

The Impact of Ambidextrous Leadership on Employees' Knowledge Sharing Behavior-Based on the Mediating Role of Trust

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ABSTRACT

With the development of social economy, knowledge has become an important resource for organizations to gain competitive advantage. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship among ambidextrous leadership, knowledge sharing and trust, and to study whether trust plays a mediating role. Data resources are obtained through questionnaires, and SPSS and AMOS are used to conduct empirical tests. The results show that ambidextrous leadership has a positive impact on employees' knowledge sharing behavior, and trust plays an intermediary role between them.

KEYWORDS

Ambidextrous leadership; Knowledge sharing; Trust

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of knowledge economy, knowledge resources have gradually become an important innovation factor in the organization. In order to obtain innovation performance, enterprises must rely on knowledge exchange and sharing. With the dynamic changes of the environment, the quality and efficiency of knowledge sharing among organizational members can have a positive impact on the effective development and utilization of knowledge resources [1]. Therefore, what factors affect the re-organization of employee knowledge sharing behavior has become a matter of concern.

As the main way of information and knowledge dissemination, knowledge sharing plays a vital role in the risk of knowledge management within the organization. At the same time, knowledge sharing, as an indispensable part of enterprise knowledge management activities, is the source of knowledge transfer, updating and innovation. Employees' knowledge sharing behavior is not generated by organizational coercion, but belongs to employees' positive, self-determined extra-role behavior [2]. In this way, the triggering of employees' knowledge sharing behavior is affected by many factors, and leadership, as a necessary person for employees' direct contact, has an important impact on the generation of employee series behavior. Most of the existing research studies the impact on organizational innovation performance from a single or specific type of leadership [3], the impact of team creativity [4], collaborative innovation efficiency [5], etc., lack of discussion on the synergy between the two in the state of coordination and balance of opposite goals. Compared with single leadership style, ambidextrous leadership is beneficial to the competition and sustainable development of enterprises in complex dynamic environment. Studies have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between ambidextrous leadership and employee knowledge sharing behavior from the organizational level [6]. As two complementary leadership behaviors,

ambidextrous leadership has a profound impact on employees and meets their differentiated needs in the knowledge sharing behavior of employees.

At the same time, trust, as an important prerequisite for employees to accept the leadership style of leadership, is also crucial to the generation of employees' knowledge sharing behavior. On the one hand, based on the trust of leaders, employees believe that they can get the appreciation and reward of leaders through knowledge sharing behavior, and are more willing to produce such behavior. On the other hand, the internal coordination of ambidextrous leadership style can meet the needs of employees, and it is easier to realize the self-development and self-management of employees, so as to win the trust of employees. From this point of view, trust is likely to have a mediating effect between ambidextrous leadership and employee knowledge sharing behavior.

Based on this, this paper will explore the impact of ambidextrous leadership on knowledge sharing behavior and whether trust plays an intermediary role between the two, which will bring theoretical and practical application value for the organization to realize the generation of employee knowledge sharing behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Ambidextrous Leadership

In order to deal with the conflict between the current efficient operation of industrial enterprise business and the long-term development of the future, Duncan took the lead in introducing the idea of " ambidexterity " into the field of management science. Subsequently, this creative theory that breaks through the idea of single management slowly developed [7]. Scholars have used cross-level analysis methods to study the ambidextrous phenomena at different levels in the organization. On this basis, Gupta introduced the idea of ambidexterity into the original leadership management theory, and thus launched the research on ambidextrous leadership in leadership theory [8]. Ambidextrous leadership refers to a new leadership style composed of two different complementary leadership behaviors, which embodies the extension and application of ambidexterity theory in the field of leadership. Compared with single leadership, ambidextrous leadership has stronger dynamic transformation ability, stronger contradiction tolerance ability and stronger cognitive flexibility. Compared with ambivalent leadership, ambidextrous leadership has stronger time-space switching ability [9]. Under the dual leadership model, the existing dual leadership model can be divided into four categories: authorization and command from the perspective of power, change and transaction from the perspective of convention, open and closed from the perspective of cognition, and authority and kindness from the perspective of grace. The existing research on the influencing factors of ambidextrous leadership has a wealth of research on enterprise innovation and enterprise employees. At the enterprise level, Wang Canhao and Duan Yufeng conducted a questionnaire survey in the Yangtze River Delta region and found that change leadership has a positive effect on exploratory innovation, while transactional leadership has a positive effect on applied innovation. [10]. Zhao Li et al. (2017) found that dual leadership has a positive effect on team creativity through an empirical analysis of the role of dual leadership in team creativity [11]. For employees in the organization, leaders ' flexible switching between ' command ' and ' authorization ' can improve the work adaptability of new employees, enhance their self-identity, and thus improve their work performance and innovation performance [12-13].

2.2. Knowledge Sharing

As the core part of knowledge management, scholars have studied knowledge sharing from different perspectives : from the perspective of knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing is the process of knowledge transfer between knowledge owners and recipients through information media to achieve knowledge sharing [14]; from the perspective of knowledge learning, knowledge sharing is a process

in which individuals, organizations and organizations learn from each other through the dissemination of opinions, professional knowledge or viewpoints [15]; From the perspective of knowledge trading, knowledge sharing, like other commodities, has buyers and sellers, and different organizations and individuals can achieve win-win results through knowledge trading [16]. At the same time, leadership style, organizational context, job characteristics [17], interpersonal relationship, subject cognition have become important factors affecting knowledge sharing [18-19]. Li Xiaoyue proposed that virtual communities can improve the entertainment, interactivity and online word-of-mouth of the platform, promote and improve users' sense of community identity, and then improve users' willingness to share knowledge. [20]. Wang Haihua et al. studied the influence of indirect interaction on the willingness of knowledge sharing in online knowledge communities, and found that positive indirect interaction can improve the individual's expected expectations and thus improve the individual's willingness to share knowledge. [21]. In addition, knowledge sharing behavior in practice is influenced by both individual motivation and consciousness [22], and the leadership support of direct managers is an important factor affecting knowledge sharing behavior [23]. Based on the research of most scholars at home and abroad, it is generally recognized that knowledge sharing is the result of the combined effect of many factors, that is, knowledge sharing is through organizational transfer and organizational learning, so that knowledge is transmitted and transformed between individuals and organizations. Other people in the organization master new knowledge through reconstruction and learning, so as to help organizational members solve problems and improve organizational efficiency. The ultimate goal is to achieve knowledge creation.

2.3. Trust

Trust, or "social trust", can be interpreted either as a shared belief in maintaining positive expectations about working with others without seeking any additional benefits, or as the degree of mutual trust within an organization as a whole [24]. Generally speaking, social trust includes both specific trust between individuals and generalized trust between groups or organizations, which tends to be stable for a long time. With the continuous development of trust research, scholars have proposed more and more types of trust, specifically: universal trust and special trust [25], emotional trust and institutional trust [26], personality trust and system trust [27]. In the enterprise, subordinates will generate trust through the authorization behavior of superiors, the perception of justice leadership and the perception of superiors' support. Trust has a positive effect on knowledge sharing. From a psychological point of view, the trust relationship between individuals helps the two sides to form a common psychological contract, narrow the psychological distance, promote their willingness to share and learn knowledge, and effectively promote the sharing of knowledge; from the perspective of sociology, the essence of knowledge sharing is the exchange of knowledge between individuals and parties, and the trust relationship can promote the formation of an informal contract between the parties to the transaction, protect the knowledge rights and interests between the parties, so as to make the mechanism of knowledge sharing smoother; from the perspective of economics, trust can reduce the internal transaction costs between knowledge sharing subjects, reduce the risk of knowledge sharing, and promote knowledge sharing.

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

3.1. Ambidextrous Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Leadership is a key factor in promoting the formation of organizational climate. If he attaches importance to knowledge management within the organization and encourages mutual communication among employees, then the knowledge sharing willingness of members in the organization will increase. On the contrary, if it hinders the formation of a shared atmosphere, it will lead to a decline in the degree of knowledge sharing. Ambidextrous leadership has the ability to deal with complex things such as contradictions in a changeable way, and can achieve a flexible

conversion between exploratory activities and exploitative activities. On the one hand, the personality characteristics of ambidextrous leadership allow him to maintain a tension relationship with employees. When treating subordinates, both equality and personalization are taken into account, and the role assignment of employees in different work tasks is also taken into account. This is beneficial for subordinates to obtain identity, which is also conducive to their creativity, which is helpful to create an enterprise knowledge sharing atmosphere environment, and at the same time can improve employees' knowledge sharing participation. On the other hand, in the allocation of power, the dual leadership attaches importance to the idea of "I-based" and "he-based", and attaches importance to the individual value of employees, so that subordinates can feel that they are supported by the leadership, thus stimulating their creativity. Ambidextrous leaders not only encourage innovative ideas, share and display personal knowledge, but also guide and ensure the orderly sharing of knowledge through normative standards, thus improving the efficiency of knowledge utilization and transformation within the organization. This is the dual leadership that breaks the "black and white" leadership behavior boundaries, plays a synergistic and complementary role within the organization, and has a significant impact on employees' knowledge sharing behavior.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Ambidextrous leadership has a positive effect on knowledge sharing behavior.

3.2. The Mediating Role of Trust

When the strength of the two leadership styles of ambidextrous leadership is consistent, it is possible to switch between the two leadership styles to improve leadership trust. Although the authoritative leadership can ensure the smooth development of the work through the control and management of employees, its communication with employees lacks "human touch", which is easy to cause employees' dissatisfaction. Empowering leadership advocates encouraging employees to work independently and participate in decision-making to achieve the purpose of resource allocation. At the same time, in order to give back the resources provided by leaders, they will more actively consider the problem from the perspective of the organization, and use the resources obtained to secretly implement some immature but beneficial ideas for organizational development [28], hoping to reward the organization and obtain high performance evaluation of leadership. Knowledge sharing is an 'extra-role behavior' of employees, and the degree of trust between employees determines whether they share knowledge or not [29]. Abrams et al.'s research results show that trust can improve knowledge sharing within the organization. [30] From the perspective of cognitive trust and emotional trust, on the one hand, leadership trust can improve employees' cognition of obtaining more benefits in the exchange relationship, so that they feel that their efforts are worth it. They are willing to express their positive and reciprocal willingness to leaders by actively helping colleagues and actively sharing their experience and knowledge, thus enhancing their knowledge sharing behavior. On the other hand, when employees are afraid that they will lose their authority, status or interests, they will resist knowledge sharing. Trust in leaders can reduce the concerns of organizational members and improve knowledge sharing among organizational members. It can be seen that trust must be maintained among members sharing knowledge within the organization, regardless of whether there are hierarchical differences or employees belonging to different lines. Only in this way can both parties have the willingness to share knowledge.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Ambidextrous leadership has a positive effect on trust.

H3: Trust has a positive effect on knowledge sharing behavior.

H4: Trust plays a mediating role between ambidextrous leadership and knowledge sharing behavior.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Samples and Data

This study was conducted by a combination of online and offline questionnaires. A total of 260 questionnaires were distributed. After eliminating 34 questionnaires with incomplete answers, the number of valid samples was 226, and the effective rate of the questionnaire reached 86.9 %. Through the preliminary statistics of the information covered by the effective questionnaire, it can be obtained that from the perspective of the number of years of establishment : 13.30 % are less than 5 years, 18.03 % are 5-10 years, and 19.31 % are more than 10 years. From the perspective of development scale : less than 100 people accounted for 16.30 %, 100-500 people accounted for 26.61 %, and more than 500 people accounted for 24.03 % ; from the perspective of personnel positions, grassroots employees account for 18.45 %, grassroots managers account for 30.90 %, department managers account for 23.18 %, and senior managers account for 27.47 % (see Table 1).

Table 1. Data information

Years of establishment	Proportion (%)	Total 203
Less than 5 years	30.54	62
5-10 years	33.99	69
More than 10 years	35.47	72
Development scale	Proportion (%)	Total 203
Less than 100 people	24.14	49
100-500 people	29.06	59
More than 500 people	46.79	95
Position level	Proportion (%)	Total 203
Junior staff	19.70	40
Junior managers	20.19	41
Department managers	29.56	60
Senior managers	30.54	62

4.2. Reliability and Validity Test

From Table 2, the Cronbach 's α of each variable item is higher than 0.8, all of which exceed 0.7, and the factor load after rotation is between 0.76 and 0.88, indicating good reliability and internal consistency.

KMO and Bartlett tests were performed on the sample data. The results showed that the KMO test value was 0.810, and the Bartlett statistical value was significantly different from 0 ($P < 0.01$). The preliminary results showed that the questionnaire data could be analyzed by factor analysis, as shown in table 3.

Then, AMOS24.0 was used for confirmatory factor analysis to test the aggregation validity and discriminant validity of the data. The results show that the factor load of each variable item is above 0.7, and the AVE value is greater than 0.5, and the CR value is greater than 0.8, indicating that the data has good aggregation validity. The specific values are shown in Table 2. Finally, in order to test the discriminant validity of the data, the coefficient between the variables and the square root of AVE are observed. The results show that the coefficient between the variables is less than the square root of AVE, which further shows that there is a good discriminant validity between the variables. The specific values are shown in Table 4.

Table 2. Reliability and validity test results

Variable	Title Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Ambidextrous leadership (AL)	AL1	0.798	0.802	0.575	0.802
	AL2	0.762			
	AL3	0.713			
Trust (UE)	TR1	0.781	0.804	0.583	0.807
	TR2	0.816			
	TR3	0.688			
Knowledge sharing (KS)	CKS1	0.740	0.812	0.588	0.811
	CKS2	0.811			
	CKS3	0.748			

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett test results

KMO Test	Bartlett's Sphericity Test		
	Approximate Chi-square	Degree of Freedom	Significance
0.810	694.097	103	0.000

Table 4. Distinct validity test results

	Ambidextrous leadership	Trust	Knowledge sharing
Ambidextrous leadership	0.758	--	--
Trust	0.151	0.764	--
Knowledge sharing	0.211	0.170	0.767

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Ambidextrous leadership, trust and knowledge sharing are incorporated into the structural equation model. The fitting results show that: CMIN / DF = 2.028, between 1-3; RMSEA = 0.074, less than 0.08; RFI = 0.897, IFI = 0.964, CFI = 0.963, NFI = 0.931, all of which are greater than 0.8. The above indicators have reached an ideal level, indicating that the model has good adaptability.

From the model test results (see Table 5):

- (1) Ambidextrous leadership has a positive impact on knowledge sharing. The standardized path coefficients of ambidextrous leadership on knowledge sharing are 0.404 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, suppose H1 holds.
- (2) Ambidextrous leadership has a positive impact on trust. The standardized path coefficient of ambidextrous leadership to trust is 0.508 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, we assume that H2 holds.
- (3) Trust has a positive impact on knowledge sharing. The standardized path coefficient of trust to knowledge sharing is 0.363, and it is significant to the extent of $P < 0.001$. Therefore, we assume that H3 holds.

Table 5. Overall relationship test results

Hypothesis Path	Non-normalized Path Coefficient	Normalized Path Coefficient	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value	Hypothesis Test
TR<---AL	0.516	0.508	0.097	5.304	***	pass
KS<---AL	0.391	0.404	0.098	3.989	***	pass
KS<---TR	0.346	0.363	0.093	3.707	***	pass

Note: "****" indicates significant at $P < 0.001$, "***" indicates significant at $P < 0.01$, "**" indicates significant at $P < 0.05$.

5. CONCLUSION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

5.1. Research Conclusion

This study discusses the impact of ambidextrous leadership on employees' knowledge sharing behavior and examines the mediating role of trust. Through literature review, the research clarifies the importance of leadership's influence on employee behavior, highlights the multiple abilities of ambidextrous leadership as a new leadership style, and profoundly affects employee knowledge sharing behavior. Subsequently, we construct a hypothetical relationship among ambidextrous leadership, trust and knowledge sharing behavior, and establish a related model. The results show that ambidextrous leadership has a positive impact on employees' knowledge sharing behavior. Leadership attaches importance to employees' knowledge management, and encourages subordinates to exchange and share knowledge, which is conducive to the stable development of the organization. At the same time, trust plays an intermediary role between ambidextrous leadership and knowledge sharing, and the trust between leaders and employees determines the degree of knowledge sharing between them.

5.2. Research Implications

The transformation and innovation of ambidextrous leadership needs to attract the attention of enterprise managers. This study examines the positive effect of ambidextrous leadership on knowledge sharing behavior through theoretical and empirical tests, and brings some practical enlightenment for better management of enterprises.

(1) Focus on the use of ambidextrous leadership. Dual leadership can effectively create an innovative atmosphere of the enterprise, stimulate individual creativity, and can effectively improve the degree of innovation participation of employees, so as to promote the transformation of innovative ideas by employees under the goal and task orientation, so as to enhance the company's innovation performance and organizational vitality.

(2) Focus on the trust relationship between employees and managers. Trust is an important psychological factor that drives employee behavior. The establishment of two-way trust between leaders and employees can enable employees to generate knowledge sharing awareness, express ideas in a timely manner, reduce transaction costs, and effectively promote knowledge sharing.

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