VISIONARY LEADERSHIP'S EFFECT ON EMPLOYEES' PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR: A MODERATING AND MEDIATING MODEL

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Abstract

As a key factor for development of an organization, employees' proactive behavior has become a front issue in the field of organizational behavior. However, there is little research on the promotion factors of employees' proactive behavior. Based on Social Exchange Theory, this paper proposes a model with moderating and mediating effects as follows: visionary leadership is positively correlated with employees' proactive behavior; perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior; job satisfaction plays a moderating role between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior; job satisfaction moderates the mediating effect of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior. Based on the two-stage paired surveys data of 348 employees and their direct superiors in a service-oriented enterprise, the hypothesis model is verified. This study provides a new theoretical perspective for enriching and expanding the relationship between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

Keywords: Visionary Leadership, Employees' Proactive Behavior, Perceived Organizational Support, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

Coming into the 21st century, with the globalization of market and the rapid development of science and technology, the competitive environment faced by organizations is becoming more and more complex and dynamic. Thus, it is impossible to solve all the problems in the development of enterprises only by relying on leaders. With the continuous change and renewal of business philosophy and management mode, the job requirements of employees have also changed dramatically. For enterprises, the value of employees is not only their labor force, but also the ideas and behaviors to promote organizational change and improve the efficiency of organizational operation. The complex and changeable competitive

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environment requires employees to take more initiative beyond their responsibility and salary. Among many factors that affect employees' proactive behavior, leadership style as an important factor has been widely recognized by the academic circle (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Ohly, Sonnentag, & Pluntke, 2006). The proactive behavior of employees plays an important role in the stable development of enterprises. Therefore, how to motivate and mobilize the proactive behavior of employees has become the focus of academic circles.

"Vision" is the strategic foundation of the organization, which focuses on the value and future. What the members of the organization strive for is not only to pursue the material conditions, but also to realize the common dream, which is the vision of the organization. Traditional leaders often stimulate employees' proactice behavior by setting directions and major decisions for them, while visionary leaders focus on the realization of the common vision of the enterprise, these leaders can combine personal visions and organizational strategies, and encourage employees to work for a common vision by delivering inspiring, authentic and clear pictures of a bright future (Kouzes & Posner, 2013), making the enterprise maintain sustainable development and competitiveness. As a new style of leadership, visionary leadership, although rising in the west, conforms to the concept of traditional Chinese culture in the Chinese context (Zhao, 2011). Based on the analysis above, this study will further explore the influence mechanism of visionary leadership on employees' proactive behavior, as well as the boundary conditions of proactive behavior.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

2. To test whether perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

3. To test whether job satisfaction plays a moderating role between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior.

4. To test whether job satisfaction moderates the mediating role of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

Literature Review

Visionary Leadership and Employees' Proactive Behavior

In the workplace, employees' transformative goal adjustment behavior is called employees' proactive behavior which is a voluntary behavior beyond job responsibility (Rego, Cunha, & Simpson, 2018). From previous studies, we can find that employees' proactive behavior is defined as a kind of prosocial behavior, which can improve organizational performance and promote organizational change (Campbell, 2000; Axtell, Holman, & Unsworth, 2000).

Previous studies have shown that leaders' behavior is one of the important factors affecting employees' proactive behavior, and plays a key role in the process of cultivating employees' proactive behavior. Leaders directly or indirectly stimulate employees' behaviors by satisfying their internal needs, which plays an important role in mobilizing employees' proactive behavior.

Visionary leadership is a kind of leadership style that communicates visions with employees in the form of oral or written language, and then motivates employees' behaviors (Van Knippenberg & Stam, 2014). According to Social Exchange Theory, visionary leadership, as a kind of positive leadership behavior, is good at combining the organizational vision and the personal visions of employees when describing the vision. In this way, a common organizational vision is built including the wishes and needs of employees, and can be clearly transmitted to employees, so that the common vision of the organization can be internalized into the common values of all employees. Therefore, when employees' internal needs are met, they will increase their awareness of sharing worries and responsibilities (Nishii & Mayer, 2009), they are more willing to take the initiative to make personal efforts for the organizational goals and tasks. In addition, visionary leadership fully authorizes and encourages employees' leadership style, which can make employees have a higher sense of security at work, and then employees carry out bolder challenges and attempts at work, so as to improve organizational performance and promote organizational development.

Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Visionary leadership is positively correlated with employees' proactive behavior.

Mediating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support is that employees can feel the importance of the organization, employers care about the contribution of employees to the organization and their well-being, that is, employees' overall perception of how the organization views their contributions and the organization's care about their interests (Eisenberger et al., 1986), which is usually reflected in the organization's attention to the relevant interests of employees. If the organization pays high attention to its employees, accordingly, the employees think that their own development benefits from the organization. This kind of gratitude will promote the employees to increase work input, improve work efficiency, and jointly promote the development of the organization. In general, perceived organizational support can be summed up as the following two characteristics: employees' perceived importance of the organization to them as individuals; the degree of individual happiness that employees experience in the organization.

Vision leadership is an important organizational situation. Through communication with employees, leaders

build an organizational vision that is consistent with employees' personal visions, point out the future development direction of the organization for employees, and encourage employees to make unremitting efforts to achieve the common organizational vision. According to Social Exchange Theory, when the organizational vision meets the internal needs of employees, employees will feel the importance and attention of the organization to themselves, so as to feel the support and welfare provided by the organization, and thus generate a sense of honor, obligation and belonging to the organization to achieve the mission for the organization, finally, affect employees' job engagement. In return, employees will show more active, more creative work attitude and spontaneous work behavior which is beneficial to the development of the organization.

Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

Moderating Effect of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an individual' s evaluation and attitude to his work. Job satisfaction depends on the gap between the individual' s expectation and the current situation. If the current situation is better than the expectation, the satisfaction is higher; otherwise, the satisfaction is lower (Vroom, 1964). According to Social Exchange Theory, under the expectation of getting reward,

individuals are involved in and maintain the exchange relationship with others. These exchanges include psychological and behavioral aspects. When the employees' job satisfaction is high, he is more recognized and satisfied with the current job status. The employee feels that the organization's support and attention to them can stimulate more job motivation, generate more proactive work behavior, and it is easier to concentrate on job with a happy mood. On the contrary, when the employee's job satisfaction is low, the employee is not satisfied with his own job status. Even if he can feel the organization's attention to himself, but he is not satisfied with the current situation, it may lead him to work with a negative and passive status, and reduce the proactive job behavior which is beneficial to the organization.

Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Job satisfaction plays a moderating role between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior, the higher the employees' job satisfaction is, the stronger the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior is.

Based on H2, H3 and the analysis above, job satisfaction may regulate the mediating role of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior. That is, visionary leadership indirectly has a positive impact on employee proactive behavior through perceived organizational support, and the existence of

this indirect effect depends to a large extent on job satisfaction. Because the relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior depends on job satisfaction,the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Job satisfaction moderates the mediating role of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, the higher the job satisfaction of employees, the stronger the mediating effect of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

To sum up, combining the hypotheses of visionary leadership, perceived organizational support, employees' proactive behavior and Job satisfaction, this study proposes a mediating model with moderating effect, as shown in Figure 1.
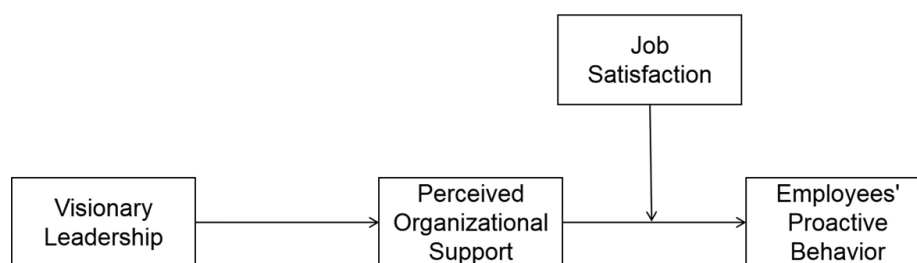

Figure 1 Theoretical hypothesis model

Methodology

Research Design

The sample of this study comes from a service-oriented enterprise in one city of China. The subjects of this study are employees and their direct superiors. In order to avoid the impact of common variance, this study uses two-time surveys to collect data, the time interval is 3 months. The specific investigation process is as follows: for the first time (T1), Employees' Questionnaire was carried out(employees' basic information, visionary leadership and job satisfaction); for the second time (T2) , Employees' Questionnaire (perceived organizational support) and Leaders' Questionnaire (leaders' basic information and employees' proactive behavior) were uesed. Except for some demographic variables, all the questionnaires in this study were scored with Likert 6 points.

Research Sample

For the first survey, 383 employees' questionnaires were sent out and retrieved on site, 8 of the 383 employees' questionnaires were invalid. And 3 months later, 375 employees' questionnaires and 81 leaders' questionnaires were sent out, 348 effective matching questionnaires between leaders and employees were finally obtained, with the recovery efficiency of 90.9%. In terms of sample structure, most of the employees are male, accounting for 95.7% of the total

sample; in terms of education level, 32.8% of the total sample is beyond junior college degree; for tenure, 41.7% of the total is over five years.

The scales used in this study have been all published in the international top journals and used frequently. All the scales in this study are measured by Likert 6-point method, 1 point to 6 points are from "totally disagree" to "totally agree".

1. For the measurement of visionary leadership, this study adopts the visionary leadership evaluation scale prepared by Van Knippenberg et al. (2019), which has 5 items in total. In this study, Cronbach's a = 0.902, representative item is "The leader often talks about the future of the enterprise".

2. For the measurement of employees' proactive behavior, this study adopts the scale of employees' proactive behavior evaluation compiled by Frese & Fay (2001), filled in by the leaders of the organization and used to evaluate the proactive behavior of their direct subordinates. There are 7 items in the scale, Cronbach's a = 0.803 in this study, and the representative item is "The employee actively solves the problems".

3. For the measurement of perceived organizational support, this study adopts the evaluation scale of perceived organizational support developed by Eisenberger et al.

(1986), which has 6 items in total. In this study, Cronbach's a = 0.864, and the representative item is "The enterprise is very concerned about my goals and values".

4. For the measurement of job satisfaction, this study uses the job satisfaction evaluation scale compiled by Tu, Yan, & Zhou (2011), which has three items. In this study, Cronbach's a = 0.852, and the representative item is "Generally speaking, I enjoy working in this company".

5. Control variables: the main control variables in this study are demographic variables, including gender, education level and tenure.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

This study mainly measured visionary leadership, perceived organizational support, employees' proactive behavior and job satisfaction. Amos 23.0 software was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the discriminant validity between them. Six indicators, such as x^2/df, NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI, RMSEA, were used to test. As shown in Table 1, the four -factor model fits the sample data best (x^2/df = 1.585, NFI = 0. 913, IFI = 0. 966, TLI = 0. 958, CFI = 0. 965, RMSEA = 0. 041), indicating that the measurement of the study has good discriminant validity.

Table 1 Fitting results of confirmatory factor analysis model

Model	Factor	x^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model1 (four factors)	A, B, C, D	1.585	0.913	0.966	0.958	0.965	0.041
Model2 (three factors)	A+B, C, D	2.783	0.846	0.895	0.871	0.894	0.072
Model3 (two factors)	A+B+C, D	3.08	0.827	0.876	0.849	0.875	0.077
Model4 (single factor)	A+B+C+D	1.743	0.01	0.955	0.946	0.955	0.046
Standard value of each index		<5	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08

Note: A, B, C and D stand for visionary leadership, perceived organizational support, employees' proactive behavior and job satisfaction respectively; "+" stands for combination; N = 348.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The mean value, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of each variable in this study are shown in Table 2. The data shows that the correlation between variables is consistent with the previous hypotheses: visionary leadership is significantly positively correlated with both perceived organizational support (r = 0. 282, P<0.01) and employees' proactive behavior (r = 0.206, P<0.01); job satisfaction and perceived organizational support (r = 0.171, P<0.01) are significantly positively correlated.

Table 2 Mean value, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of main variables (N = 348)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1						
2. Education level	-0.042	1					
3. Tenure	0.095	-0.47	1				
4. Visionary leadership	-0.066	0.016	0.132*	1			
5. Perceived organizational support	-0.100	-0.027	-0.098	0.282**	1		
6. Employees' proactive behavior	0.087	0.018	0.001	0.206**	0.167**	1	
7. Job satisfaction	-0.027	-0.011	0.003	0.277**	0.171**	0.064	1
Mean value (M)	0.01	2.21	3.9288	5.2210	4.6467	5.1054	5.1001
Standard deviation (S.D.)	0.120	0.603	3.34656	0.69872	0.74765	0.61335	0.75576

Note: **, *Stand for P<0.01, P<0.05 Respectively

Hypothesis Test Analysis

In this study, hierarchical regression analysis was used to verify the hypothesis relationship (Table 3).

Table 3 shows the hierarchical regression results (N = 348)

Variable	Perceived organizational support		Employees' proactive behavior				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
Control variable							
Gender	-0.578	-0.432	0.451	0.539*	0.584*	0.539	0.547*
Education level	-0.043	-0.050	0.021	0.017	0.022	0.028	0.023
Tenure	-0.020	-0.030*	-0.001	-0.007	-0.004	0.002	0.003
Independent variable							
Visionary leadership		0.316***		0.191***	0.158***		
Mediating variable							
Perceived organizational support					0.104*	0.142**	0.170***
Moderating variable							
Job satisfaction						0.030	0.032
Interaction effect							
Perceived organizational support×Job satisfaction							0.116*
R²	0.019	0.104	0.008	0.054	0.069	0.041	0.053
ΔR²	0.019	0.085***	0.008	0.046***	0.014*	0.033**	0.012*
F	2.204	9.854***	0.916	4.842***	4.957***	2.880*	3.130**
ΔF	2.204	32.196	0.916	16.496	5.180	5.787	4.246

Note: ***, **, *stand for $p<0.001$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.05$ respectively

1. Test of the direct effect

In order to test hypothesis H1, this study first took demographic variables as independent variables and employees' proactive behavior as a dependent variable to construct regression model (M3). Secondly, took demographic variables as control variables, visionary leadership as an independent variable, and employees' proactive behavior as a dependent variable to construct regression model (M4). It can be seen from table 3 that after controlling the impact of demographic variables, visionary leadership significantly affects employees' proactive behavior. Specifically, all demographics can only provide 0.8% explanation for the variance

of employees' proactive behavior. However, after introducing the variable of visionary leadership into the regression model, not only can the variance of explanation be greatly increased (R^2 is increased from 0.008 to 0.054), but also the F value of the model reaches the level of P<0.001, which shows that the regression model has a good fitting degree and visionary leadership has a significant impact on employees' proactive behavior. The regression coefficient of visionary leadership (M4, β = 0.191, P<0.001) is significant, which indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior. Therefore, H1, visionary leadership is positively correlated with employees' proactive behavior can be verified.

2. Test of the mediating effect

The mediating effect of perceived organizational support was examined by using the mediating effect step proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986). This study took employees' proactive behavior as a dependent variable, visionary leadership as an independent variable, gender, education level and tenure as control variables, and perceived organizational support as a mediating variable for linear regression analysis. It can be seen from table 3 that when the mediating variable is considered, the coefficient of the independent variable visionary leadership is significantly reduced (from 0.191 to 0.158), the coefficient of perceived organizational support (M5, β = 0.104, P<0.05) is significant, and the F value of the model is also significant

at the level of P<0.001, which proves that there is a partial mediating relationship between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior. H2 is verified: perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

3. Test of the moderating effect

H3 holds that job satisfaction plays a moderating role between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior. In order to test this hypothesis, after controlling the related variables, we followed the general paradigm of moderating effect test. In order to avoid multicollinearity, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction were centered. According to the results in Table 3, the regression coefficient of interaction between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction (β = 0.116, P<0.05) is significant, and job satisfaction positively moderates the influence of perceived organizational support on employees' proactive behavior. Considering the regression of the interaction between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction, R^2 increases from 0.041 to 0.053, indicating that the interaction between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction affects employees' proactive behavior. The influence of perceived organizational support on employees' proactive behavior changes from 0.142 to 0.170, indicating that the influence became stronger.

In order to further explore the

moderating mode of job satisfaction, according to Aiken & West (1991), this study conducted single slope analysis with a standard deviation higher and lower than the average value of job satisfaction respectively, Bootstrap test was carried out with PROCESS plug-in. As shown in Table 4, when job satisfaction is weak, there is a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior (β = 0.039, t = 0.702, P<0.001), and with the increase of job satisfaction, the relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior becomes stronger.

Table 4 Simple Slope test of job satisfaction moderating effect

Job satisfaction	β	Boot SE	T	P	95% confidence interval	
					Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
One standard deviation below the mean value	0.039	0.055	0.702	0.000	-0.070	0.147
Mean value	0.127	0.047	2.709	0.000	0.035	0.219
One standard deviation above the mean value	0.215	0.070	3.083	0.000	0.078	0.353
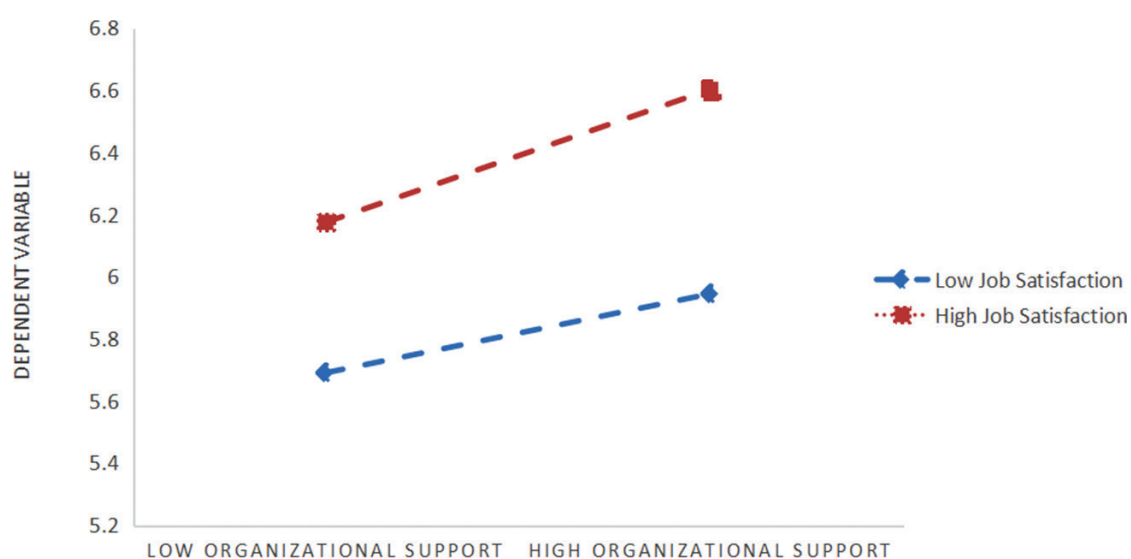
Figure 2 The moderating effect of job satisfaction on perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior

From figure 2 of moderating effect, it is shown that for employees with higher job satisfaction, perceived organizational support has a higher impact on employees' proactive behavior. On the contrary, for employees with lower job satisfaction, perceived organizational support has a lower impact on employees' proactive behavior, indicating that H3 is verified.

4. Mediating effect with regulation

By using the PROCESS plug-in, the mediating effect of Bootstrap test was carried out. After controlling gender, education level and tenure, it was tested whether job satisfaction moderated the mediating effect of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior.

Table 5 Results of mediating effect with regulation (5,000 samples)

Visionary leadership Perceived organizational support Employees' proactive behavior				
Job satisfaction	β	Boot SE	95% confidence interval	
			Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Low job satisfaction	0.012	0.025	-0.032	0.065
Medium job satisfaction	0.040	0.027	-0.002	0.101
High job satisfaction	0.061	0.035	0.014	0.151
Index	0.037	0.019	0.003	0.079

To test this hypothesis, according to Hayes (2013), the PROCESS plug-in was used to estimate the confidence interval of the indirect effect between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, and the confidence interval of the difference between them. As shown in Table 5, when job satisfaction is low, the indirect effect between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior is 0.012, 95% confidence interval is (-0.032, 0.065), and the difference interval contains 0. When job satisfaction is high, the indirect effect between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior is 0.061, the 95% confidence interval is (0.014, 0.151), and the difference interval does not contain 0. The results show that

when job satisfaction is low, the indirect effect of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior is not significant. When job satisfaction is high, the mediating effect of perceived organizational support is significant. Meanwhile, there are significant differences of mediating effect between high and low job satisfaction. The index value is 0.037, the 95% confidence interval is (0.003, 0.079), and the difference interval does not contain 0, that is, the mediating effect with regulation is significant. Therefore, H4, job satisfaction moderates the mediating role of organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, can be verified.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the two-stage paired surveys of 348 employees and their direct superiors in a service-oriented enterprise, the following conclusions are drawn: 1) Visionary leadership is positively correlated with employees' proactive behavior. 2) Perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior. 3) Job satisfaction plays a moderating role between perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior. 4) Job satisfaction moderates the mediating effect of perceived organizational support between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, the higher the job satisfaction, the stronger the mediating effect of perceived organizational support between the visionary leadership and the employees' proactive behavior.

Theoretical Significance

Based on Social Exchange Theory, this study explores the mechanism of visionary leadership to promote employees' proactive behavior through perceived organizational support and the moderating role of job satisfaction. It expands the promotion mechanism and boundary conditions of employees' proactive behavior and enriches the relevant research of employees' proactive behavior. The theoretical significance of this study is mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

1. It expands the research on the promotion factors of employees' proactive behavior. Many scholars at home and abroad have confirmed that employees' proactive behavior has a positive effect on the development of the organization. Although there have been studies on the influence of leadership style on employees' proactive behavior, there are also differences in the effect of leadership style. Through empirical research, this study fills in the gap between the two variables of visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, and expands the research scope of employees' proactive behavior.

2. This study explores the mechanism of perceived organizational support. Although some studies have shown that leadership behavior is an important factor affecting perceived organizational support, there is little research on the influence of visionary leadership on perceived organizational support. This study finds that the mediating effect of perceived organizational support in the relationship between visionary leadership and employees' proactive behavior, and further clarifies the logical relationship among visionary leadership, perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior.

3. It enriches the boundary conditions of employees' proactive behavior. This study introduces job satisfaction as a moderating variable to build a moderating and mediating model. The research on the mechanism of employees' proactive behavior and job satisfaction is still blank. This study further enriches the empirical research on perceived organizational support and employees' proactive behavior.

Practical Significance

This study explores how visionary leadership can promote the influence of employees' proactive behavior and the moderating role of job satisfaction through perceived organizational support. The results of this study provide the following suggestions for enterprises to stimulate employees' proactive behavior and further promote the stable development of enterprises:

1. Leaders' attempt to improve their own leadership style. Enterprise leaders can stimulate employees' proactive behavior by showing more visionary leadership characteristics. Only by communicating with employees often, understanding employees' needs and aspirations in terms of job and daily life, building a common organizational vision, encouraging and authorizing employees' leadership behavior, can they have a strong impact on employees' proactive behavior.

2. Leaders' efforts to enhance employees' perceived organizational support. Leaders could provide support and help for employees, thus increase their awareness of job support. In terms of value, leaders could also show employees recognition and affirmation, encourage and praise them timely, thus enhance their perception of value recognition. Meanwhile, it is necessary to maximize the consideration for employees' interests and improve their awareness of interest concerns. In short, when employees feel the support of the organization, they are more willing to implement proactive behavior to achieve the goals of the organization.

3. Leaders' care about employees' job satisfaction. Leaders should pay attention to the construction of enterprise culture, communicate with employees oftenly, understand the needs of employees, and provide support and help for employees in both job and daily life.

Research Limitations and Future Prospects

The limitations of this study are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

1. Mechanism of action: Although this study explores the mediating mechanism of organizational support and the moderating role of job satisfaction, the research content needs to be further expanded. There is no relationship variables or trait variables in the model, if relationship variables and trait variables were considered, we could fully explore the role of these paths or mechanisms in visionary leadership's influence on employees' proactive behavior. Therefore, in order to improve the accuracy of the research results, the future research can combine these variables and the variables of this study to further investigate the mechanism of action on employees' proactive behavior and compare the differences of these mechanisms.

2. Causal relationship: In this study, paired tracking method was used to collect data, but it was not a longitudinal study in the strict sense. In the future research, three-stage follow-up surveys can be implemented to further verify the causal relationship between variables.

3. Data source: The data of this study

is only from one service-oriented enterprise, which may be affected by region limit and sample category limit. Thus, the universality of the research results needs to be further confirmed. In the future research, we could expand the scope of samples, collect samples from more industries and regions, then the research results will be more convincing.

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