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The Effect of Academicians' Self-Efficacy Perception on Their Voice Behaviour

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Abstract: The current study examined the antecedents which lead employees to engage in voice behavior. Individual factors that encourage employees to speak up were investigated. Specifically, "Self-Efficacy" was expected to be positively related to "voice behavior". A secondary dataset collected via survey method was used in this paper. A stratified sampling approach was used to gather data from 496 academicians who worked in twenty-eight universities in Istanbul. All analyses were conducted at the individual level. The results showed that self-efficacy and employee voice were positively related.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Employee Voice, Structural Equation Modeling, Universities, Academicians

1. Introduction

Employee voice, its antecedents and effects have been studied in organizational behavior for more than fifty years. In recent years there has been a surge of interest among academicians, professionals, and policymakers in employee voice behavior. Competition in global markets and developments in the nature of business put constant pressure on organizations to be more innovative. As a result, managers and employers encourage their employees to share more information within the organization and seek feedback to receive better output. Our literature review has shown that studies on self-efficacy and employee voice are positively related. We therefore posit that personal characteristics and efficacy levels have a positive effect on employee voice.

Using a sample of 307 employees, a study in South Korea revealed that the positive effect of impression management motive on voice was stronger on employees whose self-efficacy was high (Choi, 2015).

The study showed that leader empowerment influenced employees' voice behavior through self-efficacy. Leader empowerment may create a positive and competitive climate where employees have more responsibility. In such an environment, employees may want to inform their leaders about the organization. As mentioned above, self-efficacy is related to individuals' persistence to overcome problems when they face challenges. Thus, high levels of self-efficacy strengthen an employee's success expectation whereas low efficacy levels may lead to employees easily giving in. When employees feel empowered by a leader, their self-efficacy levels are strengthened. Feeling more powerful, employees are more likely to express their own opinions to gain their leaders' trust (Tian, 2013).

In his study on the relationship between perceptions of occupational self-efficacy and organizational dissent, Bakan (2017) found that participants' professional self-efficacy has a positive effect on their organizational dissent. Çalık's (2018) research among 313 employees who work at two hospitals in Van shows us that employee self-efficacy has a negative effect on employee silence.

The current study aims to examine the effect of self-efficacy on employee voice behavior. We hypothesized that self-efficacy and employee voice are positively related. Besides, the study attempts to answer:

Does perceived self-efficacy influence academicians' voice behavior? Is the difference between the effect of self-efficacy on employee voice behavior of university academicians in state and foundation universities statistically significant? Do the demographic variables have an influence on employee voice behavior? In order to find answers to the questions above, we used the self-efficacy scale developed by Jerusalem (1993), which was adapted by Erci (2010) for the Turkish population. To measure voice behavior, a scale comprised of 5 items adapted from Premeaux's (2001) Willingness to Speak Up measure and 6 items adapted from Van Dyne et al. (2003) were used.

1.1. Self-Efficacy

Literature review has shown that some of the antecedents of employee voice behavior are related with personality traits. One of the them is perceived self-efficacy of employees. Employees with high self-efficacy levels tend to express their ideas more often.

"Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to successfully accomplish something" (Bandura A. , 2013). Self-efficacy is the most common mechanism for assessing self-effectiveness. People do not tend to take initiatives if they lack the belief that they can achieve a task. As long as they rely on their efficacies, they will have the power to create change (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Perceived self-efficacy plays a significant role in motivation, which has also been conceptualized as expectancy-value theory. People depend on their beliefs in order to create change (Bandura A. , 1991) .Self-efficacy is the most important part of intrinsic motivation and one of the dimensions that shapes self-conception (Wang, Gan, Wu, & Wang, 2015). On the other hand, while handling difficult situations affects people's susceptibility to stress and depression, efficacy helps people manage and overcome distressful situations. Low self-efficacy results in high anxiety, which may cause coping deficiencies. People who believe that they cannot manage the threats they may face may end up distressing themselves and impairing their chances of working effectivel (Bandura A. , 2001). Perceived self-efficacy is a factor that affects people's perseverance in their attempts to overcome difficulties in their lives. It also affects people's motivation in achieving certain tasks (Bandura & Cervone, 1986) . How people perceive their own self-efficacy can be shaped in four ways. It can be done through successful experiences, as success helps people develop self-belief of their capabilities, while failures may result in doubts in their self-efficacy. Another factor that may affect perceptions of self-efficacy is easy success. When people gain success easily, it is likely that they may be easily discouraged with a failure. Therefore, in order to learn perseverance, people must be able to overcome challenges. Unfavorable conditions enable people to learn to handle difficult situations. Once people overcome obstacles, they learn to manage failures without being negatively affected by them. The second way of developing self-efficacy is through modeling. Observing successful people provides individuals with a comparison. People tend to measure their performances by their own capabilities. This gives them an opportunity to see how others succeed and what they can do to fulfil their objectives. The third way of enhancing people's beliefs is through social persuasion. People can put in more effort when they receive encouragement from the environment around them. The important point here, however, is that the objectives must be realistic. If people are misled by their social circle, they might end up facing unsuccessful results. Last but not least, self-efficacy levels develop by an individual enhancing their physical status and reducing their stress levels (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

1.2. Employee Voice

One of the most common uses of "voice" dates back to 1970 and the classical Hirschman study on African railways. As an alternative option to "exit" (moving to an alternative company), he conceptualized "voice" as a grievance by customers when a decline in the quality of the service or product occurs or an organizational inefficiency exists that may damage the organization (Hirschman, 1970).

Employees show voice behavior as long as they feel secure (Sagnak, 2017). When an organization takes speaking out as a criticism, employees prefer to remain silent. An example of this is Nokia. Nokia lost the smartphone battle not because its technology was bad but because there was a negative organizational climate in the organization. Employees did not express their views for fear of being dismissed. They therefore either hid reality, not saying what needed to be said, or lied about their jobs (Milliken & Tatge, 2016).

Voice behavior plays an important role in identifying serious problems in an organization. The concept has been defined as a proactive form of organizational citizenship (Elsetouhi, Hammad, Nagm, & Elbaz, 2018). Voice behavior aims to create change rather than deny what may be negative existing conditions (Farrell, 1983).

Even though voice behavior can at times be risky, it holds great potential for leaders (Detert & Edmonson, 2005). Employees can continuously provide ideas about improvement and innovation and these ideas should be heard; therefore, employee voice should be regarded as an ongoing process. However, if employees do not see any point in raising their voice, they often stop speaking up, regardless of management's attitude to organizational voice (Landau, 2009). In today's dynamic business world employee voice contributes to organizational effectiveness in many ways (Ekrot, Johannes, & Gem, 2016) .

Hirschman's examination of voice behavior identifies two key concepts: exit and voice. In his study, employees who were unsatisfied with their organization in terms of money either chose to leave the company or tried to solve the problem. While his study was based on consumers rather than employees, it has become a key reference point in terms of organizational voice behavior (Spencer, 1986).

Employee voice behavior is recognized as contributing to organizational performance (Holland, Pyman, Cooper, & Teicher, 2011). Although promoting voice behavior is a time-taking and costly process, it has many benefits for an organization, such as job

satisfaction and active participation in the organization. Promoting voice behavior also enhances organizational performance and leads to low employee turnover (Holland, Pyman, Cooper, & Teicher, 2011).

Fast, Burris and Bartel (2014) suggest that managers with a low level of efficacy show less voice behavior (Sagnak, 2017). It is not the case that managers with low self-efficacy tend to avoid voice behavior, rather avoidance of speaking up stems from a lack of managerial skills (Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014). Voice behavior in organizations is not only beneficial for the individual but also for the company. Being reluctant to speak up could result in a loss of valuable information. Personal characteristics, formal and informal control mechanisms, managerial behavior are among the antecedents of voice behavior. Proactive personality, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and five factor personality characteristics have also been studied as antecedents of voice behavior (Detert & Edmonson, 2005). Employees who often take risks and speak up in organizations may believe their ideas will gain recognition whereas employees with low self-efficacy are less likely to speak up less because they think their opinions will not be supported by their colleagues (Ding, Cheng Li, Quan, & Wang, 2018).

When we look at individual characteristics, we focus on two concepts: self-efficacy and power distance. Self-efficacy is mainly whether employees' ideas are seriously taken into consideration or not. Self-efficacy is a personality trait that has a strong connection with organizational behavior. However, studies on the relationship between self-efficacy and employee voice are few in number. General self-efficacy has been found to have a link with several organizational behavior areas, for a example job performance and employee orientation. Van Dyne and Le Pine note that voice behavior offers new suggestions for change. Voice behavior is future oriented (Sagnak, 2017).

2. Methodology

This research aimed to study the relationship between self-efficacy and employee voice among academicians in 29 universities in Istanbul. The participants were chosen from state and foundation universities by using a stratified sampling method. One of the objectives of the study was to see whether there was a difference in voice behavior between academicians in state and foundation universities. The structural equation model was used to analyze structural relationships.

2.1. Scales

A self-efficacy scale was developed by Jerusalem (1993) and adapted by Erci (2010) for the Turkish population. In the current study, the response alternatives of the scale were set to 1 (never) up to 5 (always). Exploratory factor analysis and reliability tests were executed. The structural equation model and reliability tests proved that the scale could be used in this research. An 11-item employee voice scale was developed by the researcher by adapting the items of several questionnaires. The scale comprised of 5 items that were adapted from Premeaux's (2001) Willingness to Speak Up measure and 6 items adapted from Van Dyne et al. (2003). Participants responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Exploratory factor analysis and reliability tests were executed. The factor structure and the reliability of the scale are presented in the results section.

2.2. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using the structural equation model. Structural Equation Modelling is a commonly used statistical modelling technique in behavioral sciences. It is a combination of factor analysis, regression analysis. Structural equation modelling draws a convenient framework for statistical analysis. It can be seen via graphical diagram (Bollen, 1989).In terms of taking the measurement errors into consideration, the structural equation model is convenient for a statistical framework (Hox & Bechger, 1998).

Before examining the relations between variables and testing the research model, factor analyses were executed. Coefficients of Cronbach α close to .70 were considered as sufficient for internal consistency. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS- version PAWS Statistics18). Normality and linearity tests were done. Factor analysis was performed with a principal components model and the internal consistency of the scales was evaluated by computing coefficient alphas. Pearson correlations were presented for descriptive purposes and regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. To test the demographic differences for voice, T-test and One-way ANOVA were used. The first stage of this step was to test the validity and reliability of scale items through conducting confirmatory factor analysis and estimating composite reliability coefficients and average variance extracted for each latent variable. Confirmatory factor analysis was done to test whether the data fitted or not. Therefore, construct validity of variables, comprising convergent and discriminant validity, were tested. Additionally, Harman's single factor test method was performed to check whether self-report data collection generated a bias or not (Harman, 1960). Also, demographic

variables such as age, gender, tenure, and title showed no significant difference, therefore they were not used in the latter analysis.

3. Implementation

The research was conducted in state and foundation universities using the stratified sampling method. Our sample consisted of 496 academicians working in 29 universities in Istanbul, nine of which were state and the rest foundation universities. Data was collected through surveys that were uploaded to a web site. Nearly 3,000 surveys were sent out or given to academicians working in different universities, departments, and positions. Five hundred and seven surveys were filled out and returned. At the end of the data gathering process, we had 496 usable questionnaires for further statistical analysis. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants.

Table 1. The distribution of participants

University	Percentage
State	43
Foundation	57
Gender	
Female	62
Male	38
Age	
26-45	69
46-65	31
Title	
Professor. Dr.	8
Assoc. Prof. Dr	8
Assist. Dr.	16
Dr.	15
Instructor	27
Research Assistant	26

Mean and standard deviation values and correlations between variables and reliability coefficients are shown below in table 2. Our research shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between variables.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation Values, Correlation and Reliability Coefficients

	Variables	M.	S.D.	1	2	Alpha
1	Self-Efficacy	3.76	.576		.398***	.89
2	Employee Voice Behaviour	4.01	.705	.398***		.95

n=496, ***p<.001, *M: Mean, S.D.: Standard Deviation, Alpha:Cronbach's Alpha.*

Before the hypothesis was tested, the structural validity of latent variables was examined (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Confirmatory factor analysis results reveal that items for both latent variables' standardized regression coefficients are higher than 50 and t values are meaningful. This can be interpreted as all variable scales ensuring discriminant validity, which means variables do not overlap empirically. Therefore, it can be said that measurement model convergent and discriminant validities were ensured. Confirmatory factor analysis was shown in table 3.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factors	Items	Standardized Factor Loads	Standard Error	T-Value	Alpha
Self-Efficacy	SE1_1	0.605			.89
	SE2_1	0.625	0.073	16.025	
	SE3_1	0.572	0.104	10.754	
	SE4_1	0.678	0.11	12.223	
	SE5_1	0.639	0.095	11.691	
	SE6_1	0.679	0.111	12.26	
	SE7_1	0.714	0.103	12.713	
	SE8_1	0.75	0.118	13.155	
	SE9_1	0.739	0.11	13.023	
	SE10_1	0.684	0.116	12.334	
Employee Voice	V1_1	0.775			.95
	V2_1	0.799	0.043	26.014	
	V3_1	0.732	0.054	17.514	
	V4_1	0.725	0.051	17.296	
	V5_1	0.764	0.047	18.431	
	V6_1	0.739	0.055	17.711	
	V7_1	0.828	0.046	20.413	
	V8_1	0.889	0.048	22.366	
	V9_1	0.897	0.053	22.635	
	V10_1	0.866	0.048	21.612	

According to the results of fit indices, shown in table 4, the two factor primary level yielded a better result than the one factor model (χ2:586.018, df:165, p:.000; CMIN/df: 3.552; CFI: .938; TLI: .929; GFI: .890; RMSEA: .072; SRMR: .047). Besides, since the explained variances of endogenous variables are higher than .10, the model is suitable for the research (Falk R. F. & Miller, 1992).

Table 4. Fit Indices Results and Model Comparisons

Models	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Two Factor Model	586.012	165	.000	3.552	.938	.929	.890	.047	.072
One Factor Model	2027.071	166	,000	12,211	.727	.687	.565	.165	.150
Reference Values				<3	>.90	>.90	>.80	<.08	<.08

The effect of self-efficacy, the independent variable in our research sample, was tested on the dependent variable employee voice. According to the structural equation model, the results show that self-efficacy has a positive effect on employee voice behavior (β=.173, p<.01). 16 percent of the variance in employee voice behavior can be explained through self-efficacy. Therefore, our hypothesis is accepted.

4. Conclusion

In a highly globalized world, in order to maintain their position, organizations need to use innovative methods and keep abreast of the latest developments in their operating sphere. Adapting to change requires creative ideas and continuous improvement, both of which can be sought from well-trained staff, whose efficiency and effectiveness are of great importance for organizations. Accordingly, employee involvement and participation in the decision-making process can play an important role in an organization's development. One way of encouraging employees to contribute to their organization is to encourage employee voice behavior. Since we believe that an organization's most valuable resource is its intellectual capital, promoting voice behavior is a valuable strategy for the management of an organization. From the employee point of view, there are several factors that contribute to their voice behavior, the two most important being personality traits and self-efficacy. Employees with high self-efficacy tend to raise their voice more in order to make positive contributions to their organization. Previous studies have mostly focused on the effects of employee voice behavior. What is more, there are still few studies on

promotive voice. The present study aimed to identify the personal factors affecting employee voice at universities, which was the major strength of this study. It was hypothesized that self-efficacy had a positive effect on employee voice. The results of our study suggest that individuals who have a high level of self-efficacy tend to show more voice behavior. Several demographic variables such as age, tenure and gender have been examined in this study. We tried to find out whether there was a significant difference in academicians' voice behavior between state and foundation universities. However, our findings did not show any significant difference. One limitation of this study is that it was conducted only in Istanbul. Future studies therefore should focus on universities throughout Turkey.

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