

Research Findings One-Pager



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Project Title: Leader Construal Level and Employee Voice: A Future Temporal Focus Perspective
Date: February 15, 2024

Research Question: Does leader construal level predict employee promotive and prohibitive voice? Does leader future temporal perspective and employee future temporal perspective mediate the relation between leader construal level and employee voice?

Definition of Key Terms: *Construal level* represents individual differences in the extent to which a person chronically represents objects and events in terms of abstract and decontextualized elements or in terms of the more concrete contextualized elements. People whose mental representations lie on the abstract end of the continuum are characterized as high-level construers and those whose mental representations lie on the concrete end of the continuum are seen as low-level construers. *Future temporal focus* is defined as the extent to which a person orients their attention to the future or cares about the future. *Employee promotive voice* is the extent to which an employee speaks up to improve organizational practices. *Employee prohibitive voice* is the extent to which an employee speaks up against ongoing practices, policies, and processes. Both promotive and prohibitive voice are intended to benefit the organization and improve its functioning.

Research Methods: A three wave field survey was conducted among working adults. Data was obtained from 166 supervisors and 826 subordinates from various organizations in China.

Key Findings: Supervisor construal level predicts employee voice, such that when supervisors chronically construe information using higher level construals their subordinates provide greater promotive and prohibitive voice. Furthermore, supervisor temporal perspective and employee temporal perspective mediate the relation between supervisor construal level and employee voice, such that supervisors who construe information at higher levels are more future focused and promote a long-term perspective in their employees, enabling them to speak up even in situations when speaking up can be costly. Employee higher level construal is predictive of employee future focus as well as employee voice. However, we do not find any evidence to indicate that supervisor construal level predicts employee construal level, indicating that both supervisor and employee construal level predict employee voice through separate pathways.

Implications for Theory: The study aligns with recent calls by construal level theory researchers to examine how construal level differences impact social behavior and communication with others. Furthermore, by introducing future temporal focus as a mediator in the construal level-voice behavior linkages, the study enhances the explanatory power of construal level theory and its impact on voice. The study also extends voice literature by identifying leader's and employees' construal level and

future focus as an important individual difference-related antecedent that promotes promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors.

Social Significance: Recruiting and training leaders and employees to consider a longer temporal perspective will enable employees to speak up. Organizational practitioners can engender higher level construal and longer temporal perspectives among employees through leader abstract communication, symbols reinforcing broader purposes, and a culture encouraging a focus on long term impact of one's actions. Furthermore, leaders can be trained to effectively adopt the level of abstraction in their communication to promote higher-level or lower-level mindset among their employees depending on the contextual needs.

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