

The Impact of Visionary Leadership on Voice Behavior: The Mediating Role of Career Calling

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Abstract. Voice behavior is an important source of organizational change and innovation, which is crucial for organizational development. Leadership is an important factor affecting employees' voice behavior, but few scholars have paid attention to the impact of visionary leadership on voice behavior. In this study, 276 valid questionnaires were collected from several provinces and cities in China, and the relationship among visionary leadership, career calling and voice behavior was explored through linear regression. The results showed that visionary leadership has a positive impact on voice behavior, and career calling plays a mediating role between them. Our study expands the antecedents of voice behavior from the perspective of leadership.

Keywords: Visionary Leadership; Career Calling; Voice Behavior.

1. Introduction

With the intensification of organizational uncertainty and competition, guiding employees to implement proactive behaviors plays an important role in promoting the sustainable development of organizations. Voice behavior is a proactive, transformation-oriented and constructive communication [1] adopted by employees to promote the development of the organization, and to express work-related views, information and opinions[2]. As a proactive behavior, voice behavior plays an important role in organizational innovation[3] and sustainable development. When employees have a shared vision with the organization, employees are more likely to speak up their views in order to help the organization achieve the shared vision. Leaders are an important situational factor of employees' voice behavior. Visionary leadership plays an important role in building a shared vision between employees and the organization, which is likely to have a positive impact on employees' voice behavior. However, few scholars have discussed the relationship between visionary leadership and voice behavior. To this end, we will study the relationship between them and the mediating mechanism, hoping to provide new leadership context clues for voice behavior.

2. Research Hypothesis

2.1. Visionary Leadership and Voice Behavior

The path-goal theory holds that one of the important tasks of leaders is to help employees achieve work goals and organizational goals by establishing work paths, and to provide support and guidance to ensure that employee goals are consistent with organizational goals. Visionary Leadership refers to leadership in which a leader communicates a collective vision to employees in order to motivate employees. Visionary leadership helps to align employees with organizational goals by formulating and communicating a collective vision and encouraging employees to work hard to achieve the vision [4]. When employees and organizations have the shared vision and goals, employees are more likely to express their views and opinions in order to improve organizational functions and achieve organizational goals. Visionary leadership may also encourage employees to challenge the status quo

and achieve a more ideal state by developing new operation models[5]. This means that visionary leaders are more tolerant of challenging behaviors, and employees will feel more secure when they express challenging voice behavior.

Hypothesis 1: Visionary leadership has a positive impact on voice behavior.

2.2. Visionary Leadership and Career Calling

Under the dual effects of external guidance and internal drive, the career calling is a psychological construct in which individuals regard work as a process of obtaining a sense of meaning, purpose and self-realization, and take prosocial motivation as the main motivation. Visionary leaders conveys and motivates employees to realize the collective vision, which helps individuals understand the vision and goals of the organization. When individuals and organizations are consistent in vision and goals, employees are more likely to feel the meaning of work, thus stimulating their sense of mission and responsibility at work. According to the path-goal theory, visionary leaders will help employees establish work paths or provide development opportunities to help employees achieve work goals and organizational goals. This makes employees feel valued and supported and hopeful about their future job development prospects, thus stimulating their career calling.

Hypothesis 2: Visionary leadership has a positive impact on career calling.

2.3. Mediating Effect of Career Calling

Employees with a high career calling regard work as an important part of their life and are more likely to feel the meaning and value of work. They are willing to put more passion and effort into their work, which helps to improve the work process and identify problems in the organization. At the same time, employees with a high career calling are influenced by prosocial motivation, and they care more about the operation of the organization. As an important means to improve organizational functions, voice behavior is an important organizational citizenship behavior and proactive behavior. Employees with a high career calling may realize their work mission through voice behavior. Chen et al. (2023) found that career calling promotes individuals' promotive voice[6]. Combined with the previous analysis, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Career calling mediates the relationship between visionary leadership and voice behavior.

3. Study Design

3.1. Data Collection

We collected the data through online and offline channels in Shandong, Tianjin and other regions of China. We distributed 350 questionnaires, eliminated unqualified questionnaires such as incomplete responses and consistent filling of all options, and collected 276 valid questionnaires, with a valid recovery rate of 78.86%. The questionnaire was self-reported by the participants, and all participants were informed that the questionnaire was anonymous and only used for scientific analysis. Each participant was given a small monetary reward. The participants were mainly employees in industries such as education and finance. According to the results of the survey, the average age of the participants was 30.16 years old. Males accounted for 43.12% and females accounted for 56.88%; Participants with junior college education or below the level account for 27.54%, bachelor's degree account for 60.14%, master's degree and doctor's degree account for 12.32%.

3.2. Variable Measurement

Visionary Leadership: We used the scale of Parco-Tropicales and De Guzman (2014)[7], with a sample item is "Conveying a shared and specific vision of an ideal state, providing a foundation for

formulating organizational strategies and goals”. All items were rated on a 5-point scale. The reliability alpha (α) was 0.899.

Career calling: We used the scale developed by Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011)[8], with sample items such as “I am passionate about my work” and “I feel a sense of mission in my work”. All items were rated on a 5-point scale. The reliability alpha (α) was 0.870.

Voice behavior: We used the voice behavior scale developed by Liang et al. (2012)[9], with sample items such as “Making suggestions to improve the workflow of our department” and “Frankly pointing out issues that may seriously affect our department even if there are objections”. All items were rated on a 5-point scale. The reliability alpha (α) was 0.909.

Control variables: We take demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education level as control variables[10]. In the gender variable, 1 represents male and 2 represents female; In the education level variables, 1 represents less than bachelor’s degree, 2 represents bachelor’s degree, and 3 represents master’s degree and doctor’s degree.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

According to the results, there is a positive correlation between visionary leadership and voice behavior ($\gamma = 0.334, P < 0.001$). There is a positive correlation between visionary leadership and career calling ($\gamma = 0.335, P < 0.001$). There is a positive correlation between career calling and voice behavior ($\gamma = 0.434, P < 0.001$) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.Gender	1.569	0.496					
2.Age	30.156	5.907	0.099				
3.Education	1.848	0.614	0.023	0.063			
4.Visionary leadership	3.511	1.024	0.018	-0.001	0.136*		
5.Career calling	3.722	0.966	0.088	0.001	0.441***	0.335***	
6.Voice behavior	3.675	0.758	0.085	-0.007	0.266***	0.334***	0.434***

Note. $N = 276$. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

Table 2. Linear regression result

Variables	Career calling			Voice behavior	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5
Constant	2.360***(0.336)	1.544***(0.355)	2.994***(0.283)	2.300***(0.299)	1.919***(0.296)
Gender	0.159(0.106)	0.150(0.101)	0.126(0.089)	0.119(0.085)	0.082(0.082)
Age	-0.006(0.009)	-0.005(0.008)	-0.004(0.008)	-0.004(0.007)	-0.002(0.007)
Education	0.695***(0.085)	0.636***(0.082)	0.329***(0.072)	0.278***(0.069)	0.121(0.073)
Visionary leadership		0.263***(0.049)		0.224***(0.041)	0.159***(0.042)
Career calling					0.247***(0.049)
R ²	0.202	0.279	0.078	0.168	0.239
Adjusted R ²	0.193	0.268	0.068	0.155	0.225
F	22.980***	26.163***	7.676***	13.654***	16.970***

Note. $N = 276$. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

In this study, SPSS22.0 software was used for regression analysis, and the results showed that in Model 4, visionary leadership has a significantly positive impact on voice behavior ($\beta = 0.224, P <$

0.001), supporting hypothesis 1. In Model 2, visionary leadership has a significantly positive impact on career calling ($\beta = 0.263, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis 2. In Model 5, career calling has a significantly positive impact on voice behavior ($\beta = 0.247, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis 3. See Table 2.

5. Discussion

We use data from Chinese enterprises to explore the relationship among visionary leadership, career calling and voice behavior. We found that visionary leadership has a positive impact on voice behavior. Visionary leadership has a positive impact on career calling. Visionary leadership promotes employees' voice behavior by enhancing the internal psychological state of employees' career calling.

Although the relationship between leadership and voice behavior has been discussed a lot by scholars, the relationship between visionary leadership and voice behavior has received little attention. Our study expands the antecedents of voice behavior from the perspective of leadership context (visionary leadership). Career calling provides a useful help in understanding the relationship between them. Under the influence of visionary leaders, employees' career calling is enhanced, and they are more likely to devote themselves to their work and make suggestions for the development of the organization.

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