

The impact of transformational leadership on employee innovation behavior

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Abstract: Innovation is the power of enterprise development, the world is changing rapidly, only continuous innovation, enterprises can survive and develop. The innovation of enterprises is inseparable from the innovation of employees, and the influencing factors of employees' innovation behavior have always been concerned, among which leadership style is one of the important factors. Transformational leadership has always been regarded as an effective leadership style. It emphasizes that leaders cultivate employees by means of vision motivation, leadership charm, intellectual stimulation and personal care, so as to improve the direct effect on employees. Through a systematic analysis of previous studies, this paper explores the influence mechanism of transformational leadership on employee innovation behavior.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, employee innovation, enterprise innovation

1. Introduction

He who does not advance loses ground. With the development of modern science and technology, enterprise product upgrading is increasingly frequent, accelerate the pace of innovation in order to stand out in the competition. Human resource is one of the most valuable resources of an enterprise. How to stimulate the innovation ability of employees is one of the urgent problems to be solved. The fierce competition outside the organization has put forward new requirements for leadership style. Transformational leadership is a leadership style worthy of praise, which emphasizes the dimensions of vision inspiration, leadership charm, intellectual stimulation and employee care. Transformational leadership enables employees to realize the importance of the tasks they undertake, constantly arouses the needs of employees at a higher level, and urges them to achieve a level beyond the expected performance.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 The concept of transformational leadership

Different from traditional leadership styles, transformational leadership emphasizes more on the relationship with employees. The concept of transformational leadership was first put forward by Burns^[1], who pointed out that transformational leadership constantly stimulates employees' potential and urges them to work hard by constructing higher values, thus establishing an emotional foundation of mutual trust and common progress. Transformational leadership describes a blueprint for employees to align their personal goals with those of the organization.

2.2 Dimensions and measurement of transformational leadership

Based on different evaluation perspectives, different scholars have different definitions of transformational leadership. Currently, the four dimensions proposed by Bass^[2] are generally recognized by the academic community, namely, leadership charisma, vision motivation, intelligence stimulation and personalized care. Podsakoff^[3] proposed a new classification dimension. He divided transformational leadership into six dimensions, namely, promoting cooperation, expressing vision, setting example, inspiring intelligence, personalized care and raising high expectations. The research on transformational leadership was first started in the West and developed relatively well. Based on the background of The

Chinese situation, Li Chaoping et al^[4]divided transformational leadership into four dimensions with Chinese characteristics, namely, moral imitation, personalized care, vision incentive and leadership charm. Different from Bass's four dimensions, which emphasize that leaders should set an example, sacrifice the ego, and put the interests of the organization above their own.

2.3 The concept of employee innovation behavior

The word innovation was first put forward by economist Peter Schumpeter, who defined innovation as the recombination of production factors. Employee innovation behavior plays a vital role in the development of enterprises, which is the bridge connecting enterprise innovation. Amabile^[5]believes that employees will put forward novel ideas at work to improve work efficiency, such as designing new products and services and changing working mode to save time and reduce costs. New ideas are not the end of innovation, how to put ideas into practice and produce benefits is crucial.

2.4 Dimensions and measurement of employee innovation behavior

The widely used scale of employee innovation behavior is the single-dimension scale developed by Scott and Bruce, which has 6 items and has good reliability and validity. The scale is generally used for employees' self-evaluation of their innovation behavior. Based on the research results of Scott et al., Zhou and George developed a scale of leaders' evaluation of employees' innovative behaviors, with 13 items. Klesysen et al. divided employees' innovative behavior into 5 dimensions, including opportunity seeking, idea generation, idea evaluation, support obtaining and promotion, and measured them with 14 questions. At present, the scale used by scholars in the research on employee innovation behavior is a six-item single-dimension scale developed by Scott et al.

3. Research review

3.1 Direct impact

The influence of transformational leadership on employee innovation behavior is mainly through influencing employee motivation. Motivation determines what employees do, how they do it, and how hard they work in the process^[6]. Motivation can be divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation mainly comes from factors such as curiosity and interest, while extrinsic motivation comes from factors such as goal achievement and reward.

The intrinsic motivation of employees comes from their own needs, and the challenge and interest of work itself enhance the desire of employees^[7]. The higher the intrinsic motivation of employees is, the more time and energy they are likely to spend to creatively solve problems at work^[8]. According to the creativity component theory, intrinsic motivation is one of the important factors affecting employees' creativity. When employees have strong internal motivation, they will be motivated by tasks and enjoy the challenge of tasks, so they will be more creative^[9]. When employees' innovative behavior is controlled by external factors, their enthusiasm will decrease. This is because the more a job is modulated by reward, the less intrinsic motivation there is to perform the job. Extrinsic motivation shifts employees' attention to material rewards and reduces the promotion effect of intrinsic motivation on innovation behavior.

3.2 Mediating role

Innovation self-efficacy plays an important role in the influence of leadership behavior on employee innovation behavior. Self-efficacy is a person's expectation of whether he or she will achieve a goal, which connects knowledge with action. In recent years, scholars have begun to study the mediating effect of innovation self-efficacy on leadership behavior and employee innovation behavior. Gu Yuandong^[10]believes that specific self-efficacy can play an intermediary role in specific behaviors of employees. Qu Rujie^[11]believes that innovative self-efficacy affects the efficiency and level of employees' creative activities. When employees are aware of their leaders' expectations for innovative results, they will reduce their doubts and achieve their goals.

Leadership behavior affects employees' sense of organizational identity. Employees take leaders as examples to learn from, and leaders' care and motivation for employees can stimulate employees' enthusiasm for work. Therefore, transformational leadership is conducive to improving employees' sense of organizational identity. When employees have a low sense of organizational identity, they will not give

play to their own subjective initiative and will adopt a negative way to deal with problems in the organization. On the contrary, when employees have a high sense of organizational identity, they will take the initiative to seek solutions to problems in the organization and take the interests of the organization as the guidance, thus contributing to the realization of organizational goals.

Positive emotion is an emotional experience produced by an individual that produces pleasure. Employees' positive emotions have an important influence on employees' innovation behavior. Chen Hui^[12] explored the influence of innovation atmosphere on employees' innovation behavior based on 306 sample data, and the research results showed that positive emotions play an intermediary role.

4. Conclusion

Transformational leadership has a direct impact on employees' innovative behavior. According to the creativity component theory, intrinsic motivation can stimulate employees' subjective initiative and further promote employees' innovative behavior. Extrinsic motivation makes employees pay more attention to material rewards, thus reducing employees' innovative behavior. In the research on the impact of transformational leadership on employee innovation behavior, the mediating variables mainly include innovative self-efficacy, organizational identity and positive emotions. Transformational leadership influences employees' behavior, arouses their potential, and makes employees strive for higher goals. At the same time, transformational leadership promotes employees' confidence in innovation and enables them to carry out creative activities.

5. Managerial implications

China's economy has been transformed from high-speed development to high-quality development. As an important method of enterprise development, innovation plays an increasingly important role. As one of the most effective leadership styles, transformational leadership can constantly promote the growth and innovation of employees. Combined with practice, this paper puts forward the following suggestions.

Change leadership style, strengthen transformational leadership to stimulate innovative behavior of employees. In the context of China, there is often a large psychological distance between leaders and employees, and the subjective initiative of employees cannot be fully played due to the difference in status. Enterprise leaders should change their leadership style, strengthen transformational leadership, take the initiative to care for employees, and provide help for employees' career planning. In addition, leaders need to lead by example, constantly come up with new ideas and motivate employees to be innovative.

Strengthen employee training. With the development of technology, knowledge and technology are also at risk of being replaced. Leaders should pay attention to the training of employees, keep pace with The Times, and provide a solid theoretical basis for employees to give full play to their innovation ability.

Strengthen the role of incentives. Leaders should establish a set of perfect incentive system in the enterprise, strengthen the incentive effect for the employees with innovative ability, and constantly improve the subjective initiative of employees. Improving the subjective initiative of employees can promote their work enthusiasm and make employees gradually take innovation as a normal way of work.

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