

# A Review of the Influence of Different Leadership Styles on Employees' Initiative Behavior

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**Abstract.** The review mainly concludes the impact of three leadership styles, inclusive, transformational and authentic, on employees' initiative behavior. The comparative method and literature analysis method are the research methods which used. Through the above methods, this study finds that different leadership styles have different degrees of influence on employees' initiative behavior. Meanwhile, this study also recognizes that management style has a universally favorable orientation effect on employees' active behavior, whether from its own theoretical framework or leadership level. Also, it finds that most of the effects are influenced by indirect factors rather than direct ones. This study has wide knowledge coverage and a large knowledge span by reading a lot number of domestic and foreign literature. And it is committed to providing more vision and more effective information for subsequent researchers. At the same time, based on the lack of existing authoritative literature on this subject and the narrow research direction, this research wants to attract more people to pay attention to this field and contribute to its development.

## 1 Introduction

There are two kinds of roles in the company, one is the leader and the other is the led. Leaders are the corn figure in the network of teams, and it is also the focus in the enterprise team [1]. The employees of the company are belonging to the other. Leaders as inextricably bound to employees. Employees can be affected by the leadership style, which is a crucial factor. The leadership style will have a directional effect on enterprise management practices, which is also a decisive power to enact the enterprise human resource management system.

Enterprises are in the background of so unprecedentedly acute in market economy, that they extend the screening

criteria for employees from basic job requirements to the need for initiative behavior. In recent years, the employee initiative behavior is also one of the hot topics widely discussed in academic world. The employee initiative behavior is of benefit to the development both individuals and organizations. On a personal level, the employee initiative behavior enables to realize employees' self-worth. For the enterprise level, the employee initiative behavior can promote the vigorous development of enterprises. By reading related literature and relevant knowledge, the study discovers the research direction of "The influence of different management styles on employees' initiative behavior" not only attracted the attention of businesses and academia but also the public was very concerned about for the past few years.

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Based on the lack of a complete and systematic summary of existing research literature, the study will collect and summarize the literature about “The influences of leadership styles on employees’ initiative behavior”. This passage intends to write a research summary to clarify the topic. This review will summarize three distinct leadership styles that are inclusive leadership style, transformational leadership style and authentic leadership style. Meanwhile, the study will observe the differences of employees’ initiative performance under these three different leadership styles, and make comparisons from multiple dimensionality to judge the level of employees’ initiative ability.

The research aims to clear up the correlativity between leadership style and workers initiative performance, providing more general, more representative and more concise and effective information for subsequent enterprise management researchers. At the same time, it can offer a new way of thinking for enterprise managers in the process of enterprise management.

## 2 Overview of the research field

The time range for the study search on the impact of the methods and approaches leaders use to manage and guidance employee on their initiative behavior is from 2008 to 2023, using a thematic search method. On CNKI, The passage investigates the themes of leadership style and employee initiative through a literature search. There were 67 Chinese journals that dealt with the effect of style of leadership on employee proactive behavior; Search for topics such as "leader style" and "employee initiative" on Web of Science SSCI. The study has found 28 relevant foreign literatures. The article compares research on the impact of leadership style on employee proactive behavior both domestically and internationally, and finds that there is more data in Chinese literature compared to this. Among them, there are 11 core journals from Peking University and 9 CSSCI journals, indicating that the overall research quality is relatively high. From this, it can be concluded that the research proposition is currently in the early stage of development and has enormous potential for development. At the same time, it is found that the research topics are concerned by psychology, management, Organizational behavior and other fields, which indicates that this field has an interdisciplinary perspective. Looking back at the development of the entire research field, it was found that its overall situation is

showing an increasing trend. The figure 1 shows its development trend with a more intuitive Line chart.

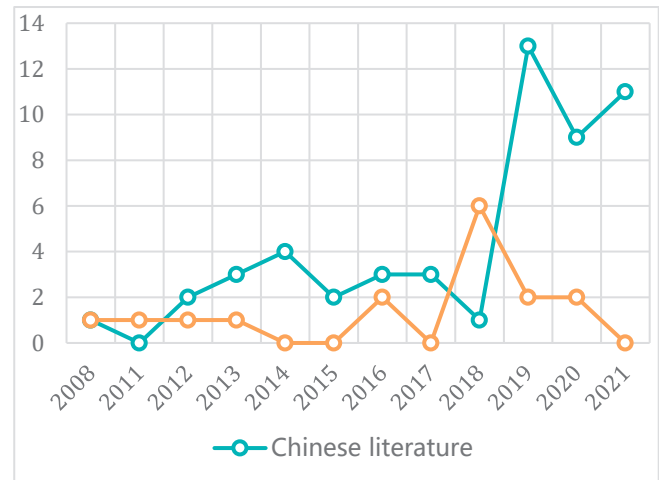


Figure 1 Literature quantity (Photo credit: Original)

## 3 The influence of inclusive leadership style on employee proactive behavior

To analyze the impact of inclusive leadership style on employees' energetic performance, the definition should be clear before research can begin. A linked leadership method called "inclusive leadership" places a strong emphasis on openness, accessibility, and accessibility in the dialogue between managers and staff [2]. The historical foundation of Chinese civilization and a priceless legacy of traditional Chinese culture are inclusion. Many academics and human resource managers in management practice now agree that creating an inclusive work environment is necessary to manage diversity and unlock its potential worth [3].

Ability motivation is crucial, but even if a person feels capable of acting pro-actively, they might not always do so. Individuals who implement proactive behavior also need to have strong reasons and motivation. From this, it can be concluded that this study, based on the causal motivation path, analyzes how inclusive leadership stimulates employees' improvisational behavior from two aspects [4]. Firstly, inclusive leadership encourages employees to bravely express their opinions and gives them some autonomy in their work. Encouragement from leaders creates a sense of trust in employees, and gives them a certain degree of autonomy to meet their autonomy needs. Therefore, employees will demonstrate a positive work attitude and proactively help the company solve problems. Secondly, inclusive leaders believe that mistakes in their

work are inevitable and demonstrate their understanding and tolerance of employee opinions through open listening to them. This creates a relatively safe working atmosphere for employees, making them feel that it is safe to propose new ideas in the team and risk using creative solutions that go against convention, reducing the risk perception of employees taking proactive actions.

Different scholars have different understandings of the impact of inclusive leadership on employee proactive behavior based on different theoretical perspectives. For example, Zhu Yu explored the impact of inclusive leadership on employees' proactive behavior under Chinese situational conditions, as well as the role of psychological capital and team virtues [5]. The analysis results of the multi-level structural equation model indicate that inclusive leadership significantly positively affects employees' proactive behavior; Psychological capital plays a mediating role between inclusive leadership and proactive behavior; Team virtues regulate the relationship between psychological capital and proactive behavior. High team virtues weaken the positive relationship between psychological capital and proactive behavior; Team virtue also regulates the indirect impact of inclusive leadership on active behavior through psychological capital. In low team virtue conditions, the indirect impact of inclusive leadership on active behavior through psychological capital is greater than in high team virtue conditions. Some research findings revealed that employee improvisation behavior is positively impacted by inclusive leadership, which relies on the mediating effect of organizational self-esteem and positive emotional atmosphere in the team. A positive emotional atmosphere in a team can enhance the positive impact of organizational self-esteem on employee improvisation behavior.

A small number of researchers from other countries have put forth various viewpoints on the sway of inclusive leadership on proactive employee behavior, such as the predictive role of inclusive leadership in innovative work behavior is explored by JAVED, RAZA NAQV, and others, using psychological security as a mediator [6]. Data gathering from Pakistani textile workers in the supervisor-subordinate binary. The findings of the study show a favorable correlation between inclusive leadership and innovative action, and that psychological security is a mediating factor in this relationship. Carmeli et al.

investigated how inclusive leadership, which is characterized by frankness attainability and usability of leaders, fosters clerk creativity in the job [7]. The author examined the relationship between the psychological safety of inclusive leadership (Time 1) and the involvement of employees in creative tasks (Time 2) through a sample of 150 employees. The Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) test has shown that comprehensive leadership is positively correlated with psychiatric security [7].

#### **4 The influence of transformational leadership style on employees' initiative behavior**

If people want to investigate the consequences of a transformational management style on employees' initiative behavior, they should figure out the connotation of transformational leadership style first. As its name implies, the difference between the transformational leadership style and other leadership styles is reflected in the word "change". The "change" is not only a change in form, but also a change in essence, which is different from the traditional management style. In the existing research field, this research finds that different scholars have different understanding of transformational leader pattern. From the point of view of organizational behavior, Liang Hao et al regard as that transformational leadership style is a "people-oriented" leadership style in which leaders constantly motivate and inspire employees [1]. From the perspective of work reshaping theory, He Guohua et al define transformational leadership style as stimulating employees' autonomy, and leaders who choose this kind of leadership style strive to provide effective support for employees' growth [8]. From the enterprises' point of view of, the transformational leadership style is recognized as an external driver make staff feel the good working atmosphere of team. The leadership style theory perfected and proposed by Bass explained and analyzed transformational leadership from four dimensions: Leadership charisma, Spiritual inspiration, Intellectual stimulation and Personalized care [9]. Nowadays, this theory became the basic theory of many scholars. To sum up, the study realizes that transformational leadership style is a management way different from the traditional one from the perspective of managers. It is a leadership style that affects employees through multiple intermediate variables.

The transformational leadership style is a new one style and has huge potential influence on the process of the enterprise. Transformational leadership positively affects employee job happiness. Also transformational leadership can promote the work involvement of subordinates. This style can correctly guide teams' resilience, push the team knowledge sharing, improve group creativity, and promote new development of enterprises.

Transformational leadership style has many aspects of positive effects. The study has learned that the initiative behavior of employees at enterprises embodies the active innovation behavior of job content, the transformative behavior of organizational structure, and the feedback seeking behavior and so on. In contemporary studies, there are few studies on the impact mechanisms of transformational leadership style on employees' behavior directly [10]. On the contrary, it is more common to use intermediary factors to indirectly affect employees' active behavior. Chinese scholars Liang Hao et al use dynamic methods to make a thorough inquiry of the influence of leadership style on employees' proactive behavior, and discover that transformational leadership style also influences employees' proactive behaviors through the intermediary of factors such as transforming environment and employee cognition [1]. Researcher Meng Hui collected 193 effective Transformational Leadership Questionnaires by data from multiple sources and proved that transformational leadership has a second-order single-factor structure [11]. It also explains that this leadership style is not affect employees directly and completely. Meanwhile, the four dimensions proposed by transformational leadership theory written by foreign scholar Bass are also the same as the above view. Even it mentioned that transformational leadership affects employees' autonomous motivation by influencing the environment [9].

Through the analysis of research reports, the study finds that employees' initiative behavior is positively impacted by transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership style is mainly the transformation of the traditional "top-down" leadership form into "bottom-up" connection with employee initiative to address the problems that the enterprise is facing and grasp the limited development opportunities. The academic research on its indirect impact on employees' active behavior has a clearer understanding than that on its direct impact, and domestic

and foreign research has a similar view on this - "four-dimensional" definition [9].

## **5 The influence of authentic leadership style on employee proactive behavior**

The definition of authentic leadership must be understood before the study can examine the effect of this style on workers' proactive behavior. "Authenticity" is a broad expression of "knowing oneself" and "being true to oneself". Authentic leadership style is based on trust and transparency, where leaders have a clear understanding of others and themselves. The definition and interpretation of authentic leadership have undergone some twists and turns. At the beginning of its theory, scholars such as Luthans F defined it as "strong self-awareness" and "positive self-regulation ability" [12]. However, some scholars later questioned and provided a more specific definition of true leadership style: true leadership is a leadership style formed by the leader's strong psychological abilities and high moral standards [13].

The most important aspect of a true leader is to showcase authenticity in their work, which helps the company form a friendly, civilized, relaxed, and enjoyable work atmosphere. Such leaders often take themselves as examples, and guide employees to take Operation Veritable by showing their own authenticity, so as to stimulate their initiative.

There are some specific impacts of authentic leadership on employees. Authentic leaders treat employees with sincerity, encourage self-expression, and establish positive and sincere interactions with employees, which can make them feel respected and valued, thereby improving their self-esteem and self-recognition level, and enhance their sense of collective identity. When members have a strong sense of identification with the collective, they will contribute their efforts to the collective goals, generate more cooperative behavior and organizational citizenship behavior, and tend to proactively report problems to superiors.

Based on various theoretical stances, different academics have varying understandings of how authentic leadership affects proactive employee behavior. For instance, the impact of genuine headship on employee error reporting, which is based on social cognition and social identity theory, is meaningful; the sense of organizational identification partially mediates the relationship with authentic leaders and employee error reports; and the climate of error management not only strengthens the positive relationship between

organizational identity and staff error reporting but also regulates the media Organizations in the information economy, according to Cui Zilong and Tian Xizhou, require more effective leadership styles to encourage employees' initiative in navigating uncertain external contexts [14]. The study utilizes effective survey data on 470 organizational employees to empirically investigate the impact of authentic leadership on subordinates' pro-active manner. By combining structural equations modeling with hierarchical regression analysis, the consequences show that genuine leadership can have a positive impact on the proactive behavior of subordinates; The liaison between authentic leadership and subordinate energetic behavior is mediated by subordinate psychological capital in a partial way; Tradition plays a significant negative regulatory role in the connection between psychological capital and active behavior.

Authentic leaders cultivate a high level of trust in their work by having a profound grasp of their own thoughts and behaviors and by encouraging proactive conduct in followers. True leaders in traditional Chinese society have an indisputable influence on how their followers behave. Confucius stated in the *Analects*, for instance, that they are upright and do not obey. The psychological threat of subordinates engaging in proactive activity can be completely eliminated by leaders who exhibit authenticity, dependability, openness, and positive traits. According to Parker and Bindl, proactive conduct is a self-regulated activity in which people actively create and accomplish goals at work [15]. Autonomous and supportive organizational scenarios are more conducive to individuals implementing proactive behavior.

It has been proven through both domestic and foreign research data that genuine leaders have a positive impact on employees' proactive posture. The sincere treatment of leaders enables them to better convey their own ideas to employees promote the formation of a positive and proactive atmosphere in the organization, make employees understand the organization's attitude towards initiative, reduce inner fear, and be more inclined to actively participate in work.

## 6 Conclusion

From existing literature, although it has been some years since the effect of leadership style on active behavior was studied domestically and internationally, there is still a large

amount of research gap to be explored. Future research can be carried out from the following aspects:

Now, a new direction in the field of leadership is to connect leadership research with Cognitive science to explore how leaders perceive, make decisions and act. For example, future research can use the perspective of Cognitive science and sample survey methods to deeply study the impact of leaders' self-awareness on others' behavior.

With the gradual deepening of economic globalization and cultural diversity, the impact of different leadership styles in the Chinese context has been explored. However, due to cultural differences among countries, some leadership characteristics may vary. However, there is still a lack of leadership style scales in the Chinese context, and different types of leadership style scales can be developed in the future.

Currently, domestic scholars are examining the positive effect that leadership style has on employees' initiative behavior. While the analysis of its negative effects is slightly insufficient.

Through a large number of domestic and foreign literature reading and comprehensive multi-channel data collection, this research has a deep understanding of this research field. At first, the study finds that the development level of this field at home and abroad is similar and the overall trend is rising in recent years from quantity and quality of the relevant literature. This research has a conclusion that this field has been brought into the public eye, and there are enormous research potential and crucial research meanings. Second, the study deems that it is necessary for China to make a set of leadership style scale according to its own characteristics. Meanwhile, the leadership style should not be divided. Nowadays, the existing research field has associated it with leadership level and organizational behavior, which is a great example for later scholars. In the future, the achievement of the positive aspects about leadership style will gradually become saturated, and there will undoubtedly be abundant study on its negative aspects. To a certain extent, what passage wrote above is helpful to the whole research field.

## Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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