

## Why Feedback Seekers Behave Proactively? The Mediating Role of Interactional Justice

*(Kenapa Peminta Maklumbalas Berkelakuan Secara Proaktif? Peranan Keadilan Interaksi sebagai Pengantara)*

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### Abstract

*Prior research indicates that employees who seek feedback usually have better work performance. But why do feedback seekers behave proactively after receiving feedback information from their supervisors? This question motivates the current research. The purpose of this paper is to explore an important mediator, namely interactional justice, which explains why feedback seekers are motivated to perform proactively. We adopt equity theory to examine whether interactional justice mediates the relationship between feedback seeking behavior and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and voice behavior. To test our hypotheses, we conduct two-time-period panel study design and collected data using questionnaires in a Taiwanese electronic goods company. In a sample of 220 employees, the results show that interactional justice is a missing link between feedback seeking behavior and OCB and voice behavior. This study advances the knowledge of creating an environment that allows people to seek feedback freely. Moreover, employers can evaluate employees' perception of interactional justice regularly via performance appraisal or survey.*

*Keywords: Feedback seeking behavior; interactional justice; organizational citizenship behavior; voice behavior*

### ABSTRAK

*Penyelidikan awal mendapati bahawa pekerja yang mencari maklum balas biasanya mempunyai prestasi kerja yang lebih baik. Tetapi mengapa pencari maklum balas bersikap proaktif setelah menerima maklum balas dari penyelia mereka? Soalan ini mendorong penyelidikan semasa. Tujuan makalah ini adalah untuk meneroka pengantara penting, iaitu keadilan interaksi, yang menjelaskan mengapa pencari maklum balas termotivasi untuk bertindak secara proaktif. Kami menggunakan teori ekuiti untuk memeriksa sama ada keadilan interaksi menjadi pengantara hubungan antara tingkah laku pencari maklum balas dan tingkah laku kewarganegaraan organisasi (OCB) dan tingkah laku suara. Untuk menguji hipotesis, kami menjalankan reka bentuk kajian panel dua masa dan mengumpulkan data menggunakan soal selidik di sebuah syarikat barang elektronik Taiwan. Menggunakan sampel 220 pekerja, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa keadilan interaksi merupakan hubungan yang hilang di antara tingkah laku pencari maklum balas dan OCB dan tingkah laku suara. Kajian ini meningkatkan pengetahuan dengan mewujudkan persekitaran yang membolehkan orang ramai mendapatkan maklum balas secara bebas. Tambahan lagi, majikan dapat menilai persepsi pekerja tentang keadilan interaksi secara berkala melalui penilaian prestasi atau tinjauan.*

*Kata kunci: Tingkah laku pencari maklum balas; keadilan interaksi; tingkah laku kerakyatan organisasi; tingkah laku suara.*

### INTRODUCTION

In 1983, Ashford and Cummings have claimed that feedback information is not only an organizational resource given to employees by leaders during performance-appraisal evaluations, but also an individual resource available to employees who can proactively seek the feedback in their time of need at workplace. Based on this novel viewpoint of conceptualizing feedback, the notion of feedback-seeking behavior has emerged and defined as “conscious

devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behaviors for attaining valued end states (Ashford 1986; Ashford & Cummings 1983).” Individuals use different tactics including inquiry, monitoring, and indirect inquiry to seek feedback (Ashford, De Stobbeleir & Nujella 2016) and seeking feedback directly helps employees to understand how others (e.g., supervisors and peers) view their work performance, their job roles in different situations, and how to manage their career path (Tsui & Ashford 1994; VandeWalle et al. 2000).

In a fast-paced dynamically changing business environment, employees are constantly dealing with works with many uncertainties. To effectively achieve work goals, increase personal competencies, and respond quickly to environmental changes, it is not enough for employees to wait for feedback information from their supervisors (Ashford, Blatt & VandeWalle 2003). Empirically, researchers have paid great attention to the consequences of feedback seeking behavior including job attitude (Ashford & Black 1996; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller 2000) and work behavior (Nifadkar, Tsui & Ashforth 2012). Moreover, feedback seeking behavior can also increase the seeker's job performance such as management effectiveness (Ashford & Tsui 1991), task performance (Dahling, Chau & O'Malley 2012), grade performance (Hwang & Arbaugh 2006), as well as motivate feedback seekers' extra-role behaviors such as creative performance (De Stobbeleir et al. 2011) and organizational citizenship behavior (Whitaker & Levy 2012).

While researchers have made a great contribution to examine the effects of feedback-seeking behavior on work performance and behavior, they also started to pay attention to the mediating mechanisms (i.e., mediators) through which feedback seeking may relate to desired work outcomes. To respond to the calling of Ashford et al. (2003), scholars adopted different viewpoints by considering a variety of mediators such as feedback-based goal setting (Renn & Fedor 2001), leader-member exchange (LMX; Lam et al. 2007), role clarity (Whitaker, Dahling & Levy 2007; Whitaker & Levy 2012), self-awareness (Asumeng 2013), top management team potency (Ashford et al. 2017), and learning about employees (Sherf, Gajendran & Posner 2020) to explain why feedback seekers have better performance or perform extra-role behavior.

As noted above, the literature of feedback seeking behavior on the mediation effects mainly focuses on developing a more accurate view of one's ability or role, obtaining more information about the discrepancy between the goal and actual performance, and establishing high-quality relationship with supervisors. In other words, these mediators concern more about feedback seekers' own understanding toward their job scopes and their relationships with supervisors. But little is known from the view of the interaction between feedback seekers and their supervisors. There exists a research gap between feedback seeking behavior and work behavior. What is the impact of feedback seekers on the target of seeking (Ashford et al. 2016)? Can employees experience justice in the process of seeking feedback from supervisors?

Based on the research question mentioned above, this study aims to gain better understanding and be responsive to the Ashford et al. (2016) call by integrating the literature on feedback-seeking and organizational justice. Several studies have shown that there is impact of subordinates' character or behavior on fair exchanges

(Korsgaard, Roberson & Rymph 1998). For example, employee's charisma was found to have affected supervisor's sentiments which indirectly increased the subordinate's perception of interactional justice (Scott, Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan 2007). Moreover, employee's assertive communication tactics were evident of causing supervisors to treat employees with greater fairness (Korsgaard et al. 1998). This research contributes to the literature in two ways, First, we adopt the perspective of equity theory (Adams 1963) to explain why feedback seekers tend to perform organizational citizenship behavior and voice behavior via perceived fairness from their supervisors. Second, this paper extends the existing literature by integrating feedback-seeking and organizational justice and examining how feedback seekers influence the way they are treated by the supervisor.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

#### *Feedback Seeking Behavior*

Before 1983, scholars considered feedback as an organizational resource that managers give employees feedback to identify their strength and weakness in their jobs and to communicate the organization's expectation to improve organizational effectiveness. That means employees are playing passive roles in receiving feedbacks. However, Ashford and Cummings (1983) proposed a new perspective that feedback is an individual resource, so that employees can proactively seek for feedback information, not just passively waiting for feedback.

By definition, feedback seeking is the effort to ascertain the appropriateness and adequacy of personal performance to reach various goals (Ashford & Cummings 1983; Millward, Asumeng & McDowall 2010). In addition to that, feedback seeking behavior is an important self-regulation tactic that can reduce the discrepancy between the current situation and the desired outcomes (Ashford & Tsui 1991; Asumeng 2013) and obtain information regarding performance evaluation (Ashford & Black 1996; Devloo, Anseel & De Beuckelaer 2011). Employees can directly ask for feedback (inquiry) or indirectly seek feedback information by observing cues at workplace about the self (monitoring), and such information is related to organizational and individual goals (Ashford & Cummings 1983; Larson 1989) and can be a day-to-day and informal performance feedback (Krasman 2013).

Feedback can come from various sources such as coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates (Ashford & Tsui 1991; Callister, Kramer & Turban 1999; De

Stobbeleir, Ashford & Buyens 2011). Because managers are familiar with various work areas and organizational regulations, in most feedback seeking researches, immediate supervisors are the most common target for seeking feedback (Chen, Lam & Zhong 2007; Lam, Huang & Snape 2007; Whitaker & Levy 2012). Hence, this research focuses on feedback seeking behavior through verbal communication asking supervisors to provide work performance and behavior-related information.

### *Interactional Justice*

Before the emerging of interactional justice, some scholars attempted to explain the difference between the interactional justice and procedural justice. Unlike procedural justice, interactional justice emphasizes the interpersonal aspect of the procedures (Colquitt, Greenberg & Zapata-Phelan 2005) and the perception of justice in interpersonal communication (Bies & Moag 1986). According to Bies and Moag's (1986), there are four aspects which describe the essence of interactional justice. Below are the definitions: (1) trustfulness: in the communication process, the power holder must be open-minded, honest and having straight-forward attitude without any falsehood. (2) justification: the powerholder should provide a suitable explanation on the decisions made. (3) respect: the power holder must treat others with sincerity and appropriateness. (4) propriety: the powerholder should avoid favoritism and inquire of inappropriate questions such as race and religion. Besides, interactional justice focuses on the fairness of everyday interactions and encounters between the leader and the subordinate in organizations (Bies 2001).

### *Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCBO and OCBI)*

Organizational Citizenship is employees' extra-role behavior (Katz 1964). As OCB is employees' spontaneous behavior, it is not included in the job description. Therefore, when employees unconditionally perform OCB, it will benefit specific organizational members and help in the operation of the company (Organ, 1997). If the contents of OCB are organization-centered or have a direct relationship with the organizational operation, and able to assist the company to maintain high effectiveness and efficacy, it can be called Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards Organization (OCBO). One such example is when employees are unable to come to work, they will voluntarily give advance notice (Williams & Anderson 1991).

In addition to OCBO, another type of OCB is Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards Individual (OCBI). The target of OCBI is work colleagues and managers. OCBI brings immediate benefits to

other employees and in a way helps to improve the organization's overall effectiveness. For example, when a coworker is absent, an employee may voluntarily offer assistance to help his or her coworker to accomplish the unfinished tasks (Williams & Anderson 1991). Such helping behavior promotes the good interpersonal relationship with other coworkers in their organizations (Van Dyne & LePine 1998).

### *Voice Behavior*

The proactive behavior literature shows that employee voice behavior is a commonly discussed research topic (Liang, Farh & Farh 2012; Ng & Feldman 2012). It is not included in the job description and is also one of the discretionary behaviors (Van Dyne, Cummings & Parks 1995). The purpose of employees' voice behavior is for changing and improving status quo for the betterment of the organization. As such whether it is a novel idea or a kind of solution, it is always constructive (Van Dyne & LePine 1998). Moreover, employee voice behavior usually possesses risks because not every comment of employees and proposed improvement are accepted by others (Van Dyne & LePine 1998). Some may lead to embarrassment (Milliken, Morrison & Hewlin 2003) and some may be labeled negatively (Milliken et al. 2003), others may lead to a damaged interpersonal relationship (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

## THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

### *Feedback Seeking Behavior and OCBO*

When employees proactively approach their supervisors seeking performance-related feedback, they can understand the supervisors' expected way of doing things and the desired work value, attitude, and behavior which enable the employees to use more effective ways to complete their work and meet the expectation of supervisors or organizations. The feedback information provided by supervisors can be perceived by employees as helping behaviors which make the employees feel obligated to reciprocate in kind (Whitaker & Levy 2012). Based on the reciprocal social exchange process, employees who seek feedback from their supervisors will work conscientiously without making mistakes, follow the rules of company even when no one is paying attention, and try to solve the problems from the company's perspective although their effort and hard work go beyond their job scopes. Thus, in this research, we propose that the more employees seek for feedback information, the greater they perform OCBO (Anseel et al. 2015; Whitaker & Levy 2012). We, therefore, tested the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1a</sub> Feedback seeking behavior is positively related to OCBO.

#### *Feedback Seeking Behavior and OCBI*

When employees proactively seek feedback from their supervisors on how well they are getting along with other organizational members, the feedback information allows employees to better understand if people like working with them and their interpersonal interactions with colleagues. In organizations, employees are not only required to perform their job well but also to achieve the social expectation of the manager towards employees. Similar to OCBO, the provision of feedback motivates the employees to think beyond their job scope and proactively offer help to other coworkers to solve their problems due to the sense of obligation (Nifadkar et al. 2012; Whitaker & Levy 2012). Accordingly, we propose that feedback seekers are more likely to share the workload of their peers and assist the new colleagues to adjust well at work. Hence, we predict:

H<sub>1b</sub> Feedback seeking behavior is positively related to OCBI.

#### *Feedback seeking behavior and voice behavior*

Feedback seekers are usually able to know their work performance (VandeWalle et al. 2000) and the discrepancy between their work situation and expected target (Ashford & Cummings 1983). Because of the feedback information given by the supervisors, the employees feel obligated to give in return by providing constructive suggestions that can improve the work procedure. Additionally, we also suggest that employees who seek feedback might have the ability to find out the potential problems and have confidence to speak out because they possess valuable feedback information; therefore, seeking feedback stimulates voice behavior (Qian et al. 2018). Accordingly, we suggest that the feedback seekers are more willing to perform voice behavior. Hence, we tested the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1c</sub> Feedback seeking behavior is positively related to voice behavior.

#### *The Mediating Role of Interactional Justice between Feedback Seeking Behavior and OCBO*

Research on organizational justice, procedural justice and distributive justice often take place when there is an exchange of resources between employees and the organization while interactional justice takes place when there is an interactional encounter between employees and the supervisors (Bies 2005; Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen 2002; Scott et al., 2007). The latter emphasizes justice in the communication process (Bies & Moag 1986).

In this paper, we adopt equity theory (Adams 1963) to study the interactional justice as a mediator that explains the relationship between feedback seeking behavior and OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior. On the basis of equity theory (Adams 1963), what employee receive for their work has an impact on their work behavior. Therefore, it is necessary to strike a balance (justice) between their input (feedback information from supervisor) and output (OCBI, OCBO and voice behavior). The assumption is that through feedback seeking, one may receive favorable information which serves as an “input” that would result in desirable “output”.

Accordingly, feedback-seeking behavior enables supervisors to provide sufficient explanation to employees on the performance evaluation. Supervisors will not conceal any information but truthfully reveal the evaluation outcome regardless whether it is positive or negative. Because supervisors can provide correct feedback information and sufficient and detailed explanation, the employees are likely to perceive interactional justice. When employees have perceived interactional justice, they then analyze and solve problems from the perspective of the supervisors. They will not only look for any answer but the best approach. They will not simply finish the given tasks but try their best to get it done well. It is such working attitude that benefits the day-to-day operation in organizations (Fassina, Jones & Uggerslev 2008). For example, the employees that have perceived interactional justice will only leave office after work is completed, treasure company resources, and apply for leave beforehand when they know they cannot come to work. They will take necessary actions that benefit the company. This research posits that interactional justice plays a mediating role between feedback seeking behavior and OCBO. Hence, we predict:

H<sub>2a</sub> Interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and OCBO.

#### *The Mediating Role of Interactional Justice between Feedback Seeking Behavior and OCBI*

When employees seek feedback from their supervisors on their interpersonal relationship, the supervisors will give feedback with respect and sincerity. If an employee is found to perform poorly in an interpersonal relationship, the supervisor would not rebuke harshly but to provide constructive solutions without favoritism. Such behavior will enable employees to feel connected to the supervisors and are willing to grow and learn together and to work harder for the success of the company. Based on equity theory (Adams, 1963), when employees perceived their treatment to be fair in the process of seeking feedback, the perceived interactional justice will motivate them to be willing to serve others including spending personal time and energy to help the needs of other coworkers and the supervisors. Empirically, the subordinate’s behavior



can shape a person’s perception of justice (Korsgaard et al. 1998). Therefore, it is posited that interactional justice plays a mediating role between feedback seeking behavior and OCBI.

H<sub>2b</sub> Interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and OCBI.

*The Mediating Role of Interactional Justice Between Feedback Seeking Behavior and Voice Behavior*

When employees seek feedback information, the message they are trying to convey is they are actively seeking to reduce and eliminate the uncertainties involved in work. For example, to identify whether approach A or approach B is more appropriate in solving a problem, the employees also want to know their progress, and these behaviors of the employees lead the supervisors to have an open and honest discussion with their subordinates on their work performance and to provide detailed explanation on their performance feedback. From the viewpoint of equity theory (Adams 1963), such detailed and clear information makes feedback seekers perceive strong interactional justice, and helps employees to propose their ideas especially ideas that help to meet work target. Even though the suggestions may not be accepted by all members in the organization, they are still willing to share their new perspective or practical solution that improves the current approach. Therefore, we predict that interactional justice plays a mediating role between feedback seeking behavior and voice behavior.

H<sub>2c</sub> Interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and voice behavior.

Figure 1 indicates the conceptual model of the relationship between feedback seeking behavior, interactional justice, OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior.

METHODS

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

We recruited the participants through the fourth author who was the consultant in an electronic goods company in Taiwan. She briefed the top managers via presentations about the purpose of the study and the benefits for the company to obtain the top managers’ support and trust to conduct the study. With the managers’ supports, we were given the permission to conduct a survey using two-time-period panel research design and collect the data using questionnaires. There were 705 employees in total. Based on the willingness of employees, there were 416 questionnaires obtained in the first stage. For the second stage, 394 employees participated in it. There were only 234 employees who completed both surveys. Out of 234 matched questionnaires, 220 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 31% (220/705).

All full-time employees were asked to participate in this research. The employees are requested to complete the online questionnaires anonymously during working hours through the Enterprise Information Portal (EIP) of their company where they need to log in using their employee ID and the password. The employees were told that all the information they filled out were kept private and confidential. The survey was open for one week for those who were willing to participate.

To decrease the threat of common method variance or CMV (Podsakoff et al. 2003), we conducted a survey in two different stages using the same questionnaire. All participants were asked to evaluate their feedback seeking behavior, perceived interactional justice, OCBO, OCBI and voice behavior in two online questionnaires. For the tests of hypotheses, the data of feedback seeking behavior and perceived interactional justice were taken from the first stage, whereas the data of OCBO, OCBI and voice behavior were taken from the second stage. There were 416 questionnaires obtained in the first stage. For the second stage, 394 employees participated in it.

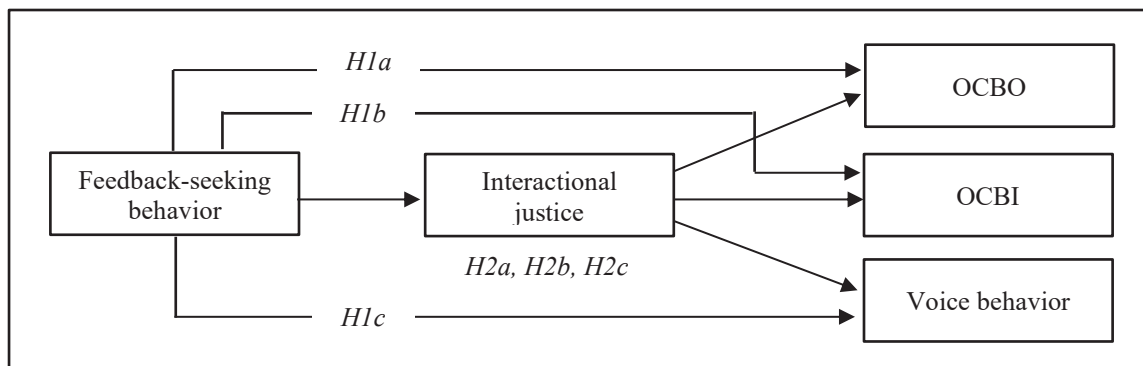


FIGURE 1. Hypothesized model of the research framework

There were only 234 employees who completed both surveys. Out of 234 matched questionnaires, 220 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 31% because there were 705 full-time employees in total.

We also obtained demographic variables from the participants, including gender, age, level of education, organizational tenure, the length of the supervisor-subordinate relationship and department in the company. In this study, the demographic variables are weakly related to major variables based on the results of regression analysis. Therefore, we did not consider the demographic variables as control variables in the tests of hypotheses for little control occurs (Carlson & Wu 2011).

#### MEASURES

##### *Feedback Seeking Behavior*

A 7-item scale validated by Teng (2015) was used. The sample items are "I ask for feedback from my supervisor regarding my overall work performance," "I ask for feedback from my supervisor regarding his/her role expectations of me," and "I ask my supervisor if my colleagues like working with me." The Cronbach's alpha was .93.

##### *Interactional Justice*

The 9 items were adopted from Colquitt's (2001) scale. Sample items are "my supervisor's explanations regarding the procedures are reasonable," "my supervisor is candid in his/her communications with me," "my supervisor treats me in a polite manner" and "my supervisor refrains from improper remarks or comments." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of interactional justice was .96.

##### *OCBO and OCBI*

OCBO and OCBI were measured using the scales developed by Farh, Earley and Lin (1997). Sample items for OCBO are "I do not mind taking on new or challenging assignments" and "I comply with company rules and procedures even when nobody is watching, and no evidence can be traced" (3 items;  $\alpha = .72$ ). Sample items for OCBI are "I am willing to help colleagues solve work-related problems" and "I am willing to assist new colleagues in adjusting to the work environment" (3 items;  $\alpha = .87$ ).

##### *Voice behavior*

We measure voice behavior with six items adapted from Van Dyne and LePine (1998). Sample items are "I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect my company" and "I get involved in issues that affect the quality of work-life here in my company." The Cronbach's alpha was .84.

All the measures above, including feedback seeking behavior, interactional justice, OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior, are scored on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 6 = "strongly agree"). All items used in this research were in Chinese. We adopted the method of back translation to assure equivalence of the measures in the Chinese and the English versions.

#### CONVERGENT VALIDITY

To test for the convergent validity of our major study variables, we performed a series of factor analyses to calculate average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) by using the values of factor loading ( $\lambda$ ). Table 1 shows that the values of AVE and CR exceed the recommended level of 0.50 and 0.70 respectively and the result suggests good convergent validity (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2011).

#### CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

To examine the distinctiveness of our focal research variables, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis and made a comparison between the hypothesized five-factor model (i.e., five focal variables) and other possible models on various fitness indicators including  $\chi^2$ , degree of freedom, SRMR, RMSEA, TLI, and CFI. Table 2 shows that the five-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 1283.49$ ;  $df = 340$ ; SRMR = .07; RMSEA = .11; CFI = .76; NNFI = .79) fitted better than other competing models.

### RESULTS

#### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics, reliability estimates, and correlations of all focal variables are shown in Table 3. There is a significant correlation between feedback seeking behavior and interactional justice. Feedback seeking behavior correlated significantly with three outcome variables (i.e., OCBO, OCBI, voice behavior).

#### TESTS OF HYPOTHESES

Figure 2 shows path coefficients which are parameter estimates for the hypothesized mediation model in the present study.

Table 4 presents the results of hierarchical regression analysis of the hypotheses. As shown in Table 3, Model 2, Model 4, and Model 6 present the effects of feedback seeking behavior on OCBO ( $\beta = .19$ ;  $p < .001$ ), OCBI ( $\beta = .17$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and voice behavior ( $\beta = .18$ ;  $p < .001$ ) respectively. Hence, Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c were supported.

Following the steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to test the mediation model. First, feedback seeking

TABLE 1. Test of convergent validity

Variable	Item	$\lambda$	AVE	CR	Variable	Item	$\lambda$	AVE	CR		
Feedback seeking behavior	FSB1	0.877	0.783	0.961	OCBO	OCBO1	0.802	0.643	0.844		
	FSB2	0.883				OCBO2	0.820				
	FSB3	0.869				OCBO3	0.783				
	FSB4	0.833			OCBI	OCBI1	0.874			0.795	0.921
	FSB5	0.904				OCBI2	0.925				
	FSB6	0.917				OCBI3	0.874				
	FSB7	0.907				Voice behavior	Voice1				
Interactional justice	IJ1	0.848	0.752	0.964	Voice2	0.707					
	IJ2	0.908			Voice3	0.787					
	IJ3	0.886			Voice4	0.822					
	IJ4	0.877			Voice5	0.700					
	IJ5	0.874			Voice6	0.793					
	IJ6	0.890									
	IJ7	0.898									
	IJ8	0.900									
	IJ9	0.702									

TABLE 2. Comparison of measurement models<sup>1</sup>

Model	Description	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	SRMR	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
1	Five-factor model <sup>2</sup> (Hypothesized model)	1283.49	340	3.77	0.07	0.11	0.76	0.79
2	One-factor model <sup>3</sup>	2859.92	350	8.17	0.19	0.18	0.39	0.43
3	Four-factor model <sup>4</sup>	1323.43	344	3.85	0.07	0.11	0.75	0.77
4	Three-factor model <sup>5</sup>	1378.75	347	3.97	0.07	0.12	0.74	0.76
5	Two-factor model <sup>6</sup>	2089.91	349	5.99	0.13	0.15	0.57	0.61
6	Two-factor model <sup>7</sup>	2137.07	349	6.12	0.15	0.15	0.56	0.59
7	Two-factor model <sup>8</sup>	2175.13	349	6.23	0.17	0.15	0.55	0.58

Note:

<sup>1</sup>n = 220. SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index.

<sup>2</sup>Five-factors: feedback seeking behavior, interactional justice, OCBO, OCBI, voice behavior.

<sup>3</sup>One-factors: all five variables combined.

<sup>4</sup>Four-factors: feedback seeking behavior; interactional justice; OCBO and OCBI combined; voice behavior.

<sup>5</sup>Three-factors: feedback seeking behavior; interactional justice; OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior combined.

<sup>6</sup>Two-factors: feedback seeking behavior and interactional justice combined; OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior combined.

<sup>7</sup>Two-factors: feedback seeking behavior, OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior combined; interactional justice.

<sup>8</sup>Two-factors: feedback seeking behavior; interactional justice, OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior combined.

TABLE 3. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities<sup>1</sup>

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Feedback seeking	3.66	.96	(.93)				
2. Interactional justice	4.48	.80	.41***	(.96)			
3. OCBO	4.62	.69	.26***	.30***	(.72)		
4. OCBI	4.84	.66	.25***	.23***	.63***	(.87)	
5. Voice behavior	4.31	.70	.25***	.24*	.64***	.63***	(.84)

Note: <sup>1</sup>n = 220. \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

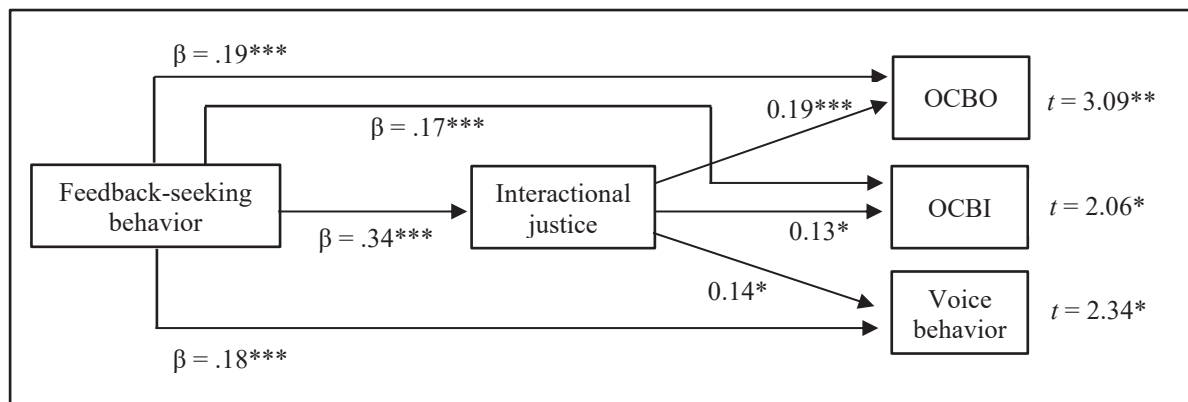


FIGURE 2. Hypothesized model including path coefficients and t-test statistics

behavior was positively related to OCBO. Second, Model 1 shows that the effect of feedback seeking behavior on interactional justice was significant ( $\beta = .34$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Third, the relationship between interactional justice and OCBO was significant ( $\beta = .19$ ;  $p < .001$ ) as shown in Model 3. Finally, when interactional justice (the mediator) is entered into the regression model, the extent of significance between feedback seeking behavior and OCBO diminishes ( $\beta = .12$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Also, we used the Sobel test to examine the mediation effects (Preacher & Hayes 2008). The result of the Sobel test shows that interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and OCBO ( $t = 3.09$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Accordingly, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

In support of Hypothesis 2b, when interactional justice was included in Model 5, the main effect of feedback seeking behavior on OCBI vanished ( $\beta = .13$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The Sobel test also shows that interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and OCBI ( $t = 2.06$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Hypothesis 2c proposes that interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and voice behavior. As shown in Model 7, when voice behavior was regressed simultaneously on both feedback seeking behavior and interactional justice, interactional justice had a significant effect on voice behavior ( $\beta = .14$ ;  $p < .05$ ) whereas the effect of feedback seeking behavior on voice behavior vanished ( $\beta = .13$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The Sobel test also shows that interactional justice mediates the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and voice behavior ( $t = 2.34$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 2c was supported.

## DISCUSSION

Many researchers have made a considerable contribution by examining the positive effect of feedback seeking behavior on work performance and behavior (Ashford et al. 2016). In this study, we investigate the positive relationship between feedback seeking behavior and

proactive behavior (i.e., OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior). Based on the reciprocal social exchange process, feedback seekers have a sense of obligation to reciprocate in kind after obtaining the feedback information and explanations from their supervisors which are related to their work performance, supervisors' expectations, and interpersonal interactions with other members at work. Because of this obligation, they are willing to take challengeable tasks, spend time on helping new coworkers, and encourage colleagues to involve in matters that affect the operation of the company.

Feedback seeking behavior scholars have called for more research on the mediating role between feedback seeking behavior and desired work outcome (Anseel et al. 2015; Ashford et al. 2003). There have been several studies that responded to the call to examine the impact of an individual's feedback-seeking efforts on other organizational members' perception towards the feedback seeker (Ashford et al. 2017; Sherf et al. 2020). However, little is known from the view of organizational justice. In response to the calling of existing studies, we took a closer look at the consequences of feedback seeking behavior by integrating research on organizational justice into feedback seeking behavior literature. By doing so, we provide a greater insight on how feedback seekers could influence how they are treated by their supervisor through the perspective of equity theory. According to our research finding, we found that employees are able to experience justice through the process of seeking feedback from their supervisors. It shows that feedback seekers can play active roles to influence the fairness treatment of their supervisors. Such perception of interactional justice motivates feedback seekers to perform extra-role behaviors (i.e., OCBO and OCBI) and voice behavior which are the desired work outcomes.

## Theoretical implications

This paper contributes to the study of feedback seeking behavior in two ways. First, by using equity theory



TABLE 4. Results of regression analysis for the mediation model<sup>1</sup>

Variables	IJ		OCBO		OCBI		Voice Behavior	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	
FS	.34***	.19***	.12*	.17***	.13**	.18***	.13*	
IJ			.19***		.13*		.14*	
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.07	.11	.06	.08	.06	.08	
F value	43.35***	16.11***	13.65***	14.72***	9.82***	13.96***	9.77***	
$\Delta R^2$	.17	.07	.04	.06	.02	.06	.02	
$\Delta F$ value	43.35***	16.11***	10.49	14.72***	4.67*	13.96***	5.29*	
Sobel test		t=3.09** (.02) <sup>2</sup>		t=2.06* (.02)		t=2.34* (.02)		

Note: <sup>1</sup>n = 220. FS = Feedback Seeking Behavior; IJ = Interactional Justice. <sup>2</sup> Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

(Adams 1963), we were able to open a black box to assess the mediation effect of feedback seeking behavior on OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior. This contributes to a better understanding of feedback seeking behavior literature. Second, we also discover the important antecedent of interactional justice. Therefore, this research has a contribution to literature of interactional justice as well. More specifically, feedback seekers can influence their supervisors to willingly provide accurate information and detailed explanation in the decision-making process of the company, and to treat employees with sincerity and respect. Ultimately, this may encourage employee to perform well in OCBI, OCBO and voice behavior.

#### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

We contribute to the practical implications in a number of ways. First, to the employees, proactive feedback seeking behavior can help them to obtain fair treatment from their supervisors. When employees perceive high interactional justice, they are more willing to contribute towards OCBO, OCBI and voice behavior. Accordingly, the organization can create a friendly proactive feedback seeking atmosphere at the workplace to increase proactive behavior among employees. The more the employee displays feedback seeking behavior, the more OCB and voice behavior the organization can expect.

Second, since perceived interactional justice is an important element in the process of seeking feedback, organizations can seek to understand the interactional justice perception of the employees through questionnaire or interview. If the supervisor finds out that some employees are rated low in interactional justice perception, the organization can conduct individual or group discussion to find out the reasons and take appropriate actions to encourage feedback seeking and provide consultation if required. This is to ensure that there is sufficient feedback (input) that can motivate the proactive behavior (output) when one perceives fairness.

Third, after the employees adopt feedback seeking behavior and obtain the work-specific feedback information, they will be more motivated to voice out their own opinions and suggestions which may help further improve work processes. In other words, in the process of interpersonal communication, feedback seeking behavior is about proactively seeking and obtaining information whereas voice behavior is about providing a suggestion. If the organizations wish to hear more constructive suggestions, they should create a safe and mutual communication platform so that employees will feel more comfortable to seek feedback and to share their valuable suggestions (Fedor, Rensvold & Adams 1992; VandeWalle & Cummings 1997).

#### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like any study, this study is not without limitation. Regarding the research sample, we collected the data through a questionnaire in one company. Although this research design can eliminate nuisance since all participants came from the same organization, this research has limitation in external validity when we try to generalize our research findings to other populations. Therefore, future studies may consider collecting data in various organizations or from different industries.

Second, the employees were asked to evaluate both feedback seeking behavior and three outcome variables at two stages, the influence of common method variance may exist due to the same source data. Thus, for future studies, we suggest asking supervisors to evaluate their subordinates' feedback seeking behavior, and to ask employees to evaluate their OCBO, OCBI, and voice behavior.

Third, it is assumed that feedback seekers will definitely receive feedback information from their supervisors. But, whether or not such information is provided by supervisor needs further examination in future study (Anseel et al. 2015).

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