

Abstract of thesis entitled:

Leader's Ethical Behaviors and Moral Transgressions: Moral Consistency or Moral Licensing?

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Abstract

According to the moral licensing theory, people may liberate themselves to act in morally questionable ways due to their past history of moral behaviors. Drawing on the view of moral licensing, this research linked leaders' ethical behaviors to their subsequent potential moral transgressions including abusive supervision, bribery and workplace sexual harassment.

Two separate scenario experiments with a 2 (ethical vs. unethical)×2 (internal motivation vs. external motivation) between-subject design were conducted in Study 1 ($N = 450$) and Study 2 ($N = 455$). Study 1 examined leaders' self-licensing effect, namely, whether leaders' prior ethical behaviors "license" the leaders to engage in subsequent moral transgressions. Study 2 examined subordinates' observer-licensing effect, namely, whether leaders' prior ethical behaviors make subordinates "license" subsequent moral transgressions from the same leader. Moreover, the moderating roles of motivation behind leaders' prior ethical behaviors in both leaders' self-licensing and subordinates' observer-licensing effects were tested. The following

results were obtained: when leaders demonstrated prior ethical behaviors, a) leaders restrained themselves from engaging in subsequent moral transgressions, and they were more likely to condemn moral transgressions and to experience moral emotional responses to transgressions, indicating the moral consistency effect; b) subordinates, as a third party, liberated the same leader to act in morally disreputable ways. They were more likely to tolerate leaders' moral transgressions, and less likely to condemn leaders' moral transgressions and to experience moral emotional responses to them. In terms of attribution, they tended to attribute leaders' ambiguous moral transgressions to external factors such as victims', organizational and cultural characteristics rather than actors per se. These findings indicate the moral licensing effect. However, both leaders' moral consistency effect and subordinates' moral licensing effect were moderated by the motivation (or perceived motivation) of leaders' prior ethical behaviors. Specifically, when leaders behaved morally because they were motivated by internal rather than external motivation, the aforementioned moral consistency and moral licensing effects were stronger.

Study 3 explored the influences of leaders' inconsistent behaviors (i.e., the combination of abusive supervision and ethical leadership) on subordinates' work-related outcomes (i.e., job attitudes and well-being) through a three-wave longitudinal survey. Participants reported ethical leadership at Time 1, abusive supervision and interactional justice at Time 2, and work-related outcomes at Time 3. A total of 223 matched data from Chinese full-time employees was obtained. Results showed that: a) interactional justice mediated the relations between abusive

supervision and work-related outcomes; b) ethical leadership moderated the relations between interactional justice and work-related outcomes, and they were stronger at high (vs. low) levels of ethical leadership; c) ethical leadership also moderated the mediating effects of interactional justice, which were stronger at high levels of ethical leadership but weaker at low levels of ethical leadership.

摘要

道德許可理論表明，個體會因為自身過去的道德行為史而縱容自己從事道德問題行為。基於道德許可的觀點，本研究將領導的道德行為與其潛在的道德違規行為相聯繫（即辱虐管理，賄賂和職場性騷擾）。

研究一（ $N = 450$ ）和研究二（ $N = 455$ ）通過兩個獨立的 2（道德或不道德） \times 2（內部動機或外部動機）情境實驗，檢驗了領導的自我許可效應（即領導會否因為自己過去的道德行為而縱容自己投身於之後的不道德行為）和下屬的旁觀者許可效應（即下屬會否因為領導過去的道德行為而縱容其從事之後的不道德行為）。此外，研究一和研究二還檢驗了領導過去道德行為的行為動機在自我許可效應和旁觀者許可效應中發揮的調節作用。研究結果表明：若領導曾經展現過道德行為，1）他們會約束自己投身於之後的不道德行為，並且對不道德行為有較高水平的譴責性和道德情緒反應，表明了道德一致性效應；2）下屬，作為旁觀者，則會縱容領導從事之後的不道德行為。他們對領導的不道德行為持有較高水平的容忍性，較低水平的譴責性和道德情緒反應。就歸因而言，下屬更傾向將領導模糊的不道德行為歸因為外部因素（如組織、受害者或文化）而非領導者本身。以上結果表明了旁觀者道德許可效應。領導者道德一致性效應和旁觀者道德許可效應均受到領導過去道德行為的行為動機的調節：當領導是出於內部動機從事過去的道德行為時，二者效應更顯著。

研究三通過一個縱向問卷調查探討了不一致的領導行為（即辱虐管理與道德領導相結合時）對下屬工作場所相關結果變量的影響（即工作態度和工作幸福感）。被試分別在第一個時間點報告了道德領導水平，在第二個時間點報告了

辱虐管理和人際公平水平，在第三個時間點報告了工作場所相關結果變量。最終，研究獲得來自 223 名中國全職員工的有效匹配數據，結果表明：1) 人際公平中介了辱虐管理與結果變量之間的關係；2) 道德領導在人際公平和結果變量之間發揮了調節作用，即道德領導水平越高，人際公平和結果變量的關係越顯著；3) 道德領導調節了人際公平在辱虐管理和結果變量之間發揮的中介效應，即人際公平的中介效應在高道德領導水平條件下是顯著的，而在低道德領導水平下是不顯著的。