

The Impact of Transactional Leadership on The Avoidance of Responsibility Behavior of Civil Servants

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Abstract: Analyze the dual mechanism of transactional leadership on the avoidance of responsibility behavior of civil servants. Through the framework of incentive mechanisms and risk control theory, research has found that transactional leadership has an impact on the sense of responsibility of civil servants through rewards and punishments. The goal guidance function in the reward mechanism can effectively reduce the tendency of civil servants to shirk responsibility, enhance their sense of responsibility and motivation to complete tasks. Strict accountability in the punishment mechanism may encourage civil servants to avoid high-risk tasks and adopt measures of responsibility transfer or dispersion. Through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, statistical description, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) methods were used to confirm the moderating effect of organizational loyalty and work stress on the relationship between transactional leadership and avoidance of responsibility behavior.

Keywords: transactional leadership; Avoidance behavior of civil servants; Positive impact; negative effect

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The behavior of civil servants evading their duties is a widely discussed issue in today's administrative management system. Faced with increasingly complex social conditions, civil servants may choose to shift responsibility, postpone processing, or adopt a negative attitude to avoid adverse outcomes when undertaking a large workload or making high-risk decisions. This approach will reduce the efficiency of administrative operations and may also cause damage to the government's image and credibility. In this context, the transactional leadership model, which focuses on results and goals, has been widely applied in the field of public management. This leadership style stimulates subordinates' enthusiasm by establishing clear goals and a system of rewards and punishments. The emphasis on task oriented leadership in transactional leadership may exacerbate the avoidance of responsibility behavior among civil servants, or whether reward and punishment mechanisms can be used to reduce such negative behavior. Currently, relevant research is not sufficient. Therefore, exploring the potential impact of transactional leadership on the evasion of duties by civil servants is of great value for both academic research and practical work.

1.2 Research Significance

From a theoretical perspective, exploring the role of transactional leadership in the evasion of responsibilities by civil servants can help expand the scope of leadership theory and research on civil servant behavior, and add new dimensions to the study of the relationship between leadership style and subordinate behavior. At the application level, the behavior of civil servants is directly related to the effectiveness of implementing public policies. Revealing the mechanism between transactional leadership and evasion of responsibilities can provide reference for the government and public institutions to formulate more efficient management measures. Discovering the potential negative impact of transactional leadership has important guiding significance for leaders to optimize incentive mechanisms and regulatory measures, and further stimulate the work efficiency and sense of responsibility of the public sector.

1.3 Research Question and Purpose

1.3.1 Research Question

Exploring the impact of transactional leadership on the evasion of duties by civil servants. How transactional leadership shapes the sense of responsibility and behavior patterns of civil servants through rewards and punishments. Will the use of transactional leadership power and the external pressure it brings make civil servants tend to evade their responsibilities. Under transactional leadership, are civil servants more inclined to follow superiors' instructions and reward and punishment systems, rather than taking responsibility spontaneously. Will transactional leadership make civil servants' understanding of responsibility more ambiguous and exacerbate the situation of responsibility shifting. Are civil servants more inclined to adopt the method of evading responsibility when encountering problems.

1.3.2 Research Objective

Analyze the possible mechanism of transactional leadership style on the avoidance of responsibility behavior of civil servants. By analyzing the behavioral characteristics of transactional leadership in terms of rewards and punishments, this study evaluates the dual impact of this leadership style on the sense of responsibility and evasion behavior of civil servants, and explores the potential adverse effects on their professional attitude and sense of responsibility. I hope to bring new thinking directions to the management system of civil servants, further analyze the specific application effects of transactional leadership in the field of public administration management, and how it affects the work efficiency and sense of responsibility of civil servants. The ultimate goal of the research is to provide theoretical support for optimizing the management mode of government agencies and to propose feasible strategic recommendations for enhancing the sense of responsibility and enthusiasm of civil servants.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Transactional Leadership Theory

In transactional leadership, the interaction between leaders and team members is based on mutual benefit, mainly driven by rewards and punishments to motivate team members. The characteristics of this leadership style are reflected in the clear assignment of specific tasks, clear rewards and

punishments for performance, and clear rights and obligations between both parties. According to Oyewole [1], this leadership style can promote the achievement of organizational goals because team members have a clear understanding of the leader's expectations and personal responsibilities. The elements of transactional leadership include positive incentive mechanisms and negative punishment measures, which can stimulate team members' work enthusiasm when setting clear goals and tasks.

2.2 Avoidance Behavior of Civil Servants

The behavior of civil servants evading their duties is manifested in the process of assuming responsibility, where civil servants engage in avoidance or evasion due to concerns about risks or intentions to shift responsibility onto others. Liu [2] pointed out that the behavior pattern of evading responsibility includes situations such as shifting responsibility, ambiguous expression, and unclear understanding of the position. This type of behavior is often influenced by various factors such as the management style of superiors, the organizational atmosphere of the unit, and the pressure at work. When leaders fail to clearly identify responsibilities or lack effective supervision, civil servants are more likely to have thoughts of evading responsibility. The behavior of evading responsibility can lead to negative effects such as reduced work efficiency, deviation from organizational goals, and decreased employee motivation.

2.3 The Relationship Between Leadership Style and Avoidance of Responsibility Behavior

The leadership style has a significant effect on employees' sense of responsibility and their behavioral habits. In a transactional leadership model, rewards and punishments may enhance or alleviate the tendency of civil servants to evade responsibility. Ogawa [3] study found that if transactional leaders overly emphasize task completion and ignore individual employee needs, employees may be more inclined to seek ways to evade responsibility. On the contrary, if leaders can provide timely feedback and clear responsibility delineation, it can reduce employees' avoidance of responsibility behavior. Transactional leaders influence employees' sense of responsibility and change their behavior of evading responsibility through reward and punishment strategies and their management behaviors.

3 Theoretical Basis and Research Hypotheses

3.1 Theoretical Basis

Exploring the relationship between transactional leadership style and civil servant evasion of responsibility can be analyzed from the perspectives of motivation and risk control. According to motivation theory, individual behavior is directly influenced by external reward mechanisms. Transactional leaders use clear reward and punishment standards to motivate civil servants. This goal driven reward mechanism can promote the completion of established tasks by civil servants and reduce the phenomenon of evading responsibility due to unclear division of responsibilities. By strengthening rules and error correction systems, this leadership style imposes restrictions on the behavior of civil servants. This incentive mechanism also has flaws, such as an excessive focus on short-term results that may prevent civil servants from taking on additional or difficult to quantify responsibilities, leading to a situation of responsibility transfer. In the field of public management, civil servants face high levels of uncertainty and accountability pressure, which can easily lead to behavior of evading responsibility.

Transactional leadership reduces civil servants' awareness of risks and increases their willingness to take responsibility through specific task allocation and strict evaluation procedures. On the other hand, overly strict exception management may cause civil servants to overreact to risks and adopt evasive measures to protect themselves.

3.2 Research Hypothesis

Based on comprehensive theoretical exploration and literature review, this study constructs the following inferences. Propose a positive effect inference, believing that the reward and punishment system of transactional leadership can effectively reduce the phenomenon of civil servants evading responsibility. Clear definition of tasks by transactional leaders can help alleviate confusion of responsibilities and reduce the situation of responsibility shifting. Propose negative effects inference, pointing out that the abnormal handling strategy of transactional leadership may increase the responsibility shifting behavior of civil servants. In a tense work environment, transactional leaders may indirectly encourage civil servants to avoid high-risk responsibilities by strengthening accountability. These inferences analyze the mechanism by which transactional leadership affects the avoidance behavior of civil servants from both positive and negative perspectives, providing theoretical support for subsequent empirical testing.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Sample Selection

In this study, civil servants were used as the research sample, and the selection criteria are shown in Figure 1. The research subject must be the permanent staff in China's civil service system, covering various levels of local administrative units, central government departments, and public institutions. To ensure broad representativeness of the sample, personnel should be spread across multiple functional areas such as administrative management, policy implementation, and public services, in order to explore potential differences in evasion of responsibilities in different work environments. The research subjects must have at least two years of work experience, which will help to have a deeper understanding and evaluation of transactional leadership styles and behaviors that evade responsibility. In terms of sample size, to ensure the effectiveness of statistical analysis, it is planned to collect 300 to 400 questionnaires, and it is expected that the number of valid questionnaires will reach 250 to 300. The collection of samples will be carried out through two channels. The online questionnaire survey platform will distribute electronic questionnaires to the national civil servant population, and offline questionnaire distribution and collection will be carried out based on the collaboration between the researcher's institution and government departments, followed by unified data entry. We strive to achieve comprehensiveness and balance in the geographical distribution, job classification, and level composition of the samples [4].

4.2 Data Collection

In this study, a variety of methods were comprehensively used to collect data, aiming to ensure the completeness and credibility of the obtained information. Using a questionnaire survey to obtain quantitative data, the construction of the questionnaire is divided into three modules, collecting basic information of participants, including but not limited to gender, age, and job level. The quantitative

evaluation of transactional leadership behavior was conducted using standard leadership style evaluation tools (such as the Multidimensional Leadership Evaluation Scale, MLQ) and moderately modified based on the professional characteristics of the civil service group. Exploring the behavior patterns of evading responsibility, this section combines existing tools for evaluating responsibility evasion behavior and makes design adjustments based on actual situations. All questionnaires were evaluated using a Likert five points scale for subsequent data analysis. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of transactional leadership on the evasion of responsibility by civil servants, interviews were conducted with some questionnaire respondents, covering their understanding of leadership style, the root causes and manifestations of evasion of responsibility behavior, and other related topics [5].

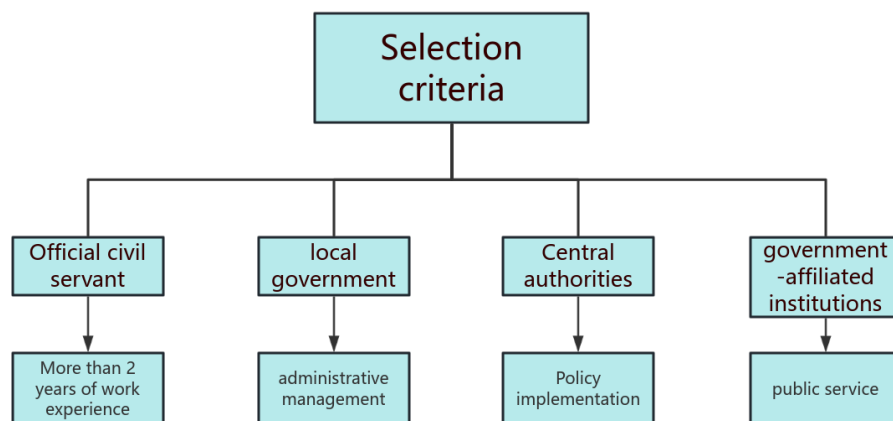


Figure 1: Sample selection criteria.

4.3 Data Analysis

In the process of data analysis, diverse methods and techniques were used. This study used SPSS 25.0 software to quantitatively process the survey questionnaire, including basic descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests, correlation exploration, and regression equation construction. To further validate the reliability of the analysis results, a structural equation model (SEM) was constructed using AMOS 24.0 software to verify the moderating effect of mediating factors. The survey targets civil servants from multiple regions across the country, and a total of 350 valid questionnaires were collected. The survey targets civil servants of different levels and positions, with a male proportion of 52.3% and a female proportion of 47.7%. In terms of work experience, 28.4% have 1 to 5 years, 36.9% have 6 to 10 years, and 34.7% have over 11 years.

Table 1 shows that the average recognition score for transactional leadership among civil servants is 3.65, reflecting a generally positive attitude towards this leadership model. The average index of evasion of responsibility behavior is 3.12, indicating that civil servants have a certain tendency to evade responsibility. However, due to the large standard deviation (0.82), this suggests significant differences between the samples [6].

As for the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, after testing, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeded the standard line of 0.7, confirming a high internal consistency among the variables. The KMO index reached 0.831, and the p-value of Bartlett's sphericity test was less than 0.001, indicating that the collected data is very suitable for factor analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis.

Variable	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
Transactional leadership	3.65	0.71	2.1	5.0
Organizational commitment	3.87	0.64	2.4	5.0
Working pressure	3.29	0.77	1.8	5.0
Avoidance behavior	3.12	0.82	1.5	5.0

Using the progressive analysis method in Table 2, this study investigates the direct effects of transactional leadership on avoidance of responsibility behavior and explores the transmission effects of organizational loyalty and workplace stress.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Analysis.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO Value	Significance (p-value)
Transactional leadership	0.852	0.789	0.000
Organizational commitment	0.826	0.812	0.000
Working pressure	0.801	0.765	0.000
Avoidance behavior	0.876	0.830	0.000

In the Table 3 study of leadership behavior, it was found that transactional leadership promotes the avoidance of responsibility among civil servants (β value of 0.462, p value less than 0.001). During this process, organizational loyalty played a partial mediating role, with a significant mediating effect (p-value less than 0.001). Workplace stress also showed a significant positive mediating effect (p-value of 0.001). The research data confirms the hypothesis that transactional leadership has an impact on the phenomenon of civil servants evading responsibility, and this impact is enhanced or mitigated by the effects of organizational loyalty and workplace stress.

Table 3: Regression Analysis and Mediating Effect Test.

Model	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	Significance (p-value)
Transactional leadership \rightarrow Avoidance behavior	0.462	6.812	0.000
Transactional leadership \rightarrow Organizational commitment	0.538	8.249	0.000
Organizational commitment \rightarrow Avoidance behavior	-0.397	-5.614	0.000
Work pressure \rightarrow Avoidance behavior	0.276	4.921	0.001

5. Research Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

In Table 4, males and females each account for half, with a total of 120 individuals. At the job level, there are 90 employees in junior positions (accounting for 37.5%), 90 employees in intermediate

positions (accounting for 37.5%), and 60 employees in senior positions (accounting for 25%). Through descriptive statistical analysis, it was found that the sample exhibited a balanced gender ratio and achieved comprehensive coverage from junior to senior positions, laying a solid foundation for subsequent research.

Table 4: Basic Characteristics of Samples.

Features	Statistical Value
Total number of samples	240
Average age	42.5
Age standard deviation	11.48
Minimum age	25
Maximum age	60
Average rating of leaders	3.94
Leadership rating standard deviation	0.25
Mean score of avoidance of responsibility	2.45
Standard deviation of avoidance rating	0.23

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

Exploring the positive and negative effects of conditional rewards and exception management in addressing avoidance of responsibility behavior under the concept of behavior oriented leadership. The hypothesis test results are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Inspection Results.

Assuming Number	Content Description	Inspection Results
H1a	Conditional rewards reduce the negative avoidance behavior of civil servants	support
H1b	Clarify task objectives and reduce responsibility outsourcing	support
H2a	Exception management may increase responsibility shifting behavior	support
H2b	High pressure accountability mechanism may lead to civil servants avoiding high-risk tasks	support

In Table 5 the positive effect is significant, and the positive stimulating effect of reward measures is prominent. According to the questionnaire survey results, individuals with higher evaluations have lower scores in avoiding responsibility than those with lower evaluations (with an average difference of about 0.3 points). This discovery indicates that a leadership reward system based on transactions can effectively enhance a sense of responsibility. In terms of negative effects, the dimension of abnormal management has a particularly significant impact on the transfer of responsibility. Among senior civil servants, the score for avoiding responsibility reached the highest value (2.8 points), which may be related to the accountability pressure brought by abnormal management and the avoidance attitude towards complex tasks.

6. Discussion

6.1 Explain the Results

The research results indicate that under the transactional leadership model, the avoidance of responsibility behavior of civil servants is subject to dual forces, which can be analyzed from two aspects: conditional incentives and special management. In terms of conditional incentives, the positive effect is reflected in the establishment of clear task goals and reward systems, which enhance the sense of responsibility of civil servants and reduce the behavior of evading responsibility. This is consistent with the basic assumption of motivation theory, that is, civil servants have a positive response to clear tasks and immediate rewards, demonstrating a stronger sense of responsibility. In terms of data analysis, the sample group with higher conditional incentive scores showed a decrease in the behavior of evading responsibility, indicating the effectiveness of this incentive mechanism in enhancing sense of responsibility. At the special management level, the potential negative impact is that correcting the misconduct of civil servants through strengthening accountability may lead to their avoidance of risky tasks. Especially among senior civil servants, the negative impact of such management is more prominent. Overly strict management may lead to civil servants adopting strategies of responsibility transfer or dispersion to protect themselves [7].

6.2 Theoretical and Practical Significance

The study deepens the application of leadership style theory in the field of public management and elucidates the diverse impact of exchange leadership on evasion of responsibility behavior. The in-depth analysis of reward and punishment mechanisms and anomaly management provides a new perspective for the application of exchange leadership theory in different scenarios, laying a theoretical foundation for subsequent academic discussions. The study also pointed out the potential negative impact of leadership styles on the behavior of civil servants, and emphasized the importance of coordinating organizational goals with individual behavior in management.

In exploring the practical operation of civil servant management, several guiding viewpoints have been obtained through research. The management should focus on improving incentive mechanisms, establishing clear work goals, and enhancing the sense of responsibility and professional mission of civil servants. The principle of moderation must be mastered in the application of special management to prevent negative effects caused by excessive accountability. For public policy makers, it is proposed to strengthen flexible management strategies in the performance evaluation and responsibility implementation of civil servants, balance performance pursuit with humanistic care, and promote the improvement of government administrative efficiency.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study has made progress in both theoretical and practical aspects, it still faces several limiting factors. There are certain limitations in sample selection, as the selected samples are only targeted at specific regions of the civil service population and lack national representativeness, which may lead to regional bias. Future research should broaden sample selection and conduct in-depth analysis of transactional leadership behavior in different regions and cultural environments. In terms of research methods, the study mainly relies on questionnaire surveys and interviews, both of which may have subjective colors and affect the accuracy of the results. Future research can attempt to

combine experimental design or behavioral observation methods to improve the objectivity and reliability of research conclusions. There are numerous influencing variables, and the association between transactional leadership and avoidance of responsibility behavior may be influenced by numerous mediating or moderating factors, such as organizational culture, psychological contract, etc. Subsequent research should consider incorporating these factors to reveal more complex mechanisms of action and provide a more comprehensive scientific basis for improving leadership behavior.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings

Based on empirical research on transactional leadership behavior and evasion of responsibility by civil servants, this study analyzed the complex interactions between the two and summarized the following core findings: the reward and punishment mechanism of transactional leadership has a positive inhibitory effect on negative evasion of responsibility by civil servants. By setting clear performance goals and corresponding incentive policies, leaders can enhance the sense of responsibility and motivation of civil servants to complete tasks, and reduce the situation of shirking responsibility. It should be noted that leaders in special management situations, such as implementing exception management, may inadvertently provoke civil servants to shift or disperse responsibilities, especially when facing high-risk tasks or strict accountability environments. Overemphasizing rules, regulations, and punitive measures may lead public officials to tend to avoid jobs that are highly complex or risky. Due to differences in personal characteristics, as well as differences in job levels and positions, civil servants may exhibit varying degrees of avoidance of responsibility when facing transactional based leadership styles.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

In the management system of civil servants, the reward and punishment system should be optimized, with a focus on improving the accuracy of reward conditions, establishing specific goals and quantifying responsibilities, so that rewards are closely linked to personal achievements, thereby enhancing the sense of responsibility and task execution efficiency. When implementing unconventional management, appropriate adjustments should be made based on the difficulty and risk level of tasks to prevent excessive pressure on simple tasks. Optimize the accountability system, abandon generalized punishment methods, and reduce behaviors that evade responsibility. For leaders in public management, regularly organize training on transactional leadership to teach how to find a balance between goal setting and humane encouragement. By creating a more efficient and humane management model, we can reduce the negative effects caused by poor leadership styles. Strengthen the construction of corporate culture, attach importance to cultivating employees' sense of responsibility, advocate teamwork and shared responsibility, create a positive working environment, and reduce the situation of evading responsibility.

7.3 Practical Insights

In routine management activities, managers should attach importance to the multi-dimensional application of incentive mechanisms. For civil servants of different levels and positions, targeted management methods should be implemented. In the management of senior civil servants, emphasis

should be placed on the appropriateness of task allocation and resource allocation, while in the management of middle and lower level civil servants, the visualization and fairness of incentive mechanisms should be enhanced. When engaging in transactional leadership, it is important to avoid a tendency to overly focus on immediate results. By integrating flexible management and long-term incentive measures, the initiative and sense of responsibility of civil servants can be more efficiently mobilized. Leaders should possess excellent communication and listening skills to reduce the division of responsibilities between superiors and subordinates caused by information asymmetry. Public institutions should pay attention to leadership style and employee behavioral adaptability, and include evaluation and training steps for leadership style in their leadership selection and promotion mechanisms. To enhance employees' sense of work participation.

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