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Existing research has primarily focused on the positive impacts of empowering leadership; however, emerging studies suggest that empowering leadership may also engender potential negative effects. To address this issue, this study first delineates the concept of empowering leadership and its core characteristics. Second, drawing upon dual-task processing effect, role theory, and implicit leadership theory, it explicates the theoretical mechanisms underlying the negative effects of empowering leadership, and further analyzes and summarizes the conditions under which the effectiveness of empowering leadership can be realized. Finally, it proposes recommendations for future research directions regarding the negative effects of empowering leadership.

Full Text

The Negative Effects of Empowering Leadership: Theoretical Mechanisms and Boundary Conditions

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Abstract

While previous research has primarily focused on the positive impacts of empowering leadership, recent studies suggest that empowering leadership may also trigger potential negative effects. Addressing this issue, this paper first defines the concept of empowering leadership and its core characteristics. Second, based on dual-task processing effect, role theory, and implicit leadership theory,

it explains the theoretical mechanisms underlying the negative effects of empowering leadership, and further analyzes and summarizes the conditions under which empowering leadership can achieve its intended effectiveness. Finally, it proposes directions for future research on the negative effects of empowering leadership.

Keywords

empowering leadership; negative effects; theoretical mechanisms; boundary conditions

1 Introduction

In today's rapidly changing organizational environment, self-managing teams and platform-based organizational structures are increasingly prevalent. Leaders expect to enhance employees' self-management and self-leadership capabilities through empowerment. Consequently, empowering leadership, characterized primarily by power sharing, has attracted widespread attention in both theory and practice (Dong, Liao, Chuang, & Zhou, 2015; Hao, He, & Long, 2018; Hill & Bartol, 2016). Extensive research has shown that by granting employees power and opportunities to participate in decision-making, empowering leadership can stimulate employees' intrinsic motivation, thereby improving positive work attitudes and behaviors (陈国权 & 陈子栋, 2017; 孙圣兰 & 吕洁, 2016). Examples include employee satisfaction (Biemann, Kearney, & Marggraf, 2015; Kim, Beehr, & Prewett, 2018; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), job performance (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Harris, Li, Boswell, Zhang, & Xie, 2014; Lee, Willis, & Tian, 2018), and innovative behavior (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Dong et al., 2015; 王永跃, 葛菁青, & 张洋, 2016).

Although many studies support the positive effects of empowering leadership, recent research has found that its effectiveness is not universally supported. Some scholars argue that empowering leadership may trigger potential negative effects that adversely impact employees and organizations (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013; Li, Chiaburu, & Kirkman, 2017; Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims, 2013; Wong & Giessner, 2018). For instance, Martin, Liao, and Campbell (2013) suggest that the self-leadership and self-management advocated by empowering leadership invisibly increases employees' environmental uncertainty and role ambiguity, leading to reduced individual work efficiency. Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, and Yun (2016) also demonstrated that leaders' empowerment objectively increases subordinates' workload, triggering job tension and resulting in decreased performance. Hao et al. (2018) similarly found that because empowering leadership strengthens employees' perceived leadership expectations, employees need to work hard to prove their worth, which triggers controlled work emotions and further reduces employee performance. Thus, while empowering leadership produces positive effects, it may also trigger potential negative effects.

Faced with these complex findings, both researchers and practitioners have

raised questions and confusion about the effectiveness of empowering leadership. This also indicates that current research cannot fully explain why empowering leadership fails or even produces negative effects. Existing research has at least two shortcomings: First, the excessive focus on positive effects has led to neglect of its negative effects, making it difficult to fully explain why empowering leadership produces negative impacts. Therefore, systematically explaining the theoretical mechanisms of empowering leadership's negative effects is important for both theoretical research and practical application (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Second, empowerment is not a "one-size-fits-all" solution; the effectiveness of empowering leadership only applies under specific boundary conditions. However, theoretical research lacks sufficient understanding of the conditions under which empowering leadership is applicable, and many researchers have called for enhanced understanding of the contingency characteristics of empowering leadership to further answer when it is effective (Lorinkova & Perry, 2017; Vecchio, Justin & Pearce, 2010; Wong & Giessner, 2018).

Addressing these issues, this study will discuss the following aspects: First, it systematically reviews the conceptual connotation of empowering leadership and summarizes its core characteristics. Second, based on existing theoretical and empirical research, this paper analyzes the main theoretical mechanisms of empowering leadership's negative effects to explain the internal logic of these negative effects. Third, according to previous empirical research conclusions, it summarizes the boundary conditions for empowering leadership's effectiveness, focusing on answering under what conditions empowering leadership can play a positive role, thereby revealing when it fails or even triggers negative effects. Finally, based on the preceding analysis and summary, this study proposes suggestions for future research on the negative effects of empowering leadership. By addressing these issues, this study aims to help researchers and practitioners understand why and under what conditions empowering leadership fails, thereby providing insights for avoiding its negative effects and implementing empowerment effectively.

2 Conceptual Definition of Empowering Leadership

The idea of empowerment can be traced back to the 1940s in research related to employee participation (e.g., Lewin, 1947). Although the concept of empowering leadership was not formally proposed in early research, the empowerment process itself implies a transfer of power from leader to subordinate. Therefore, empowerment research has primarily focused on the leadership empowerment process and its implementation effects. The concept of empowering leadership was proposed by Manz and Sims (1991), who believed this leadership style could motivate employees to engage in self-management and called it "superleadership." Later, through research by Pearce et al. (2003), empowering leadership was formally proposed as an independent leadership style based on transactional and transformational leadership. They argued that empowering leadership is a leadership style that includes behaviors such as encouraging employee self-

management, self-leadership, and participation in goal setting.

Subsequent research has examined the effectiveness of empowering leadership from two perspectives: The first is the structural empowerment perspective, which originates from job characteristics research (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and emphasizes the behavioral process by which leaders grant power and responsibility to employees (Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). Structural empowerment research primarily focuses on how leaders make empowerment decisions and implement specific empowerment strategies, such as encouraging employees to express opinions and suggestions, granting employees power and opportunities to participate in decision-making, and encouraging team self-management (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000). The second is the psychological empowerment perspective, which focuses on employees' subjective perception and evaluation of leadership empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). This perspective argues that employees' subjective psychological experience of empowerment plays a crucial role, affecting how employees define empowerment and assume empowerment responsibilities. Based on this perspective, empowerment includes four dimensions: meaning, competence, autonomy, and impact (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). In later research, scholars gradually realized that empowerment is actually a comprehensive process in which leaders influence employees' psychological experiences through empowerment behaviors, and thus the two research perspectives should not be completely separated (Menon, 2001). Simultaneously, comprehensively examining the process by which leaders influence employees' psychological empowerment through empowerment behaviors has greater theoretical and practical significance, and the development of structural and psychological empowerment perspectives shows a continuous integration trend. Based on this, the definition of empowering leadership has also integrated both perspectives, referring to behaviors that grant power to subordinates through a series of activities, thereby improving employees' intrinsic motivation levels. Specific behaviors include four dimensions: enhancing subordinates' sense of work meaning, promoting subordinates' participation in decision-making, expressing confidence in subordinates' ability to achieve high performance, and helping subordinates remove obstacles to achieving high performance (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Through analysis and review of the empowering leadership concept, it is not difficult to find that empowering leadership is distinctly different from traditional leadership styles and has its own unique characteristics. First, empowering leadership advocates stimulating employees' self-management and self-leadership capabilities through power sharing (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017). Empowering leadership encourages employees to become self-leaders, so leaders enhance employees' self-management capabilities by granting them self-control and self-decision power (Vecchio et al., 2010; 蒿坡, 龙立荣, & 贺伟, 2014). Enhancing employees' self-leadership capabilities through empowerment has become one of the important characteristics of empowering leadership. Second, empowering leadership expects employees to independently assume the power and responsibilities granted by leaders. The process of granting power im-

plies leaders' expectations for subordinates to assume responsibilities, and they demonstrate confidence and expectations for subordinates to achieve high performance (Hao et al., 2018; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Therefore, previous research also shows that empowering leadership focuses on how to enhance subordinates' autonomous work motivation, thereby strengthening their effective use of power (Lee et al., 2018; 张华磊, 袁庆宏, 王震, & 黄勇, 2014). Finally, empowering leadership encourages employees to participate in organizational decision-making and establishes a flexible and democratic management style with employees. Thus, different from traditional leadership styles, empowering leadership may promote the transformation of leader and employee roles. Leaders and subordinates need to reach consistent cognition about the responsibilities and obligations of decision-making before subordinates can clearly understand how to use empowerment to achieve leaders' goals; otherwise, leadership effectiveness and employee performance may be greatly reduced (Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013).

3 Theoretical Mechanisms of Empowering Leadership' s Negative Effects

Current research has begun to focus on and actively explore the negative effects of empowering leadership (Cordery, Morrison, Wright, & Wall, 2010; Wong & Giessner, 2018). However, it is difficult to clearly answer the question of "why empowering leadership produces negative effects." Understanding this question helps deepen and develop empowerment theory and promotes the effective implementation of leadership empowerment in management practice. Through analysis and summary of existing research, this study believes that the theoretical mechanisms of empowering leadership' s negative effects can be summarized into three theories: dual-task processing effect, role theory, and implicit leadership theory. These three theories explain the internal logic of empowering leadership' s negative effects from resource, role, and cognitive perspectives respectively.

3.1 Dual-Task Processing Effect

One of the negative effects of empowering leadership is the reduction of individual work performance, which may be due to the depletion of subordinates' internal resources (Cheong et al., 2016). Specifically, the dual-task processing effect helps explain the source of empowering leadership' s negative impacts. The dual-task processing effect refers to the cognitive resource depletion that occurs when individuals simultaneously or sequentially complete multiple work tasks, leading to reduced cognitive ability (Rubinstein, Meyer, & Evans, 2001; Langfred & Moye, 2004). Based on the dual-task processing effect, when employees simultaneously undertake multiple work tasks, potential personal resource depletion may occur, triggering reduced individual work performance (Levy & Pashler, 2001).

This is mainly caused by two mechanisms: One is cognitive interference, where

individuals have difficulty simultaneously completing the cognitive processing of multiple tasks, or the cognitive processing of one task interferes with the completion of another. The other mechanism is cognitive switching costs, which refer to resource consumption caused by individuals' cognitive switching between multiple tasks (Temprado, Zanone, Monno, & Laurent, 2001; Langfred & Moye, 2004). The dispersion and depletion of cognitive resources prevent employees from focusing on their core work tasks, thereby reducing employee work performance.

The empowerment process may trigger the dual-task processing effect, leading to reduced individual work ability and performance. On the one hand, empowering leadership objectively increases subordinates' work content, requiring them to assume more power and responsibility granted by leaders. Multiple work tasks may cause cognitive interference among employees (Mills & Ungson, 2003). Related research shows that when leaders empower employees with increased work tasks, employees may not be able to effectively handle multiple tasks and find it difficult to integrate internal and external information and resources to work creatively (Deery, Walsh, & Zatzick, 2014; Humborstad, Nerstad, & Dysvik, 2014; Matthews, Winkel, & Wayne, 2014). On the other hand, after assuming the power granted by leaders, employees need to both make work decisions themselves and be responsible for decision execution, which actually increases the complexity of subordinates' work tasks. Some researchers also emphasize that empowerment strengthens employees' work content and complexity. For example, Langfred and Moye (2004) believe that after employees gain the power to make decisions autonomously, their work task content and complexity increase accordingly. Magni and Maruping (2013) also argue that after employees assume empowerment responsibilities, they need to complete both decision-making and task execution simultaneously, significantly increasing both the content and complexity of individual work. According to the dual-task processing effect, when employees simultaneously undertake multiple work tasks and task complexity is high, potential cognitive resource dispersion and depletion may be triggered. This dispersion and depletion of cognitive resources prevent employees from focusing on their core work tasks, thus reducing individual work performance (Rubinstein et al., 2001; Temprado et al., 2001). Empirical research has confirmed the dual-task processing effect triggered by empowerment. For example, Cheong et al. (2016) proposed based on this theory that leadership empowerment actually increases the work tasks subordinates need to complete, and research results show that empowering leadership causes subordinates' job tension, leading to reduced subordinate work performance. Cordery et al. (2010) also found that empowering leadership increases employees' perceived task complexity and uncertainty, causing employees to develop resistance to work autonomy, which also reduces employee work performance. Therefore, empowering leadership may cause difficulties for subordinates in processing multiple work tasks, which is not conducive to improving subordinates' work performance.

Overall, although leadership empowerment can grant employees autonomy and

power to participate in decision-making, correspondingly, employees need to invest more resources to meet leadership empowerment expectations. The employee self-management and self-leadership advocated by empowering leadership objectively require employees to go beyond their own work tasks and assume more management decision-making activities. The increase in work task content and complexity may consume employees' own resources, causing subordinates to be unable to focus on their core work tasks. Understanding this negative effect's internal mechanism helps researchers and managers more comprehensively understand empowerment's actual effects and provides insights for avoiding empowering leadership's negative impacts.

3.2 Role Theory

In addition to triggering employees' perceived resource depletion, empowerment may also increase employees' role stress. This negative effect is directly reflected in employee well-being, and role theory helps us understand this negative effect triggered by empowering leadership.

Role theory posits that when individuals assume specific social roles, they also need to fulfill others' expectations and demands for their roles (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). When individuals have difficulty assuming others' role expectations and demands, they cannot effectively play their social roles, thus experiencing role stress. Based on role theory, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload are the main sources of role stress (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role conflict refers to the role pressure individuals experience when others' role expectations and demands for them are inconsistent or conflicting. Role ambiguity occurs when individuals lack sufficient information to clearly understand work goals and responsibilities when completing specific role tasks. Role overload describes the psychological pressure individuals perceive when they have assumed too many role expectations and demands (Rizzo et al., 1970). Previous research shows that role stress reduces job satisfaction and significantly decreases individual well-being (Bamberger, Geller, & Doveh, 2017; Schmidt, Roesler, Kusserow, & Rau, 2014).

Role theory becomes another important theory for understanding the source of empowering leadership's negative effects. When empowering leadership grants employees more autonomy and decision-making power, it also correspondingly increases leaders' demands for employees to assume more work roles. To achieve the role requirements of leadership empowerment, employees need to assume role obligations beyond their original work roles. These continuously increasing work roles lead to sustained increases in employee role stress. First, empowerment may cause inconsistency between individuals' new work roles and the behaviors that should be performed in their original work roles. In addition to executing original work tasks, employees also need to assume new work roles brought by empowerment (e.g., making work decisions autonomously). Inconsistency in behaviors that should be performed between different roles may trigger employees' role conflict. Cheong et al. (2016) believe that when employees accept the

responsibilities and tasks of leadership empowerment, new role tasks will affect employees' fulfillment of original role tasks, leading to employee role conflict. Second, empowering leadership may also place employees in a situation of role ambiguity. Empowering leadership delegates decision-making power to employees and encourages them to become self-leaders rather than directly issuing clear commands or instructions (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Employees need to face uncertainties in work by themselves, which increases the risk of employee role ambiguity (Cordery et al., 2010; Lorinkova et al., 2013). Humborstad and Kuvaas (2013) also show that when leaders overestimate employees' expectations for empowerment, empowerment causes employees to be unable to predict their role goals and responsibilities, which strengthens subordinates' role ambiguity. Finally, empowerment from leaders objectively increases subordinates' work content and scope, which may cause employees to assume role requirements beyond their capabilities, triggering employee role overload. 彭坚 and 王震 (2018) believe that while leaders delegate power to subordinates, they also expect subordinates to devote extra time and effort to work, which easily increases employees' individual work burden. Excessive role pressure continuously depletes employees' psychological resources, ultimately reducing individual well-being. Employees in long-term high role-pressure work situations experience sustained resource loss, causing negative outcomes such as job burnout. Empirical research further supports these conclusions. For example, 金家飞, 徐姗, and 王艳霞 (2014) found that when employee role pressure is too high, they have difficulty completing their assumed role tasks, which leads to psychological depression. 高中华 and 赵晨 (2015) also found that role pressure causes employees' work-family conflict, thereby reducing employees' life satisfaction. Therefore, excessively high role pressure may trigger many psychological problems in employees and reduce employee well-being.

In summary, based on role theory, empowering leadership may strengthen employees' role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload, bringing potential negative impacts on employee well-being. However, previous research overemphasized the positive effects of leadership empowerment on individual attitudes while neglecting its potential negative effects on individual well-being, which may cause harm to employees' well-being during the empowerment process. Correctly understanding the internal mechanism by which empowering leadership triggers employee role pressure helps leaders implement empowerment more effectively, ensuring that empowerment can exert positive utility while avoiding potential negative consequences.

3.3 Implicit Leadership Theory

Based on implicit leadership theory (Eden & Leviatan, 1975), employees form expectations and assumptions about leader behavior. These expectations and assumptions determine how employees interpret and position specific leadership behaviors, thereby influencing employees' work attitudes and behaviors (Foti, Hansbrough, Epitropaki, & Coyle, 2017; 曹元坤 & 祝振兵, 2015). Pre-

vious research has mainly used implicit leadership theory to explore issues of subordinates evaluating whether leaders are effective (Carnes, Houghton, & Ellison, 2015; Hansbrough, Lord, & Schyns, 2015), while recent research has also explored the important role of implicit leadership theory in explaining the implementation effects of leadership behavior (Aktas, Gelfand, & Hanges, 2016; Lam, Huang, & Chan, 2015). Especially for empowering leadership, which implicitly involves bilateral responsibility transfer and power transmission, leaders' and subordinates' expectations of empowerment will directly affect employees' sense-making and behavioral responses to leadership empowerment (Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000).

Although empowering leadership is generally regarded as an effective leadership style (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), it may be interpreted by employees as laissez-faire leadership. This is mainly because these two leadership styles share certain commonalities, as both advocate granting power and responsibility to employees and encouraging employee participation and autonomous decision-making (Wong & Giessner, 2018). However, when leaders' empowerment exceeds employees' expectations for empowerment, employees may view empowerment as leaders shirking their own responsibilities (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008). In this situation, employees resist the autonomy and uncertainty brought by empowerment, making it difficult for them to fulfill the responsibilities that empowerment confers (Humborstad, Humborstad, Whitfield, & Perry, 2008; Maynard, Mathieu, Marsh, & Ruddy, 2007). Previous research shows that when employees view leadership empowerment as laissez-faire leadership, it triggers a series of negative attitudes and behaviors (Buch, Martinsen, & Kuvaas, 2015; Skogstad, Hetland, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2014).

Moreover, when leaders' empowerment to subordinates exceeds subordinates' expectations, subordinates tend to believe these tasks are unimportant, which reduces employees' intrinsic motivation to undertake empowerment tasks and decreases their work engagement. For example, Lee, Cheong, Kim, and Yun (2017) believe that excessive empowerment from leaders sends signals to employees that leaders are not interested in or do not value these tasks, which may reduce employees' efforts to improve work performance. Empirical research further supports the view that empowering leadership leads to employees' negative cognition. For example, Wong and Giessner (2018) found, based on implicit leadership theory, the important role of subordinates' empowerment expectations. Subordinates develop specific cognitions and evaluations of leadership behavior styles, which in turn affect the process of leadership effectiveness.

When leadership empowerment behavior is relatively consistent with subordinates' expected leadership empowerment, subordinates are more inclined to identify with leadership behavior. In this case, subordinates view the power and responsibility granted by leaders as part of their work role and generate positive evaluations of leadership effectiveness. However, when leadership empowerment behavior exceeds employees' expectations for leadership empowerment, employees view the employee self-management advocated by empowerment as

laissez-faire leadership. In this situation, employees generate negative evaluations of empowering leadership effectiveness. Humborstad and Kuvaas (2013) also found that when leaders and subordinates have relatively consistent and high-level empowerment expectations, subordinates' intrinsic motivation level is higher. However, when leaders overestimate subordinates' empowerment expectations, subordinates' intrinsic motivation level decreases, which may cause empowering leadership to fail or even produce negative effects.

Therefore, employees' expectations of leadership empowerment may affect the effectiveness of empowering leadership. The failure of empowering leadership may also be due to differences between leaders and employees in empowerment expectations. Both excessively high and low empowerment behavior from leaders may trigger employees' negative cognition. On the one hand, excessively high empowerment from leaders may be viewed by employees as laissez-faire leadership and shirking their own responsibilities. On the other hand, differences between leaders and employees in empowerment expectations also trigger employees' wrong perception of task importance, as employees tend to believe that leadership empowerment means these work tasks are unimportant. Employees' cognitive biases further trigger their negative attitudes and behaviors, and the negative effects of empowering leadership thus become apparent.

4 Boundary Conditions for Empowering Leadership Effectiveness

Based on the preceding analysis and summary, it is not difficult to find that empowering leadership not only stimulates employees' positive attitudes and behaviors but may also trigger potential negative effects. Therefore, empowering leadership is not a "one-size-fits-all" solution; its effectiveness requires specific boundary conditions for guarantee. Previous research has also found that empowerment's effectiveness has significant situational dependency and can only be realized under specific boundary conditions (Vecchio et al., 2010; Wong & Giessner, 2018). Therefore, clarifying under what conditions empowering leadership's effectiveness can be ensured has important value for both empowerment theory research and practical application. In view of this, this paper summarizes the boundary conditions for empowering leadership effectiveness from three perspectives—resource, role, and cognition—based on the theoretical mechanisms of empowering leadership's negative effects, thereby providing reference for theoretical research and practical application.

4.1 Resource-Based Boundary Conditions

Based on the dual-task processing effect, the work resources and personal resources employees possess can help them effectively cope with the power granted by leaders. One source of empowering leadership's negative effects is the depletion of employees' cognitive resources, which makes it difficult for employees to cope with empowerment tasks and reduces work performance. Therefore,

sufficient resources can help employees deal with increased work tasks and complexity after empowerment. Employees' effective resources mainly include two aspects: work resources and personal resources. In terms of work resources, good interpersonal relationships and organizational management practices are important work resources for employees, while personal resources are mainly reflected in resources for coping with work stress.

First, good interpersonal relationships are important work resources affecting employees' ability to cope with leadership empowerment. Interpersonal relationships in organizational contexts, as supportive factors, help employees obtain more information and resources, which is beneficial for resolving pressure and risks in the empowerment process. However, related research also shows that when the interpersonal relationship between employees and leaders cannot provide necessary support for empowerment activities, empowering leadership may fail or even produce negative effects. For example, Harris et al. (2014) proposed that supportive organizational contexts and trust relationships help reduce resource depletion when employees assume empowerment. Research conclusions also show that only when newcomers perceive high levels of organizational support can empowering leadership stimulate employee creativity. In addition, employees' trust in leaders can also significantly enhance the positive effect of empowering leadership on employee creativity. Zhang and Zhou (2014) believe that employees' trust in leaders is an important factor determining whether employees can assume empowerment responsibilities, especially for employees with high uncertainty avoidance. Research shows that only when employees have high levels of trust in supervisors can they actively assume leadership empowerment responsibilities. Under this condition, empowering leadership can enhance employee creativity. Three-way interaction results further show that only when employees have high uncertainty avoidance and high trust in leaders can empowering leadership stimulate employee creativity (Zhang & Zhou, 2014). Therefore, good interpersonal relationships can increase the resources employees need to assume empowerment, help employees clarify empowerment responsibilities and strive to assume them, thereby promoting the smooth functioning of empowering leadership utility. At the same time, as the implementers of empowerment, the resources leaders possess also provide guarantees for employees to obtain resources to some extent. Previous research has also explored the impact of leaders' good interpersonal relationships on their empowerment implementation effectiveness. Based on social exchange theory, Lorinkova and Perry (2017) found that only when empowering leaders maintain good relationships with their superiors (leader-leader exchange) can leaders possess the material and psychological resources needed for empowerment, creating favorable conditions for effective empowerment. Under such conditions, leaders can provide sufficient resources for empowerment implementation, and thus empowering leadership can effectively stimulate subordinates' intrinsic motivation.

Second, in terms of management practices, researchers believe that organizational management practices can profoundly affect empowerment implementation effectiveness (Hempel, Zhang, & Han, 2012; Hong, Liao, Raub, & Han,

2016). Related research has found that empowering leadership and human resource management practices have substitutive effects, indicating that in organizations with relatively complete policies and practices, the effectiveness of empowering leadership may be substituted. For example, Hong et al. (2016) found that empowering leadership and initiative-enhancing HRM systems have a substitutive effect; that is, only when initiative-enhancing HRM systems are at low levels can empowering leadership effectively stimulate team initiative climate. When initiative-enhancing HRM systems are at high levels, human resource management practices play the role of stimulating employee initiative. This may be because empowering leadership and human resource management practices have similar functions in achieving specific organizational goals, so the effectiveness of empowering leadership is constrained by human resource management practices. At the same time, recent research also shows that, similar to leadership empowerment activities, human resource management practices also mean more work requirements for employees, who need to invest more resources to achieve human resource management practice goals (Jensen, Patel, & Messersmith, 2013; Mariappanadar, 2014). Therefore, empowering leadership and human resource management practices may not produce superimposed effects but instead weaken each other's positive utility. Leaders need to consider whether to empower based on the management practices implemented in the organization to avoid resource waste and conflicts.

Finally, the resources individuals possess are also important boundary conditions for whether employees can assume empowerment responsibilities. Although empowering leadership can grant subordinates resources needed for work, empowerment may thus reduce employees' resource depletion. However, when employees face high work stress and are already unable to cope with existing work pressures, more empowerment from leaders will only further deplete their resources, leading to the emergence of empowering leadership's negative effects. Magni and Maruping (2013) also believe that leadership empowerment helps employees actively respond to unexpected events, but when employees have heavy work burdens, leadership empowerment may cause employees to fall into isolated and helpless situations. In such situations, employees have difficulty completing their own work tasks, let alone assuming leadership empowerment tasks. Leadership empowerment only further increases their work burden and cannot produce motivational effects. Therefore, if leaders grant employees autonomous decision-making power without considering whether employees have the ability to cope with empowerment, it may trigger employees' resistance and harm employee performance and well-being.

4.2 Role-Based Boundary Conditions

According to the summary of empowering leadership's negative effect mechanisms in the preceding text, employees' role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload are possible negative outcomes of empowering leadership. Therefore, factors that can help employees reduce role pressure caused by empowerment

can provide more sufficient guarantees for empowering leadership effectiveness. Through analysis and review of empowerment-related research, existing research has mainly explored the boundary conditions for empowering leadership effectiveness from aspects such as organizational structure, team characteristics, and leadership factors, and found that these factors help employees clarify relevant work roles and reduce individual uncertainty after empowerment.

First, organizational structure can serve as an important boundary condition affecting empowering leadership effectiveness. Researchers believe that organizational institutional factors help clarify organizational members' responsibilities and powers, helping employees understand their roles after assuming empowerment tasks (Hempel et al., 2012; Mills & Ungson, 2003). Therefore, clear organizational systems are conducive to responsibility definition in the empowerment process and can effectively guarantee empowering leadership to play a positive role. Related empirical research also supports this conclusion. For example, 王宏蕾 and 孙健敏 (2018) found that when team structural formalization is high, organizational rules and procedures can be clearly communicated to employees through clear policies. Under such conditions, employees can clearly understand the systems and processes implemented by the organization, which enhances their environmental certainty and sense of security. Thus, only when team structural formalization is high can empowering leadership promote employees' innovative behavior. This shows that good organizational structural conditions can provide necessary support for empowerment implementation.

Second, team characteristic factors also affect the specific process of leadership empowerment implementation and become a boundary condition constraining empowering leadership effectiveness. Previous research has mainly found that team heterogeneity and team development stage constrain the effectiveness of empowering leadership implementation. For example, Hmieleski and Ensley (2007) comprehensively examined the interactive effects of environmental dynamism and top management team heterogeneity in the process of empowering leadership leading entrepreneurial teams to improve performance. They found that for teams with high member heterogeneity, the power sharing advocated by empowering leadership may reduce team work efficiency. This is mainly because heterogeneous teams find it difficult to quickly reach consensus on the same issue, which is not conducive to team members' role clarification, especially for teams in turbulent environments where the harm is fatal. However, when the external environment is relatively stable, empowering leadership stimulates heterogeneous teams to deeply explore and excavate various potential strategies, which is beneficial for improving the overall effectiveness of entrepreneurial teams. In addition, before implementing empowerment, leaders also need to fully consider the development stage of the team. For teams at different development stages, empowering leadership may produce completely different effects. Lorinkova et al. (2013) found that in the early stage of team building, directive leadership is more helpful than empowering leadership in improving team performance. This is mainly because directive leadership helps subordinates clarify roles and achieve tasks, while empowering leadership focuses more on employees'

self-leadership and learning abilities rather than task performance improvement. With team development, empowering leadership plays a more positive role in enhancing team learning, teamwork, and employee self-management, and its role in improving team performance gradually surpasses that of directive leadership. Therefore, for different team characteristics, empowering leadership may produce differential impacts, and leaders should fully examine team characteristic factors to decide whether to implement empowerment behavior.

Finally, as the implementers of empowerment behavior, how leaders implement empowerment also significantly affects the actual effects of empowering leadership. Since the empowerment process implicitly involves the transfer of leadership power and the assumption of employee responsibility, whether leaders can clearly define the roles and responsibilities of leaders and employees after empowerment will constrain the process of empowering leadership effectiveness. Related research has found that only when leaders and employees perceive clear role definitions and responsibility standards can empowerment stimulate positive behaviors in employees and teams. For example, Wallace, Johnson, Mathe, and Paul (2011) showed that when leaders' perceived responsibility standards are clear, leaders can clearly communicate empowerment expectations to subordinates, which helps reduce employees' uncertainty when independently completing empowerment tasks. Conversely, when leaders cannot clarify the task standards they expect employees to achieve after empowerment, empowerment may increase subordinates' role ambiguity. Their research conclusions further show that only when leaders' perceived responsibility expectations are clear can empowering leadership climate effectively improve leadership effectiveness. Therefore, while empowering, leaders also need to take measures to help employees define their work roles and clarify the role obligations employees should assume after receiving empowerment, thereby creating favorable conditions for empowering leadership to exert positive utility.

4.3 Cognitive-Based Boundary Conditions

Based on implicit leadership theory, employees' empowerment expectations affect their evaluation and positioning of empowering leadership (Magni & Maruping, 2013; Mathieu, Ahearne, & Taylor, 2007; Wong & Giessner, 2018). Accordingly, it can be inferred that factors that can change employees' empowerment expectations and their evaluation of empowering leadership will significantly constrain empowering leadership effectiveness. Previous research has found that employees' role identity with empowerment, readiness, personal achievement goal orientation, and organizational justice perception affect empowering leadership implementation effectiveness.

Previous research has mainly explored the boundary conditions for empowering leadership effectiveness from the perspective of employee personal characteristics. Researchers have found that only when subordinates have role identity with leadership empowerment and good readiness can they develop positive cognition and evaluation of leadership empowerment activities, and thus empowering lead-

ership can exert positive utility (Ahearne et al., 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Therefore, before empowering, leaders need to first clarify whether employees identify with leadership empowerment and their readiness for empowerment, and try to empower those employees who hold positive evaluations of leadership empowerment, which largely determines whether empowering leadership will produce positive effects. Second, subordinates' personal achievement goal orientation also affects how they define and evaluate leadership empowerment activities. For example, Lee et al. (2017) found that individuals with learning achievement goal orientation pursue self-development and capability improvement more, viewing leadership empowerment as opportunities for self-learning and improvement, so they use leadership empowerment more actively to enhance themselves. For employees with learning achievement goal orientation, leadership empowerment is more likely to produce positive effects. Researchers point out that due to the diversity of employee personal characteristics, leaders need to clarify which employees are more suitable for being granted power before empowering (Ahearne et al., 2005), and then develop targeted and differentiated empowerment strategies. In addition, employees' organizational justice perception also affects employees' attitudes and evaluations toward empowering leadership. When employees' organizational justice perception is low, leaders' differentiated empowerment may further aggravate their sense of injustice. Employees will compare the power they enjoy with others and view leadership empowerment as a source of organizational inequality, which further triggers employees' negative attitudes and behaviors (林美珍 & 罗忠恒, 2017). Therefore, leaders also need to consider employees' justice perception issues when empowering to avoid triggering employees' negative attitudes and behaviors.

Employees' cognition of empowering leadership will have a direct impact on empowering leadership implementation effectiveness, so the cognitive perspective should be an important perspective for exploring empowering leadership effectiveness boundary conditions. However, from the perspective of current research, there are still certain limitations. Related research mainly focuses on exploring boundary conditions of employee individual characteristics, and the quantity is relatively limited. At the same time, there is also a lack of research on the role of other boundary conditions within the organization on employees' empowerment cognition. Leaders should strengthen communication with subordinates about empowerment issues, grasp employees' cognition and expectations of empowerment, and try to keep empowerment behavior consistent with subordinates' empowerment expectations as much as possible. At the same time, leaders can also help subordinates adjust their cognition of empowerment to make it conform to organizational development needs. Under this premise, empowering leadership can maximize its positive role.

5 Research Outlook

Based on the analysis and summary of the internal mechanisms and boundary conditions of empowering leadership's negative effects, this study believes that

although empowering leadership has many positive impacts, it cannot be ignored that leaders may trigger potential negative effects when implementing empowerment. At the same time, the effectiveness of empowering leadership also exists under specific boundary conditions, constrained by specific organizational and individual factors. Exploring the internal mechanisms and boundary conditions of empowering leadership's negative effects is beneficial for theoretical research and practice to understand how to avoid empowering leadership's negative effects and implement empowerment behavior more effectively. However, from the perspective of existing research, research on empowering leadership's negative effects is still relatively limited, and future research needs to be enriched and developed in the following aspects.

5.1 Deepen Research on Individual Resource Gain and Loss Paths in the Empowerment Process

Existing research on empowering leadership mainly focuses on how leaders grant employees various work-needed resources through empowerment (Kim & Beehr, 2017; Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). However, empowering leadership may also mean higher work demands and more complex work content for employees, and employees may also experience sustained resource depletion due to assuming empowerment responsibilities (Cordery et al., 2010). Therefore, empowering leadership may have a “double-edged sword” effect of both resource gain and resource depletion for employees. In fact, existing research has begun to focus on and empirically test the resource gain and loss paths of empowering leadership for employees (Cheong et al., 2016). Future research should further expand relevant research ideas, exploring whether empowering leadership, while gaining resources for employees, leads to more forms of resource depletion, such as interpersonal relationship tension and physical and mental health problems. Mills and Ungson (2003) pointed out that empowering leadership may also have negative effects on employees' interpersonal relationships. Since leaders empower some employees while others have relatively fewer opportunities to be empowered, leadership empowerment behavior may cause tension in interpersonal relationships among employees. Employees who are not empowered may be jealous of those who are empowered and may even threaten others' interests and exhibit deviant behaviors (林美珍 & 罗忠恒, 2017). Therefore, empowering leadership may cause multiple forms of employee resource depletion, and these perspectives need further exploration and testing in future research. In addition, related research should continue to expand the study of boundary conditions for resource gain and loss paths after empowerment. For example, factors such as organizational support, leader-member exchange relationships, and employee self-efficacy can supplement employees' potential resource depletion, thereby helping employees avoid the negative effects of empowering leadership.

5.2 Enhance Exploration of Empowering Leadership' s Negative Impact on Employee Role Definition Process

Previous research has mainly focused on how empowering leadership stimulates employees' positive attitudes and behaviors (Dong et al., 2015; Fong & Snape, 2015), but may have neglected the impact of leadership empowerment on the employee role definition process, especially the negative role definition that empowering leadership may trigger. Future research should further expand outcome variables in the aspect of employee role pressure. For example, will leadership empowerment trigger individuals' work-family conflict? And under what conditions will it trigger individuals' work-family conflict? Responses to these questions require further analysis and exploration in future empirical research. In addition, the negative effects of empowering leadership on employee role definition also need to consider the influence of time factors. With the passage of time, empowering leadership may have dynamic impacts on employees' role definition (Cheong et al., 2016). Future research can further explore whether and how employees' role definition processes change after leadership empowerment changes, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamic process of empowering leadership' s negative impact on employee role definition. On this basis, future research also needs to enrich the exploration of relevant boundary conditions. Although current research has verified from aspects such as organizational structure, team characteristics, and leadership factors, the quantity is still very limited, and the scope involved is also relatively narrow. Future research should explore from more perspectives what factors can help role clarification after empowerment and what factors can constrain the role definition process after empowerment. For example, organizational strategy, team climate, work task characteristics, and leadership empowerment style. Related research has found that organizational strategy and management control style significantly affect employees' role clarification process (Kauppila, 2014). Future research needs to further test whether these factors constrain empowering leadership' s impact on employee role definition.

5.3 Expand Research Ideas on Empowering Leadership' s Negative Effects from Cognitive Perspective

Based on the preceding analysis, differences between leaders and subordinates in empowerment expectations may cause empowering leadership' s negative effects. On this basis, future research should further explore what factors affect subordinates' empowerment expectations and what factors can enhance consistency between leaders' and subordinates' empowerment expectations. For example, some researchers believe that individuals' adaptability may prompt subordinates to adjust their empowerment expectations and make them as consistent as possible with leadership empowerment behavior (Wong & Giessner, 2018). At the same time, due to possible differences among employees' empowerment expectations, how leaders should handle these differences is also a question worthy of in-depth analysis in future research. Should leaders avoid individual empowerment differ-

ences through team empowerment, and how to implement team empowerment more effectively to avoid employees' negative cognition of empowerment? These questions require continued exploration and response in future research. In addition, future research should further expand the cognitive perspective to explore empowering leadership's negative outcomes. When leaders delegate power to subordinates, they also convey confidence and expectations for subordinates to achieve high performance (Ahearne et al., 2005; Zhang & Zhou, 2014). Subordinates will work hard to achieve leadership empowerment expectations. Based on social cognitive theory, when employees can achieve leaders' expectations and requirements, they generate positive self-evaluation. However, when subordinates cannot effectively use power to achieve goals, they generate negative self-evaluation (Schweitzer, Ordóñez, & Douma, 2004). Researchers believe that individuals have intrinsic motivation to maintain positive self-evaluation (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; 陈默 & 梁建, 2017). After subordinates obtain leadership empowerment, to avoid the result of being unable to meet leadership expectations, they may strive to maximize the use of power even by unconventional means. Therefore, how empowering leadership triggers employees' cognitive changes after having power, and whether employees will engage in unethical behavior to maintain positive cognition, are questions worthy of further research in the future (何燕珍 & 张瑞, 2016). Finally, the empowerment process may also have different effects on empowering leaders' own cognition. Empowering leaders themselves may also feel threatened due to the weakening of power (Magni & Maruping, 2013), which also adversely affects the effective implementation of empowerment. Future research can further explore whether leaders generate negative cognition during the empowerment process and whether the existence of this negative cognition has contingency characteristics.

5.4 Enrich Explanatory Mechanisms for Empowering Leadership's Negative Effects

Based on the analysis and summary of empowering leadership-related research, existing research mainly uses dual-task processing effect, role theory, and implicit leadership theory to explain the internal logic of empowering leadership's negative effects. Although existing theoretical mechanisms can provide some ideas for understanding the sources of empowering leadership's negative effects, there may still be other potential negative outcomes of empowering leadership. For these negative outcomes, existing theoretical mechanisms cannot fully explain their internal logic. For example, some researchers believe that empowering leadership advocates and encourages the cultivation of employees' self-management abilities, which significantly reduces employees' relational dependence on the organization and their need to obtain information from the organization, thereby weakening employees' attachment to the organization (van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & Van Quaquebeke, 2012). Therefore, leadership empowerment may weaken the relationship strength between employees and the organization, and whether this negative effect actually exists and how to explain its internal theoretical logic requires further analysis and testing in future

research. At the same time, existing theoretical mechanisms mainly explain empowering leadership's negative effects on employee individual-level variables, while research on negative effects on team-level and organization-level variables is less involved. Some researchers believe that empowering leadership's impact on team performance has not reached consistent conclusions, and under specific conditions, empowering leadership may also have negative effects on team performance (Lorinkova et al., 2013). Therefore, related research needs to deeply analyze whether empowerment has negative effects on team- and organization-level factors and why these negative effects occur. In summary, future research needs to further enrich the exploration of outcome variables and theoretical mechanisms of empowering leadership's negative effects to enhance our understanding of empowering leadership's actual effects and further answer why empowering leadership produces negative effects.

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