

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHIANESE LEADERSHIP STYLE, FOLLOWER BEHAVIOR, AND LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

In the field of organizational behavior research, research on leadership topics has always occupied an important position. The factors that affect leadership effectiveness (also known as leadership effectiveness) and how to improve leadership effectiveness have not only been highly sought after by researchers, but these two issues are also enduring topics in management practice. Among the many antecedent variables that affect leadership effectiveness, the leader's leadership style has also been attracting the attention of researchers. Compared to focusing on the "talent" of leaders, the theory of authentic leadership focuses more on the "virtue" of leaders, which coincides with the traditional Chinese culture's concept of "putting virtue first". As an emerging leadership theory originating from the Western cultural background, the exploration of authentic leadership in China began in 2009, and the research is still in its early stages. There are relatively few theoretical and empirical research results related to authentic leadership, and there is not much exploration of its effectiveness and mechanism of action.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Following Behavior, Leadership Identification, Leadership Identity, Leadership Identification, Leadership Effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The power distance in Chinese corporate organizations is generally high, and employees largely assume that there is a hierarchical difference between leaders, which provides the possibility for the existence of abusive leadership. Leadership is the social influence process in which leaders achieve group goals by acquiring and mobilizing the power of employees, and influence is the most essential characteristic of leadership. It can be seen that the role of a leader largely depends on whether the leader accepts their leadership or influence, and it is particularly necessary and important to pay attention to the follower behavior of employees towards the leader. Unlike the industrial society, with the gradual substitution of knowledge and information economy for the industrial economy, enterprise organizations have undergone tremendous changes. For example, the emergence of a large number of knowledge-based employees has gradually rendered command and control leadership styles ineffective. Employees even have more information than their leaders, and they no longer passively and mechanically accept the command and leadership of their superiors. Their weight in the success or failure of the organization continues to rise. However, in practical management practice, the role of leadership is magnified, and the role of ordinary employees is largely overlooked. The excessive exaggeration of leadership's role overlooks the objective fact that "water can carry boats, but it can also capsize them." Every success and achievement achieved by an enterprise organization is similar to building a tall building. The construction of a tall building not only

requires leaders to carefully design the entire structure, but also requires the advice of every employee, building bricks and tiles one by one, the work details of every "little person" also determine the success or failure of enterprise development. The traditional view that leadership determines the success or failure of an organization has been questioned.

2. LITERATURE EXPLORATION

The Connotation and Measurement of Authentic Leadership. The connotation of authentic leadership the concept of Authentic Leadership is a positive leadership approach proposed by Luthans and Avolio in 2003. Authentic leadership is seen as the "root" concept of positive leadership. At this point, the field of organizational behavior research has begun to explore various aspects of authentic leadership, including conceptual description, connotation definition, structural measurement, theoretical research, and empirical research. Measurement of Authentic Leadership: Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang proposed in an article published in the Leadership Quarterly in 2005 that authentic leadership includes four core dimensions: self-awareness, unbiased information processing, authentic behavior, and authentic relationship orientation. From the perspective of the relationship with oneself, these four dimensions can be further divided into two categories: self-awareness and loyalty to oneself. The dimension of self-awareness belongs to the category of leaders recognizing themselves, while the category of leaders being loyal to themselves includes the other three dimensions, namely unbiased processing, authentic behavior, and authentic relationship orientation. The Influence Mechanism of Authentic Leadership

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Population and Sample

The basic rule based on statistical sample size calculation is $N > k + 1$, which means that the minimum sample size is greater than the number of survey questionnaires, which meets the relevant requirements. Based on the research companies selected by the researchers themselves, 827 respondents were found to meet the research criteria for this study. Therefore, this paper takes 827 employees in Chinese Mainland as specific research objects to carry out analysis and research. Analysis Software: During the research process, this article used SPSS 26.0 software to analyze and process the data obtained from the survey questionnaire in detail, and thus completed the empirical research.

3.2 Overview of Research Methods

Firstly, design a survey questionnaire. Based on the research purpose and combined with the research model, appropriate variable measurement tools were selected and determined. As the research variables selected in this study have been used by many authoritative studies in China, the reliability and validity of the measurement scales have been confirmed. Therefore, the measurement scales used in these authoritative studies will be directly adopted, and the description of the items will be adjusted according to the needs of this study.

3.3 Data Collection

This study used questionnaire survey method to obtain research data, and convenient sampling method was used. The distribution and collection of formal questionnaires were concentrated from June 2 to September 23, 2023, lasting nearly 3 months. In order to ensure the universality of the research, the sample mainly comes from more than ten large enterprises and institutions, including Datong Coal Mine Group Co., Ltd., in-service MBA students from Capital University of Economics and Trade, Wuyi College, Tangshan Agricultural and Commercial Bank, China Minsheng Bank, Tianjin Nuoxin Financial Group, and Capital Airport, including coal, communication, petroleum, finance, and education industries.

4. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The data analysis tools used in this study mainly include Wenjuanxing, SPSS 26.0, Amos 24.0 software and the basic analysis functions of SmartPLS_4.1. The data processing software was used to analyze the data, including quantitative research: descriptive statistical analysis, measurement modeling analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, and the results of qualitative research.

In quantitative research, there are three research objectives:

Objective 1:

To reveal the impact of authentic leadership, abusive leadership on leadership identification, employee's followership behavior and the driving factors behind it.

Objective 2:

To analyze the effect of leadership identification, employees' followership on leadership effectiveness and the driving factors behind it.

Objective 3:

To examine the impact of leadership style on leadership identification, employee's followership behavior, and how all three factors work together to increase the level of leadership effectiveness.

Encoding of variables

To facilitate subsequent writing, all variables, dimensions, measurement codes and measurement items were coded in this chapter.

4.1 Demographic information

This study aims to analyze the impact of leadership style on leadership effectiveness based on a dataset covering 714 general employees, junior managers, middle managers, and senior managers in Chinese companies, covering basic demographic information on gender, age, educational background, and nature of the business.

Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of participants

Basic Information		Quantities	Percentage (%)
Genders	male	449	62.82%
	female	265	37.18%
Age	22-25 years	19	2.56%
	26-35 years	128	17.95%
	36-45 years	284	39.74%
	46-55 years	265	37.18%
	56+	18	2.57%
Educational background	undergraduate or below	37	5.13%
	undergraduate (adjective)	366	51.28%
	bachelor's degree	229	32.05%
	PhD and above	82	11.54%
Nature of business	government owned	119	16.66%
	foreign capital	73	10.26%
	private enterprise	357	50%
	else	165	23.08%
Job level	ordinary employee	146	20.51%
	primary Manager	156	21.79%
	middle manager	211	29.49%
	senior management	201	28.21%

Of the 714 valid questionnaires, in terms of gender, males accounted for about 62.82%, while females accounted for about 37.18%, showing that males accounted for a larger proportion of the sample. The age distribution, on the other hand, is diversified, ranging from young people aged 22-25 to senior people aged 56 or above, with those aged 36-45 accounting for the highest proportion at 39.74%. In terms of educational background, those with bachelor's degree or above accounted for the majority, with 51.28% of them having bachelor's degree and 32.05% having master's degree, while those with doctoral degree or above accounted for 11.54%, which reflected that the sample group generally had a high level of education.

In terms of the nature of enterprises, private enterprises are the main component of the sample with a proportion of 50%, showing the important role of private enterprises in China's economic development. In addition, state-owned enterprises, foreign-funded enterprises and other types of enterprises also occupy a certain proportion, with 16.66%, 10.26% and 23.08% respectively. In terms of position level, middle managers are the largest group in the sample with 29.49%, followed by top managers and grassroots managers with 28.21% and 21.79%, respectively, while the proportion of ordinary employees is 20.51%.

4.2 Descriptive statistics of sample data

Descriptive statistical analysis focuses on screening, analyzing and summarizing a large amount of data obtained after a survey, and it summarizes the concentration trend and the degree of dispersion of these data. Descriptive analysis is carried out using SPSS statistical software to generate relevant descriptive statistics, and the analyzed data include maximum,

minimum, mean and standard deviation, and these descriptive statistics comprehensively analyze the characteristics of variables.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of authentic leadership

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AL1	714	1	7	6.05	1.234
AL2	714	1	7	5.86	1.256
AL3	714	1	7	5.25	1.806
AL4	714	1	7	5.47	1.431
AL5	714	2	7	5.81	1.194
AL6	714	1	7	5.59	1.576
AL7	714	1	7	5.77	1.404
AL8	714	1	7	5.91	1.418
AL9	714	2	7	5.61	1.403
AL10	714	2	7	5.82	1.249
AL11	714	1	7	5.94	1.231
AL12	714	2	7	6.11	1
AL13	714	1	7	5.79	1.318
AL14	714	1	7	5.18	1.709

The sample size was 714, covering multiple Authentic Leadership items, each of which was rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least agreeable and 7 being the most agreeable. These items included multiple aspects of authentic leadership, ranging from AL1 to AL14, which represent different leadership behavioral characteristics.

As can be seen from the data, the mean values of the items ranged from 5.18 to 6.11, showing that most of the items had a mean value close to or higher than 5.5, which could mean that the respondents generally had a more positive attitude towards these leadership behaviors. AL12 had the highest mean value of 6.11 with a standard deviation of 1.00, which indicates that the respondents agreed with this question item and were relatively unanimous in their opinions. Whereas, AL14 had the lowest mean value of 5.18 with a standard deviation of 1.709, which may reflect that there is a large difference in the respondents' views on this leadership behavior.

4.3 Analysis of measurement models

The relationship between explicit and latent variables can be expressed by measurement modeling, which consists mainly of reliability and validity tests.

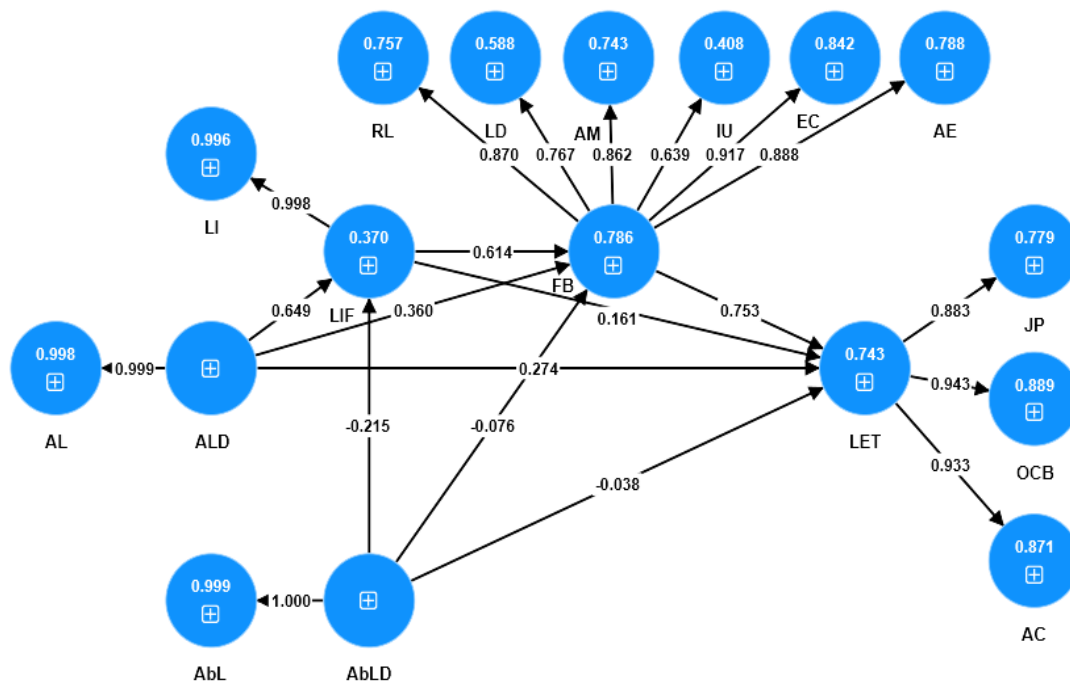
Table 4.17: HTMT table

	ALD	AbLD	FB	LET	LIF
ALD					
AbLD	0.347				
FB	0.739	0.206			
LET	0.751	0.287	0.831		
LIF	0.574	0.009	0.822	0.615	

Table 4.17 shows that all HTMT values are below 0.85, supporting the discriminant validity of the construct.

4.4 Structural Model Evaluation

The model of this study involves several variables, and the model path analysis tests the hypothesis of causal relationship between latent variables, and the path coefficients between latent variables represent the positive and negative relationship between latent variables and the intensity of influence.



4.5 Specific indirect effects analysis

Table 4.1: Specific indirect effects table

	Original sample (O)	2.5%	97.5%	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
ALD -> LIF -> FB -> LET	0.300	0.258	0.346	13.573	0.000
AbLD -> LIF -> FB -> LET	0.100	-0.074	-0.128	7.240	0.000

The results of the specific indirect effects analyses revealed that leadership style not only directly affects leadership effectiveness, but also indirectly affects leadership effectiveness by influencing leadership buy-in and employee followership behaviors. The results of these indirect effects analyses support the important role of leadership style in influencing leadership effectiveness and emphasize the importance of these mediating variables.

4.6 Analysis of total indirect effects and total effects

Table 4.2: Total indirect effects analysis table

	Original sample (O)	STDEV	T	P	Original sample (O)
ALD -> LET	0.466	0.427	0.507	22.531	0.000
AbLD -> LET	0.008	-0.020	-0.039	0.527	0.019

The effect of abusive leadership on leadership effectiveness is statistically significant although the value is small. The path coefficient is -0.030, t-value is 1.409, p-value is 0.016, and confidence interval is [-0.073, -0.010]. Although the effect is small, this negative effect is significant, indicating that abusive leaders reduce leadership effectiveness.

4.7 Qualitative research

Interview outline

Respondents were asked to comment on the following questions:

First question: what are the effects of authentic leadership, abusive leadership on leadership identification, employee followership behavior and the drivers behind them?

Second question: what are the effects of leadership identification, employee's following behavior on leadership effectiveness and the drivers behind them?

Third question: what is the effect of leadership style on leadership identification, employee followership behavior, and how do these three factors work together to increase the level of leadership effectiveness?

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study was conducted with 714 ordinary employees, junior managers, middle managers, and senior managers in Chinese companies, aiming to analyze the effects of leadership styles (authentic leadership, abusive leadership) on leadership effectiveness, with the mediating factors being leadership identification and employee followership behaviors. Based on quantitative and qualitative research, this study achieved some results:

- 1: Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Leadership Identification.
- 2: Abusive Leadership has a significant negative effect on Leadership Identification.
- 3: Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Followership Behavior.
- 4: Abusive Leadership has a significant negative effect on Followership Behavior.
- 5: Leadership Identification has a significant positive effect on employee Following Behavior.
- 6: There is a significant positive effect of employee Followership Behavior on Leadership Effectiveness.
- 7: Leadership Identification has a significant positive effect on Leadership Effectiveness.

8: Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on Leadership Effectiveness

9: Abusive Leadership has a significant negative effect on Leadership Effectiveness.

This study attempted to explore the models of Authentic Leadership => Leadership Identity => Employee Followership Behavior => Leadership Effectiveness and Abusive Leadership => Leadership Identity => Employee Followership Behavior => Leadership Effectiveness and found, based on both quantitative and qualitative research, that leadership styles not only directly affect leadership effectiveness, but also indirectly, through influencing leadership identity and employee followership behavior, affect leadership effectiveness. The results of these indirect effects analyses support the important role of leadership style in influencing leadership effectiveness and emphasize the importance of these mediating variables.

The results of the study show that:

Objective 1: To reveal the effects of authentic and abusive leadership on leadership identification and employees' following behavior and the driving factors behind them. This study reveals the effects of authentic and abusive leadership on leadership identification and employees' followership behavior and the driving factors behind them.

Objective 2: To analyze the impact of leadership buy-in, employee followership on leadership effectiveness and the drivers behind it.

Objective 3: To examine the impact of leadership style on leadership buy-in, employee followership, and how the three factors work together to increase levels of leadership effectiveness.

5.2 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the positive effect of authentic leadership on leadership effectiveness is significant and robust, while the negative effect of abusive leadership on leadership effectiveness is also statistically significant, although the value is smaller. The reasons for the different effects of these two leadership styles on leadership effectiveness and other aspects that can be discussed will be explored separately below.

5.2.1 The Positive Effects of Authentic Leadership on Leadership Effectiveness

5.2.2 Negative Effects of Abusive Leadership on Leadership Effectiveness

5.2.3 Other directions for discussion

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and in-depth discussion of the effects of authentic and abusive leadership on leadership effectiveness in Chinese companies, this study proposes the following recommendations, which are intended to help companies optimize their leadership styles, enhance their leadership effectiveness, improve their organizational cultures, and increase their employees' job satisfaction and loyalty.

- 5.3.1 Introducing and promoting an authentic leadership style
- 5.3.2 Strengthening the identification and management of abusive leaders
- 5.3.3 Fostering leadership buy-in and promoting employee followership behaviors
- 5.3.4 Optimizing corporate culture and creating a positive working atmosphere
- 5.3.5 Monitoring and improving leadership effectiveness over time

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