

The Formation and Mitigation Mechanisms of Cooperation Dilemmas in Mixed-Employment Teams: Balancing Strategies Under Power Asymmetry

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Abstract

With the opening of organizational boundaries, hybrid employment teams have gradually become an important model for enhancing organizational flexibility and innovation capability. However, the power asymmetry between formal and informal employees has become a key factor that hinders team collaboration, reduces performance, and even leads to project failure. Existing research mainly focuses on governance mechanisms at the organizational level, while lacking in-depth exploration of employment status differences at the micro level and their mechanisms in forming team cooperation dilemmas.

Drawing on power dependence theory and adopting an interactional perspective between formal and informal employees, this study reveals how power asymmetry reshapes the cooperation process at different levels: at the team level, it leads to distortions in work design (fragmentation of task structure, ambiguity of task content, and compartmentalization of the task environment); at the individual level, it triggers alienation of cooperative behaviors (formal employees' dominance-based control versus informal employees' defense-based silence), ultimately exacerbating team cooperation dilemmas. Based on the logic of "constructing balance within asymmetry," this study proposes a multi-level systemic mitigation mechanism that standardizes the operation of power and regulates members' power perception and behavioral responses, thereby alleviating the negative impact of power asymmetry in the cooperation process. The research findings not only deepen theoretical understanding of how power asymmetry affects cooperative performance in hybrid employment teams, but also provide practical guidance for enterprises to optimize employment management, enhance collaborative effectiveness, and build harmonious labor relations.

Full Text

The Formation and Mitigation Mechanisms of Cooperation Dilemmas in Hybrid Employment Teams: Balancing Strategies under Power Asymmetry

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Abstract: With the increasing openness of organizational boundaries, hybrid employment teams have emerged as a critical model for enhancing organizational flexibility and innovation capacity. However, power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees has become a key factor hindering team collaboration, reducing performance, and even causing project failures. Existing research primarily focuses on organizational-level governance mechanisms, while lacking in-depth exploration of employment identity differences at the micro level and their mechanisms in shaping team cooperation dilemmas. Grounded in Power Dependence Theory and adopting an interactional perspective between standard and non-standard employees, this study reveals how power asymmetry reshapes collaborative processes across different levels—causing distorted work design at the team level (task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment) and triggering behavioral alienation in cooperation at the individual level (dominant control by standard employees versus defensive silence by non-standard employees)—ultimately intensifying team cooperation dilemmas. Following the logic of “constructing balance within asymmetry,” this study proposes a multi-level systematic mitigation framework that regulates power operation modes and adjusts members’ power perceptions and behavioral responses, thereby alleviating the negative impacts of power asymmetry in collaborative processes. The findings not only deepen theoretical understanding of how power asymmetry affects cooperation performance in hybrid employment teams, but also provide practical guidance for enterprises to optimize employment management, enhance collaboration efficiency, and build harmonious labor relations.

Keywords: employment relationship, power asymmetry, distortion of work design, alienation of cooperative behaviors, team cooperation dilemmas

Classification Codes: C970.4; C93

1. Problem Statement

Rapid technological development and shifting market demands have triggered significant transformations in organizational structures and management models. To accomplish tasks with high quality and seek more efficient innovative

solutions, an increasing number of organizations are breaking down boundaries and reconstructing organizational models by innovatively configuring internal and external resources to drive performance leaps. However, as social division of labor deepens, many critical resources are often dispersed across different types of labor markets and external organizations (Wang & Liu, 2023; Cooke & Xu, 2024). The rigid barriers of traditional employment systems can no longer adapt to enterprises' demands for diversified human resources. In this context, the advantages of hybrid employment teams have become increasingly prominent. This model integrates internal fixed employees with diverse external flexible labor resources (Liu et al., 2025; Lu et al., 2025), reducing labor costs while facilitating the integration of external resources. According to the *China Flexible Employment Development Report (2022)*, the proportion of Chinese enterprises using flexible employment has reached 61.14%, indicating that the mixed model of flexible workers and internal employees has become a widespread phenomenon. Currently, hybrid employment teams have been widely applied in high-tech R&D, digital product iteration, construction engineering, and other fields, providing enterprises with greater flexibility and innovation capacity. According to Zhaopin's *2024 Employment Relations Trends Report*, nearly 40% of surveyed enterprises have further expanded their hybrid employment scale in the past year. However, an increasing body of research finds that the potential advantages of hybrid employment teams do not necessarily translate into stable cooperation performance; instead, their operational processes are more prone to implicit cooperation dilemmas. On one hand, differences in rights protection, decision-making participation, and responsibility boundaries between standard and non-standard employees with different employment identities often create imbalances in task allocation, information sharing, and risk-taking (Liu et al., 2019). On the other hand, the temporary, transactional nature of project-based relationships between the two parties tends to weaken mutual cooperation willingness and trust foundations (Lu et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams have become increasingly prominent, such as 隔阂 (géhé) arising from core technology sharing issues leading to project delays, inefficient task handoffs, and even responsibility disputes (Ashraf et al., 2017; Eldor & Cappelli, 2021). Mitigating cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams is crucial for enterprises to build more resilient human resource ecosystems, improve operational efficiency, and enhance innovation capacity.

Existing research on cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams has two main limitations. First, studies from the organizational level explore collaboration mechanisms in inter-organizational teams (such as supply chain alliances), attributing cooperation obstacles to organizational cultural differences or institutional friction (Alblas, 2022; Zhao & Cao, 2015), but neglect the micro-level power imbalances caused by employment identity differences among team members. Second, existing research primarily applies Social Identity Theory and Social Exchange Theory to examine interaction patterns between standard and non-standard employees, mostly starting from individual psychological cognition

or equivalent exchange relationships (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021; Chen et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021), implicitly assuming relatively balanced status among team members. However, these studies overlook the structural power asymmetry formed by employment identity differences between standard and non-standard employees, making it difficult to effectively explain the deep sources of cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams from a micro-level perspective.

This study introduces Power Dependence Theory, which can accurately characterize power interactions between standard and non-standard employees and provide theoretical guidance for alleviating cooperation dilemmas from the perspective of balancing power relations. Power Dependence Theory posits that an individual or group's power in an organization depends on their control over resources and goals and others' dependence on those resources (Emerson, 1962). When one party controls core resources, decision-making authority, or key information while the other party is highly dependent on these resources for task execution and career development, power asymmetry emerges. According to Power Dependence Theory, four dependency states may exist among hybrid employment team members: (1) mutual high dependence, (2) mutual low dependence, (3) asymmetric dependence of standard employees on non-standard employees, and (4) asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees (Wee et al., 2017). Among these, "asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees" is the most common and challenging power relationship in hybrid employment teams. Standard employees often occupy dominant positions due to stable employment relationships, higher organizational recognition, career development opportunities, and information advantages, while non-standard employees, constrained by short-term contracts, lack of organizational security, and limited resource access, are highly dependent on standard employees for task execution and career development (Qian et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). For example, in software development outsourcing projects, standard employees control core code architecture and project management authority, while outsourced engineers only handle localized module development, lacking systematic perspective and decision-making power, which affects project coordination efficiency. This power asymmetry may lead to task fragmentation, restricted communication, and unequal resource access, further intensifying team collaboration difficulties.

Therefore, this study focuses on power asymmetry where standard employees hold power advantages, arguing that it not only implies imbalanced resource and decision-making power distribution (Wee et al., 2017; Zhao & Cao, 2015), but more importantly, may hinder team cooperation by distorting work design at the team level and alienating cooperative behaviors at the individual level. Distorted work design and alienated cooperative behaviors reinforce each other, intensifying internal collaboration conflicts and making it difficult for hybrid employment teams to achieve efficient coordination and innovation breakthroughs. Based on this, this study systematically examines how power asymmetry leads to cooperation dilemmas from three aspects—team level, individual level, and intervention mechanisms—and proposes effective management solutions. Specif-

ically, first, we examine how power asymmetry triggers cooperation dilemmas at the team level. Grounded in Work Design Theory (Zhou & Wang, 2025; Carter et al., 2024), this study proposes that power asymmetry systematically distorts team task systems, manifesting as task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment. These three dimensions constitute key mediating pathways that ultimately lead to team cooperation dilemmas. Second, incorporating the interaction between standard and non-standard employees into the power dependence framework, this study systematically reveals how power asymmetry reshapes team members' cooperative behaviors, manifesting as dominant control behaviors by standard employees and defensive silence behaviors by non-standard employees, and reveals how members at different power levels adjust their cooperation strategies. Finally, based on the perspective of “constructing balance within asymmetry,” this study proposes a multi-level intervention system from both team and individual levels to provide more feasible guidance for managing hybrid employment teams. This study, by examining employment identity differences, reveals how power asymmetry leads to cooperation dilemmas and proposes systematic intervention strategies, offering both theoretical support and practical guidance for hybrid employment team management.

2.1 Hybrid Employment Teams

Hybrid employment teams are collaborative units composed of both standard employees and non-standard employees such as freelancers, part-time workers, and outsourced teams (Liu et al., 2025). Their core characteristic lies in members' different employment identities: standard employees enjoy long-term labor contracts and complete benefits, being deeply embedded in the organizational system, while non-standard employees participate through temporary contracts or project-based arrangements, possessing high flexibility but low organizational attachment (Liu et al., 2025). Currently, the application scope of hybrid employment teams is gradually expanding from non-core to core business, and employment relationships are transforming from function-complementarity orientation to value-co-creation orientation. This evolution signifies that enterprises are no longer limited to labor cost control but can also activate the value creation capacity of innovation ecosystems through dynamic combinations of employment identities.

The drivers of hybrid employment teams mainly include three aspects: First, cost control pressure—employing non-standard employees can reduce social insurance, benefits, and layoff costs while avoiding idle costs for standard employees (Chen et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). Second, meeting business flexibility needs—the hybrid employment model enables enterprises to flexibly increase or decrease non-standard employees according to business fluctuations while relying on standard employees to maintain core business stability (Batt & Colvin, 2011). Third, acquiring diverse skills—non-standard employees can bring new technologies and concepts to enterprises, achieving knowledge complementarity

and enhancing innovation capacity (Zhou et al., 2022). The hybrid employment team model offers multiple advantages. First, in terms of operational efficiency, this model can effectively reduce long-term labor costs and provide enterprises with the elasticity to rapidly adjust team scale according to business fluctuations, thereby optimizing labor allocation (Zeng & Yan, 2010). Second, in terms of talent and innovation, it breaks through the limitations of internal talent resources, enabling enterprises to accurately acquire external professional skills through flexible employment (Liu et al., 2021). Teams composed of employees with different backgrounds and employment forms facilitate the integration of diverse knowledge and stimulate idea collisions, becoming an important source of organizational innovation (Zhou et al., 2022).

However, hybrid employment teams face severe management challenges. Due to internal employment identity differences, standard and non-standard employees have significantly different contractual relationships, organizational commitment, and career development paths, which may lead to identity conflict (Daruich et al., 2023). Meanwhile, team communication and trust difficulties become prominent—non-standard employees find it hard to fully integrate into corporate culture and lack formal organizational support, resulting in restricted information flow (Solansky et al., 2014). Collaboration difficulties among team members are outstanding issues under the hybrid employment model. Since standard employees usually control core resources while non-standard employees have lower power in task execution, a control-submission relationship may emerge between the two parties, affecting team collaboration quality (Cooper et al., 2021). Therefore, hybrid employment teams are more difficult to manage than traditional teams and have higher failure rates (Gatskova, 2024). Currently, systematic research on how to coordinate different employment rules, promote team collaboration, and optimize management practices still needs further exploration.

2.2 Research on Power Asymmetry

Power asymmetry refers to a state where different individuals or groups in an organization possess significantly different levels of power control. Its theoretical foundation primarily lies in Power Dependence Theory (Battilana et al., 2022; Emerson, 1962), which posits that power relations between actors depend on their mutual dependence on goals and resources. In organizational contexts, if one party controls key resources that another party needs to achieve its goals, the controlled party becomes dependent on the controlling party, thereby granting the controller power advantage (Wei & Jiao, 2025). Significant power asymmetry only occurs when one party is highly dependent on another while the other party has low dependence on it (Wee et al., 2017). Power-advantaged parties may control resources, information, and decisions to impose unfair treatment, weaken the autonomy of disadvantaged parties, and ultimately affect cooperation. Power asymmetry originates from organizational hierarchy, resource control, and exchange relationships (Deng et al., 2023). Hierarchical structure

determines power distribution patterns—in bureaucratic organizations, senior managers control resources and decision-making authority while frontline employees have limited influence (Barrett Cox, 2021; Wei & Jiao, 2025). Resource dependence is the core of power formation—the party controlling key resources (such as technology, capital, information) usually holds advantage, while the party dependent on resource access is at disadvantage. Resource scarcity and irreplaceability determine power magnitude, and power asymmetry intensifies when resources are highly concentrated and controlled by one party in key cooperation links (Luo et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Social Exchange Theory suggests that power stems from value differences in exchange relationships. If resources provided by one party are crucial for cooperation while the other party lacks alternative options, its bargaining power will be limited (Zhang et al., 2023).

Power asymmetry not only affects individual psychology and behavior but also has widespread impacts on team cooperation and resource allocation. At the individual level, members in disadvantaged positions usually lack decision-making power and autonomy, leading to decreased job satisfaction and weakened organizational commitment (Bao & Liao, 2019; Wang et al., 2024). Long-term power disadvantage may generate helplessness and reduce innovation capacity. At the team level, uneven power distribution easily leads to cooperation imbalance—dominant members control decisions, ignore others' opinions, trigger internal conflicts, and reduce team cohesion (Gray et al., 2023). Additionally, blocked information flow and uneven resource distribution may cause disadvantaged members to reduce investment, weakening overall team innovation capacity (Huettermann et al., 2024).

To effectively balance power asymmetry, existing research proposes four coping strategies. First, reducing dependence on the advantaged party—disadvantaged parties enhance autonomy by upgrading skills and diversifying career development to reduce dependence on key resources controlled by the advantaged party (Wee et al., 2017). Second, expanding power networks—by building broader connections and resource channels to introduce alternative resource sources, disadvantaged parties can weaken single-dependence disadvantages and improve bargaining power (Zhao & Cao, 2015). Third, increasing the advantaged party's dependence on the disadvantaged—disadvantaged parties demonstrate unique value by providing innovative suggestions or critical skill support, making the advantaged party more dependent on their interests in resource allocation and decision-making, thereby enhancing their own power status (Li et al., 2023). Finally, forming alliances—disadvantaged parties can collectively advocate for resources and voice through united action, such as unions improving bargaining power through collective bargaining, or non-standard employees establishing cross-departmental communication mechanisms within teams to optimize resource allocation and cooperation models (Chung et al., 2020). These four strategies emphasize improving cooperation quality through systematically adjusting dynamic power balance, providing practical guidance for managing hybrid employment teams under power asymmetry.

2.3 Power Asymmetry Relationships in Hybrid Employment Teams

In hybrid employment teams, power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees mainly arises from three aspects. First, employment identity differences bring structural power asymmetry—standard employees possess greater stability and voice within teams, while non-standard employees, 被视为短期劳动力补充 (regarded as short-term labor supplements), must depend on standard employees to obtain internal information and resources (Cooper et al., 2021). Second, in task execution, standard employees often dominate task division, while non-standard employees' tasks are relatively marginalized (Liu & Li, 2016), forcing non-standard employees to submit to standard employees' control and arrangements. Meanwhile, the relationship foundation is built on economic contracts, where non-standard employees lack voice in teams and struggle to obtain formal organizational recognition (Daruich et al., 2023; Gatskova et al., 2024), further intensifying power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees.

This study argues that power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees is a key source of cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams. On one hand, power asymmetry may negatively affect bilateral cooperative interactions—standard employees usually exhibit stronger dominance in cooperation processes, even adopting controlling behaviors such as restricting non-standard employees' information access and reducing support for them (Li et al., 2020). Non-standard employees, lacking voice, may adopt passive compliance or defensive cooperation strategies, such as reducing proactive suggestions and avoiding extra responsibilities (Qin et al., 2023). This interaction pattern may reduce trust among team members, weaken overall cooperation willingness, and affect long-term team performance. On the other hand, power asymmetry may lead to solidified cooperation patterns. Standard employees usually control the allocation of core tasks, while non-standard employees mainly handle executive tasks without decision-making participation rights (Wee et al., 2017). Additionally, since standard employees usually master long-term strategic organizational information while non-standard employees' tasks are more short-term, this unequal information flow may cause communication barriers within teams.

2.4 Literature Review

As an important form of flexible employment, hybrid employment teams have been examined in existing research regarding their diversity, member interactions, and team performance. However, micro-level studies exploring the relationship between power structures and cooperation performance among employees with different employment identities are still lacking. Based on a summary of domestic and international research status and development trends, existing studies have certain limitations.

First, hybrid employment teams represent a new context for enterprise employ-

Figure 1

Figure 1: Figure 1

ment management, yet lack attention to cooperation dilemmas at the micro level. Hybrid employment teams challenge traditional human resource management and team management theories based on the “employee-employer” dyadic relationship (Li et al., 2023; Liu & Li, 2016; Wang et al., 2023). Existing literature mainly focuses on non-standard employees’ work attitudes, sense of belonging, and organizational commitment (Liu et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2025), while ignoring how employment identity differences and internal team power structures affect member interaction behaviors and cooperation performance. Second, how power asymmetry in hybrid employment teams affects cooperative behaviors and performance remains unclear. Dependency relationships in hybrid employment teams are often unbalanced and may lead to internal cooperation dilemmas (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021; Wang et al., 2023), but existing literature has not deeply explored how power asymmetry affects collaborative performance at the team level and cooperative behaviors in interactions between standard and non-standard employees. Third, systematic intervention strategy research for alleviating the negative effects of power asymmetry is lacking. Existing intervention strategies mainly focus on unilateral management measures, such as enhancing standard employees’ leadership behaviors through empowerment or improving non-standard employees’ sense of belonging and identity (Wee et al., 2017). However, these intervention strategies mostly study standard or non-standard employees independently, lacking a comprehensive intervention framework targeting power asymmetry within teams. In reality, effective management of hybrid employment teams requires simultaneous consideration of interactions between standard and non-standard employees, urgently necessitating the construction of a multi-dimensional power balance framework to guide hybrid employment team management.

3. Research Framework

This study aims to explore how power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees in hybrid employment teams affects team cooperative behaviors and performance, and proposes effective intervention strategies. This study systematically analyzes the effects, process mechanisms, and boundary conditions of power asymmetry from both team and individual levels. The research framework mainly includes three parts, as shown in Figure 1

. Study 1 focuses on the team level, examining the impact of power asymmetry on team cooperation performance. Study 2 focuses on the individual level, investigating how power asymmetry affects members’ cooperative behaviors. Study 3 focuses on intervention mechanisms, exploring mitigation strategies for cooperation dilemmas under power asymmetry in hybrid employment teams.

Figure 2

Figure 2: Figure 2

Figure 1 Overall Research Framework

3.1 Study 1: The Impact of Power Asymmetry on Team Cooperation Performance in Hybrid Employment Teams

Study 1 examines how power asymmetry affects team cooperation performance at the team level. This part will combine theoretical analysis and case studies to identify whether power asymmetry is a key antecedent causing cooperation dilemmas. Second, based on quantitative analysis, it will construct and verify the effect path of “power asymmetry → work design distortion → cooperation performance decline.” The research framework for Study 1 is shown in Figure 2

Figure 2 Study 1 Research Framework

3.1.1 Power Asymmetry and Cooperation Dilemmas in Hybrid Employment Teams

Cooperation dilemmas refer to situations where, when the individual benefits from betraying a partner exceed the individual benefits from mutual cooperation, partners tend to betray each other, resulting in low collaboration efficiency and performance for the team as a whole (Ren & Xiang, 2005; Panico, 2024). To comprehensively measure cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams across different stages from task execution to outcome delivery, this study selects three indicators: team task performance, project execution efficiency, and team innovation performance.

According to Power Dependence Theory, four power dependency states exist between standard and non-standard employees: mutual high dependence, mutual low dependence, asymmetric dependence of standard employees on non-standard employees, and asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Different power dependency states not only affect relationship stability but also profoundly shape how cooperation rules are formulated and how interaction structures are organized, thus having different impacts on cooperation dilemmas. This study argues that cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams are more likely to arise not from relationship instability, but from the high asymmetry in cooperation rule-making power under power asymmetry structures.

First, under mutual high dependence, both parties control resources or goals highly valued by the other. Such relationships are usually accompanied by stronger reciprocity expectations and trust motivations, with members tending to reduce threats and coercive measures to maintain cooperation continu-

ity (Murray et al., 2009). Therefore, although cooperation costs may be high, the losses from cooperation breakdown are greater, making cooperation dilemmas relatively unlikely. Second, under mutual low dependence, neither party masters resources or goals of critical value to the other. Since cooperation is not necessary for achieving individual goals, members are more likely to adopt loose collaboration or low-commitment interaction patterns. In this state, although cooperation depth is limited, the absence of structural power differences makes systematic cooperation dilemmas unlikely (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Third, under asymmetric dependence of standard employees on non-standard employees—where non-standard employees control key resources or goals valued by standard employees—standard employees usually adopt more cautious and cooperative interaction strategies to avoid damaging their own interests and maintain relationship stability. Therefore, although power asymmetry exists, power advantage is not concentrated in standard employees, making cooperation dilemmas unlikely (Wee et al., 2017).

By contrast, cooperation dilemmas are more likely to emerge under asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees. In this scenario, standard employees not only hold advantages in resource acquisition and decision-making participation but also possess greater dominance in key cooperation rules such as task definition, information flow, and performance evaluation (Wee et al., 2017). This asymmetry in rule control power makes standard employees more likely to participate in cooperation based on dominance logic rather than reciprocity logic, thereby reducing their motivation for information sharing and collaborative investment. Meanwhile, non-standard employees, highly dependent on standard employees' control over task arrangements and evaluation results, are more likely to develop compliance, defensive, or avoidance tendencies in interactions, reducing proactive communication and collaborative investment. As this power structure becomes solidified in task allocation, interaction norms, and role cognition, cooperation gradually deviates from reciprocity- and trust-based collaboration logic and evolves into a low-trust, low-investment structural cooperation dilemma (Luo et al., 2020; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Therefore, compared with other power dependency states, asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees is more likely to trigger persistent cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams. Based on this, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 1: Power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees (i.e., asymmetric dependence of non-standard employees on standard employees) is more likely to cause cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams than other power dependency states.

3.1.2 The Mediating Role of Work Design Distortion

Work Design Theory posits that task content, task structure, and task environment jointly influence individuals' responsibility experience and work performance (Carter et al., 2024; Oldham & Fried, 2016). Its core logic is that task

structure determines cooperation behavior patterns: if tasks are broken down into fragmented modules or role boundaries are unclear, individuals may fall into dilemmas of inefficient collaboration and motivational depletion (Parker et al., 2017). Although traditional work design research usually assumes that task structures and division patterns are predetermined by senior managers and emphasizes that task division is based on members' knowledge, skills, and experience differences, this division logic mainly manifests in the initial stage of work design (Carter et al., 2024). However, recent research indicates that work design is not a one-time institutional arrangement but a dynamic process continuously adjusted and reconstructed by team members during execution (Parker et al., 2017; Oldham & Fried, 2016). During this execution stage, internal team power structures often become important factors affecting task boundaries and responsibility division (Luo et al., 2020; Greer et al., 2011). In hybrid employment teams, even if macro-level task division is initially set based on professional and experience differences, standard employees may still continuously adjust task details, collaboration boundaries, and responsibility-bearing methods during actual execution due to their structural advantages in resource control, decision-making participation, and performance evaluation. These adjustments are not based on ability matching but more on risk aversion, responsibility transfer, and control needs. Non-standard employees, due to their highly dependent position in employment relationships, often become the main recipients of these execution-level "trivial tasks" and ambiguous responsibilities, consequently experiencing work design distortion during interactions (Lu et al., 2025). Therefore, this study argues that work design distortion is a key mechanism through which power asymmetry affects cooperation dilemmas.

When standard employees are in dominant positions and non-standard employees are highly dependent on them, power asymmetry triggers systematic distortion of work design. Power-advantaged standard employees, motivated by maintaining dominance and reducing risks, tend to strengthen control over tasks and resources. This behavior causes task arrangements to deviate from original collaboration logic and shift toward self-interested design oriented toward power maintenance, thereby weakening work design fairness and transparency. Non-standard employees' dependence on standard employees for resources, information, and decision-making channels makes it difficult for them to participate in task redefinition and boundary negotiation, resulting in work design lacking feedback and correction mechanisms (Alblas, 2022). Power asymmetry transforms team task allocation into one-way assignment, where non-standard employees can only passively accept design outcomes and cannot achieve dynamic balance in task structure through interaction. Consequently, power asymmetry causes work design to continuously deviate from collaboration orientation during execution and gradually evolve into a power-dominated distorted design, manifested as task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment. These outcomes collectively weaken team members' cooperative coordination and responsibility bearing.

The reason work design distortion leads to cooperation dilemmas lies in its de-

Figure 3

Figure 3: Figure 3

struction of collaboration logic and trust structure among team members. Fragmented task structure weakens interdependence among tasks, causing members to lack holistic perspective and common goals, thereby reducing collaborative motivation. Ambiguous task content increases role uncertainty and responsibility ambiguity, leading members to tend toward self-protection and avoid risk responsibility during collaboration. Barriers in the task environment limit resource sharing and information communication, causing trust levels among team members to decline and cooperation efficiency to be damaged. Therefore, this study argues that power asymmetry not only directly causes cooperation failure but also indirectly leads to team cooperation dilemmas by changing task structures and environments and systematically weakening collaboration mechanisms. Based on this, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 2: Power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees reduces cooperation performance in hybrid employment teams through work design distortion (manifested as task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment).

3.2 Study 2: The Impact of Power Asymmetry on Members' Cooperative Behaviors in Hybrid Employment Teams

Unlike Study 1, which examines the formation mechanism of cooperation dilemmas from the team level, Study 2 focuses on the individual level, analyzing how power asymmetry affects the cooperative behaviors of standard and non-standard employees and their behavioral response mechanisms. From the interaction perspective between standard and non-standard employees, this study argues that power asymmetry leads to different coping patterns in cooperative behaviors between standard and non-standard employees, namely dominant control behaviors by standard employees and defensive silence behaviors by non-standard employees. The research framework for Study 2 is shown in Figure 3

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Figure 3 Study 2 Research Framework

3.2.1 The Impact of Power Asymmetry on Members' Cooperative Behaviors

At the individual level, this study examines how power asymmetry affects employees' cooperative behaviors. Cooperative behaviors refer to team members' proactivity and mutual assistance beyond formal role requirements during collaboration, representing important indicators for measuring team cooperation

atmosphere and trust levels (Panico, 2024). To comprehensively reflect cooperative interactions among members in hybrid employment teams, this study selects three typical variables: helping behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and voice behavior. These three behaviors are all extra-role cooperative behaviors that not only reflect employees' proactive support and cooperation willingness in daily collaboration but also manifest their psychological identification with and responsibility for overall team goals (Fischer et al., 2019). Compared with in-role behaviors, they are more susceptible to power relations, trust atmosphere, and psychological safety, thus sensitively revealing the impact mechanisms of power asymmetry on cooperative interactions. These behaviors widely exist among both standard and non-standard employee groups and can comprehensively reflect overall cooperation levels in hybrid employment teams.

Based on Power Dependence Theory (Emerson, 1962), this study argues that power asymmetry reduces employees' cooperative behavior levels by undermining trust, disrupting reciprocity expectations, and suppressing proactivity. First, power asymmetry destroys team trust structure. When the highly dependent party lacks control over resources and decisions, the power-advantaged party tends to replace trust and consultation with dominance and supervision, shifting team cooperation relations from trust-driven to control-driven (Gray et al., 2023). This shift in psychological expectations makes members more cautious when helping others or sharing knowledge, worrying that their contributions will not be reciprocated or recognized. Second, power asymmetry weakens reciprocity and fairness expectations. When team members perceive imbalances in resources and decision-making power, they experience psychological imbalance from exchange inequity, thereby reducing motivation for cooperation investment. This psychological imbalance makes individuals unwilling to invest extra effort in helping others or publicly sharing knowledge and experience, avoiding further depletion of their own interests (Bao & Liao, 2019; Ashraf et al., 2017). Finally, power asymmetry suppresses members' willingness to express and improve proactively. In environments with high power distance, individuals perceive risks and psychological threats, tending to remain silent or avoid expressing different opinions for fear of being seen as overstepping authority or disobedient, thereby reducing employees' voice behavior (Qian et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2023). In summary, power asymmetry not only changes power interaction patterns among members but also weakens employees' proactivity in helping, knowledge sharing, and voice through three mechanisms—trust collapse, reciprocity rupture, and proactivity suppression—thereby reducing overall team cooperation effectiveness and performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 3: Power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees will weaken individuals' cooperative behaviors (employee helping behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee voice behavior).

3.2.2 The Mediating Role of Standard Employees' Dominant Control and Non-Standard Employees' Defensive Silence

In reality, team structures almost never have complete power symmetry—power differences are universally embedded in hierarchical settings, role division, and resource allocation (Battilana et al., 2022). However, power asymmetry itself does not necessarily lead to negative interaction consequences. In teams with clear role boundaries, stable cooperation norms, or high professional autonomy, structural power differences are often constrained by formal institutions and informal norms and may not necessarily transform into controlling interaction behaviors (Luo et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2017). Therefore, the key to understanding power asymmetry lies not in its existence but in whether and how it manifests as control-submission interaction patterns in specific organizational contexts. Unlike general teams, power asymmetry in hybrid employment teams does not only originate from rank or professional differences but is embedded in institutional resources corresponding to employment identity (Liu et al., 2025). The dependency relationship between standard and non-standard employees based on employment identity makes internal power differences more difficult to constrain through professional norms or cooperation routines and more likely to be activated as control-submission interaction patterns in daily interactions.

Power Dependence Theory indicates that uneven power distribution prompts interaction parties to adopt differentiated dependence strategies: the advantaged party strengthens control to consolidate its position, while the disadvantaged party maintains psychological safety through self-defense (Emerson, 1962). Therefore, in hybrid employment teams with power asymmetry, alienated cooperative behaviors constitute an important mediating mechanism through which power asymmetry affects members' cooperative behaviors. To reveal this process, this study further distinguishes differentiated behavioral paths for power-advantaged and power-disadvantaged parties, manifested as standard employees' dominant control behaviors and non-standard employees' defensive silence behaviors.

(1) The Mediating Role of Standard Employees' Dominant Control Behaviors

When individuals control important resources that others depend on, they often develop motivation to maintain existing status structures and consolidate their advantages by regulating resource allocation and interaction rules (Wee et al., 2017). Under power asymmetry, the party controlling key resources and decision-making authority is more likely to transform structural advantages into behavioral dominance and control. In hybrid employment teams, standard employees not only control organizational resources and performance evaluation authority but also bear formal responsibility for task outcomes, making them more inclined to maintain control over cooperation processes through directive management, tightened processes, and information filtering to reduce uncertainty and potential risks (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021). Meanwhile, power

advantage may also trigger systematic cognitive biases. Research shows that high-power individuals are more likely to overestimate their judgment accuracy and underestimate others' capabilities and contributions, thereby reducing listening, consultation, and feedback behaviors in collaboration. Consequently, cooperation decisions exhibit one-way dominance characteristics, while equal interaction among team members is restricted. Dominant control behaviors undermine team psychological safety and trust foundation. When standard employees dominate cooperation through directive approaches, other members perceive cooperation inequality, thereby reducing their willingness for proactive expression, knowledge sharing, and mutual support. Internal information flow is blocked, and cooperative interaction gradually shifts from collaboration to attachment and submission, leading to overall reduction in cooperative behaviors (Hu et al., 2021). In such contexts, not only do non-standard employees reduce cooperation investment due to perceived suppression and inequality, but standard employees themselves also reduce motivation for collaboration and supporting others by focusing on maintaining control. Both parties' cooperative behaviors continuously decline under mutual constraints, ultimately damaging overall team collaboration quality and performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 4a: Power asymmetry indirectly and negatively affects individuals' cooperative behaviors (employee helping behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee voice behavior) in hybrid employment teams by strengthening standard employees' dominant control behaviors.

(2) The Mediating Role of Non-Standard Employees' Defensive Silence Behaviors

Conversely, for non-standard employees in power-disadvantaged positions, power asymmetry is more likely to trigger defensive silence behaviors. Power gaps can induce risk perception of expression among low-status individuals—when individuals believe that expressing opinions may bring negative consequences, they choose to remain silent to maintain self-security (Wang et al., 2023). Non-standard employees lack resource and status security in power-asymmetric relationships, thus tending to avoid raising objections or improvement suggestions in cooperation to prevent being seen as overstepping authority or disobedient. Second, low-power status weakens psychological safety and sense of participation. When members 长期处于被动接受状态 (remain in long-term passive acceptance states), their self-efficacy declines, their cognition of cooperation meaning fades, and they gradually develop a behavioral pattern where silence is safe. This negative interaction reduces information exchange frequency, hindering problem feedback and experience transmission (Li et al., 2020). Third, silence behaviors destroy team learning and innovation mechanisms. Cooperative behaviors depend on continuous communication and sharing among members, while silence causes teams to lose diverse opinions and potential improvement opportunities, leading to knowledge accumulation gaps and innovation stagnation. Team collaboration dynamics are weakened,

Figure 4

Figure 4: Figure 4

and cooperation performance declines (Chung et al., 2020). In this situation, non-standard employees' cooperative behaviors significantly decrease—they less frequently offer help, share experience, or make suggestions. When facing this lack of response and interaction, standard employees gradually lose motivation for cooperation investment and shift to more directive, result-oriented work approaches. Consequently, the overall team cooperation atmosphere is weakened—non-standard employees are unwilling to express, standard employees no longer listen, and cooperative behaviors continuously decrease in mutual cooling, ultimately leading to overall collaboration efficiency and performance decline. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 4b: Power asymmetry indirectly and negatively affects individuals' cooperative behaviors (employee helping behavior, knowledge sharing behavior, and employee voice behavior) in hybrid employment teams by inducing non-standard employees' defensive silence behaviors.

3.3 Study 3: Mitigation Mechanisms for Cooperation Dilemmas under Power Asymmetry in Hybrid Employment Teams

Study 3 adopts the research 思路 (thinking) of “constructing balance within asymmetry” and focuses on mitigation conditions for cooperation dilemmas under power asymmetry. This study selects four specific moderating variables for testing: introducing structural empowerment and social integration practices at the team level, and examining standard employees' status threat perception and non-standard employees' work-contingent self-esteem at the individual level, thereby revealing key boundary conditions for the negative effects of power asymmetry. The research framework for Study 3 is shown in Figure 4

Figure 4 Study 3 Overall Framework

3.3.1 Team Formal Mechanism Design: The Moderating Role of Structural Empowerment

Formal mechanisms refer to organizational institutionalization of rules, procedures, and role arrangements to clearly define resource allocation, decision-making authority, and responsibility boundaries, thereby regulating interaction patterns and power usage boundaries among members (Gittell & Douglass, 2012). From the perspective of Power Dependence Theory, the core function of formal mechanisms is not to eliminate internal power differences but, under established dependency structures, to limit the space for power-advantaged

parties to transform structural advantages into controlling behaviors and provide stable, predictable interaction guarantees for power-disadvantaged parties (Emerson, 1962). Therefore, formal mechanism design in hybrid employment teams can reduce the possibility of power asymmetry being activated as negative behavioral patterns in daily interactions. Among various formal mechanisms, structural empowerment is considered a key institutional arrangement that directly affects power usage processes. Structural empowerment emphasizes providing members with clear task authority, resource access channels, information transparency, and formal space for decision-making participation through institutional design, enabling members to work within organizational empowerment frameworks (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). Unlike general incentives or contract terms, structural empowerment shapes members' behavioral boundaries and interaction expectations through organizational structure itself, thereby regulating the behavioral consequences of power asymmetry at the institutional level.

In hybrid employment teams with power asymmetry, structural empowerment reduces the space for standard employees to arbitrarily reallocate task structures during execution by clearly defining task authority and responsibility boundaries, making work design less likely to be transformed into a tool for maintaining power advantage. When team structural empowerment levels are high, non-standard employees can participate in task boundary definition and feedback through institutionalized channels, transforming task allocation from one-way assignment to collaborative adjustment under rule constraints, thereby weakening the impact of power asymmetry on task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment (Badir et al., 2012). Conversely, in situations with low structural empowerment, power asymmetry is more likely to directly affect task arrangement processes, causing work design to continuously deviate from collaboration orientation.

Simultaneously, structural empowerment not only affects task arrangement at the team level but also alleviates alienation of cooperative behaviors at the individual level by changing interaction expectations (Caniëls et al., 2017). In contexts lacking empowerment guarantees, standard employees are more likely to consolidate their positions through dominant control behaviors, while non-standard employees tend to adopt defensive silence strategies due to increased expression risks and uncertainty. Structural empowerment reduces standard employees' anxiety about power loss and their motivation for excessive control behaviors by providing clear voice channels, responsibility protection, and participation space, while also enhancing non-standard employees' psychological safety, making them more willing to engage in information sharing, voice, and helping behaviors (Ivanova & von Scheve, 2020). Therefore, structural empowerment can also weaken alienation of cooperative behaviors generated by power asymmetry at the interaction level. In summary, as a team-level formal mechanism, structural empowerment regulates power usage modes through institutional arrangements, thereby weakening the negative impacts of power asymmetry on team work design and members' cooperative behaviors. Therefore, this study

proposes:

Hypothesis 5: Structural empowerment negatively moderates the impact of power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees on team cooperation performance and employee cooperative behaviors in hybrid employment teams. Specifically, under high structural empowerment, the negative effects of power asymmetry on team work design distortion and alienation of cooperative behaviors among standard and non-standard employees will be significantly weakened.

3.3.2 Team Informal Mechanism Design: The Moderating Role of Social Integration Practices

In contrast to formal mechanisms relying on institutions and rules, informal mechanisms emphasize shaping members' cooperation expectations and behavioral norms through continuous interaction processes, relationship construction, and shared identification without depending on formal authorization (Ashraf et al., 2017). Informal mechanisms do not directly change the resources or decision-making authority members possess but flexibly regulate the impact of power asymmetry on collaboration outcomes by influencing members' subjective understanding of power relations and interaction patterns. In hybrid employment teams, social integration practices, as a key informal mechanism, can weaken the negative effects of power asymmetry by promoting cross-identity interactions and relationship embedding. Social integration practices refer to a series of practices through which organizations or teams promote emotional connections, mutual understanding, and shared identification among different members through daily interaction arrangements, joint activities, and relationship construction (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021; Lu et al., 2025). In hybrid employment teams, social integration practices improve cooperative relationships by increasing non-instrumental interactions between standard and non-standard employees and changing members' role cognition of each other.

In contexts lacking social integration, power asymmetry is more likely to affect work design processes. Standard employees tend to cut tasks and divide responsibilities based on identity boundaries, outsourcing high-risk or low-return tasks to non-standard employees, resulting in task fragmentation and collaboration breakdown. When team social integration practice levels are high, cross-identity interactions can enhance standard employees' cognition of non-standard employees' capabilities and investment, reducing tendencies to arrange tasks based on identity segregation (Guillaume et al., 2012). At this point, task decomposition and responsibility division are more likely to revolve around workflow and collaboration efficiency rather than serving power boundary maintenance, thereby reducing the impact of power asymmetry on work design distortion.

Simultaneously, social integration practices can also alleviate the negative impacts of power asymmetry on individual cooperative behaviors. In low social integration contexts, interactions between standard and non-standard employ-

ees mainly revolve around task instructions, and power differences are more easily perceived as identity suppression, thereby strengthening standard employees' dominant control behaviors and non-standard employees' defensive silence behaviors. Conversely, when social integration practice levels are high, trust and emotional connections among members can enhance interaction security, making standard employees less likely to maintain status through control and non-standard employees more willing to express opinions, offer help, and share knowledge. Social integration weakens the impact of power asymmetry on negative cooperative behaviors by reducing identity opposition and enhancing relationship embedding (Lu et al., 2025). In summary, as a team-level informal mechanism, social integration practices flexibly regulate the negative impacts of power asymmetry on team work design and individual cooperative behaviors by shaping interaction relationships and shared identification. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 6: Social integration practices negatively moderate the impact of power asymmetry between standard and non-standard employees on team cooperation performance and employee cooperative behaviors in hybrid employment teams. Specifically, under high social integration practice levels, the negative effects of power asymmetry on team work design distortion and alienation of members' cooperative behaviors will be significantly weakened.

3.3.3 The Moderating Role of Standard Employees' Status Threat Perception

In hybrid employment teams, standard employees usually master more stable organizational identity, resource allocation rights, and decision-making influence, thus structurally occupying power-advantaged positions. However, power asymmetry does not necessarily lead to cooperation distortion; its impact on standard employees' behaviors largely depends on how standard employees subjectively interpret this power structure. Existing research shows that power advantage does not always prompt individuals to adopt cooperative and supportive behaviors. On the contrary, under specific circumstances, power advantage may trigger individuals' defensive reactions, manifested as excessive intervention and control over others' work (Barrett Cox, 2021). In hybrid employment teams, although standard employees hold institutional advantages, the entry and participation of non-standard employees are often accompanied by implicit signals of task capability outsourcing, role boundary blurring, and potential substitutability, making standard employees more likely to interpret power asymmetry situations as status instability or status threat. Therefore, standard employees' dominant control behaviors do not stem purely from rational efficiency considerations but may be behavioral reactions driven by psychological status defense motivations. Status threat perception refers to the insecure experience individuals have when perceiving that their relative position in social or organizational hierarchies may be weakened or challenged (Reh et al., 2018). Based on Power Dependence Theory and social hierarchy perspectives, individuals not only focus on currently

possessed resources and power but are also highly sensitive to whether their relative status can be continuously maintained. When individuals perceive potential status decline risks, they often adopt behaviors to strengthen control and consolidate boundaries to prevent their advantageous positions from being eroded.

In hybrid employment teams, power asymmetry provides structural conditions for standard employees to allocate tasks and evaluate performance for non-standard employees, but whether this structural advantage is transformed into dominant control behaviors depends on standard employees' status threat perception levels. When standard employees perceive that non-standard employees pose threats to their professional authority, role irreplaceability, or organizational recognition, they are more likely to maintain their status boundaries by strengthening task intervention, restricting information sharing, or tightening decision-making authority, thereby amplifying the negative impact of power asymmetry on control behaviors (Loch et al., 2000). Conversely, when standard employees' status threat perception is low, they have more stable cognition of their organizational status and role value and less need to consolidate authority by controlling others. In this context, the structural advantage provided by power asymmetry is not necessarily transformed into dominant control behaviors, and standard employees are more likely to interpret it as responsibility for supporting team collaboration and resource integration, thereby weakening the amplifying effect of power asymmetry on control behaviors (Wang et al., 2023). In summary, standard employees' status threat perception plays a key moderating role in the relationship between power asymmetry and their dominant control behaviors. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 7: Standard employees' status threat perception moderates the relationship between power asymmetry and their dominant control behaviors. Specifically, when standard employees' status threat perception is high, the positive impact of power asymmetry on standard employees' dominant control behaviors is stronger; when status threat perception is low, this positive impact is weaker.

3.3.4 The Moderating Role of Non-Standard Employees' Work-Contingent Self-Esteem

In hybrid employment teams, non-standard employees usually occupy power-disadvantaged positions, with their resource acquisition, task stability, and organizational recognition highly dependent on standard employees. This structural power asymmetry not only restricts non-standard employees' behavioral space but also profoundly affects their cognition of their own work value. However, compared with structural constraints themselves, whether non-standard employees adopt defensive silence behaviors depends more on how they internalize power asymmetry situations into self-value evaluations. Existing research indicates that members in low-power and marginal positions do not necessarily choose silence—the key lies in whether they believe their work performance

can bring respect, recognition, and self-worth (Wang et al., 2023). In hybrid employment teams, when non-standard employees perceive that their value is highly attached to others' evaluations and situational feedback, power asymmetry is more likely to be interpreted as a high-risk situation, thereby triggering defensive behavioral reactions. Work-contingent self-esteem refers to individuals' tendency to tightly bind their self-worth to their work performance, others' evaluations, or organizational recognition levels (Kuykendall et al., 2020). Individuals with high work-contingent self-esteem have self-esteem highly dependent on external feedback and are thus more sensitive to potential negation, neglect, or punishment. This psychological trait is particularly critical in power asymmetry situations (Ferris et al., 2009).

For non-standard employees, the instability of employment identity and organizational marginalization make them more likely to view work performance as the main source of maintaining self-worth. When non-standard employees have high work-contingent self-esteem, power asymmetry not only means resource and decision-making disadvantages but is also interpreted as a situation where "expression equals risk." Once they believe that voice, questioning, or proactive expression may damage their image, trigger negative evaluations, or affect renewal opportunities, they are more inclined to protect self-worth through silence, thereby amplifying the promoting effect of power asymmetry on defensive silence behaviors (Qian et al., 2020). Conversely, when non-standard employees have low work-contingent self-esteem, their self-worth is not entirely attached to single work feedback or others' evaluations, and their sensitivity to potential negative consequences is lower. In this context, the perceived expression risk from power asymmetry is weakened, and non-standard employees are more likely to participate in communication and cooperation based on task needs or team goals, with the negative impact of power asymmetry on defensive silence behaviors also weakened (Qin et al., 2023). Overall, work-contingent self-esteem plays an important moderating role in the relationship between power asymmetry and non-standard employees' defensive silence behaviors. Therefore, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 8: Non-standard employees' work-contingent self-esteem moderates the relationship between power asymmetry and their defensive silence behaviors. Specifically, when non-standard employees' work-contingent self-esteem is high, the positive impact of power asymmetry on their defensive silence behaviors is stronger; when work-contingent self-esteem is low, this positive impact is weaker.

4. Theoretical Framework

Based on the analysis of the three studies above, this study constructs a power asymmetry-driven model of cooperation dilemma formation in hybrid employment teams based on Power Dependence Theory. The model posits that structural power asymmetry solidified by employment identity differences is the fundamental source of cooperation dilemmas. Under this structural premise, power

asymmetry evolves into systematic cooperation dilemmas by negatively affecting work task arrangements, interactions between standard and non-standard employees, and members' psychological experiences. Specifically, differences among members with different employment identities in labor contracts, resource accessibility, and power protection constitute the institutional foundation of power asymmetry. Power gaps are reflected not only in the distribution of resources, task dominance, and decision-making authority but also profoundly affect both parties' understanding of cooperative relationships, causing cooperation to gradually deviate from reciprocity-based collaboration and exhibit more strategic and defensive interaction characteristics. Furthermore, power asymmetry leads to cooperation dilemmas through two different-level mechanism paths: at the team level, power asymmetry permeates task design and cooperation methods among team members, making cooperation lack stable institutional support and process guarantees; at the individual level, power asymmetry changes members' judgments of interaction risks, prompting power-advantaged parties to show more control tendencies while power-disadvantaged parties tend to adopt avoidance and silence strategies. These behaviors not only weaken cooperation itself but also erode internal trust foundations, further distorting task structures and collaboration arrangements and continuously strengthening cooperation alienation. Under the realistic premise that power asymmetry cannot be completely eliminated, this study does not attempt to simply reduce or eliminate power gaps between standard and non-standard employees but emphasizes how to reduce the negative effects of power asymmetry on cooperative relationships through adjustments in institutional arrangements and interaction patterns within existing power structures. Based on this 思路 (thinking), this study constructs a multi-level cooperation dilemma mitigation framework covering both team and individual levels: at the team level, it corrects specific manifestations of power asymmetry in task allocation and cooperation rules through formal and informal mechanisms; at the individual level, it proposes targeted interventions for standard and non-standard employees to constrain control behaviors, alleviate defensive reactions, and thereby promote more constructive collaborative relationships.

Overall, the comprehensive model proposed by this study provides a more complete and systematic explanation of cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams, offering new theoretical logic for understanding the emergence of cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams and proposing a multi-dimensional mitigation framework that provides new 思路 (thinking) for subsequent research to explore antecedents of power structures, evolution processes of cooperation mechanisms, and effectiveness of intervention strategies, as well as more explanatory theoretical foundations for understanding cooperation dynamics in diverse employment contexts.

This study has important theoretical and practical significance. First, this study focuses on hybrid employment teams as a new organizational form, aiming to reveal the power structures and interaction logic among members with different employment identities during cooperation. Hybrid employment teams exhibit

the characteristic of coexisting standard and non-standard employees. While improving organizational flexibility, systematic imbalances in resource acquisition, decision-making participation, and responsibility bearing due to employment identity differences make cooperation behaviors prone to inefficiency and conflict. Faced with this practical problem, there is an urgent need to re-examine cooperation mechanisms in hybrid employment teams from the perspective of power structure. Existing research mostly explores team collaboration from macro-level governance structures or institutional arrangements, such as outsourcing relationships, supply chain management, or organizational contract optimization (Zhou & Wang, 2025; Zeng & Yan, 2010; Ashraf et al., 2017), while less frequently delving into the micro-interaction level between standard and non-standard employees to analyze the internal psychological and power mechanisms of cooperation obstacles. Although classic cooperation frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory reveal the important roles of trust, motivation, and identity in cooperation (Lu et al., 2025), they generally implicitly assume power equilibrium and have difficulty explaining systematic cooperation imbalances caused by power gaps in hybrid employment teams. In fact, in such heterogeneous organizations, the most fundamental cooperation obstacle does not only stem from imperfect contracts or poor communication but from the power asymmetry of non-standard employees toward standard employees. This one-way dependency relationship causes cooperative interaction to lose its balanced foundation, with standard employees dominating resources and decisions while non-standard employees remain in passive cooperation states. This study uses Power Dependence Theory as the core analytical framework to reconstruct the cooperation mechanism model for hybrid employment teams from the perspective of power asymmetry, systematically revealing how power structures evolve into root causes of cooperation dilemmas during interaction processes by identifying power dependency relationships between standard and non-standard employees.

Compared with existing research, this study explores hybrid employment team cooperation from the perspectives of employment identity differences and micro-level power structure interactions, providing new explanatory paths and theoretical support for understanding team collaboration in diverse employment environments. Second, this study systematically reveals how power asymmetry affects cooperation processes and performance at different levels from both team and individual perspectives. Existing research mostly attributes cooperation obstacles to replacement threats and job insecurity faced by standard employees or adaptation deficiencies or psychological passivity of non-standard employees (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023), while neglecting the bidirectional effects of power interactions between standard and non-standard employees. Cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams are not unidirectional individual psychological outcomes but result from the 联动效应 (joint effects) of power structure imbalance at team and individual levels (Eldor & Cappelli, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study distinguishes two analytical dimensions—team level and individual level—to unpack the internal

mechanisms of cooperation dilemma formation under power asymmetry. At the team level, based on Work Design Theory, this study proposes that power asymmetry leads to distorted team work design, manifested as task fragmentation, ambiguous task content, and structural barriers in the task environment, which undermines the coherence and integrity of cooperation processes and consequently reduces team-level cooperation performance. At the individual level, this study identifies the behavioral differentiation mechanism between standard and non-standard employees under power gaps, where standard employees tend toward dominant control behaviors while non-standard employees tend toward defensive silence. The alienation of bilateral cooperative behaviors not only compresses space for cooperative interaction but also destroys trust and psychological safety foundations, leading to reductions in cooperative behaviors such as knowledge sharing, voice, and helping. Unlike previous research mainly focusing on psychological perception or unidirectional adaptation (Wee et al., 2017), the multi-level mechanisms proposed in this study not only deepen understanding of the internal logic of power asymmetry but also provide theoretical basis and analytical frameworks for identifying differentiated intervention paths in subsequent research.

Finally, at the intervention strategy level, this study proposes a multi-level intervention mechanism for alleviating cooperation dilemmas in hybrid employment teams based on a balance maintenance perspective. Existing research on hybrid employment teams mostly adopts a unidirectional adaptation perspective (Wang et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025), neglecting the bidirectional adaptation of both power parties in interactions. In team structures with power asymmetry, the relationship between standard and non-standard employees is not unidirectional influence but jointly shapes team cooperation states through continuous 博弈 (game-playing) and mutual adjustment. This study proposes a path combining institutional balance and behavioral interventions to reduce the negative behavioral consequences of power asymmetry in team interactions. At the team level, this study unfolds from both formal and informal mechanisms. Formal mechanisms focus on regulating power exercise boundaries through structural empowerment and procedural safeguards to prevent excessive amplification of power advantages in task allocation and cooperation rules; informal mechanisms emphasize social integration practices to improve cooperation atmosphere and collaboration expectations among members with different employment identities through shared vision, cross-identity trust building, and daily interaction norms. At the individual level, this study further distinguishes differentiated behavioral reactions between standard and non-standard employees and proposes targeted adjustment paths. On one hand, it reduces standard employees' status threat perception to weaken their motivation to transform structural power into dominant control behaviors; on the other hand, it strengthens non-standard employees' work-contingent self-esteem to enhance their investment willingness and expression proactivity in cooperation, thereby alleviating defensive silence behaviors. This multi-level moderation framework provides a more operational theoretical perspective for enterprises to maintain employment flexibility while

improving team collaboration.

This study has important practical implications. First, it reminds organizational managers to 正视 (face squarely) the objective existence of power asymmetry in hybrid employment teams. Hybrid employment is not only an innovation in employment forms but also an organizational 常态 (normal state) accompanied by structural power differences. The management focus is not on eliminating power gaps but on preventing them from being amplified into behavioral and psychological consequences that hinder cooperation during collaborative processes. Second, at the team management level, enterprises should 协同运用 (synergistically apply) structural empowerment and social integration practices to reduce the negative impacts of power asymmetry on task allocation, collaboration boundaries, and interaction norms. On one hand, by clarifying responsibility boundaries, improving process transparency, and authorization clarity, they can reduce arbitrary expansion of power advantages in work design; on the other hand, by promoting cross-identity interactions, sharing team goals, and normalizing communication, they can enhance social integration among members with different employment identities, providing stable and predictable contextual support for cooperation. Third, at the individual management level, managers should pay attention to differentiated psychological reactions of standard and non-standard employees under power differences. For standard employees, they should reduce their status threat perception through institutions and management practices to suppress excessive control behaviors triggered by defensive motivations; for non-standard employees, they should enhance their work-contingent self-esteem to strengthen their sense of value and participation willingness in teams, thereby reducing avoidance and defensive reactions.

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