

A Model of Followership, Emotional Commitment and Job Performance of New Generation Employees

Mengyuan Wang

School of Business Administration, Anhui University of Finance & Economics, Bengbu, Anhui,
233030, China

Abstract

With the advent of the cloud computing era, the internal and external governance of organizations are threatened to varying degrees, and the leadership-centered view of governance is gradually being challenged; instead, academia and the corporate world are increasingly focusing on the role of followers in the enterprise. This paper focuses on new generation employees and constructs a model of the relationship between the influence of new generation employee followership and job performance based on followership theory, with affective commitment as a mediating variable. Finally, the model provides an outlook on future research directions and their effects on new generation employees' followership and performance.

Keywords

New Generation Employees; Followership Theory; Job Performance.

1. Introduction

With the progress and development of society, people can obtain information about the industry and enterprise through various channels, and the traditional mode of superior-subordinate relationship has lost its mainstream status, and the pattern of information asymmetry between leaders and subordinates has been greatly improved. In this context, the role of the follower is gradually assuming unparalleled importance and can rely on the information he or she possesses to achieve self-worth in the organizational development process, a change that heralds the gradual replacement of the traditional management style that exalts leadership (Bjugstad et al., 2006). In exploring the promotion of business development, academic researchers have gradually shifted from focusing on the leadership style dimension to focusing on the value of followers as essential to business development (Lv Zhengbao et al., 2009). From the existing literature, foreign scholars have achieved fruitful results in the study of followership, mainly in the areas of "followership purpose", "follower characteristics", "follower behavior", "follower types", and "leadership-subordinate relationships". Even though there are results on "followership", there is no consensus on the definition of the concept of followership. The definition of "followership", the core concept underlying followership theory, has not been universally agreed upon by scholars. Among the many studies on followership, some scholars consider it valuable to interpret the core concept of followership in terms of employees' ability to work. Followership is not a single but a superimposed integration of many followership competencies (Kelley, Dixon, Westbroo, 2003). It mainly includes the ability to work awareness, autonomous participation, independent thinking, goal congruence, building trust with the leader and at the same time, responsibility taking, and flexible work mobilization; Bjugstad et al. (2006) and Lv Zhengbao et al. (2009) found that followership is an ability to carry out the leader's instructions and to facilitate the leader's work with unconditional obedience to the leader's instructions, and its ultimate goal is organizational The ultimate goal is the achievement of organizational goals.

Analyzing the existing literature on scholars' interpretation of followership, it is mainly described that the greatest role played by followership is to influence leadership generation to improve leaders' leadership effectiveness and organizational effectiveness. The mainstream of domestic research on followership has two orientations: first, from a leadership perspective, scholars mainly look at followership as an explanatory variable to explore the relationship between certain factors of leadership and followership; second, looking at followership as an explanatory variable open, the main direction of exploration is which factors of leadership can contribute to organizational performance improvement (Xu, Sheng et al., 2014). The main research methods used in the existing research findings are interpolative and qualitative studies, and there are fewer direct and empirical observational studies on followership. The basis for achieving organizational performance is to achieve employees' individual performance. Scholars generally focus on the contribution of followership to the organization, but ignore the role of followership in influencing employees' individual performance, such as the impact on employees' careers, the impact on employees' loyalty to the company, and the impact on the level of trust between employees and the company, all of which involve the interests of employees themselves. Therefore, it is important to study the impact of followership on self-worth. Although some scholars have shown that the relationship between employee followership and organizational performance is positively predictive (Kim and Schachter, 2013), no research has been conducted to systematically study the relationship between employee followership and job performance. Based on the current state of research on followership, it is necessary to study the relationship between employee followership and job performance.

In recent years, the new generation of employees has been occupying a larger and larger share of the human resources market, and has become the main force of innovation and development in various industries, involving a huge number and a wide range. In this context: the new generation of employees, the main body of job performance, has very distinctive character traits compared to the older generation of employees, on the one hand they are professionally competent, innovative and have a strong sense of development, and these factors have an important role in the realization of job performance. On the other hand, the new generation of employees is easily emotional at work, has a high tendency to leave, and has a low level of organizational commitment. These characteristics determine that the new generation of employees are not recognized by their leaders and are easily "marginalized", and their sense of belonging and dependence on the organization will decline rapidly, and their work performance will also fall. In addition, it has been shown that passive followers (Kellerman, 2008) and blind followers (Chaleff, 1995), who also complete the work assigned by the leader on time and accurately, do not imply that performance requires qualities such as initiative. However, previous studies lack systematic exploration, such as under which circumstances do new generation employees take the initiative to create higher job performance? Do new generation employees with high followership imply higher job performance? How can companies ensure that the level of emotional commitment of new generation employees rises and subsequently affects job performance? What measures should leaders take to adapt to the new generation of employees, etc. These are all current issues that need to be addressed.

2. Theoretical Overview

The theory of followership is a theory gradually developed in the study of the characteristics and influencing factors of the followership behavior of the led in the leadership process. Regarding the definition of followership, domestic and foreign researchers have defined followership in the direction of relationship, competence, and action, respectively. For example, researcher Kellerman defines followership from a relational perspective; his view is that

followership is based on the employee-subordinate relationship and is a direct reflection of employees' behavior toward the leader (Kellerman, 2008). While other scholars define followership from a competency perspective, scholar Bjugstad argues that followership is a subordinate employee's ability to follow the leader's instructions to effectively perform tasks and support the leader's work, with the ultimate goal of maximizing the organization (Bjugstad, 2006). Scholar Chaleff (2006) uses the follower bravery trait as a basic, action perspective to reflect that followership is actually a manifestation of the many types of courage that employees exhibit, including the courage to give to the company, the courage to take on, the courage to innovate, the courage to accept change, and the courage to leave the company. Jehn and Bezrukova (2003) argue that defining followership cannot be based on a single factor, but should integrate its relational and operational perspectives. They argue that followership is not a spontaneous behavior but relies on personnel orientation, and that this behavior is the link between leaders and followers, giving leaders and followers a platform to achieve common goals. Domestic researchers have also defined the concept of followership. According to Yuan Tao and Ling Wen Spokes (2010), the definition of followership should start from follower characteristics, including personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, work ability and learning attitude. Y.kun Cao and Sheng Xu (2013) defined followership in terms of traits and behaviors, arguing that followership is actually a special behavior of followers interacting with the leader and the surrounding organizational environment in the process of work performance, and that the level of interaction of follower traits with the leader and the surrounding environment in carrying out work means the level of effectiveness of followership. In an academic study published in 1991, Meyer and Allen elaborated on organizational commitment theory and summarized the previous theoretical knowledge to obtain three dimensions of organizational commitment, namely affective commitment, sustaining commitment, and normative commitment, which were widely accepted by scholars. The most central of the dimensions of organizational commitment is affective commitment. according to Meyer and Allen, affective commitment refers to the intensity of commitment to work, which is expressed in terms of employees' emotional identification with the organization, achievement of organizational goals, and organizational recognition that employees are voluntarily staying with the organization. Ling (2001) study indicated that the level of affective commitment is related to the employee's job position, and the higher the position, the higher the level of clearance commitment. Also Ling (2001) showed that the level of trust in the leader, organizational dependability, and organizational climate can have an impact on affective commitment.

Performance is an essential condition for the process of organizational business development and the focus of managers and management scholars on management issues. There are two general ways of performance, namely organizational performance and employee performance, and the achievement of employee performance is crucial to the achievement of organizational performance goals and is the basis for employee promotions and salary increases; therefore, employee job performance is very important to organizations as well as employees. Throughout the summary of domestic and international studies on job performance, the influencing factors are mainly from two perspectives, which are individual perspective and organizational perspective. From the individual perspective, individual differences of knowledge workers, such as gender, age, education level, and job characteristics, are important positive predictors of workers' attitudes and job performance (Zhang, Lanxia, 2008). Zhang, Shanshan et al. (2012) found that personality traits such as gentleness, humaneness, and face effect all have a significant effect on job performance. In addition, other scholars have studied that emotional intelligence likewise has a significant effect on job performance (Wang, Yiming, 2010). From the perspective of organizational factors, scholar Wang Zhong (2004) argued that several dimensions of job characteristics-job skill diversity, and job autonomy-motivation-are

able to have significant positive predictive effects on job performance. Scholars such as Ji (2008) argue that perceived organizational support has a significant effect on employee performance, while work values play a mediating role.

3. Model Construction

Literature studies indicate that the definition of followership has not been uniformly defined, and the followership theory considers the management process as a result of the interaction between leaders, followers, and the organizational environment. Based on the followership perspective, this model explores how the level of followership of new generation employees affects the level of employees' own emotional commitment and, consequently, their job performance from the perspective of individual employees. The specific model is as follows.

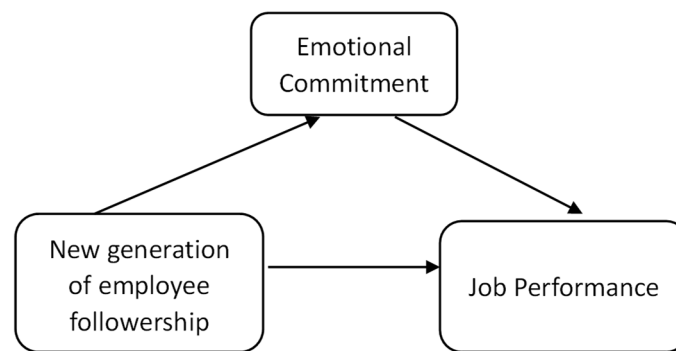


Figure 1. Study model diagram

4. Research Hypothesis

4.1. Followership and Job Performance

From the perspective of resource element theory, a company is a profitable organization formed by the integration of different tangible and intangible resources, which interact with each other to transform into the power needed for the development of the company and become the power source of its unique competitive advantage. Human resources are an important resource essential to business development, and followership is the multiple integration of multiple followership behaviors and abilities exhibited by employees (Westbrook et al., 1992). Therefore, followership is a high-level resource in the human resources of an enterprise, and the rational use of the maximum utility of resource utilization can bring a higher level of organizational performance to the enterprise. At the individual level, a high level of employee followership predicts that employees are more likely to follow their leaders and are able to proactively and efficiently carry out leadership instructions, playing an important role in enhancing organizational cohesion and thus improving their individual job performance and job satisfaction. Employees with high followership are able to proactively complete the instructions given by their leaders, have a high level of trust in the organization, see themselves and the organization as a community of destiny, and share relevant responsibilities with the organization. Therefore, high-following employees will identify and give feedback to leaders when problems arise in the organization, thus ensuring that information is communicated to organizational managers in a timely manner and ensuring that problems are solved in a timely manner, thereby contributing to organizational performance in order to improve individual employee job performance. Based on this, the following hypotheses can be formulated.

Hypothesis 1: New generation employee followership has a positive predictive effect on job performance

4.2. Followership and Emotional Commitment

Social exchange theory states that when subordinate employees are cared for and supported by the organization, the subordinate's sense of positive review will be strengthened and their level of organizational commitment will increase accordingly. According to commitment consistency, the level of emotional commitment of employees will also increase, employees will have more trust in the company, their level of followership will increase, and they will be able to willingly contribute more to the organization. Researcher Chaleff (2003) showed that high levels of followership had a positive impact on leadership effectiveness and a significant positive predictive effect on the organizational commitment dimension of leadership effectiveness. Peng Jian (2016) and other researchers analyzed data from 119 pairs of supervisor-subordinate relationships and concluded that positive followership traits can positively influence job performance and affective commitment. Sheng Xu (2014) empirically concluded that coercive followership also has an impact on leadership effectiveness, and it is positive and negative. Coercive followership also motivates employees to complete relevant instructions given by the leader, which has a positive effect on collective tasks and organizational citizenship behavior, but coercive means can cause employees to be psychologically dissatisfied, which in turn can affect the level of affective commitment. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 2: New generation employees' followership has a significant positive predictive effect on affective commitment

4.3. Emotional Commitment and Job Performance

Throughout the domestic and international literature, scholars have widely recognized that organizational commitment is divided into three dimensions, but it is questionable whether all three dimensions have a positive effect on job performance. It has been argued that although organizational commitment has a positive impact on job performance, there is only a weak correlation (Hackett, 1994); however, most researchers believe that organizational commitment is a significant and positive predictor of job performance. Keller (1997) found through an empirical study that organizational commitment has a significant positive impact on job performance. Some other scholars have also found that affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment also have varying degrees of impact on job performance. Allen and Meyer's (1997) study showed that employees with higher levels of affective commitment also had progressively higher job performance. For the new generation of employees, organizational commitment is always in flux along the career path, i.e., affective commitment is also in flux. New generation employees with high level of affective commitment will increase their trust and dependence on the company and give back to the organization by working hard to complete their job performance. Therefore, this paper focuses on the group of new generation employees and proposes the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3: Affective commitment significantly and positively affects the job performance of new generation employees

4.4. The Mediating Role of Emotional Commitment

Affective commitment is the most central part of the organizational commitment dimension and has greater importance. First, affective commitment can be used as an antecedent variable to influence variables such as employee turnover, organizational citizenship behavior, job performance, and job satisfaction. Second, affective commitment can also be used as an outcome variable and can be influenced by organizational justice, organizational context and even personal factors such as gender, region and culture. Thus, affective commitment is the

most specific dimension of organizational commitment that expresses emotions, characterized by subtlety, flexibility and ease of change, and can have an impact on various substantive elements of life. Followership refers to the traits and behaviors that followers exhibit in their interactions with leaders. Social exchange theory proposes that when leaders act in a style similar to their followers' preferred leadership style, followers will develop more trust and identification with the organization, and their followership levels will rise, willingly contributing to the organization and their job performance will increase. According to commitment congruence theory, this same behavior of contributing to the organization affects the change in the level of employees' organizational commitment, and as the level of organizational commitment increases, the level of affective commitment also increases, so it can be said that affective commitment may be a mediating variable between followership and job performance.

From the above literature review, it is clear that the level of employee followership can easily affect the level of affective commitment, and the level of affective commitment can directly affect the performance of employees; therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis based on the new generation of employees.

Hypothesis 4: Affective commitment plays a mediating role in the relationship between new generation employee followership and job performance impact

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This paper constructs a research model based on followership theory, integrates and analyzes the three elements of new generation employees' followership, affective commitment and job performance, draws out the possible influence relationship between new generation employees' followership and job performance, and puts forward the corresponding hypotheses combined with related theories.

The model constructed in this paper is based on the perspective of the individual new generation employee, whose performance is affected not only at the individual level, but also by other factors, such as leadership empowerment. Most scholars have found that the factor of leadership empowerment can have a great effect on employees. From the perspective of achieving self-worth, employees will be more motivated to work when they receive leadership empowerment, have a higher sense of belonging to the organization, inspire more creative abilities in employees, and their performance will be higher. Therefore, the introduction of leadership empowerment will make the model more comprehensive. In addition, this paper only proposes a research hypothesis and constructs a model on the relationship between new generation employees' followership and job performance, but does not conduct an empirical study, and the findings are not comprehensive and persuasive enough; therefore, the next step should be to do an empirical study and draw relevant and credible conclusions.

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