EXPLORATORY RESEARCH OF THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE OF THRIVING AT WORK IN CHINA

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Abstract

As an important construct of positive organizational management, thriving at work is a desirable and informative psychological state in which individual subjective experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work, is an indicator that one is developing in a positive direction. It has a wide range of applications of the two-dimensional structure of vitality and learning of thriving at work in the Western context nowadays. But it needs to test the adaptability in in Chinese context because of the different social and cultural context. This study develops exploratory research in the context of China through personal interview, group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires. The results of data analysis of exploratory research show that the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work also has good adaptability in the Chinese context and can be used to measure the working status of employees. The results provide a basis for further research on thriving at work in the context of China.

Keywords: Thriving at work, vitality, learning, exploratory research, two-dimensional structure

INTRODUCTION

As a kind of state construct, thriving at work can measure the progress and development of employees in the workplace through the perspective of employees' subjectively self-perception. Moreover, it is more suitable for the characteristics of the new generation of employees who have become the backbone of the workplace as a positive state of self-feeling, and has quickly become a hot spot in organizational behavior research after being proposed.

It has a wide range of applications of the two-dimensional structure of vitality and learning proposed by Spreitzer in the definition of thriving at work in the Western context nowadays. Therefore, the current research mainly uses the two-dimensional structure of vitality and learning, and the scale developed on it. Shen L & Zhang R.G (2018) suggests that there is still in its infancy and lack in-depth research on empirical research on thriving at work in China at present. As thriving at work will be influenced by the situational factors as a kind of psychological state, especially the vitality and learning belongs to emotion and cognition which are closely related to social and cultural situation. Therefore, the more different of cultural and social contexts, the more diversity of employees' subjective feelings of the psychological state and influencing factors.

Therefore, it may be different from the understanding of two-dimensional constructs of thriving at work of employees in the context of the huge differences between the East and West social and cultural environments. So, this study analyzes the applicability of the two-dimensional concept of prosperity through personal interview, group discussions and open-ended questionnaires based on the Chinese social and cultural context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there has been a lot of research on thriving in other areas, there was no research focus on workplace until Spritzer et al. (2005) came up with the construct of thriving at work.In addition, although many scholars have made it clear that some constructs need to develop and confirm to measure the enthusiasm of employees in the workplace clearly and effectively, but most studies only focus on the status of employees from surviving to thriving and seldom focused on what it really means.

Spreitzer et al. (2005) defined work prosperity as a combination of subjectively experiencing of vitality and learning at work through extensive qualitative research and cross-disciplinary literature analysis to scientifically answer the question of how to measure individual mental development in the workplace. It includes not only the two aspects of vitality and learning in the definition of thriving at work, but also emphasizes that both aspects must exist at the same time. Employees are thriving only when employees experience the vitality and learning at the same time, prosperous. Only one of them does not meet the criteria for thriving. If neither experience, the employees are in a state of Languishing.

The construct of thriving at work has integrated the development of positive organizational management theory to a certain extent. For example, the empirical research by Paterson & Luthans (2014) not only distinguishes the similarities and differences between psychological capital and thriving at work, but also confirms the relationship between them

through empirical research, which means it gradually become a hot spot in the field of positive organization management.

The concept of thriving work which includes two dimensions of vitality and learning is based on three reasons. Firstly, vitality and learning respectively reflect the emotional and cognitive aspects of the psychological development of subjective experience. Specifically, vitality reflects the emotional aspect, and learning reflects the cognitive aspect. Secondly, vitality and learning reflect the two basic psychological development viewpoints of hedonic and Eudaimonic respectively. Hedonism emphasizes the individual's experience of finding happiness, which is reflected in vitality. Eudaimonism emphasizes that individuals seek to realize their potential through learning. These two kinds of views also constitute two kinds of well-being in positive psychology including subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Thirdly, a large number of interviews show that vitality and learning are the basic requirements of the psychological development process in the qualitative study of thriving at work.

Although thriving at work and the prosperity of other disciplines are studied as a Reflective construct, the two-dimensional definition of thriving at work has been greatly recognized by other researchers compared with the definition, content and dimension of the prosperity of other disciplines. It is also related to the scientific of Spreitzer's definition of thriving at work. Spreitzer et al. (2004) summarized individual thriving in the workplace, defined thriving as the growth of positive mental capacity, and believed that this growth in the workplace would produce positive results, mainly in terms of vitality and complexity. Vitality is reflected in positive emotions, and complexity is reflected in the integration and growth of personal cognition.

In subsequent studies, Spreitzer defined thriving at work as a community experience of vitality and learning, and most of the current studies basically follow Spreitzer's conceptual definition of two dimensions of activity and learning.The definition of thriving at work includes not only the two dimensions of vitality and learning, but also the existence of these two dimensions at the same time. This makes the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work more important for research. And it may cause employees to make certain differences in the experience of thriving in different social and cultural contexts.

Chinese scholars have begun to study thriving at work based on it can effectively measure the subjective state of employees. Han Yi et al. (2013) and Zheng Xiaoming et al. (2013) published for the work of prosperous literature review research papers almost simultaneously and began the corresponding research in China. But overall, it is still in the initial stage. Therefore, the adaptability of the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work needs to be determined by corresponding exploratory research in the Chinese context despite it has been unanimously recognized by Western scholars. In particular, employees in the Chinese

context are influenced by collectivism and have a greater impact on the influence of Western individualism. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the employees how to understand the vitality and learning and to verify the applicability of the two-dimensional structure in the Chinese context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Exploratory research belongs to the pilot study, which is the beginning of the study. It obtains the basic cognition of the research content to better define the research problems, provide direction and support for the follow-up empirical research, and prevent the follow-up research from deviating greatly.

Therefore, this study conducts exploratory research to verify the applicability of the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work in the Chinese context. The exploratory research collects the understanding of employees with different industry backgrounds and organizational environments on the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work through personal interview, focus group and open questionnaire.

Personal Interview

Personal interview is a method of data collection that is often used in qualitative research, which can obtain rich descriptive data for the subjects studied, and the process of collecting data is also a process for researchers to continue to deepen their research. In addition, the analysis of the collected data can improve the applicability of the existing constructs, and it is also possible to discover new theories and new concepts through the analysis of the data, so it becomes an important supplementary method outside the empirical research despite it has some disadvantages such as small sample size, the collection process may be subjectively influenced by the interviewer, the controllability of the process is relatively low, and the causal relationship of the obtained data analysis results may be imprecise, and the time cost is high.

It is aimed at verifying the applicability of the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work rather than the discovery of new theories in this study. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are adopted in order to ensure the consistency of data collection process in personal interview and reduce the impact of researchers. Semi-structured interviews mainly refer to the preparation of relevant interview outlines for the information collected on research issues before interviews compared with free interviews. The relevant data of interviewees' attitudes and cognitions on research questions are obtained, which provides a basis for subsequent data analysis.

The study prepares an interview outline in the interview preparation stage, focusing on the constructive content of the two-dimensional structure in order to ensure the availability of valid data for personal interview. And the outline avoids hints in the expression to prevent limiting the thinking of the respondents and avoiding guided during the interview to improve the accuracy of the data.

The study selected a suitable interview space which would normally be conducted in a closed conference room to ensure the privacy of the interview space before the interview. In addition, the study sets up a small explanation to explain the purpose of the interview to ensure that the content is only used for academic research and to keep the results confidential without leaking the leadership of the employees, and having no direct impact on their performance. It is supplemented by a modest opening approach to reduce the concerns of respondents. Moreover, the study plans to record the interview content in order to ensure the authenticity of the data. Therefore, the respondent will also explain the possible recording situation and the guarantee that the academic research is not guaranteed to be leaked in the interview description. Moreover, the opinions of the respondents were respected, and the interview process was not recorded for the respondents who did not agree with the recording.

The interview outline is taken as the main line of the interview In the interview process. But in the specific communication, it adopt a way of not disturbing, not leading, and not interrupting, and the interviewees are allowed to express their true attitudes and views on the interview content as far as possible. And in the process of communication, the interview use some easy-to-understand oral language to ensure that interviewees can freely express. Therefore, it is basically controls between 40-60 minutes in the interview time in order to get the full results of the interviews and not let the interviewees feel bored.

Focus Group

Focus group is also a common method of data collection in exploratory research. Generally speaking, it is conducted by a well-trained moderator in the form of a symposium so that the participants in the group discussion can communicate and discuss the research topic, and then get the viewpoints on the research issues. And there is communication and discussion among the groups and even some point of view collision because there may be some content not involved in the personal interview which is an important supplement to the personal interview.

The role of the moderator is very important in the focus group because it is difficult to communicate and discuss in the form of a group. Firstly, the moderator need use communication and guidance technology to let the employees participating in the discussion and fully express each person's views and opinions about the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work. Secondly, the moderator need use process control technology to control the

process of discussion, and timely transform and adjust the discussion direction, so that communication can be effectively completed within a certain time. Finally, the moderator need use the listening and questioning techniques to grasp the true attitude and significance of the participants, and obtain rich discussion materials to supplement the data of personal interview.

Open Questionnaire

The study also uses an open questionnaire to collect and collect ideas from different industry backgrounds and organizational environments in addition to the collection of data through personal interview and focus group. Generally speaking, the questionnaire can be divided into closed questionnaire and open questionnaire. The shortcoming of the open questionnaire is that the structure is not strict, the collected data is difficult to be quantified and statistically analyzed, and the research object needs to have a certain ability to express words compared with the closed questionnaire. But it also has the advantage that it can conduct a wide range of topics and in-depth data collection for the research content. Therefore, it is often supplemented by other methods of data collection. So the study forms the content of the open questionnaire to carry out the research and collection of the questionnaire to further supplement the personal interviews and focus group based on the outline of the previous structured interviews

Interview outline and questionnaire content

According to the needs of exploratory research, the most important thing is to collect data on the attitude and opinions of adaptability of the two-dimensional structural of thriving at work in addition to interviews and demographic information. Therefore, the attitude and understanding of the research object on these issues will be strengthened to collect data in an all-round way in the design of the research outline. Moreover, in order to let the research object better understand the research outline, in the expression language, the difficult to understand academic concepts have been easily understood to avoid the lack of data or errors caused by incomprehension, and to ensure the research is correct.

It is the same interview outline for personal interview and focus group, but it is different of the communication process, especially focus group will be adjusted accordingly with the communication situation at that time. The content of the open questionnaire will be redesigned and the order of the interview outline will be adjusted to facilitate the research object to fill in so as to obtain sufficient research results on the basis of the interview outline and written writing habits. In addition, the basic population information is put at the end of the questionnaire in order to make the interviewees have less resistance psychology when filling in the questionnaire.

The main communication problems are:

1. How have you recently felt about your work status?

2. What kind of state do you think is thriving at work?

3. If you experience vitality and learning at work, at the same time, do you think this state is thriving at work? (If not, please tell us what you think?)

4. How is it in a state of experience of vitality?

5. How is it in a state of experience of learning?

Demographic Analysis

The study selects representative regions, industries and enterprise types during the exploratory research in order to obtain better interviews and open questionnaire data and ensure the authenticity and richness of the data, and then according to gender, age, educational background, length of service, job level and other conditions, select representative interviewees in these enterprises, as far as possible to avoid the impact of homogenization bias.

Demographic Analysis of Personal Interview

The study selects the research objects mainly through some consultation and cooperation to determine some enterprises in order to ensure the smooth progress of exploratory research. And there will be certain ice breaking communication activities to ensure personal interview successfully before the start of the study.

There were 19 enterprises in 8 cities in 6 provinces which were selected for individual interviews, and 32 effective subjects were ultimately determined through the interview willingness and interview process to conduct a certain combing and screening.

Among the interviewees of personal interview, In terms of gender, women accounted for 53.1%, which was higher than 46.9% of men. Overall, there was a reasonable gender distribution. In terms of age, 34.4% of the employees are born in 1990 and later, and 46.9% are born in 1980-1989. These two age groups together accounted for 84.3%, which is just the age of the traditional new generation of employees. So overall, the new generation of employees has become the main force in the workplace, and 9.4% are born in 1970-1979, 6.2% in 1960-1969 and 3.1% in 1959 and before. On the whole, the interviewees are mainly new generation employees, which accorded with the current age distribution of the workplace employees. In terms of education level, 21.9% of them are senior high school or below, 21.9% are junior college, 34.4% are undergraduate, 18.7% are master, 3.1% are doctor and above. Overall, there is a good coverage at all levels of education. In terms of working years, the proportion of employees who have worked for 1 years and below is 3.1%, 9.4% for 1-3 years, 15.6% for 3-5

years, 21.9% for 6-10 years and 50.0% for more than 10 years, and they will have a deeper understanding of the working conditions. In terms of duties, the general staff accounts for 34.4%, grassroots managers 21.9%, middle managers 18.7%, senior managers 12.5%, non-managerial technical experts 9.4%, for all levels of employees have a better distribution, but the general staff and grassroots managers account for the majority .In terms of company size, the number of people below 100 accounted for 34.4%, 101-200 accounted for 18.7%, 201-500 accounted for 21.9%, 501-1000 accounted for 9.4%, more than 1,000 accounted for 15.6%. The size distribution of other companies was relatively uniform except for a slightly larger proportion of small-scale companies below 100.

Table 1 Demographic variables of personal interview

content		quantity	proportion
gender	men	15	46.9%
	women	17	53.1%
age	1990 and later	11	34.4%
	1980-1989	15	46.9%
	1970-1979	3	9.4%
	1960-1969	2	6.2%
	1959 and before	1	3.1%
education level	senior high school or below	7	21.9%
	junior college	7	21.9%
	undergraduate	11	34.4%
	master	6	18.7%
	Doctor and above	1	3.1%
working years	1 years and below	1	3.1%
	1-3year	3	9.4%
	3-5year	5	15.6%
	6-10year	7	21.9%
	more than 10 years	16	50.0%
duties	the general staff	12	37.5%
	grassroots managers	7	21.9%
	middle managers	6	18.7%
	senior managers	4	12.5%
	non-managerial technical experts	3	9.4%
company size	below 100	11	34.4%
	101-200	6	18.7%
	201-500	7	21.9%
	501-1000	3	9.4%
	more than 1,000	5	15.6%

Demographic Analysis of Focus Group

In the focus group, the research invited 11 employees in a manufacturing company, including 1 department manager, 2 supervisors and 8 grassroots employees to brainstorm the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work in a manufacturing enterprise, which is a good complement to individual interviews.

Demographic Analysis of Open Questionnaire

In order to further supplement the content of the study, the open questionnaire was distributed among the on-the-job students of the Open University and MBA in addition to the enterprises mentioned above, so as to further increase the sample size and representativeness. A total of 80 open questionnaires were received and 76 were recovered. Among them, a total of 62 valid questionnaires were completed, with an effective rate of 77.5%.

Among the interviewees of personal interview, In terms of gender, women accounted for 54.8%, which was higher than 45.2% of men, and has a reasonable distribution in gender. In terms of age, 53.2% of the employees are born in 1990 and later, and 37.1% are born in 1980-1989. These two age groups together accounted for 80.3%, which is just the age of the traditional new generation of employees. On the one hand, the new generation of employees have a stronger demand for learning, so they will continue to improve their academic qualifications. On the other hand, it also shows that the new generation of employees has become the main force in the workplace. Then 9.7% are born in 1970-1979, and the older employees are not involved in this survey. As a whole, the interviewees are mainly based on the new generation of employees, which is also in line with the current distribution of the age of the workplace staff. In terms of education level, 4.9% of them are senior high school or below, 40.3% are junior college, 51.6% are undergraduate, 3.2% are master, and no doctor and above. Overall, the proportion of undergraduate and specialist is the largest. In terms of working years, the proportion of working years is 4.8%, 33.9% in 1-3 years, 16.1% in 3-5 years, 24.2% in 6-10 years, and 21.0% in 10 years. On the whole, there is a better distribution in terms of working years. In terms of duties, the general staff accounted for 50.0%, grass-roots managers accounted for 27.4%, middle-level managers accounted for 11.3%, senior managers accounted for 3.2%, non-management technical experts accounted for 8.1%. The overall distribution is still dominated by general employees and grassroots managers. In terms of company size, the number of people below 100 accounted for 30.6%, 101-200 accounted for 25.8%, 201-500 accounted for 19.4%, 501-1000 accounted for 8.1%, more than 1000 accounted for 16.1%, overall, the proportion of small-scale enterprises is relatively large.

Table 2 Demographic variables of open questionnaire

content		Quantity	proportion
gender	men	28	45.2%
	women	34	54.8%
age	1990 and later	33	53.2%
	1980-1989	23	37.1%
	1970-1979	6	9.7%
	1960-1969	0	0.0%
	1959 and before	0	0.0%
education level	senior high school or below	3	4.9%
	junior college	25	40.3%
	undergraduate	32	51.6%
	master	2	3.2%
	Doctor and above	0	0.0%
working years	1 years and below	3	4.8%
	1-3year	21	33.9%
	3-5year	10	16.1%
	6-10year	15	24.2%
	more than 10 years	13	21.0%
duties	the general staff	31	50.0%
	grassroots managers	17	27.4%
	middle managers	7	11.3%
	senior managers	2	3.2%
	non-managerial technical experts	5	8.1%
company size	below 100	19	30.6%
	101-200	16	25.8%
	201-500	12	19.4%
	501-1000	5	8.1%
	more than 1,000	10	16.1%

Data analysis Process

The study began to collect and analyze the collected data after the exploratory research of personal interview, focus group and open questionnaires. The summary and analysis of data is also one of the processes of exploratory research. It is helpful to integrate the data obtained by the three ways of exploratory research as a whole, so as to form a systematic understanding and mastery. The data collection and analysis of the study are mainly carried out in three steps: Firstly, the study organizes the data and recordings of recording personal interview and focus group to form a comprehensive and complete interview. The process of sorting out is mainly for some incomplete links in the on-the-spot records, as well as some of the interviewees' words

that are too colloquial and do not have much meaning. The recording will be re-listened for further content supplementary collation if so at the time of sorting.

Secondly, the study sorts out the contents of the open questionnaire collected and divides into two equals. Half of the questionnaires were aggregated with individual interviews and group discussions to meet the purpose and needs of exploratory research. The other half was used as a theoretical saturation test.

Finally, the study uses ATLAS software to encode and analyze the data according to the dimensions of the research construct, and classify the coded content according to different themes for exploratory research to test the adaptability of the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work in China based on the data of the interview and open questionnaire.

FINDINGS

In the interview content, many of the interviewees' answers reflect both two-dimensional structure of vitality and learning through the question: What kind of state do you think is thriving at work? As the interviewees said:

"Thriving at work is, on the one hand, a good mentality, always maintain vitality, positive work. On the other hand, it is the ability to be strong, you can complete the work, and will learn when experiencing difficulties. "

"I feel that thriving at work is that I am very happy to work, I am very willing to work and feel vitality, and then I can let myself learn something at work. There was a period of time before, and I felt that time passed. Then, after returning home, I will still think about work, and I will look forward to coming to the company to solve this problem. In this case, it is also the fastest growing."

"I feel that a good working condition must be a state in which I can continue to learn at work because I haven't graduated for a long time. I will be more energetic and vitality only by constantly learning and continue to improve my abilities. "

There are also interviewees who talk about other factors that may be attributed to behavior and outcomes in addition to experience vitality and learning, such as "a good work state is a state of spiritual renewal and positive progress; an active completion in action." At present, we should try our best to perfect the work and make some contributions to the company. "In the positive working state, feel that the work is very efficient, and there will be better results."

On the whole, the content of most interviewees can be classified into the vitality of emotional factors and the learning of cognitive factors. Moreover, a targeted question is asked about the interviewee: If you feel very energetic at work, and at the same time you will feel that you will continue to learn and progress, do you think this state is thriving at work? All the interviewees

agreed that such a state is thriving at work, and when summarizing the content in front of the interviewee, most interviewees also believe that the content of their own speech contains vitality and learning, and recognize the use of vitality and learning to define thriving at work.

In addition, the follow-up interviewees also provided more detailed content when expressing the feelings and experiences of the two-dimensional structure of vitality and learning of thriving at work. For example, in terms of vitality, some interviewers said: "I feel that there is vitality and happiness in the work. It is the most important thing. It is like what is mentioned in TVB. The most important thing is to be happy. Anyway, the most basic work I have now. The requirement is to be happy. I feel that the job is more meaningful, that is vitality. If a job is not happy, it is the same as going to work every day, then I would rather not do it." "Good work, I must be feel vitality. I used to work in a hometown in the Northeast, and I was in a state-owned enterprise. Every day, I was really awkward, and I didn't have any work at all. So, I came to Shanghai later, and I went to work every day. There is strength, because the job is to pursue it together. Of course, in Shanghai, the pressure is quite big compared to the home, not to mention anything else, just the house, and sometimes think about it. But anyway, With pressure, we must work harder." "I feel that a good working condition is that I will be put into work and will not feel tired. Moreover, I will not feel tired instead of very happy and vitality when I face difficulties. "

In terms of learning, some interviewers believe that: "thriving at work must be to let them continue to learn, because the pace of work is getting faster and faster, so we must continue to study at work so that we do not stop the development and progress, otherwise, it will be eliminated by the times." "When I am thriving at work, I will always work very hard, and at the end I will feel that I have made great progress. It has been very well developed." "Our work, there are still a lot of new things, we need to continue to learn. Only learning can let them successfully complete some new work tasks, and they can feel thriving at work. Very good, that is, I feel that the work you are talking about is thriving."

It was found that personal interview and focus group has a certain theoretical saturation and basically consistent with the content of open questionnaires after the analysis. In addition, it will also be found that the content of thriving at work is mainly concentrated in the two aspects of vitality and learning through the collation of open questionnaires. But there are some differences in the specific expression words. For example, in terms of vitality, the forms that are similar to their expressions are: feeling full of energy, happy mood, high efficiency, daily full of energy, facing a new day, like playing chicken blood, the whole person maintaining a state of mind and this state of vitality can sometimes penetrate into life outside of work etc. In terms of learning, some close expressions include: hard work and study, continuous improvement of one's ability

and level, ability to promote their own ability, personal sense of accomplishment, ability to improve themselves and improve work efficiency etc.

CONCLUSION

The study analyzes the two-dimensional structure of the vitality and learning based on the definition and theoretical development of thriving at work. It is used exploratory research to verify the applicability of the two-dimensional structure of thriving at work through personal interview, focus group and open questionnaire in the Chinese context. And the result shows that the two dimensions of vitality and learning can also reflect thriving at work in China. The results of this study provide the basis for further research on the subsequent research of thriving at work in China.

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