

# The Relationship between the Coworker Feedback Seeking with Coworker Feedback Environment

Zhenxing Gong<sup>1, a, \*</sup>, Di Xin<sup>2, b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Business, Peking University, Beijing, China

<sup>2</sup>School of History and Tourism Management, China

<sup>a</sup>zxcgong118@163.com, <sup>b</sup>931114366@qq.com

**Keywords:** coworker feedback, coworker feedback environment, Relationship

**Abstract: Background** There is a poorly understood about the impact of coworkers' feedback seeking, including feedback inquiry and monitoring on coworker feedback environment. **Method** This study departs from the perspective of prior research on the feedback environment by combining follower-centered theory and expectations states theory. This paper presents one empirical longitudinal study of one sample of 276 China's employees. **Result** Across to the three waves of study, the results show that feedback monitoring, feedback inquiry were all positively related to the coworker environment of feedback after the control of demographics' effects. **Conclusion** This research expands our understanding on feedback loop by bridging the gap from coworker feedback seeking to coworker feedback environment. Moreover, this research also adds to our understanding of coworker feedback environment by suggesting that seeking a lot feedback in a team can improve feedback environment.

## 1. Introduction

The feedback environment means the contextual processes between one subordinate and one supervisor or between the coworkers within everyday working environment.[1]The feedback environment has been linked to creative performance, task performance and organizational citizenship.[2] Although the attention of prior studies of feedback environment has been paid to supervisors, employees often have a great deal of contact with coworkers, and the coworker feedback environment plays an important role in behavior outcomes.[3] Organizations, supervisors, tasks, coworkers and the employee self-value system can act as antecedents of environment of feedback. [4]However, prior studies upon antecedents of environment of feedback has focusing mainly on factors requires regarding them accept substance passively without looking at their initiatives in feedback. On the one hand, this perspective leads to a situation in which the external source cannot achieve individual's requirement for the feedback; on one hand, it let the individuals know that the environment of feedback is not able to offer helpful feedback to them, resulting in one "feedback vacuum".[5] Accordingly, it is necessary to discuss the role of employee's proactive behaviors in feedback environment's formation[6].

As a proactive behavior, feedback seeking is the behavior of individuals that involves actively seeking valuable information in the organization so that they can be adapted to organization's and individuals' development requirement.[7] Feedback seeking plays a role of proactivity in the improvement of the performance and clarity of employees' role.[8] Cummings and Ashford (1983) stated that the employees are capable of seeking feedback by using either inquiry of feedback, which includes oral request for the evaluations of performance, or the monitoring of feedback, which includes the examination of their environment for indirect cues of feedback. However, individuals are regarded as passively accepting the influence of the feedback environment.[9] Few discussions have included seeking of feedback as one active and positive conduct that has an influence on the feedback environment path from point of circuit of feedback.[8]

With diversified development of social and cultural values due to pressure from technological innovation and market competition, it is hard to manage through depending only upon experience

and entrepreneurship for managers and team members.[6] The main source of getting competitive advantage of enterprises is the employees' initiative and enthusiasm, preferably those that possess capability, technological capability, and, especially, innovation capability.[10] The study of leadership has shifted from a perspective of supervisor center to that of follower center.[11]Feedback seeking helps the employees make evaluation and improvement of their performance,[12] thus lacking of feedback seeking behaviors will cause the problems that the employees will be trapped in the role ambiguity and lots of uncertainties. However, this is only a problem with regard to the lack of empirical research.[8]

We address the question of how coworkers respond to feedback seeking by drawing upon expectations states theory (EST)[13] as it offers one framework to understand how coworkers interpret the behaviors of their peers and how those interpretations relate to feedback environment. "Interpersonal status hierarchies" can be explained by the EST which refers to the differential levels of influence and social esteem which emerge while people make interaction. Meanwhile, the researchers discovered that the original reason of this phenomenon is that the employee will assume their coworkers' ability of completing the task and then give different levels of expectations. The way that they could make this assumption is based on the coworkers' feedback.[13][14] Two primary perspectives in EST– the evaluation-expectation and status characteristics perspectives,[15]which are particularly useful for understanding how certain types of feedback seeking affect others' feedback environment. Thus, coworker feedback seeking can not only collect information, but also influence coworker's behavior, attitude and coworker feedback environment.

The evaluation-expectations perspective focuses on how behavioral patterns relate to the peers attitude. It posits that behaviors like assertive participation are attempts to claim attitude. Because feedback seeking is assertive and change-oriented, it represents a potential supportive feedback environment-claiming behavior.[16]In conclusion, building and testing theory which addresses connection between seeking of feedback from coworker and coworker environment of feedback was a major aim of this study. The hypotheses have been developed and our research model has been constructed (Fig. 1).

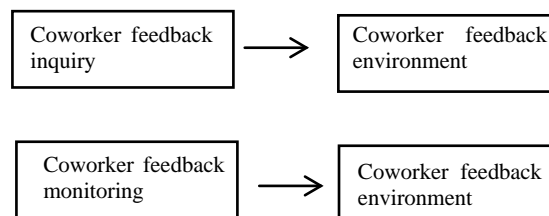


Figure 1. Test model

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants and Procedures

Participants offering effective responses to the study's 3 waves included 312 full-time nurses of 13 hospitals of 5 provinces in China. The participants did not need to provide their names; they were only asked to write the last eight numbers on their ID card as a corresponding standard. This study used longitudinal designs for collection of data, as in previous longitudinal study about the environment of feedback.[17] Nurses offered data at 3 time points 3 months apart for helping to relieve concerns related to have data of the same source and the same time. Survey 1 included the launching of demographic measures and seeking of feedback in March 2017. Survey 2 assessed coworker identification in June 2017. Survey 3 measured coworker feedback environment and began in September 2017.

Ultimately, 276 valid and effective questionnaires (finished in study's all phases, invalid and ineffective answers were excluded, such as just a score offered for the whole questionnaire) were accepted. The information about demographics showed that the sample had 40 male employees (14.5%) and 236 female employees (85.5%). 102 participants were 20-25 years of age (37%), 103

participants were aged between 25-30 (37.1%), and others were 31 years of age above. 48.3% participants had worked no more than 5 years, 39% of the participants worked for 6-10 years, and the others worked for 11 years above. Among all participants, 65.1% had one an undergraduate degree below, 26.6% held one undergraduate degree, and other participants held one master degree or above.

## 2.2 Measures

**Feedback inquiry.** Four items were created for frequency assessment with which the individuals seek the feedback through inquiring their behaviors of performance.[18]The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for inquiry measure of feedback was  $\alpha=.94$ .

**Feedback monitoring.** Three items required the respondents to tell frequency of their seeking of feedback through monitoring behaviors of performance.[18]The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for monitoring measure of feedback was  $\alpha=.92$ .

**Control variables.** Variables of demographics discovered to have significant relationship with creativity were controlled, including gender, age, education, and job tenure.

Before analyses, all continuous predictors were standardized.

## 2.3 Analysis

The relationships between the study constructs were modeled by applying structural equation modeling (SEM) utilizing Mplus 7.0 software. Mplus can estimate a latent variable effect using maximum likelihood, and using the composite scores can reveal observed variables well.[19]

## 3. Results

Results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of each variable are presented in Table 1. According to the standard of good fit,[20] all of variable's  $\chi^2/df < 3$ , SRMR and RMSEA  $< .05$ , TLI, CFI, and GFI are over .90, AVE, CR and factor loading are over .50, thus all of the variable shows good convergent validity.

Table 1. Convergent validity of each variable

Variables	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	CR	AVE	Factor loading
Feedback inquiry	2.03	.97	.96	.96	.06	.05	.72	.96	.79-.89
Feedback monitoring	2.13	.98	.97	.95	.05	.02	.59	.86	.65-.79
Coworker feedback environment	3.88	.94	.92	.91	w.07	.03	.85	.95	.52-.89

Mean, standard deviation, and correlation among variables in study are presented in Table 2. Correlations inspection demonstrates that the monitoring and inquiry of feedback had positive relationship to coworker environment of feedback ( $r=.42, p < 0.01$ ;  $r=.32, p < 0.01$ ).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of all measures

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Feedback monitoring	5.31	1.08	-			
2. Feedback inquiry	4.97	1.21	0.69**	-		
4. Coworker feedback environment	4.72	0.61	0.42**	0.32**	0.52*	-

Note. n = 264; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$

## **4. Discussion**

Some studies have found results regarding antecedent variables that influence the feedback environment. Furthermore, it is believed that the organizations, supervisors, tasks, colleagues, and employee self-value system can exert influence on environment of feedback.[21] Focusing on these factors requires regarding the employees as passively accepted objects, which ignores employee initiatives in feedback. While our research examines feedback seeking's effect through feedback inquiry and monitoring, particularly in a coworker feedback environment based on Anseel et al's suggestions.[9] Besides, it also proved certain relationship between monitoring of feedback and coworker environment of feedback and relationship between inquiry of feedback and coworker environment of feedback.

### **4.1 Theoretical Implications**

All in all, the following implications of theory are presented in this study. First of all, mechanism for formation of environment of feedback from a perspective of follower center is discussed through discussion of feedback seeking's effect. Feedback seeking can not only collect information, but also influence coworker's behavior, attitude and coworker feedback environment. However, when seeking of feedback is regarded as one active and positive behavior that has an influence on the feedback environment path from the view of circuit of feedback.[9] Creation of the environment and the improvement of ability are one dynamic process. Seeking of feedback is able to contribute to environmental building for it is capable of increasing managers' enthusiasm about improving the feedback environment. One self-motivated view upon seeking behavior of feedback indicates that there are two motives can influence people's feedback seeking behavior though looking for more accurate and trusting information.[22] This dynamic process is what we called feedback seeking-behavior. As the follower of supervisor and coworker, employees can affect supervisor and coworker's behavior and attitude through their initiatives.[23] Coworkers can share the information and feedback with each other, which increase the mobility of information and all the employees can benefit from it. What's more, compared with leaders, colleagues are closer to each other because of the equal status. Common working environment also provides colleagues more opportunities for feedback and information exchange at work.[2] With observation and inquiry feedback from coworkers, individuals can sense their closeness to a target. The confidence that is gained from seeking of feedback let them better understand coworkers to meet self-motivated factors and to boost identity.[8] As a reward for this benefit, coworkers can provide a higher-quality feedback environment that promotes innovation.

### **4.2 Practical Implications**

In management practice, coworkers ought to encourage employees' behavior of feedback seeking and provide help to determine appropriate seeking methods of feedback for them, so as to guarantee that the environment of feedback motivates them to ask for help that is related to work independently. Moreover, it is critically important that coworkers have the abilities to accurately interpret the feedback seeking motives. Perceptual bias, stereotypes, and misunderstandings are likely to influence coworkers' evaluations. If a coworker mistakenly attributes the feedback seeking of an employee who wants to enhance work performance to impression management motives and, subsequently, the coworker does not engage in constructive exchange with the employee, that employee is likely to be discouraged from exhibiting such behavior in the future.

## **5. Limitations and Future Research**

There are a few limitations in this study. Although longitudinal study was used for the verification of feedback seeking's influence upon the environment of feedback, this study only examined short-term work's outcome. The feedback process is a dynamic process and varies over the long run. A focus upon relationship between seeking and environment of feedback over a few months cannot sufficiently demonstrate one full picture of connection between the seeking and

environment. With respect to the sample, this research controlled only for gender, age, service length and education degree, while personality, job transfer, job level, new duties' assumption, enterprise size or post nature were not controlled. Based on findings of previous research, the factors, personality and orientation of goal affect the process of feedback.[23] Hence, for research in future, it is necessary to include other factors that influence the causal relation between the two to enhance reliability of conclusions of the research. This issue should be discussed in future studies.

### **Acknowledgement**

(1) This research was supported by grants from the National Natural Science Foundation of China and the project numbers are 71801120. (The program's name is The co-evolution of mentoring feedback environment and creative performance: Based on dynamic affect perspective)

(2) This research was supported by the Ministry of Education of Humanities and Social Science project and the project numbers are 18YJC630038. (The program's name is Research on the impact of internalization of external motivation on creative performance: based on Organic Integration Theory perspective)

(3) This research was supported by Shandong Social Science Planning Fund Program and the project numbers are 18DGLJ02. (the program's name is Research on the Cross-Level Influence Mechanism of Feedback Environment on Organizational Creative Performance in Shandong Province)

### **References**

- [1] Steelman, Lisa A., Levy Paul E., Snell Andrea F. The Feedback Environment Scale: Construct Definition, Measurement, and Validation. *Educational & Psychological Measurement* 2004:165-184.
- [2] Rosen, C. C., P. E. Levy, R. J. Hall. Placing perceptions of politics in the context of the feedback environment, employee attitudes, and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2006:211-20.
- [3] Chiaburu, Dan S, D. A. Harrison. Do peers make the place? Conceptual synthesis and meta-analysis of coworker effects on perceptions, attitudes, OCBs, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2008:1082-103.
- [4] Steelman, Lisa A., S. F. Young. The role of feedback in supervisor and workgroup identification. *Personnel Review* 2014:228-245.
- [5] De Stobbeleir, Katleen E. M, S. J. Ashford, D. Buyens. Self-regulation of creativity at work: The role of feedback-seeking behavior in creative performance. *Academy of Management Journal* 2011:811-831.
- [6] Baker, S. D. Followership: Theoretical foundation for a contemporary construct. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 2007;14.1:50-60.
- [7] Ashford, Susan J, R. Blatt, D. Vandewalle. Reflections on the Looking Glass: A Review of Research on Feedback-Seeking Behavior in Organizations. *Journal of Management* 2003:773-799.
- [8] Anseel, Frederik, et al. How are we doing after 30 years? A meta-analytic review of the antecedents and outcomes of feedback-seeking behavior. *Journal of Management* 2015:318-348.
- [9] Ashford, Susan J, L. L. Cummings. Feedback as an individual resource: Personal strategies of creating information. *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance* 1983:370-398.
- [10] Bjugstad, K., Thach, E. C., Thompson, K. J., Morris, A. A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles. *Journal of Behavioral & Applied Management* 2006;7(3):304-319.



- [11] Landino, L. M., et al. Ascorbic acid reduction of microtubule protein disulfides and its relevance to protein S-nitrosylation assays. *Biochem Biophys Res Commun* 2006:347-352.
- [12] Xiyang Zhang, Jing Qian, et al. Leaders' Behaviors Matter: The Role of Delegation in Promoting Employees' Feedback-Seeking Behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology* 2017;8:920
- [13] Correll, Shelley J, C. L. Ridgeway. Expectation states theory.. *Handbook of Social Psychology*. Springer US 2006:29-51.
- [14] Sanyal, M. K., et al. "Development of graafian follicles in adult human ovary. I. Correlation of estrogen and progesterone concentration in antral fluid with growth of follicles. " *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 1974;38.5:828.
- [15] Fişek, M. Hamit, J. Berger, and R. Z. Norman. Participation in heterogeneous and homogeneous groups: A theoretical integration. *American Journal of Sociology* 1991:114-142.
- [16] Anderson, C,G. J. Kilduff. Why do dominant personalities attain influence in face-to-face groups? The competence-signaling effects of trait dominance.*Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 2009:491-503.
- [17] Gabriel, Allison S., et al. The supervisor feedback environment is empowering, but not all the time: Feedback orientation as a critical moderator. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology* 2014:487–506.
- [18] Callister, Ronda Roberts, M. W. Kramer, D. B. Turban. Feedback Seeking following Career Transitions. *Academy of Management Journal* 1999:429-438.
- [19] Muthén, L. K. M. C.Mplus: Statistical Analysis with Latent Variables (Version 4.21) [Computer software. Transparent Optical Networks, 2007 ; ICTON '07. 9th International Conference on (Vol.1, pp.313 - 316).
- [20] Hu, L. T., Bentler, P. M.. Cutoff Criteria for Fit Indexes in Covariance Structure Anaysis: Conventional Criteria Versus New Alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling A Multidisciplinary Journal* 1999;6(1):1-55.
- [21] Andrews, Martha C., K. M. Kacmar. Discriminating among organizational politics, justice, and support. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 2001:347-366.
- [22] Crommelinck, Michiel, F. Anseel. Understanding and encouraging feedback-seeking behaviour: a literature review. *Medical Education* 2013:232-241.
- [23] Bjugstad, K. B., et al. Mouse neural stem cells implanted into aged ts65dn mice: A potential treatment for Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease. *Experimental Neurology* 2006;198:2561-561.