



# Research on the Influence of Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership on Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior Based on SPSS 22.0

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**Abstract.** In the modern business environment, corporate ethical problems occur frequently, so it is necessary to conduct further research on ethical leadership to cope with the deteriorating enterprise competition environment. This paper will use the form of questionnaire measurement to collect relevant data from a number of enterprises in Hangzhou and Jiaxing, most of which belong to manufacturing and service industries. After data matching and eliminating invalid data, 63 leaders' questionnaires were successfully matched with 263 subordinates' questionnaires, with effective recovery of 78.27%. In order to test the relationship between various variables, this study will use SPSS 22.0 statistical software to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data, followed by hierarchical regression analysis on the corresponding variables using SPSS 22.0 to test the hypothesis. Finally, this study found that promotion-focused ethical leadership can positively influence employees' challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating effect of thriving at work, and this process is clearly moderated by future work self salience.

**Keywords:** promotion-focused ethical leadership; thriving at work; challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior; future work self salience;

## 1 Introduction

With the impact of the new crown epidemic and the intensification of Sino-US trade frictions, companies will face a more complex business environment in 2020, and their survival and development will become increasingly difficult. In this context, some companies ignore ethics when pursuing business interests, causing moral scandals and causing great harm to the company and society. Ethical issues in the business world have been common for decades, which highlights the importance and necessity of further exploring the ethical issues of organizational leadership [1]. The research on ethical leadership came into being on the basis of this reality. In recent decades,

researchers have been trying to use standardized terms to define the connotation of ethical leadership [2], but so far, the academic circles have not formed a unified understanding of the conceptual definition and measurement methods of ethical leadership [3]. Ethical leadership was first defined as a mode of thinking that enables organization managers to make corresponding management decisions based on certain moral and ethical guidelines [4]. After that, some studies rely on social learning theory to define ethical leadership in a more standardized and complete way [5], that is, ethical leaders demonstrate appropriate behaviors to employees through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and use two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making methods. Make employees recognize and practice these behaviors. This definition has received extensive attention and use in related studies.

Leadership, as an important organizational contextual factor, will have an important effect on employees' attitudes and behaviors. For example, ethical leadership has been shown to be associated with many positive results in past studies, such as reducing employee burnout [6], reduce unethical behavior of employees [7]. Besides, studies have pointed out that ethical leadership will have an important impact on organizational citizenship behavior, but few studies have further subdivided the two for research. Therefore, on the basis of previous studies, this study explores promotion-focused ethical leadership (PEL) and challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (COCB) as independent and dependent variables. Based on the conservation of resources theory (COR), this article will explore the impact of promotion-focused ethical leadership facilitation on employees' challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior, taking the future work self salience (FWSS) as the boundary condition, and elaborate on the role of thriving at work (TAW) in the formation of their relationships.

## **2 Research Design**

### **2.1 Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership and Thriving at Work**

Thriving at work is a positive mental state where individuals feel vitality and learning at work, vitality means that the individual feels full of vitality and enthusiasm in the work, and learning means that the individual actively acquires new knowledge and new skills in the work to improve their own abilities and build confidence. The social embedding model [8] also pointed out that the prosperity of an individual's work will be affected by the organizational context, work resources, motivational work behavior and other work contextual factors.

Leadership, as an important feature of the work environment, will have an important impact on the thriving at work. Promotion-focused ethical leadership will encourage employees to behave ethically, and promote "correctness" by supporting, rewarding and encouraging employees who behave ethically [9]. According to the conservation of resources theory (COR), individuals have the tendency to acquire, maintain, cultivate and maintain their cherished resources [10]. This basic assumption can play a role in explaining human psychology and behavior. Some scholars also pointed out that the process of interaction between leaders and employees can be re-

garded as the process by which leaders provide employees with work resources. Promotion-focused ethical leadership will support employees in their daily work, communicate with employees frequently, encourage employees to show compliance with norms and reward them, which will make employees feel the trust of their superiors. On the one hand, after interacting with the promotion-focused ethical leadership, employees can experience the meaning of work and generate more positive emotions, and their vitality level will also increase; on the other hand, the promotion encouragement and rewards will also stimulate the learning motivation of employees. Therefore, this article regards the daily behavior of promotion-focused ethical leadership as a process by which the leader provides resources for employees. After the employees receive the care from their superiors, they will regard it as a supportive work resource, in order to maintain and continue to obtain such resources, employees will enhance work vitality, stimulate learning motivation, and ultimately promote their TAW. In summary, the research puts forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: PEL is positively related to employees' TAW.

## **2.2 The Mediating Role of Thriving at Work**

The COR states that individuals will tend to acquire, maintain, cultivate and protect their cherished resources [11]. Research has found that when employees are in a prosperous state of work, they are more willing to enhance their work abilities through learning [12]. In general, employees' thriving at work are more willing to invest more personal resources in their work and actively make more off-role behaviors, which provides a theoretical explanation for the mechanism of COCB.

The concept of OCB was originally defined as "the behavior that employees actively carry out based on their own knowledge that can promote the development of the organization. This behavior is not mandated by the organization, and there is no formal remuneration or reward" [13]. With the deepening of the research on OCB, scholars have extended the concept and dimension of OCB on the basis of individual OCB research. Some scholars further subdivide OCB promotion-focused ethical leadership into two categories: affiliate-oriented OCB and challenge-oriented OCB [14]. Different from affiliate-oriented organizational citizenship behavior that aims to maintain the status quo of the organization and consolidate interpersonal relationships, challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior is a constructive or transformative behavior that emphasizes challenging the organization's status quo and improving organizational performance [15].

Promotion-focused ethical leadership will support employees, actively communicate with employees, encourage employees to act in compliance with regulations, and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for employees. In this way, this article believes that PEL will give employees work resources in the process of interaction with employees, enhance their work vitality and learning motivation, and promote their TAW. Employees who enter the state of TAW are full of vitality. Furthermore, when employees have a strong motivation to learn, they are willing to acquire more knowledge and information from the organizational environment. Through this knowledge and information, they can have a more comprehensive understanding of

their work and become Willing to change the status quo. In addition, when employees are in a state of thriving at work, they can experience positive emotions, which helps to improve their cognitive thinking and problem-solving abilities, so that they dare to engage in challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. Some studies put forward the acquisition spiral inference on the basis of resource conservation theory, indicating that individuals will be more inclined to invest resources and pay attention to information on further acquiring resources in order to obtain additional resources after acquiring resources. Therefore, this article believes that when promotion-focused ethical leadership give employees work resources and enable them to enter a state of thriving at work, employees will be more willing to engage in challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior in order to obtain more resources in the future. In summary, the research puts forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: TAW mediates the relationship between PEL and COCB.

### **2.3 The Moderating Role of Future Work Self Salience**

Future work self salience is the degree of clarity and imaginability of the individual's future work self [16]. Previous studies have proved that a high level of FWSS can have many positive effects, such as encouraging employees to make active adjustments to improve work performance [17]. The COR believes that resources are anything that can help individuals achieve their goals, and future work self salience can also be regarded as an individual motivational resource, motivating individuals to take active actions in pursuit of career goals. This article believes that the self-definition of future work, as a personal resource with important value, will play an important role as a boundary condition in the path of resource gain and loss.

The COR pointed out that individuals are less likely to suffer resource losses when they have more initial resources, and their ability to acquire new resources is stronger; on the contrary, if individuals have fewer initial resources, they are more likely to suffer. Loss of resources, the ability to acquire new resources is also weaker. Specifically for this study, employees with a high level of self-definition in their future work have a clearer future job vision, and the ability to be improved to achieve future work goals is clearer, so employees will be based on a clear future job vision With more work vitality and stronger learning motivation, the role of promoting ethical leadership in the work prosperity of employees is greatly enhanced; when the individual's future work self-definition level is low, although the promoting ethical leadership encourages and Reward employees for engaging in behaviors that conform to the norms, but employees are not clear about their future work prospects and do not know the specific behaviors that should be taken. This may weaken the impact of promotion-focused ethical leadership on the thriving at work of employees. In summary, the research puts forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: FWSS regulates the positive relationship between PEL and TAW. When the FWSS level is higher, this relationship will be stronger; otherwise, the relationship will be weaker.

The above assumptions indicate that the model is a moderated mediation model. Specifically, when employees have a high level of future work self salience, the

positive relationship between the promotion-focused ethical leadership and employees' thriving at work is stronger, and the positive relationship between the promotion-focused ethical leadership and challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior through the employees' thriving at work is stronger. Accordingly, the moderated mediation hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: FWSS moderates the mediating effect of TAW on PEL and COCB. When employees' FWSS level is higher, the mediating effect of TAW is stronger. Otherwise, the weaker it is.

### 3 Research Method

This article will use the form of questionnaire survey to investigate control variables such as PEL, TAW, COCB, FWSS, and demographics. Then the data collected through the questionnaire will be processed and analyzed accordingly, and the relationship between the various variables will be explored. In order to minimize the possible impact of homology deviation, this study mainly adopted the matching form to issue electronic questionnaires to collect relevant data. The research in this study is mainly conducted in multiple companies in Hangzhou, Jiaxing and other places, and the industry distribution is mainly concentrated in the manufacturing and service industries. A total of 68 team questionnaires were distributed in this survey, including 336 subordinate questionnaires and 68 supervisor questionnaires. After data matching was performed and invalid data was eliminated, 63 leader questionnaires were successfully matched with 263 subordinate questionnaires, and the effective response rate of the questionnaire was 78.27%.

In terms of gender, males accounted for 44.9% and females accounted for 55.1% of the employees participating in this research survey; in terms of age distribution, people aged 18-25 accounted for 34.6%, and people aged 26-30 accounted for 38.0%, 31 People aged -40 accounted for 22.4%, those aged 41-50 accounted for 4.2%, and those over 50 accounted for 0.8%, indicating that the participants in this research survey are mainly young and middle-aged; In terms of distribution, 1.9% have a junior high school degree or below, 8.0% have a high school degree, 37.3% have a junior college degree, 50.2% have a bachelor degree, and a graduate degree or above. The proportion of people who participated in this research survey was 2.7%, indicating that the educational backgrounds of the personnel participating in this research survey are mainly college and undergraduate degrees; in terms of the distribution of working years, those with a working life of 1 year or less accounted for 8.7%, those with a working life of 2-5 years accounted for 53.6%, those with a working life of 6-10 years accounted for 31.2%, those with a working life of 11-15 years accounted for 3.4%, and those with a working life of more than 15 years accounted for 3.0%, indicating that most of the participants in this survey have certain working experience.

### 3.1 Measuring Tools

All scales were evaluated by likert 5-point scoring method, from 1 to 5 indicating "completely inconsistent" to "completely consistent".

Promotion-focused ethical leadership: adopt the scale compiled by Bush et al., representative items such as "My leader will encourage employees to abide by the ethical code".

Thriving at work: adopt the scale compiled by Porath et al. [18], representative items such as "I am full of ability and spirit (energy) at work".

Challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior: adopt the scale compiled by Mackenzie et al. [19], representative items such as "The employee will actively communicate with those who oppose or disagree with their opinions".

Future work self salience: adopt the scale compiled by Strauss et al., representative items such as "My future is easy to imagine".

### 3.2 Statistical Analysis

SPSS22.0 were used for statistical analysis of the questionnaire results

## 4 Research Results

In order to test the relationship between the various variables, this study uses SPSS22.0 to analyze the collected data. The specific data analysis results are as follows.

### 4.1 The Influence of Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership on Employees' Thriving at Work

The main effect discussed in this study is the impact of promotion-focused ethical leadership (PEL) on the thriving at work of employees. First, put the mean value of Thriving at Work (TAW) in the dependent variable column, and then put the control variables that may affect the PEL and TAW in the independent variable column (ie gender, age, degree of education, working years), and finally in the independent variable column. The variable column is placed in PEL. The analysis results are shown in the table below. It can be seen that the tolerance value of each variable is greater than 0.1, and the VIF is less than 10, indicating that there is no serious multicollinearity between the variables. And M2 shows that PEL is significantly positively correlated with TAW ( $\beta=0.397$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating that Hypothesis 1 is valid.

**Table 1.** The Regression Analysis Results of PEL to TAW

Variable	TAW		M1		M2	
	M1	M2	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF
Gender	-0.152*	-0.121*	0.997	1.003	0.991	1.009

Variable	TAW		M1		M2	
Age	0.111	0.094	0.610	1.639	0.609	1.641
Degree of Education	0.028	0.005	0.928	1.077	0.925	1.081
Working Years	0.055	0.024	0.621	1.609	0.619	1.615
PEL		0.397***			0.983	1.018
R <sup>2</sup>	0.045	0.2				
Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	0.03*	0.184**				
F	3.304*	12.854**				

#### 4.2 The Mediating Role of Thriving at Work in Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership and Challenge-oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior

This study uses the mediation test method provided by Baron and Kenny to test the mediating effect of thriving at Work (TAW) in promotion-focused ethical leadership (PEL) and challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (COCB). First, take COCB as the dependent variable, and put demographic variables such as gender and age as independent variables into Model 1. Next, add independent variables to PEL on the basis of Model 1. Finally, Model 3 On the basis of Model 2, add the intermediary variable TAW. The corresponding analysis results are shown in the Table below. The tolerance values of the variables are all greater than 0.1, and the VIF are all less than 5, which indicates that the multicollinearity between the variables is not serious. The results in Model 2 show that PEL has a significant positive impact on COCB ( $\beta=0.412, p<0.001$ ). The results in Model 3 show that after adding the intermediary variable TAW. TAW has a significant positive impact on COCB ( $\beta=0.218, p<0.001$ ), and PEL has a positive effect on COCB. It still has a significant positive impact ( $\beta=0.325, p<0.001$ ), which indicates that TAW plays a part of the mediating role between PEL and COCB. Hypothesis 2 has been verified.

**Table 2.** An analysis of the mediating role of Thriving at Work

Variable	COCB			Collinear diagnosis	
	M1	M2	M3	Tolerance	VIF
Gender	-0.023	0.008	0.034	0.973	1.027
Age	-0.022	-0.04	-0.06	0.605	1.652
Degree of Education	-0.076	-0.1	-0.101	0.925	1.081
Working Years	0.114	0.082	0.077	0.619	1.616
PEL		0.412***	0.325***	0.823	1.215

Variable	COCB			Collinear diagnosis	
	TAW			0.218***	0.8
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.187	0.225		
Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	0.004	0.171***	0.207***		
F	1.294	11.791***	12.371** *		

### 4.3 The Moderating Effect of Future Work Self Salience on The Relationship Between Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership and Thriving at Work

This study uses a hierarchical regression test procedure to test the moderating effect of future work self salience (FWSS) on the relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership (PEL) and thriving at work (TAW). Taking TAW as a dependent variable, adding control variables, independent variables (PEL), and adjusting variables (FWSS) in turn, and finally put PEL and FWSS on the basis of the above Interactive items. The specific analysis results are shown in the table below. Model 2 shows that PEL has a significant impact on TAW ( $\beta=0.397, p<0.001$ ); Model 4 shows that the adjustment variable is added to the regression equation to be clear about FWSS. After the product term of PEL and FWSS, the product term also has a significant effect on TAW ( $\beta=0.133, p<0.01$ ), which initially verifies Hypothesis 3.

**Table 3.** Moderating effect of future work self salience on the relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership - thriving at work

Variable	TAW			
	M1	M2	M3	M4
Gender	-0.152*	-0.121*	-0.107*	-0.097
Age	0.111	0.094	0.042	0.02
Degree of Education	0.028	0.005	-0.022	-0.019
Working Years	0.055	0.024	0.038	0.048
PEL		0.397***	0.272***	0.269***
FWSS			0.42***	0.404***
PEL*FWSS				0.133**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.045	0.2	0.357	0.374
Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	0.03*	0.184***	0.342***	0.357**
F	3.034*	12.854***	23.73***	21.791***

#### 4.4 The Conditioned Indirect Effects of Future Work Self Salience (Mediated by Thriving at Work)

This study adopts the conditional indirect effect test method used in the study of Preacher, Rucker and Hayes [20]. As shown in the table below, when the level of FWSS is high, the indirect effect through TAW is 95% The confidence intervals of are [0.0246, 0.1482] and [0.0438, 0.2087] respectively, and the two intervals do not cross 0, indicating that the indirect effect is significant. It can be seen that the FWSS promotes the intermediary relationship between TAW in PEL and COCB. That is to say, the higher the level of FWSS, the stronger mediating role of TAW between PEL and COCB. Hypothesis 4 has been verified.

**Table 4.** Conditional Indirect Effect Test of thriving at work

		<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Bias corrected 95 % CI</i>	
<b>TAW</b>	M-SD	<b>0.0356</b>	- <b>0.0068</b>	<b>0.1118</b>
	M	<b>0.0722</b>	<b>0.0246</b>	<b>0.1482</b>
	M+SD	<b>0.1088</b>	<b>0.0438</b>	<b>0.2087</b>

## 5 Discussion

Firstly, the results of this study show that there is a significant positive correlation between promotion-focused ethical leadership and employees' thriving at work. The explanation for this conclusion is: the social embedding model believes that the thriving at work of individuals will be affected by their work resources, and the process of interaction between leaders and employees can be regarded as the process by which leaders provide employees with work resources. After interacting with the promotion-focused ethical leadership, employees can experience the meaning of work more, generate more positive emotions, and have more ability and confidence to complete the work in the organizational context, and increase their self-confidence and interest in work. Increasing the level of vitality in their work; and promotion-focused ethical leadership can also enhance employees' willingness to learn and stimulate their motivation to learn. In the face of promotion-focused ethical leadership, on the one hand, employees have a higher sense of trust and do not need to spend too much psychological resources to evaluate the relationship with the leader; on the other hand Can get the support and encouragement of promotion-focused ethical leadership, so their work resources are relatively sufficient, and they can have more psychological resources to achieve a state of work prosperity through the "vitality" and "learning" dimensions. Therefore, promotion-focused ethical leadership can promote employees' thriving at Work in the work situation, that is, thriving at Work has a positive correlation with employees' thriving at work.

Secondly, this research explores the mediating role of TAW in PEL and COCB. Promotion-focused ethical leadership can support employees, actively communicate

with employees, encourage employees to act in compliance with regulations, and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for employees in the process of interacting with employees. Such leadership behavior can be seen as a way to give employees work resources. Because promotion-focused ethical leadership can give employees more psychological resources, improve their vitality, stimulate their learning motivation, and promote their thriving at Work. According to the the conservation of resources theory, individuals tend to acquire, maintain, cultivate and protect their cherished resources. Further, the resource acquisition spiral inference shows that individuals will be more inclined to invest resources and focus on further acquiring resources after acquiring resources Information for additional resources. Therefore, employees with a sense of thriving at work are more willing to invest more personal resources in their work and actively make more off-role behaviors, which provides a theoretical basis for the mechanism of challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. Specifically, when employees face the positive leadership behavior of promotion-focused ethical leadership in the organizational context, they get more work resources to support them, and they enter a state of thriving at work and full of vitality. At this time, employees are more likely to take proactive actions to solve the problem. Organize problems and improve the status quo. In addition, when employees are in a state of TAW, employees have a stronger motivation to learn and are willing to acquire more knowledge and information from the organizational environment. Through this knowledge and information, they can have a more comprehensive understanding of their work and become Willing to change the status quo. Overall, this research believes that employees with a sense of TAW will be more willing to invest more personal resources in their work, and actively make more off-role behaviors (such as challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior) in order to obtain more in the future. resource. Therefore, employee prosperity plays an intermediary role between PEL and COCB.

Thirdly, this study found that employees with a high level of FWSS are more likely to enter a state of TAW when faced with promotion-focused ethical leadership. This is because the FWSS can be regarded as an individual motivational resource, which can act on the personal resource consumption state of employees in their daily work. Employees with high levels of FWSS are more likely to enter a state of TAW when faced with PEL.

## 6 Shortcomings and prospects

Although this research has carried out corresponding empirical research in accordance with standardized inquiry methods, and has enriched the content of theory and practice to a certain extent, due to the limitation of experience and objective conditions, this research inevitably has certain research limitations. It needs to be further improved in future research.

First, there is still room for improvement in the research design of this study and the selection of survey samples. Due to the limited conditions in the implementation of the research process, the cross-sectional data design adopted in this paper will affect the

verification of the causal relationship between variables. In fact, the types of ethical leadership behavior adopted by leaders are constantly changing, and the cross-sectional data design of this article cannot reflect the dynamic change process of leadership ethical leadership behavior. Future research can take longitudinal tracking research, repeat measurements of leadership behavior variables to better observe the causal relationship and development trends between variables. In addition, the research samples of this study are mainly from Zhejiang. Future research can expand the selection of research samples to expand the generalizability of research conclusions.

Second, the boundary conditions of this research design are the individual traits of future work self salience. Future research can select external variables such as organizational context factors to explore the influence of promotion-focused ethical leadership on employees' challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior.

Third, the research method in this article only uses the questionnaire method, which is relatively simple. In the future related research, other researchers can combine the log method, experimental method and other methods to explore to obtain more accurate research results.

Fourth, this research mainly starts from the individual level, all variables and data are from the individual level, and does not take into account influencing factors at the organizational or team level. In the past, some scholars pointed out that the results obtained by measuring and analyzing related variables at different levels may have certain differences. Therefore, future research can carry out cross-level exploration, exploring the influence mechanism of ethical leadership on employees' challenging organizational citizenship behavior from the perspective of the organization or team.

Fifth, the measurement scales of all variables in this study are selected from the mature scales in foreign research and used after certain revisions. Therefore, in future research, researchers can conduct interviews based on China's national conditions or adopt appropriate local scales to verify the relationship between ethical leadership and other variables.

## 7 Conclusion

In a word, the empirical analysis of this study leads to the following conclusions: promotion-focused ethical leadership is positively related to employees' thriving at work; thriving at work mediates the relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership and challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior; future work self salience regulates the positive relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership and thriving at work. When the future work self salience level is higher, this relationship will be stronger; otherwise, the relationship will be weaker; future work self salience moderates the mediating effect of thriving at work on promotion-focused ethical leadership and challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. When employees' future work self salience level is higher, the mediating effect of thriving at work is stronger. Otherwise, the weaker it is.

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