

The Impact of Perception of Organizational Politics on Knowledge Sharing Behavior of Employees: The Mediating Effect of Psychological Capital and The Moderating Effect of Political Skill

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Abstract: Knowledge sharing behavior plays an important role in promoting enterprise innovation, and perception of organizational politics is a potential factor affecting the behavior of employees. Based on the conservation of resources theory, this paper logically deduces the theoretical model, showing that there is a significant negative correlation between perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior, psychological capital mediates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior, and political skill not only negatively moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and psychological capital, but also negatively moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politics mediated by psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior. This paper expands the perspective of research on the antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior and makes up for some gaps in the field of localization of perception of organizational politics.

Keywords: Perception of Organizational Politics; Knowledge Sharing Behavior; Psychological Capital; Political Skill.

1. Introduction

At present, China's economic development has entered a new normal, and innovation has become an important engine driving high-quality economic growth and a strategic support for enterprises to effectively cope with the complex, changeable and increasingly fierce market competition environment. Organizational innovation covers internal system, business model, production factors, corporate culture and other aspects, and runs through all levels, departments and positions. It relies on the ability to mine and acquire knowledge resources, integrate management and apply and transform knowledge, and depends on the flow and diffusion of individual knowledge at the organizational level, namely knowledge sharing. Therefore, knowledge is the key material of organizational innovation, and knowledge sharing behavior is an important forerunner of enterprise innovation behavior. However, although some enterprises try to promote knowledge sharing by building internal knowledge management systems or creating a learning organizational culture atmosphere, they still achieve little effect, which is reflected in the narrow surface of individual knowledge radiation and low transmission rate. The process of knowledge sharing is repeatedly blocked due to negative factors such as noise, blind area and misreading, which seriously inhibit the innovation vitality and development potential of enterprises. Based on social exchange theory, social cognitive theory, psychological contract theory and reciprocity theory, the academic community has explained the influence of leadership styles or behavioral traits such as paternalistic leadership, entrepreneurial leadership, humble leadership and workplace exclusion and negative gossip on employees' knowledge sharing behavior. However, it has not paid enough attention to the organizational political ecology perceived by knowledge sharing subjects.

Due to the scarcity of internal resources in an organization,

individual employees, driven by self-interest motives, will try to take various means that may damage the interests of others or the organization to grab more internal resources that are conducive to maintaining or improving their own interests. This behavior is regarded as an organizational political behavior that is free from the boundaries of organizational system. Because this behavior is covert and sensitive, it is difficult to observe, so the academic circle shifts the research focus to the perception of individual employees on organizational political behavior. Although existing studies have used social exchange theory, motivation theory and stress theory to reveal that perceived organizational politics has a significant negative impact on employee job performance, organizational trust and organizational citizenship behavior, and a significant positive impact on employee job burnout, turnover intention and silent behavior. However, it remains to be clarified whether employees with high organizational political perception will inhibit knowledge sharing behavior due to limited knowledge resources in the organization, or stimulate knowledge sharing behavior due to long-term consideration of maintaining and developing their own and organizational interests. Political perception is ubiquitous in all organizations, and becomes particularly prominent when it is embedded in the organizational political ecology in the context of Chinese culture that emphasizes interpersonal relationships. It is of great practical significance to explore the influence of perceived organizational politics on employees' attitudes or behaviors from the local perspective.

2. Theoretical Basis and Research Hypothesis

(1) The conservation of resources theory

The basic view of conservation of resources theory is that individuals are always inclined to protect, maintain and create resources beneficial to them, and potential or actual resource

loss will pose a certain threat to individuals. In which, resources are regarded as the substances, characteristics, conditions and energies that individuals deem valuable to them and the ways and means of obtaining them. It can be divided into material resources that satisfy physiological needs or highlight social status, trait resources that help to cope with stressful situations, condition resources that positively affect future working and living conditions and energy resources that are conducive to obtaining other resources.

The "loss priority" principle of conservation of resources theory points out that the impact of resource loss is more lasting and serious than that of resource acquisition, and individuals are more sensitive and violent to it, which is easy to cause depression, tension, burnout and other negative emotions. Driven by the motivation of minimizing net resource loss, individuals will strengthen the protection and maintenance of existing resources [16, 17].

(2) The research hypothesis

From the perspective of conservation of resources theory, perception of organizational politics, as the subjective evaluation and attribution of individuals in organizations to others' political behaviors aimed at maximizing their own interests, can be regarded as a source of pressure in the workplace, which will pose a threat to the loss of trait resources including self-trust and trust between colleagues. With the enhancement of the perception of organizational politics, on the one hand, employees will feel a strong sense of exclusion or indifference, and even fall into serious self-doubt. On the other hand, they will deliberately distance themselves from other members to avoid becoming a tool of organizational politics. In this case, although employees can obtain useful information in the process of knowledge sharing, the motivation of minimizing net resource loss is dominant, and preventing further loss of energy resources becomes the primary task, thus reducing employees' willingness and behavior to share knowledge.

Poon (2003) believed that employees with strong perceptions of organizational politics tend to make negative evaluations of supervisors and colleagues, weaken their sense of trust and closeness, and alienate others for the self-protection motive of preventing resource loss, thus reducing their subjective willingness to interact with knowledge. Similarly, Yang Hua (2014) found that the perceived strong organizational political atmosphere would have a negative impact on workplace friendship, thus reducing the willingness to share knowledge. Ma Chao, Ling Wenquan and Fang Liluo (2006) believed that perceived organizational politics would diminish employees' enthusiasm for organizing and reduce the frequency of voice behavior and helping behavior. In addition, Bock et al. (2005) found, based on the survey data of multiple enterprise samples, that fair and reciprocal compensation policies and promotion mechanisms within the organization promote employees' knowledge sharing behavior, which proved from the opposite side that the perceived injustice of compensation and promotion by organization members weakens knowledge sharing behavior.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H1: Perception of organizational politics is significantly negatively correlated with knowledge sharing behavior.

Luthans et al. (2007) believe that individual psychological capital is composed of a series of positive mental states such as confidence, optimism and tenacity. From the perspective of

conservation of resources theory, on the one hand, emotional resource depletion caused by strong perception of organizational politics will cause individuals to have a sense of crisis under pressure. For employees in the current VUCA era, this sense of instability and insecurity from the organization is more obvious. On the other hand, employees who perceive the strong organizational political atmosphere are more likely than other employees to rely on their own strength to reverse the status quo. However, when emotional resources are lost and they cannot obtain resource supplement and support from superiors and colleagues who implement political behaviors, their own strength is quite weak, and employees are easy to fall into the inner conflict of "willing but insufficient". Under the joint action of the above two aspects, employees' psychological capital such as confidence, optimism and tenacity for their future career development will be further reduced in the strong perception of organizational politics.

Xiong Meng and Ye Yiduo (2014) found that in addition to individual characteristics, factors such as organizational support and work pressure also have an impact on psychological capital. However, the unfair atmosphere created by organizational politics at the perception level is contrary to the fair environment required by the formation of organizational support. As echoed by relevant studies, the stronger organizational politics employees perceive, the weaker organizational support they perceive. Even if organizational support exists objectively and is strong, the perception of organizational politics will send wrong signals to employees: organizational support is just an ulterior means adopted by superiors to maximize their own or group interests. It can be seen that perceived organizational politics inhibits perceived organizational support and has a negative impact on psychological capital. Other studies have shown that perceived organizational politics has a negative impact on employees' innovation passion, organizational trust, voice behavior motivation and other internal factors, and these factors can be included in the category of psychological capital.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H2: Perception of organizational politics is significantly negatively correlated with psychological capital.

According to the conservation of resources theory, psychological capital constructed by positive elements such as confidence, optimism and tenacity belongs to the category of individual idiosyncrasies. When psychological capital is sufficient, employees are less likely to feel the threat and pressure caused by resource loss, so they are more willing to create valuable new resources through knowledge sharing, that is, to produce new knowledge.

Previous studies have explored the positive correlation between psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior. Xu Chuna (2020) found that psychological capital has a significant positive impact on tacit knowledge sharing, and psychological contract has a significant moderating effect. Cao Ruixin (2020), based on the empirical analysis of 338 employees from different enterprises, found that the higher the level of psychological capital, the more willing and able employees are to promote knowledge sharing. Li Xianmiao, Xu Zhenting (2018) and Tian Xianhua (2022) found that leadership psychological capital, mediated by employee psychological capital, would positively affect employee knowledge sharing [30, 31] by building a cross-hierarchy

model.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H3: Psychological capital is significantly positively correlated with knowledge sharing behavior.

Qiu Qian et al. (2010) summarized the research focus of foreign scholars on influencing factors of knowledge sharing and found that these factors can be divided into organizational level, individual level, knowledge level and environmental level. In this paper, perception of organizational politics can be regarded as the result of the interaction between organizational culture at the organizational level and trust and psychological security at the individual level, and psychological capital can be regarded as self-efficacy at the individual level, that is, both perception of organizational politics and psychological capital are influencing factors of knowledge sharing behavior.

A high level of perception of organizational politics will cause employees to have distrust of superiors and colleagues and insecurity about their own development conditions, consume psychological capital, build a strong barrier to energy resources including knowledge out of the motivation of minimizing net loss of resources, and deliberately alienate other employees who perceive political behavior. By reducing the sharing behavior to prevent the loss of their knowledge or political exploitation; On the contrary, the low level of Perception of organizational politics does not pose a serious threat to the emotional resources of employees. Employees are full of confidence in the future development of the organization and themselves. The relatively abundant trait resources make employees more willing and able to share knowledge, so as to create more valuable new knowledge in the process of spreading, penetrating and absorbing.

Therefore, on the basis of synthesizing H2 and H3, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H4: Psychological capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior.

Political skill is an individual's ability to accurately understand the political relationship in the workplace and achieve self-goals by influencing others' behaviors. Ferris et al. (2007) argued that political skill is a comprehensive social ability covering relationship network construction, apparent sincerity, social acumen, interpersonal influence, etc., which can not only directly affect the outcome, but also play a moderating effect in predicting the outcome relationship. Research has shown that political skills are a "catalyst" for positive behavioral relationships in the workplace. Jiang Ping and Zhang Lihua (2022) found that employees' political skills not only have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between leadership humor and job prosperity, but also have a positive moderating effect on the process of leadership humor's influence on employees' prospective behavior mediated by job prosperity. Feng Ming and Li Cong (2011) found that political skills significantly positively moderated the relationship between employee impression management and career success based on an empirical study of 395 state-owned enterprise employees. Political skills have also been proved by foreign scholars to be the "lubricant" of the negative relationship between Perception of organizational politics and job output, including performance [37, 38].

Based on the conservation of resources theory, the degree of attention and response of different individuals to the static existence and dynamic changes of their own resources varies

according to their degree of matching and adaptation to resources, which indicates that the perception of organizational politics will not cause a considerable degree of negative impact on all employees. It reflects the necessity and importance of exploring the differences of individual characteristics including political skills. Firstly, from the gain perspective of resource conservation theory, employees with high level of political skills are good at adjusting their own state flexibly according to the situation, taking active actions to deal with pressure, effectively reducing the loss of psychological resources, and thus weakening the negative correlation between perception of organizational politics and psychological capital. On the contrary, it is difficult for employees with low level of political skills to realize resource stop loss by adjusting their own state according to the situation. Emotional deterioration leads to continuous loss of psychological resources, which intensifies the negative correlation between Perception of organizational politics and psychological capital. Secondly, employees with high levels of political skills tend to make internal attributions to organizational politics, rather than maliciously speculate about their superiors and colleagues, know how to give and win trust from others, and have a lower sense of injustice and insecurity towards organizational ecology. In addition, Ferris et al. (2007) pointed out that political skills, as a special individual resource, can play a guiding and promoting role in the process of understanding and obtaining other resources from external environment. Employees with high level of political skills are socially sensitive and have strong ability to build relationship networks. They are good at using various methods to supplement additional resources from interpersonal networks and input them into the process of knowledge sharing. On the contrary, employees with low political skills tend to make external attribution to organizational politics, are reluctant to trust and intentionally distance themselves from superiors and colleagues, and have a high sense of injustice and insecurity to organizational ecology. In addition, employees with low political skills are slow in social interaction and weak in network building ability, so it is difficult for them to obtain additional resources from interpersonal network and invest in knowledge sharing process.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H5a: Political skill has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between perception of organizational politics and psychological capital, that is, the higher the level of political skill, the weaker the negative correlation between perception of organizational politics and psychological capital; The lower the political skill level, the stronger the negative correlation between Perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior.

H5b: Political skill has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between perception of organizational politics mediated by psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior, that is, the higher the level of political skill, the weaker the negative correlation between perception of organizational politics mediated by psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior; The lower the level of political skill, the stronger the negative correlation between perception of organizational politics mediated by psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior.

(3) Model construction

Based on the above research assumptions, the theoretical

model is constructed as shown in the figure below.

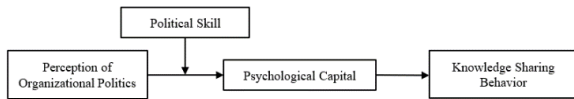


Figure1. Theoretical Model

3. Conclusion

Based on the conservation of resources theory, this paper logically deduces the theoretical model, showing that there is a significant negative correlation between perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior, psychological capital mediates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and knowledge sharing behavior, and political skill not only negatively moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politics and psychological capital, but also negatively moderates the relationship between perception of organizational politics mediated by psychological capital and knowledge sharing behavior. This paper expands the perspective of research on the antecedents of knowledge sharing behavior and makes up for some gaps in the field of localization of perception of organizational politics.

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