

An Empirical Study on the Relationship of Differential Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support and Employees' Innovative Behavior

—Analysis of Conceptual Model based on AMOS

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Abstract—Based on the social exchange theory, with a sample of 534 employees, this research discussed the mechanism of the differential leadership-perceived organizational support- employees' innovative behavior, and analyzed the regulation effect of the Chinese traditionality and organizational trust. The results show that: differential leadership has positive influence on employees' innovative behavior, perceived organizational support has mediating effect on the relationship between differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior, Chinese traditionality and organizational trust have a positive effect on the relationship between differential leadership and perceived organizational support, organizational trust moderates the relationship between differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior positively. It was found from the results that this research can provide beneficial enlightenment to the impact of differential leadership to employees' innovative behavior in Chinese domestic context.

Keywords-differential leadership; perceived organizational support; Chinese traditionality; organizational trust; employees' innovative behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Management practice has cultural particularity^[1], because the organizational management and the organizational behavior exist in the cultural context, which are influenced by the cultural atmosphere of the organization deeply^[2]. The traditional Chinese culture is represented by Confucianism, which focuses on the human relations, that is differential pattern. The differential pattern holds that fairness is the relative fairness that integrates passion and reason, and pays attention to the feelings between people.

Studies have shown that the cultural differences between China and the west countries lead to significant differences in leadership styles^[3]. Differential leadership is a special leadership style, based on the differential pattern in Chinese cultural context and it's a new direction to study its influence on employee behavior in Chinese enterprises at now stage. In the final analysis, enterprise innovation is embodied in the employees' innovation. Studies have shown that the different leadership style has the different influence on employees' innovative behaviors. The research on the influence of the differential leadership on employees'

innovative behavior conforms to Chinese management practice and it has theoretical and practical value certainly in the Chinese situation.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior

Differential leadership refers to that leaders have different leadership styles for different employees under the atmosphere of humanitarianism, and give more favoritism to their preferred employees^[4]. Zheng Boxun's research has shown that, according to the standard of "consanguinity, loyalty and ability", differential leadership divides the employees into insiders and outsiders^[5]. The classification standard and dynamic process have a certain incentive effect both on insiders and outsiders. Insiders will try their best to improve their work level for the protection of their insiders' identity and for outsiders to be the insiders.

Employees' innovative behavior refers to the behavior that employees come up with innovative ideas or solutions to solve problems and try to seek support to put them into practice. The realization of employees' innovative behaviors faces many difficulties and challenges, which require employees' unremitting persistence and external support, especially from leaders.

In the research on the influencing factors of employees' innovative behaviors, studies have shown that leadership style has an impact on employees' innovative behaviors. Although the differential leadership divides employees into insiders and outsiders and treats them differently, insiders and outsiders can be transformed dynamically. Essentially, insiders and outsiders belong to the same group. They will change their behaviors in order to be consistent with others when they are very different from others, so as to gain the sense of belonging of the organization and the same treatment of insiders; They will explore their own advantages and distinguish themselves from other employees when they are too consistent with others, so as not to be replaced^[6]. Therefore:

H1: There is a positive correlation between differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior.

2.2 Differential leadership and perceived organizational support

Eisenberger and his team proposed the concept of perceived organizational support and defined it as employees' feelings about whether the organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare^[7]. For insiders, differential leadership try their best to meet employees' work needs and care about their well-being, and insiders will feel a higher level of leaders' support.

According to the standard of "consanguinity, loyalty and ability", differential leadership divides the employees into insiders and outsiders, and this classification pattern is dynamic and transformable. Except for some acquired relationships (such as blood ties), every employee can become an insider depends on his or her talents and efforts^[8]. Previous studies have shown that differential leadership can improve employees' perception of fairness in the process of leadership. There is a positive correlation between procedural fairness and

perceived organizational support. Therefore, we can infer that by better meeting employees' expectation of procedural fairness, employees will have a higher perceived organizational support under differential leadership. Therefore:

H2: There is a positive correlation between differential leadership and perceived organizational support.

2.3 The mediating effect of perceived organizational support

Previous studies have shown that perceived organizational support has a significant positive impact on employees' job performance. According to the principle of reciprocity in social exchange theory, enterprises care about and meet the psychological needs of employees and provide support for their work. Out of a desire to reward the organization, employees will increase their work input for the benefit of the organization and the behaviors that are beneficial to the organization and try do some innovative behaviors with certain risks when employees perceive the care and support from the organization. Innovation is a process of constant change and development, which is full of risks and uncertainties^[9]. Studies have found that supportive culture and atmosphere are conducive to stimulating employees' creativity and increasing their innovative behaviors^[10].

In addition, innovation is a risky behavior, and employees will measure the risk caused by the failure of the innovation behavior. It is often related to employees' psychological security when they consider the risks brought by innovative behaviors. Employees who have a high perceived organizational support will have a higher psychological security, therefore there is a lower perceived innovation risk and more innovative behavior conducive to be generated. Therefore:

H3: There is a positive correlation between perceived organizational support and employees' innovative behaviors.

Based on the analysis above, differential leadership has a positive impact on perceived organizational support, as while perceived organizational support has a positive impact on employee innovation behavior. The paper argues that the differential leadership not only has a direct impact on employees' innovative behavior, but also act on employee innovation behavior through the perceived organizational support. Therefore:

H4: Perceived organizational support plays mediating effect between differential leadership and employees' innovative behaviors.

2.4 The moderating effect of Chinese traditionality and organizational trust

The influence of culture on people is subtle and lasting. The brand left by traditional culture has become a part of the personality of modern Chinese people, which exerts an influence on all aspects of economic and social life. Yang Guoshu and Yu Anbang put forward the concept of Chinese traditionality^[11]. The Chinese traditionality is the degree of recognition of Chinese traditional values, and it is one of the concepts that can best describe Chinese people's character and value orientation. In the research of Farh, the respect authority is mainly brought into the field of organizational management research, it is manifested in the role relationship of "superior and inferior" in the relationship between superiors and subordinates specifically^[12].

Employees with high traditionality have a higher sense of identity for differential leadership rooted in traditional Chinese culture. Insiders with high traditionality will understand leaders' care as the organization attaches special importance to themselves, so they will have a high perceived organizational support. And outsiders, who have a high traditionality tend to adhere strictly to authority. They will follow the differential leadership style without objection, and the identification with the leader will also enhance their perceived organizational support. And vice versa. Therefore:

H5: Chinese traditionality takes positive moderating effect between differential leadership and perceived organizational support.

Trust is the belief that the actions of others will benefit our own interests. Organizational trust is a subjective positive psychological state that guides people's attitudes and behaviors towards organizations, leaders and employees. And who believes that no matter the organization, the leader or the colleagues will not harm their interests when they take actions^[13]. Employees with high trust in the organization will abide by the authority of the organization, voluntarily obey the rules and regulations in the organization, have a strong sense of identity for the organization, and will devote more time and energy to the realization of the goals of the organization.

Studies have shown that the atmosphere of trust in an organization can regulate employees' identification with leaders and organizations. Employees who have high trust, their organizational commitment can still be maintained even if they suffer from unfair treatment. Therefore, employees with high organizational trust, who have a high sense of identity to differential leadership and a high sense of belonging to the organization, and then they will perceive strong organizational support. Therefore:

H6: Organizational trust takes positive moderating effect between differential leadership and perceived organizational support.

The conceptual model of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

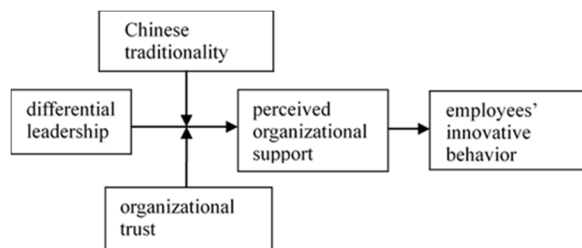


Figure 1. Systematic Framework

3. THE RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 The sample

This study uses questionnaire survey method to collect sample data. We contributed questionnaires 960, recovered 824 and the effective ones were 534. The effective recovery rate was 55.63%.

3.2 Tools of research

The measured items of the variables involved in this paper are all derived from mature scales at home and abroad to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. Considering the actual situation of Chinese enterprises and the language expression habits of Chinese, for the scales from abroad, we adopt the way literal translation -free translation to obtain the preliminary items. And consult management experts to determine the questionnaire questions. Finally we gained 29 items. All of the items are measured by 7 points scale of Likert.

The scale of differential leadership from the research of Jiang Dingyu and Zhang Wanzhen^[4], which including 7 items, Chronbach alpha coefficient is 0.873. The scale of perceived organizational support from the research of Eisenberger and Stinglhamber^[14], which including 5 items, Chronbach alpha coefficient is 0.880. The scale of Chinese traditionality from the research of Farh^[12], which including 5 items, Chronbach alpha coefficient is 0.777. The scale of organizational trust from the research of Robinson^[13], which including 6 items, Chronbach alpha coefficient is 0.890. The scale of employees' innovative behavior from the research of Scott and Bruce^[5], which including 6 items, Chronbach alpha coefficient is 0.890. Moreover, the control variables: gender, age, education, years of working in the company, and years of working with the direct boss.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Test on reliability and validity test

We use SPSS24.0 and AMOS24.0 to process and analysis data. In order to test whether the data have serious homology bias, we use the Harman single factor test method to test the common method bias of all variables involved in the study except the controlled variables. The results show that there is no serious problem of common method biases, because first principal component of the unrotated single-factor model is 32.338%. There is no serious problem of multicollinearity because VIF of every variable is less than 3. The factor loading of all items are bigger than 0.6 and pass the Bartlett sphericity test, it shows that the scale has good structure validity. In the term of discriminant validity, we use AMOS24.0 to carry out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on data. The results show that five-factor model has the best fitting effect: $\chi^2 / df = 1.349$, RMSEA=0.027, NFI=0.945, IFI=0.984, CFI=0.984, GFI=0.945.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The table 1 shows that the average and standard deviation of the variable and the coefficient of correlation between the variables.

There is a significant positive relationship between differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior ($r=0.376$, $p<0.01$), perceived organizational support ($r=0.283$, $p<0.01$). H1, H2 and H3 are verified.

TABLE 1. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Variable	Differential	Perceived	Chinese	Organizational	Employees'
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	leadership	organizational support	traditionality	trust	innovative behavior
Differential leadership	0.873				
Perceived organizational support	0.283**	0.880			
Chinese traditionality	0.165**	0.292**	0.777		
Organizational trust	0.267**	0.685**	0.293**	0.890	
Organizational trust	0.376**	0.537**	0.174**	0.574**	0.892

Note: data sample N=534; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. The data on the diagonal are the internal consistency coefficient of each variable.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

We use multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The table 2 shows the test results of the mediating effect of perceived organizational support on differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior. Model 1 and model 5 are formed after we add control variables into the model to conduct regression of employees' innovative behavior and perceived organizational support. Model 2 is formed after we add the independent variable differential leadership for regression into the model 1, and the results show that the differential leadership has a significant positive on employees' innovative behavior ($\beta = 0.366$, $p < 0.001$), so the H1 is confirmed. Model 6 is formed after we add the independent variable differential leadership for regression into the model 5, and the results show that the differential leadership has a significant positive on perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < 0.001$), so the H2 is confirmed. Model 3 is formed after we add the mediating variable perceived organizational support for regression into the model 1, and the results show that the perceived organizational support has a significant positive on employees' innovative behavior ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$), so the H3 is confirmed. Model 4 is formed after we add the mediating variable perceived organizational support for regression into the model 2, and the results show that the perceived organizational support has a significant positive on employees' innovative behavior ($\beta = 0.465$, $p < 0.001$), so the H3 is confirmed. What's more, the influence of differential leadership on employees' innovative behavior decreased from 0.366 to 0.240. Thus, it can be concluded that perceived organizational support plays a partial mediating role between the differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior, so the H4 is confirmed.

TABLE 2. TEST OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF MEDIATING EFFECT

Variable	Employees' innovative behavior				Perceived organizational support	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Differential leadership		0.366***		0.240**		0.272***

Perceived organizational support			0.531***	0.465***		
<i>F</i>	2.440*	16.072***	36.788***	40.031***	3.821***	10.604***
<i>R</i> ²	0.023	0.155	0.295	0.348	0.035	0.108
ΔR^2	0.013	0.145	0.278	0.339	0.026	0.098

The table 3 shows the test results of the moderating effect of Chinese traditionality and organizational trust. Model 7 is formed after we add the controlled variables, independent variable differential leadership, moderate variables Chinese traditionality and organizational trust into the model to conduct regression of perceived organizational support. And the results show that the Chinese traditionality has a significant positive on perceived organizational support ($\beta= 0.242$, $p < 0.001$). Model 8 is formed after we add the interaction item of differential leadership and Chinese traditionality into the model to conduct regression of perceived organizational support. And the results show that the the interaction item of differential leadership and Chinese traditionality has a significant positive on perceived organizational support ($\beta= 0.122$, $p < 0.01$), so the H5 is confirmed. Model 10 shows that the interaction item of differential leadership and organizational trust has a significant positive on perceived organizational support ($\beta= 0.133$, $p < 0.001$), so the H6 is confirmed. The figure 2and figure 3 show the specific effect.

TABLE 3. TEST OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF MODERATING EFFECT

Variable	Perceived organizational support			
	<i>M7</i>	<i>M8</i>	<i>M9</i>	<i>M10</i>
Differential leadership	0.233***	0.251	0.103***	0.115***
Chinese traditionality	0.242***	0.218***		
Differential leadership× Chinese traditionality		0.122**		
Organizational trust			0.650***	0.666***
Chinese traditionality× organizational trust				0.133***
<i>F</i>	14.520***	13.993***	74.078***	69.133***
<i>R</i> ²	0.162	0.176	0.496	0.513
ΔR^2	0.151	0.163	0.490	0.506

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of our study have a certain reference significance to the practice of enterprise management and some operational plan for the healthy development of the Chinese enterprise. Based on the social exchange theory, the study the mechanism of the differential leadership-perceived organizational support- employees' innovative behavior, and analyzes the regulation effect of the Chinese traditionality and organizational trust. The results show that differential leadership has significant positive influence on employees' innovative behavior and organizational support, organizational support has positive influence on employees' innovative behavior, which takes mediating effect between differential leadership and employees' innovative behavior. Chinese traditionality takes moderating effect between differential leadership and organizational support. Organizational trust takes moderating effect between differential leadership-perceived organizational support- employees' innovative behavior. However, there are still some deficiencies in the study: Employees of different types of organizations (traditional companies and emerging companies) have different perceptions of leadership styles, but this study does not classify organizations.

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