

# Big Five Factors and Employees' Voice Behavior among Employees in Small-Medium Enterprise in Penang

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## Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between the Big Five factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and employees' voice behavior among employees of SME in Penang. The independent variables are the Big Five factors while the dependent variable is employees' voice behavior. The hypothesized relationship between the Big Five factors and employees' voice behavior is based on a logical argument that those who demonstrate Big Five factors would be positively and negatively related to employees' voice behavior to their superior. The theories that support the theoretical framework are the theory of individual difference in task and contextual performance. A total of 292 questionnaires were distributed to employees of a small-medium enterprise in Penang. A total of 108 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a usable response rate of 74%. The collected data were analyzed statistically using multivariate statistics. Factor analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive analysis, correlational analysis, and regression analysis were used as the bases of analyses. The results only indicated that agreeableness and neuroticism among the five independent variables were significantly related to employees' voice behavior, but positively significant, which did not support the hypotheses of the study. Therefore, all the hypotheses were not supported by the study results.

**Keywords:** Big Five factors, employee voice behavior, small-medium enterprise, Penang, Malaysia

## 1. Introduction

Small-Medium Enterprises (SME) contribute a significant development result in social sector and economic sector, in Malaysia. The SMEs sector is proven as the powerful engine, which drives the growth of the nation development. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of SME has improved its growth from 6 percent in 2012, to 6.3% in 2013, which exceeded Malaysia's GDP growth, 4.7% (SME, 2014). According to SME (2014), the contribution of SMEs to nation's GDP as compared to Large Enterprises in 2013 is 33.1% versus 66.9%. The contribution of SME to nation's GDP also had been seen in the increasing trend from 2005 to 2013. This number signifies the importance of SME in Malaysia. According to MohdAris (2007), SME employed approximately 3.0 million employees, which was 65.1% of the total employment of 4.6 million. It is undeniable that SME significantly contribute to Malaysia social and economy development. In order to maintain the job creation and income generation, which deemed as the backbone of the Malaysian economy, we have to sustain SME development in Malaysia (June & Mahmood, 2011).

LePine and van Dyne (1998) found that it is important of innovation in recent business environment situation and they encourage more researches that help to enhance our understanding of voice. In the research by Nikolaou et al. (2008), they found that there is more and more important for an organization relies on employees who are willing to express their new ideas and make constructive suggestion for change in order to initiatively respond to the challenges of the business environment. An organization's innovation shouldn't solely depend on the source of top management level only, it should also gather from innovative competencies of employees from the lower level. According to Morrison (2011), information from employees at lower levels is very important for top management of an organization, because they need the multi-perspectives information to make good and strategic decision when responding to the dynamic business situation, and also fix a problem before it increases rapidly. However, today in SME, as when employees confront problem that put them in dilemma of making decision whether to voice or hold potentially constructive information, employees mostly choose to close their

mouth than voice their ideas and opinions for workplace environment, company policies or operating procedures.

According to Bull et al. (2010) argued that employee voice is a vital part of the performance puzzle of an organization by having employee participation in organizational decision-making. However, many studies focus the employee voice within large corporation, there is lack of study on SME (Wilkinson, Dundon, & Grugulis, 2007; Moore & Read, 2006; Ryan, 2005). Furthermore, research in studying the relationship between employees' personality and their voice behavior in SME also limited. There is a necessity to study employee voice within SMEs because of that SME has played a significant role in job creation, innovation and economic performance for a nation (Bull et al., 2010). Therefore, more studies are required to fill the gap of literature in this area and the researcher is looking into the employees' voice behavior of SME employees.

Additionally, voice behavior involves the individual expend effort to speak up and to express ideas in their mind (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). It means that the way the individual behaves in response with his voice to a particular situation. On other hand, Milliken et al. (2003) highlighted that if employee prefers to be silence, no voice, would impact to feeling of futility or resignation. Therefore, understanding about the underlying personality of an employee could assist us to predict the response of the employee in voice and to prevent unnecessary turnover due to covered feeling of futility.

Employees' personality could be the predictor for their voice behavior in SME, as their personality factors could influence their willingness to voice about the ideas and suggestions, which could highly contribute to the development of SME sector growth. Thus, this study utilizes the study made of Nikolaou et al. (2008) in determining the relationship between Big Five factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and employees' voice behavior in Malaysia's SME context. Moreover, this study intends to explore the significant factors of Big Five personalities with the employees' voice behavior.

## **2. Research Significance**

This paper perceives some significance from the research. It would bring further understanding of the personality and voice behavior in Malaysia, particularly the SME's employees. The aim is to fill up the research gap of the personality and voice behavior literatures. Moreover, it intends to add further knowledge in this area of study for the SME environment and their employees in the context of Malaysia. This paper could also facilitate the development of hypotheses for personality and employees' voice behavior for future research in this area within a SME organization. There are few reasons of choosing SME in this study.

Firstly, it is seldom that SME top management applied open-door policy. Top management sometimes does not think about the valuable information and constructive ideas from employees, which could contribute in productivity yield or even benefit in organizational-change. In previous researches (Barrick & Mount, 1991; LePine & van Dyne, 2001), the researchers found that employee who are more conscientiousness are more willing to voice about ideas for improvement. Therefore, this research would let the top management aware in knowing there are employees with high in conscientiousness would likely to share their ideas for better organizational advantages in the company policy, department improvement, and own job satisfaction.

Secondly, error prevention via innovative solution is deemed vital point to increase the productivity from the recent level to better yield level in SME. In order to get the continually growth for SME, the government's policy highlights the focus in productivity improvement and innovation-led areas (SME, 2014) of manufacturing sector. Employee voice would provide advantage on quality and productivity, furthermore in identifying and dealing with problem (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). Therefore, ideas or opinion from the lower level staffs such as operators, technical people or facility monitors, should be heard as they could help in improving productivity with innovative ideas.

Thirdly, SME relies very much on labor force to drive their operating activities. In order to collect information that could enhance the quality of organization's work from the employees, supervisor and managers would need to understand the relationship between personality and voice behavior of the employees. Therefore, this research aim to give a reference for the supervisors and managers in getting to know who would probably provide information and who would not, through understanding the personality of the employees.

Fourthly, amount of voice behavior among SME employees would affect their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Low voice behavior is making organizational silence. Organizational silence is believed to generate feeling of not being valued, perceived lack of control and cognitive dissonance (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). In the other hand, high voice behavior will lead the employees to have high perceived being valued, high

in job satisfaction, which then reduce the turnover rate. Therefore, level of voice behavior (high or low) of an employee could reflect the employee job satisfaction or leaving intention.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Big Five Factors Personality

Digman (1990) noticed that McDougall offered an interesting opinion required thinking about personality and wrote in 1932 that,

“Personality may to advantage be broadly analyzed into five distinguishable but separate factors, namely intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper...”

It has been decades that researches argued, relabeled the five factors and point out for gaps that encourage for further studies. Norman's (1963) work has labeled the five factor as extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and culture, which are commonly used and referred in the researches after his, until current, subsequently called as “Norman's Big Five” or simply “Big Five” (Barrick & Mount, 1999). In this research, names used by Nikolaou et al. (2008) are adopted for this research; they consist of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Moreover, Big Five factors are widely accepted as the dominant paradigm of personality, and being used in many personalities related researches. The Big Five factor structure (Goldberg, 1992) is proven useful in understanding the personality in many aspects of studies. Timeline given for this research is limited, hence simpler and briefer measure of the Big Five, which introduced by Saucier (1994) with only 40-item instrument will be used.

The Big Five factor structure consists of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Firstly, openness to experience refers to people who are openness to experience carry traits associated with intelligent, curious, cultured, imaginative, original, broad-minded and artistically sensitive (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Openness to experience also called as Culture (Norman, 1963) or most frequently as Intellect as follow to Goldberg (1990). Digman (1990) agrees that this dimension can be called as likely all of these, because this dimension normally comes in traits with cultured, curious, imaginative, intelligent, and broad-minded. Secondly, conscientiousness refers to people with high conscientiousness carry traits associated with dependability, careful, thorough, responsible, and organized (Barrick & Mount, 1991). LePine and Van Dyne (2001) found that people with high conscientiousness are very good in self-motivation and aiming to accomplish their work. They are achievement-oriented, hardworking and perseverant. Thirdly, extraversion refers to people who are extroverts carry traits associated with sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991). According to LePine and Van Dyne (2001) that extraversion is talking about someone's energy level, positive affectivity and potency. It is relating to practice positive and cooperative interaction with co-workers in order to accomplish their work. This dimension also called as Surgency by Norman (1963) and Goldberg (1990). Fourthly, agreeableness refers to people with agreeableness carry traits associated with courteous, flexible, friendly, sociable, cooperative, trusting, forgiving, good-natured, soft-hearted, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). LePine and Van Dyne (2001) found that agreeable people prefer to work as a team, more cooperative and skillful in interpersonal interactions. Finally, neuroticism refers to people with low neuroticism carry traits associated with angry, anxious, embarrassed, depressed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). LePine and Van Dyne (2001) found that those are high in neuroticism are emotionally not stable, they easy to get anxious or angry and always express negative attitudes toward others. Hence, neuroticism is related to emotional stability in the opposite way.

#### 3.2 Employees' Voice Behavior

According to LePine and Van Dyne (1998), voice is challenging and upset interpersonal relationship. Voice among the employees is intention that not only in a form of interpersonal communication with management, it brings meaning to the change-oriented communication for the situational improvement (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). However, if an employee is feeling difficulty to share information, speak up and give feedback, there is possibility that could negatively affect his trust, morale and motivation (Nikolaou et al., 2008). Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) studied about upward communication in organization could be influenced by trust in superior. They found that the employees are most likely to filter carefully the information that they communicate upward when they lack of trust in their superior. Therefore, the voice among employees and superior may not bring meaning in changed-oriented improvement as the information convey upward could be inaccurate or insufficient after being filtered by the employees.

In some researches, they found that individual personality and individual differences are influencing the voice of employees. Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) found that there is connection between voice and four factors that

form a person disposition and perception. The four factors are locus of control, self-esteem, perceived top management openness and trust in supervisor. Furthermore, Avery (2003) also found that the three disposition factors, self-esteem, self-efficacy and locus of control, could predict the value of voice of an individual. Besides the three disposition factors, he also evaluated influence of the Big Five personality dimensions (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in predicting the value of voice. Therefore, the personality of an employee could influence the employee's voice behavior.

According to Perlow and Williams (2003), who have interviewed the senior executives and staffs in organizations ranging from small setup company to large corporations as listed in the Fortune 500, they found that silence in an organization can rightly taking a high psychological price on staffs negative feeling such as anger, humiliation, unfair, etc., if such feelings couldn't be expresses, they will discourage effective interaction, stop creativity and erode productivity. All of these findings highlighted the importance of an employee to express his voice in an organization.

#### **4. Relationship between Big Five Factors Personality and Employees' Voice Behavior**

Empirical researches conducted by LePine and Van Dyne (2001), Avery (2003) and Nikolaou et al. (2008) have explored more information about relationship between Big Five factors personality and employees' voice behavior. The Big Five factors were used to measure the individual differences. Detert and Burris (2007) stated that the logic this study about individual differences as correlates of voice is that "someone could be more likely than others to 'go the extra mile' in regard to speak up".

LePine and Van Dyne (2001) found that voice behavior is about asking a person to put on certain attempt to speak and let others hear the opinions in their mind. Their research also proved for the initial stage on the relationship between the Big Five factors and voice behavior. Avery (2003) tested the influence of Big Five factors dimensions and core self-evaluation dimensions on voice. More recently, Nikolaou et al. (2008) argued that we can foresee employees who have high conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism would show increased voice behavior as one of contextual performances, if happen that there is firm relationship between voice behavior and contextual performance. They also found that employees' voice behavior is more significantly towards their immediate superior than toward the top management of the company.

Previously, the researchers have brought initial evidences on the relationship between five-factor-measure personality, which is called as Big Five factors in this research, and voice behavior (LePine & van Dyne, 2001; Avery, 2003; Nikolaou et al., 2008). Furthermore, Nikolaou et al. (2008) argued that if the connection employees' voice behavior and contextual performance really exists, we could expect that employees with high conscientiousness, extraversion and low neuroticism for example, would have increased voice behavior than others. Therefore, Nikolaou et al. (2008) explored and tested the hypotheses in the way: conscientiousness and extraversion will be positively related to employees' voice behavior; openness to experience, agreeableness and neuroticism will be negatively related to employees' voice behavior.

Wilkinson et al. (2004) found that most of the researches already conducted in focusing in relation to employee voice are over-reliant on managerial perspectives. Furthermore, the employees contribute a lot in SMEs sector, in this research, the researcher links to the relationship between the Big Five factors (as the personality measure) and voice behavior among employees.

#### **5. Underlying Theory**

A theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance introduced by Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997) with intention in building on task and contextual performance framework from individual differences in personality variables and cognitive ability variables as shown in Figure 1.

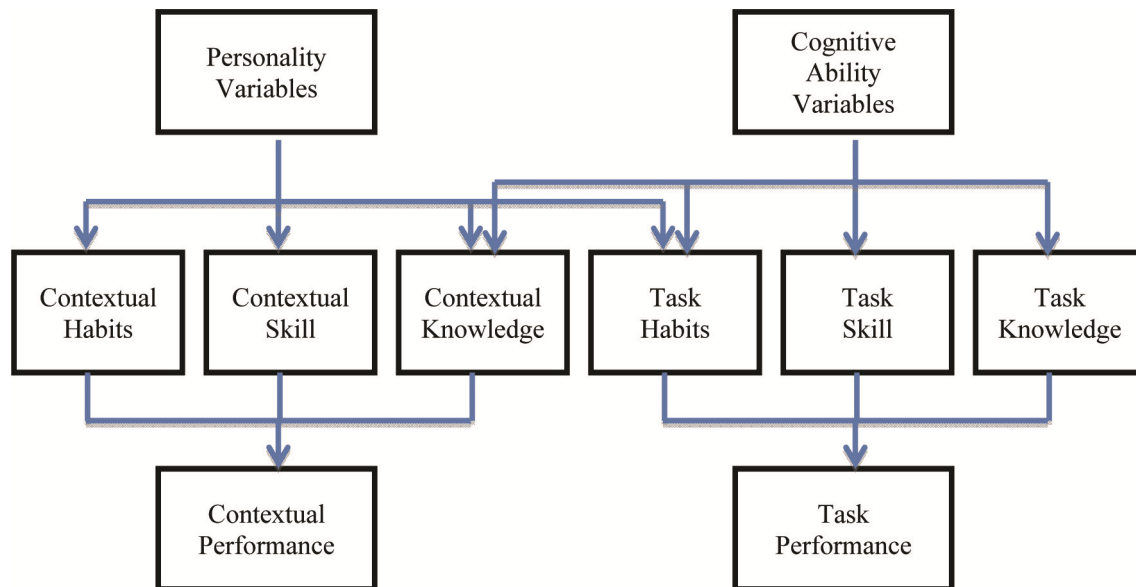


Figure 1. A theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997)

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) differentiates the two type of performance by describing task performance focuses in direct activities that transform inputs into output, whereas contextual performance focuses in indirect activities that contribute to organizational success as whole outcomes. Task performance includes purchasing raw material, operating a machine, supervising employees, and etc. Contextual performance includes behaviors such a cooperating with others, defending organizational objective, volunteering to contribute more, and etc.

Voice is consistent with the definition of contextual performance because specific acts of voice are mostly the same across most of jobs, it cannot be required in advance, tend to be discretionary or extra-role (Speier & Frese, 1997). Therefore, voice is deemed as an important form of contextual performance and tested its relationship with Big Five factors personalities (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in LePine and van Dyne study (2001).

This theory is believed to be useful because it suggests a set of possible antecedent of voice and also linkages within a broader nomological network, especially it has specified the nature of relationship for predictors of voice (as form of contextual performance) relative to task performance (LePine & van Dyne, 2001). LePine and van Dyne (2001) studied the relations between individual differences and three outcomes: voice, cooperative behavior, and task performance with underlying this theory.

Their research explored the individual difference in affecting employees' voice behavior (which is form of contextual performance) at work place. If an employee's voice behavior toward the organization is different in difference personality, therefore difference personality of employee would contribute different level of contextual performance in an organization. If voice is a form of contextual performance, LePine and van Dyne (2001) suggested that relationship between individual difference and voice shall follow the model predicted by the theory of individual differences in task and contextual performance.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework as in Figure 2 is showing the relation link between variables in this research. Employees' voice behavior is the dependent variable in this research, which is influenced by Big Five Factors: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, also call the independent variables in this research. Therefore, this research is to replicate the previous study conducted by Nikolaou et al. (2008) in the Malaysia's SMEs context among staffs.

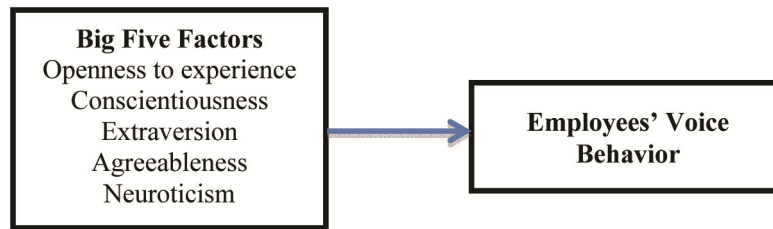


Figure 2. Theoretical framework

## 7. Hypotheses Development

LePine and van Dyne (2001) found that people who are high in openness to experience enjoy new experience and like to learn new thing. They would most likely to consider new changes rather than supporting status quo. Hence, employees who are openness to experience are positively related to voice behavior. Besides that, Avery (2003) found such people are likely to have innovative and creative way to improve existing practice. Both studies hypothesized openness to experience will positively predict the voice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis One: Openness to experience is significantly related to employees' voice behavior.

Avery (2003) found that people who are high in conscientiousness will seek for better control in their jobs, leading them to increased voice behavior. Nikolaou et al. (2008) hypothesized that conscientiousness will be positively related to employees' voice behavior. They argued that conscientiousness workers are efficient and capable in work, also are persistent individual. Therefore, Hypothesis Two: Conscientiousness is significantly related to employees' voice behavior.

Avery (2003) found that extravert people likely to find opportunity via voice behaviors to present themselves and influence others. Nikolaou et al. (2008) hypothesized extraversion will be positively related to employees' voice behavior. They argued that extravert people are sociable, active, optimistic, affectionate, talkative and humorous. These people always feel secure and behave assertively at work. Therefore, Hypothesis Three: Extraversion is significantly related to employees' voice behavior.

Avery (2003) found that agreeable people do not want to create problem or conflicts with others, they also unable to see the "negative-side" of their actions. Nikolaou et al. (2008) hypothesized agreeableness have affected the employees' voice behavior. They argued that agreeableness people could be described as soft-hearted, helpful, forgiving, good-natured, straight-forward and easily trust others. Therefore, Hypothesis Four: Agreeableness is significantly related to employees' voice behavior.

Nikolaou et al. (2008) hypothesized neuroticism will be significantly related to employees' voice behavior. They argued that neurotic people likely to have psychological distress, unrealistic ideas and they are easily to get worry, feel insecure and emotional unstable. It is believed that these people would be unwilling to provide opinions for improvement or changes to their organization. Therefore, Hypothesis Five: Neuroticism is significantly related to employees' voice behavior.

## 8. Methodology

The paper applied a cross-sectional and correlational research design. Therefore, it took a positivistic approach to test the theoretical framework and hypotheses. The deductive strategy was executed in this research design. The relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables as spelt in the theoretical framework and their hypotheses were tested. The hypotheses were tested in a 'natural' setting of the environment itself. Data is collected through the survey method by using questionnaire in structured way from the targeted group of employees of SME in Penang.

The population and sampling frame were employees of SME in Penang, Malaysia. The unit of analysis for this study is employees as an individual. Systematic sampling from probability sampling method was used in doing the sampling pick respondents from the population. In probability sampling method, every element in a population has a known chance of being chosen as subject in the sample frame (Sekaran, 2003). In the SME, the total of employees were 292 at the initial survey was being conducted. The company HR representative was advised to do selection of the respondents for the survey by selecting every odd number from the name list, which is already arranged according to the first alphabet of employees' name. During the fieldwork, a total of 146 self-administered questionnaires were distributed. These questionnaires were distributed through various human resource representatives of the SME in Penang. Self-administered structured questionnaires were

designed, distributed, and collected from respondents. A total of 108 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a usable response rate of 74%.

The questionnaires contained three pages and divided into Part A, B and C. All the questions are close-ended questions. Part A covered 9 questions that collect the demographic information of the respondents. Part B is to measure the independent variables of the research. There were 40 questions that measure Big Five factors personality, each factor (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) had 8 questions. Part C measures the dependent variable of the research, employees' voice behavior. There were 7 questions. Four questions measure about the frequency of expression on disagreements and 3 questions about easiness of expression on disagreements.

The variables in this research were measured using existing scales and had been tested on their validity and reliability, as shown in Table 1. Five-point Likert-type scale was being used to measure all of the scales for the independent and dependent variables.

The Big Five factors personality, there were 5 sub-variables that are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Big Five factors was assessed using the 40-item instrument developed by Saucier (1994), and modified into using 5-point Likert scale instead of original 9-point Likert scale. The scale was measured with scale ranging from (1) "Very Inaccurate" to (5) "Very Accurate". The Cronbach's alpha for the independent variables scale was more than 0.70 respectively for self-rated respondents (Saucier, 1994). On the other hand, there are 7 sub-variables for the employees' voice behavior measurement. Four questions of them measure about the frequency of expression on disagreements and the scale was measured with scale ranging from (1) "Never" to (5) "Always". Three of them measure about easiness of expression on disagreements and the scale was measured with scale ranging from (1) "Very Difficult" to (5) "Very Easy". The Cronbach's alpha for the independent variables scale was 0.91 (Nikolaou et al., 2008).

Table 1. Layout of items in the questionnaire

Section	Variables	No.of Questionnaire	Source	Cronbach's alpha
A	Demographic	9	Self-developed	
B	Big five factors	40	Saucier (1994)	
	• Openness to experience			0.78
	• Conscientiousness			0.83
	• Extraversion			0.83
	• Agreeableness			0.81
	• Neuroticism			0.78
C	Employees' voice behavior	7	Nikolaou et al. (2008)	0.91

## 9. Data Analysis

Overall, 146 questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents who are working as employees in the SME. From the total 146, only 125 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 85.6 percent. However, 17 were unusable which due to filled incompletely or incorrectly. Therefore, only 108 questionnaires were usable, giving a rate of useable response of 74%. Respondents' demographic profiles were analyzed on their age, gender, race, nationality, highest qualification of education, organizational tenure, current position, positional tenure, and superior's gender. The respondents' demographic profiles are presented in Appendix 1.

The result shown that the majority of the age group for this survey was 30 years old and below, which contributed to 45.4%, followed by the second highest was between age group of 31 to 40, which contributed to 38.0%, and the third was age group 41 to 50, which contributed 15.7%, out of the overall respondents, and so on. For gender, majority of the respondents are male which contributed 63%, meanwhile 37.0% are female. By ethnicity, Malays were represented by 57.4%, Chinese by 34.3%, and others by 8.3%.

In the nationality section, 91.7% were Malaysian whereas the balance of 8.3% was non-Malaysian (Vietnamese). Academically, majority of the respondents hold high school certificate or lower qualification (65.7%); Diploma or Advanced Diploma were 18.52%; STPM or certificate were 8.3%, and the least was Bachelor's degree, 7.4%.

As for the organizational tenure, 31.5% are working for 1 to 3 years in the organization, 4 to 6 years was 27.78%; less than 1 year was 23.2%; more than 9 years was 13.9%, and 7 to 9 years was 3.7%.

The nearly half of the respondents (47.2%) are working as operator; 28.7% works as officer; 18.5% are team leader and 5.6% were unclassified or did not indicate their job positions. By positional tenure by years, 40.7% of respondent who were working for 1 to 3, 23.1% works for 4 to 6, 22.2% works for less than a year. As for the superior's gender, majority of the respondents reported to male superior (61.1%), and 38.9% reported to female superior.

In Table 2 below, the Cronbach's alpha value for the six variables was found more than 0.7 individually, which is more than the requirement of the reliability. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.83 for employees' voice behavior, 0.80 for openness to experience, 0.87 for conscientiousness, 0.75 for extraversion, 0.84 for agreeableness and 0.81 for neuroticism. They are all accepted and considered as reliable.

Table 2. Reliability analysis based on Cronbach's alpha for all variables

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Dependent variable		
Employees' voice behavior	7	0.83
Independent variables		
Openness to experience	8	0.80
Conscientiousness	8	0.87
Extraversion	8	0.75
Agreeableness	8	0.84
Neuroticism	8	0.81

Correlation analyses were conducted on all variables. In Table 3, employees' voice behavior has a significant positive relationship with openness to experience ( $r=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), conscientiousness ( $r=0.26$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), agreeableness ( $r=0.28$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and neuroticism ( $r=0.33$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Employees' voice behavior did not have any significant relationship with extraversion. Openness to experience was the only significantly positive related to neuroticism ( $r=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Openness to experience did not have any significant relationship with conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness. Conscientiousness is significantly positive related to extraversion ( $r=0.31$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and agreeableness ( $r=0.23$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Conscientiousness did not have any significant relationship with neuroticism. Extraversion did not have any significant relationship with agreeableness and neuroticism. Meanwhile, agreeableness also did not have any significant relationship with neuroticism.

Table 3. Correlation analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Employees' voice behavior	1				
2 Openness to experience	0.21*	1			
3 Conscientiousness	0.26**	0.15	1		
4 Extraversion	0.14	0.01	0.31**	1	
5 Agreeableness	0.28**	0.06	0.23*	0.08	1
6 Neuroticism	0.33**	0.21*	0.07	0.02	0.06

\* $p<0.05$ , correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* $p<0.01$ , correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression analyses were conducted on independent variables, Big Five factors personalities (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and the dependent variable,



employees' voice behavior. Regressions were used to construct a predictive model in Table 4. In this analysis,  $R^2$  value showed that 23% of the variance in the dependent variable (employees' voice behavior) was explained by the Big Five factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism). It means that 77.2% of the variance for employees' voice behavior was explained by other unknown additional variables, which were not explored in this study.

Table 4. Regression results for employees' voice behavior

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Openness to experience	0.12	1.33	0.19	0.94	1.07
Conscientiousness	0.15	1.62	0.11	0.84	1.19
Extraversion	0.07	0.76	0.45	0.90	1.11
Agreeableness	0.21**	2.38	0.02	0.95	1.06
Neuroticism	0.28***	3.17	0.00	0.95	1.05
$R^2$	0.23				
Adjusted $R^2$	0.19				
$F$ -change	6.01***				

a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Voice Behaviour.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The  $F$  ratio gives information about relationship of the means between the two groups, independent variables and dependent variable. Table 4 also illustrated that the regression model was significant model because the  $F$  ratio was significant ( $F(5,102)=6.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A  $p$ -value of 0.000 in ANOVA is a common way to state that the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable is significantly significant. It implies that the Big Five factors (independent variables) was a good fit in predicting employees' voice behavior. In other words, this means that the combined effect of the five independent variables (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) was good at predicting employees' voice behavior.

Beta coefficient,  $\beta$ , is used to describe the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. It is used to find for individual predictor. The higher of beta coefficient value means for the stronger of the relationship of the two variables. Positive of beta coefficient value means for the positively related between the two variables and vice versa for the negative beta coefficient value.

Firstly, the three hypotheses, Hypothesis One, Two and Three are not supported due to their insignificance value of more than 0.05. Meanwhile, we found that two hypotheses are supported, which are Hypothesis Four and Five. In Hypothesis Four, the statistically significant value was 0.02 (less than 0.05), it showed agreeableness is significantly related to employee voice behavior. The coefficient value at 0.21 signified a positive relationship between two variables, which means agreeableness is positively related to employees' voice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis Four is supported. In Hypothesis Five, the statistically significant value was 0.00 (less than 0.05), it is clearly showed a significant relationship between neuroticism and employees' voice behavior. The coefficient value at 0.28 signified a positive relationship between neuroticism and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis Five is supported.

Overall, regression analyses showed that the five-independent-variable (combined effect) was a good fit in predicting of employees' voice behavior. In summary, Agreeableness (H4) and Neuroticism (H5) was a significant predictor of employees' voice behavior, while Openness to Experience (H1), Conscientiousness (H2), and Extraversion (H3) are not a significant predictor of employee voice behavior. Table 5 shows the summary the results.

Table 5. Summary of hypotheses results

Hypotheses	Results
H1 Openness to experience is positively significant to employees' voice behavior	Not Supported
H2 Conscientiousness is positively significant to employees' voice behavior	Not Supported
H3 Extraversion is positively significant to employees' voice behavior	Not Supported
H4 Agreeableness is negatively significant to employees' voice behavior	Supported
H5 Neuroticism is negatively significant to employees' voice behavior	Supported

## 10. Discussion

The result is to answer the question “is there a relationship between Big Five factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and employees' voice behavior?” This study  $R^2$  value showed that 22.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (employees' voice behavior) was accounted for by the five independent variables (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). The five independent variables only have 22.8% influences on the employees' voice behavior. There would be many other factors that could affect to the employees' voice behavior at work place, which were not explored in this paper.

In correlation analysis showed that openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism have positive relationship with employees' voice behavior. The regressions analyses only showed that agreeableness and neuroticism was a positive predictor of employees' voice behavior. The employee voice behavior at the SME is influenced by two types of personality, which are agreeableness (21%) and neuroticism (28%). The rest of variables, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion were not a significant predictor to the employees who are working in the Small Medium Enterprise in Penang, Malaysia.

### 10.1 The Influence of Big Five Factors (Openness to Experience) on Employees' Voice Behavior

Coefficient value at 0.12 signified a positive relationship between two variables, openness to experience and employees' voice behavior. But, the statistically significant value was 0.19, it showed no significant related found from the study result between openness to experience and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, this study result does not support the hypothesis that the Big Five factors (openness to experience) are positively significant to employees' voice behavior. However, the study result is congruent with previous studies by LePine and van Dyne (2001) and Avery (2003). The previous two studies results also did not support the hypothesis, but the previous researchers did not have further comment on why the hypothesis was not supported.

From the personality perspective, people who are openness to experience would actively participant in change-oriented matters by voice in discussion and providing their ideas. They are highly possible to speak up their ideas and suggestions for the new implementation or problem solving purpose. But this study result did not show the significant between openness to experience and employees' voice behavior. It probably could be due the misinterpretation of the questionnaires by the respondents during answering the questionnaires. Moreover, 65.7% of the respondents had high school qualification and below education level, which might be difficult for them to understand and answer the questionnaire. This shortfall could not really reflect their real practice on their voice behavior at workplace.

### 10.2 The Influence of Big Five Factors (Conscientiousness) on Employees' Voice Behavior

In this study, the statistically significant value was 0.11, it showed no significant related found from the study result between conscientiousness and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis was not supported. This study revealed that conscientiousness was not positively significant related to employees' voice behavior, which is not congruent with previous study by Nikolaou et al. (2008), who found supported result to the hypothesis.

From the demographic profile of the respondents, 45.4% are from age group 30 and below. They are perceived to be young in the workplace. They rarely show the personality as to be able to work orderly and dependable in the organization. They intend to put themselves into “quite” when participating in the discussion, and let others to say. Furthermore, for the organizational tenure of the respondents, 23.15% are less than 1 year and 31.48% are only 1 to 3 year. Their voice could be low due to they are relatively new in the organization. They might be conscientious and very self-motivated and achievement-oriented on their own work, but might rarely actively participate in group discussion or matter related to company and department.

### *10.3 The Influence of Big Five Factors (Extraversion) on Employees' Voice Behavior*

Coefficient value at 0.07 signified a weak positive relationship between two variables, extraversion and employees' voice behavior. But, the statistically significant value was 0.45, it showed no significant related found from the study result between extraversion and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis was not supported. This study revealed that extraversion was not positively significant positive related to employees' voice behavior, which is congruent with previous study by Nikolaou et al. (2008), whose results also did not support this hypothesis. However, the researchers did not have further comment on why the hypothesis was not supported.

From the personality perspective, extraversion is socially based personality dimension brought to relate to voice behaviors. Extraversion has been shown as the personality dimensions which is most strongly related with observer ratings of contextual performance, where voice behavior also has the conceptually similarity with (Motowidlo et al., 1997). But this explanation was not being reflected from this study results. The respondents who are extravert did not show positively significant to employees' voice behavior. This could be due to the SME top management seldom applied open-door policy. This makes the employees perceived that their suggestion rarely been considered by top management and feel reluctant to provide ideas about the company or their departments.

### *10.4 The Influence of Big Five Factors (Agreeableness) on Employees' Voice Behavior*

The statistically significant value was 0.02 (less than 0.05). It showed that agreeableness is related to employees' voice behavior, and with a coefficient value at 0.21 signified a positive relationship between two variables, agreeableness and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, hypothesis is supported. This result is consistent with the previous findings. Avery (2003) and Nikolaou et al. (2008) also found that agreeableness is significantly related to employee voice behavior.

Also, the finding in this study supported the study of Tett and Burnett's findings (2003). The data collected could be more toward the prosocial voice, where the agreeableness people could be more likely to engage in interacting with others, not only for their self-interested, also show the concern for others' benefit in collective groups.

From the demographic profile, 51% of the respondents are in the job category of operator. This job category could show the high involvement in collective voice in opinion about department or company policies. These employees may think that their collective voice in a group is more influential than an individual voice. They prefer to go for collective voice and concern about others' opinions in a discussion. Therefore, this situation contributed in positively significant related to employees' voice behavior by agreeableness dimension.

### *10.5 The Influence of Big Five Factors (Neuroticism) on Employees' Voice Behavior*

The statistically significant value was 0.00 (less than 0.01), it showed that a significance relation was found between neuroticism and employees' voice behavior. Moreover, a coefficient value of 0.28 signified a positive relationship between the two variables, neuroticism and employees' voice behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported. This result supported the hypothesis that Neuroticism is significantly related to employees' voice behavior. The result showed that people who are neuroticism is significantly positive related to employees' voice behavior. This result is consistent with Nikolaou et al. (2008) findings.

Neuroticism is opposite with emotional stability. This dimension people are likely to have the nature of psychological distress felt, which makes them feel easily to get worry, feel insecure and emotional unstable. The results clearly described that a neurotic employee will voice their dissatisfaction at the workplace. When they feel distress and worry, they will voice out their opinion to the organization.

For the demographic profile, there are 25% respondents still considered "new" in the organization, their organizational tenure was less than one year. Neurotic respondents could be mostly come from this group of organizational tenure. The respondents rated themselves, as neurotic people probably due to they might still not suit themselves into the work environment, which might make them easily to feel insecure to say something opposite to the department or company policies. They showed high in employees' voice behavior measure could be due to their collective voice by following what other group members' say in a meeting or discussion. Therefore, this study result showed that neuroticism is positively significant to employees' voice behavior.

## 11. Conclusion

This paper had demonstrated that exploring the difference of individual could approach an employee's voice behavior. The findings of this study showed that the combined effect of the Big Five factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) was good at predicting employees' voice behavior. Employees' voice behavior may be found difference in different personalities individual. Therefore, Big Five factors may be positive or negative predictor of employees' voice behavior.

In general, this study has provided insights on the relationship between Big Five factors and employees' voice behavior among employees in Small Medium Enterprise (SME) in Penang. This study is filling the limitation gap of literature in this area, moreover for the environment in SME sector. This study also provided reference in the empirical testing on the variables.

This study could also provide benefit and guideline to the practitioner in SME sector of Malaysia, the Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation, Malaysia (SME Corp) and Small and Medium Industries Development Corporation, Malaysia (SMIDEC) by revealing to them the current employees' voice behavior among employees in Penang.

It is important to recognize the employees' voice behavior through understanding the individual differences among employees. It is because of specific aspects of personality of an individual would initiate voice intention of the individual whether to express themselves in a situation of communication, such as trouble shooting discussion, change-oriented procedure review, improvement suggestion for department, brainstorming session, etc.

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**Appendix 1**

## Demographic of Respondents

Demographic	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	68	63.0
	Female	40	37.0
Age	30 and below	49	45.4
	31-40	41	38.0
	41-50	17	15.7
	51 and above	1	0.9
Race	Malay	62	57.4
	Chinese	37	34.3
	Others	9	8.3
Nationality	Malaysian	99	91.7
	Vietnamese	9	8.3
Academic Status	SPM and below	71	65.7
	STPM or Certificate	9	8.3
	Diploma or Advanced diploma	20	18.5
	Bachelor's Degree	8	7.4
Organizational Tenure	Less than 1 year	25	23.1
	1-3 years	34	31.5
	4-6 years	30	27.8
	7-9 years	4	3.7
	More than 9years	15	13.9
Job category	Operator	51	47.2
	Officer	31	28.7
	Team Leader	20	18.5
	Unclassified/Not Indicated	6	5.6
Positional Tenure	Less than 1 year	24	22.2
	1-3 years	44	40.7
	4-6 years	25	23.1
	7-9 years	7	6.5
	More than 9years	8	7.4
Superior's gender	Male	66	61.1
	Female	42	38.9

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