

A Review of Research on the Influencing Factors of Employees' Taking Charge Behavior

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Abstract: Employees' taking charge behavior refers to discretionary and constructive behaviors through which employees voluntarily initiate, promote, and implement changes that contribute to organizational improvement and development. It serves as a crucial source of organizational adaptability and sustainable innovation in increasingly complex business environments. In recent years, with the rapid advancement of digital transformation, green development, and agile organizational management, taking charge behavior has become a prominent topic in the field of organizational behavior. This study systematically reviews the existing literature on the influencing factors of employees' taking charge behavior, focusing on four major dimensions: leadership factors, organizational environmental factors, individual psychological factors, and underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, current research limitations are summarized, and future research directions are proposed to provide theoretical references for subsequent studies and practical implications for organizational management.

Keywords: Taking charge behavior; Influencing factors; Boundary conditions; Literature review

Online publication: August 14, 2026

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the digital economy and the increasing uncertainty of organizational environments, organizations have become increasingly dependent on employees who proactively identify problems, initiate innovation, and facilitate continuous organizational improvement. Consequently, employees' taking charge behavior has emerged as an important source of sustainable competitive advantage for organizations ^[1]. Compared with in-role behaviors, taking charge behavior is characterized by greater proactivity, challenge orientation, and risk-taking tendencies. It not only facilitates organizational innovation but also enhances organizations' capability to adapt to environmental changes ^[2]. In recent years, research on taking charge behavior has expanded beyond traditional leadership perspectives to encompass digital management, organizational climate, psychological resources, and multilevel mechanisms, resulting in a more comprehensive theoretical framework ^[3]. Therefore, a systematic review of recent international studies

on the influencing factors of employees' taking charge behavior is necessary to clarify the research trajectory and identify future research directions.

2. Current research on the influencing factors of employees' taking charge behavior

2.1. Leadership factors

2.1.1. Continuous development of transformational leadership research

Leadership has consistently been regarded as one of the most important antecedents of employees' taking charge behavior. Existing studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership promotes taking charge behavior by enhancing employees' autonomy and role-breadth self-efficacy, thereby establishing an important theoretical foundation for subsequent research ^[2]. Further studies have shown that team-member exchange strengthens the positive relationship between proactive personality and taking charge behavior, while transformational leadership further amplifies this positive effect ^[4]. Green transformational leadership enhances employees' personal initiative and further promotes taking charge behavior through green organizational identity ^[5]. Differentiated transformational leadership facilitates taking charge behavior by increasing employees' psychological availability, whereas collectivism orientation positively moderates this relationship ^[6]. In addition, individual-focused transformational leadership promotes employees' willingness to undertake organizational change through the sequential mediating effects of psychological capital and thriving at work ^[7].

2.1.2. Diversification of leadership styles

With the continuous advancement of research, multiple leadership styles have gradually been identified as important antecedents of employees' taking charge behavior. Secure-base leadership enhances employees' psychological availability, thereby increasing their willingness to engage in organizational change, and this relationship is further strengthened by independent self-construal ^[8]. Authentic leadership promotes taking charge behavior by enhancing team social capital, while employees' absorptive capacity further reinforces this mechanism ^[9]. Empowering leadership encourages employees to utilize their strengths and increases their willingness to assume organizational responsibilities, with ambition strengthening this positive relationship ^[10]. Family supportive leadership continuously enriches employees' resources, thereby increasing their willingness to cope with risks and challenges associated with organizational change ^[11]. Relative leader-member exchange enhances employees' positive self-perception, which subsequently promotes taking charge behavior ^[12]. Furthermore, under the context of digital transformation, digital leadership enhances taking charge behavior by promoting job crafting and strengthening employees' proactive personality ^[1].

2.2. Organizational environmental factors

The organizational environment constitutes an important contextual factor influencing employees' taking charge behavior. High-commitment work systems create a supportive human resource management environment, strengthen employees' sense of organizational responsibility and willingness to embrace change, and consequently promote taking charge behavior ^[13]. Strengths-based psychological climates enhance employees' feelings of being recognized by the organization, thereby increasing their motivation to initiate organizational improvements ^[14]. Employees' positive perceptions of digital human resource

management transformation enhance work engagement, which subsequently promotes taking charge behavior, while person–organization fit positively moderates this relationship ^[3]. Conversely, job insecurity weakens employees’ willingness to undertake organizational change and influences taking charge behavior through a moderated mediation mechanism ^[15]. During organizational change, core organizational members generally exhibit higher levels of proactive change behavior, whereas other employees are more susceptible to organizational pressure and traditional ways of thinking ^[16].

2.3. Individual psychological factors

In recent years, psychological resources have become an important theoretical perspective for explaining employees’ taking charge behavior. Supervisor information sharing enhances employees’ relationship energy and strengthens family-like employee–organization relationships, thereby promoting proactive organizational change behavior ^[17]. Positive psychological resources improve employees’ ability to cope with change-related challenges and further facilitate taking charge behavior through thriving at work ^[7]. Psychological availability not only directly promotes taking charge behavior but is also influenced by employees’ levels of independent self-construal ^[8]. Positive self-perception enhances employees’ intrinsic motivation to assume organizational responsibilities and promote organizational improvement, serving as an important psychological foundation for taking charge behavior ^[12]. Job crafting enables employees to proactively adjust their work content and methods, thereby increasing their willingness to engage in organizational change, while proactive personality further strengthens this relationship ^[1].

2.4. Mechanisms underlying employees’ taking charge behavior

Recent studies have shifted from examining isolated antecedents to exploring the complex mechanisms underlying employees’ taking charge behavior. Team social capital and absorptive capacity jointly constitute an important mediated moderation mechanism that explains how leadership behaviors promote employees’ taking charge behavior ^[9]. Strengths use and ambition jointly represent an important pathway through which empowering leadership facilitates taking charge behavior, further enriching the explanatory framework of proactive behaviors ^[10]. Psychological availability and collectivism orientation jointly constitute a moderated mediation mechanism explaining the influence of differentiated transformational leadership on taking charge behavior ^[6]. Digital human resource management influences employees’ proactive behaviors through work engagement and person–organization fit, providing a novel theoretical framework for understanding taking charge behavior in the digital era ^[3]. Moreover, environmental passion and autonomous motivation form a dual mediation mechanism that explains employees’ engagement in green organizational change, providing valuable theoretical insights for future research on taking charge behavior ^[18].

3. Discussion

Overall, international research on the influencing factors of employees’ taking charge behavior has established a relatively mature theoretical framework. Research has gradually expanded from traditional transformational leadership to diverse leadership styles, including digital leadership, empowering leadership, secure-base leadership, authentic leadership, and family supportive leadership, thereby enriching leadership research in this field ^[1–2]. Simultaneously, studies on organizational contexts have increasingly focused on digital human resource management, strengths-based psychological climates, high-commitment work

systems, and organizational change contexts, substantially extending the research boundaries of taking charge behavior ^[13–14]. Psychological resources have also become an important theoretical basis for explaining employees' taking charge behavior, with variables such as psychological capital, psychological availability, job crafting, self-perception, and relationship energy significantly enriching the explanatory framework ^[12, 17]. Furthermore, research has gradually evolved from simple linear relationships to more sophisticated mediated, moderated, and serial mediation models, indicating a trend toward more comprehensive and multilevel theoretical development ^[3, 9].

Nevertheless, several limitations remain. First, most existing studies rely on cross-sectional research designs, resulting in limited understanding of the dynamic developmental process of employees' taking charge behavior. Second, under the context of digital transformation, the impacts of artificial intelligence, algorithmic management, and intelligent organizational environments on employees' taking charge behavior remain insufficiently explored. In addition, cross-cultural differences in the mechanisms underlying taking charge behavior require further empirical investigation.

4. Future research directions

Future research on the influencing factors of employees' taking charge behavior can be advanced in several important directions. First, greater attention should be devoted to longitudinal research to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic process through which employees' taking charge behavior emerges, develops, and evolves over time. Such research would help capture the temporal changes in proactive behaviors and provide a more comprehensive explanation of their developmental trajectories. Second, in the context of the digital economy, future studies should focus on emerging organizational contexts, such as digital leadership, artificial intelligence, human–AI collaboration, and digital human resource management, to explore how these factors influence employees' taking charge behavior and to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which digital transformation shapes proactive behavioral outcomes. Third, future research should further strengthen multilevel investigations by integrating individual-, team-, and organizational-level factors into a comprehensive analytical framework. Such efforts would facilitate a better understanding of the interactions among antecedents operating at different levels and contribute to the development of more systematic theoretical models of employees' taking charge behavior. Finally, greater emphasis should be placed on cross-cultural comparative research to examine the similarities and differences in the antecedents of employees' taking charge behavior across different institutional environments and cultural contexts. Such research will contribute to refining the theoretical framework of employees' taking charge behavior and provide richer theoretical insights and practical implications for organizations pursuing digital transformation and high-quality development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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