



Examining the effects of manager-subordinate gender match on managerial response to voice



Cristiano L. Guarana^{a,*}, Junchao (Jason) Li^{b,1}, Morela Hernandez^c

^a Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, 1309 E. Tenth Street, Bloomington, IN 47405, United States

^b Freeman School of Business, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118, United States

^c Darden School of Business, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 6550, Charlottesville, VA 22906, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Voice
Gender
Social comparison
Gratitude

ABSTRACT

In this article we examine the effects of manager-subordinate gender match on managerial response to employee voice. Drawing from social comparison theory, we propose that managers high on social comparison orientation respond more favorably to voice expressions that come from opposite-gender subordinates than to those from same-gender ones. Given the importance of social emotions to social comparison processes, we posit that gratitude can play a central role in determining managerial response to voice expressions. In two experimental studies with managers in Brazil (Study 1) and the United States (Study 2), we found consistent support for our hypothesized interactive effect of social comparison orientation and manager-subordinate gender match on managerial response to voice expressions. In addition, we found that managers' experienced gratitude mediated this effect (Study 2). Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

Voice in organizations refers to the “discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning” (Morrison, 2011: p. 375). Although evidence has mounted that employee voice can help managers identify problems and improve organizational effectiveness (e.g., Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013), voice from subordinates is often not well received by managers, and similar content can elicit disparate managerial responses (e.g., Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014; Grant & Gino, 2010; Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2012). For example, Howell, Harrison, Burris, and Detert (2015) showed that subordinates' demographic characteristics can send signals to managers and influence managerial responses to voice expressions. In particular, they found that managers responded more favorably to voice expressed by females, as compared to males. Indeed, gender is a vivid and salient individual attribute that is central to self-concept (Markus, 1977; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and can significantly influence how individuals interact (e.g., Duguid, 2011; Miller, 1984). Considering that managers and subordinates interact and influence one another (DeRue, 2011; Eberly, Johnson, Hernandez, & Avolio, 2013), examining voice expressions without considering manager gender can undermine the complexity embedded in

managerial responses to voice. Thus, we draw on social comparison theory to explicate how gender match between a manager and a subordinate who expresses voice can trigger a social comparison process, which might negatively influence managerial response to subordinate voice expressions.

People tend to compare themselves to others to evaluate, verify, and improve themselves (Festinger, 1954; Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002; Taylor & Lobel, 1989). Although comparisons can be self-enhancing, they can also trigger defensive reactions when the focal individual's self-defining attribute is challenged (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Mussweiler, Gabriel, & Bodenhausen, 2000). Since gender is a salient individual attribute for managers (e.g. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Goktepe & Schneier, 1989; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014), we propose that managers can engage in social comparison processes. Because subordinates' voice expressions can be viewed as challenging managers' core role expectation of making decisions and being influential in their work environment (Burris, 2012; Fast et al., 2014), social comparison process might lead managers to respond negatively to voice expressions from same-gender subordinates. As a result, managers might perceive voice expressions as an affront rather than as help. We posit that this comparison process will be especially pronounced in managers who are predisposed to engage in social comparison (i.e., high on social comparison orientation; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Thus, the negative effect of gender

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: cguarana@iu.edu (C.L. Guarana), junchli@uw.edu (J.J. Li), hernandezm@darden.virginia.edu (M. Hernandez).

¹ The first two authors contribute equally to the manuscript and are presented in alphabetical order.

match on managerial response to voice is likely stronger when the focal manager has a strong social comparison orientation.

Moreover, considering the importance of social emotions in social comparison processes (Lange & Crusius, 2015; Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010), we theorize that gratitude can account for the interactive effects of manager-subordinate gender match and social comparison orientation on managerial response to voice expressions. We posit that gratitude is especially important for voice expressions because it is an empathic emotion that has a relational component associated with “recognition and appreciation of an altruistic gift” (Emmons & McCullough, 2004, p. 378). Thus, rather than viewing subordinate voice expression as a personal affront—as can be the case when voice comes from same-gender subordinates—managers with a strong social comparison orientation might interpret voice expression from an opposite gender subordinate as an act of generosity. Taken together, we build a first-stage mediated moderation model that examines how manager-subordinate gender match interacts with manager social comparison orientation to influence managerial response to voice through gratitude (Fig. 1).

1.1. A social comparison perspective on manager-subordinate gender match and managerial response to voice

A premise of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) is that individuals have an intrinsic desire to learn about and improve themselves through comparisons with others. As such, in an effort to gain relevant information, individuals compare their abilities and opinions with those of others (Wood, 1996, Taylor, Wayment, & Carrillo, 1996). Implicit in this argument is the competitive nature of human beings. Comparisons with worse-performing others can be perceived as self-enhancing; comparisons with better-performing others can be perceived as a self-diminishing. A large body of research supports this paradigm: “downward” comparisons can provide competitive relief and self-reassurance (for reviews, see Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983), often leading to feelings of happiness (Santor & Zuroff, 1997) and pride (Webster, Duvall, Gaines, & Smith, 2003); whereas, “upward” comparisons are related to competitive inferiority (e.g., Richins, 1991), often leading to negative affect (e.g., Wheeler & Miyake, 1992) and feelings of envy (e.g., Salovey & Rodin, 1984). Positive and negative responses to social comparisons are typically strong when individuals compare themselves with similar others, on self-defining and self-relevant attributes (Salovey & Rodin, 1984).

Among the attributes that can trigger perceived similarity, and in turn, social comparisons, gender is of particular relevance for at least two reasons. First, physical differences between males and females are easy to identify (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and can influence the way in which managers and subordinates evaluate the behavior of men and women at work (e.g., Caleo, 2016; Heilman, 2012). The saliency and

vividness of physical gender differences can create spontaneous, effortless, and unintentional processes of social comparison (Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995). Second, gender is a central component of self-concept (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus, 1977; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals often describe themselves by their gender, creating a psychological and intangible divide (Hoffman, Borders, & Hattie, 2000). Considering that males and females can systematically differ in their cognitions, motivations, and emotions (Cross & Madson, 1997; Guimond et al., 2007), gender can provide psychological information that activates social comparison processes. Despite the type of similarity (physical or psychological), individuals generally prefer to compare themselves with same-gender others because of saliency in the self-concept (Crocker & Blanton, 1999; Miller, 1984).

Organizational scholars have established that gender is a salient self-defining attribute that triggers social comparison in the organizational context. For example, Duguid (2011) found that in prestigious work groups, females—who are usually in the minority—tend to experience competitive threat when evaluating highly qualified female candidates. Additional evidence comes from Ely's (1994) ethnographic study. She found that female lawyers perceive female-female relations as highly competitive and even undermining. Consistent with these findings, Parks-Stamm, Heilman, and Hearn (2008) found in their experimental studies that women tend to penalize women who succeed in male gender-typed jobs because they perceive more successful women as a challenge to their own perceived competence. Although the bulk of the literature has focused on female-female interactions, we broaden our predictions to include male-male interactions. We do not expect different results based on the gender of the manager because individuals, in general, engage in same-gender comparisons (Miller, 1984).

Besides the importance of gender match generating perceived similarity, individuals tend to engage in social comparison over relevant and self-defining attributes (Salovey & Rodin, 1984). For example, researchers found that individuals engage in same-gender comparisons (Zanna, Goethals, & Hill, 1975) when they believe the other party can affect their performance. In a managerial context, subordinates can have a sizable impact on the effectiveness of their managers (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). We propose that voice expressions activate social comparison processes in managers because subordinates who speak up with constructive, yet change-oriented ideas, can be viewed as challenging the manager's beliefs in his or her decision-making authority and ability to influence their work environment (Burriss, 2012; Fast et al., 2014). When same-gender subordinates express voice, managers are likely to feel that their self-defining responsibilities are being challenged or upstaged and experience intimidation from the harm inflicted on their self-concept and self-esteem (Exline & Lobel, 1999). As such, managers will be more likely to reject the suggested idea and under-evaluate the same-gender subordi-

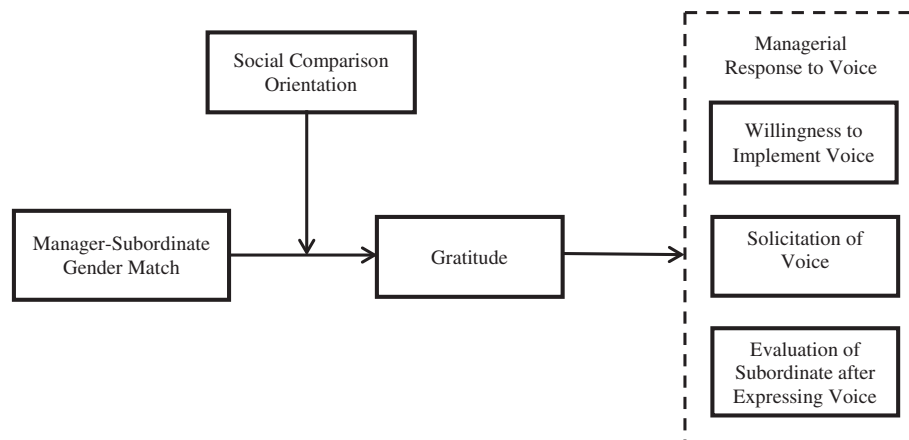


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5045673>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5045673>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)