EFFECTS OF HEALTH-PROMOTING LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH WORKPLACE OSTRACISM, MODERATED BY EMPLOYABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Health-promoting leadership and workplace environment are the driving force for enterprise development. Meanwhile, the employability of employees is the core element of the employment relationship. The higher the employability, the higher the labor market value, which also has an important impact on employee engagement. This study explores the effects of health-promoting leadership and workplace ostracism on employee engagement in the context of employability. The results show that: 1. Workplace ostracism has no negative effect on employee engagement, and employability has no moderating effect on the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee engagement. 2. Health-promoting leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement, but employability has no moderating effect.

Key words: Health-promoting leadership, Employability, Workplace ostracism


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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the influence of informatization and employment relationships, employee employability is gradually valued. Employability enables employees to deal with career development in different positions and professional roles (Rodrigues, Butler, & Guest, 2019). Moreover, workplace environment and leadership type are individuals' perceptions of the external environment, workplace environment among colleagues has been proven to influence employees' work attitudes (Weingart, Behfar, Bendersky, Todorova, & Jehn, 2015). Therefore, this study explores how health-promoting leadership and workplace variables impact on employee engagement,
and the employability as a moderator variable, how to moderate the relationship between the above variables and employee engagement.

2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Nowadays, working hours occupy most of the employee lives, so the workplace interpersonal relationship is important for employees. Employee engagement is known as "the state of positive enrichment related to work" (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020). However workplace ostracism as great trouble to normal communication between employees, employees suffering from workplace ostracism need to pay more energy and time for self-psychological rehabilitation, which reduces their work engagement (Kwan, Zhang, Liu, & Lee, 2018). Therefore, this study proposes that:

\( H1: \) Workplace ostracism will negatively affect employee engagement.

Health-promoting leadership effectively reduces employee workload by improving workplace measures (Hoert, Herd, & Hambrick, 2018; Jiménez, Winkler, & Dunkl, 2017). Employees feel that they are accepted and supported in the work environment, the degree of work engagement is higher (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, & Sels, 2013). Therefore, this study proposes that,

\( H2: \) Health-promoting leadership will positively affect employee engagement.

Employability is defined as the ability of continuous employment and re-employment under the influence of a given work environment and its resources (McGonagle, Fisher, Barnes-Farrell, & Grosch, 2015), similar to the employee survivability (Zhang & Chen, 2017; Zhang & Chen, 2020; Zhang & Liu, 2020). Health-promoting leadership affects employee engagement by improving the working environment, reducing work pressure, and planning employee training (Jiménez, Winkler, et al., 2017). Organization of training of employee career development is positively related to their employability, and employees improve their employability through long-term/short-term specific/general training initiated or voluntarily participated by employers (Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2015). At the same time, organizational training, internal promotion opportunities, and employability development opportunities are conducive to improving employee engagement. Considering the common interests of leaders and employees in employability, the stronger employability of employees is, the more hardworking and engaged employees are (Yizhong, Baranchenko, Lin, Lau, & Ma, 2019). Therefore, this study proposes that,

\( H3: \) Employability positively moderates the relationship between health-promoting leadership and employee engagement.

Employability is related to the willingness and ability of employees to adapt to changes in the work environment and work content (Kluytmans & Ott, 1999). Workplace ostracism has a negative effect on employee work attitude. For example, when they suffer from workplace ostracism, individuals with low employability will present the phenomenon of low organizational self-esteem and employee engagement (Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2016). Workplace bullying is an antecedent of job insecurity. Workplace bullying has a positive effect on job insecurity, and workplace bullying includes workplace ostracism (Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland, & Einarsen, 2014). Employability negatively moderates the effect of job insecurity on job burnout (Aybas, Elmas, & Dündar, 2015). However, job burnout was negatively correlated with employee engagement (Auh, Menguc, Spyropoulou, & Wang, 2016). When employees have low employability and insecurity, workplace ostracism is prone to occur (Van Hootegem, De Witte, De Cuyper, & Elst, 2019). In addition, employees with higher employability have strong initiative and have their own plans for their own work. Therefore, they will not be affected by accidental or inadvertent ostracism among colleagues.
in the workplace. Employees with higher employability will continue to complete their due tasks with quality and quantity and maintain high employability. Employability positively moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee engagement. Therefore, this study proposes that,

\[ H4: \text{Employability positively moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee engagement.} \]

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Measures

Five-point Likert scale was used in this study, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Health-promoting leadership adopted the health-promoting leadership scale compiled by Jiménez, Winkler, et al. (2017), which has 21 questions from 7 dimensions. For example, “My leader will take care that the health of all employees is promoted”. Its Cronbach’s alpha 0.958 in this study.

Workplace ostracism was measured to adopt a 10-item with one dimension scale developed by Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008). For example, “My colleagues ignored me in their work.” Its Cronbach’s alpha 0.941.

Employability was measured to adopt a 5-item with one dimension scale developed by Berntson and Marklund (2007). For example, “I have a contact network that I can use to get a new (equivalent or better) job.” Its Cronbach’s alpha 0.837.

Employee engagement scale prepared by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) was adopted in this study, which included 9 items with three dimension. For example, “Time flies when I am working.” Its Cronbach’s alpha 0.901.

Gender and age are important effect factors of employee engagement, this study adds education level, monthly salary, years of working, marital status, work position, and enterprise scale as control variables.

3.2. Participants and Procedure

The convenience sampling method is employed in the questionnaire. MSME employees as the participants of this study. Given the time and competence of researchers, questionnaires are sent out to the employees of MSME to be investigated by using the researcher’s own social relationship. The electronic questionnaires are forwarded via WeChat, QQ, E-mail, and other network communication tools.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Basic Data Analysis

A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed, and 862 questionnaires were collected. Deletion principle of the invalid questionnaire: with the enterprise-scale question, the enterprise with more than 300 employees was not belonging MSME and deleted it. After sorting out 139 invalid questionnaires, 723 valid questionnaires are remaining effective, so the effective questionnaire recovery rate was 72.3%.

The information of the respondents is summarized below. In terms of gender, 255 males (35.3%) and 468 females (64.7%); As age distribution, most responders among 25 and 30 years old (48.3%); As education level distribution, 295 responders (40.8%) with a Junior college degree; In terms of monthly salary, the proportion of CNY 5001-8000 is the most (37.8%); During the Years of working, the proportion of 2-less than 3 years is the most...
(36.7%); And 62.2% responders were unmarried; In terms of work position, the proportion of grassroots managers is the most (37.1%); As enterprise size, 10 - less than 100 person is the most (46.5%).

4.2. Common Method Variance
Harman single factor test common method variance (CMV) was adopted to extract 4 factors. The largest factor was explained by 47.341%. Hence, the results no being-mentioned solicitude.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis
Amos 23 was utilized in this study to analysis confirmatory factor analysis. All the indicators are greater than standard value. CMIN/DF=1.582(<3.0), GFI=0.916, AGFI=0.906, NFI=0.935, TLI=0.974, IFI=0.975, CFI=0.975 (>0.9), RMSEA=0.028(<0.08), SRMR=0.0280 (<0.1) (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

4.4. Convergent Validity
Comprehensive reliability (CR) and average variance extraction (AVE) was accepted to experiment with the convergent validity of variables in this s. According to Table 1, the comprehensive reliability of all variables greater than 0.8. AVE scores except for employee engagement, which is 0.478, all being greater than 0.5. To sum up, all variables in this study have convergent validity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health-promoting leadership</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.668-0.781</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace ostracism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.757-0.807</td>
<td>0.941</td>
<td>0.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.696-0.740</td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee engagement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.643-0.727</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>0.478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5. Correlation and Discriminant Validity
According to Table 2, none of the confidence interval values in all the brackets has a value covering 1.00 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), which shows that the correlation between potential variables is distinguishable and has discriminant validity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HPL</th>
<th>WO</th>
<th>Ey</th>
<th>EE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HPL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>-0.724 ***</td>
<td>-0.640, -0.808</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ey</td>
<td>0.909 ***</td>
<td>0.987, 0.831</td>
<td>-0.669 ***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>0.918 ***</td>
<td>-0.681 ***</td>
<td>0.896 ***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.989, 0.847)</td>
<td>(-0.612, -0.750)</td>
<td>(0.961, 0.831)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ***at 0.01 (two tails), the correlation is significant. (parenthesis): Confidence interval of standardized correlation coefficient ±1.96 SD. HPL= Health-promoting leadership; WO=Workplace ostracism; Ey=Employability; EE= Employee engagement.
4.6. Direct Effect
Amos maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) was used to test the direct effect. According to the structural equation model constructed, the multiple square correlation of employee engagement is 0.884, indicating that the degree of employee engagement is explained to be 88.4%.

Health-promoting leadership has a significant positive impact on employee engagement (Beta=0.705, p <0.001), indicating that the higher the employee perceived by health-promoting leadership, the higher the employee engagement. Therefore, H1 was confirmed. Workplace ostracism did not have a significant negative impact on employee engagement (Beta= -0.045, p =0.147). Therefore, H2 in this study was not confirmed.

4.7. Latent Moderated Structural Equations
As shown in Table 3, the path coefficient of the interaction item "HPL*Ey" between health-promoting leadership and employability on employee engagement is 0.021, p=0.553>0.05, which shows insignificant. The path coefficient of the interaction item "WO*Ey" between workplace ostracism and employability on employee engagement is 0.110, p=0.079>0.05, which shows insignificant.

Table 3 Summary of Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Est./S.E.</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>EE←HPL*Ey</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>EE←WO*Ey</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>1.755</td>
<td>0.079</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
The results revealed that (a) Workplace ostracism did not have a negative relationship with employee engagement; (b) Health-promoting leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement; (c) Employability cannot positively moderates the relationship between health-promoting leadership and employee engagement; (d) Employability cannot positively moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee engagement.

5.1. Discussion
5.1.1. The influence of workplace ostracism on employee engagement
The results show that workplace ostracism has an insignificant impact on employee engagement. The reason may be that when colleagues ostracized employees, they are increasingly trying to learn professional knowledge, waiting for the opportunity to quit or move up. Workplace ostracism has an insignificant impact on employee engagement, sometimes it is the reverse stimulation effect (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). The second is that family and work also occupy an important position in modern life. China employees bear a high attachment to their family. No matter what the working environment is, they still need to work hard to support their families.

5.1.2. The influence of health-promoting leadership on employee engagement
Consistent with previous research findings, health-promoting leadership can improve the workplace environment, reduce the workload, promote the fair distribution of resources, and do not let the efforts of employees be ignored, thus enhancing employee engagement (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2011). The results of this study show that leaders pay attention to employees' health awareness, workload, and whether leaders are willing to help...
employees improve their skills, whether they value employees' efforts and let colleagues help each other (Dunkl, Jiménez, Žižek, Mīlfelner, & Kallus, 2015), employee engagement is improved, and they focus on their work (Jiménez, Bregenzer, Kallus, Fruhwirth, & Wagner-Hartl, 2017).

5.1.3. Employability cannot moderate the relationship between health-promoting leadership and employee engagement

The results of this study show that employability has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between health-promoting leadership and employee engagement. The reason may be that MEMS is different from that of state enterprise and public institutions. In China, state enterprises and public institutions have "financial support" from the government so the employee of MSME need to keep the higher engagement to fight for the lives. secondly, employees with high employability have their own cognitive system and arrange their work efficiency (Fløvik, Knardahl, & Christensen, 2020). Employees with low employability focus on the process of learning and improving their own abilities, which is a process of self-motivation (Dill & Morgan, 2018).

5.1.4. Employability cannot moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee engagement

The results of this study show that the moderating effect of employability on workplace ostracism and employee engagement is not significant. This conclusion may be related to the far-reaching influence of Chinese traditional culture on Chinese employees. Compared with the brave exploration of western culture, Chinese employees are relatively conservative. Although the new generation of employees born in the 1980s and 1990s are constantly pouring out, the employees at this stage generally have the characteristics of risk aversion, and the employees with risk aversion are more likely to avoid this kind of situation caused by changing jobs risk. In the workplace, it will not be affected by accidental or casual rejection among colleagues, and rashly change jobs.

5.2. Implication

5.2.1. Encourage health-promoting leadership in MSME

Health-promoting leadership is closely related to the current trend of paying attention to health. It focuses on the establishment of a healthy workplace environment and the healthy development of employees. Therefore, we should encourage the construction of health-promoting leadership in MSME, form a good workplace atmosphere, and formulate a healthy and orderly development of enterprise management plan.

5.2.2. Reduce workplace ostracism

Workplace ostracism, as an individual psychological perception of employees, is inevitably affected by workplace environments, such as leader-member relationships and colleague interpersonal relationships. Workplace ostracism is regarded as "cold" violence in the workplace, which leads to greater psychological pressure on employees and brings great trouble to normal communication between employees (Kwan et al., 2018). Therefore, it is suggested that leaders of MSME should attach importance to employee relations, pay attention to explicit or invisible workplace ostracism in the workplace, and strive to create a harmonious and inclusive workplace atmosphere.
5.2.3 Employability

Employability is the ability of employees to obtain employment and choose jobs. Enterprises should treat employees' employability rationally according to their own situation. In addition, the research period coincides with the COVID-19 epidemic period. Although this is a special reason that may lead to different results on the employability of employees, enterprises still need to pay attention to the impact on the employability of employees in the general environment. For example, during the period of the COVID-19 epidemic, the work of employees in capital intensive factories, hotels, and restaurants is often difficult remote implementation via home (Bartik, Cullen, Glaeser, Luca, & Stanton, 2020). Therefore, MSME needs to find out what will affect the employability of employees, so as to better identify the employability of employees.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

The current study nevertheless has some possible limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional data and convenience sampling make it difficult to determine the causality of the relationships. Longitudinal studies combined with probability sampling can be used in future studies.

Moreover, this study was conducted during the data collection period of COVID-19, which makes the employability moderating effect was different from the previous research results. In the follow-up study, the moderating effect of employability under the absence of epidemic interference on leadership type and workplace environment could be tested again.

Finally, self-report, colleague report, leader report, and other reporting methods could be combined in the follow-up study to further improve the objectivity of data.

REFERENCES


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