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A Study on the Influence Mechanism of Self-sacrificial Leadership on Employee Engagement-Based on Dual Identity Perspective

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Self-sacrificial leadership is a leadership style that postpones or gives up personal interests, benefits or privileges in order to achieve the mission and collective interests of the organization, it often postpones or sacrifices self-interest, such as the exercise of power, the division of labor and the distribution of rewards[1], in order to serve the collective interests and promote the achievement of organizational goals. It plays an important role in maintaining smooth operations and overcoming corporate crises in today's complex and changeable information age. "Engagement" is defined as the positive integration of the individual in the work from physical, cognitive and emotional aspects [2]. Employees are the mainstay of the companies, governing the existence and development of the organization, and both individuals and organizations can derive positive results from a high level of employee engagement. According to leadership theory, leaders are able to influence employees' behavioral concepts through their perceptions, motivations, and competencies [3]. As a positive leadership style, self-sacrificial leaders often demonstrate selfless values and self-sacrificing behaviors at work. Many studies have proven the impact of self-sacrificial leadership on employees in various aspects, but the impact of self-sacrificial leadership on general employees' engagement and its dimensions and the mechanism of the impact remain to be explored. The typical manifestations of social identity are organizational identification and leader identification, some studies have separately demonstrated that self-sacrificial leadership have a positive effect on both leader identification and organizational identification of employees, but no scholars have studied the effectiveness of self-sacrificial leadership from the perspective of both of them.

Therefore, based on social identity theory, this paper investigates the influence of self-sacrificial leadership on employee engagement, mainly exploring the following questions: (1) What is the influence of self-sacrificial leadership on employee engagement and the dimensions of cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and behavioral engagement. (2) Whether leadership identification and organizational identification, play a mediating role in the path of self-sacrificial leadership on employee engagement and its dimensions, and what mechanisms of influence they exhibit.

2. THEORY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on social identity theory, the hypotheses and research framework are proposed herein (Figure 1).

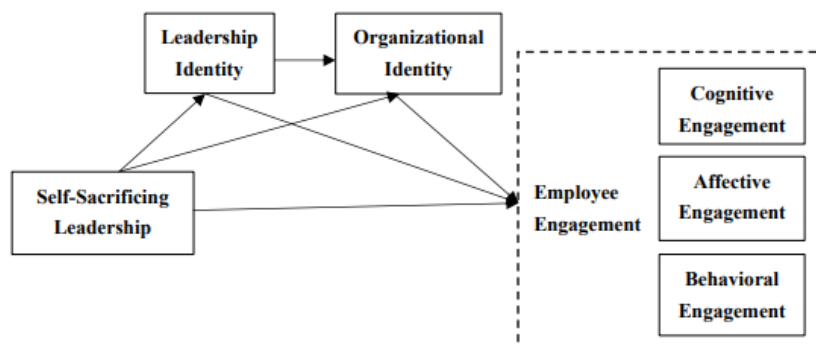


Figure 1. Research framework

In this study, questionnaire survey method was adopted to collect data anonymously, the scales are selected from domestic and foreign mature scales, and the questionnaires are suitable for employees to fill in. After about three months of formal research, a total of 320 questionnaires were collected, and 273 valid data were retained after processing the data, and the hypotheses of this paper were verified by building regression models on them.

3. RESULTS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

This study observed some valuable and interesting findings: (1) Self-sacrificial leadership can effectively motivate the generation of employee engagement in enterprises. A leader who can make self-sacrifice for the collective good and the benefit of employees can win the recognition and trust of employees and play a role model, which can positively influence employee engagement. (2) Self-sacrificial leadership can positively influence employees' engagement through leader identification and organizational identification, and can also promote employees' organizational identification through the multiple mediating effects of leader identification-organizational identification. Self-sacrificial leaders can enhance employees' leader identification by influencing their positive self-perception. And as the agent of organization, leaders can also promote the formation and transformation of employees' organizational identification, so that employees can show higher levels of engagement. (3) The effects of self-sacrificial leadership on cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement are consistent with the hypotheses of this research, and the proportion of mediating effects and multiple mediating effect of the path where organizational identification is located gradually decreases with changes in cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. This may be because when leader identification and organizational identification are introduced simultaneously, organizational identification is more likely to be inhibited by external factors or employees' internal will than leader identification, thus inhibiting the actual occurrence of certain manifestations.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS

From the perspective of social identity, this study not only enriched the research on self-sacrificial leadership and employee engagement, but also explored the influence on different levels of employee engagement and uncovered the influencing mechanism. In the context of the current rapidly changing development environment, it provides enlightenment for the search of the leader-employee balance: Leaders should cultivate the spirit of self-sacrifice and be able to give up short-term personal interests for collective goals and development, and leaders should also weaken the imperative leadership style and effectively promote the formation of employee leader identification by influencing the psychological state of employees through actual performance. The organization should also maintain consistency with the leaders, create a collectivist culture and improve the representation of leaders. Promote the formation and transformation of employee organizational identification, and improve employee engagement at all levels.

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