The Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employee Silence in China: Perceived Organizational Trust As a Mediator

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Abstract. The article examines the impact of ethical leadership on employee silence, adopting the methods of questionnaire and documents investigation. The findings show organizational trust plays a mediating role and, what's more, the perception of organizational politics has a moderating effect between ethical leadership and employee silence. More specifically, the results are as follow: (a) Ethical leadership has significant negative influences on employee silence; (b) Organizational trust directly affects employee silence and plays a mediating role between ethical leadership and employee silence; (c) Perception of organizational politics moderates the mediated relationship between ethical leadership and organizational trust, and finally increases employee silence behaviors. In short, this research supplements the related discussions on ethical leadership and provides guidance for leaders to adopt certain leadership styles in different situations.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership; Employee Silence; Organizational Trust; Perception of Organizational Politics

1 Introduction

During the new economy era when market is constantly changing and developing, whether enterprises can succeed depends on whether they can timely transit in order to adopt market requirements. Employees are aware of the situation and existing problems in their enterprises, so the potential demands of enterprise transformation in organization are usually inspired by them. Employees are able to develop innovative solutions based on their work experience, which helps enterprise to adjust behaviors to consolidate its status in the market. On the other hand, if employees always keep silent about the potential crisis in the enterprises, managers will be late in recognizing problems and making transformation so that competitors could swoop in and gain a stronghold in the market. It is truly common in China that employees in most enterprises choose to keep silent even though they know the existing problems in their enterprise. Chen Xiaotao (2008) evolved Chinese culture and society in the concept of employee silence and believed there are three reasons to explain employee silence: (a) Employees may keep silent because of their non-confidence of their suggestions; (b) Employees could worry that their voice behavior will affect their relationships with colleagues

or leaders in the workplace, or make superiors humiliated, or leave colleagues the impression that they are pushy. Therefore, employee silence is a behavior to protect their positions and relationships in the workplace; (c) Employees may not consider themselves as permanent members in their enterprise, so they believe "if not involved personally in the matter, let it be" and retain their opinions. The Chinese traditional characteristic of low-key has impact on the organizational atmosphere of employee voice behavior in Chinese enterprises to some extent.

In the context of the profound impact of employee silence on the enterprise and because of the complex psychology behind employee silence, recent years, scholars focus more on the subject about the factors affecting employee silence which includes factors of organizational atmosphere, personal variables of employees and leaders. The topic of factors of leaders is the increasing valued research direction.

Ethical leadership as one of the representative types of leaderships is a research hotspot in recent years. Some famous enterprises were exposed as having ethical and moral problems, (for example, Quanjian group and Muji recalled defective products,) which triggered theorists and practitioners in every field to think why some enterprises lack morals and how to deal with this phenomenon.

It is widely believed that immoral leaders will unintentionally lead to ethical and moral issues. Therefore, one of the effective ways to avoid the problems is to adopt ethical leadership style. Ethical leaders unintentionally affect employee's behavior by two-way communication, material reward and spiritual encouragement, setting a good example and caring employees and so on. It cannot be denied that ethical leaders play an very important role in affecting employee's behavior including silence behavior.

Some studies show that leadership behaviors directly affect employees' trust in organization. Ethical leaders are of the collectivism spirits, humanization and long-term enterprise value and those can be transferred to employees. With these characteristics, ethical leaders play effect on employee's work ethic and values and help establish confidence in corporation. Because employees realize "trust" as the support of enterprise, employees are promoted to change their negative behaviors including silence behaviors. At the same time, employee's subjective perception of the organization, for example, perceptions of organizational politics, may play a role in employee silence. The employee's perception of organizational politics is employee's objective organizational political perception formed because of working and organizational environment, which finally effects employee's attitude, psychology and behaviors.

In this study, we discussed the relationship between ethical leadership and employee silence by additionally joining variables of organizational trust and perception of organizational politics and expected to enrich and perfect the relation path between ethical leadership and employee silence. The important senses of this research are: (a) Developing leadership style and employee behavior theory with new elements; (b) Providing enterprises with practical instruction about how to contain employee silence and how to encourage employee voice behavior.

2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Ethical Leadership and Employee Silence

Employee silence is defined as the phenomenon where the employees who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress withhold any form of his or her expression. (Pinder et al, 2011) A growing body of research suggests the elements effecting employee silence include individual, organization, leader, colleague and social culture[3]. Leadership types such as ethical leadership, Autocratic Leadership, democratic Leadership, transformational Leadership and transactional Leadership focus on "how" and "when" to evolve employee silence. The concept of "Ethical leadership" presented by Enderle (1987) is "a way of thinking aims at to clarify and to make explicit the ethical dimension which exists in every management-decision to formulate and justify ethical principles", and also the ethical and appropriate behavior of leaders who apply a variety of ways to encourage employees to perform basically consistent behavior with respect to leaders in interpersonal communication and communication (Brown, 2005)[4]. With the progress of the research work, scholars are paying more attention to the study of "the personal characteristics and behavioral characteristics ethical leaders take" than of "what is ethical leadership." For example, Trevino (2003) proposes that two features of ethical leaders are ethical individuals (who act ethically) and ethical managers (who positively affect employees' behavior). Resick (2011) concludes six features of ethical leaders which are (a) responsibility, (b) consideration and respect for others, (c) fair and non-discriminatory treatment, (d) character, (e) collectivist orientation, (f) openness and flexibility.

In terms of the influence of ethical leadership on employee silence, the previous studies can be summarized into three theoretical perspectives: (a) Social exchange theory(Blau,1964), that is, employees "reward" and " feedback" the organization or the behavior of leaders, thus forming a social exchange relationship in reciprocity equilibrium. Specifically, if ethical leaders find and meet employees' needs and understand them on employees' stand, employees thereby will feel respected and thankful and make suggestions that benefit to the development of the organization as a reward. (b)Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), that is, ethical leaders influence the ethical conduct of employees through modeling (Brown, 2005)[4]. Employees judge the behaviors of the leaders and other members in organization and determine which behaviors are ethical, being influenced imperceptibly to imitate the praised ethical behavior. Caring about the interests of the organization and suggesting for the organization shows the responsibilities of employees. Ethical leaders deliver moral spirit such as responsibility to employees via various ways. Therefore, employees will change their silence behavior into voice behavior. It was verified that ethical leaders have positive effect on employee silence by LiLin. (c) Social identity theory (Tajfel＆Turner,1986), that is, by enhancing employee's identification, employees will combine personal interests with the organization's and more evolved in working for the organization, therefore, employee silence can be reduced. In addition, some scholars found the inner relationship between ethical leadership and employee silence from other theoretical perspective, for example, by conservation of resource theory and self-determination theory, Liming Xu (2018) pointed that virtuous circle formed by ethical leadership has an effect on employee silence[8]. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: ethical leadership has a significant negative effect on employee silence.

2.2 Mediator Role of Organization Trust

Organization trust is the process where employee form the sense of security in organization (Ferrin, 2001), and mainly divided into internal organization trust and trust among organizations. This study focuses on the former one, internal organization trust, including employee's trust in the organization, their leaders and colleagues. Many previous studies have illustrated that leadership style is one of the key factors influencing organizational trust, including the relationship between leaders and followers and leaders' characteristics. Based on leader-member exchange theory, the relationship between leaders and followers is connected via resource and information exchange. Ethical leaders focus on timely communication with employees and are committed to creating an environment where employees feel free to discuss, so employees know their leaders better and organization trust is enhanced. Moreover, leaders' characteristics and work ability greatly influence organization trust (Mayer, 1995). Ethical leaders understand and respect others, treat all staff equally and avoid ethical risk, which contributes to employee's organization trust enhancing. The influence path of ethical leadership upon organization trust was further discussed in Hongpu's study (2010)[10] . He found ethical leadership has significant positive impact on organization trust as to new employees. Organization trust comes from high quality social exchange relationships between leaders and members. According to principle of reciprocity, altruistic behavior shows more frequently among employees when organization trust maintains high-level, for example, employees are more likely to propose suggestions. Employees' trust in their organizations is a contributing factor in employee silence. When the organizational environment is open and without potential threats, employees feel more active to express their opinions or change their silence style because they believe they won't be involved in unfair treatment with their voice behavior. Furthermore, the level of employee's trust in their leaders and colleagues also affects their silence behavior. Employees report to immediate superior, so only if leaders are open to accept suggestions, employees feel free to propose something. Based on the observing that colleagues' voice behaviors could win them praises by other colleagues, employees believe they won't get ridiculed or pushed aside as a result of voice behavior, in other words, they feel more encouraged to state their own opinions. It was confirmed in Deng Jinzhao's study that with higher level of organization trust, employee voice behaviors are prone to occur (2010)[10] .

According to the "leader behavior- trust in leader - employee response" model, ethical leaders are willing to remain open and flexible in listening to their employees, convincing employees that leaders can make judgments fairly and avoid inflicting punishment arbitrarily, and it contributes to reducing the risks of employee voice behaviors (Dirks, 2002).Therefore, employees tend to make suggestions that help improve the organization performance. In addition, when leaders implement the recommendations employees put forward, employees will trust that their leaders will put emphasis on every suggestion they propose. And this will help employees aware that their own actions or recommendations can have an effective impact on the organization, and help motivate employees mentally as well as strengthen their sense of belonging. As a consequence, they no longer keep silent on projects of vital interest in the organization, and employee silence is reduced. Yang Xia (2017) further confirmed that the inferences of this model[5]. Based on the perspective of social exchange theory, they inferred that ethical leadership has a significant positive affect on organizational trust and organizational trust has a negative impact on employee silence. Banksgc et al. (2021) found

that psychological security plays an intermediary role between ethical leadership and employee voice behavior[1]. They explained that the generation of psychological security derives from the psychological contract between the employees and the organization, and the psychological contract comes from the employee's trust in organization. In terms of the above inferences, we expect that organizational trust, rather than psychological security, is mediator. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Organizational trust performs the mediating functions between ethical leadership and employee silence.

2.3 Moderator Effect of Perceptions of Organizational Politics

"Perceptions of organizational politics involves an individual's attribution to behaviors of self-serving intent, and is defined as an individual's subjective evaluation about the extent to which the work environment is characterized by co-workers and supervisors". The effect of perceptions of organizational politics on employee silence attacked the attention of the scholars before. They proved that Perception of organizational politics can affect employees' job satisfaction and psychological security, etc. When the level of employees' job satisfaction and psychological security are low, employees refuse to put organizational profits first and get indifferent to organizational problems, thereby leading to silence behavior. In other words, perceptions of organizational politics changes employee behavior by influencing their personal psychological feelings. So, would perceptions of organizational politics play a role in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee silence? In theory, when employees have a high level of perceptions of organizational politics, the traits of ethical leaders such as fairness and openness will be negatively affected, and ethical leadership will be also less effective for the dependent variables. In addition, employees hold the view that it is futile to suggest because their voice behavior won't bring them the rise of position or benefits but potential risk, as a result, the decrease of self-efficacy leads to the employee behavior. It is indicated in social cognitive theory that individual psychology and behavior are determined by external environment and subjective cognition.

Organization trust is the overall perception of the internal and external organizational environment. In other word, organization trust is the interaction of external environmental factors (leadership behavior) and subjective cognitive factors. Employees question ethical leaders' behaviors or even misunderstand their behaviors as selfish at a high level of Perception of organizational politics when conflicts happen between the information obtained by employees with the behaviors of ethical leaders, which will finally increase the negative effect of ethical leadership on employee silence. This will eventually exacerbate the phenomenon that the negative effect of ethical leadership on employee silence is weakened. Therefore, employees choose to keep silent because of the risk of suggesting. On the other hand, employees place more trust in the organizational system or rules and bypass gaining interests through "organizational political behavior" at a lower level of perception of organizational politics. Thus, with employees' confirming their trust in organization, and believing the organization is reliable and safe, the negative effect of ethical leaders on employee silence is increased. When organization encounters problems, employees would be more willing to suggest and communicate. In other word, employee silence is easier to change in the employees with a lower level of perception as the reinforced mediating effect of ethical leadership on organization trust.

What's more, perception of organizational politics reflects the highly politicized organizational environment in China to a large extent, which indicates ethical leadership may have great influence on the effect pathway of ethical leadership. We therefore hypothesize

Hypothesis 3: The perception of organizational politics moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee silence.

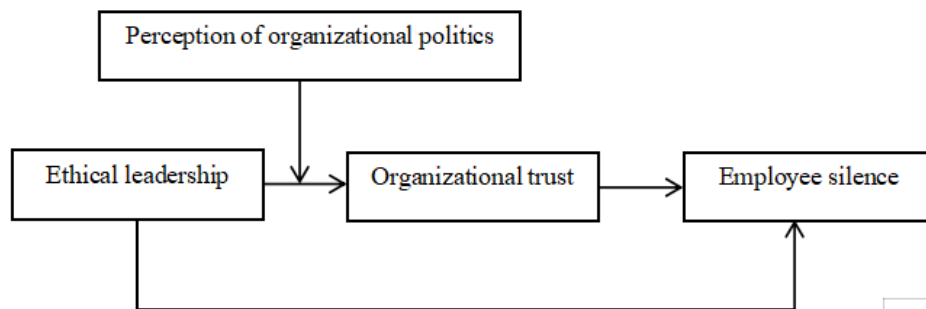Based on the above *hypothesis*, the research framework is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1. The hypothesized model explaining relationships among ethical leadership, employee silence, organizational trust and perception of organizational politics.

3 Method

3.1 Participants and Procedure

We selected employees as our respondents (including interns) in a variety of organizations. In coordination with human resource management department, we distributed the questionnaires mainly online. 283 questionnaires were recalled and 265 of them were valid, with an effective rate of 93.6%. Of the 265 respondents, 40% of them are male, 78.11% of them had a college diploma or higher educational qualification, 73.70% of them are under 40 years old, 82.64% of them worked for 1-5 years.

3.2 Measures

Five variables were included in this questionnaire: ethical leadership, organizational trust, perception of organizational politics, employee silence and control variables. We chose gender, age, working years and educational level as control variables, to eliminate the effects they might have on research variables mentioned. The ratings of questionnaires about the other four variables were made on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Ethical Leadership. Ethical leadership was measured by using ten items from Brown et al.'s (2005) ethical leadership scale[4]. Co-workers were asked to evaluate the ethical level of their superiors in corporation, such as "My supervisor is always generous in taking his subordinates' advices". This scale also adopted by Chinese scholars Jiang Jingjing (2018) and Cao Menglei (2015) et al., and this indicated that this scale is of good reliability and applicability. A higher score indicates the more prominent ethical characteristics of leadership.

Organizational Trust. Employee respondents completed the 7-item organizational trust scale developed by Robinson (1996), to research the degree of trust respondents have to their companies. Sample items include "In general, I believe the motivations and intentions of the organization are good." Chinese scholar Liu Shuyu (2018) used this scale to verify the relevant hypotheses, and it proved that this scale has high cultural applicability. The higher the score is, the more likely employees tend to trust the organizations.

Perception of Organizational Politics. According to the scale developed by Chao Ma et al. (2006), which fits the Chinese context, respondents were asked to evaluate the organizational political behavior in organizations. This scale is divided into peer relationships, self-interested behavior, as well as compensation and promotion. A sample includes "In our unit, every employee just care about their own work." The higher score means the respondents thought organizational politics was more common in organizations.

Employee Silence. Co-workers were asked to complete the 5-item scale developed by Tangirala et al. (2008). Co-workers indicated the extended to which they kept silence in the organization, such as "I will choose to keep silence rather than voice my opinions when facing the phenomenon that affects working efficiency in the organization". This scale was also used by Yun Fan (2016) and Zhang Xufan (2013), who are both Chinese scholars, to study the enterprises' and employees' issues in the context of China, which exemplified the good reliability of this scale[11]. The higher the score, the more silent the participants were in the organization.

4 Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Common Method Variance Analysis

In this paper, Harman's single-factor method was used to test for common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). First, we constructed a factor including all the variables of the study. Second, through exploratory factor analysis we found the nonrotating factor explained 24.6% of the variance, which was less than 40% of the total variance. This result showed that we had the variance under control and ensures that the variance will not affect research conclusions.

4.2 Test of Reliability and Validity

In terms of reliability test, the Cronbach's α coefficients of ethical leadership, organizational trust, perception of organizational politics and employee silence were 0.982, 0.981, 0.968, 0.975 respectively. All of these coefficients were above 0.9 and there was a good liability of data obtained from four scales. In terms of validity test, each of variables in the questionnaire was analyzed with SPSS. Firstly, the KMOs of four variables were all above 0.9 and the results of sphericity test were significant, which means the scales are suitable for factor analysis. Secondly, the data results after factor analysis are shown that the factor load of each item under all variables was above 0.5 and the cumulative contribution rate of the four variables was more than 50%. It shows that the scales reflect perfectly the items to be investigated, with good validity and reliability.

4.3 Correlation Analysis of Variables

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables. Data in Table 1 show that ethical leadership is significantly and negatively associated with employee silence (r=-0.726, p<0.01) and perception of organizational politics (r=-0.728, p<0.01), while it is significantly and positively associated with organizational trust (r=0.824, p<0.01). Furthermore, organizational trust is significantly and negatively correlated with employee silence (r=-0.706, p< 0.01). These results provide the basis for the examination of main effect, mediating effect and regulating effect in next step.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations coefficient for each research variable

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1.ethical leadership	3.398	1.217	1			
2.organizational trust	3.505	1.161	0.824**	1		
3.perception of organizational politics	3.136	1.041	-0.728**	-0.701**	1	
4.employee silence	3.037	1.452	-0.726**	-0.706**	0.833**	1

Note. $* p < .05, ** p < .01.$

Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing

In this study, the regression analysis method was used to address the hypotheses stated above. We took gender, age, educational level and working age as control variables, to ensure greater reliability of research results. The results are shown in Tables 2 and Table3 and the analysis of the three effects as follows:

The Main Effect Test of Ethical Leadership

Table 2 was constructed with ethical leadership as the independent variable and employee silence as the dependent variable, the regression coefficient of this model was -0.871 (p<0.01) and this result indicated that ethical leadership has a significantly negatively direct effects on employee silence, which supports the hypothesis 1.

The Mediating Effect Testing of Organizational Trust

To test the mediating effect of negative anticipations, we verified the significant effect of ethical leadership on organizational trust and the significant effect of organizational trust on employee silence, to research how organizational trust exerts a mediating effect on ethical leadership and employee silence. The method developed by Baron et al. (1986) was used to verify the mediating effect of organizational trust. After the variables (gender, age, education, and working age) are controlled, the test is divided into three steps. Firstly, model 1 was constructed with ethical leadership as the independent variable and organizational trust as the dependent variable, the regression coefficient of this model was 0.781 (p< 0.01), and it shows that ethical leadership has significantly positive effect on organizational trust. Secondly, model 2 was constructed with ethical leadership as the independent variable and employee silence as the dependent variable, the regression coefficient of this model was -0.871 (p< 0.01). Meanwhile, we constructed model 3 with

ethical leadership, organizational trust as the independent variables and employee silence as the dependent variable. This result indicated that organizational trust has significantly positive relation to employee silence (β=-0.444, p<0.01). Moreover, compared with model 2, model 3 introduced mediating variable, organizational trust, and the effect ethical leadership had on employee silence reduced from β=-0.871 (p< 0.01) to β= -0.524 (p< 0.01). To sum up, organizational trust acts as a mediator between ethical leadership and employee silence.The results are shown in Tables 2. Therefore, H2 were supported.

Table 2. Results of Mediating Effect of Organizational trust

Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2	F
Mediator model (outcome=Organizational trust)				
Ethical leadership	0.781**	0.685	0.663	112.515**
Dependent variable model (outcome=employee silence)				
Ethical leadership	-0.871**	0.545	0.527	62.011**
Dependent variable model (outcome=employee silence)				
Ethical leadership	-0.524**	0.510	0.510	60.522**
Organizational trust	-0.444**			

The Moderating Effect Test of Perception of Organizational Politics

In order to examine the moderating effect of perception of organizational politics, we adopted the research method developed by Ye Baojuan et al. (2013)[9] . Following their steps, the test process is shown in Table 3 with the results of the moderating effect by controlling the variables (gender, age, education, working age). Firstly, we introduced ethical leadership, perception of organizational politics and interactive item as the independent variables on the original basis respectively, as well as took organizational trust as the dependent variable, in order to verify whether the coefficient of interactive item significant or not. It shows from model 1 that the interaction between ethical leadership and perception of organizational politics had significantly positive effect (β= 0.233, p <0.01). The relationship between organizational trust and employee silence has been confirmed above, which indicated that perception of organizational politics moderates the mediation, organizational trust. More specifically, high perception of organizational politics will strengthen this mediated relationship, and low perception of organizational politics will weaken this mediated relationship.

Next, ethical leadership, perception of organizational politics and interactive item were added to model 2, as the independent variables successively, with employee silence as the dependent variable, to analyze whether the coefficient of intermediary variable still significant or not. Based on model 2, which introduced organizational trust as the independent variable, the coefficient of organizational trust still significant (β= -0.271, p< 0.01). This result shows that under the influence of the interaction between ethical leadership and perception of organizational politics, the intermediary effect of organizational trust still existed and

significant, namely, organizational trust mediated the effect that the interactive item had on employee silence. In conclusion, the hypothesis 3 is proved tenable.

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Moderation of Perception of Organizational Politics in the Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Organizational Trust

Variables	Model1	Model 2	Model3	Model 4
	OT (Dependent Variable)		**ES（dependent variable）**	
Gender	0.000	-0.033	-0.094	-0.015
Age	-0.036	0.014	-0.035	-0.019
Educational Level	0.081	0.064	0.000	-0.005
Working age	-0.032	-0.017	-0.074	-0.069
Step 1 (Main effect)				
EL	0.624**	0.441**	-0.316**	-0.376**
POP	-0.252**	-0.387**	0.886**	0.842**
Step 2 (interaction effect)				
EL×POP		0.233**		0.076
F	104.283**	106.403**	115.842**	100.141**
R²	0.708	0.743	0.729	0.732
△R²	0.686	0.031	0.712	0.714

Note. EL refers to ethical leadership, POP refers Perception of organizational politics, OT refers to organizational trust, ES refers employee silence.* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (Two-tailed test).

5 Conclusion

5.1 The Main Function of Ethical Leadership

It was found that ethical leaders produce significant negative role in employee silence behavior. Theoretically, ethical leader behaviors contribute to developing open atmosphere in organization, and they are more engaged in getting various suggestions from employees and reviewing their own behaviors. In this situation, employees are encouraged to put forward their opinions by knowing that to suggest is free of risk. Thus, ethical leaders are able to avoid employee silence or change existed silence behavior.

This conclusion is consistent with the studies concluding that the positive behaviors of leaders like authentic and inclusive leaders have effect on silence behavior and voice behavior (Hsieh et al.,2020)[2]. In addition, the results of our study are of interconnections with the conclusion of some studies that discuss the effect of ethical leaders on employees' positive behaviors. For instance, Huang Zhiqiang (2018) studied how ethical leaders invoke employees' ownership of ideas. Instead of keeping silent, putting forward recommendations of their own accord is a

typical performance/manifestation of employees to take ownership, and it indicated that ethical leadership has a negative effect on employee silence behaviors. Moreover, Tang Y and Li Y. (2022) verified the positive effect ethical leadership has on organizational citizenship behavior from the perspectives of individual and organization[6]. The results of this study coincide with three theoretical perspectives mentioned above (social learning theory, social identity theory and social exchange theory) which also provide support for self-determination theory which indicates that ethical leadership restrains employee silence through satisfying employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence and belonging: ethical leadership keep their mind open and provide more room for employees to reform and innovate, which meets the needs of employees for autonomy; ethical leaders will attach importance to every suggestion employees propose, and this will make employees feel the effectiveness of their behaviors in the organization, that is, improving their feelings of self-efficacy, therefore, meeting the needs of employees for competence; the humane concern from the ethical leaders will cater for employees' psychological needs for belonging, thus promoting employees' behaviors of presenting recommendations and advice actively. The results of this study also support social information process theory, the voice behavior of ethical leaders toward higher-level leaders will provide clues for employees indirectly and employees will realize that their leaders expect them to be those who can provide effective suggestions, that is, the ethical leaders' voice behavior toward their superiors will become the expected norms for their employees, so that employees will change their silent behaviors.

5.2 Intermediary Role of Organization Trust

The results show that organization is the factor in ethical leaders on silence behavior's effectiveness through mediating effect. Ethical leaders enhance employee's trust by promoting employees' positive perception of the organization environment, as a result that employees are more willing to put forward their own suggestions for the development and long-term interests of the organization instead of taking covert reprisals like silence behavior. This conclusion is consistent with "leader behavior- trust in leader - employee response" model

It is showed organization trust takes directly negative effect on employee silence (Jing Cui, 2014). Liu Ligang divided both employee silence and organization trust into three categories, and focused on each other's relationships (2010). Organization trust also effect employee behavior as a intermediary role. It has been proved that organizational trust mediates between inclusive leadership and employee silence, and because of the similarities between inclusive leadership and ethical leadership, organization trust would play a role in the influence path of leadership styles on employee silence (Zhang Qi). Organizational trust has been proved to mediate the relationship between individuals and organization as its indirect influence on the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational innovation behavior indirectly (Wang et al., 2022)[7]. The result of this study also could be applied to social exchange theory. As trust is the main content and important premise of social exchange theory, ethical leaders focus on establishing common goals with their employees through communication, which promotes employees trusting organization. Employees will care the development of organization when they keep high quality relationship with leaders and they could change their silence behavior. The results of this study are of supported by conservation of resource theory, that is, employee believe they will gain more work resources such as promotion prospect or affectual resources such as the trust from leaders by their positive behaviors. In other words,

voice behavior would happen when the employees who greatly trust the organization are trying to seize the benefits and resources.

5.3 Moderating Effect of Perception of Organizational Politics

The results show that perceptions of organizational politics plays a moderating role between ethical leadership and employee silence, which further indicated factors from individual perspective have negative or positive effect on employee silence behavior.

Perceptions of organizational politics takes direct effect on silence behavior (Sun Yiwen,2018; Zhu Haiyan,2018)[12]. As it was proved that perceptions of organizational politics plays a moderating role between leading role and silence behaviors so perception of organizational politics can influence the effectiveness of a particular behavior or style of leadership on the behavior of employees, perceptions of organizational politics also exert a great influence on employees silent behaviors through moderating effect (Zhang Zhengtang,2018)[12]. In this study, we focused on ethical leadership and confirmed the possible effects that perceptions of organizational politics as a moderating effect could take. This study is consistent with social cognitive theory, which suggests that not only the organizational environment and the ethos outside the organization, but also the employees' perception of the organization's environment can affect employee behaviors. The thought of employees with a high level of perceptions of organizational politics that organization is speculative and full of "self-interested behavior in organizational politics" interferes with the effect path of ethical leadership on employee silence behavior. What's more, the result in this study is consistent with theory of organizational equity which suggests that ethical leaders keep fair and create a organizational atmosphere without favoritism so employees' perceptions of organizational politics can be moderated and the positive effect of ethical leadership can be enhanced. Finally, employees will take more voice behaviors and reduce their silence behaviors.

5.4 Management Implication

From the perspective of ethical leaders, in recent years, there are endless news about business ethics, and topics about "ethics" are more and more popular. It makes a huge difference that whether enterprises insist on their ethics or focus on the short-term interest and abandon ethics. Through discussing the characteristics of ethical leadership and the negative effect that ethical behaviors take to silence behavior, we would advise that enterprises should focus on the long-term interests brought by ethical leaders and pay more attention to cultivate ethical leaders. According to discussion, as to cultivate ethical leaders that contribute to the long-term development, enterprise should: (a) Implement more training programs for leaders, especially the training programs about enhancing ethical standards, so leaders will change their mindset that put profits first. (b) Evaluate leader behavior periodically, give them feedback promptly and raise their awareness of what improper behaviors will lead to "retaliation" of employees, so they can correct their behaviors in time.

In terms of employee silence behavior, it is difficult for leaders to catch up with the pace of development only with the professional knowledge and skills in rapidly changing marketing. Employees are those individuals directly contacting the business and they have the ability to detect and solve problems in time. The crisis will finally breaks out if employees always keep silent about the company's crisis, at the same time, when the company is overtaken by

competitors, few measures can be taken to recover it. Thus, employee silence behavior influences enterprise's development and how to reduce silence behavior is a quite hot research direction. According to discussion, In order to curb the employee silence, enterprises should: (a) Promote a change in leadership style. Directive leaders often seek absolute compliance to orders from their subordinates and ignore the process of making suggestions. Following leaders in this style, employees are not confrontational and are afraid to challenge authorities, so they keep silent. Stereotyped leaders should change their mind, realizing the damage that silence behavior could take, and change their behavior and style, promoting employee voice behavior, in order to keep the pace with the rapid development of society; (b) Create an open and democratic organizational culture and atmosphere. Leaders should give spiritual and physical rewards to those who propose practical solutions for the enterprise, and convince employees that making positive suggestions will be rewarded. Thus, by doing this, employees' organization trust and sense of security can be enhanced. (c) Focus on developing employee organization trust. From the perspective of affect-based trust, leaders should be concerned about employees' life and work and give them care and attention. From the perspective of cognition-based trust, leaders should prove themselves reliable with their capacity and morality. (d) Build a transparent and fair organizational system. Leaders should avoid taking measures from their subjectivity but follow the system rules, realize that the organization rewards and punishes employees based on the system, and break the barrier from employees.

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