Research on the Influence of Platform Leadership on Employee Creativity: The Moderating Effect of Trust

Liu Zhijiang [1,2], Jacquline Tham[1], Ooi Boon Keat[1], Song Dongjie[2]

[1]Management and Science University, Malaysia

[2]Guangxi Normal University, Guilin, China

ABSTRACT

The long-term development of an organization cannot be separated from the creativity of employees, and the leadership style of leaders has a certain influence on the exertion of employees' creativity. As a new type of leadership style, "platform leadership" plays a positive role in employee behavior. This paper chooses the dimension of "employees' trust in leaders," explores the differences and advantages between "platform leadership" and other leadership styles, constructs the influence mechanism between platform leadership and employees' creativity, and examines the role of "employees' trust in leaders". Using SPSS 25.0 to analyze the data from 208 questionnaires, the empirical results show that: (1) platform leadership has a positive impact on employees' creativity; (2) employee trust in leadership positively moderates the relationship between platform leadership and employee creativity.

The research findings can help business executives define their own management strategies, develop targeted management programs, and provide important reference significance for the long-term development of enterprises and the optimization of human resources.

KEYWORDS: platform leadership; employee creativity; trust; regulating action.

1. Introduction

1.1 The research background

In the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China's economic development is still placed in a high position. In the 21st century, with the rapid development of the digital economy, "creativity" has become a prerequisite for all walks of life to survive and develop. In recent years, under the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the economy has generally been in a downturn, and the economic benefits of enterprises have dropped sharply. Many enterprises are facing difficult challenges. Some failed to withstand the storm and collapsed, but others accumulated experience in difficulties, withstood the test of crisis through reform and innovation, and became more and more brave in the Vietnam War. The prosperity

and development of enterprises play an important role in promoting the development of China's economy. Without the strong support of enterprises, our goal of becoming a powerful country may be more difficult to achieve.

In order to gain a firm foothold in the hugely competitive market and have their own right to speak, it is beyond doubt necessary to develop the economy. Economic development cannot be separated from the contribution of enterprises, and the prosperity and development of enterprises virtually promote the economic development of our country. Only by constantly improving their own creativity can enterprises maintain their own exuberant and vigorous vitality so as not to be eliminated from the development trend.

With the continuous expansion of the scale of enterprises, more inclined to the flat organizational structure change, which requires more flexible handling of the relationship between superiors and subordinates. Leaders' emotional attitude directly affects their subordinates' working attitude. Employees in an enterprise are the main body of the enterprise, the key group for enterprise development, and play an important role. In terms of employee groups, with the continuous rise of knowledge workers and the increasing proportion of new hires, the original hierarchical consciousness and hierarchical concept in the organization has been gradually weakened, and the "decentralization" and "DE-leadership" of the organization have become an important trend. Platform-based leadership has gained a lot of attention from businesses as a novel kind of leadership style, and more study of the relevant literature is necessary and merits careful examination. Throughout the research on the influence of platform leadership on employee creativity, no scholars have considered the moderating role of "trust". The degree of employees' "trust" in leaders has an important impact on organizational effectiveness and survival.

In China's enterprises, creative employees are urgently needed to give full play to their own advantages, create and enter new fields, and provide businesses with additional new energy to help them grow. Based on the influence of platform-based leadership on employees' creativity, this paper further studies the moderating role of "trust" relationships in it.

1.2. The significance of the research

The development of an enterprise cannot be separated from the joint efforts of employees in the enterprise, and the style of leaders affects the attitude of employees towards work. Among many leadership styles, this paper chooses "platform leadership" for further research. If an enterprise does not innovate and its members do not have creativity but only work according to the rules, it will be eliminated by the times in the hugely competitive market. Therefore, only enterprises that dare to innovate and possess strong creative staff who are able to generate new concepts on a regular basis, have a broader market, and show strong competitiveness.

The influence of platform leadership on employees' creativity, the influence of employees' trust in leaders on employees' creativity, and the moderating role of trust between leaders and subordinates is very important for the survival and development of enterprises. Nowadays, with the changing environment, the relationship between internal and external stakeholders in enterprises becomes increasingly complex.

Today, with the vigorous development of the digital economy, leaders and employees can fully grasp relevant information with the help of digitally intelligent systems in networked organizations. Leaders no longer have information advantages, and employees hope to be respected and treated equally by leaders, thus stimulating creativity. The research in this paper has important theoretical and practical significance.

1.2.1Theoretical significance

Platform-based leadership is a relatively novel leadership style. Seeking up pertinent literature studies, few scholars combine platform-based leadership with employee creativity, and the analysis of the regulatory role of "trust" has not yet started. This study can enrich the theoretical and empirical literature in the field of platform-based leadership and the impact of platform-based leadership on employee creativity.

1.2.2 Practical significance

Significance from the perspective of enterprises: The research results of this paper can give the top management of enterprises a brand-new and comprehensive understanding of platform-based leadership styles, so that they are more willing to cultivate leaders with this style. Today, "only innovation, only development" highlights the importance and key of platform leadership to enterprise development. However, the necessity of "trust" in getting along with leaders and employees needs further study. In an enterprise, leaders share resources with employees so that employees can realize their own value and get respect and recognition from leaders, so as to stimulate employees' enthusiasm for work and make enterprises develop steadily and far-reaching in complex competition.

Significance from the perspective of leaders: The results of this study can help leaders understand the advantages of a platform-based leadership style and then gradually transform into this style. Change their previous management, and subordinates to get along with employees do not do the proper place. Enlighten leaders to try their best to communicate with employees on an equal footing, share resources, go on time in both directions, and make progress together. It is also necessary to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of employees and their own work, give employees the space to fully show themselves, encourage employees to create, and force them to demonstrate their superior worth in a variety of ways, which has a good role in promoting the development of enterprises.

2. Literature review

2.1 Platform Leadership

2.1.1 Overview of platform leadership

"Platform leadership," also known as "platform leadership," was first proposed by Gawer (2000), which refers to the influence that platform enterprises can have the product research and development of other enterprises providing complementary products (Gawer, 2000).

Platform-based leadership refers to a leadership type in which leaders attach importance to the common cause of themselves and their subordinates, stimulate their

potential and enthusiasm through the expansion of career scope and the improvement of career quality and level, and influence themselves and their subordinates at the same time (Hao Xuguang, 2016). The essence of platform-based leadership is that leaders and subordinates fulfill each other, grow together, and improve together, which is also the essential difference between platform-based leadership and other leadership theories (Hao Xuguang, 2014). Simply speaking, it is through joint efforts to make the cause bigger and better and build a broader platform for the development of enterprises, leaders, and employees themselves.

Parker (2017) and other scholars believe that platform leadership not only provides a platform but also constantly optimizes the platform ecosystem to create new value (Parker, 2017). Platform leaders are more willing to communicate with their subordinates in an "inclusive" manner and listen to their subordinates' voices patiently. By continuously expanding the business scope and upgrading the business level, we can stimulate the potential of ourselves and our subordinates and mobilize the enthusiasm of employees (Ma Lu et al., 2022).While paying attention to stimulating employees' enthusiasm and creativity, they also use the same way to motivate themselves so that subordinates can spontaneously strive for the overall goal of the organization. Platform leaders are willing to share existing resources with subordinates, and leaders who dare to share opportunities, rights, and other resources with subordinates generally have a broad mind (Wang Zhili, 2019).

2.1.2 Dimensions and measurement of platform leadership

Up to now, there are few empirical research articles and corresponding dimensions and measurements on platform-based leadership. There are mainly four dimensions and five dimensions of platform-based leadership in China (Du Yuanyuan, 2022).Platform leadership combines the advantages of traditional leadership styles such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and charismatic leadership. Hao Xuguang put forward four dimensions of platform-based leadership for the first time, namely, paying attention to the growth of leaders and subordinates, building and continuously expanding and optimizing the career platform, shaping the interactive relationship of mutual perfection, and dynamically optimizing the interactive process (Hao Xuguang, 2016). Although these four dimensions have not been proved by sufficient facts and academic arguments, the research on platform-based leadership has far-reaching significance. With the gradual deepening of the research, Hao Xuguang and others discovered the multi-dimensional complex structure of platform-based leadership and once again summarized that it consists of six dimensions: tolerance, personal charm, change planning, platform building, platform optimization, and common growth (Liu Wenqi et al., 2021).

Around platform-based leadership, Hao Xuguang and others developed a 5-dimensional scale with 25 questions, such as "My leader doesn't mind that his subordinates are better than himself in some aspects, and my leader is good at motivating his subordinates to pursue higher goals to gain a sense of self-accomplishment" (Liu Wenqi et al., 2021). Xin Jie et al. developed a 5-dimensional scale with 22 questions. The 5 dimensions are sharing altruism, interaction and cooperation, incubating makers, self-cultivation, and empowering equality. Specific items such as "My leader makes leaders and employees face the market and create

value together, and my leader gives employees full right to speak and participate, emphasizing teamwork" (Xin Jie et al., 2020).

2.2 Employee Creativity

2.2.1 Overview of Employee Creativity

Creativity refers to the ability to invent and create, which is influenced by a variety of circumstances. The survival and development of an enterprise can not be separated from the creativity of its employees, which is a necessary prerequisite for the prosperity and development of the organization. Employee creativity refers to the ability of individuals to produce unique and novel creative ideas or access potential for innovation, including products, services, practices, processes, procedures, and other potentially valuable achievements (Tang Qiutiao, 2022). On the basis of predecessors' research, taking predecessors' experience as a platform, we constantly enrich and improve its content and seek new ideas to solve problems.

The higher the creativity of employees in enterprises, the stronger the competitiveness of enterprises in the industry. Gupta (2014) believes that creativity should include: developing creativity; using resources and information to solve problems; having employees communicate with each other to stimulate creative thinking; enhancing the original artistic concepts; and finally turning them into valuable resources. (Gupta, 2014).

2.2.2 Influencing factors of employee creativity

Through reading a large amount of related literature on the impact of employee creativity, I found that the impact factors on employee creativity are mainly divided into individual factors, situational factors, and the interaction between emotion and the individual.

Individual variables primarily show themselves as traits of the individual's personality, cognitive ability, emotional attitude, knowledge, and so on. Creative people are often willing to learn new things. Amabile (1997) pointed out that creative individuals often have certain personality traits (Amabile, 1997). On the basis of strong cognitive ability and encouragement and guidance from superiors, it is easier to stimulate employees' creativity, make employees dare to innovate, and have the ability of independent judgment and independent thinking. For personal knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, storage, combination, and generation of new knowledge is the prerequisites for creativity (Cao Yong et al., 2014).

Scenario factors mainly show the support of the whole organization to employees and the extent to which superior leaders assist staff members. Some scholars have proved that when the overall atmosphere of the organization supports employees' creative behavior, it will be more conducive to the promotion and development of employees' creativity (Oldham, 1996). That is to say, Employee creativity is strongest when the organization's overall creative climate is better. Through reading related articles, it was found that Amabile and others think that leaders who are positive and willing to share with employees are more conducive to improving employees' creativity or have a positive impact on employees' creativity.

The research on the interaction between situations and individual factors emphasizes

the interaction between the creative subject and its social environment (Woodman, 1993; Zhou, 2014). In the same situation, employees have different influences on their creativity due to various individual factors. In the organizational culture of the team, the team members work together and encourage each other, which helps to promote the development of employees' innovation, self-efficacy, and creativity (Li Na, 2021).

2.2.3 Dimensions and measurement of employee creativity

Many scholars in academic circles are still studying and discussing the dimension of creativity. Unsworth (2001) divides creativity into two dimensions: why and what (Unsworth, 2001). Why is about why employees engage in creative activities or why they exhibit creative behavior, and the discussion is about whether the driving force of employees' creativity is internal or external. What can stimulate employees' creativity, or what are the factors that stimulate employees' creativity? Another scholar, Chen Xiao distinguishes four categories of creativity: anticipatory, proactive, reaction, and contribution creativity. There are multi-dimensional and one-dimensional statements about employee creativity. Researchers divide employee creativity into one-dimensional and multi-dimensional, but the mainstream is one-dimensional (BROWN, 2011).

From the perspective of evaluation objects, it can be divided into two types: individual creativity measurement and team creativity measurement (Chen Dongmei, 2018). In the measurement of individual creativity, some scholars use the scale of three items, some scholars use the scale of nine items, and some scholars use the scale of thirteen items. In the measurement of team creativity, we use a six-item scale or "team" instead of "individual" in individual creativity and measure the creativity of the whole team by measuring average creativity of all people in the team. Follow-up researchers can choose different measurement methods based on the circumstances of their own investigation.

2.3 Trust

2.3.1 Overview of trust

The Oxford English Dictionary defines trust as "holding confidence or dependence on the quality or attribute of someone or something, or on the authenticity of a statement (Hong Mingyong et al., 2013)." It regards trust as an attitude or an identity, without doubt, including trust between people and between people and things.

Trust means that both parties trust each other and will not use the loopholes of trust to complete some transactions. Trust is a kind of behavior, and it is also an expectation of this kind of behavior. The reasons for one party's trust in the other are different, and the trust mechanism also presents different characteristics according to its distinct foundation (Liu Jing, 2016). In an enterprise, trust is also included among all levels and peers, and the degree of trust exerts a subtle influence on the management cost of the organization, the work efficiency of employees, the realization of self-worth of employees, the overall development, and so on.

The trust studied in this study is the trust of employees toward leaders. The trust between them is based on mutual communication and attraction and deepened by long-term frequent exchanges and communication between individuals, which is

manifested as believing and trusting the trusted person (McAllister, 1995).

2.3.2 Dimensions and measurement of trust

With the deepening of academic research, different scholars have different understandings of the dimensions of trust, and their definitions are also different. Generally speaking, the basis of the division includes the foundation, scope, level, and content of trust (Li Baoqing, 2019). Although an individual's knowledge, values, and background of trust will influence their capacity for judgment and inclination, trust is mostly based on the reliability of reliable objects. (Mayer, 1995). Employees' trust in leaders mainly studies the degree of trust between leaders and employees.

2.3.3 Influencing factors and results of trust

Trust is influenced by many factors, and different degrees of trust will produce different results. To study the driving or decisive factors of trust, that is, to study the "source of trust," "base of trust," or the pre-factors of trust (Cao Yuling, 2001). In practice, the ability of the trusted party is usually examined first, followed by the motivation (Zhang Yanfeng, 2006). Personal factors, family factors, education level, age, and so on will have a positive or negative impact on trust between employees and leaders and thus have different results.

In an enterprise, good trust will help employees to trust and be satisfied with their superior leaders and enterprises, increase their loyalty, and thus make enterprises obtain higher profits. Trust lays a solid foundation for maintaining a strong team and corporate culture, improving employee satisfaction and work quality, and thus improving the performance and value of enterprises.

2.3.4 Summary of Literature review

As far as current academic research is concerned, since the concept of platform leadership was put forward, many scholars have studied its own significance. Some scholars combine platform-based leadership style with employee creativity and explore the influencing factors or variable factors that play an intermediary role, but no scholars have dabbled in trust yet. With the rapid development of the economy in enterprises, the fast-paced life makes it difficult for people to take out time and mind to manage the feelings between people, so the trust of employees in leaders is particularly important. In the process of communication, the cognition, recognition, and trust of others is the result of the interpersonal relationship from strangers to familiarity, and then from familiarity to harmony, that is, from strangers to acquaintances to intimate friends (Hu Minzhong, 2018).

The main research direction of this paper is whether "employee trust in leadership" has a moderating effect between platform-based leadership and employee creativity. If so, how is it adjusted? It provides a new direction for following-up research and allows more scholars to invest in related research. Therefore, the research on "The Influence of Platform Leadership on Employee Creativity: The Regulating Effect of Trust" is of great significance to the survival and development of enterprises.

3. The theoretical assumptions

3.1 The hypothesis of the relationship between platform leadership and employee

creativity

Among many leadership styles, this paper chooses platform leadership as a relatively new field to study. Platform leaders regard employees' work and their own work as common tasks and common undertakings of both parties and can achieve equal communication and positive interaction in the process of getting along with each other. In the process of work, platform leaders pay more attention to leading by example and setting a good example for subordinate employees. At the same time, platform-based leaders, while sharing conversations with employees on an equal footing, are conducive to opening up employees' mental models and stimulating employees' creative potential, thus promoting employees' active innovation behavior (Zhu Yu et al., 2018). The sharing of knowledge, experience, and skills among platform leaders is conducive to enhancing employees' psychological endurance in the process of innovation and stimulating employees' divergent thinking and creative potential (Li Ling et al., 2022).

With the rapid development of the economy, creativity is very important for the development and growth of an enterprise. Generally speaking, there are some employees in enterprises who choose to follow the rules because they are afraid of making mistakes or offending leaders. They are unwilling and afraid to produce their own ideas and express them in their work, and they are even more afraid to give their creativity to actions, so there is no way to mention the creativity of employees. The development of an enterprise can not be separated from the joint efforts of employees in the enterprise and from the creativity of employees in the enterprise. Therefore, how to improve the creativity of employees is an important issue that needs to be studied nowadays.

In order to achieve better development, many enterprises have begun to pay attention to the cultivation of platform-based leadership style. When employees encounter difficulties and setbacks or have their own ideas, platform leaders give more encouragement and participate in them. Platform leaders are willing to share their knowledge, insights, and resources with subordinates and communicate with employees on an equal footing, which also provides a platform for employees to grow, on which both leaders and employees can exercise and grow. Let employees be fearless of difficulties and setbacks; let employees have the courage to try and contact new things; reduce the pressure of making mistakes; and become the strong backing of employees.

Because it is a platform-based leadership style, employees can have more opportunities to generate new ideas, express new views, and show new abilities, which provides a larger space for employees to exert their creativity. Therefore, it is considered that platform-based leadership has a positive impact on employees' creativity to a great extent. The paper puts forward the hypothesis 1:

H1: Platform leadership has a positive impact on employee creativity.

3.2. The Moderation of trust

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, human needs are divided into five categories. Only after the former needs are met will people have higher needs. Employees' trust in leaders belongs to the demand for respect, which also promotes

the ultimate self-worth of both parties, and one of the greatest level demands of human beings is the promotion of self-worth. That is to say, after the demand for respect is met, both sides will develop in a better direction and grow together. In this process, we constantly improve our self-worth and even exert our own value to make the external environment better.

A harmonious superior-subordinate relationship will make employees feel that they are working in a safe environment that encourages self-development, so employees will also show greater creativity (Wu Zhixin, 2016). In an enterprise, the trust of employees in leaders indicates that leaders have a certain prestige, and employees are willing to listen to their own leaders from the heart. Because of trust, employees are willing to share their ideas with leaders; because of trust, employees are willing to develop on the platform provided by leaders; and because of trust, employees are willing to become friends with leaders. It is the trust of employees in leaders, so employees are more willing to show their creative side in front of leaders and have in-depth communication with leaders to generate new ideas. Employees also trust leaders' resources and suggestions, which makes it easier to stimulate employees' creativity.

To sum up, it can be speculated that employees' trust in leaders affects the relationship between platform-based leadership and employees' creativity, and the higher the degree of trust, the greater the influence of platform-based leadership on employees' creativity. Therefore, this paper selects employee trust in leadership as a moderating variable to explore the impact of platform leadership on employee creativity. The paper puts forward the hypothesis 2:

H2: Employee trust in leadership positively moderates the relationship between platform leadership and employee creativity.

3.3Research Hypothesis Model
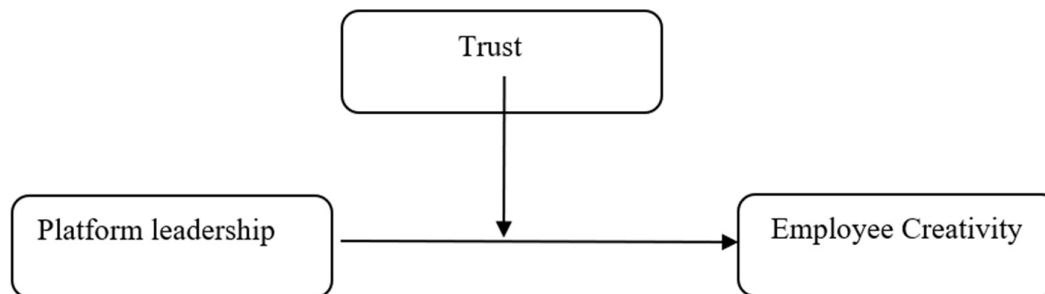
Figure.1 Relationship between Platform leadership and Employee Creativity

3.4Research Method

This paper mainly focuses on platform-based leadership and employee creativity and explores whether employees' trust in leaders regulates the relationship between platform-based leadership and employee creativity. Through reading the relevant literature, we can understand the scholars' understanding of related concepts and put forward assumptions according to the problems to be studied. According to the

relevant scholars on the variables involved in this study, an expanded scale analysis summary, according to the actual situation, would improve the form of a questionnaire. After the questionnaire was issued, the data were quantitatively analyzed by analysis software.

3.4.1 The literature research method

Based on the existing problems in enterprises, this paper studies the relevant knowledge, literature, and books at home and abroad, such as platform leadership, employee creativity, the influence of trust on employee creativity, and the background of adjustment, so as to deepen the understanding of these concepts. Learn from other people's research methods, think independently, refine the direction of the problems to be studied, summarize the previous research results, summarize the findings and theoretical understanding of earlier studies, find their own innovations, and generate new ideas and understandings. It lays a good theoretical foundation for the research in this paper and plays a supporting role in it.

Starting with the research of literature, according to the research purpose of this paper, the framework of this paper is supported by theory. Put forward hypotheses to demonstrate the influence of platform-based leadership on employees' creativity and the role of trust in it. The research results have a certain value for improving the creativity of employees in enterprises.

3.4.2 Questionnaire survey method

In view of the research needs, the measurement scale for this research is a collection of variables from related domains that have been chosen with greater maturity. In order to ensure the rationality and reliability of the questionnaire, three methods are adopted: first, distribute the questionnaire in a small scope, try to fill it out, and then study, improve, and modify the questions again; second, put a separate feedback question at the end of the questionnaire so that the questionnaire filler can leave questions in the process of filling out this questionnaire, which is convenient for timely adjustment; and third, employees will be reminded that it takes more than 180 seconds to fill out the questionnaire to ensure the accuracy of the answer.

After the pre-survey, we analyze the data, check the analysis results, then test the reliability and validity, and then go to the selected enterprises to conduct on-the-spot investigation and update the questionnaire to form the final questionnaire and measurement scale.

The follow-up-specific operation method is to import the final version of the questionnaire into the questionnaire star for online distribution and also print out the paper version and forward it to nearby coworkers for offline completion, using a combination of online and offline. Personal information of employees will not be designed in the questionnaire, and it is completely anonymous, which ensures the objectivity of the results. The final questionnaire will be distributed to the employees of our company to fill out and then recovered, and the questionnaire will be sorted out and analyzed by the Likert 5-point scoring method.

Finally, the number of questionnaires collected is 211, and the number of valid questionnaires is 208, which meets the survey needs.

3.4.3 Statistical analysis methods

To analyze and study the relationship between the research objects, first of all, pre-process the data, use SPSS 25.0 software to test the results of the questionnaire collected, test whether the reliability and validity meets the normal standards, and then carry out mathematical statistics and analysis after passing the test. Verify the relationship among platform-based leadership, employee creativity, and employee trust in leaders, and carry out the correlation analysis and regression analysis to see whether platform-based leadership and employee creativity are related and influence each other, whether employee trust in leaders plays a regulatory role, and what the regulatory direction is.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Reliability analysis

In this paper, the α coefficient is used to analyze the reliability of the data derived from the questionnaire. The three scales are all mature scales in related fields, among which "platform leadership" adopts Xu Xi et al.'s scale on platform leadership, with a total of 9 topics. "Employee Trust in Leadership" adopts the Li Baoqing Research Scale on the Relationship between Employee Trust and Job Satisfaction, with 9 questions in total. "Employee Creativity" adopts Wu Wenwen's Impact Scale on Employee Creativity, with 10 questions in total. The analysis results show that the coefficients of the three scales are 0.956, 0.953, and 0.955, respectively, and the α coefficient of all 28 items is 0.984. The α coefficient does not increase obviously because of the deletion of individual items, and all the coefficients far exceed 0.5, so the reliability coefficient is very high.

The results show that the data reliability of platform-based leadership, employee creativity, and employee trust in the leadership scale has reached the standard of further research and suitable for the upcoming operational research. The specific data is shown in the following table:

Table 1 Reliability analysis of the scale

Scale name	Number of items	Alphaα coefficient	Alphaα coefficient of all items
Platform Leadership Scale	9	0.956	0.984
Trust scale	9	0.953	
Employee creativity scale	10	0.955	

4.2 Validity analysis

On the basis of high reliability, this paper uses the SPSS tool for validity testing to verify whether the overall scale meets the requirements of further data exploration. The KMO value and Bartlett sphericity test data of the scale were obtained by SPSS analysis. Only when the KMO sampling suitability number is greater than 0.6 and the Bartlett sphericity test significance is less than 0.05 can the next confirmatory factor analysis be carried out. The results of this analysis (as shown in Table 2) are: KMO value = 0.987 > 0.6, Bartlett significance = 0.00 < 0.05, so the questionnaire meets the

requirements and can be used for confirmatory factor analysis.

According to the research and analysis, it can be seen from Table 3 that the absolute values of standardized load systems are all greater than 0.6 and show significance, which means that there is a good measurement relationship. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on three factors (platform leadership, employee trust in leadership, and employee creativity) and 28 analysis items. The AVE values of the three factors are all greater than 0.5, and the CR values are all higher than 0.7, which means that the analysis data has good aggregation (convergence) validity. The next regression analysis can be carried out. Specific data are as follows:

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett tests

KMO sampling appropriateness measure		0.987
Bartlett sphericity test approximates	Chi-square	6072.891
	Degrees of freedom	378
	Significance.	.ooo

Table 3: Factor Load Factor Table

Factor (latent variable)	Measurement item (explicit variable)	Non-standard load factor (Coef.)	Standard load factor (Std. Estimate)	AVE value of average variance extraction	Combined reliability CR value
Platform leadership	1	1	0.837	0.708	0.956
	2	0.972	0.848		
	3	1.042	0.844		
	4	0.988	0.817		
	5	1.055	0.849		
	6	1.004	0.849		
	7	1.108	0.874		
	8	0.961	0.826		
	9	1.01	0.829		
Trust	1	1	0.83	0.694	0.953
	2	0.899	0.805		
	3	0.947	0.813		
	4	0.933	0.813		
	5	1.025	0.855		
	6	0.983	0.846		

	7	0.997	0.841		
	8	0.959	0.831		
	9	1.041	0.861		
Employee creativity	1	1	0.808	0.681	0.955
	2	0.966	0.805		
	3	1	0.819		
	4	1.116	0.851		
	5	1.028	0.807		
	6	1.076	0.834		
	7	1.054	0.824		
	8	1.038	0.828		
	9	1.092	0.848		
	10	1.027	0.831		

4.3 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis mainly studies the correlation among platform-based leadership, employee creativity, and employee trust in leaders, which lays the foundation for subsequent regression analysis. Further analysis of the relationship between variables and the direction of the relationship, correlation analysis, and follow-up trust plays a regulatory role in laying the foundation.

Pearson correlation analysis is used to analyze the correlation of each variable. The relationship between variables is judged by values and symbols. Pearson correlation analysis shows that there is a correlation between them if the r value is between -1 and 1; r = 0 means that there is no correlation between them at all; the closer the absolute value is to 1, the stronger the correlation is; and positive and negative represent the direction of the correlation.

As shown in the figure, there is a high correlation between platform leadership and employees' trust in leaders (r = 0.956, P < 0.01), platform leadership and employees' creativity (r = 0.953, P < 0.01), and employees' trust in leaders and employees' creativity (r = 0.958, P < 0.01), and they are all positively correlated. Subsequent regression analysis can be carried out. In addition, the control variables of age, working years, and job position are significantly correlated with employees' creative behavior, indicating that the above variables as the control variables of this study are more reasonable. Specific data are as follows:

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis

		Gender	Age	Educational background	Years of service	Job position	Leadership	Trust	Creativity
Gender	Pearson correlation	1	. 055	. 043	-. 008	-. 068	-. 002	. 003	-. 012
	Sig. (Double-tailed)		. 427	. 540	. 908	. 333	. 980	. 962	. 866
Age	Pearson correlation	. 055	1	-. 017	. 520**	. 190**	. 612**	. 627**	. 614**
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 427		. 810	. 000	. 006	. 000	. 000	. 000
Educational background	Pearson correlation	. 043	-. 017	1	. 079	. 106	. 094	. 065	. 076
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 540	. 810		. 254	. 129	. 179	. 353	. 277
Years of service	Pearson correlation	-. 008	. 520**	. 079	1	. 200**	. 721**	. 711**	. 704**
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 908	. 000	. 254		. 004	. 000	. 000	. 000
Job position	Pearson correlation	-. 068	. 190**	. 106	. 200**	1	. 273**	. 250**	. 268**
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 333	. 006	. 129	. 004		. 000	. 000	. 000
Leadership	Pearson correlation	-. 002	. 612**	. 094	. 721**	. 273**	1	. 956**	. 953**
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 980	. 000	. 179	. 000	. 000		. 000	. 000
Trust	Pearson correlation	. 003	. 627**	. 065	. 711**	. 250**	. 956**	1	. 958**
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 962	. 000	. 353	. 000	. 000	. 000		. 000
Creativity	Pearson correlation	-. 012	. 614**	. 076	. 704**	. 268**	. 953**	. 958**	1
	Sig. (Double-tailed)	. 866	. 000	. 277	. 000	. 000	. 000	. 000	
**. At 0.01 level (double tails), the correlation is significant.									

4.4 Regression analysis

Using SPSS regression analysis, first of all, the influence of platform leadership on

employee creativity is studied to verify whether Hypothesis 1 is true. The results show that the standardization coefficient is 0.290 (p = 0.00 < 0.05), which shows that platform-based leadership has a positive impact on employee creativity; that is, the more the leadership style is inclined toward platform-based leadership, the easier it is for employees to exert their creativity. So hypothesis 1 holds.

The dependent variable of the moderating effect is the employee's creativity, and the independent variable is platform leadership, trust between leaders and employees, and the interaction between platform leadership and employees' trust in leaders. From the analysis results, we can see that the interaction item's regression coefficient is β = 0.277 (p = 0.00 < 0.05), which shows that the moderating effect of employees' trust in leaders is valid, and the result is positive, which shows that employees' trust in leaders plays a positive moderating role between platform leadership and employees' creativity. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is valid.

Table 5 Regression analysis

model	Unstandardized coefficient		Normalization coefficient		
	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Significance
(Constant)	1.322	. 271		4.874	. 000
Platform leadership	. 283	. 064	. 290	4.438	. 000
Employees' trust in leaders	. 419	. 065	. 419	6.478	. 000
Interactive item data	182	. 040	. 277	4.575	. 000
A. Dependent variable: Employee creativity					

A. Dependent variable: Employee creativity

5. Discussion

The current research makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on platform leadership by empirically examining its influence on employee creativity - a crucial factor driving organizational success in today's digital era. By introducing trust as a moderating variable, this study sheds novel light on the underlying mechanisms governing the relationship between platform leadership and employee creativity - an area that has been relatively underexplored in prior scholarly work.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Going beyond existing theoretical frameworks, this investigation integrates perspectives across diverse domains like leadership, creativity, and trust to develop a comprehensive model for understanding the intricate interplay among these pivotal concepts. By empirically validating the positive impact of platform leadership on employee creativity, as well as the moderating role of trust in amplifying this effect, our findings enrich the conceptual understanding of how leaders can cultivate an organizational climate conducive to creative behaviors among the workforce.

Notably, introducing trust as a moderating variable represents a significant theoretical contribution. While previous studies have explored the direct effects of leadership styles and employee-leader relationships on various organizational outcomes, the present research elucidates the critical role of trust in shaping the effectiveness of the platform leadership approach in stimulating employee creativity. This insight highlights the importance of considering interpersonal dynamics, particularly trust, within the context of emerging leadership paradigms and their impact on organizational innovativeness.

5.2 Practical Implications

The insights gleaned from this study offer valuable guidance for business leaders and managers aiming to cultivate a work environment that encourages and sustains employee creativity - a vital source of competitive advantage in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. By advocating for the adoption of a platform leadership style, characterized by equal communication, resource sharing, and mutual growth with employees, leaders can create fertile ground for creative expression and innovation to thrive.

Furthermore, our findings underscore the pivotal role of trust in amplifying the positive effects of platform leadership on employee creativity. Managers are advised to prioritize trust-building initiatives, fostering open communication, fairness, and consistent supportive behaviors throughout their organizations. By nurturing an organizational climate of trust between leaders and employees, companies can unlock the full potential of the platform leadership approach in stimulating and sustaining creative endeavors, ultimately driving innovation and bolstering organizational performance.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the present study offers valuable insights, several limitations warrant acknowledgment, which simultaneously present opportunities for future research endeavors. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data constrains the ability to draw definitive causal inferences about the relationships among the variables under investigation. Longitudinal studies, employing rigorous methodological designs, are necessary to elucidate the dynamic interplay and potential feedback loops among platform leadership, trust, and employee creativity over extended periods.

Second, the reliance on self-reported measures of employee creativity may introduce common method biases, potentially influencing the observed effects. Future research could incorporate more objective assessments of creative outputs, such as expert evaluations, peer ratings, or tangible measures of innovation, to enhance the validity and robustness of the findings.

Third, the study's sample was limited to enterprises within China, potentially restricting the generalizability of the results to other cultural and institutional contexts. Cross-cultural investigations, encompassing organizations from diverse geographical regions and societal backgrounds, could shed light on potential cultural contingencies and enhance the external validity of the findings.

Fourth, while the current research focused on the moderating role of trust, future

studies could explore the potential influence of other contextual factors, such as organizational climate, job autonomy, and complementary leadership styles (e.g., transformational, servant leadership), on the platform leadership-creativity relationship. Incorporating these variables could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the complex mechanisms underlying this linkage.

Fifth, as the conceptualization and measurement of platform leadership continue to evolve, more comprehensive scale development and validation efforts are needed to capture the multifaceted nature of this emerging leadership approach. Collaborations between scholars, practitioners, and industry experts could facilitate the refinement of theoretical understandings and operational definitions of platform leadership.

Finally, adopting a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, could provide a more nuanced understanding of the platform leadership-creativity relationship. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, could offer rich insights into the contextual factors and underlying processes that shape the interplay between these constructs, complementing the quantitative findings.

6. Conclusions

The present study makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on platform leadership and employee creativity by empirically validating the positive impact of platform leadership on fostering employee creative behaviors. Notably, this research introduces trust as a critical moderating variable, highlighting its pivotal role in amplifying the positive effects of platform leadership on stimulating employee creativity.

The key findings reveal that when leaders embrace a platform-based leadership approach, characterized by equal communication, resource sharing, and mutual growth with employees, it effectively cultivates a supportive environment that encourages creative expression and innovative thinking among the workforce. Furthermore, the presence of trust between leaders and employees amplifies this positive effect, facilitating open communication, knowledge exchange, and a heightened sense of psychological safety – all of which are conducive to the manifestation of creative behaviors.

These insights hold significant implications for organizations striving to nurture a culture of innovation and sustain competitive advantages in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. By embracing the principles of platform leadership and actively fostering trust within their ranks, companies can unlock the creative potential of their employees, driving innovation and ultimately bolstering organizational performance.

While the present study contributes to the understanding of platform leadership, trust, and employee creativity, it also acknowledges limitations and highlights opportunities for future research endeavors. Longitudinal investigations, cross-cultural validations, and the exploration of additional contextual factors could further refine the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of these concepts.

Ultimately, this research underscores the pivotal roles of platform leadership and trust in catalyzing employee creativity – a critical imperative for organizational success in

the digital age. By providing empirical evidence and integrating diverse theoretical perspectives, this study lays a solid foundation for ongoing scholarly inquiry and practical guidance, empowering organizations to cultivate a work environment that nurtures innovation, fosters growth, and sustains competitive advantages in an ever-changing global marketplace.

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