Employees as advocates or adversaries during a corporate crisis. The role of perceived authenticity and employee empowerment[1]

Alessandra Mazzei - Jeong-Nam Kim - Gianluca Togna - Yeunjae Lee - Alessandro Lovari

Abstract

Purpose of the paper: this study investigates the impact of organization perceived authentic behaviors, employee empowerment and quality of organization-employee relationship on employees' positive megaphoning during crisis situations, i.e. the voluntary information forwarded regarding organizational accomplishments.

Methodology: a survey was administered on 306 current employees who are working full-time in a semiconductor company in Italy (LFoundry, Avezzano, AQ-Italy), where a corporate crisis was ongoing by the time the research was conducted.

Results: results suggest that both organizations' authentic behavior and employee empowerment increased the likelihood of positive megaphoning and reduced intentions of negative megaphoning regarding a corporate crisis. Furthermore, it was found a significant mediation impact of the organization-employee relationship on employee behaviors regarding an organizational crisis.

Research limitations: the study is a single organization one, therefore further research is required to confirm findings in different countries and companies.

Practical implications: companies should invest on the levers of interpersonal relationships, empowerment and the authenticity of the organization not only because they allow to improve the organizational climate in a moment of ordinary organizational life, but especially because they encourage the employees' active alliance in the event of crises. In a crisis situation, organizations' authentic actions are likely to be more powerful than their words, or even individuals' intrinsic motivation.

Originality of the paper: this paper contributes to theory development in the field of internal crisis communication, showing that during crisis situations, organizational effort and perceived organizational authenticity are a better predictor of positive megaphoning than employee empowerment and intrinsic motivation.

Key words: internal communication; employee communication behavior; megaphoning; perceived authenticity; empowerment; internal crisis communication

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1. Introduction

Scholars have long emphasized the role of employees and their behaviors for organizational effectiveness. For example, in business and organizational behavior literatures, concepts such as employees voice and silence (Morrison, 2014; Van Dyne *et al.*, 2003) or organization-citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Organ, 1988) have been examined extensively. Recently, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to how to manage employees internally to foster their performance externally (Santos-Vijande *et al.*, 2013), recognizing a significant role of members' behaviors for corporate reputation. Helm (2011) noted that what employees say about their organization or the way they behave have the power to make external publics perceive an organization positively or negatively. To avoid the risk of not expressing its identity and not surviving, every company should express its culture and personality on the basis of its shared values and act ethically (Baccarani and Golinelli, 2015), evidently through people that belong to it: employees.

In this sense, the role of employees' communication behaviors (ECB) has been emphasized across the disciplines. In particular, applied communication researchers have recently introduced a concept, *megaphoning*, capturing employees' external behaviors about their organization (Kim and Rhee, 2011).

Employees' behaviors are especially important during the periods of corporate crises. Internal communication has been indicated as a significant factor for issue management (Frandsen and Johansen, 2011; Johansen *et al.*, 2012). It is also helpful for preventing a crisis, minimizing damage and producing positive outcomes (Mazzei *et al.*, 2012), and it is even regarded as a solution to corporate problems (Taylor, 2010). In particular, employees' intentions of disclosing positive or negative information about the company and a crisis situation in their personal network play a critical role in managing corporate reputation and resilience (Kim and Rhee, 2011) and for brand co-creation (Mazzei *et al.*, 2017).

Despite its strategic significance, little research has provided a comprehensive approach to understand what organizational efforts affect employees' communicative behaviors in a crisis situation. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to develop a model of employee behaviors during a crisis and test its utility. By building a link among organizational authenticity, employee empowerment, and organization-employee relationships, the study aims to understand how organizational factors affect employees' communicative actions-megaphoning-during the periods of an organizational issue.

The paper is organized as follow. The first section discusses the literature review on employee communication behavior, corporate crisis and employee megaphoning, organizational authenticity, employee empowerment, and organizational-employee relationship at the basis of the research model. The second section presents the research methodology, while the subsequent discusses findings. The paper concludes with a section devoted to the discussion regarding the theoretical developments and a concluding section on managerial and research implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Communication Behaviors (ECB)

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Management and organizational behavior scholars have investigated diverse types of employee communication behaviors (ECB) and the individual and organizational efforts sustaining them. Organ (1988) correlated employees' organizational pro-social or citizenship-type behaviors with individuals' job satisfaction, and Mayer and Gavin (2005) showed that trust in management originates with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Crant (2000) referred to employee proactive behavior, which consists of in- or extra-role anticipatory actions that employees willingly take. Employee voice behaviors that employees seek to make constructive changes via discretionary and risk-taking efforts, and its related constructs (e.g., issue selling, upward communication, pro-social organizational behaviours, and leadership) have been identified in numerous business and psychology studies (Budd *et al.*, 2010; Lavelle *et al.* 2010; Morrison, 2014). Grant and Ashford (2008) underlined the increasing importance of employee proactivity for organizations and elaborated an integrated framework of organizational and individual antecedents. Also, marketing literature focuses on employee communicative behavior aligned with the brand positioning of the company when interacting with customers (Sirianni *et al.*, 2013).

In the meantime, communication researchers have also begun to explore employee communication behaviors (ECB) that affect public relations outcomes. Kim and Rhee (2011) conceptualized megaphoning, defined as "the likelihood of employees' voluntary information forwarding or information sharing about organizational strengths (accomplishments) or weaknesses (problems)" (p. 246). By adopting information forwarding and sharing variables from the Situational Theory of Problem-Solving (Kim and Grunig, 2011), Kim and Rhee (2011) captured both employees' positive and negative external communication behaviors about their organization. While earlier concepts such as employee voice or pro-social behaviors describe consequences of employee behaviors for changing organizational governance, megaphoning is differentiated in that it conceptualizes their daily communicative behaviors towards people in individuals' personal network (e.g., family members, friends). Kim and Rhee (2011) additionally indicated that developing a good relationship with employees is a key factor that determines the direction of voluntary information behaviors. Subsequently, several scholars have identified the importance of megaphoning as an outcome of public relations. Men and Stacks (2013) argued that leadership style and employee empowerment behavior generate positive megaphoning. In a study in American and Italian companies (Mazzei, 2014), economic performance was considered as one of the most important outcomes of employees' communicative actions. Kang and Sung (2017) emphasized the importance of organizations' symmetrical communication efforts for increasing employees' positive communication behaviors.

2.2 Corporate Crisis, Internal Crisis Communication and Employee Megaphoning

Such behavior also creates opportunities to minimize organizational threats (Kim and Rhee, 2011). In particular, employees have played a critical role as advocates of their organization during the organizational crisis through their communicative actions (Coombs, 2000; Mazzei *et al.*, 2012; Rhee, 2008). To sustain employee advocacy during crises, are crucial internal communication, the quality of relationships (Mazzei *et al.*, 2012), and communication strategies that signal company's commitment (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2015). In crises situations, adequate and timely information affect employee trust and commitment toward the crisis resolution (David, 2011). But it is mainly based on a rational approach, while a more complex approach should help the understanding of employees (Heide and Simonsson, 2015). The internal perspective in the study of crisis communication focuses mostly on organizational preparedness, crisis leadership, and organizational learning (Bundy *et al.*, 2017). A new stream emphasizes the employees' communication with each other for sense-making during a crisis (Strandberg and Vigsø, 2016).

Taking into consideration the strategic value of employees' communicative behaviors in terms of organizational reputation during a corporate crisis, the study intends to explore organizational strategies to foster employees' communicative actions.

2.3 Strategies for ECB: organizational authenticity

Organizational authenticy is at the core of management and marketing studies (Sirianni *et al.*, 2013; Pattuglia and Mingione, 2017) especially in social mediated markets, where brand relationships emerge at the intersection of brand conversation and texts (Mandelli, 2012).

Since the introduction of megaphoning in applied communication literature, several scholars have explored diverse antecedents to understand employees' motivation to communicate. Among various communication trends in the 21st century, researchers and practitioners have noted the role of authenticity as an essential factor for successful organization-employee relationships (Lee and Kim, 2017; Men and Stacks, 2014; Shen and Kim, 2012) in an organizational context. Scholars in management and communication disciplines have emphasized authenticity as an important trait of leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Men and Stacks, 2014; Wang and Hsieh, 2013; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014). Authentic leadership is a process that stems from psychological capacities and organizational context and results in self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates (Luthans and Avolio, 2003).

Highlighting the behaviors necessary for an organization to be perceived as an authentic company, Shen and Kim (2012) identified three components of authenticity: truthfulness, transparency, and consistency. *Truthfulness* means that an organization should be true to itself, and it includes an organization's efforts to discover what the public wants, provides information continuously to publics, accepts feedback

and involves the public in organizational decision-making processes. *Transparency* indicates an organization's willingness to admit, accept, and learn from their mistakes objectively, and it is facilitated by symmetrical communication strategy in the organization. The last component of authentic organizational behavior is *consistency*. This indicates that the value, belief, and rhetoric of an organization should be in accordance with its behaviors.

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In communication contexts, linking authenticity with organizational outcomes, Shen and Kim (2012) determined that perceived authenticity of organizational behavior affects employees' messaging behavior and is mediated by the perceived quality of their relationship with the organization. Similarly, Men and Hung-Baesecke (2015) also contended that employees in a positive relationship with an organization with perceived authenticity and transparency are likely to become corporate advocates. Focusing on types of relationships between an organization and its employees, Lee and Kim (2017) found that organizations' authentic behavior was related to employees' perceived communal relationship and positive megaphoning, while it was negatively correlated with exchange relationship and their negative behaviors.

Based on prior literature, this study focused on an organization's authentic behavior as an organizational factor that may lead employees' information behaviors during periods of corporate crises. That is, the study predicts that when employees perceived that their organization's actions are trustful, transparent, and consistent, it is likely that they will engage in their communicative behaviors in a beneficial way for their organization when a corporate crisis is ongoing. The following hypotheses are thus suggested:

- *H1a. Employees' perceived authenticity of organizational behavior will increase their positive megaphoning during the crisis.*
- *H1b. Employees' perceived authenticity of organizational behavior will decrease their positive megaphoning during the crisis.*

2.4 Strategies for ECB: employee empowerment

While communication researchers have attempted to understand employee communication from the perspective of an organization's behavior, several business and psychology researchers have closely examined psychological factors to identify the antecedents of employee behaviors (Menon, 2001; Spreitzer, 1995; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Psychological empowerment, one of the significant predictors of employee behaviors in the workplace, is defined as a process of psychological state manifested in meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). *Meaning* refers to a sense of feeling that one's work is personally important. *Competence* indicates self-efficacy or belief in one's ability to successfully perform tasks. *Self-determination* refers to perceptions of freedom to choose how to initiate and carry out tasks. *Impact* represents the degree to which a person views his/her behaviors as making a difference in work outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995). These four indicators together are regarded as an enabling process that makes an employee initiate tasks and persist (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

In organizational contexts, employees' psychological empowerment and its antecedents and consequences have been extensively examined in various contexts. For example, Avolio *et al.* (2004) showed that transformational leadership affects employee empowerment, which in turn increases employees' organizational commitment. Similarly, Men and Stacks (2013) also found a significant impact of transformational leadership on employee empowerment as well as corporate reputation. Job characteristics and employees' work satisfaction have also been linked with employee empowerment (Liden *et al.*, 2000). Safari, Haghighi, Rastegar, and Jamshidi (2011) determined that psychological empowerment may predict employees' organizational learning.

However, little empirical research has attempted to link employees' psychological empowerment with their actual communicative actions in the extant literature. Thus, the present researchers theorized that employee empowerment may have an important influence on employees' willingness to engage in communication behaviors both in and out of the workplace, especially during a crisis. That is, when employees perceive their jobs are personally important and meaningful, they may forward or share positive information to others about their organization when the company is going through a challenging time. In addition, employees who believe that their behaviors can make a difference are more likely to spend time and energy advocating for their company and their own work during a time of organizational crises. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that individuals' psychological empowerment may directly affect their megaphoning behaviors. The following hypotheses thus are proposed:

- *H2a. Employee empowerment will increase their positive megaphoning behaviors during the crisis.*
- *H2b. Employee empowerment will decrease their negative megaphoning behaviors during the crisis.*

2.5 Mediator: organization-employee relationship

As a critical organizational outcome, perceived relationship quality between an organization and its employees is suggested as a mediator for increasing or decreasing employees' communication behaviors during a crisis.

To measure the organization-employee relationship, the study adopted the widely-used conceptualization of organization-public relationship (OPR) (Hon and Grunig, 1999) including four indicators of relational outcome-trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. *Trust* indicates an employee's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the company, and *control mutuality* refers to the degree to which employees agree on who, between the company and themselves, has the rightful power to influence the other. *Commitment* means the extent to which an employee believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. *Satisfaction* refers to the extent to which an employee feels favorably toward the company because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. Using this framework as a guideline, Men and Stacks (2014) defined the organization-employee

relationship as "the degree to which an organization and its employees trust one another, agree on who has the rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to the other (p. 307)".

Linking it with the organizational strategies and the consequence suggested in this study, prior studies have examined its linkage with organization-employee relationships. It has been closely linked with employees' organization-related behaviors (Kang and Sung, 2017; Kim and Rhee, 2011; Lee and Kim, 2017; Mazzei *et al.*, 2012) and organizations' authentic behaviors (Lee and Kim, 2017; Shen and Kim, 2012) as well as employee empowerment (Men, 2011; Park *et al.*, 2014).

Extending previous studies, this study aims to discover how perceived authenticity of an organization and employee empowerment leads to employees' megaphoning behaviors mediated by the organization-employee relationship in a crisis situation. Direct effects of relationship quality on employees' behaviors regarding a crisis were also posited. The current study thus proposes the following hypotheses:
- H3. *Employees' perceived authenticity of organizational behavior will be positively related to the quality of the organization-employee relationship.*
- H4. *Employee empowerment will be positively related to the quality of the organization-employee relationship.*
- H5. *Perceived quality of organization-employee relationship will a) increase employees' positive megaphoning and b) decrease negative megaphoning during the crisis.*

3. Methodology

As the study aims to understand employees' communication behaviors during periods of a corporate issue, this study selected a company experiencing an organizational crisis by the time when the research was conducted. By using a web-based survey tool to collect the data, employees who are currently working full-time in LFoundry, a semiconductor company in Italy, were invited to participate to the survey. At the time the participants participated in the survey, the company had been going through the following issue: the company had been sold to a new industrial group and a surplus of workable hours was declared, and consequently, some negative media coverage generated. With permission from a senior executive, employees were invited to take a web-based survey and guided to complete questions.

A sample of 762 employees was extracted from a population of 1581 employees. The sample was stratified using the following variables: a) supervisors/managers (101/158), b) professionals (200/327) and blue-collars (461/1096). Employees were randomly chosen.

Among 762 invitations, 326 employees completed the survey, and after deleting unanswered and incomplete responses, we had a final sample of 306, with a response rate of 40.2%. The final sample (N = 306) consisted of 15.7% females (n=48) and 84.3% males (n=258). Among the respondents, 18% (n=54) were managers, and 82% (n=252) were non-managers. Regarding years of work, 78% (n=237) of the respondents have worked in

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this company more than ten years and 22% (*n*=69) of them have worked 6-9 years. Age level of 40-59 comprised 41% (*n*=126) of the sample, followed by 30-39 (37%, *n*=113), 50-59 (19%, *n*=58), and 20-29 (2%, *n*=6).

The survey included 41 question items, adopted from previous studies. The questionnaire was originally developed in English, and a bilingual native Italian speaker translated it into Italian, and two other native Italian speakers carefully revised it to ensure translation accuracy. 5- point Likert scales were used for all items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of each variable and correlations are summarized in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Descriptives of latent variables (Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations)

	α	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive Megaphoning in Crisis	.826	3.68	0.58	1.00				
2.Negative Megaphoning in Crisis	.714	1.88	0.60	-.520**	1.00			
3. Organizational Authenticity	.900	3.40	0.66	.511**	-.542**	1.00		
4. Employee Empowerment	.834	3.81	0.46	.375**	-.364**	.369**	1.00	
5.Organization-Employee Relationship	.925	3.41	0.64	.489**	-.546**	.753**	.334**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at *p*<.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' elaboration

As a behavioral outcome, employees' positive megaphoning was measured with five items (Cronbach's α= 0.826), and five items (Cronbach's α= 0.714) were used to measure negative megaphoning behavior during the crisis. The items were adopted from Kim and Rhee (2011) and revised. A brief description of context (i.e., current corporate crisis) was given to the participants to answer the questions in a limited context. 12 items from Spreitzer (1995) were used for measuring employees' psychological empowerment (Cronbach's α=0.834): 3 items were used for meaning (Cronbach's α = 0.763), competence (Cronbach's α = 0.833), self-determination (Cronbach's α = 0.775), and impact (Cronbach's α = 0.864), respectively. For measuring perceived authenticity of organizational behavior, this study adopted seven items (Cronbach's α= 0.90) from Shen and Kim (2012), including truthfulness (2 items, Cronbach's α= 0.807), transparency (3 items, Cronbach's α= 0.798), and consistency (4 items, Cronbach's α = 0.770). To measure organization-employee relationships, a total of 12 items (Cronbach's α= 0.925) from Hon and Grunig (1999) were used-commitment (2 items, Cronbach's α= 0.873), trust (4 items, Cronbach's α= 0.825), control-mutuality (3 items, Cronbach's α= 0.790), and satisfaction (3 items, Cronbach's α= 0.816). Items are summarized in Appendix.

The hypotheses were tested with structural equation modeling (SEM) (Byrne, 1994; Kline, 2005) using Mplus program. Multiple criteria were

used to evaluate the goodness-of-model fit, including the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) indexes, which are a minimal set of fit indexes that should be reported and interpreted when reporting the results of SEM analyses (Kline, 2011).

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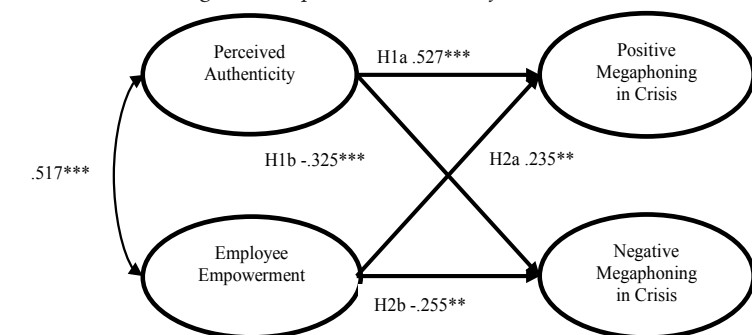
4. Findings

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that employees in this specific company reported a relatively high level of positive megaphoning behavior during a crisis ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.58$), and a low level of negative megaphoning ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.60$). In terms of organizational factors, employees tended to perceive a medium level of good relationship with their organization ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.64$), and a high level of empowerment ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.46$) in the workplace. Additionally, the participants perceived a medium level of authenticity of their company's behaviors ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.66$).

The hypothesized structural model displayed in Figure 1 demonstrated satisfactory fit to the data. The model showed a joint-fit criterion $\chi2_{df}(127) = 230.10$, CFI = .964, SRMR = .037, RMSEA = .052 (.041, .062), thus we proceeded to interpret the hypotheses.

The first model specified the direct paths from perceived authenticity and employee empowerment to their megaphoning behaviors. Hypotheses 1 posited that organizations' authentic behaviors influence employees' communicative behaviors in a corporate crisis. We found a significant positive path in H1a ($\beta = .527$, $p < .001$) and a negative path in H1b ($\beta = -.325$, $p < .001$). Thus, both hypotheses were supported. In H2, the study examined the impact of employee empowerment on megaphoning behaviors. It had a positive impact on positive megaphoning (H2a: $\beta = .235$, $p < .01$), and a negative effect on negative megaphoning (H2b: $\beta = -.255$, $p < .01$). H2a and H2b were thus both supported.

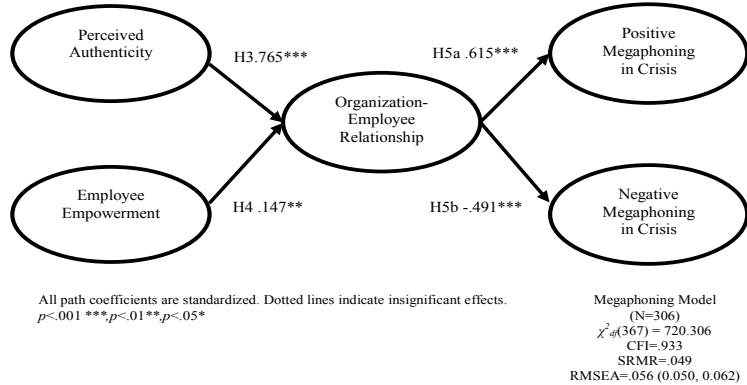*Fig. 1: Conceptual model and major results*

All path coefficients are standardized. Dotted lines indicate insignificant effects.
$p < .001 ***$, $p < .01 **$

Megaphoning Model
(N=306)
$\chi^2_{df}(127) = 230.10$
CFI=.964
SRMR=.037
RMSEA=.052 (0.041, 0.062)

Source: Authors' elaboration

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The second model in Figure 2 proposed the mediating effect of organization-employee relationship on employees' megaphoning behaviors during crises, and it also showed a good model-fit, $\chi2_{df}(367) = 720.306$, CFI = .933, SRMR = .049, RMSEA = .056 (.050, .062).

Fig. 2: Results of hypothesized model (mediation effect of organization-employee relationship)

All path coefficients are standardized. Dotted lines indicate insignificant effects.
$p<.001$ ***,$p<.01$**,$p<.05$*

Megaphoning Model
(N=306)
$\chi^2_{df}(367) = 720.306$
CFI=.933
SRMR=.049
RMSEA=.056 (0.050, 0.062)

Source: Authors' elaboration

The result revealed that all the hypotheses were supported. In H3, the study found that employees' perceptions of organizational authenticity had a positive effect on the quality of relationship between an organization and its employees (H3: $\beta = .765$, $p< .001$). The impact of employee empowerment on organization-employee relationship also turned out to be significant (H4: $\beta = .147$, $p< .01$). Lastly, the quality of relationship significantly increased employees' positive megaphoning (H5a: $\beta = .615$, $p< .001$) and decreased negative megaphoning during crises (H5b: $\beta = -.491$, $p< .001$). This study further examined indirect effects to understand the role of organization-employee relationship. The results showed that the mediation effect of organization-employee relationship between perceived authenticity and employees' positive megaphoning ($\beta = .470$, $p < .001$) as well as negative megaphoning ($\beta = -.376$, $p < .001$) were all statistically significant. Furthermore, organization-employee relationship significantly mediated the effect of employee empowerment on both positive megaphoning (.090, $p = .004$) and negative megaphoning (-.072, $p = .004$) during crisis.

5. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to develop an integrated model of employees' communicative behaviors, megaphoning, focusing on an organization's crisis situation. Specifically, the study investigated whether organizations strategies to foster authenticity and employee empowerment are associated with the quality of organization-employee relationship as well as employees' behaviors regarding a corporate issue.

One important contribution of the study is to strengthen the concept of megaphoning in a crisis situation. While earlier concepts (e.g., employee voice) have explored how employees' behaviors play a role in improving organizational procedures or governance (Organ, 1988; Mayer and Gavin, 2005; Crant, 2000), the present study paid attention to employees' motivations to forward positive or negative information about the company beyond the boundary of an organization.

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Enlarging the well-established concept, employee voice (Morrison, 2011) toward the more comprehensive concept of employee communication behavior, the study addressed both internal (e.g., managers, coworkers) and external (e.g., customers) interlocutors. That is, compared to the existing concepts such as employee voice, the concept of megaphoning captures the interactions with external interlocutors such as customers, other stakeholders, friends, relatives, and so forth. Recognizing its internal and external nature, this study attempted to explain how organizational factors facilitate the circulation of good or bad information about an organization during a crisis within an organization and beyond its boundaries. This finding is coherent with literature showing the linkage between employee engagement and their pro-social voice (Klaas *et al.*, 2012; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Kang, Sung, 2017; Ruck *et al.*, 2017)

Specifically, the study found that employees' perceived authenticity of their organizational behaviors and empowerment increased their positive megaphoning behaviors. That is, those who evaluate their company as authentic in their actions and who feel empowered in the workplace are more likely to forward and share positive information with other people (e.g., families, friends) when a company is undergoing a crisis. Employee authenticity is affected by organizational identification (Knoll and Dick, 2013) and leader authenticity predicts organizational climate (Henderson and Brookhart, 1996), as well as organizational authenticity affects employee performance at large (Cording *et al.*, 2013).

In addition, those strategies also had significant impacts on employees' negative megaphoning behaviors. When employees engage in tasks in the workplace and feel that their organization is behaving in authentic ways, the likelihood of sharing negative aspects about the company in a difficult time decreases. Adding to prior studies, the study empirically shows that organizations' authentic and empowering strategies for their employees play a crucial role in minimizing threats in organizational crises through employees' communication behaviors. With the results of the study, we further discovered that employees' evaluations of experience within the organization affect how they behave during the periods of corporate crisis.

Furthermore, this study explicates the role of relationship quality between an organization and its employees during crisis empirically, as it significantly mediates the association between organizational strategies-authenticity and empowerment-and employee behaviors. Such a finding indicates that, during organizational turbulence, an organization's authentic behavior can be effective at enhancing employees' commitment, satisfaction, and their perceptions of trust and control mutuality to their organization (i.e., relationship quality), which in turn activate their communicative behaviors (i.e., megaphoning). Similar to previous studies

(Kim and Rhee, 2011; Lee and Kim, 2017; Mazzei *et al.*, 2012), the study emphasizes that an organization's efforts to build a long-term relationship with their employees will enhance the likelihood of positive megaphoning and minimizing the negative one during crises.

When it comes to employee empowerment, it increased employees' perceived relationship with their organization, which eventually affects their communicative actions. It suggests that employees' affection for work itself is identified with their perceived relationship with the organization when it is going through a crisis, and this identification makes them feel motivated to forward or share positive information with others in their personal network voluntarily to advocate or protect their organization. In terms of negative megaphoning, it may also indicate that when workers are satisfied with their job, it is more likely that they have a favorable relationship with the company. This positive relationship quality motivates employees to reduce their negative actions, caring for their company's threats. In this sense, this study theoretically explicates how organizations' behaviors may prevent issues and help them to build powerful resilience after the crisis through employees' daily communicative behaviors, by utilizing significant outcomes (e.g., authenticity, empowerment, relationship quality) across the disciplines.

6. Conclusions: managerial and research implications

The integrated model of organizational factors triggering ECB discussed in this paper has several managerial and research implications for management studies. From the managerial point of view, this study gives a possible answer to a major question in management studies: how leadership behavior and organizational efforts not only sustain employee voice but also encourage employees to be active in protecting their company. With the result that authentic organizational behavior can be the main triggering factor during a crisis situation, managers can develop ethical and effective strategies for an organizational crisis to enhance employees' positive information sharing behaviors and minimize their intentions to share negative information about the company. In addition, managers and organizations need to establish effective communication strategies to prevent the crisis in order to make employees feel empowered and perceive a good relationship with their company, so that positive information about the company could circulate through employees and thus through their personal networks.

Today a crisis is a physiological event, and not an exception. The business contexts are often volatile, uncertain and they change continuously: companies cannot be taken by surprise. For this reason, companies need to invest in the improvement of employees' quality relationships, during ordinary organizational life. This factor is the leverage that will lead to competitive advantage, in the event of crises. Organizations can use different strategies and tools to improve the quality of relationships: the enhancement and recognition of the individual employee work, training, career and development, diversity management and above all integrated

and incisive HRM practices, like an active use of internal communication as a managerial and strategic leverage. Internal communication can create a climate of identification with the organization and, through horizontal, cross-over, top-down and bottom-up communication mechanisms can generate and nurture relationships based on long-term trust and can generate commitment. Moreover, through a realistic EVP (Employee Value Proposition), internal communication can encourage a reciprocal relationship and can have a positive effect on job satisfaction. (Botha *et al.,* 2011; Heger, 2007).

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The findings of the study are promising for research and practice because of the characteristics of the data collected. Rather than recruiting current employees from various organizations, participants in the present study were invited from a single organization that had recently experienced corporate transition. Thus, the study could identify whether employees who share the same corporate culture or organizational environment have different motivations to forward or share positive information about their organization during periods of a crisis. Adding on a prior study that generalized employees' behavioral patterns, the study further indicated that perceived good relationship with the organization has significant influences on positive and negative external behaviors of employees within the same company.

The study also has a limitation that needs to be addressed. The fact that the study was based on a single organization can be both a strength and a limitation. As the collected data is from a male-oriented organization where most workers have been at the company for a long time, it may reduce the possibility to generalize the findings in other contexts. Further studies, therefore, may test the integrated model of megaphoning in different contexts and across the industry sectors, by considering the employees' demographics, psychographics, and other characteristics that affect their communicative intentions during a crisis. Additionally, although having data with employees' behaviors measured right after the crisis occurred gives the study benefits in many ways, the study could not measure how authentic the company's behavior (e.g., leadership) was after the corporate crisis. Future study may examine how an organization was trustful, transparent, or consistent in their ways of dealing with corporate issues and its impacts on employees' behaviors.

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Alessandra Mazzei
Jeong-Nam Kim
Gianluca Togna
Yeunjae Lee
Alessandro Lovari
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Appendix. Measurement Items

Measurement Items	α	Standardized coefficients	
		Model 1	Model 2
Positive Megaphoning (Kim and Rhee, 2011)	.826		
I spent much time to explain to publics or others about what happened and how our organization was working to improve the situation.		.669***	.675***
I was advocating for my organization's position actively.		.776***	.784***
I tried everything I could to improve my organization's situation.		.626***	.629***
I was proactive and aggressive in defending my organization during the issue (or crisis).		.879***	.871***
I was upset when I met people who spoke of my organization negatively.		.758***	.757***
Variance Explained (R²)		42.3%	37.8%
Negative Megaphoning (Kim and Rhee, 2011)	.714		
Honestly, I felt happy that the organization was in crisis.		.595***	.594***
I talked to my family about how poorly the management handled the situation.		.545***	.538***
I felt like leaving the organization during the crisis.		.642***	.646***
I enjoyed seeing the crisis that the top management experienced.		.756***	.752***
I felt that the organization and top management deserved such crisis because of its malpractice.		.748***	.747***
Variance Explained (R²)		32.5%	36.4%
Perceived Authentic Organizational Behavior (Shen and Kim, 2012)	.900		
Trustfulness	.807		
My organization always tells the truth.		.820***	.824***
I believe that my organization's actions are genuine.		.772***	.773***
Transparency	.798		
I feel that my organization is willing to admit to mistakes when they are made.		.747***	.759***
I feel that my organization accepts and learns from mistakes.		.758***	.762***
Consistency	.770		
I believe that my organization's behavior matches its core values.		.833***	.824***
My organization's beliefs and actions are consistent.		.851***	.846***
I think my organization matches the rhetoric with its action.		.655***	.648***
Employee Empowerment (Spreitze, 1995)	.834		
The work I do is very important to me.		.744***	.771***
My work activities are personally meaningful to me.		.764***	.792***

The work I do is meaningful to me.		.732***	.748***
I am confident about my ability to do my jobs.		.604***	.622***
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.		.655***	.683***
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.		.641***	.660***
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.		.569***	.583***
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.		.678***	.695***
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.		.661***	.677***
My impact on what happens in my department is large.		.689***	.711***
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.		.715***	.735***
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.		.664***	.681***
Organization-Employee Relationship (Hon and Grunig, 1999)	.925		
Trust	.825		
Whenever this company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about me.		-	.774***
This company can be relied on keep its promises.		-	.745***
I believe that this company takes my opinions into account when making decisions.		-	.757***
I feel very confident about this company's skills.		-	.687***
Control mutuality	.790		
This company and I are attentive to what the other says.		-	.746***
This company believes my opinions are legitimate.		-	.710***
This company really listens to what I have to say.		-	.765***
Commitment	.873		
I feel that this company is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to me.		-	.627***
I can see that this company wants to maintain a relationship with me.		-	.687***
Satisfaction	.816		
I am happy with this company.		-	.750***
Both this company and I benefit from the relationship.		-	.757***
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this company has established with me.		-	.745***
Variance Explained (R^2)		-	68.8%

***$p < .001$

Academic or professional position and contacts

Alessandra Mazzei
Associate Professor of Management
University IULM - Italy
e-mail: alessandra.mazzei@iulm.it

Jeong-Nam Kim
Professor, Gaylord Family Endowed Chair of Public Relations and Strategic Communication
University of Oklahoma, USA
e-mail: layinformatics@gmail.com

Gianluca Togna
Organizational Development and Corporate Communication Manager
LFoundry - Avezzano – Italy
e-mail: gianlucatogna@gmail.com

Yeunjae Lee
Assistant Professor of Public Relations and Strategic Communication
University of Miami - FL, USA
e-mail: yxl992@miami.edu

Alessandro Lovari
Assistant Professor of Sociology of Communication
University of Cagliari - Italy
e-mail: alessandro.lovari@unica.it