FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF THE NEW GENERATION OF EMPLOYEES IN CHINA: THE ROLES OF POSITIVE EMOTION AS MEDIATOR AND LMX AS MODERATOR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PL	Positive Leadership
OC	Organisational Climate
TC	Trust Climate
CC	Communication Climate
EC	Emotional Climate
FC	Fairness Climate
PC	Psychological Capital
EF	Efficacy
HO	Hope
RE	Resiliency
OP	Optimism
PE	Positive Emotion
LMX	leader-Member Exchange
OCB	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

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FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI TINGKAH LAKU KEWARGANEGARAAN ORGANISASI GENERASI BAHARU PEKERJA DI CHINA: PERANAN EMOSI POSITIF SEBAGAI PENGANTARA DAN LMX SEBAGAI MODERATOR

ABSTRAK

Seiring dengan globalisasi ekonomi dan dagang elektronik (e-dagang) yang sedang berkembang maju, ekonomi sosial telah melalui perubahan besar dan kemajuan makin pesat. Pekerja dengan tingkah laku kewarganegaraan organisasi (OCB) menyumbang kepada pencapaian sosial dan ekonomi dalam organisasi. Malangnya, pekerja generasi baharu, sebagai sumber manusia teras syarikat Internet berkemungkinan kecil untuk terlibat dalam OCB. Mereka biasanya mempunyai kekurangan konsep kolektif, rasa tanggungjawab yang tidak cukup baik, identiti dan kesetiaan organisasi yang menurun, purata hayat bekerja yang singkat dan kadar pusing ganti yang tinggi. Masalah ini mungkin merugikan pembangunan organisasi dan prestasi. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi faktor pengaruh untuk memperbaiki OCB di antara generasi baharu pekerja. Oleh sebab hal yang demikian, kajian ini meneliti beberapa cara untuk menangani isu yang menanti generasi baharu pekerja. Teori-teori yang diaplikasikan dalam kajian ini ialah psikologi positif, teori penentuan diri, dan teori pertukaran sosial. Daripada pendirian psikologi positif, kepimpinan positif (PL), iklim organisasi (OC), dan modal psikologi (PC) telah dipilih sebagai pemboleh ubah bebas. Sementara itu, emosi positif (PE) dan pertukaran ketua-anggota (LMX) masing-masing yang bertindak sebagai pemboleh ubah perantaraan dan pemboleh ubah sederhana untuk mengkaji kesan terhadap sikap staf organisasi (OCB). Kajian keratan rentas ini menggunakan teknik pensampelan tujuan untuk

mengenal pasti respondennya. Tinjauan borang soal selidik, sorotan kajian, dan analisis kuantitatif telah dijalankan bagi pengumpulan dan analisis data. Tinjauan borang soal selidik telah dilaksanakan dalam kalangan pekerja generasi baharu syarikat Internet bersaiz kecil dan sederhana yang ditubuhkan di China. Pada keseluruhannya, 255 borang soal selidik yang sah telah terkumpul. Model persamaan berstruktur-kuasa dua terkecil separa (PLS-SEM), Pakej *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS) v23.0 dan perisian SmartPLS 3.0 telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data statistik dan mengesahkan hipotesis penyelidikan. Dapatan kajian menujukkan bahawa PL mempunyai hubungan korelasi positif dengan PE pekerja, yang mempengaruhi OCB. Dua dimensi OC iaitu iklim kepercayaan (TC) dan iklim emosi (EC), memberikan kesan positif terhadap PE pekerja, yang mempengaruhi OCB mereka. Sebaliknya, iklim komunikasi (CC) dan iklim kesaksamaan (FC) tidak memberikan sebarang kesan positif terhadap PE. Walaupun dimensi keberkesanan PC tidak memberikan kesan positif ke atas PE, dimensi PC yang lain (harapan, daya pemulihan dan sikap optimis) mempengaruhi PE secara positif, lantas memberikan kesan terhadap OCB pekerja. Emosi positif (PE) telah mempengaruhi OCB dengan berkesan. LMX menyederhanakan impak PE ke atas OCB. Tidak lama lagi, kajian ini akan menjelaskan pendekatan berkesan yang boleh diaplikasikan oleh syarikat-syarikat untuk memastikan kemajuan dalam kalangan organisasi dan pekerja. Kajian ini memberikan perspektif baharu kepada amalan pengurusan dalam teori OCB dan teori PL. Kajian ini diakhiri dengan perbincangan tentang beberapa pengehadan dan cadangan untuk membuka jalan peluang usaha penyelidikan pada masa hadapan.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF THE NEW GENERATION OF EMPLOYEES IN CHINA: THE ROLES OF POSITIVE EMOTION AS MEDIATOR AND LMX AS MODERATOR

ABSTRACT

Along with the flourishing electronic commerce (e-commerce) and economic globalisation, the social economy has experienced profound changes and accelerated progress. Employees with organisational citizenhip behaviour (OCB) contribute to the accomplishment of social and economic in the organisation. Unfortunately, the new generation of employees, being the core human resources of Internet companies are less likely to engage in OCB. They generally have a lack of collective concept, weak sense of responsibility, low organisational loyalty and identity, short average working life, and high turnover rate. These issues may be detrimental to organisational development and performance. The purpose of this study is to explore the influencing factors of improving OCB among the new generation of employees. As such, this study looked into several ways to resolve issues lurking in the new generation of employees. The theories deployed in this study are positive psychology, self-determination theory, and social exchange theory. From the stance of positive psychology, positive leadership (PL), organisational climate (OC), and psychological capital (PC) were selected as independent variables. Meanwhile, positive emotion (PE) and leader-member exchange (LMX) served as the mediating and moderating variables, respectively, to examine the impact towards organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This cross-sectional study adopted the purposive sampling technique to identify its respondents. Questionnaire survey, literature review, and

quantitative analysis were carried out for data collection and analysis. A questionnaire survey was performed among new-generation employees from small and medium-sized Internet companies established in China. In total, 255 valid questionnaires were collected. The partial least square-structural equation model (PLS-SEM), Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) v23.0, and SmartPLS 3.0 software were deployed to analyse the statistical data and verify the research hypotheses. The findings revealed that PL had a positive correlation with the PE of employees, thus affecting OCB. The two dimensions of OC; trust climate (TC) and emotional climate (EC), exhibited a positive impact on the PE of employees, thus affecting their OCB. On the contrary, communication climate (CC) and fairness climate (FC) did not exert any positive effect on PE. While the efficacy dimension of PC did not affect PE positively, the other PC dimensions (hope, resiliency, and optimism) positively influenced PE, thus affecting employees' OCB. Positive emotion (PE) did effectively affect OCB. The LMX moderated the impact of PE on OCB. Imminently, this study sheds light on the effective approaches that can be adopted by companies to ascertain progress among organisations and employees. This study offers a fresh perspective on the management practice in OCB and PL theories. This study ends with a discussion of several limitations and recommendations to pave the path of future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Economic globalisation and digital economy have made some profound changes to and flourished the social economy in China. Under the open economic conditions and reformation, companies in China are facing fierce competition that has shifted from the traditional market and cost competition types to talent-based management and technology competition types. Human resources denote the number of working-age, under-working-age, and over-working-age groups in a region or country. Human resources refer to the general education, ability, skills, experience, and physical strength possessed by employees within a certain period that can be used by companies and contribute to value creation (Ulrich, 1996). The new generation of employees is the core force and main personnel component in the present organisations. The ability and behaviour of the new-generation employees substantially affect the competitive advantage of the organisations. Hence, human resources have increasingly become the competitive advantage of organisations and the core competition to attain sustainable development. As a result, the management faces more pressure and challenges, while employees experience more competitive pressure in the workplace. When faced with complex tasks and dynamic working environment, employees tend to develop negative emotions and fall into job burnout. This adversely affects their work vitality and intensifies their intention to turnover. The new generation of employees, which functions as the main force of an organisation, refers to those born after year 1980 (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Sessa et al., 2007; Beard et al., 2008; Li, 2020; Hou et al., 2022; Fan, 2022; Han, 2022; Liu, 2022; Yang, 2022; Du et al., 2022; Hu, 2022; Huang, 2022).

A comparative study conducted by Worry-free Future (2022) between new and previous generations of employees in a huge recruitment company in China revealed that employees from the new generation displayed better learning abilities and desires, richer creativity, and a preference for new things than the previous generations. Despite their strong personality, high self-esteem, and high willingness, the new generation of employees exhibit low self-discipline and a sense of responsibility, as well as high distrust, and disloyalty towards the organisation. They are vulnerable to the impact of work environment and leadership style, particularly their direct superior leaders. Hence, amalgamating the characteristics of the new generation of employees to achieve excellent job performance with peace of mind has become the focus of many organisations. The new generation of employees has brought unprecedented management difficulties to organisations and society. Owing to their unique characteristics, the motivational techniques that are effective for old employees have little or even nil effect on the employees from new generation (Marston, 2010). These new-generation employees reflect children who grew up during China's reformation towards the opening up and market economy. Employees from new generation are often in the contradiction between reality and ideal; some are enthusiastic, some are quiet, some pursue entrepreneurship and adventure, while some just trust their fate (Fu & Duan, 2013).

Corporate human resource management has identified the vulnerability of the new generation of employees, exemplified by the serial suicides among Foxconn's new-generation employees in China. Tragic incidents like this have garnered much attention from the public towards management issues. However, the new generation of employees exhibits an inability to bear work pressure and resort to extreme methods such as adopting negativity, evasive behaviours, and even

contemplating suicide (Niu, 2011). They tend to avoid responsibilities and escape from setbacks upon encountering unpleasant work experiences (Li & Tian, 2011). The new generation of employees lacks positive emotion (PE) at work, which leads to low mood, dissatisfaction, and withdrawal behaviour. Having PE and the confidence to complete their tasks help avoid avoidance behaviour, resulting in the PE status of the new generation of employees at work to have garnered much attention.

In addition, the new generation of employees requires more team spirit and a sense of identity within the organisation (Song, 2012). Interpreted as individualism, it dominates the new generation of employees that results in strong self-awareness and a lack of team awareness (Wang & Yang, 2014). Referring to the increasingly diversified value orientation, both work and income are no longer the only content they attach importance to (Zhang & Shi, 2002). Positive leadership (PL) is sought and organisational management methods should stimulate individual enthusiasm. It is crucial to hire employees who are loyal to the organisation and display a high sense of identity (Albert et al., 2000). In this era of knowledge economy, the cost of employee recruitment and training continues to rise, while the human capital formed by employees in organisations is becoming more critical (Carleton, 2011). Therefore, studies on leadership behaviour and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) of the new generation of employees meet the demand of practical and theoretical circles.

Within the work setting, the most criticised component of the new generation of employees refers to their sense of responsibility (Cai, 2010). Suppose organisational identity is only the internal psychological characteristic that impacts the work performance of new-generation employees, their sense of responsibility denotes their actual work performance because one's sense of responsibility includes

not only the cognition and emotional experience of responsibility but also the behaviour of executing responsibility (Li & Ye, 2009). In the workplace, responsible behaviour signifies completing tasks assigned by the organisation in a thoughtful manner. Many managers and the older generation of employees claim that the sense of responsibility among the new generation of employees is insufficient or even missing because new-generation employees have high expectations and can easily give up carrying out their responsibilities at work (Hou, 2013). For this new generation, work is a part of life and not for survival. As a result, they will only choose to work overtime and take the initiative to assume a few responsibilities. Such behaviour is precisely the most needed manifestation of OCB. Suppose employees highly agree with the organisational objectives and the tasks assigned by the organisation, they are more likely to accomplish those tasks to achieve the objectives (Ellemers et al., 2004). Employees with positive work attitudes are more likely to achieve good outcomes and receive positive feedback, thus increasing the possibility of establishing their sense of responsibility (Judge & Bono, 2001).

In this study, the new generation of employees refers to those born in China after the implementation of the one-child policy in 1980; denoting the only child in their family. While growing up amidst the fruitful achievements of reform and opening up (when compared to post-1970s), this new generation enjoys a prosperous material life. Concurrently, the vast usage of the Internet has made the living environment of this generation more open. Methods of obtaining information have become more diverse than the approaches deployed by the older generation of employees, conventional concepts are questioned, and personal enjoyment is undeniably a priority. Labour relations with organisations can easily lead to discordant situations. In addition, the loyalty of the new generation of employees is

low. They are more concerned about their interests and focus on their progress. It is not easy to impress them with words of devotion and affection. When self-interest cannot be satisfied, they are more likely to adopt turnover behaviour (Huang, 2022).

The new generation of employees has experienced a range of cultural shocks stemming from the rapid economic progress in China during the reformation era and opening up after 1980. This new generation is the core group of many companies at this present time. They have a vital role in enhancing business performance and organisational development. Upon experiencing authoritative suppression or their rights deprived, they tend to exhibit passive resistance and self-abandonment towards work. Such a trend can cause these employees from the new generation to experience psychological discomfort in the workplace. The absence of a practical way to resolve this issue will only worsen their work performance, affect their enthusiasm for work, and ultimately lead to their departure. Hence, the new generation of employees hopes the organisations will improve their management methods and offer an excellent working atmosphere. While selecting a job, the new-generation employees first consider if their self-worth can be realised and if they can obtain personality respect; not the salary (Yao, 2022). Besides positively influencing the work status and behaviour of employees, PL enhances both the PE and work enthusiasm of the subordinates (Wang, 2020). When the organisational atmosphere of mutual trust and smooth communication satisfies the psychological needs of the new generation of employees, they are more likely to develop more OCB for the organisation.

In this era of information explosion, the issues in managing the new-generation employees are mostly related to the growth environment and their personality characteristics. For instance, they have formed a unique concept of self-worth throughout their developmental process. While they are more advocating, they

intensely pursue freedom. Also, the new generation of employees gives more heed to the psychological level in their work process, hoping to work happily and make their working atmosphere more comfortable.

According to Luo (2022), the emotional conflict experienced by the new generation of employees should be addressed to delay the outbreak of any negative emotions. It is crucial for organisations to create an excellent organisational climate (OC) to stimulate enthusiasm among employees of the new generation. Positive leadership (PL) behaviour has an impact on employees' sense of job fulfilment, mainly because PL behaviour motivates and encourages employees to express new insights, raise questions, and devise innovative solutions. Active leaders often discuss their vision and plans with their staff. Such a work setting equips employees with high self-esteem and a better sense of security to have a higher sense of job fulfilment (Liu & Li, 2022).

1.1.1 Overview of China's Internet Enterprises

Internet companies are the new engine for China's economic take-off. Based on the data released by the Internet Society of China on 26 November 2021, in the period from January to October 2021, the operating income of China's top 100 Internet companies was 4.1 trillion yuan with a year-on-year increase of 16.9 per cent, while the operating profit was 442.69 billion yuan with a year-on-year increase of 39.4 per cent. Internet companies in China deploy network platforms based on computer network technology to offer services and reap profits, register Internet domain names, build websites, and execute commercial activities (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2021). They utilise Internet technology because Internet access services, information services, data services, and online processing

services are their core businesses, certain with the survival of the Internet industry (Gu, 2017).

Nevertheless, given the global economic integration and the continuous lack of growth power, the combined impact of the emerging new technologies and markets, and the expiration of early intellectual property protection, it is impossible to ascertain the survival of Internet companies with rough operations and ineffective management approaches. Under the increasingly intricate operation and management environment, the competitive pressure faced by Internet companies is escalating. People are the most important asset for Internet companies and the most active factor among the productivity components. The competition mode with people or talents as the core makes human resource management a strategic component and a critical factor for Internet companies to gain competitive advantage and other benefits (e.g., low cost, high efficiency, and sustainable development). Therefore, managers of Internet companies seek cutting-edge human resource management approaches to improve the existing talent management methods in order to strive for the progress of their employees, increase their overall income, and enhance the competitiveness of their companies.

The Internet offers people unparalleled convenience with a substantial impact on conventional enterprises, including commercial, industrial, and financial enterprises (Li et al., 2014). Internet companies offer products and services based on the Internet technology. When compared with conventional enterprises, Internet companies display numerous characteristics: computer technology accounts for a more significant proportion, computer technology changes more frequently, and network information technology is applied more frequently. Hence, the new generation of employees in Internet companies possesses a higher level of knowledge,

relatively weaker interpersonal skills, and "high IQ, low EQ", when compared to conventional companies. With the popularisation of some emerging concepts, such as O2O, Internet of Things, and cutting-edge technological applications, the merging of Internet technology and traditional industries will increase eventually to generate many new Internet companies. It is foreseeable that companies with Internet "wings" will be the main force to boots the progress of China's thriving economy.

The BCG, a world-famous management consulting company, released a report in August 2015 entitled "Employment reconstruction in the Internet Age: Three trends of the impact of the Internet on social employment in China." The report disclosed that among the Internet enterprises established across China, employees aged 35 and below accounted for 94% of all employees (Fan et al., 2015). Thus, employees born after 1980 are the backbone of Chinese Internet enterprises.

The present employment relationship of the Chinese Internet enterprises denotes that: (1) people are the most important and prominent asset of Internet enterprises, in which the new generation of employees is the main force of human resources. (2) A comparison between the older and new generations of employees reveals many different personality and behaviour characteristics. Hence, it is imminent for the managers of these Chinese Internet enterprises to explore and analyse the work attitude and behaviour displayed by the new generation of employees for further improvement (Wu, 2015).

Turning to the typical characteristics of the new generation of employees, as well as the actual scenario and needs of the present Internet enterprises, some characteristics of the new generation of employees appear to be a "double-edged sword." More studies and discussions are required pertaining to the new generation of employees to serve as guidelines when devising effective corporate management

strategies in China for Internet companies that will gradually become the conventional form of future companies. Suppose Internet companies fail to guide the new generation of employees in an effective manner based on their work values and attitudes, stimulate their positive side, and enhance their OCB; their work progress will be negatively affected. Enterprise competitiveness among Internet companies reflects the competition for human capital. Work attitude and organisational identity have been associated with the power source of the new generation of employees' efforts, which in turn, affect the direction and degree of their efforts at work (Wu, 2015). The personal characteristics of employees in Internet companies, their job instability, and turnover issues bring losses to Internet enterprises. Those listed issued faced by the new generation of employees working in Internet companies should be addressed (Yu, 2020). Despite the vast knowledge possessed and innovations introduced by Internet companies, the new-generation employees have a different background and growth environment from the older generation. These younger employees are keen on trying new things, besides having rich imagination and creativity. While being the only child in their family and having grown up in an ideal environment, they have a low sense of belonging to the company and display a high turnover rate. Thus, it is crucial to motivate the new generation of employees effectively so that they will work to create more excellent value for the company, as sought by Internet companies (Zhao, 2020).

Internet companies have mushroomed rapidly in these recent years. The emergence of the Internet has eased individuals to work comfortably and has brought dramatic changes to people’s lifestyles. Along with national policy support and social development, more Internet companies have been established. The development of enterprises requires the involvement of people, which is the basis for

all enterprises to outline their regular operations and gain profits. Company profit can be maximised only by maximising the work efficiency of the employees. With the growing new generation of employees penetrating the job market, they are the main force of enterprises while also injecting new vitality into their workplace. The new generation of employees has unique psychological and personality characteristics due to a multitude of factors, including their life background, academic environment, and values. Concurrently, the new generation of employees has excellent mobility and a high turnover rate. Thus, managing the new generation of employees efficiently, assisting in their career development and future planning, as well as achieving exceptional organisational performance, should be the focus of Internet enterprises (Tang, 2021). In the management research domain, scholars have regarded OCB as an employee who is out of role behaviour, indispensable for organisational progress, and positively promotes organisational performance. According to Organ (1988), such spontaneous behaviour cannot be directly recognised by the formal reward system of a firm but is conducive to the effective operation of OCB. Subsequently, more scholars have explored the aspects of OCB in terms of its definition, structure, antecedents, and consequences. Factors that can influence the OCB of employees are categorised into four groups: individual characteristics, task characteristics, organisational characteristics, and leadership behaviour. Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) has been proven to affect one's behaviour, organisational performance, and management performance. For instance, a significant correlation was noted between leadership behaviour and OCB (Li et al., 2005).

1.1.2 **Preliminary Study**

A preliminary study was conducted to examine the actual situation regarding the impact of OCB on the new-generation employees of Chinese Internet companies. The preliminary study ascertained the direction, clarity, completeness, and accuracy of this research work. The respondents to the preliminary study comprised of six employees from three regions (four companies) that recorded the most developed Internet industry in China. The respondents were invited to answer eight questions related to the impact of OCB; employee characteristics; perceptions towards company and leadership; OC behaviour; incentives; organisational identity; and other related factors. This study determined if the personality characteristics of and the issues faced by the new generation of employees are similar to the outcomes reported in prior studies under the influence of varying economic development periods. The necessity and significance of this study are highlighted in this preliminary study. Eight questions were sent to the respondents in advance. After obtaining consent from the audit department of the selected respondents' companies and informing them that all information would be kept confidential, the researcher successfully communicated with the selected respondents.

Beijing being one of the largest city in China that consists of higher number of Internet Company. The participants in the preliminary study were selected from Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong because these three regions have high representativeness. According to the list of China Internet Association's top 100 enterprises in 2020, Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong are the most developed regions in the Internet industry. From the list, 38 Internet enterprises were established in Beijing, thus accounting for 38%. Shanghai and Guangdong were ranked second and third with the establishment of 18 and 13 Internet enterprises,

respectively. The top three regions accounted for 69% of the total 100 Internet enterprises. The eight questions posed to the respondents are listed as follows:

(1) Do you think your colleagues have unique personalities? What are the outstanding ones?

(2) Do you think company leadership behaviour has an impact on employees' work behaviour and attitude? What type of leadership do the employees prefer?

(3) Do you think the climate of the company is important? Will the climate of trust, communication, emotion, and fairness in the company help its management?

(4) If the company adopts better management practices or incentive systems, will the employees' sense of responsibility increase?

(5) Do employees in your company like to work overtime?

(6) Is the job stability of the employees high? Is the turnover rate high?

(7) Under what circumstances do the employees in your company exhibit more extra-role behaviour?

(8) Under what circumstances are employees willing to do more for the company? Such as maintaining the company's reputation, voluntarily working overtime, saving resources, maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships, taking on more responsibilities, and actively helping colleagues solve problems. Does organisational citizenship behaviour promote personal development, organisational development, and organisational performance?

1.1.2（a） Findings of Preliminary Study

The outcomes of the preliminary study revealed that the new generation of employees working at the selected Internet companies had strong self-awareness, strong learning ability, and a desire to reflect self-worth through salary. They

preferred leaders who exhibited positive behaviour and expected their leaders to treat each other as equals rather than oppressing others. Some employees were prone to have conflicts with their leaders because they upheld their ideology, work style, and way of expression. Those conflicts led to misunderstandings and confusion in communication, which not only affected the work efficiency and enthusiasm of the employees but also hindered the long-term progress of the company. Some employees had high-level OC through the display of high-level trust and smooth communication. Generally, it was found that leadership style and behaviour, OC, and individual psychological states are all related to work behaviour and attitudes. Details about the preliminary study and the outcomes are discussed in the following.

Company A (An Internet company in Beijing focused on talent service and recruitment):

The interview session held in September 2020 involved two employees who were born after 1980. One of them worked in the human resources management department and the other respondent held an ordinary staff position. The responses provided by the two employees, which were relatively close, are discussed as follows. Since the employees of the new generation possess strong learning abilities and new knowledge derived from technological gadgets (e.g., mobile phones, computers, and the Internet), they can start quicker with fewer hiccups. The new generation of employees has unique personalities, such as loving challenges, preferring being independent, and having diverse values. They dislike adhering to rules but prefer tackling challenging tasks, improving themselves, and relishing a sense of accomplishment. The new-generation employees pay heed to personal development, long to realise self-worth, and are easy to leave the company. The conventional career concept holds that organisations should offer employees job security and

employees should display their loyalty towards the organisation. Nonetheless, these new-generation employees have a low sense of responsibility and organisational identity, besides abhorring working overtime. In this digital era, employment has become more flexible and job-hopping is a common phenomenon. The new generation of employees tends to forward their demands directly. They seek better career development, generous wage, and opportunities for continuous learning. With better development opportunities, the new-generation employees are more likely to change jobs for personal development and dismiss organisational needs.

The new-generation employees have high requirements for material conditions. They pay attention to several factors when choosing a job: fat salary, harmonious OC, broad development space, realisation of self-worth, and professional counterparts. These factors can affect one's resignation. They are not afraid of authority and they have certain preferences for leadership type, such as high business ability, high moral character, positive communication, and trust in employees. Fear is absent against higher-ranking leaders. Conflicts that spark between the new generation of employees and their superiors mostly stem from the following four aspects: conflict of interest, communication method, ideology, and work style. Companies must offer PL and OC for their employees to perform OCB.

Company B (An Internet company in Beijing focused on education and training):

The interview sessions held from September to October 2020 involved two employees who were born after 1980. One of them was with the human resources management department and the other respondent had an ordinary position in the company. Their relatively close responses are discussed in the following. Along with their strong ability to learn and accept new technologies, the new-generation employees are livelier than employees from the previous generations and this brings

fresh vitality to the company. These younger employees have their own unique opinions and standards in executing tasks, their views on numerous things, and they are self-centred. As they have more access to information and more choices in the growth process, their values are diversified. The new-generation employees are likely to change jobs when they have better development opportunities. They have a higher target orientation for themselves and a stronger desire for success while being eager to gain social recognition and reflect their self-worth. They have specific requirements for enterprises and believe that enterprises should improve employees' abilities and provide employees with more development opportunities.

The new-generation employees give more importance to material conditions. They are only willing to work overtime if they wish to do so. These younger employees were born in the era of rapid economic progress where people's material level dramatically improved to live prosperously. The younger employees have decent family conditions and focus on the positive pay-return relationship. They believe that trust and emotional climate (TC and EC) at the organisational level can enhance their recognition and loyalty. These younger employees prefer leaders with solid business ability and positive behaviour. While dismissing leadership hierarchy, they claim that respect and trust go both ways. When compared with the obedience and respect shown by older employees to managers, the younger ones focus on the ability and positive behaviour of managers. The new-generation employees love to challenge authority, give opinions to managers, point out any inadequacy observed in the leader, and have a conflict with managers due to differing views on matters related to communication methods. Employees can demonstrate more OCB if the organisation makes more effort in PL, OC, and intrinsic motivation. This behaviour contributes to personal development and organisational performance.

Company C (An Internet company in Shanghai focused on environmental products and services (e.g., cleaning and disinfection)):

The telephone interview conducted in November 2020 involved an employee born after 1980 who held a service position in the company by taking care of online and offline businesses. The respondent had the following to say. The new-generation employees possess unique personalities and prefer challenging work. While disregarding rules and obedience, they focus on personal development. The conventional career concept holds that organisations should provide employees with job security and that employees should be loyal to the organisation. As these younger employees have a low sense of responsibility, it is imminent to establish a connection between the growth environment and their personality characteristics.

The new-generation employees pay more heed to the psychological level of their work, as they hope to work happily and work is only a means of making a living. They dislike overtime work and would leave the company if they feel that work is not going well. Suppose the senior management decides to be more relaxed with the new-generation employees, they may gradually lose their enthusiasm for work. Ultimately, they aspire to be reckoned with and respected. The new-generation employees should have more patience when addressing intricate issues. From the stance of growth environment and academic background, these younger employees differ from employees from the older generation. Since the new-generation employees mostly grew up under the protection of their parents, they are relatively weak when solving life-work issues. They lack responsibility and problem awareness in their work due to the impact of their upbringing.

The new-generation employees focus on the leadership style adopted by the company, whereby they hope that the leadership can be proactive. They dislike

leaders who misuse their power for work arrangements. Instead, they seek positive communication and an atmosphere of trust in the company. When positive leaders discuss the company vision and plans with the staff, the staff would have a high sense of self-esteem, security, and work purpose. The new-generation employees seek a good communication platform to build a trusting and open emotional communication atmosphere. If they can overcome issues at the workplace, actively take responsibility, and display OCB; the work setting will become conducive to both staff and the firm.

Company D (An Internet company in Guangzhou focused on e-commerce (e.g., cosmetics, health products, and instruments)):

A telephone interview conducted in November 2020 involved an employee who was born after 1980 and belonged to a senior management position in the company. The respondent provided the following responses. The new generation of employees possesses strong self-awareness. Upon growing up amidst the fruitful achievements of reform and opening up in comparison to those who grew up during the post-1970s, these younger employees enjoy a more prosperous material life. The advent of the Internet has made the living environment of this new generation open, thus daring to question traditional concepts and focusing on personal enjoyment, as well as self-centeredness. Their labour connection with the company can easily lead to disharmony. The new-generation employees have outstanding personalities and prefer to be free of authority. They do not like to work overtime and work is just a means of making a living for them. They are more concerned about their feelings during work, while concurrently seeking recognition and respect. The idea of collectivism needs to be stronger. These younger employees believe that

identification with the company should be based on its leadership style and climate as close or consistent with their expectations.

Most of these new-generation employees possess high self-esteem and are loyal to their way of life. Instead of giving in when encountering conflicts at work so that the team could function efficiently, younger employees would opt for resignation. Given that the loyalty of the new-generation employees is low, rhetoric about dedication and feelings does not quickly move them. When their interests are not met, they are easy to leave. The new generation of employees, who grew up in the new era of rapid development and networking, are mostly the only child favoured dearly by their parents. Such a growing environment makes them form distinct characteristics and work values: prefer working independently, lack interpersonal relationships, poor communication and cooperation awareness, high self-direction, impatient in executing tasks, dislike tedious work, abhor authority, as well as due importance given to equality and fairness among colleagues or between superiors and subordinates. Organisations that implement PL create a harmonious OC, increase mutual trust and respect, as well as motivate the PE and psychological motivation of the staff. In this case, the staff will demonstrate OCB. Despite the tremendous competitive pressure faced by companies, these younger employees wish to have more positive management methods and their PE stimulates so that they can willingly display OCB to improve personal and organisational performance.

1.1.2（b） Implication of Preliminary Study

The preliminary study outcomes revealed that the new-generation employees of Chinese Internet companies possess unique personalities, along with some problems caused by work attitudes and behaviour that may be detrimental to

organisational development and performance. Strong self-awareness, weak traditional concepts, low sense of responsibility and organisational identity, dislike of overtime, high turnover rate, like to challenge authority, low recognition and loyalty towards the organisation, more emphasis on fair salary and personal benefits, and poor psychological endurance are some issues that can harm the performance of a company in the long run. Past studies reported that if employees only complete tasks within their role, the company operation will be severely challenged because the company cannot list all job scopes and requirements in the actual operational process.

The present intricate environment at local and global levels has intensified competition among domestic small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Thus, the allocation of enterprise resources must be optimised. Among them, human capital is a vital resource for an enterprise, in which scientific and efficient management methods are more conducive to optimising the allocation of human resources, particularly in stimulating the OCB of employees. Since the past two decades of the digital era, these new-generation employees are accompanied by the emergence of novel electronic gadgets and other new cutting-edge elements. They are good at taking advantage of the convenience of high technology in their life and work. These younger employees are the backbone of the development of all walks of life in contemporary China. Investigating the manifestations of the identified inter-generational conflicts and putting forward the corresponding management measures in a targeted manner offer theoretical and practical significances that can maximise the value of new-generation employees and boost the company progress.

1.1.3 The Importance of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour and Its Influence

The new-generation employees have experienced unprecedented self-identity, organisational identity, trust crisis, high turnover rate, and enterprise management issues. This has escalated the disharmony of labour relations in companies, thus weakening the job stability among younger employees. Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can effectively overcome these problems and improve organisational performance (Pu, 2009; Jin, 2011). The issues experienced by new-generation employees in Chinese Internet enterprises are severe as well. In the context of OCB, employees strive to maintain the company image and identify, actively act in favour of the company, work hard, be willing to help colleagues, as well as participate in coordination and communication actively. In this study, the stances captured from new-generation employees of Internet companies determined the impact of positive leadership (PL), organisational climate (OC), and psychological capital (PC) on their work attitude and OCB. By taking PE as the mediating variable and leader-member exchange (LMX) as the moderating variable, the influential factors of OCB were analysed in this study.

Positive leadership (PL) is the result of the latest investigations conducted in the fields of positive organisation, positive psychology, and positive behaviour. Positive leadership (PL) promotes achieving high performance, focusing on strengths and abilities, affirming one's potential, as well as emphasising positive communication, optimism, and value to identify opportunities in problems and threats. Positive leadership (PL) focuses on one's kindness and virtue, self-interested goodness in staff and organisation, as well as inherent goodness tendency (Cameron, 2013). Wijewardena et al., (2014) found that PL positively influenced employees' emotions, which in turn, affected their subjective well-being, OCB, and job performance. As such, the impact of PL on PE and OCB was assessed in this study.

Imminently, OC has a subtle impact on the external behaviour and internal psychology of employees. One's perception of the company is a crucial criterion when measuring the atmosphere of the company. The attitude of the organisation towards employees, the treatment given to employees, and the working environment in which employees live have a heavy impact on the perception among employees towards the organisation as a whole. When these perceptions gradually reach a consensus, an OC is formed (Bock et al., 2005). In this present study, the respondents comprised of new-generation employees. Enhanced workplace climate and good employee characteristics can improve the work attitude and behaviour of employees.

Luthans et al., (2002; 2007) explained that PC is a positive psychological state, which is exploitable and measurable to promote more positive organisational behaviour among employees. The new-generation employees have an open mind and a sense of innovation, which can affect organisational stability. If an organisation can develop a positive mental state among the new-generation employees, the staff will naturally demonstrate positive organisational behaviour. Hence, PC serves as the predictor variable in this study.

Positive emotion (PE) refers to the degree to which one feels warm and active or when one is in a state of high-energy activation, engrossment, joy, and engagement. Naturally, PE responds to one's sensitivity to cognition and active thinking. One with high PE can more fully engage in the corresponding organisational activities (Watson et al., 1988). Positive psychology studies revealed that the giving behaviour of virtue practice can bring people more PE, as well as meet their psychological and spiritual needs. Positive emotion (PE) encourages individuals to voluntarily adopt virtue as their code of conduct and display altruistic behaviour (Chen, 2021). Virtue and altruistic behaviour are the concrete

manifestations of OCB. If a company can stimulate the internal motivation and PE of staff in the management process, the staff will display more OCB.

Due to the variance in the communication time between leaders and subordinates, as well as the amount of resources invested in the communication process, the quality of the exchange may differ. Different organisation members have different roles in the organisation, which determines the variances in the interpersonal exchange relationship between members and supervisors. Despite the limited resources in the organisation, leaders need to allocate their resources evenly. Under the pressure of time, leaders would choose congenial and capable subordinates and give them special treatment, whereby these subordinates are expected to contribute substantially to the process of the leader performing work and achieving goals (Graeo & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The new-generation employees have unique personalities and are not afraid of authority. They hope leaders will treat each other as equals and actively communicate with staff. Thus, LMX serves as the moderator variable in this study to examine the impact of OCB.

If a company only relies on the behaviour of employees in its operation, it is not easy to effectively achieve the target goals. While there is no perfect organisational system, it is only possible to include some tasks and responsibilities (Organ, 1988). Thus, it is necessary to rely on the out-of-role behaviour displayed by employees to make up for the lack of role responsibilities to meet organisational goals. Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is behaviour that benefits an organisation, but is not explicitly or directly recognised in the formal compensation system. Simply put, OCB refers to the behaviour demonstrated by employees who consciously engage in work. An organisation should adjust its management methods to motivate its employees because this behaviour will promote the effective operation

of the organisation (Organ, 1988). The new-generation employees are full of vitality, uniqueness, strong learning ability, open-mindedness, and courage to realise their value. Upon displaying more OCB, younger employees can improve their personal development, besides enhancing organisational performance and development.

1.2 Problem Statement

In this new digital era, various established enterprises across China have faced increasingly severe challenges. Upon penetrating the job market, those born in the 1980s are the backbone of the present companies. They are the most active and innovative factor in any enterprise as the carrier of knowledge. This new generation of employees has experienced the rapid progress of China's economy and the influence of both domestic and foreign cultures from the reform and opening up policies.

However, scholars indicate that the new generation of employees has insufficient OCB. Their insufficient OCB is alongside with their diversified values, poor obedience awareness, low organisational recognition, and high mobility (Hou, 2022). The issue of OCB within an organisation affects organisational development and employee performance, leading to several workplace issues (Wang, 2014). For instance, OCB deficiencies can hinder efficient organisational performance and organisational culture inheritance (Liu, 2022).

The new generation of employees is generally less engaged with OCB because they have bold personalities, self-centred and display a weak sense of responsibility (Yang, 2019). Han (2022) stipulated that compared to the older generation of employees, the younger ones grew up in a completely different social background. For example, with the policy of one child in a family, the younger

generation is being showered with love in a family that consists of four or even six adults for a lengthy period, resulting in those born after 1980 need not reciprocate to maintain a stable relationship that later causes insufficient adaptability in organisational work. This is what has led to the minimal engagement of OCB among the employees of the younger generation (Lin, 2022)

A growth environment forms a set of distinctive personality characteristics for new-generation employees, including a strong sense of innovation, dissatisfaction with the current work situation, and insufficient organisational loyalty (Meister & Willyrd, 2010). The specific behaviour and problems of new generation employees are manifested through self-centredness, lack of collective concept, weak sense of responsibility, deficiency of organisational identity and loyalty, short average working years, and a high turnover rate (Yang, 2019; Hou, 2022; Lin, 2022; Liu, 2022; Huang, 2022). Other characteristics, such as self-centredness, determination for self-realisation, great emotional changes, low sense of organisational identity, and aversion to overtime work, have led to several workplace issues (Wang, 2014).

The new-generation employees are prone to negative phenomena, including turnover behaviour, dissatisfaction with the current work situation, and insufficient organisational commitment. They portray less organisational loyalty, and thus, their job-hopping rate is rather high. Given that the loyalty of the new-generation employees is lacking, they will leave the organisation if their interests are not met (Huang, 2022). Young employees seek jobs with challenges and development potential to satisfy and match internal needs. They generally values personal development and individual independence more. However, workplace conflicts are more likely to occur, resulting in low identification with the organisation and engagement in insufficient OCB.