Investigating the Effect of Platform Leadership onEmployee Innovative Behavior

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Abstract :

With the rapid development of information and digital technology in China, the Platform economy has been born, more and more enterprises appear as platform-oriented leaders. Platform leadership is a new leadership model withthe core characteristics of "empowerment", "growth", and equal sharing. At present, there are few literature on integrating platform thinking into leadership theory both domestically and internationally, and there is even noconcept of platform leadership internationally. As the Chinese economy enters a stage of high-quality development led by innovation, the innovation ability of employees determines the long-term development of enterprises. However, it is worth further exploring how platform leadership can influence employees' innovative behavior and ability. Based on the social exchange theory, the Social cognitive theory and the ability motivation opportunity theory, this paper introduces four variables of organizational learning, knowledge sharing, coworker support and psychological empowerment as mediating variables, and constructs a multiple mediating model of platform leadership influencing employee innovation behavior. Based on multiple theoretical perspectives, this article analyzes and reviews the impact mechanism of platform leadership on employee innovation behavior, constructs an integrated theoretical model, and discovers the possible mediating factors and pathways that platform leadership may affect employee innovation behavior. At the same time, some of the mediating factors found in this article, such as organizational learning and colleague support, have not yet formed a unified consensus on the concepts, types, antecedents, and outcome variables of these two influencing factors in domestic and foreign research. This article attempts to construct a relationship between platform leadership and these two variables, which can fill the gap in the discussion on the relationship between organizational learning, coworker support and platform leadership. Finally, through literature review and theoretical model construction, the author found that in the era of China's digital economy, enterprises should cultivate and value platform based leadership. This article

also provides a theoretical basis for platform leaders to effectively promote employee innovation behavior.

Key words: Platform leadership, employee innovation behavior, organizational learning, knowledge sharing, coworker support, psychological empowerment

1. Introduction
1.1 Background

With the rapid development of Chinese information and digital technology, the popularity of the internet continues to rise, and digital technologies suchas cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence have quickly emerged. Humans have moved from the traditional industrial economy era tothe platform economy era (Xin & Kong, 2020), where the fast-changing, developing, and iterative background is filled with many uncertainties. A In the platform economy era, the relationships between things are increasingly becoming platform-oriented, networked, and distributed. Organizational forms such as small and micro platforms enterprises and maker have becomepopular (Ji et al., 2014).

Traditional hierarchical structures are difficult to adapt to rapidly changing consumer needs and the requirement to enhance management innovation. and all of this deeply affects the concepts, models and approaches of modern management, bringing revolutionary changes to the theories and practices of the management field (Xin & Xie, 2020). The emergence of new management problems and contradictions has made leaders face a historic thinking transformation, requires fundamentally establishing a leadership theory paradigm and practical approach based on the platform metaphor to adapt, survive, and develop in the fiercely competitive and challenging internet era (Xin & Kong, 2020).

As a large number of jobs are being replaced by machines, humans are increasingly engaged in creative work. Innovation has become an inevitable choice for enterprises to seek survival and development in response with the complex and changeable competitive environment, and the driving force of enterprise innovation comes from the innovation behavior of employees (Li Ling et al., 2022). How to stimulate employees' innovative behavior has long been an important issue in the field of management research (Sun, 2020).

Under the background of individual rise, Employees have higher needs for growth and development. Traditional material incentive methods such as adding bonuses and increasing salaries are becoming less effective in stimulating employee enthusiasm (Hao, 2016a). Currently, the relationship between individuals and organizations has become "strong individuals, weak organizations" (Wu, 2022).

1.2 Problem Statement

Existing studies have shown that charismatic, empowering, authentic, and ethical leadership styles can lead to higher job satisfaction among employees and stimulate their autonomy and innovative vitality (Li, 2019). Authentic, entrepreneurial, inclusive, distributed, benevolent, and accommodating leadership can inspire employees' innovation behavior and performance (Fan et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2021; Song, 2020; Tang, 2021; Zhang, 2022).Some scholars have explored the relationship between platform leadership and employee innovative behavior, but research on platform leadership is still in its infancy both domestically and internationally, and empirical research related to it has not yet been fully developed, which deserves further in-depth study (Xu, 2022).

Organizational learning is an important driving force for organizational innovation, and the two promote each other. Cohen and Caner (2016) pointed out that organizational learning is conducive to matching internal resources with external environments to achieve mutual adaptation, thereby promoting the occurrence of innovative behavior and the improvement of innovative performance. Although some concepts, mechanisms, types, antecedent and outcome variables of organizational learning have been proposed both domestically and internationally, there is no unified consensus, and there is still a lack of systematic theoretical research (Li & Guo, 2019).

In the digital economy era, knowledge management capability has become an important asset for organizations to achieve sustainable development (Jielin et al., 2020a). Sharing knowledge among employees can help them overcome the limitations of existing knowledge and achieve innovation (Yuntao et al., 2017). According to social exchange theory, Platform leadership focuses on building a benign interactive relationship with employees (Hao X G et al., 2021), so in order to repay platform leadership, employees will enhance their internal motivation to share knowledge. Based on this, this study introduces knowledge sharing as a mediator variable, attempting to explore whether the willingness to share knowledge can play a mediating role in the relationship between platform leadership and employee innovative behavior.

Currently, the academic community has not fully explored the role of coworker support. In Chinese studies, coworker support is mostly examined as a moderating variable, and the research field is also limited.The role of coworker support in the relationship between platform leadership and employee innovative behavior, as well as its underlying mechanisms, has not been addressed in the literature review. Therefore, this paper will investigate coworker support as a mediating variable. Psychological empowerment reflects individuals' cognitive perception of their work role positioning, reflecting the psychological state of employees' perception of organizational environment and managerial behavior, which is directly influenced by leadership behavior (Spreitzer, 1996). Scholars have shown that

transformational leadership (Chen Y X et al., 2006), paternalistic leadership (Chen L et al., 2013), authentic leadership (Shi G F & Yang G F, 2015), and others have an impact on psychological empowerment, thus it is highly likely that platform leadership also has an impact on psychological empowerment.

1.3 Research Gap

Since Chinese scholar Hao Xuguang proposed the concept of platform leadership in 2014, there have been only over 35 related research papers in China in the past 10 years. Using " Google Scholar " search the keywords "allintitle: platform leadership, innovative behavior" did not yield any related literature. Using "allintitle: platform leadership" yielded 219 related English literature,The results show that foreign literature mainly refers to companies or organizations that are market leaders in the platform environment and industry (Liu et al., 2021; Fontana & Greenstein, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). This is not the same concept as the one proposed by Chinese scholar Hao Xuguang. Only one paper discusses the impact of platform leadership on organizational dual learning (Yang et al., 2022). Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the current international academic research on platform leadership is still in its infancy (Yang et al., 2022; Wang & Hao, 2023; Xie, 2022).

Chinese literature on platform leadership mainly focuses on normative theoretical explanation, with only four scholars and teams exploring and developing the concept, dimensions, and measurement scales of platform leadership (Hao et al., 2021; Hou, 2016; Xin & Kong, 2020; Zhao, 2018). Currently, there are only three studies on the relationship between platform leadership and employee innovative behavior in China, mainly discussing a single mediating variable (Hao et al., 2021; Wu, 2022; Xu, 2022). Empirical research on platform leadership is still in its infancy, especially the lack of in-depth research on the influence mechanism of platform leadership on employee innovative behavior, work performance, and other aspects (An et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Xiao, 2021; Xu, 2022).

2. Literature Review

This paper will base on the social learning theory, social exchange theory andAMO model to construct the internal mechanism of platform leadership to influence the innovation behavior of employees.

In order to better address the research question of this paper - the specific mechanism of platform leadership's impact on employee innovative behavior, The author used various academic search engines, such as Google Scholar and Baidu Scholar, and searched electronic databases, including Elsevier, EBSCO, JSTOR, China Academic Journals Network Publishing Database. However, the search only yielded less than 20 English academic papers.Using Chinese keywords such as "employee innovative behavior" and "platform leadership," approximately 35 Chinese and English academic papers were retrieved. Finally, it was determined that only two foreign literature and 35

Chinese literature were relevant.The number of related research papers published by platform leaders is shown in Figure 1. Among which 19 were journal articles and 17 were theses. According to the publication year, the number of platform leadership research papers reached 17 in 2022, accounting for 47% of the total literature, 6 papers were published in 2021, accounting for 17% of the total literature, and the average number of papers published from 2014 to 2020 did not exceed 3 papers.

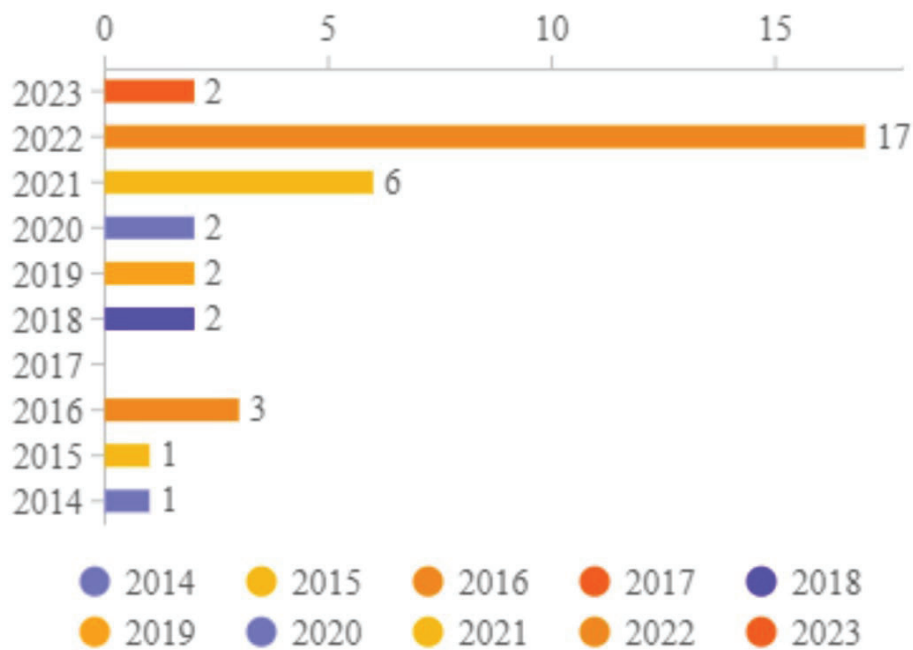The annual publication count statistics of PL

Year	Count
2023	2
2022	17
2021	6
2020	2
2019	2
2018	2
2017	
2016	3
2015	1
2014	1

Legend: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

Figure 1 The Annual Publication Count Statistics of Platform Leaders

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

The development of social exchange theory has developed through three stages, namely Homans' (1958) behavioral exchange theory, Blau(1964) structural exchange theory, and Emerson(1976) social exchange theory. Homans (1958) believed that social exchange was a behavior that individuals engaged in based on resources and rewards. Social exchange is not entirely equal but based on mutual attraction and equal exchange. The principle of reciprocity is the core of social exchange behavior, which is based on the costs paid by the actor and the rewards obtained by the exchange object. The content of social exchange includes money, information, goods, services, status, and love (Alvin, 1960). This theory comprehensively includes all types of resources that both parties may provide in an exchange (Blau, 1964). In recent years, social exchange theory has been widely used in the study of employee workplace behavior. A leader's attitude of trust towards employees, and the establishment of stable trust relationships with employees, can enhance the degree of return for employees towards the leader or

organization. Therefore, in an organizational context, social exchange theory can be used to explain why individuals are willing to invest more in their work when they feel that their organization has invested in them. Social exchange theory can also explain the psychological process of exchange relationships between leaders and employees (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to social exchange theory, when leaders exhibit good behavior towards employees, employees tend to have a more positive attitude and are better able to achieve organizational goals. Based on social exchange theory, this paper believes that psychological empowerment, organizational learning, knowledge sharing, and coworker support within the organization can all be considered as interactive activities between two or more individuals in the organization, involving exchange and communication of money, information, services, knowledge, and love.

2.2 Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory was proposed in the 1960s, was published in 1977 in the book "Social Learning Theory" (Bandura & Walters, 1977). According to the Social Learning Theory, an individual's learning can be categorized into two forms: simple direct learning and complex vicarious learning. During the process of vicarious learning, the Social LearningTheory emphasizes the role of models as examples for individuals. Models' behaviors and language are more likely to encourage individuals to learn through imitation when responding to external stimuli. In organizational contexts, the traits and behavior of a platform-type leader, sharing and exchanging knowledge between employees, and colleagues' encouragement and demonstration are the main sources of vicarious learning for employees.By observing, employees gain knowledge, experience, and ideas in an environment of equal communication and common growth. Leaders, members, and employees mutually influence each other, and employees self-regulate to make appropriate responses (Gist, 1987b).

Another core component of the Social Learning Theory is the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism. The core idea of the theory is that individual behavior, cognition, and other personal factors interact with the environment (Bandura & Walters, 1987). The Triadic Reciprocal Determinism highlights the interaction among the three factors, but the strength of the influence varies and depends on specific conditions such as the environment, individual, and work activity.

Based on social learning theory, The inclusive, change-encouraging, career development opportunities, and growth-sharing traits of platform leaders can establish a positive, personalized, stimulate subordinates' confidence and self-efficacy, change employees' psychological cognition and work attitude, and ultimately guide employees' behavior towards innovation, promoting the implementation of employees' innovative behavior.

2.3 Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Theory

The AMO model was initially proposed by Vroom (1964) within the framework of the Expectancy Theory of employee motivation, an individual's performance level is the result of the interaction between their ability and motivation (job performance = f(ability × motivation)). Blumberg and Pringle (1982) argued that employees' abilities and motivations are more or less influenced by the work environment, and that having only ability and motivation does not necessarily lead to high performance.

For the measurement of ability, motivation, and opportunity in the AMO theory, most scholars introduce corresponding variables based on their research content instead of these three variables and choose existing scales or develop new scales for measurement. Li & Ding, (2015) using the AMO theory tool, pointed out that employees' innovative behavior is influenced by their comprehensive understanding of their own innovative ability, innovative motivation, and innovative opportunity. the generation of employee innovative behavior in enterprise practices is a complex system. This paper will also refer to the model framework based on the AMO theory, introduce psychological empowerment as an ability factor, knowledge sharing as a motivation factor, platform-based leadership, organizational learning, and coworker supportas opportunity factors, and try to explain the influence mechanism of platform-based leadership, organizational learning, knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and coworker support on employee innovative behavior in platform enterprises by analyzing the interaction of the three factors of individual-situation-opportunity, comprehensively summarizing and analyzing the antecedent factors of employee innovative behavior.

2.4 Platform Leadership and Employee Innovative Behavior

Platform leadership was first proposed by Hao Xuguang in year 2014. the theoretical basis for platform leadership is Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Hao Xuguang (2014) believes that the assumption of platform-based leadership is that every individual has the potential for self-actualization, and leaders should provide a platform for employees to achieve self-actualization. In 2016, Hao Xuguang further deepened the definition of the concept of platform leadership, which he believed is centered on equal sharing, organizing resource sharing and optimizing the platform through equal communication with subordinates, developing a common cause for both leaders and employees, activating their potential, and promoting mutual growth and achievement, a new type of leadership (Hao, 2016a).

Currently, there is limited literature on platform leadership in China and abroad. There are only five articles on the dimension and measurement of platform leadership. Among them, Hao Xuguang's measurement scale with six dimensions and 25 items was widely accepted which was including charm, tolerance, revolution planning, platform building, platform optimization and mutual growth.

The current research on the connotation of employee innovation behavior mainly defines it from three perspectives: individual characteristics, behavior, and process. There are many scholars who define employee innovation behavior from a process perspective. This study will also be based on a process perspective, believing that employee innovation behavior refers to the process in which employees use their own experience, skills, and knowledge to summarize innovative methods and perspectives related to enterprise operation or management, and implement them to create innovative service methods or product types. Therefore, employee innovation behavior is divided into two stages: the generation of innovative ideas and the implementation of innovative behavior. There are currently many research literature on leadership and employee innovation behavior in the academic community.

2.5 Organizational Learning

In the context of global competition and China's creation of a learning society, organizational learning has been widely recognized as the fundamental condition and driving force for strategic and sustainable development of organizations. Argyris&Schon (1978) believed that organizational learning is the process of identifying organizational problems and then addressing them by making changes to the existing structure, regulations, culture, etc. of the organization. Since the concept of organizational learning was proposed, there has been no unified concept. There are currently four recognized perspectives in the academic community, which define organizational learning differently from the perspectives of cognition, process, outcomes, and systems (Wei, 2020). This article will refer to the definitions of Baker and Sinkula (1997), combined with the perspective of Wei Xintong (2020), and believe that organizational learning is the process of learning commitment, analysis, discussion, creation, and dissemination of knowledge, skills, and ideas within employees and organizations to achieve organizational goals and achieve long-term development. The measurement of organizational learning is divided into three dimensions: "learning commitment", "shared vision", and "open mindedness".

2.6 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental aspect of knowledge management and is crucial in enhancing technological innovation and the essential competitiveness of organizations, as stated by Bakker et al. (2014). Scholars have different perspectives and dimension divisions on knowledge sharing, such as performance, motivation, willingness and ability, function orientation, and transmission direction to divide the dimensions. Chinese scholar Wang and Zhu (2012a) merged two variables, knowledge sharing and individual traits, and explored employee innovative behavior by combining the two factors. They believed that knowledge sharing involves two necessary conditions, namely knowledge sharing ability and knowledge

sharing willingness. Current research on knowledge sharing is mainly analyzed from individual, organizational and situational perspectives. While in organizational situations, leadership style is seen as an important factor affecting knowledge sharing. Leadership support for knowledge sharing is considered an important contextual factor that influences employees' willingness to share knowledge (Lin, 2007). Previous studies have shown that authorized leaders and spiritual leaders will have an impact on employees' innovative behavior and innovation performance through knowledge sharing (Wan Pengyu et al., 2019; Rao Jada et al., 2019; Ye, 2021). It was found that platform leadership affects employees' innovation behavior by influencing their share knowledge intention(Xu, 2022). According to Wang & Hao's (2023) study, knowledge sharing plays an intermediary role in platform leadership and business model innovation in enterprises.

2.7 Coworker Support

The definition of coworker support has not been unified, and literature research shows that the relevant research on coworker support comes from the concept of social support. Because coworkers share common characteristics such as working together, equality, matching, and not being superior or inferior to each other, coworkers are the most likely and important source for individuals to obtain emotional and work support. Beehr et al. (2000) pointed out that coworker support can be divided into instrumental support or emotional support. Coworker instrumental support is task-oriented and aims to complete work or solve work-related problems. Coworker emotional support is people-oriented and is based on friendship and personal care. According to the definitions provided by scholars both China and internationally, and referencing the perspectives of He Yu (2020) and Dai Chunlin (2011), this study considers coworker support as a mutually beneficial behavior that promotes cooperation among colleagues. It refers to the emotional, instrumental, and informational support and assistance that individuals receive from their coworkers. Coworker support can be divided into two dimensions: emotional support and instrumental support. Xue & Zhao's (2016) study showed that the level of coworker support is influenced by ethical leadership. Yang and Li (2013) pointed out in their research that when the level of coworker support is high, psychological empowerment can have a greater impact on employees' innovative behavior. scholars both domestically and internationally have typically linked coworker support with specific occupational groups, such as salespeople, service personnel, and nursing staff, among others.

2.8 Psychological Empowerment

In theoretical research, scholars have two different views on the path of empowerment, namely the relational path and the motivational path, and constructed the psychological empowerment model based on the motivational path. Scholars have divided the dimensions of psychological

empowerment into three types: single dimension, three dimensions, and four dimensions, and have developed different measurement scales accordingly. Psychological empowerment is a psychological state that reflects an employee's perception of the organizational environment and the behavior of management, which is directly influenced by leadership behavior. This research divides psychological empowerment into four dimensions: job meaningfulness, self-efficacy, autonomy, and job impact, based on the dimensions put forth by Chinese scholar Li Chaoping et al. (2006). Scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of the antecedent and outcome variables of psychological empowerment. Some scholars have also explored the mediating effect of psychological empowerment, such as the close relationship between psychological empowerment and leadership style (Chen et al., 2006). Leadership style and management style have a significant mediating effect in the work environment (Bao, 2020). In research using work behavior and performance as dependent variables, it has been confirmed that psychological empowerment plays a mediating role between ethical leadership and employee suggestion behavior, empowering leadership and employee creativity, and moral leadership and work performance.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Though the literature review, a theoretical framework is developed on the basis of social learning theory (Bandura 1986), social exchange theory (Thiebow and Kelly 1959) and the ability-opportunity motivation model. Based on the platform-based leadership theory proposed by Chinese scholar Hao Xuguang in 2014, the author combined the outcome variables of platform leadership influencing factors with employee innovation behaviors, trying to explore the internal relationship between platform leadership and employee innovation behavior.

In enterprise practice, the generation of employee innovation behavior is a complex system, so the choice of variables in the theoretical framework of this paper is based on the ternary interaction determinism and AMO model theory. Introducing psychological empowerment as an individual ability factor, knowledge sharing as an individual motivation factor, platform leadership, organizational learning, and coworker support as opportunity situation factors, and by analyzing the interaction of individual-situation-behavior three factors, The author tries to construct a multiple mediation model for platform leadership to influence employees' innovation behavior, as shown in Figure 2
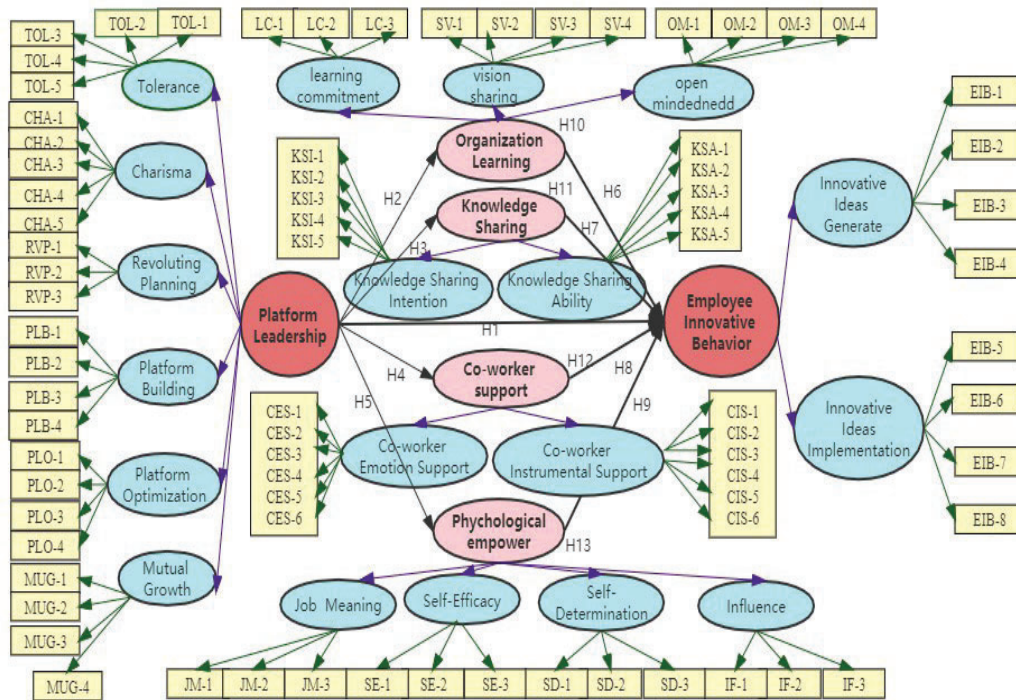
Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

3.Conclusion and Discussion
3.1 Conclusion

This article has formed five preliminary research conclusions through literature review：

Firstly, based on multiple theoretical perspectives, a comprehensive theoretical model has been developed for the influence of platform leadership on employee innovation behavior. This paper integrates organizational learning, knowledge sharing, psychological empowerment, and coworker support as mediators to construct a multi-mediation model of the impact of platform leadership on employee innovative behavior, While discussing individual variables such as psychological empowerment, and further explores situational factors such as organizational learning, knowledge sharing, and coworker support, discussing the mechanism by which platform leadership affects innovative behavior, enriching the theoretical and empirical literature in the field of platform leadership(Yang & Zhang, 2023;Li Ling et al., 2022).

The second conclusion is to fill the gap in the discussion of the relationship between organizational learning and platform leadership. In the past research on platform leadership, there was no in-depth discussion on the relationship between organizational learning and platform leadership and innovation behavior (Li Ling et al., 2022).

The third conclusion is to fill the gap in the discussion on the relationship between coworker support and platform leadership. At present, the current

academic exploration of coworker support is not rich enough. In Chinese studies, coworker support is mostly used as a moderating variable(Wang et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2019; Xu Lei et al., 2022). Through literature review, the author attempts to build a relational model between coworker support and platform leadership and employee innovation behavior.

The fourth conclusion is to fill the gap in the discussion of the relationship between knowledge sharing and platform leadership(Yang & Zhang, 2023). At present, there is less literature in China to discuss the relationship between platform leaders and employees' innovative behavior from two dimensions of knowledge sharing(Yang et al., 2022). Through literature review, this paper constructs a relational model between knowledge sharing and platform leaders and employees' innovative behavior.

The fifth conclusion is from the perspective of practical, In the era of digital economy and artificial intelligence, enterprises should cultivate or recruit leaders who value equality and sharing. this article provides a solution for platform leaders on how to inspire employee innovative behavior(Wu, 2022). At the same time, the research results will provide a theoretical basis for how platform enterprises can more effectively promote employee innovative behavior under limited resources.

3.2 Limitation

（1）This study only reviews the relevant theoretical literature, distinguish the similar definition of similar concepts, summarizes the relationship between the variables in the model, the background of the theoretical model, and how to use the theoretical model, whether the model is suitable to the real enterprise situation, the model fit degree test are not involved, so the next step will test the model to determine whether the theoretical model is applicable to the real enterprise scenario.

（2）This study only constructed a multiple mediation model through literature review, but the moderating effect between platform leadership and employee innovation behavior was not explored. Future research can improve the mediation mechanism, moderating mechanism, and boundary influence mechanism through more comprehensive theoretical and empirical analysis.

（3）This article mainly conducts research from an individual perspective, and in the future, cross level research can be considered from other levels such as teams or organizations to provide more specific and targeted suggestions for management practice.

（4）This article explores platform leadership based on Chinese cultural context. According to relevant research, cultural differences in different countries have different impacts on behavior, In the future, it is possible to study whether the impact of platform leadership on employee performance varies under different cultures.

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