

# EFFECTIVE NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN RESOLVING CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY AMONG WORKERS AT UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA (USIM)

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**Abstract:** This study delves into the realm of organizational conflict resolution, focusing specifically on the role and effectiveness of nonverbal communication among workers. The research is grounded in the recognition of nonverbal communication as a pivotal factor in addressing conflicts within an organizational context. The primary objectives of the study are threefold: (1) to assess the effectiveness of nonverbal communication among workers in the workplace, (2) to gauge the level of conflict resolution among organizational staff, and (3) to explore the correlation between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution in the workplace. A quantitative approach is employed using a survey technique via Google Forms. This study involves 50 respondents who are randomly selected among the workers at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). The data analysis techniques, including mean calculation, assessment of variable levels, correlation analysis, and T-test, were employed to derive meaningful insights. The findings reveal a positive influence of nonverbal communication on conflict resolution within the organizational setting. This implies that nonverbal cues play a significant role in fostering effective communication and subsequently contribute to resolving conflicts among workers. The implications of these results underscore the importance of recognizing and cultivating nonverbal communication skills in the workplace to promote a harmonious and conflict-free organizational environment. Overall, this study

contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of nonverbal communication and its impact on conflict resolution in organizational settings.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Communication, Non-Verbal, Conflict Resolution.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication, the transmission of messages and symbols between individuals, plays a crucial role in human interaction (Kurniadi & Mahaputra, 2021). Effective communication, facilitated by language, is vital for expressing thoughts, sharing knowledge, and fostering connections (Mailani et al., 2022). However, conflicts often arise in organizational settings due to differing perspectives and communication styles among members (Hyatt & Gruenglas, 2023).

Throughout history, humans have employed various communication methods, from ancient oral traditions to modern digital platforms (Medoff & Kaye, 2021). While verbal communication is predominant, nonverbal cues, such as gestures and facial expressions, play a significant role in conveying emotions and intentions (Burgoon et al., 2021). Despite this, the impact of nonverbal communication on conflict resolution remains largely underexplored (Hemshorn de Sanchez et al., 2022).

The rise of technology has transformed communication, introducing new forms of nonverbal expression such as emojis and GIFs (Khmel, 2021). However, unresolved conflicts

persist in organizations, leading to decreased morale and productivity (Imtiaz et al, 2022). Addressing this issue requires a deeper understanding of nonverbal communication's role in conflict resolution.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in resolving conflicts within workplace settings. Specifically, it seeks: (1) to identify the effectiveness level of nonverbal communication among workers, (2) to assess the level of conflict resolution in the workplace, and (3) to explore the correlation between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution.

By shedding light on the intricate dynamics of nonverbal communication in conflict resolution, this research aims to provide insights for organizational leaders, human resource (HR) professionals, and conflict resolution practitioners. Ultimately, it seeks to enhance workplace communication, foster positive relationships, and improve organizational outcomes.

The journal article used as a comparison is a study that examines the importance of nonverbal communication in the construction sector in Malaysia (Mohammadi et al., 2022). This journal article was chosen because it has the same nonverbal communication variables as those studies by the researchers, the difference is that the research method that has been used in the study is qualitative research. The technique employed in this study is thoroughly examining and evaluating pre-existing literature on nonverbal communication within the construction industry.

The second journal, namely Conflict Resolution Strategies among Surgical Team Members in a Nigerian Tertiary Health Institution (Oyediran et al., 2021) is used as a comparison because the study has the same variable as those being studied by researchers. The variable is about the conflict resolution styles. This comparative journal can be useful in helping the researchers to see the appropriate theory to be used in their research as well as providing references for writing in this study.

The researcher of this study used a quantitative approach to examine the research questions and research objectives of this research. The instrument that has been used is a questionnaire via an online form which is Google Form. Then, the survey was distributed randomly to the 50 staff at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM).

From the study, there are two hypotheses have been identified in this study based on the objectives and conceptual framework formed. The hypothesis developed and wanted to be tested in this study is to see a significant relationship between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution. The hypotheses of the study are: (1) there is a significant correlation between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution among the workers in an organization, and (2) There is a significant difference in nonverbal communication between administrative and professional staff.

## METHODS

This research employs a quantitative approach which used an online survey via Google Form to examine the relationship between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution among the workers in an organization. The survey was based on the questionnaire which was developed and distributed among 50 respondents who were randomly selected among the workers in Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) through online media such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and e-mail. The questionnaire consists of three sections which include respondents' demographic background, nonverbal communication as the independent variable, and conflict resolution styles as the dependent variable. The variable of nonverbal communication was measured using a *Likert* scale from 1-5 while the variable of conflict resolution style used Four Point *Likert* scale. In order to analyze the data obtained, this study used a Statistical Procedure for Social Sciences (SPSS) which emphasized the descriptive

findings, correlation, and T-test. The reliability was tested on both variables. As a result, the 32 items that measure the nonverbal communication variable indicate a strong reliability which is  $\alpha = 0.973$  while the conflict resolution style scores  $\alpha = 0.885$  (15 items).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1, there were 24 males and 26 females involved in the survey. The majority of the respondents have 10 years and above experience working at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) which is 74%. The second most elevated respondents are 14% with five to 10 years of experience. 8% of respondents have below than 2 years of experience and only 4% of respondents have two to five years of experience working at USIM. The study found that most of the respondents work as professionals with 29 respondents, while others work as administrative with 21 respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Background (N=50)

Items	f	%
Gender		
Male	24	48.0
Female	26	52.0
Years of employment		
Below 2 years	4	8.0
2 – 5 years	2	4.0
5 – 10 years	7	14.0
10 years and above	37	74.0
Staff		
Administrative	21	42.0
Professional	29	58.0

Table 2 shows the effectiveness level of nonverbal communication which is identified as low, medium, and high. The findings reveal that the high level is getting the majority of responses with  $f=43$ , followed by the medium level  $f=6$  and the low level with  $f=1$ . The findings of the level show that the high level has the highest frequency compared to other levels. For those who are working in an organization, they need to communicate more effectively to ensure that the information reaches the recipient.

Table 2. Effectiveness Level of Nonverbal Communication

Level	f	%
Low	1	2.0
Moderate	6	12.0
High	43	86.0

Then, the recipient needs to understand the information given well (Newman & Ford, 2021). Thus, the effectiveness of nonverbal communication plays a vital role in communication among employees in the workplace.

Apart from that, the study also wants to investigate the level of conflict resolution among the respondents. Table 3 shows the level of resolving conflict among the respondents in their workplace. In the table, there are two levels were identified, namely low and high. These levels have been divided into five different components of conflict resolution styles namely collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising. Based on the result, accommodating has been chosen as the most resolving-conflict style which is the percentage of the low level is 22% ( $f=11$ ) and the high level is 78% ( $f=39$ ). However, the respondents use the competing style as the least

Table 3. Level of Resolving Conflict

Level	f	%
Collaborating		
Low	15	30.0
High	35	70.0
Competing		
Low	29	58.0
High	21	42.0
Avoiding		
Low	19	38.0
High	31	62.0
Accommodating		
Low	11	22.0
High	39	78.0
Compromising		
Low	14	28.0
High	36	72.0

conflict-resolving style. The percentage of the low level is 58% ( $f=29$ ) is higher than the high level which is 42% ( $f=21$ )

Following this, it is found that there is a significant remark of the relationship which is a moderate and positive correlation between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution ( $r = 0.448, p = 0.001$ ). An independent-sample- T-test was conducted to compare the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in administrative and professional conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for administrative ( $M=127.19, SD=25.301$ ) and professional ( $M=138.41, SD=11.525$ ) conditions;  $t(48) = -2.11, p = 0.040$ . These results suggest that administrative and professional conditions do affect the effectiveness of nonverbal communication.

## CONCLUSIONS

As far as this study is concerned, nonverbal communication should always be practiced by the employees at their workplace because it plays a very important role in our daily communication, especially in resolving conflicts that have arisen between employees. The effectiveness of nonverbal communication can be supported by the very findings of this study that a significant difference is found between the administrative and professional conditions. Following this, the result also shows that there is a significant relationship between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution among the workers.

More efforts should be made to increase the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in resolving conflict among employees. Not only is there a significantly moderate and positive relationship between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution, but how they form, practice, or handle their situation when they are in a conflict situation and they must be aware of the nonverbal communication cues in their daily lives may be highly affected on their relationship and interpersonal communication.

On the practical front, the study offers valuable insights for organizational leaders,

Human Resources (HR) professionals, and conflict resolution practitioners. Recognizing the importance of nonverbal communication in conflict resolution can guide the development of targeted interventions and real-world applications (Eaves & Leathers, 2017).

Organisations might integrate these discoveries into their training and development initiatives. Workshops and seminars can improve employees' ability to accurately understand and utilise nonverbal clues. Organisations can observe substantial enhancements in dispute resolution procedures and foster a healthy workplace culture by investing in the development of nonverbal communication skills. Integrating these findings into HR practices, such as recruitment and team building, can enhance interpersonal connections in the workplace (Robertson, 2020).

This study suggests that an exploration of cultural variations should be involved in examining the relationship between nonverbal communication and conflict resolution. Having had the extension of this study, the result may reveal clearer insight into the influence of cultural norms and expectations on the understanding and use of nonverbal cues would enhance the development of conflict resolutions that are culturally responsive in varied organizational settings.

The study also suggests future research that could investigate the functioning of nonverbal communication in virtual or remote work environments, considering the growing dependence on technology-mediated communication in modern workplaces. Examining the efficacy of nonverbal cues on digital platforms and the difficulties in interpreting them in virtual environments might have practical importance.

In conclusion, this study addresses the pressing need to recognize the significance of nonverbal communication in resolving conflicts within organizational settings. By exploring this aspect comprehensively, organizations can develop effective strategies to promote harmony, productivity, and employee well-being.

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