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## Impact of Managers' Voice Solicitation on Leader-Member Exchange with the Mediating Role of Employees' Voice Behavior and Emotional Exhaustion

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**Abstract** *Employees' voice plays a vital role in enhancing organizational achievements. Despite its vitality, existing literature provides that managers usually demonstrate reduced voice solicitation. This study attempts to find the likely effects of managers' reluctance toward employees' voice. Furthermore, employees who cannot raise their voice may suffer from emotional exhaustion, which in turn can lower their perception of Leader-member exchange (LMX). The extant research was carried out on a sample of 240 respondents from telecom sector of Pakistan as manager-employee matched pairs, supports the above arguments. Based on a variance-based structural equation modelling and bootstrapping procedure, results showed that employees' voice behavior and employees' emotional exhaustion serially mediated the relationship between managers' voice solicitation and LMX. The results highlight the need to have an environment in organizations where employees' voice is not denigrated. Finally, the theoretical and managerial implications of the study were presented.*

**Key Words:** Emotional Exhaustion, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Voice Behavior, Voice Solicitation.

### Introduction

In the last two decades, the notion of employee voice has encountered notable research attention in the fields of management, industrial relations and behavioural studies. Amongst others, the focus of the above research has remained on examining the mechanisms underlying employees' opinions in organizational decisions (Kaufman, 2014). Despite extensive research on employees' voice, certain aspects related to it have been ignored, thus far. The notable one is how employee voice challenges managerial behavior. Generally, voice is considered a challenging act; therefore, it is resisted and avoided by the intended recipients, e.g., managers (Fast et al., 2014). Furthermore, voice is always perceived to be threatening by others. Hence, employees "read the wind" over periods of time, meaning thereby, they assess as to when their high-ups let them raise voice (Burriss, 2012, p. 851). Put simply, employees more often need to analyze the benefits and costs of raising the voice before speaking up (Morrison, 2011). Research has been done to find the potential antecedents as well as outcomes of employee voice; evidence regarding leader's response and employees' emotional display, however, is rarely studied (Morrison, 2011). Beukboom (2008) states that the listening behavior of a manager can have certainly called for relational implications, as it creates an atmosphere of trust and intimacy in organizations. Empirical research proves that employees' psychological well-being and personal development is linked to the positive effects of listening. However, research on the pragmatic outcomes of managers' voice solicitation and employees' voice behavior on the quality of the manager-employee relationship has been scarce (Mineyama et al., 2007).

For every organization, employees' voice is considered an important factor as it contributes to the effective functioning of the organization as well as employees performance. Managers need the information to flow from and to their employees smoothly so that work processes around them run efficiently, and potential problems are addressed effectively (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Being an important source of upward information, employees are often found hesitant and unwilling to raise the voice. This may happen due to the likelihood of facing uncalled for consequences of

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speaking up (Morrison, 2011), and hence, they tend to assess managers' voice solicitation before raising their voice. Literature still needs to address the motivational factors, which may provoke employees to withhold or express voice (Burris, 2012). Managers welcome employees' voice by not avoiding it and soliciting their input when they believe they have adequate control and can manage activities by sufficient control at work (Tangirala et al., 2019). The fragile egos of managers can be protected by avoiding employees' voice; otherwise, they feel a threat to their status (Fast et al., 2014). In the recent past, studies on employee voice relied on managers' perceptions instead of examining managers' behaviors toward employee voice (Weiss et al., 2017). Therefore, we reckon it apt to investigate what subordinates maintain about voice solicitation demonstrated by their supervisors. Furthermore, voice affects emotions is also an important link to get into consideration (Morrison, 2014). Research needs to focus on reasons that limit the opportunities to have a voice in organizations (Dundon & Gollan, 2007).

Employees may fear speaking up as they expect a negative reaction from their managers who believe that subordinates' voice is a threat and a challenge to their status quo (Burris, 2012). The extant research is a contribution to emotional exhaustion literature by studying the constructs of voice and voice solicitation, stating how reduced voice solicitation by managers affects the emotions of employees. The extant study is an addition to the literature of "LMX" by investigating how employees' voice and managers' voice solicitation can affect leader-member relationships in an organization. The research revealed that when managers listen to their subordinates, it can foster LMX (Steil & Bommelje, 2004).

This study develops and analyzes a framework using two separate mediation processes assessing the effect of voice solicitation on voice behavior of employees and employees' emotional exhaustion to reveal it more vigorously how it leads to LMX. Voice solicitation is a construct that affects managers' relationship with their subordinates. This study is novel in this context because managers' voice solicitation behavior has been studied rarely in literature and in Pakistani context has not been examined before.

## Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### Theory

#### Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)

This theory deals with emotional exhaustion and provides an understanding of resource loss accompanied because of exhaustion. This theory posits that when an individual has a threat of losing resources, or he/she actually encounters some resource loss, then emotional exhaustion occurs that leads to adverse effects on individuals and organizations (Hobfoll, 1989, 2018). The present study is grounded in COR theory claiming that when employees perceive their managers to be avoiding their voices by showing reduced voice solicitation, they withhold their voices in order to avoid negative consequences, which creates emotional exhaustion in employees disturbing their exchange relations with their managers.

#### Managers' Voice Solicitation and LMX

Literature suggests that supervisory support helps employees increase their task-related outcomes and reduce negative outcomes like stress (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Such employees receive certain socio-emotional resources from their supervisors (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Specifically, when managers positively treat their employees and do not ignore them, their employees feel their esteem needs to be fulfilled, and thus, they feel good about their work environment (Blader & Tyler, 2009). Hence, for the betterment of organization, managers are encouraged to seek their employees to speak up, as creative ideas can lead to positive results (Edmondson, 2003). Employee voice is mainly controlled by managers, which refers to have adequate control to let employees speak (Edmondson, 2008). Research indicated that managers usually avoid the voice of employees; it means show reduced voice solicitation (Detert & Trevino, 2010). Voice is normally raised to bring an organizational change; therefore, managers are often reluctant to hear it as they feel it a threat to their status quo (Bolino et al., 2004).

Voice solicitation is the encouragement of ideas from employees to bring changes at the workplace (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). But management usually avoids solicitation because of maintaining a status quo which they have maintained according to their choice as voice of employees can be disruptive to them. When managers solicit employees' voice, it makes the organizational environment a safe and secure place to present their opinions and employees feel psychologically safe (Ashford et al., 2009). It motivates the employees to perform well and achieve organizational objectives (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Reduced voice solicitation can adversely affect the mutual exchanges of employees with respective supervisors (Gomez et al., 2010). When employees'

voice is not entertained, it affects the respect and trust in the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Workers experiencing voice receptive behavior of their managers develop a good relationship with their managers, which ultimately affects their performance (Platow et al., 2006). Therefore, we can say that the voice solicitation behavior of managers affects the Leader-member exchange association.

H1: Managers' Voice Solicitation behavior is positively related to the quality of Leader-Member Exchange relationship.

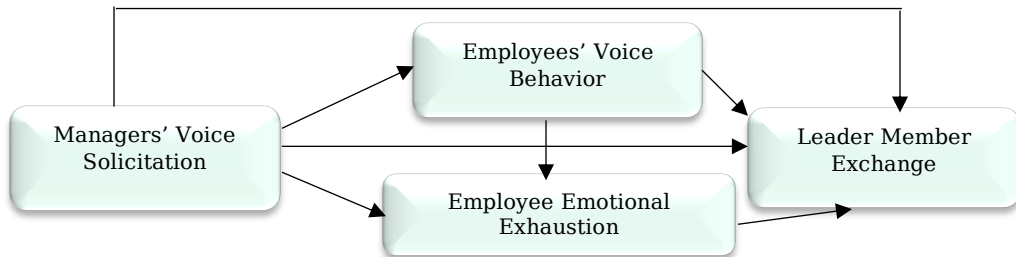


Figure 1

## The Mechanism behind Managers' Voice Solicitation and LMX

### Employee Voice Behavior as a Single Mediator

Despite certain benefits associated with employees' voice, managers tend to feel reluctant to solicit employee voice and denigrate their ideas while reacting defensively (McClellan et al., 2013; Kappler, 1980). Reason being, managers, consider employee voice a challenge to the status quo (Burris, 2012). Moreover, sometimes managers deem listening to employees their incompetence and inability to make managerial decisions (Fast & Chen, 2009). Hence, such managers protect themselves by avoiding employee voice. Some studies suggest that managers often feel a threat of criticism if they are receptive to their employees' voice, especially in terms of being considered powerless in the eyes of their peers (Burris, 2012; Fast et al., 2014). Thus, they try to protect their ego by avoiding the subordinates' voice (Fast et al., 2014). Research indicated that leaders could have a critical role in influencing employees' voice behavior and that role can alter their voice to a great extent (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

Although employees' voice has the potential to contribute to organizational performance (Edmondson, 2003), most employees observe silence and withhold even constructive suggestions (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been proved empirically that employees well-being is associated with their voice behavior, and it complements their self-beliefs (Bono & Judge, 2003). Negativity in employees may occur because of withholding voice (Cha & Edmondson, 2006). Employees' performance evaluation seemed to be higher when they were allowed to voice (Thompson, 2003). We, therefore, propose that when employees' voice is solicited, it leads to a good quality relationship in organizations. LMX is also related to the employees' independence for sharing information that carries risk in itself in terms of uncertainty and negative consequences (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). Initially, LMX was mentioned as "Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL)" (Cashman & Graen, 1975). The basic theme of this premise is based on the notion that the leader treats each individual differently based on the quality of the relationship each follower has with that leader (Dansereau, 1975). This dyadic combination matures over a period through a variety of roles, which both the dyad members play in due course, for example, role creating, and role-taking (Matta et al., 2015). Sometimes this dyadic relationship matures successfully in the form of trust, mutual respect and loyalty, but sometimes dyads get limited to the only formal requirement of the job (Martin et al., 2015).

Thus, building on the above, we hypothesize that:

H2: Managers' voice solicitation positively affects employees' voice behavior.

H2a: Employees' voice behavior will mediate the relationship between managers' voice solicitation and LMX.

### Emotional Exhaustion as a Single Mediator

A related issue to voice is emotional exhaustion (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). That refers to "the extent that individuals feel emotionally overextended and drained by their work" (Maslach, 1981, p.101). The present study points to the relationship of voice with emotional exhaustion, as speaking

up can be risky and may result in depletion of resources that can be at the personal expense of employees.

When employees perceive their managers to be less supportive and approachable in terms of listening to their views, then their tendency to get emotionally exhausted increases ([Ashford et al., 2009](#)). Workers may avoid speaking up as they feel it unsafe as well as ineffective to speak to those who denigrate their voice and thus, they refrain themselves from sharing even potentially important information and therefore this makes them emotionally hurt at the workplace (Cooper & Kustatcher, 2006).

(COR) assumption purports that “people strive to obtain, retain and protect those resources which they value” ([Hobfoll, 1989, p.517](#)). Therefore, based on COR theory, it is suggested that when employees cannot have said, they get emotionally exhausted. When employees are emotionally exhausted, they are less expected to maintain the quality of relationships with others, and their managers are no exception. LMX is an important approach in the field of leadership, which examines the level of association between a manager and his or her subordinate ([Dansereau & Yammarino, 2005](#)).

Several studies indicated that employees could perform better and achieve difficult tasks while being focused on their goals. It happens especially when they experience low levels of emotional exhaustion ([Graen & Scandura, 1987](#)) as they can manage and utilize their productive resources, compared to those who experience high levels of emotional exhaustion—thereby wasting their energies and resources, which they have lost in encountering emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989, 2018). Because of this, both managers and employees would fail in the successful development of LMX.

Therefore, we propose that:

H3: Employee voice behavior is negatively related to employee emotional exhaustion.

H3a: Emotional exhaustion negatively affects LMX.

H3b: Employee emotional exhaustion will mediate the relationship between managers’ voice solicitation and LMX.

### Serial Mediation of Employees’ Voice Behavior and Emotional Exhaustion

Although managers’ voice solicitation positively relates to employee outcomes, yet how managers’ voice solicitation affects the relationship with employees is to be discovered. To answer this, we assess the association of managers’ voice solicitation and LMX focusing on employee voice behavior and employee emotional exhaustion as mechanism laying the above relationship. Based on COR theory, we propose that being denigrated by supervisors, employees are less likely to feel LMX of high quality, especially due to decrease in their voice behavior and subsequent increase in their emotional exhaustion.

Individuals may face forfeiture materially and socially in response of raising voice ([Wilkinson et al., 2018](#)). Voice is usually considered to be a negative phenomenon even the purpose behind it is positive. Therefore, authority figures in organizations normally dislike their subordinates’ voice (LePine & [Van Dyne, 1998](#)). It has been demonstrated that employees are more engaged in their organizations when they can speak up ([Ruck & Welch, 2012](#)). When employees cannot speak up, they get dissatisfied with their jobs ([Knoll & van Dick, 2013](#)), and thus, their commitment reduces ([Morrison, 2011](#)). Several studies have indicated that employees can perform better and achieve difficult tasks while being focused on their goals when they experience low levels of emotional exhaustion ([Graen & Scandura, 1987](#)). This is because, with low emotional exhaustion, they can manage and utilize their productive resources well (Hobfoll, 1989). As a result, such employees experience good working relationships at the workplace, especially with their managers. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H4: Employees’ voice behavior and emotional exhaustion will serially mediate the association between managers’ voice solicitation and LMX.

## Method

### Sample

Data was gathered from a sample of 240 respondents consisting of matched pair dyads having managers and their respective employees from 30 regional offices of telecom sector of Pakistan having ( $M_{age} = 39$ ; male = 70%, female = 30%). Based on convenience sampling technique, 400 questionnaires were distributed by self-administration, email, as well as via WhatsApp, out of which 268 were received, usable questionnaires were 240.

**Measures**

We measured voice solicitation behavior by using a four-item scale of voice solicitation (Barte l, Burris & Fast, 2014). Response categories ranged from 1 = never to 5 = always. Employee voice behavior was measured by using (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998) 6 item scale, which ranged from [1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree]. Emotional exhaustion was measured by using a nine-item scale developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) which ranged from [1=Strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree]. LMX was scaled by using a 7-item measure developed by Scandura & Graen (1984.) Response categories ranged from [1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree].

**Analysis and Results**

Upon initial analysis of descriptive statistics and normal Q-Q plots and histograms, it revealed that our data were non-normally distributed. Thus, we used the variance-based structural equation modelling approach using WarpPLS 7. Measurement and structural models were estimated. PLS-SEM approach is used by the researcher as the sample size is relatively small and the data available is neither perfectly nor approximately normally distributed (Henseler et al., 2014). While employing reflective measurement, we analyzed Tenenhaus goodness of fit (GoF = AVE × R<sup>2</sup>). Results revealed GoF = 0.44, indicating a good fit of our model, as GoF ≥ 0.10, 0.25, and 0.36 is considered low, moderate, and high respectively. These results are substantiated by some additional indices, i.e., “standardized root mean square residual” (SRMR = 0.08; Benchmark is ≤ 1.00), Standardized mean absolute residual (SMAR = 0.07; ≤ 1.00), R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR = 0.94; ≥ 0.90). The researcher employed ex-ante as well as ex-post approach to avoid common method and source error (Chang et al., 2019; Podsakoff et al., 2003). We designed the questionnaire by taking great care so that responses from different sources were elicited in such a way employees provided a rating for their behavior, emotional exhaustion and their respective managers' voice solicitation, and LMX data was provided by managers. Sufficient time was given to respondents to complete the questionnaires. In applying ex-post approach, certain statistical techniques were used to avoid CMB. For an exploration of items, Harman's single factor test was conducted, the result of which indicated 18% estimated variance, which is quite below the threshold limit that is 50%.

As this method identifies inflation or deflation of path coefficients, therefore (VIF) variance inflation factor for each indicator and the associated constructs were estimated. In PLS-SEM, to counter the effect of Common Method Variance, VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values of the inner model are tested, which should be less than 3.3 (Kock, 2015). Table 1 shows clearly that our VIF values for all the constructs are lower than 3.3; therefore, the condition to show that data is free from common method bias is fulfilled. All indicators showed satisfactory VIF values ranging between 1.1 to 2.7. “Average block variance inflation factor (AVIF)” and “average full collinearity VIF” (AFVIF) were also estimated to be ideal as they are lower than 3.3, that is a cutoff point, being AVIF = 1.30 and AFVIF = 1.47. Regarding the internal validity of our results pertaining to all endogenous variables, the estimates of predictive relevance revealed acceptable values, i.e., Q<sup>2</sup> ≠ 0 (Kock, 2018).

**Table 1.** Latent Variable Estimates

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	ρ <sub>c</sub>	α	AVE	VIF
Managers' voice Solicitation	—	—	0.94	0.93	0.84	1.56
Employees' voice Behavior	0.34	0.33	0.95	0.94	0.85	1.79
Employees' emotional Exhaustion	0.31	0.28	0.94	0.92	0.86	1.29
Employees' LMX	0.20	0.16	0.93	0.89	0.81	1.22

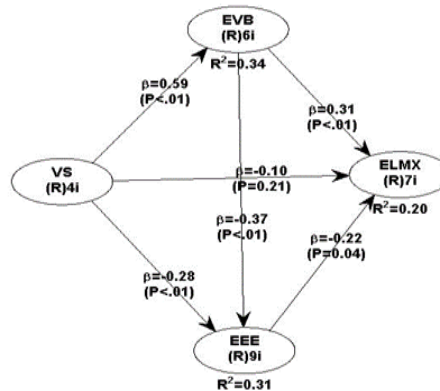
ρ<sub>c</sub> = Composite Reliability; α = Cronbach's alpha; AVE = Average Variances Extracted; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor (Full collinearity); Q<sup>2</sup> = Predictive Relevance

Another important psychometric property is to establish discriminant validity. There are two techniques to measure the models' discriminant validity. Square roots of AVE must be higher than all the correlational values among the variables, and (Table 3) shows these values diagonally. The second method used is the “Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations” (HTMT) that must be lower than 0.85 (Ringle et al., 2014). Our proposed model HTMT values fall in an acceptable range <0.85, which comply with the condition of discriminant constructs (see Table 2 for details).

**Table 2:** HTMT ratios (Discriminant Validity)

Variables	VS	EVB	EEE
EVB	0.61		
EEE	0.27	0.41	
LMX	0.08	0.31	0.36

Note: VS = Voice Solicitation, EVB= Employees' Voice Behavior, EEE= Employees' Emotional Exhaustion, LMX= Leader-Member Exchange

**Figure 2**

## Hypotheses Testing

(Table 3) presents descriptive statistics and correlation. The values of correlation coefficients provide initial support for all of the hypothesized relationships. That is there is a positive as well as significant association between managers' voice solicitation and LMX ( $r = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), managers' voice solicitation and employee voice behavior ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and negative significant relationship of voice solicitation with emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, employee voice behavior has negative significant relationship with employee emotional exhaustion ( $r = -0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and positive significant relationship with LMX ( $r = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, emotional exhaustion has negative significant relationship with LMX ( $r = -0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, we tested for H1 by regression analysis. As, H1 proposes the positive association between Managers' voice solicitation behavior and Leader-member exchange. The results show that managers' voice solicitation positively predicts the LMX,  $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $t = 2.43$ ,  $p < 0.01$  ( $R^2 = 0.16$ ,  $F(1, 119) = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Figure 2. shows, H2 stating the positive link between managers' voice solicitation and employee voice behavior is supported ( $\beta = 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). H3 stating the negative relationship between employees' voice behavior and their emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -0.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is supported. Hypothesis 3a stating the negative relationship between employees' emotional exhaustion and LMX ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is supported.

For mediation analysis, Preacher and Hayes' (2017) process macro having a bootstrapping procedure, 5000 iterations, bias-corrected at 95% Confidence Interval was applied. H2a shows simple mediation effect of employees' voice behavior and LMX. Results shown in Table 4, model 1, show that managers' voice solicitation behavior positively and significantly predicted the employees' voice behavior (path *a*) and LMX (path *c*). Employee voice behavior is found to have a significant positive effect on LMX (path *b*). Moreover, after controlling for employees' voice behavior, the direct impact of managers' voice solicitation on LMX was reduced and became insignificant (path *c'*). This refers to mediation. The confidence intervals also show the significant indirect effect indicating mediation process ( $B = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.06 ; 0.46]$ ). Therefore, H2a is supported.

H3b refers to the simple mediation effect of employees' emotional exhaustion between managers' voice solicitation behavior and LMX relationship. Results shown in Table 5, Model 2, show that Managers' voice solicitation has a significant negative effect on employees' emotional exhaustion (path *a*) and significant positive with LMX (path *c*). Emotional exhaustion has a

significant negative effect on LMX (path *b*). Moreover, after controlling for employees' emotional exhaustion, the direct effect of managers' voice solicitation on LMX was reduced but became insignificant (path *c'*). Furthermore, the confidence intervals revealed the significant indirect effect providing support for mediation ( $B = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.11; 0.22]$ ). Therefore, *H3b* is supported.

*H4* proposed the multiple-step mediation consisting of two mediators, being mediator 1 (Employees' voice behavior) and mediator 2 (Employees' emotional exhaustion), on the relationship of Managers' voice solicitation behavior and LMX. Results presented in Table 6, Model 3, indicate that Managers' voice solicitation has a significant positive effect on Employees' voice behavior (path *a*<sub>1</sub>). For the second mediator, results indicate a significant negative effect of managers' voice solicitation on employees' emotional exhaustion (path *a*<sub>2</sub>) and on LMX positive significant effect of managers' voice solicitation behavior (path *c*). Employees' voice behavior has a significant negative effect on Employees' emotional exhaustion (path *a*<sub>3</sub>). Employee voice behavior has a positive significant direct effect on LMX (path *b*<sub>1</sub>), whereas, employee emotional exhaustion has a negative significant direct effect on LMX (path *b*<sub>2</sub>). Results of Model 3 further indicate that by the inclusion of employee voice behavior and emotional exhaustion in the model, the effect of managers' voice solicitation on LMX is reduced and became insignificant (path *c'*). The serial mediation analysis performed by bootstrapping analysis indicated that the indirect effect of managers' voice solicitation on LMX via sequential mediation of employees' voice behavior and employees' emotional exhaustion is positive significant, that is  $B = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.002; 0.186]$ . The total indirect effect of managers' voice solicitation on LMX via employee voice behavior and emotional exhaustion is positive significant,  $B = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $CI_{95\%} [0.06; 0.48]$ . Hence, *H4* is supported.

**Table 3.** Mean, Standard Deviation, Inter-correlations and Average Variance Extracted

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Managers' voice Solicitation	2.99	1.08	0.91			
Employees' voice Behavior	3.33	1.08	0.58***	0.92		
Employees' emotional Exhaustion	2.61	1.16	-0.26**	-0.40***	0.93	
Leader-Member Exchange LMX	3.44	0.98	0.04*	0.30***	-0.35***	0.90

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ,  $\sqrt{AVE}$  in bold face are shown on diagonal.

**Table 4.** Simple Mediation Results

Model 1				
VS → EVB → LMX (IV → M <sub>1</sub> → DV)				
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>CI</i> <sub>95%</sub>	
<i>Direct / Total Effects</i>				
Path <i>a</i> (Direct effect of VS on EVB)	.34(.10)	5.59***		
Path <i>b</i> (Direct effect of EVB on LMX)	.17(.11)	3.55***		
Path <i>c</i> (Total effect of VS on LMX)	.08(.11)	2.43***		
Path <i>c'</i> (Direct effect of VS on LMX, controlling EVB)	.04(.10)	-1.30 <sup>ns</sup>		
<i>Indirect Effects</i>				
EVB	.22(.10)		[0.06; 0.46]	

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , *ns*=not significant,  $N=240$ ,  $CI_{95\%}$ = Confidence Interval at 95%, VS=Voice Solicitation, EVB= Employee Voice Behavior, LMX=Leader-Member Exchange.

**Table 5.** Simple mediation results

Model 2				
VS → EEE → LMX (IV → M <sub>2</sub> → DV)				
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>CI</i> <sub>95%</sub>	
<i>Direct / Total Effects</i>				
Path <i>a</i> (Direct effect of VS on EEE)	.19(.11)	-4.00***		
Path <i>b</i> (Direct effect of EEE on LMX)	.14(.11)	-3.13***		
Path <i>c</i> (Total effect of VS on LMX)	.08(.11)	2.43***		
Path <i>c'</i> (Direct effect of VS on LMX, controlling EEE)	.04(.12)	-1.16 <sup>ns</sup>		
<i>Indirect Effects</i>				
EEE	.08(.05)		[0.11 ;0.22]	

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , *ns*=not significant,  $N=240$ ,  $CI_{95\%}$ = Confidence Interval at 95%, VS=Voice Solicitation, EEE=Employee Emotional Exhaustion, LMX=Leader-Member Exchange

**Table 6:** Multiple step mediation results

Model 3 VS→EVB→EEE→LMX			
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>t</i>	CI <sub>95%</sub>
<i>Direct / Total Effects</i>			
Path <i>a</i> <sub>1</sub> (Direct effect of VS on EVB)	.34(.10)	5.59***	
Path <i>a</i> <sub>2</sub> (Direct effect of VS on EEE)	.12(.11)	-2.39**	
Path <i>a</i> <sub>3</sub> (Direct effect of EVB on EEE)	.18(.11)	-3.25***	
Path <i>b</i> <sub>1</sub> (Direct effect of EVB on LMX)	.13(.11)	2.64***	
Path <i>b</i> <sub>2</sub> (Direct effect of EEE on LMX)	.09(.12)	-1.98*	
Path <i>c</i> (Total effect of VS on LMX)	.08(.11)	2.43***	
Path <i>c'</i> (Total effect of VS on LMX, controlling for EVB and EEE)	.02(.12)	-.81 <sup>ns</sup>	
<i>Indirect Effects</i>			
Total	.23(.10)		[.061;.486]
EVB	.16(.10)		[-.001;.40]
EEE	.01(.04)		[-.073;.12]
EVB & EEE	.05(.04)		[-.002;.186]

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , ns=not significant,  $N=240$ , CI<sub>95%</sub>= Confidence Interval at 95%, VS=Voice Solicitation, VB= Voice Behavior, EEE=Employee Emotional Exhaustion, LMX=Leader-Member Exchange

## Discussion

Findings of our study proved that Managers' voice solicitation positively affects LMX, which supports our hypothesis that managers' voice solicitation is positively related to LMX. Past studies have proved that successful development of LMX relies more on managers' attitude as compared to employees (Ali et al. 2018). As was expected, employee voice behavior and employee emotional exhaustion fully and sequentially mediated this positive relationship. As shown by the results in Table 6 managers' voice solicitation significantly increases employees' voice behavior which decreased Emotional exhaustion of employees. This decreased level of emotional exhaustion leads to a good quality LMX relationship between a manager and his/her subordinate. Empirical research already proved that positivity in emotions and a stable mindset could create positive outcomes and vice versa (Schaufelli & Bakker, 2004). Lastly, analysis for sequential mediation shows that Employees' voice behavior and Employee Emotionally exhausted state sequentially mediated the association between Managers' voice solicitation and "LMX".

Overall, this study results shed light on the vitality of Managers' behavior towards employees' voice, which they can anticipate before speaking up by the attitude of managers, portrayed in front of their employees. Therefore, working only on the Employee' voice is not enough; organizations need to have interventions to make their managers more consultative as well as open to the voice of their employees.

## Implications and Future Research Directions

In line with past studies, this study bears some workable implications for the organizations. It is highly recommended for organizations to create an environment of autonomy for individuals where they can decide upon the ways to perform their work-related activities/tasks. For this management of organizations need to design a training program that can develop the required skills of individuals (Dedahanov et al. 2016). This study can serve as an intervention to assess the role of managers by being supportive, which may result in managers' positive responsiveness towards employee voice. Our research can also contribute to leadership literature by developing a connection between the style of the leader and its consequences on employee voice regarding the solicitation by manager. Due to highly competitive work environments, today's organizations face a great deal of challenge to manage their human capital. One very important aspect in this regard is to develop a high degree of LMX between leader and follower for the prosperity of organization. This study is novel in this context because managers' voice solicitation behavior has been studied rarely in literature and in Pakistani context has not been examined before. Reduced Voice solicitation can decline the healthy culture of an organization which consequently damages employees' performance and work engagement. Therefore, it is required to research the magnitude to which managers can solicit voice. Managers' voice solicitation is a rarely studied concept, therefore in future by focusing on some antecedents of voice solicitation and some moderating variables can be an addition to the literature



## **Conclusion**

Realizing the importance of employees' voice, managers' receptiveness towards voice is an important mechanism. Employees generally do not speak up, sensing it a risky attempt because they have a perception of negative consequences based on the aversive behavior of their managers. It is quite unfortunate for all involved in organizations, that voice of employees is usually denigrated. There is a dire need of developing strategies in organizations that restrict stifling employees' voice by ensuring the solicitation of voice by the managers. It will lead to the healthy culture of the organizations resulting in positive employee and organizational outcomes. Voice aversion can decline the healthy culture of an organization which consequently damages employees' performance and work engagement. Therefore, more studies are required to find the extent to which managers can solicit voice and reduce their aversive behavior to produce positive outcomes such as team effectiveness, innovation and employee engagement, which ultimately affect organizational performance.

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