

Different Leadership Styles and New-generation Employee Voice: Examining the Mediating Effects of LMX

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Abstract: Based on the sample of 105 New-generation employees in China, this paper analyses how the employee-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles affect the New-generation employee voice behaviors respectively with the LMX as a mediator. The results suggest that the employee-oriented leadership style has a positive effect on LMX significantly, while the task-oriented leadership style has a negative effect. Though LMX is positively related to both promotive voice and prohibitive voice significantly, the relationship between LMX and promotive voice is more salient. The results also show that LMX has a fully mediating effect on the relationship between employee-oriented leadership style and employee voice, but no mediating effect on the relationship between task-oriented leadership style and employee voice.

Key words: leadership style; LMX; employee voice; new-generation employee

JEL code: M

1. Introduction

Employee voice, as an extra-role behavior, mainly refers to the upward expressions of constructive suggestions about work-related issues, and improvement-focused information flow. In today's business environment of ever-growing dynamism and instability, voice plays an important role in organization's survival and growth, continuous improvement and creativity (Nemeth & Staw, 1989; Detert & Burris, 2007). More and more organizations recognize the importance of employee voice, and expect their employees to proactively do so. However, employee voice, though intends to improve the organizational effectiveness, often questions the current policies or planning, and more than often challenges the status quo and the authority. As a consequence, voice behaviors might damage the interpersonal relationships, with possible relational conflicts or even retaliation (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Graham & Van Dyne, 2006; Adler & Kwon, 2002; Milliken et al., 2003). With these concerns, employees may prefer to keep silent rather than raise their ideas or suggestions, which might delay the corrections for problematic issues (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The study by Milliken and his colleagues (2003) suggested that over 85% of the employees had kept silent for the work they were

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responsible, even though they felt their voices might be quite important. Therefore, it is imperative to study how to encourage employees to voice proactively in organizational management (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Burris et al., 2008).

Employee voice involves the interactive communications between employees and supervisors, therefore, varied leadership styles will affect the voice behaviors in different ways. Leadership style means the way of attitude and behavior the leader holds for subordinates, which influences the relationships and the interactions between supervisors and subordinates. For instance, abusive leadership style is characterized with supervisor's long-term emotionally and psychologically hostile treatment on subordinates. In some cases, supervisors even condemn or belittle employees publicly, which worsens the leader-employee relationship and casts negative impacts on subordinates' emotions, attitudes and behaviors, resulting in a low intention to voice (Burris et al., 2008; Yan & Huang, 2011; Wu et al., 2012). In contrast, transformational leadership style, through creating attractive visions and identifying high-level needs for employees, establishes trust in work places, resulting in positive impacts on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Empirical studies have consistently shown that transformational leadership style directly affects the employees' organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (Li et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2011; Zhou & Long, 2012). Additionally, the paternalistic leadership style aims at employee's obedience through the carrot and stick policy. It suppresses employees' initiatives, thus negatively affecting their voices (Zhang et al., 2015).

All the above three leaderships focus on leaders' attitudes toward employees, such as supportive or abusive, as well as the impacts on employee voice, but none of them involves the leaders' attitudes toward the tasks to be finished by their employees. For instance, if the leadership style is task-oriented, what is the impact on employee voice? Will it be different from the employee-oriented style? In the mid of last century, researchers in the University of Michigan found that the task-oriented leaders focused mainly on the collective achievements. They considered their subordinates as the tools to reach goals (Kahn & Katz, 1960). A negative relationship was further identified between those task-oriented leaders and the collective productivity, as well as the employees' job satisfaction. There were quite few studies about the impacts on employee voice. Among those on voice behaviors, the measure has been widely taken which was developed by LePine & Van Dyne's (1998). This measure mainly examines the promotive voice, not the prohibitive one. Though modern organizations expect more prohibitive voice behaviors (Wei & Zhang, 2010), previous studies haven't investigated the impacts on these behaviors yet. The promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors differ in nature from each other in perspectives of contents, roles, potential impacts and mechanism. Promotive voice suggests new ideas to enhance current performances. "Making things better" is much more welcome by supervisors. However, prohibitive voice questions or criticizes the problematic issues at work. "Finding quarrel in a straw" might lead to conflicts and contradictions. It is critical to implement specific communication and management strategies in response to these different voice behaviors. Meanwhile, facing different leaderships, employees might take varied strategies to match supervisors' expectations, resulting in different voice behaviors.

Additionally, previous research didn't reflect the changing demographics of contemporary employees. In recent decade, the New-generation born in the 1980s and 1990s have accounted for a considerably big part of the workforce. Based on a survey made in Nangjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province in China in 2013, the people who were born between 1980 and 1994 has accounted for 20.4% of the province's total population. 40.5% of the labor force who were born between 1980 and 1984 have been promoted to the management positions, among which, 16.3% was the mid-level managers (Nanjing Federation of Trade Union and Jiangsu Linghang Human

Resources Service LLC, 2013). These New-generation employees differ themselves from older generations in personalities and life values. They are more individualistic, confident, and culturally open-minded. They intend to challenge the authority and respond to leaderships with strategies different from older generations. Therefore, the studies will be beneficial to improve the human resources management that focus on the impacts of varied leadership styles on the New-generation's voice behaviors.

Because of the lack of the literature which investigate how varied leadership styles affect employees' voice behaviors, especially the prohibitive voice, this study intends to develop a theoretical model for leadership style, leader-member exchange (LMX), and voice behaviors, with the LMX as the mediating variable between leaderships and New-generation employee's voice behaviors. As an important variable, a high LMX suggests low risks perceived by employees when they make voices, while a low LMX, high risks. The paper consists of five parts: the first part proposes theoretical hypotheses on the model of leadership styles, LMX and voice behaviors; the second is on research methodology including variables, measurement, survey and data collection; the third is data analysis and results; the fourth is empirical analysis, and the last part is conclusions and implications.

2. Theoretical Hypotheses

Discussions on the effectiveness of leadership have been the foci of varied theories of leadership. Pioneering research at Ohio University, its expansion to the Managerial Grid Theory at University of Michigan, and the Contingency Theory of Leadership (Kahn & Katz, 1960; Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1974), all investigated the effectiveness of leader behaviors from different perspectives. In these studies, leadership styles were examined at two dimensions: employee-oriented and task-oriented. The employee-oriented leadership emphasizes the maintenance of the supervisor-employee relationship. Supervisors care and respect employees' needs. In contrast, task-oriented leaders supervise and control employees to accomplish the goals, considering them as tools to finish the tasks (Kahn & Katz, 1960; Blake & Mouton, 1984). Fiedler (1967) first developed the Contingency Theory of Leadership, which proposed that effective group performance depended on the proper matching between leadership styles and specific situations. The model was based on the premise that a certain leadership style would be most effective in different types of situations. With regard to employee voice behavior, it is one of the measures to leadership effectiveness. A favorable voice environment encourages employees to make suggestions at their discretions while supervisors welcome any ideas from employees. However, supervisors are normally the creator and implementer of the current policies, and they take charge of the rewards/punishment and promotion of the employees. Because of the challenges in voice behaviors and the receiver sensitivity, voice behaviors are dependent on employees' security perception about the leadership situations. As one of the important leadership situations, the LMX is measured by the degree of trust, dependence and respect between supervisors and employees. With a higher quality LMX, employees feel safe when voicing, otherwise they may keep silent when they are concerned with felt risks of voicing (Van Dyne et al., 2008). Studies further found that LMX affects how supervisors and employees communicate and what (Kassing, 2000; Fix & Sias, 2006). Employees intend to directly talk to supervisors with a higher quality LMX, otherwise they may prefer indirect communications. A positive relationship has been identified between higher quality LMX and prosocial organizational behaviors, and employees are encouraged to perform behaviors which can benefit managers directly (Gouldner, 1960; Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007; Ilies et al., 2007). This study will take the LMX as a mediating factor and examine how the employee-oriented vs. task-oriented leaderships affect the employee's

voice behaviors with the New-generation employees as samples.

2.1 Leadership Styles' Impacts on LMX

(1) The relationship between employee-oriented leadership and LMX

Theories about LMX were originated from the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). The social exchange is differentiated from the economic exchange by felt obligations, mutual benefits and trust between individuals. Graen and Cashman (1975) investigated the interactions between supervisors and subordinates and found that, supervisors and employees in a higher quality LMX situation would form a relationship of high level mutual trust, respect, loyalty and benefits. As a result, employees feel a strong obligation toward supervisors, and they enjoy multiple channels to communicate with their supervisors. In a lower quality LMX situation, the supervisor-subordinate relationship is based on the formal chain of command. Employees have limited resources, support and trust, and they communicate with their supervisors by formal means. With employee-oriented leadership style, supervisors care employees' needs and motivations, allow them to participate in decision-making process, support their career planning and skills development, and respect and trust each subordinate. Based on psychological contract theories, when employees' expectations are satisfied, they will be happy. As a result, they will perform as expected by their supervisors, such as respect and trust. Thus a higher quality LMX is formed with mutual trust and respect. Based on these assumptions, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Employee-oriented leadership positively affects the LMX.

(2) The relationship between task-oriented leadership style and LMX

Normally task-oriented supervisors place the collective achievements into their first priority. They care less about subordinates' needs and place respect at a lower level, since they consider their employees as tools or means to accomplish tasks. They emphasize on technology and ways to reach group goals. These leaders specify tasks to be accomplished and employees' roles to play, but take employees' suggestions and benefits less into consideration. It is effective to entail the accomplishment of the tasks within a limited time period, but because of the lower priority placed on employees' needs and well-beings, employees may feel insufficiently motivated, or even decide to resign. When employees' expectations on supervisors are not met, they will feel unsatisfied, which may lead to disappointing attitudes or behaviors. As a result, a lower quality of LMX will be formed with less mutual respect and trust. Therefore, it is assumed that,

Hypothesis 2: Task-oriented leadership negatively affects the LMX.

2.2 LMX Impacts on Voice Behaviors

A majority of employees might be concerned about the risks in voice behaviors because of the felt challenges in voice contents and the power status of their audience, therefore they might feel reluctant to proactively make any suggestions. A higher quality LMX will be more encouraging for employees to voice, reducing their concerns about the voice risks. First, in a higher quality LMX situation which is based on mutual trust and respect, employees have more knowledge about supervisors' leadership style. They have better social interactions and positive communications with their supervisors. They are more familiar with supervisors' attitudes, behaviors, and thinking ways. Accordingly, they will feel more confident about the ways to voice as well as the contents, which may lead to a better result of voicing (Krone, 1991). This observation was testified in Fairhurst's study (1993), which concluded that employees' perception of the quality of LMX will affect the ways and contents of supervisor-employee communications. Furthermore, as an insider in the high quality LMX situation, an employee will obtain more information about the organization through effective communications with his supervisor. He will have more knowledge about the needs of his supervisor. When experiencing the problematic issues, he will be

able to make an accurate judgment on the necessity and feasibility of his voices. Yukl and Fu (1999) found that a higher quality LMX encourages subordinates' participation in the decision-making process. Some cross-cultural studies suggested that, managers with paternalistic approaches intend to consider those employees as insiders who have a closer relationship with them. If these insiders make conductive voices, they are considered as responsible and engaged, which will further enhance the trust and connections between them and supervisors. Even if the voices are not up to expectations, leaders will make favorable attributions and treat their subordinates in a tolerant way (Zheng, 1995; Wang et al., 2010). All these findings indicate that employees in a higher quality LMX situation will have lower levels of felt risks of voice behaviors but higher perceived benefits, which might positively affect both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors. Therefore it is assumed that,

Hypothesis 3: LMX positively affects employees' voice behaviors.

2.3 LMX as a Mediator between Leadership Styles and Voice Behaviors

Leaderships reflect the leader's attitudes toward employees and their behaviors. Their attitudes and behaviors will affect their relationships with employees, which in turn will affect the employee's psychology and behaviors. Employee-oriented leadership style emphasizes managers' care and respect for subordinates, leading to a higher quality LMX of mutual respect, support and trust. Employees are treated as insiders. These insiders may obtain more information or enjoy more autonomy because of being trusted and favorably treated by supervisors. They will feel less risks of voice, thus would like to make more suggestions and ideas. In contrast, task-oriented leaders prioritize tasks and goals, requiring employees to keep certain levels of performance and strictly follow deadlines. Focusing on tasks may result in less attention on employees, thus difficult to form a higher quality of LMX. Employees are considered as outsiders with less trust or support, who have less communications with supervisors. Employees consider their relationship with supervisors as a formal authority connection. They perceive a higher level of risks in voice behaviors, therefore less likely to proactively make suggestions. Based on these assumptions, an additional hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 4: LMX is a mediator between leadership styles and employees' voice behaviors.

In sum, the following model is an overall portrait of all hypotheses:

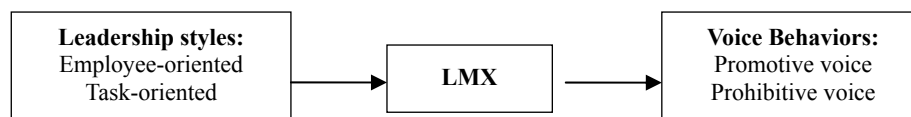


Figure 1 Model of Leadership styles, LMX and Voice Behaviors

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Samples

Research samples in this study are part-time MBA students at Jinan University, China and the employees from the university's alumni's businesses. 200 copies of survey questionnaires were mailed out. 120 copies were collected with 105 as effective responses, an effective response rate of 52.5%. New-generation employees are defined as "those who were born after the 1980s and started their first full-time job with 4-year or 2-year college educations". The sample demographics are shown in the following table:

Table 1 Demographics of Research Samples

Gender	M	45.7%	Organization types	State-owned	35.2%
	F	54.3%		Private-owned	34.3%
Age	< 24	58.2%	Position	Foreign-invested	30.5%
	25-34	41.8%		employees	52.4%
Education	2-year college	14.3%	Voice behaviors	Managers	47.6%
	4-year college	79.1%		Face-to-face	42.9%
	Post-graduate	6.6%		Phone	16.2%
Working years	< 3 years	48.6%		Text messaging	11.4%
	4-10 years	42.9%		Email	31.4%
	> 10 years	8.5%			

It is noticeable that the New-generation employees prefer interactive voice behaviors through face-to-face talks and phone conversations, the two accounting collectively for 60% of their voice ways.

3.2 Variables

Leadership styles: 12 items measured with 5-Likert scale are borrowed from Blake and Mouton (1984). Examples of employee-oriented leadership style include “He often helps subordinates”, and “He often spend time listening to subordinates’ suggestions”. Examples of task-oriented leadership style are “He often sets up specific performance standards for subordinates”, and “He often regulates strict timetables for subordinates”. Scores of each item were averaged for measuring the two different types of leadership styles.

LMX: 6 items borrowed from Graen and his colleagues’ study (1982) are used to measure LMX in a 5-Likert scale, such as “You have a harmonious relationship with your supervisors”, and “Your supervisors know well your issues at work and needs”. An average score was computed to measure this variable.

Employee voice behaviors: both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors are examined with the 12 items of 5-Likert scale developed by Liang and Farh (2008, 2012), such as “I proactively think about the issues which will affect my organization growth, and make suggestions”, and “I actively make suggestions for the projects which will be beneficial for my organization” as promotive voice, and “I dare to raise the questions which might negatively affect the productivity, even it might make others uncomfortable”, and “I dare to initiate the discussions on problematic issues in the organization, even it might hurt my relationships with colleagues” as prohibitive voice. Scores of each item were averaged to be the composite one for each voice behavior.

Control variables: respondents’ gender, age, education attainment, working years, organization type, and positions were treated as control variables. Gender and position are measured as dummy variables, and others as categorical variables.

3.3 Data Analysis

SPSS 17.0 and AMOS 20.0 were used for data analysis. First, internal reliability was examined through the corrected item-total correction (CITC) analyses and Cronbach α , then the validity of each item was examined through factor analysis. Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to analyze how the leadership styles affect employee voice behaviors.

4. Analysis of Data Reliability and Validity

4.1 Reliability Analysis

The corrected item-total correction (CITC) analyses for the variables of leadership styles, LMX and voice

behaviors suggested that, four items (T5, T6, T10 and T12) should be deleted from the composite score of leadership styles, one item (T18) from LMX, and one item (T25) from voice behaviors due to low inter-reliability. Table 2 shows the CITC coefficient and Cronbach α after these items were excluded from these variables, which suggest a high internal reliability among the variables.

Table 2 CITC Coefficient and Cronbach α Analysis

Variable	Item	CITC	Cronbach α if item deleted	Cronbach α	Standardized Cronbach α
Employee-Oriented Leadership	T1	0.808	0.878	0.909	0.91
	T2	0.769	0.891		
	T3	0.838	0.869		
	T4	0.768	0.891		
Task-Oriented Leadership	T7	0.712	0.699	0.799	0.8
	T8	0.653	0.731		
	T9	0.651	0.731		
	T11	0.451	0.82		
LMX	T13	0.869	0.882	0.917	0.917
	T14	0.746	0.908		
	T15	0.854	0.885		
	T16	0.641	0.927		
	T17	0.847	0.886		
Promotive Voice	T19	0.849	0.912	0.931	0.93
	T20	0.846	0.913		
	T21	0.867	0.91		
	T22	0.877	0.908		
	T23	0.857	0.911		
	T24	0.507	0.951		
Prohibitive Voice	T26	0.726	0.898	0.678	0.678
	T27	0.821	0.896		
	T28	0.6	0.874		

4.2 Validity Analysis

4.2.1 Factor Suitability Analysis

Table 3 shows the KMO analysis for the leadership styles, LMX and employee voice behaviors, suggesting these three variables are suitable factors in data analysis.

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Sphere Test

Variable	KMO	Bartlett's Test		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Leadership styles	0.836	442.899	28	0
LMX	0.869	399.787	10	0
Voice Behaviors	0.841	734.523	36	0

4.2.2 Factor Analysis

(1) Exploratory factor analysis

60 samples were selected for the principal component analysis. For the variables of leadership styles, two factors were identified through Varimax analysis, that is, employee-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style which explained 49.196% and 22.363% of the variances respectively, and 71.559% of the total

variances collectively. Similarly, one factor was identified for the LMX variable, explaining 75.535% of the total variance, and two factors for the voice behavior, that is, promotive voice and prohibitive voice, explaining 74.926% of the total variances collectively.

(2) Confirmatory factor analysis

The factor analysis for the remaining samples suggested that the factor loadings for each item of all variables was all higher than 0.4. The detailed confirmatory factor analysis is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variable	χ^2/df	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	IFI
Leadership	1.126	0.035	0.953	0.994	0.995
LMX	1.909	0.093	0.977	0.989	0.989
Voice Behavior	5.218	0.041	0.822	0.849	0.851

5. Empirical Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 5 summarizes the mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients. It shows that both employee-oriented and task-oriented leadership styles are significantly correlated to the LMX, and the LMX is significantly correlated to both promotive and prohibitive voices.

Table 5 Correlations of Variables

	Mean	SD	Gender	Age	Edu.	Org. Type	Position	Work years	Employee-Oriented	Task-Oriented	LMX	Promotive voice	Prohibitive voice
Gender	1.54	0.501	1										
Age	1.45	0.554	-0.260**	1									
Education	1.92	0.454	-0.028	0.175	1								
Organization	1.95	0.813	0.040	0.133	-0.166	1							
Position	1.48	0.502	-0.312**	0.505**	0.245*	0.174	1						
Working years	1.62	0.712	-0.196*	0.314**	0.058	0.101	0.378**	1					
Employee-oriented	2.98	1.04	0.066	-0.090	-0.141	0.022	-0.144	0.094	1				
Task-oriented	3.09	0.874	-0.127	-0.132	-0.074	-0.008	-0.102	-0.077	-0.356**	1			
LMX	3.046	1.01	0.144	0.0250	-0.152	0.202*	-0.036	0.126	0.770**	-0.309**	1		
Promotive voice	3.03	0.919	0.084	-0.009	-0.132	0.221*	-0.009	0.207*	0.624**	-0.090	0.742**	1	
Prohibitive voice	2.97	0.797	-0.113	-0.145	-0.139	0.037	0.026	0.122	0.233*	0.009	0.213*	0.388**	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

5.2.1 Impacts of Leadership Styles on the LMX

Stepwise regression analysis was used to examine how the leadership styles affect the LMX. In Step 1 analysis, the variables of gender, age, education, organization type, position and working years were included in the regression model, but none of them had significant impacts on the LMX. In Step 2, the employee-oriented leadership style was included in the model, and it has a significant relationship with the LMX ($\beta = .765$, $p < .001$). In Step 3, the employee-oriented leadership was replaced by the task-oriented leadership into the model, and it has a significant negative relationship with the LMX, suggesting that leaders' too much emphasis on task

accomplishment was not good to form a high quality relationship between leaders and employees.

Table 6 Multiple Regression of Leaderships on the LMX

	LMX		
	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Control Variable			
Gender	0.156	0.127	0.097
Age	0.051	0.083	0.013
Education	-0.121	-0.043	-0.130
Organization type	0.165	0.151	0.174
Position	-0.072	0.048	-0.096
Working years	0.158	0.022	0.144
Leadership			
Employee-oriented		0.765***	
Task-oriented			-0.302*
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.043	0.622	0.125
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.098	0.647	0.184
<i>F</i>	1.774	25.437***	3.125*

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

5.2.2 Impacts of the LMX on Employee Voice Behaviors

(1) Impacts on promotive voice behaviors

As shown in Table 7, when the LMX was included in the regression model, the adjusted R^2 increased greatly, suggesting the LMX has a positive relationship with the promotive voice behaviors. When a higher quality LMX is formed, employees will feel low risks in voice behaviors. They intend to make more suggestions with an attempt to help the organization grow better.

Table 7 LMX Impacts on Promotive Voice Behaviors

	Promotive Voice	
	STEP1	STEP 2
Control Variable		
Gender	0.091	-0.020
Age	-0.040	-0.077
Education	-0.088	-0.002
Organization type	0.194	0.077
Position	-0.065	0.014
Working years	0.247*	0.135
Independent Variable		
LMX		0.714***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.06	0.543
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.114	0.574
<i>F</i>	2.108	18.654***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

(2) Impacts on prohibitive voice behaviors

When the LMX was introduced into the model, both R^2 and ΔR^2 were increased. As shown in Table 8, the LMX has a positive relationship with prohibitive voice. With a higher quality LMX, employees intend to suggest changes to address the problems in the organization with an attempt to make it better.

Table 8 LMX Impacts on Prohibitive Voice Behaviors

	Prohibitive Voice	
	STEP 1	STEP 2
Control Variable		-0.162
Gender	-0.128	-0.259*
Age	-0.248*	-0.097
Education	-0.124	-0.010
Organization type	0.026	0.097
Position	0.081	0.114
Working years	0.148	0.135
Independent Variable		0.219*
LMX		0.069
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.033	0.132
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.089	2.109*
<i>F</i>	1.592	

Note: * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).

5.2.3 LMX as a Mediator between the Leadership Styles and Voice Behaviors

(1) LMX as a mediator between employee-oriented leadership style and promotive voice behavior

As shown in Table 9, when the LMX was controlled, there was no significant relationship between the employee-oriented leadership and promotive voice behavior, which suggests a complete mediating role played by the LMX between these two variables. The mediating effect accounts for 91% of the total variance.

Table 9 Mediating Effects of LMX between Employee-oriented Leadership and Promotive Voice Behavior

Variable	LMX STEP 1	Promotive Voice STEP 2	Promotive Voice STEP 3	Promotive Voice STEP 4
Control Variable				
Gender	0.127	-0.020	0.068	-0.008
Age	0.083	-0.077	-0.016	-0.065
Education	-0.043	-0.002	-0.027	-0.001
Organization Type	0.151	0.077	0.184*	0.093
Position	0.048	-0.014	0.029	0.000
Working years	0.022	0.135	0.140	0.127
Independent Variable				0.142
Employee-oriented Leadership	0.765***		0.601***	0.142
Mediating Variable				
LMX		0.714***		0.600***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.622	0.543	0.415	0.546
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.647	0.574	0.454	0.581
<i>F</i>	25.437***	18.654***	11.530***	16.655***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

(2) LMX as a mediator between employee-oriented leadership style and prohibitive voice behavior

As shown in Table 10, when the LMX was controlled in Step 4, there was no significant relationship between the employee-oriented leadership and prohibitive voice behavior, which suggests a complete mediating role played by the LMX between these two variables. The mediating effect accounts for 79% of the total variance.

Table 10 Mediating Effects of LMX between Employee-oriented Leadership and Prohibitive Voice Behavior

Variable	LMX STEP 1	Prohibitive Voice STEP 2	Prohibitive Voice STEP 3	Prohibitive Voice STEP 4
Control Variable				
Gender	0.127	-0.162	-0.136	-0.152
Age	0.083	0.259*	-0.239	-0.250*
Education	-0.043	-0.097	-0.102	-0.097
Organization Type	0.151	-0.010	0.022	0.003
Position	0.048	0.097	0.115	0.109
Working years	0.022	0.114	0.111	0.108
Independent Variable				0.142
Employee-oriented Leadership	0.765***		0.212*	0.114
Mediating Variable				
LMX		0.219*		0.129*
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.622	0.069	0.068	0.065
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.647	0.132	0.131	0.137
<i>F</i>	25.437***	2.109*	2.089	1.902

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

(3) LMX as a mediator between task-oriented leadership style and promotive voice behavior

As shown in Table 11, when the LMX was controlled in Step 3, there was no significant relationship between the task-oriented leadership and promotive voice behavior, which suggests no mediating effect from the LMX.

Table 11 Mediating Effects of LMX between Task-oriented Leadership and Promotive Voice Behavior

Variable	LMX STEP 1	Promotive Voice STEP 2	Promotive Voice STEP 3	Promotive Voice STEP 4
Control Variable				
Gender	0.097	-0.020	0.075	0.001
Age	0.013	-0.077	-0.051	-0.061
Education	-0.130	-0.002	-0.091	0.008
Organization Type	0.174	0.077	0.197	0.064
Position	-0.096	-0.014	-0.072	0.001
Working years	0.144	0.135	0.244*	0.134
Independent Variable				0.142
Task-oriented Leadership	-0.302*		-0.081	0.149*
Mediating Variable				
LMX		0.714***		0.761***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.125	0.543	0.057	0.559
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.184	0.574	0.121	0.593
<i>F</i>	3.125*	18.654***	1.899	17.457***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

(4) LMX as a mediator between task-oriented leadership style and prohibitive voice behavior

As shown in Table 12, when the LMX was controlled in Step 3, there was no significant relationship between the task-oriented leadership and prohibitive voice behavior, indicating no mediating effect from the LMX.

Table 12 Mediating Effects of LMX between Task-oriented Leadership and Prohibitive Voice Behavior

Variable	LMX STEP 1	Prohibitive Voice STEP 2	Prohibitive Voice STEP 3	Prohibitive Voice STEP 4
Control Variable				
Gender	0.097	-0.162	-0.134	-0.156
Age	0.013	0.259*	-0.252*	-0.255*
Education	-0.130	-0.097	-0.124	-0.094
Organization Type	0.174	-0.010	0.027	-0.014
Position	-0.096	0.097	0.079	0.101
Working years	0.144	0.114	0.147	0.114
Independent Variable				0.142
Employee-oriented Leadership	-0.302*		-0.030	0.040
Mediating Variable				
LMX		0.219*		0.232*
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.125	0.069	0.024	0.061
<i>ΔR²</i>	0.184	0.132	0.090	0.133
<i>F</i>	3.125*	2.109*	1.365	1.847

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

In sum, the LMX does not play a mediating role between the task-oriented leadership and employee voice behaviors.

6. Discussion

6.1 Conclusion

This study took 105 New-generation employees as samples and investigated the mediating effects of the LMX between the leadership styles and employee voice behaviors. Tentatively, the following conclusions are made:

First, the employee-oriented leadership style has a positive impact on the LMX ($\beta = 0.765$, $p < 0.001$), but the task-oriented leadership style has a negative impact ($\beta = -0.302$, $p < 0.05$). Characterized by respect and care for employees, the employee-oriented leaders intend to form a high quality trust relationship with their employees. In contrast, the task-oriented leaders emphasize on task and technology but care less for employees' needs, therefore, it is less likely for them to build up a higher quality trust relationship with their employees.

Secondly, a higher quality LMX affects employees voice behaviors significantly, both the promotive ($\beta = 0.714$, $p < 0.001$) and prohibitive ($\beta = 0.219$, $p < 0.05$) voices. But the promotive voice is more likely to be encouraged than the prohibitive voice by the higher quality LMX.

Thirdly, when the mediating effects between the leadership styles and employee voice behaviors were examined, it was found that, the LMX plays a complete mediating role between the employee-oriented leadership style and employee voice, but not between the task-oriented leadership style and employee voice. Specifically, the mediating effect between the employee-oriented leadership style and the promotive voice is higher than that between the employee-oriented leadership style and the prohibitive voice.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study intends to make contributions to the advancement of leadership theories. First, it furthers the research on leadership styles. The current leadership theories depict how the employee voice behaviors are

influenced by transformational, abusive, and paternalistic leadership styles, but mainly center on the employee-oriented leadership style, with few studies on the task-oriented leadership style. Fewer studies have been made on how these two leadership orientations affect the voice behaviors. For leaders, both employees and tasks are basic targets of management. Managers intend to accomplish tasks by working with employees by effective and efficient means.

Secondly, this study examines how different leadership styles affect the New-generation employees' voice behaviors. In recent years, more and more organizations intend to learn about the New-generation employees' personalities and cultural values, and how their personalities and cultural values affect their productivity and job satisfaction (SHRM, 2004). Based on the findings in this study, though characterized by individuality, autonomy, and authority-challenging, the New-generation employees are loyal to relationships. Therefore, a high quality manager-employee relationship is more likely to be established between them and the employee-oriented leaders, which, in turn, affects the employee voice behaviors. In this regard, this study expands the studies on employees' individual behaviors.

Thirdly, previous studies have focused on promotive voice behaviors, but few on prohibitive voice. Since the nature of prohibitive voice will increase the perceived risks, employees would like to abide by the law of "Silence is gold" (Liang & Farh, 2012). But if leaders care, respect and trust their subordinates, employees would like to raise prohibitive suggestions and ideas. Therefore, this study tentatively initiates the examination on employee's prohibitive voice behaviors.

6.3 Empirical Contributions

First, in terms of employee behaviors, diversity has been a new trend in recent decades. It has been a hot topic how to manage the New-generation employees in organizational life, especially to improve these self-centered young employees' productivity through effective leadership styles. This study suggests that the employee-oriented leadership style satisfies the New-generation employees' needs for respect and care, which intends to positively affect both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors among the new-generation employees. That will be referential to the management on new-generation.

Secondly, more and more organizations have recognized the importance of employee voice behaviors, since the voices can be beneficial for the organization growth. However, it is still being explored how to motivate the employees to make suggestions. As the target of voice, leaders work closely with employees, so their leadership styles affect the LMX as well as employee voice behaviors. It is quite practical for leaders to take appropriate leadership style to encourage their employees to proactively voice.

Thirdly, the relationship is one of the most important aspects in Chinese culture, including the relationships with leaders, friends, colleagues, and family members, etc. The relationship with leaders is the most important in career development. A closer leader-employee relationship is characterized by mutual trust. Leaders will treat their subordinates as "insiders", thus provide them with more opportunities (Zheng, 1995). The closer relationship is expected to reduce the felt risks of voice behaviors among employees. The benefits enjoyed by the employees will make them feel obligated to make suggestions upward as a return. Therefore, leaders shall build up and maintain a good relationship with their employees through improving management and communication to encourage them to make more suggestions.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

There are three main limitations in this study. First, the research participants are part-time MBA students at a Chinese university and the employees in its alumni's organizations. There were 105 effective questionnaires for

data analysis. The organizations are all located in Guangdong province. Further studies are to be conducted to generalize the findings from the New-generation employees in these organizations into other areas. Second, the data in this study are one-point statistics, longitudinal data are to be collected for a higher validity. Though it was found that the LMX might be affected by the leadership styles, it might be affected by other factors. Thirdly, the leadership styles in this study are categorized into employee-oriented and task-oriented styles based on Fiedler's study (Fiedler, 1967). Hersey and Blanchard (1974) suggested a continuum of low-to-high in each style, therefore the leadership styles can be further categorized into four styles, namely, telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Researchers may investigate how these four leadership styles affect employee voice behaviors.

Future studies are expected to focus on the following three perspectives. First, this study examines the overall employee voice behaviors, not some specific members within an organization, such as the managers at different levels, which is in great need (Wang et al., 2010). Managers work directly in the production sites and know key information and issues in the operation, so they are called the real controller of the "pulse of the organizations" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 1997). It is critical to investigate their voice behaviors.

Though the current study examines both promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors, the two dimensions of voice, it didn't specify various targets of voice behaviors. Because the costs and rewards related to voice behaviors depend on whom the target is, the voice is target-sensitive in nature. Suggestions can be made upward for supervisors, as well as for peers or downward for subordinates. For different targets, the antecedents and strategies for voice behaviors will be quite different. Future studies can be focused on these different targets of voice (Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010; Morrison, 2011).

Finally, this study examined the voice behaviors of Chinese New-generation employees only. The cultural transferability of the findings is to be testified. Future studies shall investigate the New-generation employee voice behaviors within different business administration practices and cultural contexts outside China. For instance, the New-generation employees in the U.S. and Europe workforce are referred to as Generation Xers and Generation Yers (Smola & Sutton, 2002). How are their voice behaviors affected by their cultural orientations and work values? This is an important question for global organization leaders to explore.

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Appendix Survey Questionnaire

Survey

This is a study about the communication between the supervisor and employee. You are cordially invited to participate in this survey to help researchers learn more about the factors which may affect the employee's making suggestions at work. Please answer the following questions based on your real experiences. If you don't feel comfortable about any question, please feel free to leave it blank. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous, which will not have any negative impact on your academic grading or performance evaluation. Please feel free to contact Dr. Xiaoyan SU at Jinan University for any questions or concerns via tsuxyan@jnu.edu.cn. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Part I Demographics

1. Gender: A. Male B. Female
2. Age: A. 30 or below B. 31-39 C. 40 or above
3. Highest education: A. Associate degree B. Bachelor degree C. Graduate degree
4. Employment status: A. Full time B. part-time C. Unemployed (if so, please answer the following questions based on your previous employment)
5. Your position: A. Supervisor B. Employee
6. How many years have you been in this employment: A. 3 years or less B. 3-10 years C. 10 years or more
7. The most frequent way I make suggestions to my supervisor:

A. Face-to-face B. Phone call C. Text messaging D. Email E. Other, please specify: _____

Part II Your supervisor's leadership

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	S/he often helps employees					
2	S/he often spends time listening to employees' suggestions					
3	S/he is quite understanding toward employees.					
4	S/he often thinks of employees' benefits.					
5	S/he is supportive of employees' actions.					
6	S/he treats every employee equally.					
7	S/he often gets tough with employees.					
8	S/he often criticizes the employees with unsatisfactory performance.					
9	S/he often talks to employees in a commanding tone.					
10	S/he often assigns specific tasks to employees.					
11	S/he often sets rigid timeline for employees.					
12	S/he often makes explicit evaluation criteria for employees.					

Part III Supervisor-employee relationship

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
14	You are very supportive to your supervisor.					
15	Your supervisor knows well your needs and problems in your work.					
16	Your supervisor knows well your working capability.					
17	Your supervisor helps you solve your problems at work by using his power.					
18	You enjoy a harmonious relationship with your supervisor.					
19	You trust your supervisor and support his decisions.					

Part IV Statement about leadership

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
20	Supervisors don't need to talk to subordinates when they made decisions.					
21	Supervisors shall exercise their power to treat subordinates.					
22	Supervisors seldom ask for subordinates' feedback.					
23	Subordinates shall not oppose supervisors' decisions.					
24	Supervisors shall not empower subordinates for important tasks.					
25	It is quite important for subordinates to get specific working instructions and requirements.					
26	Supervisors expect subordinates to strictly follow instructions and procedures.					
27	Rules and regulations intend to tell employees what the organization expects them to do.					
28	Standardized procedures are very important for employees to complete tasks.					
29	Specific instructions are very important for employees to complete tasks.					

Part V Making suggestions

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
30	I actively think about the issues which affect the organization's development and make suggestions.					
31	I actively make suggestions on the projects which are beneficial to the organization.					
32	I often make suggestions which help improve the work procedures.					
33	I actively make constructive suggestions which help achieve the organization's objectives.					
34	I often make suggestions to improve the organization's operational efficiency.					
35	I stop my co-workers' inappropriate behaviors which may obstruct work performance.					
36	In despite of co-workers' objection, I inform my supervisors of the destructive behaviors.					
37	I dare to raise the issues which are destructive to the organization, even though other I might make others lose face.					
38	I dare to raise destructive problems in the organization, even though I might hurt the relationships with my co-workers.					
39	I actively report the coordination problems at work to supervisors.					

Great thanks for your participation!