Analysis of Moral Leadership and Prosocial Violation Behavior Based on Chain Intermediary Model

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Abstract: Based on the perspective of organizational scenarios, this paper explores the relationship between moral leadership and prosocial violations. It uses the structural equation model and bootstrap method. Empirical analysis was carried out on 320 valid samples to explore the relationship between moral leadership and the prosocial violations of the employees and their intermediary mechanisms. The results show that moral leadership not only directly affect the employee's prosocial violations, but also indirectly through the psychological security and the chain intermediary effect of the psychological contract. It studies and reveals the "black box" between moral leadership and prosocial violations, enriches the antecedent research of prosocial violations, and is instructive for the theoretical research and management practice of organizational governance.

1. Introduction

At present, the complexity and uncertainty of the organization's external environment have increased dramatically, resulting in inevitable time lag in the process of the organization's adjustment or change behavior to adapt to the changes in the environment, thus constraining the flexibility of employees and their rapid response ability. The original rules and regulations aimed at improving the efficiency of the organization are often counterproductive. In this situation, employees will also violate regulations in some cases based on the purpose of benefiting the organization rather than self-interest. Scholars in the field of organizational behavior study this phenomenon and put forward the concept of "pro-social rule breaking" (hereinafter referred to as psrb). Psrb refers to violations committed by employees to increase the well-being of the organization [1]. In the specific practice situation, psrb reflects that employees will face such a dilemma: on the one hand, organizational rules are consistent with organizational goals and need to be observed; on the other hand, violating organizational rules is beneficial to organizational well-being [2]. Psrb has a pro-social nature, so this behavior can often bring benefits to organizations, colleagues and so on, but it may cause damage to its own interests, so it has certain risks [3].

Through combing the past literatures, we find that most of the existing researches on psrb start from individual factors to explore the mechanism of psrb, such as risk preference, responsibility, core self-evaluation, etc. According to the theory of social information processing, the social environment in which employees live will give them a large amount of information, thus affecting their attitude changes and behavior implementation. The interpretation of this situation by employees will affect their psychological cognition and finally determine their behavior implementation [4]. As far as organizational situation is concerned, leadership should be the key pre-factor that affects employees' psrb behavior.

Virtuous leadership shows higher personal virtues of leadership through fairness and justice, caring for employees, integrity and responsibility, and setting an example for employees [5]. Under the background of Chinese society and culture, moral leadership is easy to gain the trust and approval of employees, which will affect their behavior choices [7]. Some studies have pointed out that most leadership behaviors directly affect employees' psychological perception, thus affecting employees' behaviors [8]. From the perspective of risk perception, psrb has obvious behavioral risk characteristics, and psychological security is an important condition affecting its occurrence [9].

Psrb behavior has altruistic characteristics at the same time. Employees often show psrb behavior according to practical requirements for the needs of caring for organizational well-being and fulfilling psychological contracts. However, at each stage of the formation of the employee's psychological contract, there are corresponding behavioral and cognitive factors that affect the psychological contract [10]. The psychological security that moral leadership influences employees to form should help to promote the formation and performance of employees' psychological contracts. On the basis of reducing the risk concerns about psrb behaviors, employees should be further motivated to make such behaviors more actively.

To sum up, this study integrates social information processing theory and psychological contract theory, and discusses the chain mediation mechanism of psychological security and psychological contract in moral leadership to promote employee psrb and the influence differences of different action paths. Paying attention to the influence mechanism of moral leadership on employees' psrb can supplement the gap between moral leadership and employees' psrb in theory and provide reference for organizations to control employees' psrb behavior in practice. The theoretical model of this study is shown in figure 1.

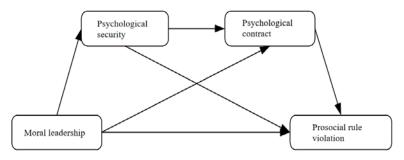


Fig.1 Theoretical Model

2. Research Assumptions and Theoretical Basis

2.1 Moral Leadership and Pro-Social Violations

Virtuous leadership is an important part of paternalistic leadership, which shows the personal virtues of higher supervisors, specifically, treating subordinates equally, setting an example in personal behavior and work, setting an example in behavior, and not abusing authority for personal gain [6]. Existing research has proved that moral leadership has a positive impact on employee's emotional commitment and engagement, and has the greatest explanatory power on employee's performance, attitude and behavior [11]. In the workplace, employees can obtain a large number of letters from leaders [12], so leadership behavior is an important variable to induce employees' psrb behavior. Virtuous leadership has the characteristics of setting an example by example, selflessness and altruism [13], which will convey to employees the information that the above behaviors are reasonable and accepted by the organization. Therefore, employees under virtue leadership are more willing to make extra efforts and show more altruistic behaviors in their work [14].

H1:moral leadership positively affects employees' psrb behavior.

2.2 The Intermediary Role of Psychological Security

Psychological security is an individual's perception of his or her surrounding interpersonal relationships, which reflects the degree to which individuals are willing to take risks in their working environment [16]. Existing research shows that leadership has a greater impact on employee psychological security [17]. Psrb is an employee's behavior that consciously violates organizational rules rather than accidentally, so it is a kind of self-determined behavior outside the role and has certain risks [18]. When employees have a strong sense of psychological security, they will produce a definite judgment on the current working environment, thus they are more inclined to think that other employees will tolerate their own risky behaviors, which may in turn increase their willingness to implement psrb. Based on the above analysis, this paper puts forward the following

research assumptions:

H2: psychological security plays an intermediary role in the relationship between moral leadership and employees' psrb behavior.

2.3 The Intermediary Role of Psychological Contract

Psychological contract is the employee's understanding of the obligations and responsibilities of both employers and employees [10], which is reflected in the employee's perception and commitment of the exchange relationship between internal and external personal contributions and organizational returns. Since the concepts of "organization", "enterprise" and "company" are relatively general, in the specific management practice situation, employees actually establish psychological contracts with their direct superiors [19]. According to the theory of social information processing, individuals tend to choose information with high credibility and significance for information processing to form their own attitudes and behavioral intentions [20]. That is, employees will interpret the supervisor's support as recognition of their work, thus they are more willing to fulfill their responsibilities to their superiors, increase their work enthusiasm and further follow the psychological contract. Based on the above analysis, this paper puts forward the following research assumptions:

H3:psychological contract plays an intermediary role in the relationship between moral leadership and prosocial rule violations.

2.4 The Chain Intermediary Function of Psychological Security and Psychological Contract

The exemplary role and interpersonal care demonstrated by moral leadership convey an important signal of the organization's support for employees. Psychological security is a perception of this signal. Employees under moral leadership will be less aware of the threat and hostility signals in the working environment. Psychological security is at a higher level. The belief that the behavior will affect personal image and career development will directly promote the formation of employee psychological contract [21]. Employees with high-quality psychological contracts are easy to perceive signals of high sense of identity with the organization, and will not care about personal gains and losses when implementing organizational behavior [22]. Therefore, psrb behavior may be implemented for the benefit of the organization. Based on the above analysis, this paper puts forward the following research assumptions:

H4: psychological security and psychological contract play a chain intermediary role in the relationship between moral leadership and employee psrb behavior.

3. Research Design

3.1 Data Collection

For the acquisition of relevant data of enterprise employees, it is mainly collected by issuing questionnaires. Considering the convenience of the data collection process and the originality of the obtained data, Beijing, Chengdu and Chongqing are selected as sample areas, and employees of 20 high-tech enterprises are selected as the survey objects. Questionnaires are mainly distributed through network platforms and personal social relationships. A preliminary survey was conducted in October 2018 and a large sample survey was conducted from November 2018 to January 2019. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed. After eliminating regular answers, incomplete data and less than 5 questionnaires from the same enterprise, 321 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 91.74%. See Table 1 for statistics of basic characteristics of samples.

Table 1 Sample Basic Characteristic Table

Statistical variable	Variable value	The number of	Proportion (%)		
Gender	Male	169	52.8		
	Female	152	47.2		
Education	Junior college	25	7.8		
	Undergraduate course	206	64.1		
Age	21-30 years old	249	77.5		
	31-40 years old	65	20.3		
	41 and above	7	2.2		
Enterprise nature	State - owned enterprise	110	34.4		
	Non-state-owned	211	65.6		
Position	enterprises General staff	211	65.6		
Position			17.2		
	First line managers	55			
	Middle manager	49	15.3		
	Top management	6	1.9		

3.2 Measuring Tool

The main variables of this study are moral leadership, psychological security, psychological contract and violation of pro-social rules. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement scale, this study adopts the scale widely used and mature at home and abroad for investigation and study. Likert's 5-point sequential scale was used to measure the scale, "1-5" means from "very inconsistent" to "very consistent".

- (1)Virtuous leadership: Select the Virtuous Leadership Scale [23] developed by Xu Yanni, Gu Qinxuan and Jiang Wan, and report the opinions of subordinates on their direct leaders.
- (2)Psychological security: The 3-item psychological security scale developed and used by Edmondson was selected. The employee's psychological security scale is filled in by the employee himself.
- (3)Psychological contract: 8-item psychological contract scale developed and used by Robinson was selected. The employee's psychological contract scale is filled in by the employee himself.
- (4)PSRB: 8-item PSRB measurement scale developed and used by Morrison[1]. The PSRB scale for employees shall be filled out by employees themselves.
- (5)Control variables: referring to previous studies on PSRB behavior by scholars, demographic variables and related work characteristics may have an impact on employees' cognition and behavior, so this study selects gender, age, education background, enterprise nature and position as control variables.

3.3 Data Analysis Results

3.3.1 Common Method Deviation Test

Although this study adopted strict procedural control measures on the survey objects and process during the questionnaire filling process, there is still a possibility of common method deviation because the questionnaire data are collected through employee reporting method. This study uses SPSS22.0 statistical software and principal component analysis method to make factor analysis on all valid questionnaire topics and separate the common factors that have not been rotated. The results show that six factors with characteristic roots greater than 1 are separated out, of which the first factor accounts for 31.88% of the total load of all factors, meeting the requirement of less than 40% critical value, indicating that the common method deviation in this study is within the acceptable range and can be further analyzed statistically.

3.3.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Before verifying the hypothesis, this study uses AMOS 21.0 statistical software to carry out confirmatory factor analysis on the research variables to test whether the research variables have good discrimination validity and whether the measurement model (i.e. moral leadership, psychological security, psychological contract and prosocial violations) has good fitting degree. The

analysis results are shown in Table 2. The fitting indexes of the four-factor model (χ 2/df=2.526, CFI=0.943, TLI=0.924, GFI=0.932, NFI=0.909, RMR=0.033, RMSEA=0.069) have reached a good fitting standard and are superior to other competitive models. It shows that the four variables in this study have good discrimination validity and can be tested by structural equation model in the next step.

Table 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ2	df	χ2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	NFI	RMR	RMSEA
Four	149.009	59	2.526	0.943	0.924	0.932	0.909	0.033	0.069
factors:ML;PS;PC;PSRB									
Three	198.185	62	3.197	0.913	0.891	0.909	0.880	0.039	0.083
factors:ML;PS;PC+PSRB									
Three	328.496	62	5.298	0.830	0.786	0.800	0.069	0.116	
factors:ML+PS;PC;PSRB					0.835				
Double	357.131	64	5.580	0.813	0.772	0.815	0.783	0.067	0.120
factor:ML+PS;PC+PSRB									
Double	414.455	64	6.476	0.776	0.727	0.788	0.748	0.065	0.131
factor:ML+PS+PC;PSRB									
Single	430.690	65	6.626	0.767	0.720	0.784	0.738	0.065	0.133
factor:ML+PS+PC+PSRB									

Note: ML is a moral leader. PS is a psychological sense of security; PC is a psychological contract; PSRB is a pro-social violation. "+"indicates factor consolidation

3.3.3 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient matrix of variables. The results showed that moral leadership had significant positive correlation with psychological security (r=0.441,p<0.01), psychological contract (r=0.427,p<0.01) and prosocial violation (r=0.584,p<0.01). At the same time, psychological security is positively correlated with psychological contract (r=0.590,p<0.01) and prosocial violation (r=0.425,p<0.01). In addition, psychological contract and prosocial violation (r=0.552,p<0.01) also showed positive correlation. The results of correlation analysis preliminarily illustrate the relationship between variables as assumed, and also provide the basis for further data analysis.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics And Correlation Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	value	deviation								
1 Gender	1.475	0.500	1							
2 Age	1.247	0.493	0.120*	1						
3 Education	2.220	0.567	0.133*	0.207**	1					
4 Enterprise	1.666	0.473	0.183*	0.073	0.012	1				
nature										
5 Position	1.523	0.815	0.075	0.353**	0.398**	0.004	1			
6 Moral	3.722	0.581	-	-0.026	0.065	-0.070	0.100	1		
leadership			0.294**							
7	3.537	0.611	-0.134*	-0.066	0.089	0.003	-0.002	0.441**	1	
Psychological										
security										
8	3.760	0.804	-	-0.107	-0.024	-0.025	-	0.427**	0.590**	1
Psychological			0.196**				0.132*			
contract										
9 Pro-social	3.790	0.629	-	0.040	0.057	0.009	0.064	0.584**	0.425**	0.552**
violations			0.197**							

Note * means p<0.05, * * means p<0.01

3.3.4 Research Hypothesis Testing

This paper uses Shu Rui's method to test chain mediating effect [24] to test the mediating effect of psychological security and psychological contract between moral leadership and violation of pro-

social rules by constructing a competitive structural equation model. The models are compared with $\Delta\chi 2$, AIC, BIC and other information indexes. The smaller the information index is, the better the fitting effect of the models is. The analysis results are shown in Table 4.

Firstly, a full model M1 is established, in which psychological security and psychological contract play a mediating effect between moral leadership and prosocial rule violation. Taking M1 as the benchmark model, the model fits well. However, psychological security has no significant effect on the path coefficient of prosocial rule violation, and the path is deleted according to the principle of giving priority to deleting insignificant paths [23]. The competition model M2 is obtained. Its goodness of fit conforms to the standard, and M2 is simpler and can produce smaller information statistics. M3 removes the direct path of moral leadership to psychological contract based on M1. The results show that the model fits well. Compared with M2, M3 has no significant difference in fitting effect ($\Delta\chi 2=0.926$, degree of freedom difference 1, p>0.1), but AIC, BIC and other information indexes are higher than M2, so M2 fitting is better. On the basis of M1, M4 is obtained by removing the direct action path of moral leadership on psychological contract and psychological security on prosocial rule violation. The results show that the model fits well. However, compared with M2, M4 has significant difference in fitting effect ($\Delta\chi 2=5.903$, degree of freedom difference is 1, p<0.05), and AIC, BIC and other information indexes are higher than M2, so M4 is poor in fitting.

Mode	1 Describe	x 2			- 2/10	DMCEA	CDI	TIT	CET	NET	ATC	DIC
Mode	Describe	χ	df	Δx²	x ² /df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	GFI	NFI	AIC	BIC
M1	ML PS PC PC PSRB	149. 009	59	-	2.526	0.069	0.943	0.924	0.932	0.909	213.009	333.596
M2	ML PS PC PSRB	152. 314	60	-	2.539	0.069	0.941	0.923	0.930	0.907	214.314	331.132
М3	PS PC PSRB	153. 240	61	0.926	2.554	0.070	0.940	0.923	0.930	0.907	215.240	332.058
M4	$\begin{array}{c} PS \longrightarrow PC \\ \searrow \\ ML \longrightarrow PSRB \end{array}$	158. 217	61	5.903*	2.594	0.071	0.938	0.921	0.928	0.904	218.217	331.267
М5	$ML \longrightarrow PS \longrightarrow PC \longrightarrow PSRB$	205. 515	62	53.201***	3.315	0.085	0.908	0.885	0.909	0.875	263.515	372.769

Table 4 Model Fitting Information Index

Note: * * * indicates p<0.001 * * means p<0.01 * means p<0.05

Finally, M5 removed the direct action path of moral leadership against psychological contract and prosocial rule violation and the direct action path of psychological security against prosocial rule violation on the basis of M1, and constructed a complete series intermediary model of moral leadership, psychological security, psychological contract and prosocial rule violation. The results show that the fitting effect of this model is poor. compared with M2 and M5, the fitting effect is significantly different ($\Delta\chi 2=53.201$, degree of freedom difference is 2, p<0.001), and the information index is significantly higher than M2 (see table 3). By comprehensive comparison, M2 is selected as the best matching model in this study. the path coefficients in M2 are all significant. the standard solution of each coefficient is shown in fig. 2.

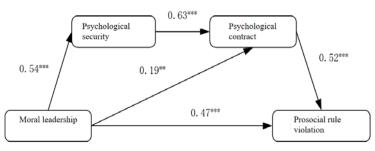


Fig.2 Action Path Diagram of Chain Intermediate Structural Equation

In this study, the nonparametric percentile Bootstrap method of deviation correction was used to conduct repeated sampling 2,000 times to further test the chain mediating effect. The results show

(see Table 5): the direct effect of moral leadership on violation of employee prosocial rules is 0.3834, the 95% confidence interval is [0.2978, 0.469], excluding 0, and the direct effect is significant; The independent mediating effect of psychological security between moral leadership and prosocial rule violation is 0.0125, 95% confidence interval is [-0.0340,0.0626], including 0, the mediating effect is not significant; The independent mediating effect of psychological contract between moral leadership and prosocial rule violation is 0.1386, the 95% confidence interval is [0.0769,0.2268], excluding 0, the mediating effect is significant. The chain mediating effect of psychological security and psychological contract is 0.1511, the 95% confidence interval is [0.0839,0.363], excluding 0, the chain mediating effect is significant. The sum of the mediation effects of the three mediation paths is the total mediation effect, and the result is 0.3022; The sum of direct effect and total mediating effect is the total effect, and the result is 0.6856. The effect amount is the percentage of each mediating effect value to the total effect. The effect amounts of the three mediating paths are 1.82% (insignificant), 20.22%, 22.04% respectively, and the total mediating effect amount is 44.08%.

Effect Intermediary path Intermediate Bt Bias corrected 95%CI Effect path error quantity CI=[0.2978,0.4692] Direct Moral leadership Prosocial rule violation 0.3834 0.0435 55.92% effect Mediating Moral → Psychological security 0.0125 CI=[-0.0340,0.0626] 0.0248 1.82% effect Prosocial rule violation Moral → Psychological contract 0.1386 CI=[0.0769,0.2268] 0.0376 20.22% Prosocial rule violation Moral leadership Psychological security 0.1511 0.0395 CI=[0.0839.0.363] 22.04% Psychological → Prosocial rule violation

Table 5 the Value and Quantity of Intermediary Effect in Chain Intermediary Effect

4. Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the theory of social information processing, this study uses 321 valid samples from innovative enterprises to construct and verify the relationship and mechanism between moral leadership and employee PSRB behavior. The results show that moral leadership positively affects employees' PSRB behavior. Psychological security and psychological contract play an intermediary role in the process that moral leadership positively affects employees' PSRB behavior. Specifically, it will exert its influence through the independent intermediary role of psychological contract and the chain intermediary role of psychological security and psychological contract. The specific contributions of this study are as follows:

4.2 Theoretical Contribution

First, this study expands the research boundary of antecedents of employee PSRB behavior. Moral leadership often appears as a single-dimensional concept of complex leadership models. Based on this, this paper empirically tests the positive predictive effect of moral leadership on employees' PSRB behavior, and deeply discusses the mechanism between the two. It gives a detailed answer to why moral leadership can trigger employees to implement the "risky" behavior of PSRB behavior, enriching the theoretical research on the relationship between leadership style and PSRB behavior.

Second, PSRB behavior has dual attributes of prosocialism and risk, and its causes are complicated [3]. Therefore, this study further introduces the psychological cognitive variable psychological contract on the basis of the psychological perception variable of psychological security, and elaborates and tests the influence mechanism of moral leadership with psychological security and psychological contract as continuous mediators on PSRB behavior. It reveals the complex multi-mediation process of moral leadership influencing employees' PSRB behavior,

which is closer to employees' inner world and organizational practice situation. This transmission mechanism follows the psychological cognitive process of "stimulation-perception-reaction-behavior" [24], which shows the psychological process of moral leadership influencing employees' PSRB behavior in a chain way.

4.3 Management Inspiration

First, according to relevant theories of organizational design, the positive and negative effects of organizational rules exist objectively and dialectically. How to weaken the negative effects in the design and operation of organizational rules is an eternal problem in the study of organizational and employee behavior. This study empirically demonstrates that moral leadership significantly positively affects the behavior path mechanism of employee PSRB, and reveals that moral leadership can help solve such problems to some extent. In the specific management practice situation, the enterprise should give consideration to the cultivation of "morality" on the basis of paying attention to the "talents" of leaders in the past, give full play to the moral exemplary role of leaders, and cultivate the moral atmosphere of the organization. Leaders should teach by word and deed, give full play to the inspiring role of moral example, cut off the psychological burden of PSRB behavior of employees to the maximum extent, and give full play to its positive role, so as to effectively enhance the competitiveness of the organization for a long time and realize sustainable development.

Second, the confirmation of the chain intermediary role of psychological security and psychological contract in the process of moral leadership promoting employees' PSRB behavior indicates that the enlightenment organization should attach importance to the cultural and psychological structure of employees' ethics standard in the Chinese context, take the social relationship of leadership behavior as the orientation in the management process, pay attention to employees' psychological feelings, and try to avoid the disadvantages of unilaterally emphasizing cost-benefit logic under the assumption of western "economic man" so as to improve the organization's performance. At the same time, it also provides new application enlightenment for building a dialogue platform of "legitimacy" between leaders and employees, easing the conflict between the two and solving the problem of lack of meaning for employees.

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