

Review of Research on Paradoxical Leadership

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Abstract

By combing the existing literature, this paper first explains the source of paradoxical leadership, that is, the theory of paradox, further describes the conceptual connotation of paradoxical leadership, and identifies the difference between it and Ambidextrous leadership. The research results of paradoxical leadership are summarized from four aspects: structural dimension, measuring tool, influencing factor and influencing effect. The results show that the existing literature mainly studies the impact of paradoxical leadership on the external environment of organizations. In the future, paradoxical leadership should consolidate the mechanism of action to solve organizational problems, and even carry out more in-depth studies by using cross-hierarchy complex influence effect.

Keywords

Paradoxical leadership, Paradoxes, Structural dimension, Environment.

1. Introduction

As the external environment of an organization becomes more dynamic and complex, the internal environment of the organization becomes more and more complex and changeable. In order to meet the needs of organizational structure and the different personal needs of employees, leaders will face continuous problems and challenges. Therefore, managers should deal with these contradictions by satisfying both the needs of structure and employees. However, situational or leadership contingency theory emphasizes an "either/or" strategy. They emphasize static matching of leadership behaviors under specific conditions to achieve results. But research suggests that making choices in a flexible and paradoxical corporate environment is "a sin". Therefore, a single type of leadership may improve short-term performance at present, but if long-term effectiveness and motivation are to be maintained, leaders must simultaneously accept and coordinate contradictions [1].

Zhang et al. (2015) proposed the concept of "Paradoxical Leadership" based on the Oriental yin-yang philosophy and the theory of paradox, and believed that this new dynamic Leadership style is a series of Leadership behaviors that are competitive but interrelated and can meet the demands of competitive work over time. It can effectively respond to the conflicting demands of the organizations mentioned in the above examples, show the characteristics of diversified behaviors, arouse the possibility of employees to suppress silent behaviors, and motivate, guide and coordinate employees from different sides [2]. Paradox at the same time, previous studies have found that leadership, not only can greatly increase the staff's sense of meaning. Moreover, it also has significant influence on individual or team innovation [3], individual dual behavior for exploration and utilization, voice behavior and other extra-role behaviors.

2. Eastern Philosophy and Approaches to Paradoxes

According to the theory of paradox and the philosophy of Yin and Yang, although the binary opposites of paradoxes seem to oppose, negate and separate from each other, they are actually

interdependent, complementary and constitute a harmonious whole. Duality is interdependently connected in a larger system [4]. Because of the complexity of modern organization, diversity and dynamic characteristics such as more and more apparent, cause the traditional western management theory of "either/or" (either/or) thinking at risk of excessive simplify management practices and requirements, related research and practice is an urgent need to a more comprehensive and the guidance of system theory thought. In this context, the paradox theory in management research emerges as The Times require, which can guide researchers to go beyond the oversimplification and polarization, fully realize the complexity, diversity and fuzziness of organizational life, and provide appropriate countermeasures for their research.

This gives us a way to understand leadership and to look at its development in a way that acknowledges and exploits paradoxes. This is not only timely, but also necessary, because tensions from competitive demands tend to trigger strong, defensive reactions among organizational leaders, which can lead to potentially harmful reactions. Leaders who accept conflict and seek to support it can cultivate creative and beneficial alternatives [5]. Therefore, the organization should "strive to move tension and anxiety in this direction, to find insightful inner connections."

3. Concept and Dimension of Paradoxical Leadership

Marc Lavine (2014) established a competing values framework (CVF), four quadrant, from the perspective of paradox was used to study the competing values framework as a means to develop leadership skills, think paradox led (paradoxical leadership, PL) is the paradox theory to join the leadership style theory development and effective combination of a new type of leadership theory.

Zhang et al. (2015) base their theories on eastern thinking to understand the nature of paradoxes and explore leaders' behavioral efforts to work through the organizational paradoxes they may face -- that is, the power to resolve conflicts simultaneously and over time. Correspondingly, the concept of "Paradox Leadership" is put forward from empirical research, which is considered as a kind of Leadership behavior that seems to compete with each other but is also interrelated, and meets the demands of competitive work over time. In essence, paradoxical leadership is a dynamic and collaborative approach to organizational management. In order to operate and develop an organization more effectively, leaders may use paradoxical behaviors to deal with organizational paradoxes.

Kauppila and Tempelaar (2016) consider paradoxical leadership as a leadership style that juxtapose leadership behavior that seeks to cultivate followers' exploratory behavior with leadership behavior that seeks to cultivate followers' exploitative behavior [6].

However, there are still some differences between paradoxical leadership and Ambidextrous leader (AL) proposed by Rosing et AL. (2011). First of all, the theoretical basis is different. Dual leadership is based on contingency theory, emphasizing that leaders need managers to make a choice and balance between competing goals, while paradoxical leadership is based on the paradox theory of the development of yin-yang theory [7]. Integrate the two sides of the contradiction into a cooperative body. Second, different in nature, AL provides a normative perspective on how an organization operates. The idea is that leaders manage the duality of competition more subtly by focusing on both sides of the competitive tension in a balanced rather than differentiated way. In this process, it needs to accept inconsistencies by maintaining multiple and often conflicting strategic needs. Third, the mechanism of action is different, which indicates that the key leadership quality of dual leadership is "the ability of senior management to tolerate and resolve contradictory relationships caused by different camps".

4. Antecedents and Outcome Variables of Paradoxical Leadership

Zhang et al. (2015) believe that the factors influencing paradoxical leadership include the leaders' ability to integrate their thinking on complex and contradictory things, the uncertainty and complexity of the big picture and the environment, as well as the flexible organic organization that is more likely to produce paradoxical leadership and give full play to it. Other factors such as leaders' cultural values, learning orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and external influences such as company environment and industry type have been proposed but not proven. At the same time, Chinese scholars Liu (2015) include job complexity as a mental process, including problem solving [8], judgment, and using technical knowledge, and the situation in China has been the head of an enterprise was validated by empirical study job complexity is higher, the paradox of leadership, the leadership effectiveness.

Second, at the individual level, Zhang et al. (2015) believe that paradoxical leaders can expand their overall understanding of work needs and identify new work needs and opportunities through role models to cope with the changing environment. At the same time, the paradox of leadership style can enhance the relationship between employee identity, improve the performance of their work in the act of some characters [9], such as innovation, there are also studies confirm paradox led the self-efficacy can fully stimulate the staff's innovation, and promote and arouse the creativity of employees.

Third, at the team level, Luo et al. (2015) found that paradoxical leadership can play a positive role in team innovation, and knowledge creation and knowledge integration can play a completely intermediary role [10]. There are also literatures integrating social learning theory and pro-social motivation theory, and the results show that paradoxical leadership can effectively stimulate team vitality by applying contradiction and integrated thinking, thus having an important impact on team innovation ability.

5. Review of Existing Research on Paradoxical Leadership

Scholars have carried out many beneficial discussions on the effectiveness of paradoxical leadership, which has promoted the development of paradoxical leadership theory to some extent. However, the research on the action mechanism and boundary conditions of paradoxical leadership behavior is still in its infancy, and there is still a lack of action mechanism on the environment of paradoxical leadership and the solution of organizational problems, and even the use of cross-hierarchy complex effect to carry out more in-depth research.

5.1. The Influence of Paradoxical Leadership on Employees' Negative Behaviors at the Micro Level

Paradoxical challenges at the micro level, especially in people management, receive less attention. For example, organizations expect managers to depersonalize subordinates so that they behave consistently, while subordinates expect managers to treat them as unique individuals. At the same time, existing studies at the micro level are more to explore the impact of paradoxical leadership on positive employee behaviors, such as innovation behavior, initiative behavior, dual behavior, etc. However, due to the influence of conflicts within organizations and among employees, or the influence of some incoordination and low motivation, negative behaviors of employees in China's organizational context are still frequent, which is an urgent problem that hinders the development of a good organization. What is the impact of paradoxical leadership on these behaviors? What are the boundary conditions that affect this? All the above problems need further study.

5.2. Further Strengthen the Research on Paradoxical Leadership Environment

Zhang et al. (2015) believe that paradoxical leadership can play a more effective role in an active organic organization. However, current studies at home and abroad focus on the various roles that paradoxical leadership can play in an enterprise in order to solve the contradictions caused by the external competitive environment of the enterprise. Paradoxical problems also exist in enterprises. It is still important to focus the problems on the factors that influence the development of organizations, and to examine the applicability of paradoxical leadership and theoretical exploration of previous studies.

5.3. To Strengthen the Research on the Interaction of Individual Characteristics and Situational Factors in the Paradoxical Leadership Mechanism

In an increasingly interdependent, knowledge-based world, leadership needs to consider and deal with complexity. At present, Chinese and foreign studies mainly focus on the influence of paradoxical leadership on the external complexity and dynamic characteristics of organizations in flexible enterprises. The effectiveness of paradoxical leadership due to the role of individual factors and environment remains to be studied.

5.4. Further Explore the Theoretical Basis of Paradoxical Leadership Mechanism

In the past, studies on the outcome variables were made from the common social exchange theory, social cognition theory, the paradox theory under the philosophy of yin-yang, information processing theory and different research perspectives, and some inconsistent results were also obtained. Some scholars call for expanding the theoretical perspective of the study of paradoxical leadership. Paradoxical leadership is an important organizational resource, and studying it from the perspective of resource-related theories may be a direction that can be expanded.

Leaders are seen as a source of help. They help us get through difficult times, make new discoveries, and project a vision for the future. In today's rapidly changing world, an understanding of good leadership is more important than ever. With the increasing complexity of the environment, the discomfort of the traditional leadership model gradually emerges. Whether paradoxical leadership can effectively deal with the negative impact of complex environment has become a hot issue in the research of leadership theory and organizational behavior. Previous studies have opened up a new perspective for the study and practice of paradoxical leadership theory, but more studies are needed to enrich and verify this theory.

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