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# Encouraging Employee Voice in the Hospitality Industry: The Role of Organizational Culture and Leadership Styles

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## ABSTRACT

*With the highest employee turnover rate, the hospitality industry need to encourage employees to voice their opinions, ideas, and any of their other concerns for improving performance and reducing employee turnover. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of different types of organizational culture and different leadership styles on employee voice in the hospitality industry. Hospitality human resource practitioners could modify their organizational culture and leadership style according to the results of the study, in order to encourage their employee voice. The results of this study could also contribute to the literature about factors that influence employee voice.*

**Keywords:** *employee voice, organizational culture, leadership styles.*

## INTRODUCTION

Employee voice (EV) has attracted much interest in both the research and practice of human resource management in past years. EV refers to employees' participation in influencing corporate development, where employees express their voice through informal and formal means to minimize conflict and improve communication (Stone, 2005). Studies have indicated EV could lead to creativity and commitment (Zhou & George, 2001), decrease employee turnover, and improve organizational performance (Batt et al., 2002). In terms of the benefits of EV on organizational development, employers need to build an atmosphere conducive to EV. With the highest employee turnover rate, the hospitality industry in particular should encourage employees to voice their opinions, their ideas for improving performance, and any of their other concerns.

Organizational culture and leadership are widely considered two of the most significant factors in bringing organizational change and improving service delivery (Kloot & Martin, 2007; Waterhouse & Lewis, 2004). The effect of organizational culture and leadership styles could be positive for an organization, but it also could be negative in some ways, for instance, as an obstacle to employees' performance (Yang, 2007). In order to encourage EV, employers need to know which type of organizational culture and leadership style are more helpful for building an

atmosphere that encourage EV. The objective of this study is to examine the influences of different types of organizational cultures and leadership styles on EV in the hospitality industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Employee Voice**

Employee voice (EV) is employees' expression of constructive ideas, information, and opinions in order to benefit organizations (Van Dyne et al., 2003). EV enhances overall performance effectiveness (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Studies have found EV was influenced by both person-centered factors, including employees' self-esteem and job satisfaction (LePine & Van Dyne), and situational factors, including group size and the relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). However, no research has indicated which organizational culture types or which specific leadership styles are more encouraging for the EV of hospitality employees.

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture refers to the specific collection of values, norms, attitudes, and beliefs shared by people and groups in an organization (Hill & Jones, 2001). Organizational culture shapes the way employees perceive and react to jobs (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1998) and influences employees' attitudes and behaviors at work (Sheridan, 1992).

According to the competing values framework (Cameron & Ettington, 1988), there are two dimensions that form four types of organizational culture: control, competition, collaboration, and creativity. Organizations with control cultures have standardized, well-defined, and hierarchical structures of authority and decision making. They focus inwardly, on their internal orientation and integration. Competition cultures are similar to control cultures in terms of valuing stability and control, but focus on external relations and transactions with suppliers, customers, contractors, and so forth as the way to best achieve success. Collaboration cultures emphasize flexibility, discretion, and outward focus. Creativity cultures share similarities with collaboration cultures in terms of emphasizing flexibility and discretion, and share similarities with control cultures in terms of their inward focus.

Based on the competing values framework and the study of Botero and Van Dyne (2009), which showed that strong supervisor-subordinate relationships and closer individual power distances encourage EV behavior, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Collaboration (clan) and creativity (adhocracy) organizational cultures contribute to encouraging EV more than control and competition cultures do.*

## **Leadership Styles**

Leadership plays a significant role in the success or failure of an organization. According to path–goal theory, leaders have to engage in different types of leadership behavior based on the demands of a particular situation, so that they can choose the best paths to guide their subordinates toward reaching organizational goals (House, 1971). There are four leadership styles in path–goal theory (House, 1974): directive, achievement-oriented, participative, and supportive. A leader with a directive style lets subordinates know what is expected and how to perform the tasks. A leader with an achievement-oriented style sets challenging goals for subordinates, expects them to perform at their highest level, and shows confidence in their ability. A leader with a participative style consults with his or her subordinates and asks for their suggestions before making a decision. A leader with a supportive style shows concern for the subordinates' psychological well-being. Based on the path–goal leadership theory, we propose the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2: Participative and supportive leadership styles contribute to encouraging EV more than directive leadership styles and achievement-oriented leadership do.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire includes four sections. In the first section, the use of six items, each with a 5-point Likert scale, are adapted from Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) study to measure EV behavior. The second section will measure organizational culture using the measurement from Smart and John (1996)'s study. Respondents will be asked to evaluate their organizational cultures by awarding up to 100 points to different organizational behaviors. In the third section, 20 items with 5-point Likert scales are adapted from Indvik's (1988) investigation of PGL theory, to measure leadership styles. The last section asks some general information about respondents, such as gender, age, working tenure, and educational level.

### **Data Analysis**

We will conduct two multiple linear regression analyses to test the research hypotheses. In the first multiple linear regression, the dependent variable is EV. The independent variables are the four types of organizational culture. In the second multiple linear regression, EV is the dependent variable and the four leadership styles are the independent variables.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

In terms of high employee turnover rate, it is important to encourage hospitality employees to speak up with their ideas, opinions, and concerns. Employers could enhance EV by modifying the organizational culture and their leadership style according to the results of this

study, so that they could build a productive atmosphere for their employees. In addition, the results of this study could contribute to the literature about factors that influence EV.

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