



Strengths Use and Employee Advice: The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

Liu Xiaoyu, Wang Guohong, Chu Xixi, Li Zhihong

Department of Human Resources and Public Management, Beijing Institute of Petrochemical Institute, Beijing, China

Email address:

wanggh3504@163.com (Wang Guohong)

To cite this article:

Liu Xiaoyu, Wang Guohong, Chu Xixi, Li Zhihong. Strengths Use and Employee Advice: The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluation. *Journal of Human Resource Management*. Vol. 11, No. 3, 2023, pp. 97-101. doi: 10.11648/j.jhrm.20231103.12

Received: June 27, 2023; **Accepted:** July 17, 2023; **Published:** August 4, 2023

Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the association of employee strengths use with their advice behavior, and the mediating role of core self-evaluation. Data were collected from a sample of 272 employees working in a variety of enterprises in China. The results show that strength use has a positive impact on employee advice behavior. When employees can fully use their strengths to complete a task, they can face the work and challenges of the organization with more confidence and trust their own opinions. Strength use has a positive impact on core self-evaluation, strength use is a kind of positive intervention, which can help employees find and understand their own strengths to improve their core self-evaluation. Core self-evaluation has a positive impact on employee advice, employees with high level of core self-evaluation more likely to put forward high-quality suggestions. Strength use has an impact on advice behavior through the mediating role of core self-evaluation, and core self-evaluation partially mediates the relationship between strengths use and employee advice. This study contributes to the literature of strengths use.

Keywords: Strengths Use, Core Self-Evaluation, Advice

1. Introduction

With the development of social economy, enterprises are facing fierce competition all the time. A company that wants to grow needs not only technological advances, but also the employees' advices [1]. Employee advice behavior refers to employees actively expressing their thoughts or constructive opinions about their work [2] which are helpful to improve the management level of the company and the personal performance of other employees or themselves [3].

Previous studies have found that not only individual factors, such as cheerful personality and sense of responsibility, have an impact on employee advice behavior [2], but also organizational factors such as corporate culture and organizational atmosphere also have an impact on employees' advice behavior [4]. Employee advice behavior is a typical work initiative behavior [5].

With the continuous development of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, individual strengths and individual strengths use have been paid more attention by scholars. Dubreuil et al. found that strengths use has a significant positive impact on employees' work performance,

and employees with a higher level of strengths use are more likely to show more initiative in work [6]. Therefore, we concluded that employees' strengths use may have a positive impact on employees' advice behavior.

Strengths theory points out that individual strengths use can bring positive results by improving their self-efficacy [7], therefore, this study introduces core self-evaluation as a mediating variable to explore the mechanism of the relationship between employees' strengths use and advice behavior, and to further open up the 'black box' of the relationship between the two variables.

2. Research Hypothesis

2.1. Strengths Use and Advice

Previous studies have shown that strengths use refers to the process of team work, and as a kind of personal resource, employees can give full play to their strengths in the work, so as to feel a more authentic self, take the initiative to complete the work task, and invest more time and energy in the work, so that they can play an active role in the team work [7].

Employees will take strengths as a resource and use it to the extreme, so as to stimulate their initiative in the work environment, better achieve the team goal, and also help employees to better play their own ability in the work environment, promote team cooperation and improve work efficiency [8]. Previous studies have found that work initiative can trigger employees' advice behavior. Employees take the initiative to put forward their own opinions and suggestions to the organization based on existing problems and oriented towards improvement and change [9]. Advice behavior refers to employees actively reflect the internal problems of the enterprise and provide effective suggestions [10]. Therefore, this paper holds that strengths use prompts employees to take initiative in their work, which will lead to advice behavior. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes:

H1: Strengths use has a positive effect on employee advice behavior.

2.2. Strengths Use and Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation is a subjective and internal personality trait, proposed by Judge as a broader, more hidden and higher-level personality trait, which can be described from four aspects: self-esteem, self-efficacy, neuroticism and locus of control [11]. Previous studies have shown that self-efficacy is an aspect of core self-evaluation, which can indirectly improve core self-evaluation [12]. By using their own strengths, employees gain more successful experience, thus improving their self-confidence in work, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy, and thus having more work initiative [13]. As employees use strengths as a resource, the more resources accumulated, the stronger the sense of self-efficacy, so the higher the core self-evaluation of their own. Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes:

H2: Strengths use has a positive effect on core self-evaluation.

2.3. Core Self-Evaluation and Advice

Advice behavior refers to that employees find problems in their work and put forward effective suggestions to the enterprise [10]. Core self-evaluation is a method of self-knowledge and self-evaluation, which can enable employees to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses more objectively. This evaluation can not only improve employees' self-awareness and self-cognition, but also make employees more clearly understand their own abilities and values [11]. Previous studies have shown that core self-evaluation has a positive effect on employee advice behavior, and employees with a higher level of core self-evaluation are more likely to show a higher level of advice behavior at work [14]. It is found that core self-evaluation affects employees' proactive behavior [15]. Therefore, this paper holds that the higher levels of employee core self-evaluation, the stronger employee self-confident, the more positive the attitude of employees in work, thus producing advice behavior. Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes:

H3: Core self-evaluation has positive influence on

employee advice behavior.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

Combined with the analysis of hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3, strengths use can motivate employees to give full play to their initiative in work. The stronger self-efficacy, the higher the level of core self-evaluation, which may stimulate their advice behavior. Enable them to play an active role in the team work process. Therefore, this paper believes that through strengths use, employees can improve their core self-evaluation and become more willing to make suggestions to the organization. Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes:

H4: The use of strengths has an impact on advice through the mediating effect of core self-evaluation.

In summary, the research model is built, as shown in Figure 1:

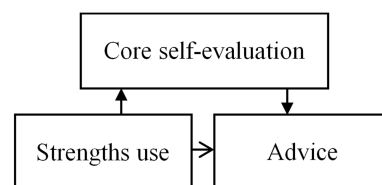


Figure 1. Theoretical model diagram.

3. Research Method

3.1. Sample Selection and Data Collection

The data in this paper were collected by means of online survey. The respondents were mainly employed employees, and the samples were selected across the country to increase the universality of the conclusions. In the questionnaire design, the questionnaire response time should be controlled to no less than 90 seconds to ensure the quality of the questionnaire. In addition, questionnaires were distributed through online channels in order to collect as many samples as possible. In the end, a total of 329 questionnaires were received. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, all the data were screened and sorted, and the questionnaires with abnormal data were deleted. The final number of valid questionnaires was 272, and the effective recovery rate was 82.7%. These data are in line with the expected assumptions and indicate that the results of this study are reliable.

From the gender distribution of the sample, the number of men is 109, while the number of women is 163. According to the age distribution of the samples, 91 people were 25 years old and below. 88 people between the ages of 25 and 30; The number of people aged 30-35 is 44. According to the distribution of education level of the sample, 151 people have bachelor's degree, 90 people have junior college degree, and 31 people have master's degree or above. From the distribution of the unit nature of the sample, the number of people in state-owned enterprises is 54, the number of people in government agencies/institutions is 47, the number of people in private enterprises is 81, and the number of people in other units is 71. According to the distribution of unit size

of the sample, 70 people work for 50 people or less, 57 people work for 51-100 people, and 67 people work for 101-500 people. From the distribution of working years of the sample, there are 165 people who have worked in the company for 1-5 years, 40 people who have worked for 5-10 years, 13 people who have worked for 10-15 years, 28 people who have worked for 15-25 years, and 26 people who have worked for more than 25 years.

3.2. Variable Measurement

The measurement scales in this paper are all Likert 5-point scoring, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

The scale of advice behavior was developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) [2], the Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.911. The scale of core self-evaluation adopts the version compiled by Judge et al [11], the Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.911. The scale of core self-evaluation adopts the version compiled by Judge et al [16], the Cronbach's α coefficient of the scale was 0.886. All scales meet the reliability requirements of relevant studies.

The control variables of this questionnaire include demographic variables such as gender, age, education background and unit nature. These variables will have a certain impact on the independent variables, mediating variables and dependent variables of this paper, but will not have a decisive impact on the research results of this study.

4. Research Result

4.1. Reliability and Validity Test

SPSS26.0 was used to analyze the reliability and validity

of the three scales. The results were shown in Table 1. The Cronbach's α coefficients of strengths use, advice behavior, and core self-evaluation scales were 0.886, 0.911, and 0.806, respectively, all above 0.8, indicating that the internal consistency of these three scales was very high. The KMO value of all scales was greater than 0.7, and the significance of Bartlett sphericity test was less than 0.001, all of which were less than 0.05, indicating that all scales had good validity.

Table 1. Reliability and validity analysis results of each scale (N=272).

Variable	Cronbach's α	KMO
Strengths use scale	0.886	0.881
Advice scale	0.911	0.889
core self-evaluation scale	0.806	0.840

4.2. Harman Single Factor Test

It can be seen from the analysis results in Table 2 that the variance of the first common factor is 38.504%, which does not exceed 40% [17], it shows that there is no serious common method bias in the data in this paper.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

According to the correlation analysis in Table 3, the correlation among strengths use, core self-evaluation and advice behavior are significantly correlated at the level of 0.01. Strengths use significantly promotes advice behavior ($r=0.747$, $p<0.01$). Strengths use has positive effect on core self-evaluation ($r=0.214$, $p<0.01$). Core self-evaluation has a positive effect on advice behavior ($r=0.244$, $p<0.01$). This provides a preliminary basis for further testing the hypothesis. Relevant analysis results are shown in the following table:

Table 2. Correlation analysis among variables (N=272).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3 degree	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sex	1.60	.491	-								
2. Age	2.31	1.311	-.062	-							
3. Highest degree	1.78	.632	.183**	-.098	-						
4. Unit property	3.02	1.445	.117	.053	-.164**	-					
5. Unit size	2.86	1.619	-.122*	.027	.187**	-.134*	-				
6. Working years	1.93	1.389	-.163**	.645**	-.063	.045	.086	-			
7. Strengths use	3.9890	.62661	.022	-.087	-.125*	.008	-.013	-.110	-		
8. Core self-evaluation	3.5614	.63885	-.037	.011	-.032	.034	.093	-.045	.214**	-	
9. Advice	3.7813	.73249	-.014	.026	-.114	.032	.021	.014	.747**	.244**	-

Note: N=272 ** means $p<0.01$, the correlation is significant; * indicates $p<0.05$ and the correlation is significant

4.4. Regression Analysis

Table 3. Results of regression analysis (N=272).

Variable	Advice				Core self-evaluation	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
Sex	.012	-.015			-.036	-.043
Age	.017	.049	.012	.020	.071	.080
Highest degree	-.121	-.008	.017	.000	-.038	-.007
Unit property	.016	.024	-.121	-.112	.048	.050
Unit size	.047	.027	.016	.005	.110	.104
Working years	-.007	.059	.047	.021	-.111	-.093

Variable	Advice				Core self-evaluation	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
Strengths use	-	.757***			-	.211***
Core self-evaluation				.240***		
R ²	.015	.570	.015	.015	.020	.063
ΔR^2	.015	.554	-.007	.056	.020	.043
F	.689	49.950***	.689	.006**	.906	2.550*

Note: *** indicates significant correlation with $p < 0.001$; ** means $p < 0.01$, the correlation is significant; * indicates $p < 0.05$ and the correlation is significant

According to the analysis results in Table 4, when advice behavior is taken as the dependent variable for linear regression analysis, there is a significant positive correlation between strengths use and advice in Model 2 ($\beta = 0.757$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that strengths use has a positive effect on advice. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. In model 6, there was a significant positive correlation between strengths use and core self-evaluation ($\beta = 0.211$, $p < 0.001$), which supported Hypothesis 2. In model 4, there is a significant positive correlation between core self-evaluation and advice behavior ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that core self-evaluation has a positive effect on advice behavior. Hypothesis 3 was further verified.

Table 4. Analysis results of the mediation model ($N = 272$).

Variable	Advice	
	Model 7	Model 8
Sex	-.015	-.012
Age	.049	.042
Highest degree	-.008	-.008
Unit property	.024	.020
Unit size	.027	.018
Working years	.059	.067
Strengths use	.757***	.739***
Core self-evaluation		.085*
R ²	.570	.577
ΔR^2	.570	.007
F	49.950***	44.775***

Note: *** indicates significant correlation with $p < 0.001$; ** means $p < 0.01$, the correlation is significant; * indicates $p < 0.05$ and the correlation is significant

In Table 4, the regression coefficient of strengths use on advice is 0.757, $p < 0.001$; after adding core self-evaluation, the regression coefficient of strengths use on advice behavior is 0.739, $p < 0.001$; while the regression coefficient of core self-evaluation on advice behavior is 0.085, $p < 0.05$. It shows that this is a partial mediating model, and core self-evaluation has a positive effect on employee advice behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

5. Limitations and Conclusion

Our study is the first to examine employee strengths use and advice behavior and to explore the mediating role of core self-efficacy. The results show that: strengths use has a positive impact on advice; strengths use has a positive impact on core self-evaluation; Core self-evaluation has a positive impact on advice; core self-evaluation mediates the strengths use-advice relationship.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

First, this study confirms that strength use has a positive impact on employee advice behavior. When employees can fully use their strengths to complete a task, they can face the work and challenges of the organization with more confidence and trust their own opinions. In this way, employees will be more courageous to put forward suggestions to superiors, and they are more likely to be recognized and adopted by superiors.

Second, this study confirms that strength use has a positive impact on core self-evaluation. Strength use is a kind of positive intervention, which can help employees find and understand their own strengths to improve their core self-evaluation. When employees receive positive feedback from their superiors, their self-confidence increases, and they are more willing to contribute to the organization.

Third, this study confirms that core self-evaluation has a positive impact on employee advice. Employees with high level of core self-evaluation are more likely to put forward high-quality suggestions. High level of core self-evaluation can enhance employees' sense of responsibility, emotional involvement and initiative, which may promote employees to participate in advice, put forward high-quality suggestions and make positive contributions to the development of the organization.

Fourth, this paper confirms that strength use has an impact on advice behavior through the mediating role of core self-evaluation. Core self-evaluation, as the intermediary process for the use of strengths, is mainly reflected in employees' self-cognition and self-reflection ability, through which employees can better understand their own abilities and values, and find more job opportunities and challenges.

5.2. Practical Implications

Firstly, enterprises can scientifically use employee strength, so as to effectively improve employee participation and engagement. Secondly, this paper discusses the mediating role of core self-evaluation in the influence of strength use on employee advice behavior, which has practical significance for the construction and improvement of the current enterprise resource management system. According to the two proposed strategies of "improving employees' core self-evaluation" and "creating a good environment for employees' advice behavior" proposed in this paper, enterprises can comprehensively improve employees' awareness of core self-evaluation and the willingness of advice, thus promoting the rapid development of enterprises

and ensuring good communication and information flow within the organization.

5.3. Limitations

Firstly, this study takes employees as research objects, which has certain limitations and may affect the universality of research results. In the future, the scope of research objects can be further expanded to improve its external effectiveness. Secondly, the social environment, corporate culture and other unknown influencing factors in the research process may also be the reasons for the limitations of this study. Future studies can compare strength use and employee advice behavior in different cultural backgrounds. Finally, future studies can explore the moderating variables that may affect the relationship between strengths use and advice behavior.

References

- [1] Elizabeth, W. M. (2011). Employee Advice Behavior: Integration and Directions for Future Research [J]. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5 (1), 373-412.
- [2] Linn, V. D., Jeffrey, A. L. (1998). Helping and Advice Extra-Role Behaviors: Evidence of Construct and Predictive Validity [J]. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 41 (1), 108-119.
- [3] Allen, T. D., Rush, M. C. (1998). The effects of organizational citizenship behavior on performance judgments: A field study and a laboratory experiment [J]. *The Journal of applied psychology*, 83 (2), 247-260.
- [4] James, R. D., Ethan, R. B.(2007). Leadership Behavior and Employee Advice: Is the Door Really Open? [J]. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 50 (4), 869-884.
- [5] Park, H., Tangirala, S., Hussain, I., et al.(2022). How and when managers reward employees' advice: The role of proactivity attributions [J]. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107 (12), 2269-2284.
- [6] Nuri, K., Jinkook, T. (2015). The effects of personal characteristics on employee advice behaviors [J]. *Korean Journal of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 28 (4), 565-589.
- [7] Harzer., Ruch.(2014). The Role of Character Strengths for Task Performance, Job Dedication, Interpersonal Facilitation, and Organizational Support [J]. *Human Performance*, 27 (3), 183-205.
- [8] Dejun, T. K., Violet, T. H. (2016). A self-determination perspective of strengths use at work: Examining its determinant and performance implications [J]. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11 (1), 15-25.
- [9] Ethan, R. B.,(2012). The risks and rewards of speaking up: Managerial responses to employee advice [J]. *Academy of management journal*, 55 (4), 851-875.
- [10] Budd, J. W., Gollan, P. J., Wilkinson, A., et al. (2010). Patterning employee advice in multinational companies [J]. *Human Relations*, 63 (3), 395-418.
- [11] Timothy, A. J., Amir, E., Jouce E. B., et al. (2003). The Core Self-Evaluations Scale: Development of a Measure [J]. *Personnel Psychology*, 56 (2), 303-331.
- [12] He, D., Xin, Q. L. (2019). Can core self-evaluations promote employee strengths use? [J]. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 29 (6), 576-581.
- [13] Jacques, F., Geneviève, A. M., Laurence, C., et al. (2012). Harmonious passion as an explanation of the relation between signature strengths' use and well-being at work: Test of an intervention program [J]. *Human Relations*, 65 (9), 1233-1252.
- [14] Samuel, A., Fred, O. W., Reuben, M., et al. (2017). Core Self-Evaluations and Employee Advice Behavior [J]. *Journal of Management*, 43 (3), 946-966.
- [15] Sharon, K. P. (2010). Making Things Happen: A Model of Proactive Motivation [J]. *Journal of Management*, 36 (4), 827-856.
- [16] Marianne, V. W., Karina, M., Crizelle, E., et al. (2016). Strengths use and deficit correction in organizations: development and validation of a questionnaire [J]. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 25 (6), 960-975.
- [17] Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88 (5), 879-903.