Empirical Research of Manager’s Impression Management

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Abstract. Impression management had become a hot topic in academia recently and received more and more attention, but the domestic scholar’s related researches in this field are still in its infancy. The author has made the empirical study on the relationship among the supervisor’s impression management, the three types of organizational justice, trust awareness and job satisfaction through collecting questionnaires in several enterprises in Guangzhou. Through the Structural Equation Modeling we found that the manager’s impression management has a significant impact on employees perceived organizational justice, trust awareness and job satisfaction.

Introduction

In 1955, the American sociologist Erving Goffman first proposed that people will consciously manage the impression to others. He thought all people are “actors” in the social interaction activities, and need to act in front of “audience” in various kinds of “environment”. His Theatrical Art Theory has made a significant impact on the formation and development of “Self-presentation”, “Impression management”, “Influence strategy” and “Machiavellian behavior”.

Literature Review

Impression Management

Since the 80s of last century, European and American’s business management academia began to use the Interpersonal Influence Theory to explain the work behavior of employees. They believe that employees will take a series of impression management measures, try to make a good impression to others, in order to get a better job, performance evaluation and pay. In this paper, based on the American scholar Wayne and Liden’s point of view, we defined impression management as people to protect their own self-image and influence others perceptions of their behavior.

European and American scholars’ research show that the employee’s impression management behavior will affect the supervisor’s view to them. Keck through experiment show that employees tend to think highly of managers who take impression management measures. William L. Gardner and Dean Cleavenger asked 81 college students to assess the leader's leadership style and leadership effectiveness and employees’ satisfaction according to the impression management behavior of leaders. They found that respondents’ perception of transformational leadership style, leadership effectiveness, satisfaction with the leader have positive correlation with the claptrap and model behavior of the leader but negative correlation with the leader’s behavior of self-promotion and threatening behavior.

Many domestic and foreign scholars agree that people will take different influence strategies and impression management measures in different cultural backgrounds. However, existing literature, both domestic and foreign in enterprise management have rare empirical study on the influence of the cultural background to the administrators’ impression management behavior except Katherine R. Xin who is an assistant professor at the University of Southern California in American.

Based on the view of Ferris and Katherine R. Xin, people will take different impression management measures specific to oneself, managers and job title. The author thought managers’
motivation to take these three different measures and three kinds of impression management behavior are different at home and abroad.

1. The impression management measures specific to oneself: enterprise managers in Western have a strong personal orientation awareness. They prefer to take self-promotion strategy to affect employees’ impression to them. Chinese culture emphasis morality such as Humility, lead by example, fit one’s deeds to words and Inside and outside as one, so Chinese enterprise managers rare try to affect employees’ opinion to them through self-promotion. Chinese employees are not only “listening the word”, but also “watching the word” when associate with managers. Managers’ self-promotion strategy not only can’t make a good impression to employee but also may cause employees’ dislike. As a result, the author thought managers set an example to others is the best way to management impression of themselves.

2. The impression management measures specific to others: western scholars thought, ingratitude with others is the main way to management one’s impression, while ingratitude is a derogatory term in Chinese culture. People always hate the managers who ingratitude with others and cliques. Chinese culture emphasis on collectivism and object to selfish, advocating the moral idea like “kindness”, “solidarity”, “help each other”, “public and private keep separate” act. Only buy going deep into masses and care for people and play well with others can make a good impression on employees. What’s more, folk basis is an important condition for managers to promotion. Managers take the way of civil servant leadership and concern about the interest of employees, thus can obtain the staff’s support. Therefore, the author think Chinese managers should take measures to management their impression through care for employee, respect employees’ intelligence and feelings, maintaining a good relationship with employees.

3. The impression management measures specific to job title: compare with western culture, Chinese culture stress more on “hard working”, “humility”, “free from arrogance and rashness”, “words are but wind, but seeing is believing”. Chinese employees prefer to judge the managers’ management ability based on the manager’s attitude to the job and their real work ability. Managers showed their management ability through manage their behavior and leave an impression of combined ability with character and fitness for the management. Therefore, the author think Chinese managers show their leadership through the words and deeds, especially the job performance can be the main strategies to management impression aimed to the job title.

From the above three aspects, the author measure managers’ impression management behavior and analyses how these impression management behavior influence employees’ sense of fairness, sense of trust, satisfaction and sense of belonging.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is people’s feeling of the justice in the organization. Different aspects of the organizational justice constitute the structural dimension of the organizational justice. There are four main viewpoints on the structural dimension of the justice: (1) Two-factor theory: they think the justice is divided into distributive justice and procedural justice, which is the most common view. (2) Single factor theory: they agree that the link between distributive justice and procedural justice is too close to distinguish, therefore advocate the structure of the justice is unidimensional. (3) There factor theory: they believe justice is made up by distributive justice, procedural justice and interpersonal justice. (4) Four factor theory: they think justice is made up by distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice.

Job Satisfaction

Employees’ job satisfaction is a very important concept in the enterprise management theory. American scholar Locke pointed out that the employee’s job satisfaction is a pleasant emotional state caused by work experience. American scholar Titus Oshagbemi think job satisfaction is an emotional state which is come into being after compare their work experience with the work experience they expected or desired.
In the existing literature, scholars at home and aboard did a lot of study on job satisfaction, including the influence factors and effect results. Their research show that the employee’s personal factors, the characteristics of the work itself, organizational support, organizational justice are important factors which affect employees’ job satisfaction, while job satisfaction will affect employees’ work performance and organizational commitment and other factors.

The Conceptual Model and Assumptions

On the basis of literature research and qualitative research, the author puts forward the conceptual model shown in Figure 1. In this figure, organizational justice refers to the employee’s evaluation to whether the manager’s human resource management strategy is fair. Results (distribution) justice refers to the employee’s evaluation to whether the results of the manager’s human resource management are fair. Procedure justice refers to the employee’s evaluation to whether the process of manager’s human resource management is fair. Interpersonal fairness refers to the employee’s evaluation to whether the relationships between managers and himself is fair. Job satisfaction refers to a pleasant emotional state caused by work experience. Employee’s trust to managers refers to employees believe the integrity, kindness and ability of the manager. Led by example refers to manager’s behavior that set an example to others. Managers care for the staff refers to managers concerned about staff’s work, respect for employees and help employees improve work ability. Managers display leadership skills refers to the managers show their ability on human resources management. This concept model assumes that: managers’ impression management behavior will affect organizational justice perceived by employees, trust awareness to managers and job satisfaction. These three types of organizational justice influence each other, and organizational justice will also affect trust awareness and job satisfaction.

The Relationship between the Three Types of Organizational Fairness

In 1986, American scholars Bass and Mogget said: “the process of organization’s distribution strategy made up by a serious of events, in these events, communication process caused by distribution process and through communication process produce distribution decision results.” Therefore, they think procedure justice affect international justice and then affect results justice. Craig C. Pinder, who is a famous scholar in the field of organizational behavior in Canada agree that there are relationships between the three types of organizational justice, which is procedure justice affect international justice and then affect results justice. According to Beth, Mogget and Pinder, the author assumes that:
H1: employee perceived procedure justice has a direct positive influence on interpersonal justice.
H2: employee perceived procedure justice has a direct positive influence on results justice.
H3: employee perceived interpersonal justice has a direct positive influence on results justice.

The Relationship between the Manager’s Impression Management and Organizational Justice

Led by example is a common characteristic of transformational leadership and servant leadership. American scholar Krakow’s experimental results show that managers set an example to employees is an important component of transformational leadership behavior focused on managers.

According to Team values theory, managers concerned with the interest of the team is an important component of procedure justice perceived by employees (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Pillai, Scandure and Williams’s empirical study results further shows that managers’ transformational leadership style has significant direct impact on the procedure justice perceived by employees in United States, Australia, India, Colombia and The Middle East (Jordan and Saudi Arabia).

The author thinks that employees are more likely to believe the managers who comply with the code of ethics, establish a diligent, responsible and be scrupulous in separating public from private interest role model will persist in morality, unbiasedness, accuracy, representativeness, consistency, error correction and other procedure justice principles. According to Pillay’s point of view and Podsakoff’s empirical study and the above discussion, the author assumes that:

H4: led by example has a significant positive influence on procedure justice perceived by employee.

Existing literature shows that scholars at home and abroad generally agree that how managers treat employees will affect procedure justice and interpersonal justice perceived by employee. Although there is still controversial in academia on whether the concept of interpersonal justice is a separate notion, or a component of procedure justice, enterprise management scholars generally believed that both servant leadership and transformational leadership have an important characteristic which is leaders respect and care for staff. Respect and care for the staff can enhance interpersonal justice and procedure justice perceived by employee. In addition, according to the Tinot and Volcker's point of view, leaders respect the staff still can give employees more opportunity to access to good resources. Therefore, the author assumes that managers leave employees an impression of care about their interests and respect them can strengthen employees perceived of procedure justice, interpersonal justice and the results justice, namely:

H5: manager’s behavior of care for employees has a direct positive influence on the three types of organizational justice perceived by employees.

The author thinks that staff’s overall view of enterprise’s human resource management and supervisor’s management behavior will not only affect procedure justice and results justice perceived by employees, but also will affect their perception of interpersonal justice. The more powerful of managers’ leadership, the more can give the staff impression that managers are qualified for the management, and the more can enhance employee perceived fairness. Therefore, the author assumes that:

H6: employees’ perception of managers’ behavior of display leadership has a significant positive influence on three types of organizational justice.

In the existing literature, enterprise management academia research employee’s trust awareness from the following two aspects. Some enterprise management scholars mainly study the nature of relations between leaders and employees. They explore how employees to understand the nature of the relationships according to social exchange theory. The others focus on the influence of the leaders’ character to employees’ trust awareness. They think leaders largely determine whether employees can achieve its purpose (promotion, salary, work schedules, employment, etc.). As a result, employees’ attitude to the leaders’ integrity, reliability, impartiality and ability will affect employee's work attitude and work behavior. Enterprise management scholars in Europe and United States generally believe that employees’ perception of trust actually is employees’ view of the leader,
namely the staff will observe the behavior of the leader, then judge the relationship with the leader, or judge the character of the leader.

The author believed that managers set an example to staff can show employees that they abide by society moral principles, managers care for employees can show their kindness to employees, managers’ human resources management ability can show employees that they have the necessary management knowledge and management skills. Therefore, from these three aspects the managers leave employees good impression can enhance employees’ trust awareness. According to the above argument, the author assumes that:

H7: managers’ behavior of set an example to others, care for employees and display leadership have a significant positive influence on employees’ trust awareness.

In 2004, American scholars Judge and others made a meta-analysis of the influence managers’ behavior makes on employees, based on European and American scholars’ 165 published papers and 36 unpublished doctoral dissertations during 1887 to 2001. They found that leaders show consideration for employees (leaders concerned about employees, respect for employees, seeks happiness for employees, support employees’ working, thanks to employees’ contribution) will enhance employees’ job satisfaction, satisfaction to leaders, working enthusiasm, improve the leader's job performance and the effect of leadership, team and organizational performance.

Manager is the spokesman of the enterprise. The impression of managers in the work will directly influence employees’ view to managers. Employees' job satisfactions include employees' overall satisfaction, satisfaction to the union, managers and enterprise. Especially, the employees' view on the manager will affect employee’s satisfaction to managers. Managers led by example in the work, concern about employees, respect for employees, and try hard to improve their management ability, thus employees are more likely to love the manager and think the manager is trustworthy. Therefore, the author assumes that:

H8: managers’ behavior of set an example to others, care for employees and display leadership have a significant positive influence on employees’ job satisfaction.

Domestic and foreign scholars generally agree that organizational justice is one of the important factors that affect employees’ job satisfaction. While in the existing literature, enterprise management academia had different conclusion on the effect of all kinds of organizational justice on employees’ job satisfaction. In 2001, the American scholar Colquitt, Cohen Zarathustra and Spector made a meta-analysis respectively on the empirical study results of organizational justice literature. They found that the procedure justice and results justice have a great positive influence on the employees’ job satisfaction; interpersonal justice and informational justice have medium influence on employees’ job satisfaction. In the four types of organizational justice, procedure justice has the largest impact on employees’ job satisfaction, support the view that "results justice affect employees’ satisfaction to management decision and employees’ job satisfaction", proposed by American scholar McFarlin and Sweeney. Besides employees' salary satisfaction highly correlated with results justice and procedure justice, all kinds of organizational justice have the similar effects on employees’ kinds of satisfaction (overall satisfaction, satisfaction to the union, satisfaction to managers and satisfaction to enterprise). As a result, they point out that managers must pay more attention to the results justice, the procedure justice and interpersonal justice to enhance employees’ job satisfaction. The author agrees to Cohen, Zarathustra and Shep’s point of view, assumes that:

H9: three types of organizational justice perceived by employees have a significant positive influence on employees’ job satisfaction.

Although many European and American scholars’ empirical study results show that procedure justice is the main factor influencing employees’ trust awareness, the empirical study made by Hong Kong scholars Yui Tim Wong, Chi Sum Wong and Hang Yue Ngo in joint venture in China, Li Shan Xie and Chun Xiao Wang of Sun Yat-Sen University in service enterprises in our country and Xiu Juan Zhang and Chun Xiao Wang of Sun Yat-Sen University in 66 enterprises in Guangdong province show that interpersonal justice is one of the most important factor that affect our employees trust in managers in the three types of organizational justice.
The author thinks that compared with European and United States, employees in our country pay more attention to how managers treat them. Thus, the interpersonal justice may have a bigger impact on our country employees’ trust awareness. In addition, employees' salary in our country is lower, they are more likely to form their trust awareness based on the results justice. As a result, the author thinks that three kinds of organizational justice will affect employees’ sense of trust to managers. According to the above argument, the author assumes that:

*H10: three types of organizational justice have a significant positive influence on employees’ trust awareness.*

**Measurement Scale**

In this study, all variables adopt seven-point Likert-scale.

*Manager’s Impression management behavior* According to American scholars Wayne and Li Deng, and assistant professor of the university of southern California Xinrong’s essay about impression management behavior, as well as PearlKrakow’s essay about transformational leadership behavior, the author designed the impression management behavior scale focused on managers, and from three aspects such as led by oneself, takes care of employees and display leadership to measure manager’s impression management behavior.

*Organizational justice* (1) Results justice. The author uses the scale developed by American scholars Price and Mill, from five aspects such as salary, promotion, rewards and punishments, bonuses and performance evaluations to measure results justice perceived by employees. (2) Procedure justice. The author made appropriate modification based on American scholar Moorman’s scale and measure employees’ view on the procedure justice from five aspects such as whether managers collect comprehensive and accurate information in the management decision-making process, whether willing to listen to the opinions of the staff, whether willing to take the advice of the staff, whether always according to the procedures prescribed to make enterprise management decision, and whether the decision-making procedure is appropriate. (3) Interpersonal justice. The author simplify the American scholar Moorman’s scale and measure the interpersonal justice from five aspects such as managers concerned about the staff, polited to the stuff, honest, put oneself in stuffs’ position and explained to employees the management decision patiently.

*Trust awareness* The author selected five measurement items from the trust awareness scale made by the United States scholars Nairn and Maclovia, and measure the employees’ overall trust awareness from five aspects such as “employees believe that managers can do a good job”, “managers are honest to employees”, “managers have very good faith”, “employees honestly willing to report their own situation to mangers”, “managers believe in manager’s work ability”.

*Job satisfaction* The author use the scale designed by American scholar Smith measuring employees’ satisfaction with managers, colleagues, salary, work place and jobs.

**Data Quality and Structural Equation Model Analysis**

In January-June, 2014, the author disturbed 1500 questionnaires in nine companies in Guangzhou, and recycled 1232 questionnaires. The recovery rate is 82.13%. In this study, the author uses LISREL 8.52 software to analyze metering model and structural equation model. According to the practice of many scholars at home and abroad, the author makes the measurement project of each concept split into two, and makes it as the measurement indicators of the concept. The author uses SPSS 12.0 software to calculate the internal consistency coefficient of each levels of measurement and sub-scales. In this study, each levels of measurement’s internal consistency coefficient are between 0.86 and 0.95, shows that each levels measurement scale is reliable. Each sub-scales’ internal consistency coefficient is greater than 0.6, shows that each levels of measurement’s sub-scale is reliable.
The author takes the correlation coefficient matrix as the input matrix and uses the maximum likelihood estimation program of LISREL software to analysis structural equation model. Index such as NFI, NNFI, CFI, IFI, GFI, AGFI, RFI, RMR and RMSEA show that model and data fit well. The model’s estimated value of Standardized coefficients are shown in Table 1. The conceptual model are shown in Figure 2.

**Research Conclusion and Discussion**

**The Relationships between Three Types of Organizational Justice**

The data analysis results show that among the three types of organizational justice perceived by employees, procedure justice affect interpersonal justice and results justice, interpersonal justice affect results justice, which support American scholars Bass and Mogget, and Canadian scholar Pinder’s point of view basically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and indicators</th>
<th>coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized estimates</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>Variables and indicators</th>
<th>coefficient</th>
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<th>C.R</th>
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* mean significantly under 0.05 significant level, the other means significantly under 0.01 significant level

**Managers’ Impression Management Has an Impact on Organizational Justice Perceived by Employees**

SEM analysis results show that managers’ lead by example behavior affect procedure justice perceived by employees, managers concerned about the staff and show leadership skills will affect employees’ perception of three kinds of fairness. Managers lead by example and set an example for employees, staff s are more likely to believe that they will adhere to the consistency, unbiasedness, accuracy and error correction, representative, morality and other procedure justice principle according to society's moral standards to make management decision, and more likely to think that their management decision is fair.

Enterprise management scholars at home and abroad generally believe that manager’s behavior of concerned about the staff can improve interpersonal justice perceived by employees. In this study, the author found that managers concerned about the staff, not only can improve interpersonal justice perceived by the employees, but also can improve the employees’ perception of results justice. The author thinks that the manager who concerned about the staff will not only respect the staff's intelligence and emotion, and also will respect employees' rights, improve employees' financial incentives. Therefore, managers concerned about the staff not only can improve employees' perception of interpersonal justice, but also can improve employees' perception of results justice. Managers’ behavior of display leadership sills will not only affect employees’ perception of procedure justice and interpersonal justice, but also will affect employees’ perception of results justice.
justice. The work of human resource management in enterprise may affect employees’ perception of fairness, job satisfaction, trust awareness and sense of belonging to the enterprise. The better managers complete the human resource management work, employees are more tend to think that managers will adopt a fair process to make human resource management decisions, respect employees’ right to know, and explain their decision-making to employees.

Managers’ Impression Management Behavior Has an Impact on Employees’ Trust Awareness and Satisfaction

Structural equation model analysis results show that manager’s behavior of show leadership skills has a significant positive impact on employees’ trust awareness and satisfaction. At present, the competition between the enterprises in Guangzhou is very fierce. Manager’s behavior of display leadership skills is a very important factor which decided enterprise’s competitiveness and economic benefits. If managers leave employees the impression that they qualified for the work, employees are more likely to think that the enterprise will gain more economic benefits in the future, and also more likely to trust managers, satisfied with their jobs.

Limitations of the Study

Though the author proposes some innovative academic point of view, the study also have the following limitations:

1. In order to save time and money, the author using cross-sectional survey method instead of longitudinal research method to design the research. Therefore, the author can not make a completely positive conclusion on the causal relationship of each latent variables in the conceptual model.

2. In this study, the author measure the managers’ impression management behavior from three aspects, such as manager’s "set oneself an example to others", "care for employees" and "display leadership skills", without the behavior of manager’s "threat", "please" and "help". The author believes that "threat", "help" and "please" behavior are not the managers’ main impression management behavior in China. But this does not mean that enterprise managers of our country will not take these impression management measures. To make an overall judgment on the effect of impression management measures on employee’s attitude and behavior, enterprise management scholars in our country should make a comprehensive measurement of manager’s all kinds of impression management behavior in the future research. In addition, Chinese theoretical workers on enterprise management should also discuss the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign enterprise managers’ impression management strategies.

References


