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VOICE OUT OR KEEP SILENT: DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

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In an organization, the leader and employees play a vital role to ensure the objectives, vision and mission of the organization can be achieved. The relationship between these two groups is something unmeasurable and is always interesting to be highlighted because failure in bringing good relationship between these two parties may eventually lead to job dissatisfaction and may also lead to high workers turnover.

The successful relationship between these two parties is usually very much related to the satisfaction of workers in the organization. Job satisfaction here can be measured through the nine areas including pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, rewards, operation procedure, coworkers' relations, work itself and communication (Spector, 1985).

From the nine areas highlighted, the area focused in this paper is on the communication and this refers to communication between the leader and subordinates which is the voice. We must have heard of this statement "no news is a good news", and when transplanted into how management look into this matter is that when there is no respond meaning everything is good and acceptable at all levels of the organization. Does this really mean that keeping silent is good or is there any other factors of employees' attitudes of keeping silent?

In this paper, we will try to look at the concept of employee's voice and silence and the leading factors. Employee voice is informal and discretionary communication by an employee of ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems, or opinions about work-related issues to persons who might be able to take appropriate action, with the intent to bring about improvement or change (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2011; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Thus, it depicts the process of communication from lower to upper level and the communication can be in many forms from giving suggestions to the extent of expressing their concerns to the top management. The definition also implies how the upward management takes action towards the voice raised up to them. In contrast to employee's voice is the employee silence which implies the opposite character of voice.

Employee silence on the other hand is the action of employees who refuse to voice out and choose to remain silent despite they may have feedback or criticisms to share. Although chances are given, they choose not to say anything over matters within the organization to individuals who might be able to take action. These are people who are not engaged in voice and may instead choose to be silent. Looking at the action, it is interesting to know the reason behind, is it because of the employee's unwillingness to be engaged or is it because of fear of the consequences.

Table 1
Variables that can motivate or inhibit voice

	Motivators	Inhibitors
Individual dispositions	Extraversion Proactive personality Assertiveness Conscientiousness Duty orientation Customer orientation	Achievement orientation
Job and organizational attitudes and perceptions	Organizational identification Work group identification Felt obligation for change Job satisfaction Role breadth Control or influence Organizational support	Detachment Powerlessness
Emotions, beliefs and schemas	Anger Psychological safety	Fear Futility Image or career risks
Supervisor and leader behaviour	Openness Consultation Leader-member exchange Transformational leadership Ethical leadership Leader influence	Abusive leadership
Other contextual factors	Group voice climate Caring climate Formal voice mechanisms	Job and social stressors Climate of fear or silence Instrumental climate Hierarchical structure Change resistant culture

Source adapted from 2014 Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior

Table 1 highlights on the factors that motivate employee whether to speak or remain silent. Factors that motivate employees to speak were highlighted in column two under the motivators and factors that hinder employees to speak is highlighted in column three under inhibitors. The main concern in the table is on the factors that inhibit employees to voice out their opinion. For example, superior and leader behavior as highlighted in the table that is related to abusive leadership can be an alarming situation of how a leader's character can shape respond received from employee. Continuous feeling of being abused may lead to employee refused to voice out their opinion and leading to an autocratic style of leadership.

After looking at the factors that motivates and inhibits employees to speak, it is very interesting to look further on the effects of silence. As mentioned by (Morrison & Milliken,2000) significant level of silence can affect an organization such as high level of employee stress, dissatisfaction and disengagement which in the end may lead to undermine performance and retention. Bagheri (2012) mention that involvement of employees may encourage people to have the feeling of belongingness and can encourage them to speak freely. Thus, having an atmosphere that creates employee involvement with the management can also create relationship and better communication between the superior and subordinates.

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