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The role of supervisors on employees' voice behavior

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing on social learning theory and social information processing theory, the purpose of this study is to examine how perceived supervisor's voice behavior relates to employees' own voice behavior both directly and indirectly through trust in supervisor. In particular, this study also investigates the moderating role of gender in the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior. Further, this study proposes that gender moderates the indirect effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee voice behavior via trust in supervisor.

Design/methodology/approach – The proposed hypothesis was tested by using hierarchical regression analyses and Hayes' PROCESS macro.

Findings – The results show that perceived supervisor's voice behavior is positively related to an employee's own voice behavior and trust in supervisors. In particular, trust in supervisors mediates the relationship between perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee's own voice behavior. Additionally, the relationship between trust in supervisor and employees' voice behavior was stronger for female employees.

Originality/value – The current study investigates employees' perception of immediate supervisor's voice behavior that encourages employees to speak up, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the factors that facilitate employee voice behavior. In particular, this study advances the understanding of how and why employees' perception of supervisors' voice behavior relates to employees' voice behavior by examining the mediating and moderating factors.

Keywords Gender, Trust in supervisor, Employee voice behaviour, Supervisors' voice behaviour

Paper type Research paper

In today's business environment, employee voice is considered a key component for enhancing organizational competitiveness, since it brings innovative ideas to the fore, enables error correction and improves competitive advantage (Burris, 2012; Detert and Edmondson, 2011; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Liang *et al.*, 2012; Morrison, 2011). In addition to organizational benefits, employee voice behavior also results in higher performance appraisals (Ng and Feldman, 2012) and has a positive consequence on career growth (Wang *et al.*, 2014). However, despite the benefits, employees usually perceive voice behavior as risky. Prior research has shown that employees are not willing to speak out at the workplace because of the fear of being viewed negatively and damaging social relationships with others (Milliken *et al.*, 2003). In particular, employees avoid voice that is directed toward supervisors, because supervisors typically have power over employees' resources and career outcomes (Gao *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, how employees perceive their supervisors is critically important for encouraging or hindering employees' own voice behavior.

Building on social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), this study suggests that an employee's perception of their immediate supervisor's voice behavior is positively associated with the employee's own voice behavior. That is, when employees perceive their immediate supervisors to be engaged in voice behaviors with leaders at higher levels of the hierarchy, they may be more willing to engage in voice behavior with their immediate supervisors. In addition to the direct impact of a supervisor's voice behavior, this study also proposes that perceived supervisor's voice behavior affects employees' voice behavior through the mediating factor of trust in supervisor. Despite well-established literature on employee voice behavior,

relatively limited research has examined the relationship between perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior. In particular, less is known about the underlying mechanisms through which supervisor's voice behavior influences employees' voice behavior. Thus, this study advances the understanding of how and why employees' perception of supervisor's voice behavior relates to employees' voice behavior by examining the mediating factor of trust in supervisor.

Further, to provide a deeper understanding of the context of voice behavior, this study proposes that gender plays a moderating role in the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior. Employee gender was considered a distinct factor that influenced employee voice behavior in the workplace (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Wang *et al.*, 2014). Specifically, previous research has shown that the patterns of male vs female employee voice behaviors differ in the workplace (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). Speaking up in the workplace is perceived as being more acceptable for males than females, and women are less likely to engage in voice behaviors that challenge the status quo. Therefore, trust in one's supervisor may have a greater impact on females than males with respect to employees being willing to speak up to their supervisors. More specifically, compared to male employees, female employees engage more actively in voice behavior when they have higher levels of trust in their supervisor. By exploring the role of gender in voice behavior, this study provides insight into the complex interplay between trust in one's supervisor, gender and employee voice behavior in the workplace.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior

Drawing on social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), this study proposes that perceived supervisor's voice behavior has an influence on employees' own voice behavior. Social learning theory posits that employees learn appropriate behaviors by experiencing and observing their supervisors, and employees tend to emulate this behavior (Bandura, 1986). Supervisors often have higher levels of status and power within organizations, and thus are influential sources of information for employees regarding what behaviors are important and appropriate at work. Therefore, employees tend to emulate their leaders' behavior to attain similarly positive outcomes of leaders (Bandura, 1986). In a similar vein, if employees observe their immediate supervisors actively voicing constructive opinions and ideas to higher level leaders, they may emulate those patterns in their own voice behavior.

Research on social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) provides another theoretical foundation for understanding how perceived supervisor's voice behavior might affect employees' own voice behavior. The social information processing theory suggests that individuals use information from the immediate work context as social cues to interpret events, and develop expectations about appropriate attitudes and behaviors (Weick *et al.*, 2005). According to social information processing theory, supervisors' behaviors provide direct and indirect social cues to their employees that help employees form attitudes and behavioral intentions. Thus, perceived supervisor's voice behavior toward higher level leaders indirectly informs employees what is expected from them and what is valued in the organization, since the behavior of the supervisor is often seen as conveying the expectations and intended norms of the organization. Accordingly, perceiving their supervisor's voice behavior may increase an employee's likelihood of engaging in their own voice behavior.

Empirical studies have shown that immediate supervisors' behaviors and attitudes influence employees' behaviors and attitudes (Bommer *et al.*, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2005). For example, several researchers have found that vicarious learning by observing leaders'

behaviors plays a key role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of followers (Manz and Sims, 1980; Treviño and Brown, 2005). In addition, previous studies have indicated that leaders' ethical behavior directly influences employees' ethical behavior (Brown *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, witnessing others engaging in citizenship behavior has been argued to increase an individual's citizenship behavior (Bommer *et al.*, 2003). Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence, this study hypothesizes the following:

H1. Perceived supervisor's voice behavior is positively related to employee voice behavior.

Perceived supervisor's voice behavior and trust in supervisor
In general, trust refers to the extent to which people are willing to rely upon others and make themselves vulnerable to them (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). To date, numerous studies have revealed that greater employee trust in their leaders leads to favorable work outcomes, such as more cooperation, better organizational citizenship behaviors, enhanced group performance and improved organizational performance (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; McAllister, 1995). Given the importance of trust in leaders in relation to organizational effectiveness, many researchers have attempted to identify the key determinants of trust in leaders within organizations (for a recent meta-analysis, see Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). In particular, researchers have reported that individual perceptions of leaders' behaviors and attitudes play an important role in building trust in leaders (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002).

Drawing on the social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), this study proposes that a supervisor's voice behavior provides significant social cues relating to the supervisor's competence and ability that increases employee trust in the supervisor. Since supervisors who actively speak up to provide new suggestions and ideas about work-related issues can be considered as competent and reliable leaders, their voice behavior is an important clue for getting employees to build their trust in supervisors. Even though there are no empirical studies examining the role of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employees' trust in the supervisor, previous research has indicated that supervisors' perceived behaviors, such as ethical behavior and organizational citizenship behavior, are positively related to employees' trust in supervisors (Yaffe and Kark, 2011). Thus, this study proposes that perceived supervisor's voice behavior will be positively related to employees' trust in supervisors:

H2. Perceived supervisor's voice behavior is positively related to employees' trust in their supervisor.

The mediating role of trust in supervisor on the relationship between perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employees' voice behavior
Due to supervisors' power and the risks associated with employees' voice behavior, trust in supervisor may play a decisive role in employees' decisions to voice their opinions (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). That is because, trust allows individuals to accept vulnerability to others and thus promote risk-taking behaviors such as employees' voice behavior (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). Thus, employees who have more trust in their supervisors are likely to feel safer and more comfortable about the ways in which the supervisor will respond to their voice behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will actually express their opinions and ideas about workplace issues. However, if employees have little trust in their supervisors, they may believe that speaking up about their concerns and suggestions about critical work issues is too risky, which may lead them to choose to remain silent on the subject. Some empirical studies have indicated that trust in organizations is positively associated with employees' voice behavior (Gao *et al.*, 2011; Ng and Feldman, 2013; Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003).

Given the relationship between perceived supervisors' voice behavior, trust in supervisors and employees' voice behavior, this study suggests the following:

H3. Trust in supervisor mediates the relationship between perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior.

The moderating role of gender in the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior

Based on gender role theory (Eagly and Wood, 1991), this study proposes that gender may moderate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior. Gender role theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others using gender identities, which describes what is typical for each sex and what is desirable and admirable for each sex. People rely on these gender roles for their understanding of what behaviors are acceptable for their gender. More specifically, previous research on traditional gender roles suggests that, compared to males, females are socialized to be more nurturing and communal, socially sensitive and empathic in their interpersonal interactions (Van der Graaff *et al.*, 2014).

With regard to employee voice behavior, some research works have shown that the expression of voice is associated more with male gender roles than female (Kidder, 2002). In addition, males are perceived as more assertive and as being more outspoken by observers (Eagly *et al.*, 1995). Because females place a greater value on social relationships and harmony in the workplace, they are less likely to engage in behaviors that disrupt the status quo or argue for changes that might upset colleagues and supervisors. Since women who speak up for themselves can be viewed as being too assertive or too forward, females may be more sensitive to the risks associated with speaking up. Empirical evidence has shown that male employees are rated more likely to engage in voice behavior than female employees (Farrell and Finkelstein, 2007).

Accordingly, trust in supervisor may have a stronger impact on female employees than male employees. In other words, female employees are able to more actively engage in speaking up in their organizations only when they have a higher level of trust in their supervisor; otherwise, the behavior is considered too risky for them. However, compared to female employees, the impact of trust in supervisor may be weaker for male employees than female employees, since they might assume that the expression of voice is associated more with the male gender; therefore, having trust in supervisor may not be the critical factor that encourages them to speak up. Some studies have shown that gender influences trusting behavior and trustworthiness (Amin *et al.*, 2015; Buchan *et al.*, 2008). That is, the relationship between trust in supervisor and voice behavior will be stronger for female employees than male employees. Thus, this study proposes the following:

H4. Gender will moderate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior, which will be stronger for women than men.

Combining *H3* and *H4*, this study proposes that gender may moderate the indirect effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee voice behavior via trust in supervisor. The above arguments represent that employees' perception of supervisors' voice behavior will increase their trust in supervisor thereby, encouraging them to be more actively engaged in their own voice behavior. In particular, it is proposed that the relationship between trust in supervisor and voice behavior is stronger for female employees than male employees. Thus, it is logical to suggest that the indirect effect of perceived supervisor voice behavior on employees' own voice behavior via trust in supervisor will be stronger for female employees, since trust in supervisor has a stronger impact on female employees. However, for male employees, the influence of employees' perception of supervisor's voice

behavior on their own voice behavior will be weaker. Accordingly, the following moderated mediation hypothesis is proposed:

H5. The conditional indirect effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior via trust in supervisor is moderated by gender, such that the mediated relationship is stronger for female employees in comparison to male employees.

Methods
Samples and procedures
The sample for this study was recruited from an oil company in Korea. A total of 152 employees answered the questionnaire. After excluding incomplete data, a total of 140 respondents were included in the final analysis. The respondents consisted of 101 males (72.1 percent) and 38 females (27.1 percent). The majority of respondents had completed a bachelor's degree ($n = 81$, 57.9 percent). The average age of the participants was 33.33 years (SD = 6.24) and the average tenure in their current organization was 5.3 years (SD = 58.2).

Measures
A forward–backward translation process was used, since the questionnaires were originally developed in English.

Perceived supervisor's voice behavior. Perceived supervisor's voice behavior was measured using the five-item scale of constructive voice behavior developed by Maynes and Podsakoff (2014). The original version of the measure was used to ask about co-workers' voice behavior, so the current measure was slightly modified to ask about their supervisors' voice behavior. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). A sample item is "My supervisor frequently makes suggestions about how to improve work methods and practices." Cronbach's α was 0.94.

Trust in supervisor. An instrument developed and validated by McAllister (1995) was used to measure trust. McAllister (1995) created 11 items to assess trust: five items for affect-based trust and six for cognition-based trust. A sample item for affect-based trust was, "We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes." A sample item for cognition-based trust was, "My supervisor approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication." Each item was evaluated using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For this study, the Cronbach's α for trust was 0.96.

Employee voice behavior. The five-item scale developed by Maynes and Podsakoff (2014) was used to evaluate employees' own voice behavior. Each item was scored on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). A sample item is "I frequently make suggestions about how to improve work methods and practices." For this study, the Cronbach's α for trust was 0.96.

Control variables. Age and tenure were included as control variables because they reflect individual-level factors related to voice behavior (Morrison, 2011).

Results
Table I shows the mean, standard deviations and correlational coefficients for all variables. As expected, perceived supervisor's voice behavior, trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior were positively and significantly correlated with one other. As seen in Table I, perceived supervisor's voice behavior was positively related to employee voice behavior ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, perceived supervisor's voice behavior was positively linked with trust in supervisor ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, trust in supervisor was positively

related to employee voice behavior ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). However, gender was not significantly related to other variables except age.

Before the hypothesis testing, Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) was conducted. An exploratory factor analysis of all of scale items revealed three factors explaining 65.28 percent of the variance in the current study's constructs. The first factor accounted for 48.15 percent and the last factor explained 6.66 percent of the total variance. The result of the factor analysis suggested that common method variance does not seem to be a significant threat to the results. In addition, a series of confirmatory factor analyses were performed. Overall model fit was tested using fit indices including the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI). First, the hypothesized three-factor model comprising perceived supervisor's voice behavior, trust in supervisor and employees' voice behavior was compared to a two-factor model which combined perceived supervisor's voice behavior and trust in supervisor. The results indicated that the three-factor structure showed satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2(51) = 65.57$; CFI $= 0.99$; TLI $= 0.98$; IFI $= 0.99$; RMSEA $= 0.05$) and demonstrated better fit than the two-factor model ($\chi^2(53) = 126.48$; CFI $= 0.93$; TLI $= 0.92$; IFI $= 0.94$; RMSEA $= 1.0$). The change in the χ^2 value was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 60.91$, df $= 2$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the three-factor model was compared to the single-factor model which combined all the items ($\chi^2(54) = 427.63$; CFI $= 0.66$; TLI $= 0.59$; IFI $= 0.67$; RMSEA $= 0.22$). The results showed that the change in the χ^2 value was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 362.06$, df $= 3$, $p < 0.001$) and the representations of the three variables were distinct constructs.

Hypothesis testing

The proposed hypothesis testing was conducted by using hierarchical regression analyses and Hayes' PROCESS macro. First, hierarchical regression modeling was used for testing *H1* and *H2*. Table II represents the hierarchical regression analysis results. As shown in Table II, perceived supervisor's voice behavior was positively and significantly related to employee's own voice behavior (B $= 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), supporting *H1*. In addition, perceived supervisor's voice behavior was positively related to trust in supervisor (B $= 0.92$, $p < 0.001$), supporting *H2*.

In order to confirm the significance of the indirect effect of trust in supervisor, the PROCESS macro with 1,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2013; Model 4) was used. Results showed that the indirect effect of trust in supervisor was 0.18, and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) (lower limit $= 0.06$ and upper limit $= 0.33$) for the indirect effect did not overlap with 0 ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, *H3* was supported.

For *H4*, the Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro with 1,000 bootstrap samples (Model 1) was used for testing the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee's own voice behavior. The results demonstrated a significant

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	33.33	6.24	1							
2. Gender	0.73	0.45	0.31**	1						
3. Tenure	64.6	58.2	0.68**	0.12	1					
4. PSVB	3.29	0.91	0.02	0.03	0.09	1				
5. Trust	4.32	1.30	0.05	0.11	0.09	0.65**	1			
6. EVB	3.23	0.78	−0.06	0.04	0.02	0.44**	0.48**	1		

Table I.
Means, standard deviations and correlations of the study

Notes: $n = 140$. PSVB, perceived supervisor's voice behavior; EVB, employee voice behavior. Gender (1 $=$ male, 0 $=$ female); age (unit: year); tenure (unit: month). **$p < 0.01$

| | B(SE) | | The role of |
	Employee voice behavior	Trust	supervisors
Control variables			
Age	−0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	
Tenure	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	
Independent variable			
Supervisor's voice behavior	0.38 (0.07)***	0.92 (0.09)***	
ΔR^2	0.19	0.41	
Adjusted R^2	0.19	0.41	Table II.
R^2	0.20	0.42	Regression results
F	11.62**	32.87***	for supervisor's
			voice behavior

Notes: $n = 140$. **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

gender moderation effect on the link between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior, evidenced by a significant interaction between gender and trust ($t(139) = -3.01$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, for females, the indirect effect of supervisor's voice behavior on employee voice behavior was stronger via trust ($\beta = 0.37$, 95% bias-corrected CI [0.18, 0.58]). For male employees, the indirect effect of supervisor's voice behavior on employee voice behavior was weaker via trust ($\beta = 0.10$, 95% bias-corrected CI [−0.04, 0.27]). The simple slopes for the interaction are displayed in Figure 1. As presented, the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee's voice behavior was stronger for female employees. Therefore, *H4* was supported (Figure 2).

Finally, the moderated mediation was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 14). Table III summarizes the results of the conditional indirect effects of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employees' own voice behavior via trust in supervisor. As presented in Table III, the indirect effects of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employees' own voice behavior via trust in supervisor were stronger for female employees ($\beta = 0.37$, 95% bias-corrected CI = [0.19, 0.57]) and a 95% bias-corrected CI did not overlap with 0. However, the conditional indirect effects of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee's own voice behavior were not significant for male employees ($\beta = 0.10$, 95% bias-corrected CI = [−0.04, 0.26]). Thus, *H5* was supported.

Discussion
Drawing upon social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), a theoretical model linking perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior was developed and tested by investigating the underlying mechanisms as well as the boundary conditions. The results revealed that: perceived supervisor's voice behavior was positively associated with employee
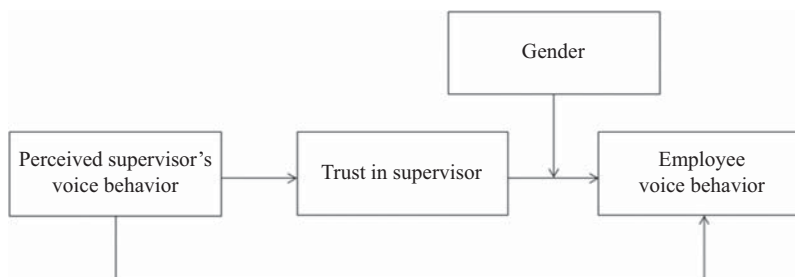

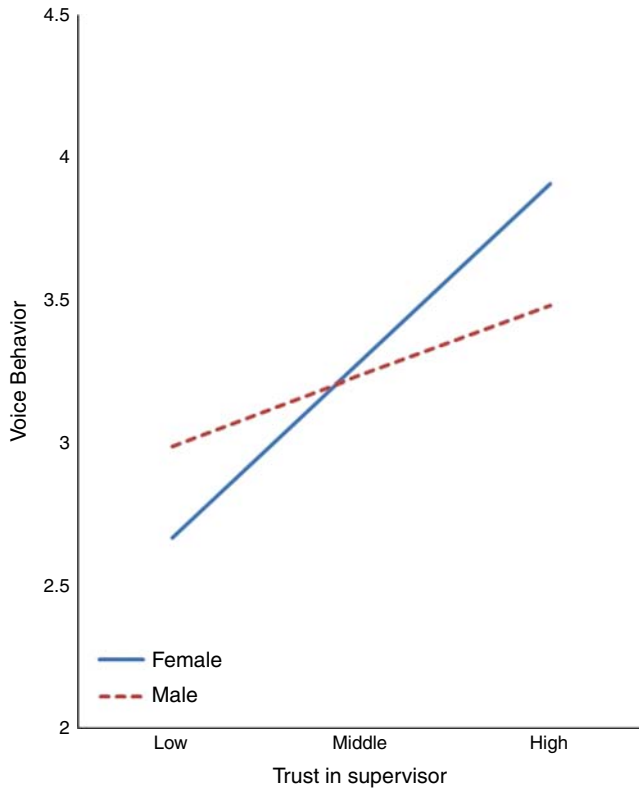Figure 1.
Hypothesized model
of the study

Figure 2.
Moderating effect of gender on the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee's own voice behavior

Table III.
Conditional indirect effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee's own voice behavior

| | Indirect effects | Boot SE | Bootstrapping BC 95% CI | |
			Lower	Higher
Female	0.37**	0.10	0.19	0.57
Male	0.10	0.07	−0.04	0.26

Note: **$p < 0.01$

voice behavior; trust in supervisor mediated the relationship between perceived supervisor's voice behavior and employee voice behavior; gender moderated the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behaviors; and gender moderated the indirect effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee voice behavior via trust in supervisor.

Theoretical implications
The current study has several theoretical implications. First, consistent with the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), the results of this study support the notion that employees' perception of supervisor's behavior plays an important role in employees' voice behavior. More specifically, this study finds that when employees observe supervisor's voice behavior, they are more

likely to engage in their own voice behavior. Consistent with previous research (Bommer *et al.*, 2003; Ng and Feldman, 2013), the findings of the present study indicate that observing supervisors' behavior is an influential factor for motivating employees to speak up in an organization. Thus, future researchers should take into account the role of perceived supervisor's voice behavior in relation to employee's own voice behavior.

Second, the current study extends the voice literature by providing an underlying mechanism in the relationship between employees' perception of supervisors' voice behavior and their own voice behavior. The present study finds that employees who perceive supervisors' voice behavior are more likely to trust in supervisors, which, in turn, have a greater tendency to engage in voice behavior. That is, employees who have more trust in their supervisors are likely to feel safer and more comfortable about the ways in which the supervisor will respond to their voice behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood that they actually express their opinions and ideas about workplace issues. By empirically testing trust in supervisor as a mediator that underlies the effect of perceived supervisor's voice behavior on employee's own voice behavior, this study attempted to explain why employees' perception of supervisor's voice behavior affects their own voice behaviors.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the voice literature by investigating the moderating role of gender in the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee voice behavior. The results indicate that female employees are more likely to engage in voice behavior when they have strong trust in their supervisors. Past research has indicated that gender has a significant impact on employee voice behavior (Farrell and Finkelstein, 2007; Kidder, 2002). However, it is not certain how gender interacts with trust in supervisor and affects employee voice behavior. Based on gender role theory, this study suggested that gender could be an important boundary condition for the relationship between trust in supervisor and voice behavior, because females and males have different expectations regarding voice behavior at the workplace. The findings of this study indicate that trust in supervisor has a stronger impact on female employees in relation to voice behavior. Thus, the current study advances the understanding of how gender roles interact with trust in supervisor to influence employees' voice behavior.

Practical implications
The findings of this study also have implications for practitioners. First, the study confirms that employees' perception of supervisors' voice behavior is positively associated with employees' voice behavior. Currently, employees' voice behavior is considered a key competence for enhancing organizational effectiveness (Burris, 2012; Detert and Edmondson, 2011; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Liang *et al.*, 2012; Morrison, 2011). Therefore, organizations that hope to increase employees' voice behavior should pay more attention to the role of supervisors' behavior, such as their voice behavior. In other words, supervisors' voice behavior should also be developed and rewarded in organizations. HR managers need to consider how to incorporate supervisors' voice behaviors into the subordinates' portion of 360° feedback instruments, and properly reward the supervisors' behaviors.

Second, the present study shows that trust in supervisor plays a significant role in enhancing employees' voice behavior. In particular, the findings of the current study emphasize that the effect of trust in supervisor on employees' voice behavior can be different based on their gender. More specifically, the present study has shown that females are more actively engaged in voice behavior when they have trust in supervisor. Accordingly, organizations that want to improve employees' voice behavior, particularly female employees' voice behavior, need to ensure females have a high level of trust in their supervisors. In particular, female-dominant organizations should pay more attention in building a high level of trust in supervisors, since the level of trust in supervisor plays a

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significant role on employees' voice behavior. In addition, it is also important to know the negative effect of dysfunctional behavior on the part of supervisors in organizations (whether it is female-dominant or not), since it can lower employees' trust in their supervisors. Therefore, organizations need to know who their credible leaders are, and who are not.

Limitations and future research direction
While the results of this study have theoretical and practical implications, there remain several limitations. First, the causality of the results should be made with caution, as a cross-sectional design is employed. Future research should consider applying a longitudinal research design. Second, as all the variables were measured using a single source (i.e. employees), the results can be attributed to common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2003). Thus, future researchers should consider including multiple sources (i.e. supervisors' voice behavior assessment by higher level leaders) at different time periods. Furthermore, the sample largely consisted of employees in a single company in South Korea, and this may limit the generalizability of the results. In particular, South Korea is characterized by a high power distance culture (Hofstede, 1991). As individuals with high levels of power distance tend to be more receptive to top-down communication, the pattern of employees' voice behavior may be rather different in countries with different cultures. In addition, as a sample size of 140 is relatively small, replication research is required to verify the findings. Finally, the current study only focused on employees' perception of supervisors' voice behavior and its effect on their own voice behavior; it remains necessary to examine other social cues, such as co-workers' and mentors' voice behaviors.

Conclusion
Building on the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), this study suggests that an employee's perception of their immediate supervisor's voice behavior may have a direct influence on the employee's own voice behavior, and an indirect impact on building trust in their supervisor. In addition, it proposes that gender may moderate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee's voice behavior. The results of the study highlight the important role of perceived supervisor's voice behavior, trust in supervisor and gender in the process of enhancing employees' voice behavior. Therefore, it is necessary for future researchers to pay more attention to the role of supervisors' behaviors and attitudes in relation to employees' voice behavior, particularly with respect to gender.

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