How to Promote Employee Voice Behavior: Analysis Based on Leadership Style Perspective

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Abstract

In recent years, the theoretical and practical circles have conducted a lot of theoretical exploration and practical development on how to promote employees' voice behavior, among them, the effect of leadership style on employee voice behavior has received full attention from academic circles. On the basis of the researches of leadership style theory and voice behavior, the paper used text analysis to investigate the process mechanism and effect direction of different leadership style on voice behavior emphatically. The results showed as follows: The influence of leadership style on employee voice behavior is significant mostly, while there were differences in process mechanism and effect direction; Among them, psychological mechanism of employees played a major role in transmission and moderating effect, the connotation and characteristics of leadership style determined the effect degree and effect direction. By applying the leadership style contingently and creating good employee voice climate, employee voice behavior could be promoted widely, and management quality of the enterprise would be improved.

Key Words: Leadership Style; Employee Voice Behavior; Process Mechanism; Effect Direction.

1. Introduction

Innovation and flexibility are the necessary conditions for modern enterprises to maintain the competitive advantage in the market. The development and innovation of enterprises not only need employees to fully implement their in-role behaviors, but also need to pay full attention to the employees' extra-role behaviors. Employee voice behavior is the basis for organizational continuous change (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) [1]. In recent years, the research on the antecedents of employee voice behavior mainly focus on employee attitudes, traits and organizational situation factors (Duan Jinyun et al., 2007)[2], among them, the research based on the perspective of leadership style is becoming more and more. Leadership style refers to a relatively stable leadership behavior formed by leaders in long-term business management practices, reflecting a leader's characteristic, relatively stable and tendentious way of behavior (Tyler et al., 2006) [3]. It has an impact on the employees' psychology, willingness and behavior. In the practice of enterprise management, whether it is the enterprise policy system or the employee performance evaluation, it is generally decided and evaluated by leaders. Higher management authority and organizational status endow leaders with more power to operate organization, involving rewards and punishments, promotion opportunities and work division. Voice is that the employee puts forward suggestions and opinions on the problem of organization, which includes the views of the employee on the way of leadership and the strategies or methods to solve the problem. On a certain degree of "offensive" nature, voice may be regarded by a leader as

an employee's complaint about work, and it may also challenge the authority of the leader. Therefore, employee voice behavior is bound to be directly or indirectly influenced by the leadership style of the enterprise. Previous studies have also confirmed that the personality traits of a leader affect the management style, and the management style affects the cultivation of the staff's awareness; Compared with the control and bureaucracy management style, participatory and supportive management styles will give employees more trust and opportunities in organizational decision-making, which stimulate more employee voice behaviors (Bae et al., 2011) [4]. Based on these, the paper analyzed employee voice behavior from the perspective of enterprise leadership and explored how different leadership styles affect employee voice behavior. The conclusion could also better guide enterprise management practices, mobilize employee voice behavior, avoid information asymmetry within the organization, promote the scientific decision-making of enterprises, and enhance business performance.

2. Leadership Style and Employee Voice Behavior

Employee voice behavior has the characteristics of interpersonal interaction, which will inevitably be influenced by the way of leadership style. The attitude and behavior of the leader are the important basis for the employee to evaluate their advantages and disadvantages when they make suggestions to their superiors or organizations. It ultimately affects the employee voice or not, how to voice, and the frequency of the voice behavior, the breadth and depth of the voice. Leadership style is an important situational variable that affects employees' attitude and behavior, and is also an important predictor of employee voice behavior. Different leadership styles have different influence mechanisms on employee voice behavior.

2.1 Transformational Leadership and Employee Voice Behavior

Transformational leadership can inspire the internal motivation of employees through leader charm, intellectual stimulation, vision incentive and individualized care (Bass & Avolio, 2013) [5], thus motivates employees to pay extra efforts to achieve organizational goals (Bono & Judge, 2005) [6]. Wu Longzeng et al. (2011) [7] pointed out that transformational leadership is positively related to employee voice behavior, and this effect is fully mediated by employee psychological safety perceptions and leader member exchange quality. Duan Jinyun & Huang Caiyun (2014) [8] found when individual-focused TFL was high, the probability of employee voice behavior was increased, and this relationship was partially mediated by intrinsic motivation. Power distance orientation acted as a mediated moderator which moderated the relationship between the individual-focused TFL and the voice behavior. Autonomy orientation acted as a moderated mediator which moderated the relationship between the intrinsic motivation and the voice behavior. Sun Yu & Wang Jing (2015) [9]also thought that transformational leadership and its dimensions have a significantly positive impact on employees' advice. Psychological empowerment played a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' advice. Employees' advice contributed a lot to the development and transformation of organizations.

2.2 Participative Leadership and Employee Voice Behavior

Participatory Leadership provides employees with more support, information, and resources to promote employees' participation in organizational management by providing with work autonomy (Huang et al., 2010) [10]. Such leaders encourage employees to express their opinions and participate in the decision-making process, through empowerment, employees can get higher autonomy, efficacy and control sense, and at the same time, enhance their trust in leaders, thus promoting employee's voice behavior (Duan Jinyun & Ling bin, 2011; Miao et al．，2014; Ahearne et al., 2005；Liu et al．，2010) [11][12][13][14]. Xiang Changchun & Long lirong (2013)[15] found that participative leadership is positively associated with both promotive and prohibitive voice behavior significantly; Assertive impression management motive mediates the relation between participative leadership and prohibitive voice, but the mediating role in the relation between participative leadership and promotive voice is not supported, when controlling psychological safety; Interpersonal justice

moderates the relation between assertive impression management motive and prohibitive voice. Zhang Chen et al. (2016)[16] pointed out that participative leadership was positively related to employee's voice behavior; Voice role perception mediated the relationship between participative leadership and voice behavior; The relation between voice role perception and voice behavior was not only negatively moderated by interdependent self-construal but also positively moderated by independent self-construal.

2.3 Authentic Leadership and Employee Voice Behavior

By improving the leader's ego and internalization of moral standards, using positive psychological ability of employees, and the balance of information processing, transparent relationship with employees, authentic leadership could stimulate the authenticity of employees, enhance employee trust in leader, triggering employee voice behavior (Avolio et al.，2004；Diddams & Chang, 2012) [17][18]. Liu Shengmin & Liao Jianqiao (2015) [19] thought that authentic leadership is positively related with employee prohibitive voice, which is mediated by employee hope. Felt obligation for constructive change plays the positive role to employee prohibitive voice, which is positively moderated by authentic leadership. By the direct and indirect way, authentic leadership plays the positive role to employee's prohibitive voice. Li Xiyuan (2016) [20] found that authentic leadership has positive effects on both subordinates' prohibitive and promotive voice behaviors; Perceived supervisor support plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between authentic leadership and subordinates' voice behavior; Power distance moderate this relationship between perceived supervisor support and subordinates' voice behavior.

2.4 Paternalistic Leadership and Employee Voice Behavior

Paternalistic leadership is one of the most common ways of leadership in non-Western cultural situations. Zheng Boxun et al. (1995, 2000, 2003) [21][22][23]put forward the theory of Chinese style leadership- paternalistic leadership, combining the characteristics of Chinese Confucian tradition, collectivism and high power distance culture. It took discipline and authority as the core, and strictly control subordinates' by authoritarian leadership and emphasize caring employees, such as benevolent leadership which is like father's benevolent and moral leadership which leaders using personal accomplishment to conquer subordinates. Existing studies indicated that paternalistic leadership had effect on voice behavior. Moreover, moral leadership dimension of paternalistic leadership has positive effect on voice behavior, while authoritarian leadership has negative effect. The influencing mechanisms are partially mediated by psychological safety (Duan Jinyun, 2012) [24]. Ma Guimei (2014) [25]further noted that authoritarian leadership hindered subordinates' promotive and prohibitive voice behavior, and the negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and prohibitive voice was stronger; Felt responsibility for constructive change and perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between authoritarian leadership and subordinates' voice behavior. Qiu Gongying & Long Lirong (2014) [26] also found that authoritarian leadership had a significant negative influence on both speaking up and speaking out. LMX mediated the relationship between authoritarian leadership and speaking up, and TMX mediated the relationship between authoritarian leadership and speaking out. As a moderator, guanxi prevalence strengthened the positive relation between LMX and speaking up. Walumbwa & Schaubroeck (2009) [27]thought that moral leaders could have a positive impact on employees' constructive actions by transmitting messages of encouragement and innovation to employees; Liang Jian (2014) [28]pointed out both psychological safety and felt obligations mediated the influence of ethical leadership on voice behavior. Power distance orientation not only positively moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and two mediators：the relationship between ethical leadership and two psychological mediators was much stronger for high power distance employees than for the ones with low power distance orientation.

2.5 Other Leadership Styles and Employee Voice Behavior

Ethical leadership could give employees certain right of expression, autonomy and decision-making, and enhance the willingness of employees to reflect problems (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Harttog, 2008) [29][30]. By creating a

psychological security atmosphere, it stimulates employee voice behavior (Walumbwa & Schauubroeck, 2009) [27]. Yang Mengyuan & Zhao Qiang (2016) [31], from the perspective of self-cognition and social decision, found that there was a positive correlation between inclusive leadership and employee voice behavior. In two relationships, voice effectiveness and internal motivation play a partial mediating role. In addition, inclusive leadership shows openness, usability and accessibility, which can improve the level of employee voice behavior. Zhu Yue & Wang Xiaochen (2015) [32] pointed out that servant leadership was positively related to followers' voice behaviors, and LMX fully mediated this relationship. Learning goal orientation moderated the relationship between LMX and voice behaviors, such that the relationship was stronger among employees with high level of learning goal orientation. LMX mediated the relationships between servant leadership and voice behaviors only for employees with high level of learning goal orientation. Humble leadership is based on humility, emphasizing the leader's initiative to reduce its body and the common development with its subordinates (Owens & Hekman, 2012) [33], and looking at himself objectively, appreciate the merits of others, keeping an open mind to new knowledge and ideas of others (Owens et al., 2013) [34]. Zhang Juncheng (2016) [35] found humble leadership could positively predict employees' voice behavior, and employees' psychological safety could partially mediate the influence of humble leadership on employees' voice behavior. And employees' proactive personality could positively moderate the mediating effect of psychological safety at the first-stage of the aforementioned indirect path, so that the indirect effect of humble leadership on voice behavior via the mediation of psychological safety would be stronger for the employees with higher level of proactive personality. Xue Xian et al. (2015) [36] combined the study of empowerment from the two perspectives of organization and employee and found that followers' power distance orientation has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between empowering leadership and employee voice behavior. Moreover, this effect is achieved through the mediating effect of psycho-logical empowerment, namely the mediated moderation effect. Weng Qingxiong et al. (2016)[37] based on the analysis of the Confucian culture about "five constant virtues" and pointed out affective leadership can be remarkably distinguished from participative, instrumental and supportive leadership; Affective leadership is negatively related to subordinates' turnover intentions, is positively related to voice behavior and accounts for incremental validity on turnover intentions and voice behavior when controlling participative, instrumental and supportive leadership separately.

2.6 Abusive Supervision and Employee Voice Behavior

Tepper (2000) [38] first defined "abusive management", and he thought that abusive supervision is a continuous hostile behavior perceived by a staff, including verbal style, such as sarcasm, slander, abuse, etc., and non-verbal, such as cold and crowded, but not including physical contact. Abusive supervision is a negative leadership behavior of leaders who give non emotional treatment to employees' emotions and psychology. It has a negative impact on employees' psychology, attitude and behavior. This kind of negative leadership behavior often appears in the enterprise organization situation, and has been regarded as a leadership style by some leaders, and then acts on the employee's suggestion behavior. The leader's abusive management will negatively affect employees' constructive behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007) [39]. Wu Weiku et al. (2012) [40] investigated abusive supervision's impact on employee voice behavior. And found that abusive supervision influenced employee voice behavior through undermining employee's perception of psychological safety. Uncertainty avoidance moderated the relationship between abusive supervision and psychological safety perception in that an employee with higher uncertainty avoidance felt more psychological unsafe when being abused by his or her supervisor. Xi Meng et al. (2015) [41] drew on the theory of conservation of resources and found that the positive relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate's silence was moderated by three factors, namely, self-construal at the individual level, job complexity at the job level, and organizational culture at the organizational level. Specifically, employees with higher self-construal, doing more complicated jobs, and staying in a company with organizational culture focusing on employee development, will have more silence when they feel abused by their supervisors. Ju Lei (2016) [42] also pointed out that abusive supervision negatively affects subordinate promotive voice behavior; Organizational justice mediates the relation between abusive supervision and subordinate promotive voice behavior; Employee forgiveness behavior can moderate the

negative relation between abusive supervision and subordinate promotive voice behavior mediated by organizational justice.

Table 1 showed the representative empirical research achievements of the leadership style on voice behavior in China's context in recent five years.

Table 1: Different Leadership Style and Employee Voice in the Context of Chinese in Recent Five Years						
Leadership Style	Main Effect	Impact Mechanism		Theoretical Basis	Representative Researchers	Literature Resources
		Mediating Effect	Moderating Effect			
Transformational Leadership	positive	intrinsic motivation	power distance orientation(-); autonomy orientation (+)	Self-Determination Theory	Duan &Huang(2014)	Nankai Business Review
Ethical Leadership	positive	felt obligations; psychological safety	power distance(+)	Social Learning Theory; Social Exchange Theory	Liang (2014)	Acta Psychologica Sinica
Paternalistic Leadership (authoritarian leadership; benevolent leadership; moral leadership)	authoritarian leadership(-); benevolent leadership(+); moral leadership(+)	self-efficacy	perceived organizational support(+)	Social Impact Theory; Organizational Support Theory	Tian & Huang(2014)	Science Research Management
Participative Leadership	prohibitive voice(+)	assertive impression management motive	interpersonal justice(+)	Social Exchange Theory; Interpersonal Expectations Theory; Trait Activation Theory; Incentive Theory	Xiang& Long(2013)	Management Review
Authentic Leadership	employee prohibitive voice(+) team prohibitive voice(+)	employee negative anticipation; voice climate	\	Social Information Processing Theory; Behavioral Integrity Theory	Liu & Liao(2016)	Journal of Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management

Humble Leadership	prohibitive voice	voice efficacy	zhong-yong thinking(-)	Social Cognitive Theory	Zhang, Zhang, Zhang & Cui(2017)	Management Review
Ethical Leadership	positive	voice-efficacy; psychological safety; supervisor-subordinate guanxi	\	Social Cognitive Theory; Social Information Processing Theory; Social Exchange Theory	Wang, Ge & Chai(2017)	Journal of Psychological Science
Servant Leadership	positive	voice efficacy; voice role identity	perceived leader power(+)	Organizational Identity Theory; Hygiene-Motivational Factors Theory	Duan, Zeng & Yan(2017)	Chinese Journal of Applied Psychology
Confidence Leadership	positive	organization-based selfesteem; psychological safety	individualism	Confidence Leadership Theory; Leader-Member Exchange Theory	Li, Liu & Liu(2016)	Academic Research
Abusive Supervision	Promotive voice (-) prohibitive voice(-)	organization-based self-esteem	locus of control	Social Exchange Theory; Hygiene-Motivational Factors Theory	Yan(2012)	Journal of Management Science

Noted: Collated on the basis of literatures from CNKI in China, and the reference literatures were not listed at the end of the paper." +" :positive impact;" - ": negative impact.

3. Managerial Implication

The paper used the method of text analysis, through combing domestic and foreign latest research developments on leadership style and voice behavior, based on literature analysis and induction, examined employee voice behavior from the perspective of leadership style. It is not only a theoretical exploration of how mature leadership style theory is applied to reality, but also a practical guidance for leaders to enhance employee voice management. The following management enlightenment were summed up in this paper, based on the specific role mechanism of different leadership styles in the previous article.

3.1 Managers Need to Apply Leadership Style Contingently

Different leadership styles have different effects on employee voice behavior. In complex corporate organizational situations, leadership style cannot be immutable, and we need to use leadership styles in a contingency way according to the psychological needs and behavioral guidance of employees' suggestions. The leadership style is mainly based on the characteristics of leadership, while employee voice behavior is a kind of challenging and risky promoting behavior, which based on assessment and judgment about psychological security perception, effectiveness perception, internal motivation understanding, organizational power distance, and leader member exchange. Therefore, in order to stimulate this explicit

behavior of employees, business leaders need to fully concern their employees' subjective will and psychological direction, and this requires leaders to use the way of leadership flexibly. Besides, leadership style is embedded in specific cultural contexts. Researching employee voice behavior from the perspective of leadership style, it is necessary to re-examine the connotation change, style development and utility of leaders, and influence the differences caused by cultural context. Therefore, in the process of applying the leadership style of the localization enterprise, in order to make a greater contribution to the promotion of different leadership styles on employee voice behavior, we should pay full attention to the thinking habits and behavior characteristics of local employees, as well as the organizational culture background of specific enterprises, and apply the theory of western leadership flexibly. And according to the needs, to develop leading behavior suitable for local management, so as to stimulate the enthusiasm of the staff and the degree of enterprise participation. And according to the needs, to explore new theory of leadership styles which are suitable for localization management, and then motivate staff employees ' voice behavior and enterprise participation.

3.2   Build Good Voice Climate for Employees

The direction of different styles of leadership on employee voice behavior was different. The leadership style could both promote employee voice behavior, while it could impede the expression of employee voice. Through a comprehensive study of the process of leadership style on employee voice behavior, it can be found that the key intermediary mechanism in the effect path is the psychological mechanism of employees. This psychological mechanism involved employees' security needs\self-esteem needs\social needs and self-actualization needs. The extent to which employees' voice potential was developed depended on the satisfaction of this psychological need, which is mainly dependent on the creation of the climate of enterprise voice behavior. Good enterprise employee voice climate, including the organization voice climate\team voice climate and so on' they are inseparable from the support of enterprise leaders and the influence of enterprise leadership style. Therefore, when business leaders choose a certain kind of leadership style, they should not only consider whether the specific leadership style apply to the organization and accepted by employees, but also take a comprehensive look at the specific organizational climate and psychological cognition that the leadership style may form. In other words, sometimes leadership style may not be obvious, while it contributes to an air - like recessive particle in the enterprise organization situation, which acts on the employee's behavior choice.

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