Research on the Relationship between Internal Corporate Social Responsibility, Organizational Commitment, and Employee Innovative Behavior

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Abstract. Innovation is the core competitiveness of enterprises, and how to motivate employees to innovate is an important issue to be solved in enterprise management. The role of internal corporate social responsibility in motivating employees to innovate is worth exploring. Therefore, this study used empirical research methods to explore the relationship between internal corporate social responsibility, organizational commitment, and employee innovative behavior, where organizational commitment was a mediator. Through a questionnaire survey of 308 enterprise employees, this study drawn the following conclusions: (1) Internal corporate social responsibility positively and significantly affected employee innovative behavior and organizational commitment. (2) Organizational commitment positively and significantly affected employee innovative behavior. (3) Organizational commitment was a mediating variable between internal corporate social responsibility and employee innovative behavior. Based on the conclusions of the study, this study proposed suggestions on motivating employees to innovate, hoping to help enterprises develop and progress.

Keywords: Internal corporate social responsibility; organizational commitment; employee innovative behavior.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing era, corporate social responsibility has gradually received widespread attention. Chinese enterprises have been outstanding in fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities in recent years. Outside the enterprises, they have actively donated money and materials to help people in need and made outstanding contributions to the society; Within the enterprise, efforts have been made to help and care for employees, including protecting their rights and interests, caring about their lives, etc. Many enterprises issue corporate social responsibility reports every year, which reflects the importance that enterprises attach to fulfilling their corporate social responsibility. In the field of management, research on corporate social responsibility has also been expanding, becoming one of the hot topics of research. At present, many researches on corporate social responsibility focus more on the organizational level, such as corporate value [1], corporate performance and risk [2], corporate innovation performance [3], etc. For individual employees, the existing research showed that corporate social responsibility can positively affect employee attitudes and behaviors, such as employee well-being [4], employee engagement [5], etc.

With the development of society and economy, competition among enterprises continues to intensify, and innovation has become the core competitiveness of enterprises. How to motivate employees to innovate is a problem that every enterprise is paying attention to. In stimulating employee innovative behavior, the role of corporate social responsibility is worth exploring, especially internal corporate social responsibility, which is closely related to employees. Corporate social responsibility can positively promote employee innovation behavior [6]. Corporate social responsibility can be classified according to external and internal stakeholders. External corporate social responsibility is the behavior that enterprise implements to external stakeholders, while the behavior that enterprise implements to internal stakeholders is referred to as internal corporate social responsibility [7]. Through reading and sorting out relevant literature at home and abroad, this study found that there are few studies that explore the impact of internal corporate social
responsibility on employee innovative behavior and its internal mechanism, which is worthy of further study. According to the social exchange theory [8], enterprises and employees are a typical exchange and reciprocity relationship. Employees create value for their labor and expect material and spiritual returns from the enterprise. Both parties are mutually beneficial and exchange value. Employees are the main internal stakeholders of an enterprise, and fulfilling internal corporate social responsibilities can promote the formation of high organizational commitment by employees to the enterprise, and is conducive to encouraging employees to innovate in their work. Therefore, this study believes that organizational commitment is the mediating path between internal corporate social responsibility and employee innovative behavior.

According to the above research and analysis, this study will explore the relationship between internal corporate social responsibility, organizational commitment, and employee innovative behavior from the perspective of social exchange theory, in order to enrich the research on the impact of internal corporate social responsibility on employee innovative behavior and the mediating mechanism, hoping to provide some theoretical reference and management inspiration for enterprises in stimulating employee innovation, and promote enterprise development.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

2.1 Internal Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Innovative Behavior

Corporate behavior that can have a positive impact on stakeholders and transcend their economic interests is called corporate social responsibility [9]. With the development of relevant research, research on corporate social responsibility not only involves the organizational level, but also the individual level of employees. More and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the relationship and internal mechanism between corporate social responsibility and employee cognition and behavior. The focus on implementing social responsibility for internal employees is known as internal corporate social responsibility, including providing employee training, continuing education, a safe work environment, diverse employee policies, and other aspects [10]. Employee innovative behavior refers to a series of changes in which employees produce innovative ideas in the process of work and apply them to practice [11]. The perceived corporate social responsibility of employees can positively affect employee innovative behavior, with internal corporate social responsibility having a stronger impact [12]. Internal Corporate Social Responsibility is of great significance to employees. The enterprise actively fulfills its internal corporate social responsibilities, enabling employees to feel the material and spiritual attention and assistance from the company. According to the social exchange theory, employees will pay corresponding labor to repay the enterprise, display a more positive work attitude and behavior in their work, actively seek ways to improve work efficiency, generate innovative ideas and implement them in their work, thereby promoting the improvement of organizational performance. Therefore, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Internal corporate social responsibility can positively affect employee innovative behavior.

2.2 Internal Corporate Social Responsibility and Organizational Commitment

Employee desire or expectation to stay in the organization is regarded as the organizational commitment, which reflects the employee's support for the organization [13]. The performance of corporate social responsibilities to social and non-social stakeholders, employees and customers can have an impact on employee organizational commitment [9]. According to the social exchange theory, enterprises can fulfill their internal social responsibilities, meet the material and emotional needs of employees, and exchange emotions with employees, thus promoting employees to form an emotional dependence on the enterprise, that is, organizational commitment. Therefore, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Internal corporate social responsibility can positively affect organizational commitment.
2.3 Organizational Commitment and Employee Innovative Behavior

Organizational commitment can reflect employee recognition of organizational goals and values, and higher organizational commitment can positively affect encouraging employee innovative behavior, which is conducive to encouraging employees to actively explore creative ways to deal with problems encountered in the work process [14]. Organizational commitment can well predict the innovative behavior of employees [15]. Therefore, when employees form a high organizational commitment to the organization, their sense of organizational identity and belonging will also increase, and are more willing to stimulate their own internal work motivation, work hard to find new ways to improve efficiency, and apply them to work practice. Therefore, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Organizational commitment can positively affect employee innovative behavior.

2.4 The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

Corporate social responsibility can improve employee organizational commitment [16]. At the same time, corporate social responsibility can indirectly affect employee organizational citizenship behavior by influencing their organizational commitment [17]. Based on the theory of social exchange, enterprises perform their internal social responsibilities to employees from the perspective of their personal interests, and cares about the work and life of employees, such as creating a fair organizational atmosphere, building a reasonable salary system, caring about the growth of employees, and providing career planning for employees. Employees receive the care and support from the enterprise, and employees will deepen their emotional dependence and recognition on the enterprise, they will also take a more positive attitude to work and stimulate the enthusiasm of employees. Because of the formation of organizational commitment, employees will combine their own interests with the interests of the organization, and employees will actively seek innovative ways to complete their work in the work, which is to stimulate their own innovative behavior, thereby improving work efficiency and achieving the common goals of the organization and individuals. Therefore, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Organizational commitment plays a mediating role between internal corporate social responsibility and employee innovative behavior.

According to the above hypotheses, this study constructed the concept model as Fig.1 shown.

Fig. 1 Concept Model

3. Methods

3.1 Procedures and Sample

The research object of this study is enterprise employees. The questionnaire was distributed to enterprise employees in Beijing, Inner Mongolia and other places by means of online release, and 308 valid questionnaires were collected. Among the employees interviewed, 113 were male (36.7%) and 195 were female (63.3%). 184 employees aged 18-25 (59.7%), 83 employees aged 26-30 (26.9%), 35 employees aged 31-40 (11.4%), and 6 employees aged over 40 (1.9%). 48 employees were junior college students or below (15.6%), 190 employees were undergraduates (61.7%), 64
employees were masters (20.8%), and 6 employees were doctors (1.9%). 137 employees have worked for less than 1 year (44.5%), 98 employees have worked for 1-5 years (31.8%), 54 employees have worked for 6-10 years (17.5%), and 19 employees have worked for more than 10 years (6.2%). There are 240 grassroots employees (77.9%), 43 grassroots managers (14%), 18 middle-level managers (5.8%) and 7 high-level managers (2.3%).

3.2 Measures

The scale questions are all based on the Likert five-point scale, with a score of 1 to 5 representing a range from very inconsistent to very consistent.

Independent variables. Internal corporate social responsibility was measured by five questions [18]. According to the research needs, the items are fine-tuned. For example, "My company provides employees with a fair wage system". In this study, Cronbach's \( \alpha = 0.914 \).

Mediating variables. Organizational commitment was measured by eight questions [19]. For example, "I like to talk about our company with outsiders". In this study, Cronbach's \( \alpha = 0.943 \).

Dependent variables. Employee innovative behavior was measured by six questions [20]. Referring to relevant research, the items are fine-tuned according to the research needs, such as "I always seek new technologies, methods and product ideas". In this study, Cronbach's \( \alpha = 0.930 \).

Control variables. Referring to relevant research, this study takes gender, age, education, working years and position as control variables.

3.3 Data Analysis

In the process of data analysis, SPSS and AMOS software were used in this study. This includes descriptive statistical analysis of samples and variables, reliability and validity analysis, correlation analysis between variables, and testing the hypotheses of this study.

4. Results

4.1 Validity Analysis

This study used AMOS software to analyze the validity of the model. The results showed that the three-factor model consisting of internal corporate social responsibility, organizational commitment, and employee innovative behavior fitted well (\( \chi^2/df=2.176 \), GFI=0.904, CFI=0.967, TLI=0.961, RMSEA=0.062).

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Through data analysis, the means, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of each variable were shown in Table 1. The means of each variable is greater than 3, which is above the middle level. Internal corporate social responsibility was significantly and positively related to employee innovative behavior (r=0.552, p<0.01). Internal corporate social responsibility was significantly and positively related to organizational commitment (r=0.742, p<0.01). Organizational commitment was significantly and positively related to employee innovative behavior (r=0.655, p<0.01). These results provided preliminary basis for the next step of testing research hypotheses in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Internal corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>3.492</td>
<td>0.832</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Organizational commitment</td>
<td>3.440</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td>0.742**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Employee innovative behavior</td>
<td>3.593</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td>0.552**</td>
<td>0.655**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=308, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
4.3 Hypothesis Test

This study used sequential test method to test hypotheses through multiple hierarchical regression [21]. Gender, age, education, working years and position were control variables in this study. Linear regression equation models were established for regression analysis. Table 2 showed the hypotheses testing results of this study.

The impact of internal corporate social responsibility on employee innovative behavior was positive and significant (β=0.556, p<0.001), supporting hypothesis 1. Internal corporate social responsibility can significantly and positively affect organizational commitment (β=0.749, p<0.001), supporting hypothesis 2. Organizational commitment has a significant positive impact on employee innovative behavior (β=0.654, p<0.001), supporting hypothesis 3. When both internal corporate social responsibility and organizational commitment were included in the regression equation as independent variables, the impact of internal corporate social responsibility on employee innovative behavior was significantly lower than before (β =0.148, p<0.05). This result indicated that organizational commitment plays a partial mediating role between internal corporate social responsibility and employee innovative behavior, supporting hypothesis 4.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Organizational Commitment</th>
<th>Employee innovative behavior</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.046</td>
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<td>-0.040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working years</td>
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<td>-0.098</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
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<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal corporate social</td>
<td>0.749***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.556***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.654***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=308, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

5. Conclusions and Discussion

Based on the social exchange theory, this study explored the impact of internal corporate social responsibility on employee innovative behavior and the mediating role of organizational commitment. Through data analysis and hypothesis testing, the following conclusions were obtained from this study: (1) Internal corporate social responsibility can positively and significantly affect employee innovative behavior and organizational commitment. (2) Organizational commitment can positively and significantly affect employee innovative behavior. (3) Between internal corporate social responsibility and employee innovative behavior, organizational commitment played a partial mediating role. The performance of internal corporate social responsibilities by enterprises to their employees reflects the importance, support, and concern that enterprises attach to employees, which is conducive to promoting employees to implement positive behaviors in the work process. At the same time, it also makes employees more willing to stay in the enterprise, and enhances employee organizational commitment to the enterprise. Due to feelings and recognition for the enterprise, employees are fully motivated to actively propose new ideas at work and apply them to practice, thereby promoting the improvement of organizational performance.

Employees are the main internal stakeholders of the enterprise, and their attitudes and behaviors affect the development of the enterprise. According to the research conclusions, this study puts forward the following management suggestions: First of all, enterprises should actively fulfill their
internal corporate social responsibilities to their employees, including establishing a fair compensation and promotion system, protecting their rights and interests, supporting their personal career development, encouraging them to participate in decision-making, and creating a good work atmosphere. This not only promotes employee innovation, but also helps enhance their organizational commitment. Second, improve the organizational commitment of employees to the enterprise, care about the daily work and life of employees, help employees solve the difficulties encountered in work and life, and carry out collective activities to close the distance between employees and the enterprise, so that employees feel that the enterprise attaches importance to them. When employees feel the care and support from the enterprise, they will be more willing to stay in the enterprise and work harder and more actively, which is conducive to promoting employee innovation.

This study verified the relationship between internal corporate social responsibility, organizational commitment, and employee innovative behavior through empirical analysis, and proposed some management suggestions that can help enterprise effectively motivate employee innovation and promote enterprise development and progress. However, there are still some limitations in this study. In terms of sample data collection, this study uses the method of online distribution of questionnaires to collect sample data, which is relatively simple. Therefore, in the future research, we can expand the way of data collection and use the combination of online and offline methods to collect more comprehensive data for research and analysis. In terms of research content, this study is based on the perspective of internal corporate social responsibility. Future research can also refine corporate social responsibility to specific stakeholders, respectively explore the impact on employee innovative behavior and more internal mechanisms.

References


