



Exploring the Mechanism of the Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Employees' Career Resilience

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Abstract

Career resilience has received a lot of attention from academics as it helps employees to better adapt to workplace stresses and challenges. Yet what factors influence the shaping of individual employees' career resilience? While there are a variety of different research findings, few studies have examined the antecedents of career resilience from an inclusive leadership perspective. Based on resource conservation theory and social cognitive theory, a questionnaire was used to explore the mechanism of inclusive leadership's influence on employees' career resilience, and the model was also empirically tested using data from 394 questionnaires. The empirical results show that inclusive leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' career resilience; self-efficacy plays a part in mediating the relationship between inclusive leadership and career resilience. The findings of the study confirm the positive effect of inclusive leadership on shaping individual employees' career resilience and provide some theoretical guidance and implications for subsequent research.

Keywords

Career Resilience, Inclusive Leadership, Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

As the pace of life accelerates, chronic overload and rising career stress sap employees' enthusiasm for their work, leading to career difficulties and thus affecting the long-term development of the company. Although employees have different responsibilities and jobs, they all need to be able to cope with crises in the face of stress and hardship, so career resilience has become a key concern. In this context, the question of how to improve employees' career resilience and achieve a win-win situation for both employees and the company has become an urgent issue for organizations.

Career resilience was first described in London's paper "A Theory of career Motivation" and is defined as "the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even discouraging or disruptive ones" (London & Neo, 1997). Some employees show great adaptability in the face of changing circumstances, learning and improving through adversity, while others shy away from changing circumstances. The reason for this difference is precisely the difference in employees' career resilience. As the leader who has the closest contact with employees in an organization, his or her leadership style has a direct impact on employees' psychology and motivation, which in turn affects their work attitudes and behaviour. However, most previous research has focused on the impact of inclusive leadership on individual and organizational innovation performance, and little attention has been paid to its impact on employees' psychological states. So, can inclusive leadership enhance employees' career resilience? What is the mechanism of its

intrinsic effect? Through literature reading, based on resource conservation theory and social cognitive disengagement theory, an attempt is made to explore the direct impact of inclusive leadership as an antecedent variable on career resilience; at the same time, self-efficacy is used as a mediating variable to explore the intrinsic path of relationship between inclusive leadership and career resilience. This paper fills in the gaps of previous research, enriches the research content of career resilience by linking to practical and theoretical model construction, and provides some theoretical basis for understanding the impact of inclusive leadership on employees' career resilience in real-life situations.

2. Literature review and theoretical hypothesis

2.1 Inclusive leadership and career resilience

Nembhard and Edmondson were the first to introduce the concept of inclusive leadership in the field of organizational management, stating that inclusive leadership connotes the act of inviting employees to participate in work and appreciating their contributions, emphasising the importance of valuing and listening to employees' opinions (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

The reason for employees' low performance and low emotions at work is that they are not getting enough resources in their current jobs. Resource conservation theory states that individual resources are limited and when resources are threatened, individuals will show emotional exhaustion and in order to cope with long-term development, individuals need to actively adjust their mindset and take practical action to acquire and store resources. Inclusive leadership, as a leadership style that supports and recognises employees and communicates with them as equals, has a positive impact on employees' access to resources (Yu Zhou et al., 2018; Qun Li et al., 2021). Nembhard and Edmondson found that employees' psychological pleasure is enhanced when they perceive appreciation and recognition from their leaders. Carmeli's research suggests that the openness, accessibility and effectiveness of inclusive leadership can also have a positive impact on employees' psychology. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed. Based on the above analysis, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Inclusive leadership has a positive impact on employees' career resilience.

2.2 The mediating role of self-efficacy

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, as the core variable that motivates positive motivation and behaviour, stimulates an individual's intrinsic potential. Schwarzer et al. state that general self-efficacy refers to an individual's self-belief in his or her overall ability to cope with complex and changing environments or uncertain tasks (Schwarzer et al., 1997).

Inclusive leaders respect the diversity of their employees with generosity and kindness, tolerate mistakes in their work, encourage equal communication between superiors and subordinates, and create a harmonious and relaxed working environment for their employees, thus significantly enhancing their psychological capital. Self-efficacy, as part of psychological capital, is also positively influenced by an inclusive leader. Specifically, an inclusive leader treats all employees in the organisation fairly and focuses on the fair distribution of benefits to enhance employees' own sense of value. When employees encounter difficulties, they are able to communicate in a timely manner and provide advice and available resources, so that they can respond positively and calmly to problems, creating a sense of achievement and reducing the insecurity that comes with the unknown.

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a product of social cognition that increases motivation within the individual and plays an important role in the individual's self-regulation process. Gist states that a high level of self-efficacy implies a positive self-perception, which leads to an optimistic attitude towards work, reduces anxiety caused by the unknown and stress, and increases motivation to cope with negative energy (Gist, 1987). Furthermore, employees with a high level of self-efficacy are also more rational in dealing with work stress. After setting goals, employees with high levels of self-efficacy are confident and unsure of their perseverance, and are not easily disturbed by difficulties. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee career resilience.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research tools

Career resilience: using the Psychological Capital Scale developed by Luthans et al. and translated by Chao-Ping

Li (Luthans et al., 2007), with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.965.

Inclusive leadership: a scale developed by Hollander, which contains 16 items divided into three dimensions of support recognition, communication fairness and self disrespect, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.965.

Self-efficacy: 10 questions using a scale developed by Schwarzer et al. (2002) with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.982.

3.2 Sample selection and analysis methods

The data was collected online using an online approach and carried out in a snowball fashion, and 394 questionnaires were returned after screening out those that were not completed carefully 89.7%.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Reliability analysis

The alpha values for career resilience, inclusive leadership and self-efficacy were all greater than 0.7, indicating good reliability of the questionnaire.

Validation factor analysis was performed using AMOS 24.0 software. The results showed that the goodness of fit of each indicator of the model (RMSEA=0.045, $X^2/df=1.801$; TLI and CFI were both greater than 0.9) was higher than the other models, i.e. there was good discriminant validity between the variables.

4.2 Main and mediating effects tests

A validation analysis of the mediating role of self-efficacy between inclusive leadership and employee career resilience was conducted using hierarchical regression with SPSS 26.0.

After controlling for the variables of gender, age, marital status and years of service, inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to career resilience ($\beta=0.710$, $p<0.001$) and hypothesis H1 held.

Refer to Baron and Kenny's recommendations for testing mediating effects for data analysis. (1) Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to career resilience ($\beta=0.710$, $p<0.001$); (2) Inclusive leadership had a significant positive effect on employees' self-efficacy ($\beta=0.536$, $p<0.001$); (3) The results showed that when inclusive leadership and self-efficacy were added to the regression equation at the same time, self-efficacy had a significant positive effect on employees' career resilience ($\beta=0.372$, $p<0.001$), while the positive effect of inclusive leadership on employees' career resilience remained significant and decreased compared to not adding self-efficacy ($\beta=0.511$, $p<0.001$), indicating that self-efficacy plays a partially mediating role between inclusive leadership and employees' career resilience, and H2 was proved.

5. Conclusions and insights

Based on resource conservation theory and social cognitive theory, and using questionnaire data to empirically analyse the relationship between inclusive leadership, employee self-efficacy and employees' career resilience, the following findings were obtained: (1) Inclusive leadership can significantly enhance employees' career resilience, which indicates that different leadership styles can influence the psychological state of individuals. (2) Employees' self-efficacy mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and their career resilience, which indicates that inclusive leadership can enhance employees' self-confidence in the face of adversity and drive them to be more resilient and stress-resistant in the face of adversity.

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