A Review of the Research on the Impact of Employer Brands on Employees' Proactive Behavior

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Abstract

By reviewing the literature on employer brand and employee initiative,this paper expounds the influence of employer brand's dimensional leadership, organizational atmosphere, work itself, career growth and development and other factors on employees' proactive behavior.And discuss the intermediate mechanism that some of these dimensions affect employee proactive behavior, and discuss the intermediate mechanism that some of these dimensions affect employees' proactive behavior.so as to provide a direction for enterprises to build an employer brand that can promote employee initiative. At last, the future research direction is put forward on the basis of summarizing the existing research results.

Keywords

employer brand; Leadership style; Organizational climate; The work itself; Proactive behavior.

Introduction

With the improvement of knowledge level and living standard of various talents in the labor market, the working concept and attitude of many workers have changed a lot, which also brings great challenges for enterprises to attract and retain talents and mobilize employees' initiative and enthusiasm.Some organizations at home and abroad, such as hewitt consulting, Watson Wyatt and Fortune, and domestic institutions such as Zhaopin, Chinahr.com and so on launched the best employer selection activities,to find out the best employers through the selection, understand their outstanding points in talent attraction and retention, and hope to bring enlightenment to other companies' management talents.Therefore, more and more enterprises begin to pay attention to the construction of enterprise employer brand.In addition,with the increasingly fierce competition in the era of globalization and the rapid development of science and technology and economy, the complexity of employees' work in enterprises is becoming higher and higher. In order to achieve higher benefits and give play to more values, employees must give more play to their initiative, take the initiative to seek change and make more initiatives .However, faced with the limitations of the previous work philosophy and the branding of the post-90s employees, it is still a huge challenge for enterprises to urge employees to take more proactive actions.

The concept of employer brand was first proposed by Ambler T and Barrow S (1996). They think about the positioning of an employer in the human resource market from the perspective of marketing. And they believe

that the employer brand is a combination of functional benefits, economic benefits and psychological benefits provided by the enterprise, and it is confirmed by the employer . In addition, some scholars such as Edwards M R (2009) , Voronchuk & Starineca,O.(2014) believe that employer brand mainly refers to the experience in the workplace . And Jain, v.,& Pal, r. (2012) believes that it is a commitment of the enterprise to employees . These two views are from the external and internal perspectives of the enterprise. Chinese scholars Zhu Yongguo and Ding Xuefeng (2008) divided the employer brand into seven dimensions, including work itself, management and leadership style, personal development, corporate strength, salary system, welfare system and cooperative relationship .Other scholars Lievens, High-house (2003), Huang Fugang, Liu peng et al. (2012) believe that the employer brand can be divided into functional and symbolic dimensions .Ambler T and Barrow S (1996) divide it into three dimensions: economic, functional and psychological interests.

In terms of proactive behaviors, Frese and Kring et al. (1996), from the perspective of the whole organization, defined proactive behaviors as employees' spontaneous, proactive and future-oriented behaviors that fit in with the organizational strategy and goals and need to persist in overcoming difficulties to achieve organizational changes . They mainly emphasized the three aspects of spontaneous, active action and overcoming difficulties in proactive behavior[5]. Later, Parker and Williams et al. (2006) integrated the views of previous studies and defined active behavior as a spontaneous and predictive behavior of individuals in order to change or improve their surroundings or their own circumstances . Proactive behavior is an inclusive term, including proactive work behavior, strategic behavior, individual-environment matching behavior, active career behavior, voice behavior, feedback seeking behavior, responsible behavior, innovative behavior, etc . Existing studies have shown that employees' proactive behaviors are influenced by individual factors and situational factors . Individual factors are mainly for individual employees, such as individual initiative personality , individual knowledge level, skills and abilities . The situational factors that influence the employee's proactive behavior are leadership and management style , work itself , organizational environment and other factors . From the perspective of the company, we think more about the fact that employee's proactive behavior is influenced by the situational factors in the organization.

However, after reading a large number of literatures, it is found that most of the studies on employer brand are based on theoretical level and lack of empirical analysis and research. Secondly, most of the researches on employees' proactive behaviors are from a single perspective, such as the active personality, leadership and work characteristics, etc., and there is no research on how to influence employees' proactive behaviors from the perspective of the employer brand as a whole. Based on this, this paper mainly discusses the influence of employer brand on employees' proactive behavior from the following aspects: how various factors of employer brand affect employees' proactive behavior, which factors of employer brand are conducive to stimulating employees' proactive behavior, and which factors have no significant effect on employees' proactive behavior; It points out the deficiency of current research and the prospect of future research.

1.Research on the influence factors of employer brand on employee's proactive behavior

Employee proactive behavior is affected by individual and situational factors. From the perspective of employer brand, we pay more attention to the impact of situational factors on employee proactive behavior. In view of the fact that previous studies did not involve the discussion of the influence of employer brand on

employees' proactive behavior, this paper, based on the literature review, discusses the influence of employer brand on employees' proactive behavior from the perspective of relevant dimensions under the employer brand.

1.1 Leadership style

Liu bing and Xu xiao (2017) believe that leadership style is an important situational factor, which plays an important role in stimulating and promoting employees' proactive behavior[16]. In an enterprise, the leadership style adopted by the leader and how to manage the employees will affect the behavior of the employees. According to Federer's Contingency Theory of Leadership, we know that a good leader can change his leadership style according to the specific situation. He also put forward that a leader can achieve good leadership effect in the enterprise by two ways, one is to change the leadership style to adapt to the situation, the other is to change the environment to adapt to their leadership style. In the enterprise, if the employee's enthusiasm is not high, the initiative is not strong, the employees are not willing to take responsibility, have not been willing to make the proactive behavior, as a manager's leadership to change the status quo is often time-consuming, so leaders can change their leadership style to promote employees to take more proactive behaviors. Based on this perspective, many scholars at home and abroad have discussed the impact of different leadership styles on employees' proactive behaviors. Leadership style can be roughly divided into three aspects: positive leadership (transformational leadership, public servant leadership, etc.), negative leadership (abusive management, authoritarian leadership) and leader-member exchange quality.

Positive leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, ethical leadership, public servant leadership, and participative leadership, can directly or indirectly influence employees' proactive behavior.Transformational leadership is a future-oriented leadership style full of hope for future performance. They give meaning to their work and motivate their subordinates to pursue self-actualization. At the same time, they can directly stimulate employees' proactive behavior by means of authorization and incentive, so that they can treat their work and environment with a vision of change and actively seek for change. Den Hartog D N, Belschak F D (2012) found that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' proactive behavior in a Dutch enterprise, and is regulated by role breadth, self-efficacy and autonomy. When autonomy is low, the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' proactive behavior is stronger among employees with low self-efficacy than among employees with high self-efficacy.When autonomy is high, the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' proactive behavior is more significant for employees with high sense of self-efficacy than for employees with low sense of self-efficacy[15]. Chinese scholars Huang Youli and Cheng Xinyu (2015) thought about the characteristics of proactive behavior: reform and the characteristics of challenging the organization's current situation. They believed that transformational leadership also has the characteristics of challenge and innovation, which will effectively encourage employees to imitate the leadership behavior and take the initiative to make changes . Public servant leadership and support leadership are generally based on the interests of employees and can give them all kinds of help in work. According to the Resource Protection Theory, when employees perceive that they have abundant resources, they will be more willing to take the initiative to work, while when resources are scarce, employees will be reluctant to take the initiative to avoid resource consumption . Liu Yanjun and Xu Shiyong (2018) studied the influence of public servant leaders on the proactive behavior of employees. They believed that employees taking on proactive behaviors would bear certain risks and feel insecure in their hearts. While public servant leaders are concerned about the growth and development of employees. They fully trust and

authorize employees, effectively reducing employee insecurity and motivating them to take active actions . Parker et al. (2007) showed that participatory leadership can convey a signal of trust in employees' daily work, and trust from leaders can significantly predict the generation of subordinates' proactive behavior, thus demonstrating that participatory leadership has an important impact on proactive behavior .

Negative leadership behaviors, such as abusive management and authoritarian leadership, have relatively few studies on the impact of employees' proactive behaviors. Negative leadership behavior, in order to prevent problems that are difficult to deal with at work, or to avoid unpredictable conditions after the change, the leadership will impose psychological or behavioral restrictions on employees through various interventions, Negative leadership behavior, in order to prevent problems that are difficult to deal with at work, or to avoid unpredictable conditions after the change, the leadership will impose psychological or behavioral restrictions on employees through various interventions, resist and strike the proactive behavior of employees, and urge them to reduce the proactive behavior. Liu bing and Xu xiao (2017) discussed the influence of authoritarian leadership on proactive behavior. He believes that the authoritarian superiors have stricter requirements for employees, so the usual job evaluation is negative or not, which may cause psychological pressure and tension on the employees, and even cause self-doubt and reduce their enthusiasm to take proactive behaviors[16]. Therefore, the empirical results show that authoritarian leadership has a negative impact on employees' proactive behavior.

The quality of leader-subordinate exchange also affects the proactive behavior of employees. Leadership member exchange quality refers to the relationship between employees and leaders at work. Leaders and subordinates with high leadership member exchange quality will trust each other, which is conducive to the generation of proactive behavior. At the same time, the leader will give the employees with initiative extra work support to help them improve their work and environment. Chiaburu D S, Smith T A (2014) believes that under the high leadership-member exchange relationship, the two sides have full trust and support to jointly create a good environment to reduce threats. Employees can make changes in this environment with confidence and enhance their willingness to take proactive behavior . The low quality of leadership member exchange is not conducive to the generation of proactive behavior. The research of Grant A M, Ashford S J (2008) confirmed this inference .

1.2 Organizational atmosphere and working environment

The atmosphere and working environment in an organization can have an impact on employee behavior and attitudes. Wu X,Kwan H K (2018) believes that the work environment is the motivation determinant influencing employees' proactive behaviors . When the organizational atmosphere is relaxed and pleasant, and employees cooperate with each other, superiors and subordinates, and peers are full of trust and other positive atmosphere, it will have a positive impact on employees' behavior and more likely to prompt employees to take proactive behaviors. Zhu yu (2014) believes that the establishment of trust and open organizational culture and team atmosphere in the organization is an important external environment condition for employees to take proactive behaviors[18]. Takeuchi R, Chen Z (2012) believed that the sense of fairness in the organizational atmosphere would influence the behavior choice of employees.Through their research, they found that the perceived fairness of organizational procedures and distribution mechanism would affect employees' innovation and voice behavior . Qiao Kun and Liu Sai (2018) discussed the influence of organizational ethics on employee's proactive behavior, selected work motivation as mediator variable, and found that under the

caring and rule-based organizational atmosphere, the employees' work motivation is affected, internalizing external motivation, and the internal motivation can influence employees to work, generate proactive behavior, thus verifying the organizational atmosphere through the chain of internal and external work motivation to influence employee's proactive behavior. While the instrumental organizational atmosphere has no significant influence on employees' proactive behavior, but it can exert negative influence on employees' proactive behavior through the chain effect of work motivation . This is because the internal motivation of employees comes from the work itself, while the external motivation comes from external motivation and affirmation, which is similar to the Two-factor Theory of motivation theory. In a caring and rule-based organizational atmosphere, employees spontaneously generate internal motivation to guide their behaviors. While in the instrumental organizational environment, employees need external auxiliary tools and support to carry out their work. Internal motivation is not strong, so external motivation support is needed, which can be transformed into individual internal motivation to guide behavior. The research of Zhang Zhengtang and Wu qiong (2016) also supports the idea that the organizational atmosphere perceived by employees will have an impact on the proactive behaviors of employees with different motivations . Some scholars Yang Zhenfang and Chen Qingwen (2016) believe that if managers advocate altruistic atmosphere in the organization and form an organizational culture of altruistic behavior among employees, it will satisfy employees' spiritual needs of self-realization, craving for others' attention and appreciation, so as to stimulate employees to take proactive behaviors . In addition, scholar Zhang Guiping and Liao Jianqiao (2011) mentioned that "weak environment", namely the environment with organizational uncertainty, is easier for employees to take proactive behaviors . Some scholars believe that although the uncertain organizational environment is a weak environment, in which employees may think and act more freely, but the weak environment itself has certain uncertainties, when employees perceive that uncertainty hinders them from taking proactive behaviors, they are more likely to give up proactive behaviors for fear that their actions will not produce the desired effect in such an unstable environment. Similarly, some scholars have discussed the organizational atmosphere that is not conducive to employees' initiative behaviors, such as workplace exclusion, organizational atmosphere of job burnout, organizational climate of “satisfaction and happiness” and rigid and strict institutional environment. Xue Xianfang, Wang Chongming (2009) found that there is a significant negative correlation between job burnout and individual initiative . Liu Xiaoyu, Liu Jun (2015) Based on the self-verification perspective, it is found that workplace exclusion can make employees be excluded and isolated in their work, resulting in bad feelings such as job burnout, and influence the generation of proactive behaviors . The organizational atmosphere of “contentment and happiness” emphasizes that employees are comfortable with the status quo, and their hearts are not stopped. They are not seeking active change. In the moment of the ever-changing Internet era, there will undoubtedly make organizations feel like a pool of water, no innovation and vitality, let alone proactive behaviors[27]. Foreign scholars Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007) found that the rigid environment is not conducive to employees to take the initiative, so they put forward the concept of flexible management and found that the fuzzy environment in the organization, namely the non-rigid and strict environment in which flexible management is implemented, is more able to stimulate proactive behaviors of employees[19]. Shin Y, Kim M J (2015) studied the relationship between subjective norms and proactive behaviors, and found a negative relationship between them, indicating that subjective norms are not conducive to employees' proactive behaviors . All these studies show that if there is a relatively strict organizational system and environment in the organization, it will restrict the thinking and behavior of employees. At the same time, due to the constraints of subjective constraints, employees are afraid to face the pressure from superiors and peers in the company and reduce their willingness to take proactive behaviors.

1.3 Working characteristics

Compared with other factors, work itself has a more direct impact on employees' proactive behaviors. Latham & Pinder (2005) believed that job design would influence employee motivation and behavior[17]. Work in the enterprise, if the value brought by the work does not meet the expectation of employees, the work cannot meet the performance of the ability of employees, and the realization of the value cannot stimulate employees, and employees will not take proactive behaviors to deal with the work. From the perspective of work itself, scholars discuss how work itself influences employees' proactive behavior from two perspectives of work. On the one hand, it is based on work autonomy, including work autonomy and employees' sense of control over work (Frese, Garst,& Fay,2007).Morrison, 2006) . On the other hand, it is based on challenging work, including the complexity and richness of work(Parker et al.,2006)[10].

Some scholars argue on the basis of work autonomy.Employees who have a high degree of control and autonomy over their work can give full play to their abilities and knowledge at work without fear of making mistakes or failing. At the same time, work control makes employees more confident of their ability to achieve their work goals through taking proactive behavior. Studies of some scholars have confirmed this point. Binnewies,Sonnentag and Mojza(2009) found that employees with a high degree of control over work are more likely to take proactive behavior . Sonnentag S, Spychala A (2012) also demonstrated that work control can improve employees' initiative by enhancing their internal work control . Xue Xianfang, Wang Chongming (2009) found that under the working environment of job burnout,work design adopts multiple forms, and the way of increasing work fun can reduce employee burnout and enhance employee initiative[31]. Authorizing employees is also a way to enhance employees' control over their work, and to give employees an autonomy in their work, to express their trust and support to employees, and to motivate employees' initiative. Through Zhang hua and Sun Chunling (2014) 's research on authorization atmosphere, psychological authorization and employee initiative, they verified the positive effect of authorization on employees' proactive behavior . Authorized employees have more ideas and innovations on work without too much restriction. They can display their talents and knowledge again and generate proactive behavior spontaneously. In addition, the flexible role orientation of employees will also encourage them to take proactive behavior. Flexible role orientation emphasizes that employees have more autonomy in their work, giving employees free space to play, and is more conducive to employees' proactive behavior.

Some scholars, based on the challenging work, demonstrate the complexity of work. Common ideas include job complexity, job enrichment, job challenge, and challenging stress on employees. Parker et al. (2006) demonstrated that enrichment of work would have an impact on employees' proactive behavior. Enrichment of work could improve employees' understanding of the meaning of work, enable them to enjoy the process of work, and form internal incentives for employees, because enrichment of work is conducive to personal career growth[10]. Lin Ye, Li Yanping (2016) also pointed out in the study of proactive behavioral situationalization that through the study of 211 employees in two companies in China, the meaning of work can stimulate proactive behavior of employees . Zhang Guiping and Liao Jianqiao (2011) innovatively introduce the concept of "flow" (a state in which individuals are completely immersed in work), and believe that increasing the complexity, and innovation of the work will make employees feel the convection experience at the same time put forward advocacy work autonomy, give employees full authorization, encourages employees to

make the proactive behavior[30]. Parker et al. (2006) also mentioned in the paper that if an organization sets reasonable but challenging goals for employees, it will motivate employees to make a commitment to the goals. In order to achieve the goals, they will take proactive behaviors to achieve the goals[10]. Yang Yusu and Yang Xi (2018) are innovative from the perspective of challenging stressors, suggesting that new generations of employees pursue challenges in their work, and that challenging stressors can convey their trust and recognition to them, so as to motivate employees to take proactive behaviors to meet challenges and complete tasks .

1.4 Career growth and development

Employees participate in work in order to achieve their own value and obtain good career growth and development. Li Chengjiang and Yang Dongtao (2011) put forward the need for employees to grow up in their own research, which will encourage them to actively seek opportunities in career development and change themselves or the environment . Zhao Bin, Han Panpan (2016) used rooted theory to encode the antecedent variables that affect employees' proactive behaviors. It is found that employees with strong career orientations hope to obtain professional success through proactive behavior. At the same time, it is found that the knowledge and ability of employees also affect employee initiative. When employees feel that their abilities and knowledge are lacking, they are less likely to take proactive behaviors . Jiang Linfeng and Yuan Denghua (2007) also believe that employees' knowledge, skills and abilities will affect the proactive behavior of employees, and they can improve their initiative through training[14]. In order to realize his self-worth in the work in the further development of a career, in addition to complete the task of the work itself, more people would take self study, take the initiative to improve their ability and level, take responsibility in the work, or to break the current embarrassing situation, seek further breakthroughs and development. Therefore, enterprises can take measures to improve the ability and knowledge of employees, and provide a growth platform for employees through training and other means. When employees are satisfied with their knowledge and ability, they are more inclined to take proactive behaviors.

1.5 Other factors

In the discussion of antecedent variables of employees' proactive behaviors, in addition to the influence of the above aspects, some scholars have carried out simple studies from the aspects of salary incentive policy, future work self and organizational culture. For example, Liu Mi, Long Lirong (2007), in the study of active personality, proposes that modern organizational systems, organizational flattening, organizational decentralization and other forms will encourage employees to make more proactive behaviors . When it is a flat organizational structure in the organization, employees have more space and freedom to play their own abilities in the organization. At the same time, in such an organization, the information channels are smooth, and the working resources are easy to obtain. Direct leadership is closely linked, and employees are more likely to succeed in taking proactive behaviors, which in turn encourages them to make more proactive behavior. Li Chengjiang and Yang Dongtao (2011) also mentioned in their research that organizational structure, corporate culture and other factors would influence employees' proactive behaviors[36]. In the organization, motivating employees to actively change, encourage change, and an innovative organizational culture can more effectively stimulate employees' willingness to take proactive behaviors. Zhao Bin and Han Panpan (2016) believe that the group pressure between colleagues helps to stimulate employees to take active actions. Therefore, they propose that enterprises form group pressure on individuals by formulating personalized salary incentive

policies to stimulate them to take proactive behaviors[37]. Shin Y, Kim M J (2015) also believed that the hierarchical compensation system in a company would encourage employees to take proactive behaviors[33]. According to Maslow's Demand Theory, when employees value the material needs such as salary and welfare, they will work harder to meet their basic needs. A reasonable and attractive hierarchical reward system can act as a catalyst to stimulate these employees to actively seek changes in their work and strive to improve their salary levels.

2.Conclusion and future research prospect

By reviewing the existing literatures at home and abroad, we found that there have been abundant researches on the relationship between employer brand dimensions and employee initiative behaviors, and consensus has been reached on some viewpoints. Most studies have shown that factors under the employer brand, such as leadership style, organizational atmosphere, work itself and career growth and development, have a significant impact on employees' proactive behaviors. When the organization is a positive leadership style such as change or support, the organizational atmosphere is full of trust and fairness, or the work itself is autonomous and complex, challenging, employees can feel their professional growth in the company, will motivate employees Initiatives at work, on the other hand, if the organizational leadership style is negative leadership, the organizational atmosphere is not harmonious, discord, and the work itself is not challenging, employees can not achieve their professional value well, which is not conducive to their making proactive behaviors. Although many current studies can support the above conclusions, there are still deficiencies in the current research, which need to be further explored in the future:

2.1 Conduct systematic and integrated research.

At present, the practical world is paying more and more attention to the employer brand. We can see from the selection of the best employer held over the years that many platforms are conducting the selection of the best employer, and the number of enterprises participating in the selection is increasing year by year. In addition, the changes of the times, the new generation of employees in the workplace and the advancement of science and technology, it is more and more necessary for current employees to actively participate in the work and make more proactive behaviors. However, there is no empirical research to study employees’proactive behaviors from the perspective of employer brand. The existing literatures are all researches on employees’proactive behaviors from various dimensions under the employer brand, and some are only theoretical discussions and deductions, and there is no empirical analysis. Considering the reasons, it can be concluded that there is no uniform standard for the conceptual dimension of the employer brand and the scale measurement, and the scale for the study of employee proactive behavior is not uniform, which increases the difficulty for the study. Future research can explore the integration of employer brand on employee’proactive behaviors. Considering which dimensions under the employer's brand will have an impact on employee’proactive behaviors, and which dimensions have no significant or negative impact. At the same time, discuss which dimensions can be used in combination under the employer brand to improve the employer brand of the enterprise and build the employer brand.

2.2 Exploring the intermediate impact process of employer brand on employee ’proactive behaviors.

Employer brand is the construction of enterprise strategy, while employee's proactive behavior is the behav-

ior of individual employees. How does employer brand affect employee's proactive behavior? At present, the literature has explored the dimensions of employer brand through organizational identity, role width self-efficacy or organizational support to influence employees' proactive behavior. In the future, can also add intermediary variables or adjustment, to find the influence of the intermediate process. Thus, from the perspective of employer brand, the enterprise can effectively stimulate employees to take more initiative by giving play to the role of intermediary mechanism, so as to realize two-way value co-creation between employees and the enterprise.

2.3 Conduct targeted research in conjunction with specific companies.

For different companies, employer brand building has different concerns. For example, some companies pay attention to employees, and some companies pay attention to the fulfillment of corporate social responsibility, which is related to the industry and type of the company. So, the influence of the employer brand to employees proactive behavior, specific enterprises can be selected, and case studies or experimental methods can be used for specific analysis and discussion. It may be able to explore for a specific enterprise, what kind of employer brand construction more can stimulate proactive behavior of employees.

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