

THE DIFFERENT PERSONALITY EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FEEDBACK SEEKING BEHAVIOR: DO LEADERSHIP MODERATES?

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ABSTRACT

Feedback seeking is a kind of impression management strategy. When they have good performance, aggressive good feedback seeking can draw supervisors' attention on their success. When they have bad performance, the proactive bad feedback seeking behavior can manipulate supervisors' judgments. Our study finding is that Taiwanese employees are shy to do good feedback seeking than bad feedback seeking behavior. Extraversion subordinates tend to do more good and bad feedback seeking behavior than introversion subordinates. Under the consideration leadership, extraversion subordinates exhibit more bad feedback seeking behaviors to influence supervisors' impression.

Keywords: Feedback seeking behavior, Impression management, Extraversion, Management style, Chinese Culture,

INTRODUCTION

Employees receive feedback from many sources (e.g. subordinates, coworkers, or clients) in their working environments. One of the most important feedback sources is supervisors' feedback (Ashford, 1993) [1]. Because supervisors evaluate the performance appraise and have the right to give praise, job promotion and penalty. Thus, subordinates value supervisors' feedback and feedback is not only given by supervisors, but also can be manipulated by subordinates' doing some proactive behaviors. This kind of proactive behavior is defined as feedback seeking behavior (Ashford and Cummings, 1983) [3].

The proactive feedback seeking behavior have three advantages for subordinates, first, subordinate can obtain more working information to accomplish the goal. Since the supervisor's feedback reveal his working expectation and

direct subordinates some guidelines to follow. These benefits will motive subordinate to seek supervisors' feedback aggressively.

Second, the motive for subordinates to seek feedback aggressively is that supervisors' acknowledgement of the level of working performance. Before formal performance appraise, ask supervisors' opinion in advance can help subordinates to confirm the level of working performance. At present supervisor's perception is good or bad and what should they do to fulfill the job and avoid failing jobs. The proactive feedback seeking behavior can help subordinates to acquire job praise and escape from inflicting the punishment.

Third, aggressive feedback seeking behavior also can influence supervisors' performance judgments (Ashford et al, 2003; Eastman, 1994) [2] [6]. Employees do good feedback seeking behavior to acquire the supervisors' attention on their good performance and enhance the supervisors' perception of the quality of their work (Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi and Norman, 1985) [16] [19]. On the contrary, when employees' performances are not good, they may use proactive bad feedback seeking behavior to influence supervisors' evaluation. Subordinates may give some apologies or excuses and try to minimize the supervisors' potential negative evaluation or emotional feelings (Larson, 1989) [10].

Because culture plays an important role to influence employees' organization behavior, different culture background employees may exhibit distinct level of feedback seeking behavior. When employees performed well, not everyone is willing to call supervisors' attention to their achievement. In contrast, when employees performed poorly, they may more aggressive try to correct supervisors' impressions. Some culture characteristics affect person's psychological mechanism and behavior. Past research put

less emphasis on it and this is our first research purpose to examine the culture difference.

Second, not every employee is aggressive to do feedback seeking behavior; the personality may affect their behavior. Extroverted people are not shy to show their advantages or interact with other people. Extroversion or introversion personality may lead to different ability to do feedback seeking behavior. Therefore, in this paper, we seek to understand the extent which personality influence the good and bad feedback seeking behavior.

Third, some supervisors are task-oriented; they ask subordinates to accomplish the job without excuses. Some supervisors are human-oriented, they care every subordinate not only their working performance but also themselves. Subordinates may know the effect of using feedback seeking behavior to influence task-oriented or human-oriented supervisors is different. They may display distinct feedback seeking behavior to different management style supervisors. Consequently, our final purpose is to examine will different management style supervisors moderate the relationship between subordinates' personality and feedback seeking behavior.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Feedback Seeking Behavior and Impression Management

Previous research of feedback focused on how supervisor conveys a message to a subordinate (Ilgen, Fisher and Taylor, 1979) [9]. Therefore, Ashford and Cummings (1983) [3] propose a new thinking that subordinates may proactively seek feedback in stead of passively waiting for it to be informed. Because subordinates would like to know how their working performance have been perceived by supervisors and what should they do to deal with their job, they would ask others, such as supervisors or coworkers for information about their performance (Ashford and Cummings, 1983, 1985) [3] [4]. This kind of behavior is defined as feedback seeking.

By proactive feedback seeking behavior, subordinates not

only obtain useful working information from their supervisors, confirm supervisors' perception of their level of working performance in advance, but also can influence their impression (Morrison and Bies, 1991) [12]. These motives would be driven subordinates to seek feedback aggressively. When subordinates performed well, proactive good feedback seeking behavior attract supervisors' attention on their success working performance, ensure supervisors perceived their completion of a task and even to increase the supervisors' perceptions of their working quality. Further, they can get job praise, money reward or promotion; subordinates are more willing to exhibit good feedback seeking behavior.

When subordinates performed poorly, aggressive bad feedback seeking behavior can help them acquire more remedy information from supervisors, give them adequate apologies and excuses to reduce supervisors' angry and negative evaluation. Therefore, subordinates may avoid inflicting the punishment, penalty and loss supervisors' trust of working ability; subordinates will tend to display bad feedback seeking behavior.

Chinese Culture and Feedback Seeking Behavior

Culture plays an important role in directing persons' social skills and communication. Taiwan is strongly influenced in many aspects by traditional Chinese culture and Confucian values. Chinese culture values include harmony, conformity and "face" (Raltson et al., 1993; Shaw et al., 1993) [15] [17]. In Hofstede (1988) [8] study, Taiwan society compared to U.S. culture is at the lower middle end of the Individualism scale. Under the influence of collectivism (not too outstanding of their coworkers) and humble, when subordinates performed well, they may not aggressive inquire supervisors' feedback. Because of making a parade of successful working performance, it may damage their harmonious working relationships with coworkers. However, when they performed poorly, in order to avoid loss of "face", they are more aggressive to do bad feedback seeking behavior and try to manipulate their supervisors' impression to reduce their image harmed.

H1: Taiwanese subordinates are more aggressive to perform bad feedback seeking behavior than good feedback seeking behavior.

Extraverted Person and Feedback Seeking Behavior

Personal trait is continued and steady psychological condition that we can use it to predict persons how to interact with others. Some people are more aggressive and better than others to do impression management. According to Costa and McCrae (1992) [5], extraverted people are likely to be sociable, energetic, dominant, cheerful and positive in their outlook on life. In contrast, introverted people are more conservative, less outgoing and unsocial. Consequently, when extraverted people have good performance, they may not shy to exhibit their success achievement to others. When they do not accomplish supervisors' desire, they may use some social skills and actively inquire supervisors' opinions to reduce their working images harmed. Thus, extraversion subordinates present more good feedback seeking behavior than introversion subordinates; extraversion subordinates exhibit more bad feedback seeking behavior than introversion subordinates. We therefore test the following hypotheses:

H2a: Extraversion personality is positive related to good feedback seeking behavior.

H2b: Extraversion personality is positive related to bad feedback seeking behavior.

The Moderating Role of Supervisors' Management Style

Different supervisors' management style would affect subordinates to adopt distinct communication style and interaction pattern. In the Ohio State Leadership Studies defined two different management styles. Consideration leadership supervisors have been defined as they establish job relationships with subordinates based on mutual trust, respect for subordinates' ideas, and consideration of their feelings. Accordingly, initiating structure leadership supervisors have been defined as structure supervisors and subordinate roles toward goal attainment (Fisher and Edwards, 1988) [7].

Penley and Hawkins (1985) [14] argue that consideration supervisors are more human-oriented leadership and heavily rely on relational aspects of communication, such as interpersonal concern and warm. Initiating structure supervisors are more task-oriented leadership and communication focus is the actual content of the information provided. Under consideration leadership, extraversion subordinates perceived doing impression management with their supervisors is more effective. Aggressive good feedback seeking behavior let supervisors notice their success working performance and have good impression on them. Proactive bad feedback seeking behavior mitigated subordinates' error and supervisors may think they have tried hard to attain the goal and than reduce their negative evaluation and emotion from subordinates' poor working performance.

However, under initiating structure leadership, extraversion subordinates observe doing impression management with their supervisors is more ineffective. When subordinates performed well, supervisors may think they just fulfill their job, they will not increase their perception of subordinates' working performance. If subordinates do not performed well, proactive bad feedback seeking behavior can not influence initiating structure supervisors' impression. Because they depend on subordinates' real outcome to make judgments, bad feedback seeking behavior is ineffective. Therefore, we posit supervisors' management style will moderate the relationship between subordinates' personality and good/bad feedback seeking behavior, as shown in the following hypotheses.

H3a: The positive moderating effect of consideration supervisors between extraversion subordinates and good feedback seeking behavior is stronger than initiating structure supervisors

H3b: The positive moderating effect of consideration supervisors between extraversion subordinates and bad feedback seeking behavior is stronger than initiating structure supervisors

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

The sample of this study was collected from Taiwan Top 1000 corporations. We random sampled 620 companies and mailed our questionnaires to human resource department and sales department. Of these, 118 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 18 percent. However, because of eliminating the uncompleted data, only 111 samples were examined in this study. For these samples, 46.8 percent of members were male, 73.9 percent had a college education or above and 45.9 percent of members were from human resource department, others were from sales department.

Measures

Good feedback seeking behavior

Good feedback seeking behavior which we modified scale from Moss, Valenzi and Taggart (2003) [13]. For example, "I will display my excellent work for my coworkers and hope they might replay some positive remarks to my supervisor." "I would cheerfully greet my supervisor hoping that this would lead to a conversation about a task that I had effectively completed." "After performing well, I would ask my supervisor about my performance to draw his/her attention to my success." There are total were eight items, we summed these items. We averaged responses to these items ($r = .74$).

Bad feedback seeking behavior

Bad feedback seeking behavior which we modified scale from Moss, Valenzi and Taggart (2003) [13]. For example, "I would admit to my supervisor that I had performed poorly and tell him/her that I learned from the experience and would not repeat the incident." "After performing poorly, I would show my supervisor that I was taking responsibility for my performance and taking corrective measures." "I would inform my supervisor immediately after performing poorly and tell/guarantee/promise him/her that I would do an excellent job the next time." Total were eight items, we summed these items. We averaged responses to these items ($r = .65$).

Extraversion personality

Employees' extraversion personality which we modified scale from NEO PI-R(S form) (Costa and McCrae, 1991) [5]. For example, "I always feel full of energy." "I like to talk with others." Total were five items, we summed these items. The higher scores called extraversion person and lower scores called introversion person. We averaged responses to these items ($r = .69$).

Initiating structure leadership

Initiating structure which we modified scale from the research of Stogdill (1963) [18]. For example, "Supervisor requests his employees to obey his working rules." "Supervisor clearly notifies every employee know his working requirement" Total were ten items, we summed these items. The higher scores called high initiating structure supervisor and lower scores called low initiating structure supervisor. We averaged responses to these items ($r = .78$).

Consideration leadership

Consideration which we also modified scale from the research of Stogdill (1963) [18]. For example, "Supervisor respects his employees' welfare." "Supervisor is glad to accept employees' opinions and feelings" Total were ten items, we summed these items. The higher scores called high consideration supervisor and lower scores called low consideration supervisor. We averaged responses to these items ($r = .89$).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

TABLE 1 presents the means standard deviations and zero-order Pearson correlations of all the key variables. (As show in TABLE 1)

Tests of the Hypotheses

Good and back feedback seeking behavior

Taiwanese employees tended to exhibit more bad feedback seeking behavior ($M=6.56$, $SD=1.51$) than good feedback seeking behavior ($M=4.55$, $SD=4.52$, $t(110)= 8.785$, $p<.000$) to their supervisors. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Main effect and moderating effect

We conducted a hierarchical multiple regression to test Hypothesis 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b. As shown in Table 2, after regressing Good/Bad feedback seeking behavior on the extraversion personality, extraversion personality was positive related to good feedback seeking behavior ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.05$), lending support to Hypothesis 2a; positive related to bad feedback seeking behavior ($\beta = 0.168$, $p < 0.1$) Hypothesis 2b was supported.

TABLE 1 Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

Key Variables	Mean	s.d.	Correlations			
Extraversion	3.67	.56	--			
Initiating structure	3.32	.57	.063	--		
Consideration	3.18	.73	.049	.601**	--	
Good FSB	4.52	1.99	.183*	.018	.025	--
Bad FSB	6.56	1.52	.168+	.061	.25**	.050

$n=111$, $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $P < .01$

TABLE 2 shows that the supervisors' management style of initiating structure ($\beta = 0.017$, $p = 0.173$) and consideration ($\beta = 0.005$, $p = 0.961$) does not moderate the link between extraversion personality and good feedback seeking behavior, and Hypothesis 3a was not supported. The probably reason is that Chinese culture influence Taiwanese employees exhibited fewer good feedback seeking behavior despite facing different management style. Initiating structure ($\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.533$) does not moderate the link between extraversion personality and bad feedback seeking behavior, however, consideration ($\beta = 0.287$, $p = 0.01$) significant moderate the link between extraversion personality and bad feedback seeking behavior, and Hypothesis 3b was supported.

TABLE 2 Results of Regression Analysis for Interactive Effect of Extraversion Personality and Supervisors' Management Style on Good/Bad Feedback Seeking Behavior

Dependent variable	Good FSB		Bad FSB	
		t		t
Independent				
Extraversion	0.183	1.943**	0.168	1.784*
Interactive effects				
Extraversion × Initiating structure	0.017	1.372	0.078	0.625
Extraversion × Consideration	0.005	0.049	0.284	2.624***

$n=111$, * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $P < .01$

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This paper had three important goals. First, Taiwanese subordinates are indeed shy to exhibit good feedback seeking behavior let supervisors know their achievement. When they failed to complete the goal, they are more aggressive to influence supervisors' judgment. From a practical standpoint, this finding is the important management implication for multinational corporations or company with different culture background employees. They should concern different culture value directing employees' organization behavior. Corporations should design a fair evaluation performance appraisal system.

Second, our research result finds that extraversion employees present more feedback seeking behavior. Past literatures put less emphasis on the effect of different personality (Ashford and Cummings, 1983; Moss, Valenzi and Taggart, 2003) [3] [13]. The practical implication for managers is that they should appraise performance carefully, and avoid these kinds of impression management distorting true working performance.

Third, this paper present consideration supervisors' management style positively moderated the relationship between extraversion personality and bad feedback seeking behavior. Under the consideration management style,

employees do more feedback seeking behavior to mitigate punishment of job failure and influence supervisors' impression. This finding complete some part of feedback literature, and also remind consideration supervisor not to be manipulated by extraversion subordinate's bad feed seeking behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

Like any study, this one is not without limitations. First, our research relies on all self-report assessment that some relationship might be inflated by common-method variance. Therefore, we believe common-method variance is not a major threat in our research but indeed is a research limitation. Future researcher might examine these effects by collecting information from different sources (e.g. supervisors).

Second, the current research is also limited by its cross-section design; our study could be extended by using a longitudinal research design to clarify how feedback seeking behavior affect performance appraisal. In spite of the limitation of our research, our findings provide new insights of feedback seeking behavior. We also encourage researchers to conduct other relative variable (e.g. LMX quality, (Liden et al., 1997) [11]). This is an interesting area for future research.

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