Who speaks up at work? Dispositional influences on employees’ voice behavior

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between the five-factor model of personality (FFM) and employees’ voice behavior in Greece.

Design/methodology/approach – Employees’ personality characteristics were assessed along with their voice behavior towards their supervisor and the top management of their company. Data were collected from a cross-sectional sample of 334 professionals.

Findings – The findings demonstrate the relationship between personality and voice behavior towards the immediate supervisor, but not towards the top management of the company, and show that conscientiousness and emotional stability are the strongest predictors of employees’ voice behavior.

Research limitations/implications – The results of the study should be interpreted with caution, since they are based on self-report measures. However, the findings suggest that two personality dimensions (emotional stability and conscientiousness) are significantly related with employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor.

Practical implications – The findings suggest important practical implications for HR practices, such as employee communication and personnel selection, since at least two personality dimensions are related with employees’ voice behavior. The study also emphasizes the significance of first line supervisors’ communication style in enhancing employees’ voice behavior.

Originality/value – This is the first study exploring the relationship between the FFM and employees’ voice behavior carried out in a EU-country, such as Greece.

Keywords Personality, Employee communications, Employee behaviour, Greece

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Organizations are increasingly demanding more and more from their employees, such as taking initiative, generating innovative ideas with impact, speaking up and accepting responsibility, as a result of intensive competition, higher customer expectations, increased focus on quality, etc. In order to survive, organizations need
people who are responsive to the challenges of the environment, are not afraid to share information and knowledge and can stand up for their own and their team beliefs.

However, despite the constant calls for employees’ engagement and open communication channels within organizations, an increased number of change management programs fail because organizations fail to support communication, sharing of information and knowledge (Beer and Nohria, 2000). A construct that has recently attracted the attention of organizational change researchers and theorists is employees’ voice behavior. Although, employee’s voice could be considered as the opposite pole of organizational silence, van Dyne et al. (2003) suggested that they are two independent, multidimensional constructs. Our main focus in the current study is employees’ voice behavior.

Premeaux and Bedeian (2003, p. 1538) have defined speaking up as:

[...] openly stating one’s views or opinions about workplace matters, including the actions or ideas of others, suggested or needed changes and alternative approaches or different lines of reasoning for addressing job-related issues.

Employees’ voice is desirable not only as a form of communication with the management, but also as a means of change-oriented communication intended to improve the situation (LePine and van Dyne, 2001). van Dyne et al. (2003) suggested that two major conceptualizations of voice exist in the management literature. The first approach uses the term to describe speaking up behavior, such as when employees proactively make suggestions for change and the second to describe the presence of due process procedures enhancing justice judgments and facilitating employee participation in decision making (p. 1369). Avery and Quinones (2004) have also described two distinct streams on voice research as an antecedent of procedural fairness; the first has focused on identifying the mechanisms by which voice leads to increased fairness, an approach known as the instrumental model of voice; the second supports that voice enhances fairness, because it implies that individuals’ views are worth hearing, thereby conveying some measure of social status to the voice recipient, an approach known as the relational model of voice (p. 107).

Voice behavior

Reluctance to share information, speak up, and provide feedback has the potential to negatively affect employees’ trust, morale and motivation. Also, information and ideas withholding can undermine organizational decision making, error correction and development and innovation processes (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000). Speaking up is positively accepted and highly praised from a lot of organizations, especially those involved in major organizational restructuring requiring employees’ input in order to elicit successful organizational change. Employees’ suggestions can be very valuable during these times of change (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003).

In one of the first studies exploring voice behavior in work groups, LePine and van Dyne (1998) explored a number of possible person-centered and situational antecedents of voice. Job satisfaction, self-esteem, group size and self-management were all positively related to voice behavior. Frese et al. (1999) explored predictors of making suggestions in companies and they identified that the most important predictors were initiative at work, higher order need strength, self-efficacy, expected improvements in work and suggestion inhibitors (negatively). More recently, Detert and Burris (2007)
demonstrated that one of the most influential factors of employees’ voice behavior is leadership openness, whereas Fuller et al. (2006) also identified that voice behavior, as assessed by employees’ supervisors, is positively related to employees’ felt responsibility for constructive change.

van Dyne and LePine (1998) and LePine and van Dyne (2001) have carried out significant amount of work on employees’ voice. They approached voice behavior as another form of contextual performance in work organizations, i.e. the type of employees’ work-related activities that are discretionary, not directly rewarded or officially required by the organization, but overall promote the image of the organization, both internally and externally, and along with in-role, task performance activities contribute to organizational effectiveness. They suggested, that contextual performance does not primarily entail change-oriented behavior, such as voice behavior, but on the other hand, voice can be constructive and in the long-run should make a positive contribution to the team and the organization. Similarly to LePine and van Dyne (2001) and Choi (2007) suggested a link between voice and change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. He claimed that voice represents employee behavior that is intended to make constructive changes in the work and task environment. Another form of contextual performance identified by Graham and van Dyne (2006) was civic virtue. In their study, they showed that voice behavior, defined in their work as civic virtue-influence, was predicted by employees’ experienced significance within the context of their work group, their self-esteem levels and justice beliefs.

Similarly to the aforementioned studies, voice has also been explored as part of the personal initiative (PI) construct, which is considered a broader concept than organizational citizenship behavior. Fay and Frese (2001) and Frese et al. (2001) have defined PI as a work behavior defined as self-starting and proactive that overcomes barriers to achieve a goal. PI is considered as an active behavior through which an employee is self-starting, proactive and persistent. Frese et al. (2001) claim that PI in employees is not always welcomed, especially by supervisors or colleagues. Supervisors may even think that high-PI individuals as “being rebellious” (p. 141). Voice, as a change-oriented behavior, is also often not welcomed by a company’s management. Individuals speaking up about problems at work, or suggesting improvements to problems are often considered as trouble-makers and are frequently left out or even isolated by colleagues and supervisors. The current study aims to explore further potential predictors of voice behavior, using the five-factor model of personality (FFM) as the organizing framework.

**Personality and voice behavior at work**

The field of personality has been dominated for the past two decades by the FFM (Costa, 1996; Goldberg, 1990; John, 1990; McCrae and John, 1992). The five factors usually labeled neuroticism (the tendency to experience negative affect, such as anxiety, insecurity and psychological distress), extraversion (the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction and activity level), openness to experience (the proactive seeking and appreciation of new experiences), agreeableness (the quality of one’s interpersonal interaction along a continuum from compassion to antagonism), and conscientiousness (the amount of persistence, organization and motivation in goal-directed behaviors) (Costa, 1996; Piedmont and Weinstein, 1994) have provided researchers and practitioners with a clear measurement framework and are responsible for the recent resurgence of interest to personality research and practice.
In the current study, we are more interested in the relationship between the FFM and contextual performance. Conscientiousness and agreeableness have shown consistent links with the two major dimensions of extra-role performance, i.e. generalized compliance and altruism, respectively, (Organ and Ryan, 1995). LePine and van Dyne (2001), as described earlier, approached employees’ voice behavior as a significant form of contextual performance. They explored the role of individual differences, and identified that four of the five dimensions of the FFM are associated with employees’ voice behavior; conscientiousness and extraversion positively and neuroticism and agreeableness negatively.

In another similar study, Avery (2003) explored the relationship between personality, as expressed by the FFM and core-self evaluations (CSE) and the value of voice. CSE is a broad personality construct indicated by four specific traits:

1. self-esteem (i.e. the basic appraisal that people make of their worth);
2. generalized self-efficacy (i.e. a person’s global estimate of his/her ability to mobilize the motivation and abilities needed to achieve important outcomes);
3. locus of control (i.e. the degree to which individuals believe that they control events in their lives); and
4. neuroticism, which defines the emotional stability of individuals and their tendencies to dwell on the positive or the negative (Judge et al., 1998, 1997).

Avery (2003) demonstrated that although both the FFM and core self-evaluations accounted for significant variance in the value of voice, only extraversion and self-efficacy significantly predicted the value of voice. We consider Avery’s study as very significant for the current study, since it follows a similar research methodology with ours and we also do not assess actual voice behavior, as LePine and van Dyne (2001) have done, but self-reported voice behavior. One would expect that an individuals who places high value on voice would also demonstrate increased voice behavior. However, a significant limitation of these two studies is that student samples were used. The current study aims to contribute to the partial replication and extension of these studies in Greece, using working individuals as participants, adopting a survey methodology instead of an experimental study.

LePine and van Dyne (2001) suggest that “voice behavior requires that individuals expend effort speaking up and expressing suggestions they may have” (p. 328). Voice behavior, as defined by LePine and van Dyne (2001), captures a change-oriented attempt of the individual aiming to a positive contribution to a group or organization. Their research brought initial evidences on the relationship between the FFM and voice behavior. If the link between voice behavior and contextual performance actually exists, we would expect that employees with certain personality characteristics, such as high conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability, for example, would demonstrate increased voice behavior, as an alternative form of contextual performance.

Another contributing factor of the current study is the country in which it was conducted. More specifically, we explored our research questions in Greece, a country-member of the European Union, with a central role in the financial and business development in the Balkans and the South-Eastern Europe. A few studies have explored the role of individual differences in occupational settings in Greece (Nikolaou and Robertson, 2001; Vakola et al., 2004) and the current study aims to develop further our understanding of the role of individual differences at work in Greece.
In order to understand potential cultural differences between Greece and the USA, where the previous studies exploring voice behavior have been carried out, we will refer to Hofstede’s (2001) framework. Greece scores 60 in power distance and USA 40 with an average of 51; 112 in uncertainty avoidance and USA 46 with an average of 64; 35 in individualism and USA 91 with an average of 51 and finally Greece scores 57 and USA 62 in masculinity with an average of 51. The most notable comment regarding our study is that Greece is a collectivist country with the highest score amongst 53 countries in uncertainty avoidance. High reluctance to change suggests that employees might be reluctant to speak up and come up with suggestions about change-oriented behavior; an outcome that might influence the findings of our study compared to similar findings in the USA. However, we have to note that Greece is a member of the European Union since 1981 and, building on its recent economic growth, it has become one of the first members of the Euro area since 2001. Being a member of a large economic unity has radically influenced Greek economy and business, forcing it to adopt more West-European standards. Consequently, we should be careful not to take for granted the cultural differences between Greece and the USA, especially as described by the relatively out-of-date Hofstede’s research.

Research hypotheses
The main hypothesis of the current study is that individual differences, as expressed by the FFM, are expected to associate with employees’ voice behavior in Greece. Despite the cultural differences between Greece and the USA, we have no reason to expect that the pattern of relationships identified between personality and voice behavior by LePine and van Dyne (2001) in the USA will be different in Greece. Even though there are some differences in cultural values between the two countries, there is no theoretical reasoning to expect that Greek cultural values would change the nature of the relationships between personality and voice in Greece[1].

Conscientious employees are competent, orderly-minded and persistent individuals. A high score in conscientiousness denotes concentration on goals and dedication to achieve them, while showing interest to the success of their organization. As earlier discussed, conscientiousness has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of both in-role and contextual performance. Avery (2003) claims that highly conscientious individuals may seek greater personal control in their jobs, leading them to increased voice behavior. LePine and Dyne (2001) also found that conscientious individuals are more likely to engage into voice and cooperative behavior than to task performance. It is expected that conscientious employees will not hesitate to speak up about their concerns, especially towards their supervisor. Thus:

H1. Conscientiousness will be positively related to employees’ voice behavior.

Neuroticism describes individuals prone to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges, and maladaptive coping responses. They are easily worried individuals, insecure and quite emotional. It is common to be concerned about how other people perceive them and also to experience feelings of inadequacy. They often feel insecure about their thoughts and are quite self-conscious, as individuals. Therefore, one would expect that they would be reluctant to make suggestions for improvement or significant changes to their organization. LePine and Dyne (2001) also demonstrated that neuroticism is negatively related to both voice behavior and cooperative behavior. Thus:
H2. Neuroticism will be negatively related to employees’ voice behavior. Agreeableness describes the quality of one’s interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings and actions. Agreeable individuals may be described as soft-hearted, good-natured, helpful, forgiving, gullible and straight-forward. They see the “good face” of people and therefore easily trust others. Avery (2003) suggests that agreeableness is often viewed in terms of conflict management style, in that agreeable individuals do not want to create problems to or conflicts with other people, but they also cannot see the “dark side” of some of their actions. Further, as earlier discussed, voice behavior is often perceived negatively by the management of a company, since it is change-oriented. On a similar vein, a significant finding of LePine and Dyne (2001) was the bidirectionality of agreeableness; it was negatively related to voice behavior but positively to contextual performance. Thus:

H3. Agreeableness will be negatively related to employees’ voice behavior.

Extraversion assesses quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction; activity level; need for stimulation; and capacity for joy. Extravert individuals are sociable, active, talkative, person-oriented, optimistic, fun-loving, affectionate and humorous. Their humor often helps them say things to other people in a non-threatening way. They enjoy being with other people, not necessarily in good nature, as is the case for agreeable individuals, and it is hard for them to “keep their mouth shut” even if that’s the best for them. Extrovert individuals often feel secure and behave assertively at work. Avery (2003) claims that extravert individuals will find the opportunity through voice behavior to express themselves and influence others. Similar results were identified by LePine and Dyne (2001). Thus:

H4. Extraversion will be positively related to employees’ voice behavior.

Openness to experience assesses proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake; toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar. Individuals who are open to experience are curious, with broad interests, creative, imaginative and untraditional. They are prone to consider different alternatives and since, as LePine and van Dyne (2001) suggest, they value change, one would expect that it should be associated with increased voice behavior, since voice behavior is fundamentally change oriented. However, openness to experience has demonstrated the weakest relationships with traditional work behavior, work engagement and especially contextual performance. Avery (2003) and LePine and van Dyne (2001) did not identify a link between openness and voice behavior but they did not offer an adequate explanation of their finding. Openness to experience includes a number of diverse components, leading Hough (2003) to describe it as the most amorphous and heterogeneous dimension of the FFM. Thus:

H5. Openness to experience will not be associated to employees’ voice behavior.

Method
Participants/procedure
In total, 334 professionals from various organizations based in Athens, Greece participated in this study. They were graduate students of the Athens University of Economics and Business studying MBA, International MBA and Human Resources Management. They all worked full-time, in various organizations, studying in
part-time, executive development programs. They participated voluntarily completing the questionnaires at the end of their classes. Participants were asked to complete an anonymous self-report questionnaire pack, which incorporated the measures described in the following section. They were informed that all data would be treated as confidential, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and any stage. About 52.4 percent were females, working in middle (37.4 percent) or top management positions (11.4 percent). The remaining were non-managerial white-collar employees. The majority of them (61.4 percent) worked in large organizations employing more than 500 employees with an average tenure of 3.5 years.

Measures

Personality. The FFM was assessed using the Traits Personality Questionnaire 5 – TPQue5 (Tsaousis and Kerpelis, 2004). The TPQue5 is a measure of the Big 5 model developed and validated specifically for use with Greek adults. It is a short version (101 items) of a Greek FFM measure (TPQue; Tsaousis, 1999) comprising scales of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The TPQue5 factor scales displayed excellent internal consistency and good test-retest reliability. Convergent and discriminant validation of the TPQue5 was demonstrated through comparison with other personality measures, while the analysis of the factorial structure of the test justified its concordance with the long form. The α’s for the current study were all at an acceptable level (neuroticism: 0.87; extraversion: 0.80; openness: 0.77; agreeableness: 0.79; conscientiousness: 0.79). TPQue5 has been used in a number of studies with Greek adults (Furnham et al., 2005; Vakola et al., 2004) demonstrating excellent psychometric properties.

Employees’ voice behavior. Employees’ voice behavior was assessed using the instrument described in Vakola and Bouradas (2005). It is a seven-item scale, where participants were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 – never to 5 – Always) how often they express their disagreements concerning a number of issues (e.g. company issues, department’s issues, their job, issues related to job satisfaction such as salary, working conditions, etc.). The participants were asked to complete the section twice, regarding the company’s top management and their supervisor. Therefore, two dimensions of voice behavior were elicited: employees’ voice behavior towards top management (α = 0.87) and employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor (α = 0.91). A high score on these scales indicates increased voice behavior on behalf of the employee. Following the suggestion of a reviewer we carried out an exploratory factor analysis of the items; the proposed two factor solution emerged without any primary loadings below 0.40 and cross-loadings that are less than 0.20 below the primary loading. These two scales were treated as the dependent variables of the study. The items of this measure are presented in the Appendix.

Results

Table I presents the descriptive statistics and the inter-correlation matrix of the study variables. Overall, the effect sizes between the personality dispositions and employees’ voice behavior are relatively moderate but statistically significant, with the exception of the relationship between openness to experience and employees’ voice behavior towards top management. The correlations were statistically significant towards the expected direction, with the exception of agreeableness, which demonstrated positive
rather than negative correlations with employees’ voice behavior. In order to explore our hypotheses, we carried out two sets of multiple regression analyses, controlling for tenure and gender. We did not control for any other variables, such as company size or job level, since they did not demonstrate any statistically significant effect on employees’ voice behavior. The results of these analyses are presented in Table II.

The FFM of personality seems to demonstrate stronger associations with employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor rather than with top management. Although the block of the five personality dimensions explains a statistically significant 4 percent of employees’ behavior towards top management variance, no one of the dimensions emerged independently as a significant predictor of voice behavior. This is not the case for the relationship between the FFM and employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor, whereas both the block of the five dimensions explain 8 percent of the outcome’s variance and the dimensions of neuroticism and conscientiousness emerged as statistically significant predictors, partially confirming \( H1 \) and \( H2 \).

### Table I. Descriptives and correlations of the study’s variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>51.72</td>
<td>7.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Neuroticism</td>
<td>40.55</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>−0.22**</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Agreeableness</td>
<td>51.10</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>−0.13*</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Extraversion</td>
<td>47.95</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>−0.21**</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Openness to experience</td>
<td>50.08</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Employees’ voice behavior towards top management</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
<td>−0.12*</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>−0.21**</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.60**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *\( p < 0.05 \); **\( p < 0.00 \); \( N = 334 \)

### Table II. Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting voice behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>( B )</th>
<th>SE ( B )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( F )-change</th>
<th>( B )</th>
<th>SE ( B )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( F )-change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.10</td>
<td>4.54*</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>−0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.13</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>5.67**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>2.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.13*</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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</table>

\( R^2 = 0.03 \) for Step 1 (\( p < 0.05 \)); \( \Delta R^2 = 0.08 \) for Step 2 (\( p < 0.00 \)); \( F(7, 322) = 5.44^* \) and \( R^2 = 0.01 \) for Step 1 (n/s); \( \Delta R^2 = 0.04 \) for Step 2 (\( p < 0.00 \)); \( F(7, 322) = 2.15^* \)

Notes: \( B \)s and \( \beta \)s are from the final equation. *\( p < 0.05 \); **\( p < 0.00 \); \( N = 334 \)
Discussion

The main objective of the current study was to explore whether employees’ voice behavior is related to their personality dispositions, as expressed by the FFM. We have carried out our research in Greece, a different cultural setting from the USA where most of the similar studies have been conducted in the past (Avery, 2003; LePine and van Dyne, 2001). Our main theoretical argument was that the previously identified links between personality and voice would be valid in Greece, despite the cultural differences between the two countries.

Our results showed that neuroticism and conscientiousness demonstrated statistically significant relationships, negatively and positively, respectively, with employees’ voice behavior towards their supervisor. The opposite pole of neuroticism – emotional stability – describes an individual who is calm, relaxed and secure, as opposed to worrying, nervous, emotional and insecure individuals (Costa, 1996). An emotionally stable individual will not feel inadequate or insecure to express concerns or recommend suggestions to his/her supervisor. Further, a conscientious employee, who describes herself as organized, reliable, hard-working, self-disciplined, ambitious and persevering, will consider speaking up to her supervisor as one of her main duties in order to promote and improve her work performance. Conscientiousness has been repeatedly proved as the most significant predictor of performance at work, both in- and extra-role. Further, LePine and van Dyne (2001), in their study also identified these two dimensions as significant predictors of voice behavior, as a form of contextual performance.

It is also interesting to note that personality was associated with employees’ voice behavior towards their immediate supervisor more strongly than towards the top management of the company. As one of the reviewers suggested, it makes sense that personality makes more of a difference in proximal voice because voice directed at the organization is less personal and more distal. It seems that employees believe that speaking up to their supervisor is worth the effort, increasing the results of a more positive outcome, when it comes to change-oriented suggestions.

These findings however do not support the significance of the remaining dimensions of the FFM. Agreeableness, openness to experience and extraversion failed to reach a statistically significant level in the regression analyses, demonstrating only statistically significant bivariate correlations with employees’ voice behavior, despite our expectations. These ambiguous results of the role of the FFM on employees’ voice behavior should not discourage researchers from identifying links between personality dispositions and voice. Maybe, the FFM is not the most appropriate model of researching individual differences and employees’ voice, and the researchers should turn their attention to traits that are more related to active, voicing behavior at work, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem and CSE (Judge and Bono, 2001).

An explanation of our results regarding agreeableness, openness to experience and extraversion is the research design we have adopted, compared to LePine and van Dyne’s (2001) study. We have exclusively used self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional sample of employees from various organizations, whereas their work was based on coded transcripts of actual voice behavior with students. Our research design could not allow the actual assessment of voice behavior, but only participants’ self-reported demonstration of voice behavior, which might be quite different. Employees’ self-presentation might have influenced their responses. Finally, another issue that should be looked at is the well-known bandwidth-fidelity dilemma
This dilemma deals with the question of what is the most appropriate level of analysis in exploring personality. Is it appropriate to investigate phenomena on the broader level of personality (e.g. the five dimensions of the FFM) or at the lower level using the sub-scales of these dimensions? For example, the impulsiveness facet of neuroticism may be positively associated with employees’ voice behavior and the same may be applied for other FFM facets as well, such as the deliberation facet of conscientiousness, which one would expect to relate negatively with voice behavior. Unfortunately, the use of a short version of a FFM questionnaire did not allow us to investigate relationships at the lower level and therefore this question remains unanswered for the time being.

Further, we should also take into consideration the setting where the current study took place. Maybe one of the reasons why we could not replicate parts of the LePine and van Dyne’s (2001) study in Greece is the different cultural values, compared to the USA. Greece might be largely considered a West-European country, as a member of the EU, but it is also extensively influenced by the Middle-East and Mediterranean national culture. An indication of these influences is the high collectivism that exists in Greek national culture. Therefore, a number of well-founded research findings that exist in some West-European counties, or the USA might not be applicable in Greece. For example, Nikolaou and Robertson (2001) could not identify any links between the FFM of personality and both in-role job performance and organizational citizenship behavior. An explanation they offered, which might also be applicable in the current study, is based on the wide use of unreliable and less valid recruitment and selection methods, such as personal recommendations and unstructured interviews.

The data of our study were all obtained using a one-shot questionnaire methodology, in a cross-sectional research design and it is often argued that common-method variance rather than causal links may explain some of the relationships identified. Spector (1987, 2006) reviewing the effects of shared method variance on organizational research, concluded that it is largely mythical reaching the status of urban legend. He noted that well-developed measures with sound psychometric properties seemed free of this problem. In the current study, all measures were taken from previous studies with sound psychometric properties. Further, even if shared method variance exists, there is no reason to expect that the differences in correlations among our variables are due to its effect, since its presence would not be expected to exert differential bias on the observed relationships.

The current study also has a series of research and practical implications, that should be mentioned. The first significant finding is that at least two personality dimensions of the FFM seem to be associated with employees’ voice behavior at work. These two dimensions, conscientiousness and neuroticism, are considered as the most significant predictors of overall job performance across jobs and hierarchical levels (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000) and the current study brought further support to their importance. As far as research implications and future research are concerned, a necessity occurring as a result of this study is the exploration of the predictive validity of the FFM’s facets and their relationship with voice behavior using different research methodologies (e.g. longitudinal/experimental study or others’ evaluation of employees’ actual voice behavior). It would also be interesting to explore the effect of the interaction between personality and situational/contextual antecedents of voice behavior.
employees’ voice behavior, if we consider that an employee’s behavior is a function of both stable personality pre-dispositions and the situation, as well. Moreover, more research is needed on the construct definition of employees’ voice in Greece. A future research question could be for example how much different or similar it is compared to the established definitions?

Finally, it is important to note that the initial results of this research could be used as a guide for future studies exploring the antecedents of employees’ voice behavior at work. Employees’ dispositional characteristics, such as those captured by the FFM and/or maybe other similar personality constellations, can facilitate towards the development of a voice culture in organizations, especially in those asking from their employees not only to listen to others but also to express their thoughts and concerns regarding organizational issues.

Note
1. We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

References


**Further reading**


**Appendix**

*Employees’ voice behavior measure*

How often do you express your disagreements to your managers concerning the following issues?

- Regarding company issues.
- Regarding my department issues.
- Regarding my job.
- Regarding issues related to job satisfaction, such as salary, working conditions, etc.

How easily do you express your disagreements to your managers concerning the following issues?

- Regarding company issues.
- Regarding my department issues.
- Regarding my job.
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