

THE EFFECTS OF MANAGERIAL CONSULTATION ON VOICE FUTILITY WITH ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AS MODERATOR: MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Muna Ibrahim G. Alyusef

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

PengCheng Zhang

Huazhong University of Science & Technology, Wuhan

University of Hail, PR China

Abstract

Managerial consultation is the precursor in encouraging employee voice behaviors. In present day, voice is regarded as an essential tool in improving the performance of any organization. Employee voice acts as a driving factor in influencing organizational change and suggesting innovative ideas. Organizational justice moderates the relationship between managerial consultation and voice futility. Psychological safety motivates employees to feel safe in voicing their opinions. When employees feel they will not be treated unjustly and are free to express their ideas, they are more likely to voice their opinions without hindrance. Moreover, by anticipating positive responses from the manager, employees are more likely to have trust in management to appreciate their input. This study has three propositions. The first states that managerial consultation has a positive impact on voice futility. Secondly, organizational justice moderates this relationship while lastly, psychological safety mediates this relationship. The study concludes in the acceptance of these propositions. Researchers should explore the psychological factors of managers regarding employee voice.

Keywords: Managerial consultation, voice futility, organizational justice, psychological safety

Introduction

Getting subordinates to voice their opinions has been pinned as a main driving factor of managerial decision making and organizational efficiency (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The existing research regarding

voice has exhibited positive influences of employees voicing their opinions on quality of decisions (Nemeth, 1997), performance of team (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999), and organizational execution (Argote & Ingram, 2000). Subsequently, scholars have pointed out the precursors that motivate employees to express themselves (Ashford et al., 1998; Withey & Cooper, 1989), while recent studies have revealed that managers tend to plan an essential role in the process of voice as they are considered as the possessors of power to solve the problems regarding which voice is provoked (Ashford et al., 2009; Detert & Burris, 2007). Researchers have proposed that managerial consultation can indicate how suitable an organizational setting is to the input of an employee (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Subordinates are familiar with the often futile manner of struggles related to alteration of the existing state of affairs (Detert & Trevino, 2010) and the involved personal risks in raising voice (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Hence, provided that employees are aimed at generating managerial support for their proposed changes in addition to eluding any personal risks, employees tend to speak up in case that they perceive their managers to be more open (Ashford et al., 1998) and inoffensive (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008). Moreover, in a climate where justice prevails, employees are more likely to trust their managers to make just and fair decisions.

Nonetheless, the involvement of employees that has been explored is often limited to the direct participation of employees in routine activities, by observation, diagnosis and problem solving concerning work-related problems. The manner in which employees contribute in organization is more strategic and their participation in organizational decisions is also important. However, it is mostly ignored in the literature. This paper proposes that in a setting where employees feel psychologically safe towards voicing their opinions, asking for help and fearlessly expressing themselves, they are more susceptible to developing a greater extent of involvement in organizational performance enhancement. Organizational performance is the main goal of managerial activities. Hence, by providing psychological safety to the employees, management can effectively get employees to raise their voices and contribute to organizational decision-making and problem solving.

Significance and the scope of proposed study

This study is important as it evaluates the effect of organizational justice in relation to psychological safety of employees and its impact on voice futility. Although, psychological safety has been studied in terms of voice futility in previous research, the role that organizational justice can play in this association is not exhausted. This study will explore the relationship between managerial consultation and voice futility with

psychological safety as the mediator. By reviewing literature, it can be said that the managerial consultation is aimed at meeting the needs of the employees so that the organization could progress as a whole. Each individual is important in this process and must be catered. However, in an environmental climate where organizational justice does not exist, employees are likely to become frustrated and their psychological safety is threatened. They are likely to feel insecure and consider raising voice as a threat to their job security and personal well-being. Organizational injustice can evoke hatred in employees towards the organization and they are less likely to give suggestions for organizational improvement.

Employee management is an important part of resource management. Without voice, employees act as a resource that is being wasted away under the shadow of assigned duties and their identities outside of their obligations are unknown. Encouragement of voice behaviors gives employees the chance to present themselves and become more effective. Although extensive literature has focused on explaining this association, this paper will give insight into the psychological aspect of raising voice in an organization.

The proposed conceptual model

The proposed model encompasses managerial consultation, voice futility, psychological safety and organizational justice. Managerial consultation is taken as the independent variable, the effect of which is measured on employee voice futility. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between managerial consultation and voice futility while organizational justice moderates it. Managerial consultation/discussion is aimed at getting employees to speak up and voice their ideas. By encouraging voice, managerial discussion makes it possible for organizations to progress. Employee participation, beyond the documented responsibilities of their job agreements, is hard to come by as employees perceive speaking up as a threat to their job security. This hindrance can only be overcome by providing the employees with the trust that their suggestions or opinions are not taken offensively by the management. The employees are required to feel safe psychologically and believe that they are completely free to express themselves. Only then, management can stay updated on all the issues that arise in the organization on employee level. Managerial support is also important while various leadership styles also impact psychological safety of employees. However, for the sake of this exploration, managerial consultation and organizational justice are the only factors considered to be affecting the employees' psychological safety.

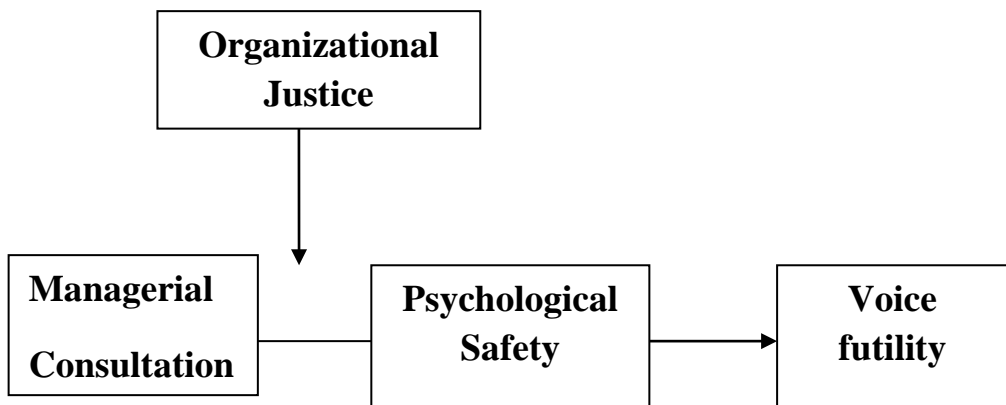


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Managerial consultation and outcomes

Managerial consultation is important to the encouragement of employee voice and is a precursor for many leadership-related factors. A research by Grant, Gino, and Hoffman (2011) explored how perceptions of followers mediate the joint impacts of extraverted behaviors of leaders, employee voice and felt obligation towards constructive change. In simpler words, the perception of employees regarding the receptiveness of the leader can either motivate or demotivate employees to raise their voice. It may be indicate of the potential employee voice has to disrupt interpersonal association between employees and supervisor (MacKenzie, 2011). In cases where employees perceive the management to be less receptive towards them, they are more likely to feel greater risks to their job security when raising their voice regarding any issue. This fear can induce a psychological struggle in the employees and cause no problems to be pointed out to the management. Hence, no improvement is possible. Particular styles of leadership have additionally been differentiated in scholarly writings as supportive of employee voice while others tend to discourage it (e.g., Detert & Trevino, 2010; Edmondson, 2003).

As senior management are supposed to have little direct interactions with most of the employees, the impact of senior management is supposed to be fundamentally indirect. The stories regarding leaders and structures, practices and policies maintained and enacted by the leaders lead to the commonly shared conceptions about voice behaviors in the organizations (Ashford et al. 1998, Dutton et al. 2002). In the organizational climate conceptualization presented by Morrison and Milliken (2000) regarding employee silence, managers are presented to establish a tone for voice behaviors that seeps down to the lowest of employees in the organization. As an example, the senior management may develop a negative climate of voice

by centralizing the process of decision making. This could lead to perceptions in the minds of the employees that raising voice is either unacceptable or unwanted. Such anticipations regarding senior management are consistent with the wide culture and leadership literatures in which senior management are considered to have an extensive impact on the setting of strategic direction (Jacobs and Jaques, 1986), structural control (Trice and Beyer, 1993), and tales about such management that get generally dispersed (Schein, 1992).

Leadership, as part of managerial consultation, is associated with nearly all aspects of organizational performance. Bettencourt (2004) quotes leadership to be a significant factor of organizational change. Rationally, employees evaluate work philosophy, administrative justice, and dynamics at the workplace mainly in accordance to the perceptions related to attributes of leaders. As an example, in case that a leader is considered as authoritative and narrow-minded, employees tend to attribute parallel qualities to their workplace environment even if the personality of leader and style of leadership are not demonstrative of the personality of organization. On the other hand, in case that a leader shows indications of supportiveness and enslavement, employees have greater potential to attribute comparable qualities to their environmental at workplace. Choi (2007) describes this event as the leader influence, where style of leadership and personality create a zone of effect on other facets of organizational personality. Detert and Trevino (2010) showed how leaders that mean well are regularly uninformed of how their positional authority adds to assumptions of employees regarding holding their tongues and avoiding interactions with individuals in powerful positions.

Even though employees tend to frequently make assumptions in trying to comprehend how open their supervisors are towards their voice (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997), their evaluations may not be always correct. To be precise, even in the case that employees determine it safe and useful to raise voice, this assumption could often lead to disappointment as the managers may not be in the receptive frame of mind. On the other hand, employees may consider that raising voice is a threat to their jobs or outright futile when it could be safe and appreciated in reality (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Provided that managerial perceptions and conducts play a vital role in the development of a climate of either voice or silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), assessing how managers respond to employees that raise voice in contrast to how they respond in real circumstances and the devices driving these managerial responses is significant. Specifically, it is vital to comprehend both cases, one in which managers support voice behaviors and the perceptions of employees regarding management that support their voice.

By examination of research regarding practices of management responses to employee voice has been rather limited. The existing reports produce complex outcomes as numerous antecedents have been introduced to moderate and mediate this relationship. Firstly, not many researches have evaluated how management tends to support the idea of employees who raise voice. It is not known whether or not management backs employee ideas either by execution or through defending them to upper level management. Secondly, literature indicates that employees should view the managers that endorse their ideas as more influential and effective. Hence, managerial consultation is mostly viewed as having a positive influence on employee voice behaviors.

Proposition 1: *Managerial consultation has a positive impact on voice futility.*

Psychological safety

Psychological safety denotes the collective beliefs among the members of a work unit that they perceive to be safe to get involved in interpersonal behavior of risk encountering (Edmondson, 1999). In accordance with Edmondson, the conception of psychological safety encompasses more than just perceptions and experiences of interpersonal trust; it additionally explains a workplace climate described by shared respect, an environment in which individuals are comfortable in communicating their dissimilarities. Burke and associated (2006) discovered that psychological safety enhances the possibility members of the team will feel unrestricted to ask suggestions and judgments. The feeling of psychological safety regarding questioning of present issues and freedom to voice opinions are fundamental for engagement of employees in establishing fresh and innovative ideas and giving newer propositions (Kark & Carmeli, 2009).

Several antecedents related to psychology can influence the manner in which managerial consultation guides employee voice behaviors. Psychological safety is likely to enhance positive approaches toward behaviors of voice (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Psychological safety refers to the extent to which subordinates feel that their colleagues and/or managers will not penalize or misinterpret them for undertaking risks in expressing opinions and issues (Detert & Burris, 2007). Psychological safety impacts the way by which orientation of employees direct employee voice behaviors. In another study, Tangirala, Kamdar, Venkataramani, and Parke (2013) proposed that two basic orientations influence employee voice. The first orientation is duty orientation referring to the perception of ethical and moral obligation in employees while the second orientation is the degree of their deep-rooted personal drive to progress in their profession (p.1040).

Moreover, they perceived that efficacy of voice and psychological safety moderates the relationship between employee orientation and employee voice. Efficacy relates to the assessment of the proficiency of an individual's behavior (Bandura, 1986). The extent to which employees feel self-confident of raising voice is related to voice efficacy (Ashford et al., 1998). In another study, Tangirala et al. (2013) questioned 282 personnel and supervisors from a Singaporean company of financial services. The results indicated that the duty orientation has positive impact on voice while ambition orientation has a negative impact on voice. Additionally, efficacy of voice enhanced the positive influences of duty orientation. Conversely, psychological safety perceptions lowered the negative effects of ambition orientation. Hence, psychological safety has an indirect positive impact on voice in this respect.

Proposition 2: *Psychological safety positively mediates the relationship between managerial consultation and employee voice futility.*

Situational factor

Organizational justice relates to the explanation of fairness in the setting of an organization and has its origins from research in the field of social psychology intended at comprehending fairness concerns in social exchanges (Greenberg, 1990). The impartiality with which subordinates are regarded by their respective organization is a frequently explored subject. Previous studies centered on organizational justice have been more concentrated on distributive justice. The equity theory by Adams (1965) is the basis for distributive justice. In accordance with the equity theory, an individual views others in any social setting, estimates his/her assumed outcomes/incomes and then contrasts these calculations to the estimations of others. Equity is present when there is equality or at least similarity in the two estimations. Conversely, inequity exists in case that these estimations are at par with each other as this could lead to a perception of injustice and partiality experienced by both of the involved parties. An attempt at resolving this discrepancy must be made to establish balance. Hence, both subjects are involved in the rectification of the situation by either reacting behaviorally or psychologically. Goldberg, Clark, and Henley have studied voice, organizational justice, and social classification literature collectively. Their framework integrates voice responses of observer to injustices performed on colleagues. On the basis to the theory of social identity, they claim that the objective of injustice effects viewer identification with the aim, as moderated through the span of justice of the observer. They have additionally proposed that the relationship between the perceptions of justice of the observer and speaking up is moderated by the supposed opportunity to articulate voice of the observer. Hence, organizational justice and its perceptions leads to the encouragement of employee voice.

Proposition 3: Organizational justice moderates the relationship between managerial consultation and voice futility.

Conclusion

In review of the above discussion, it can be concluded that managerial consultation has a positive impact on voice futility while organizational justice moderates this relationship and psychological safety acts as a mediator. Organizational justice exhibits fairness in managerial decisions and practices which encourages the employees to express their opinions. In this way, when employees are certain that their personal and professional well-being is not on the line, they are more likely to freely express their ideas. Although it is possible that these ideas are not always constructive or helpful, however, these can effectively contribute to the pool of ideas that help the overall improvement of the organization. Moreover, significant issues can go unnoticed if they are not highlighted to the management. Hence, employee voice acts as a contributor to problem solving while organizational justice makes it possible for the managers to act objectively. Managerial discussion that is not biased or partial can influence positive behaviors in the employees. Employee voice has been reported to be influenced by numerous factors. However, psychological safety is a factor that is more individualistic in nature and explains the perceptions of employees regarding voicing their opinions. Further research should evaluate how managers perceive employee voice in cases where they have not outcomes in positive results.

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