Article

Influence of Paternalistic Leadership on Employee Innovation Behavior and New Venture Performance: The Moderating Role of Leader Humility

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Abstract: This study examines how paternalistic leadership in new ventures influences employee innovation behavior and new venture performance. Three dimensions of paternalistic leadership in leader humility have a positive moderating effect on employee innovation behavior. To this end, we proposed and tested the supporting roles of the social cognition theory, social exchange theory, social learning theory, and interpersonal attraction theory. A total of 248 valid questionnaires were collected through a professional survey company for analysis, which revealed that among the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership, benevolent leadership and moral leadership both have a positive impact on employee innovation behavior and new venture performance, while authoritarian leadership has a negative impact. We also discovered that leader humility plays a significantly positive role in moderating the influence of authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership on employee innovation behavior. The results demonstrate that paternalistic leaders increase their effectiveness by maintaining humility as a management strategy, creating a superior, innovative atmosphere, and contributing to the progress of employee innovation behavior.

Keywords: paternalistic leadership; employee innovation behavior; leader humility

1. Introduction

New ventures are often characterized by a strong atmosphere of "mass entrepreneurship and innovation" and strong innovation ability. New ventures can not only accelerate the transformation of technological achievements but also accelerate the efficiency of technological innovation. The core of its development lies in innovation. Innovation is based on people. If new ventures want to strengthen innovation and achieve breakthroughs, they cannot do without talents with innovation ability. Although it is a shortcut to attract talents from the outside, the key point is to cultivate innovative talents and motivate employees to have spontaneous innovation behaviors in order to gain advantages in long-term competition in the future, which are closely related to new venture leaders [1]. Paternalistic leadership as a local extension of China's leadership style was officially put forward in the 1990s but in the history of the continuous precipitation and development of most Chinese characteristics of leadership style. Compared to other leadership styles, paternalistic leadership is more complex. It treats employees with authority and kindness and, at the same time, has a high degree of morality [2], thus differentiating into three different dimensions, including authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership [3–5].

Different characteristics will produce different chemical reactions in employees. Leaders' decisions, cognition, and even their words and actions all affect the production of employees' innovation behaviors [6]. It is worth exploring how paternalistic leadership can affect employees in new ventures, whether it can stimulate employees' independent innovation, whether it is beneficial to enterprises to cultivate innovative talents more in line with enterprise operation, and whether it can then affect the future development of the whole enterprise and substantially improve new venture performance.

As for the new venture, the entrepreneur, as the leader of the enterprise, should not only build a platform for the employees but also provide the soil for the employees to innovate. However, unlike mature enterprises, the information and resources at the disposal of new ventures are limited [7]. For employees to carry out innovative activities, they not only need to spend a lot of energy and time to come up with new ideas, but they also need leaders to invest resources into putting them into practice [1]. Leaders and employees not only have to bear the risk of failure but also the pressure caused by the contradiction between limited resources and the necessity of innovation. Leaders should not only inspire employees to innovate but also influence employees not to be afraid of failure and to have the courage to take risks in the face of failure. The nature of paternalistic leadership determines that it will not communicate with employees on an equal footing, which will also strengthen employees' fear of innovation. Therefore, for the leader, how to alleviate this fear and how to create a better platform for employees to take innovation as a habit and responsibility has become a problem to be solved. In the process of the leader promoting employee innovation, the leader and the employee will inevitably have a corresponding interpersonal relationship. In the study of interpersonal attraction, there is a view that individuals' behaviors will be different in different situations. The emotional affinity of individuals [8] is the result of the integration and processing of the social information displayed by the individuals themselves, others, and the external environment [9]. As a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation, humility also plays a certain role in interpersonal communication. Scholars believe that humility is a plasticity trait that individuals can develop and subjectively decide based on their own life experience, and leaders can decide when and where to show humility [10]. Humility becomes an effective interpersonal tool to help the leader achieve his or her goals. Can this kind of leader humility play a moderating role in the influence of paternalistic leadership on employees' innovative behavior?

Despite paternalistic leadership having been widely studied by scholars, the influence of Chinese paternalistic leadership on employee innovation behavior has also been the subject of quite a few scholars' deconstructions. However, scholars have focused on exploring the inner mechanisms of paternalistic leadership behavior, which ignores the differences in the external environment in which paternalistic leadership can operate and its effectiveness in that environment. In the context of relatively limited information and resources in new ventures, the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership needs more verification and deconstruction. In addition, in the highly innovative environment of new ventures, employee innovation is regarded as the core force of innovation, and encouraging employee innovation may conflict with the authority inherent in paternalistic leadership. The key point to solving this contradiction has been ignored for a long time. Compared with modifying the management model, whether using some interpersonal skills can achieve twice the result with half the effort needs further exploration and research.

In order to solve the above problems, based on the social learning theory, social exchange theory, and interpersonal attraction theory, this paper discusses the relationship between paternalistic leadership, employee innovation behavior, and new venture performance and mainly discusses the moderating effect of leader humility on paternalistic leadership and employee innovation behavior. On this basis, the structural models of paternalistic leadership, leader humility, employee innovation behavior, and new venture performance are constructed. In contrast to mature enterprises across levels of research, in new ventures, there is no obvious structure of enterprise, and what we do to enrich this context is provide a relevant study of paternalistic leadership that, at the same time, reveals the leadership humility behavior as interpersonal communication auxiliary "props" and a feasible "black box" for new leaders and enterprise daily management to provide some references and guidance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Paternalistic Leadership

Silin was the first scholar to discuss paternalistic management [11]. Silin considered the leaders of Chinese social organizations to be radically different, laying the foundation for the subsequent proposal of the paternalistic leadership concept and the proliferation of relevant studies, although that concept was not explicitly mentioned. Later, Redding pointed out that there is a marked heterogeneity between Chinese and Western economic cultures and named it "Chinese capitalism", of which paternalism is regarded as a remarkably unique representative [5]. He also proposed the concept of benevolent leadership and the tendency of the "rule of man". He argued that leaders, while authoritative, also care for and attend to their employees like parents, albeit to varying degrees and using various methods depending on the specific employee scenarios. On the basis of what was discovered by Silin and Redding, Westwood posited that authoritarian leadership is common in Chinese companies and that authoritarian and dictatorial leadership styles are highly accepted in Eastern culture [3]. On this basis, Zheng presented a dual theory of paternalistic leadership, namely, being authoritative and benevolent, for which extensive and incisive explanations were provided [2]. Farh and Cheng, together with Zheng, expanded the theory by proposing a new connotation of paternalistic leadership [2]. With the original theoretical connotation as the core, they integrated moral leadership into paternalistic leadership. That is, after establishing a ternary theory of paternalistic leadership, a complete theory of paternalistic leadership was constructed. Subsequently, several companies at home and abroad adopted this theory in their business practices, providing a wealth of practical support to verify the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership.

Among the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership, authoritarian leadership is the most commonly used style by Chinese companies, in which leaders act as the head of the family or the father of the organization, manifested through their exhibition of authority and majesty, requiring subordinates to demonstrate loyalty and obedience like sons, and establishing a clear hierarchical relationship between leaders and subordinates. Benevolent leadership reflects the tendency toward the "rule of man". In other words, while leaders have exclusive power, they will also show meticulous care and care for their employees like their parents, but they are not equally treated, and there will be obvious selectivity. Moral leadership crystallizes the management concepts of the rule of virtue, model, ritual, and man in the Confucian tradition. It is expressed as a common expectation of leaders and subordinates; that is, leaders' exhibition of moral conduct and ethics is a prerequisite for subordinates truly obeying leadership.

In existing studies, we also found that some leadership styles were similar to the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership, such as abusive supervision, servant leadership, and ethical leadership, and we could extract keywords similar to authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership. However, there are obvious differences.

Abusive supervision is described as "subordinates' perceptions of supervisors engaging in sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" [12]. For instance, a supervisor is rude to his or her subordinates, tells them their thoughts or feelings are stupid, gives the silent treatment, makes negative comments about the subordinate to others, and reminds the subordinate about past mistakes and failures. The adverse reaction is conveyed from a supervisor to his subordinate through disdain, rude words, frustration, and other indecent acts. Authoritarian leadership, however, emphasizes their authority and status in the organization and requires employees to obey their decisions [13,14]. This does not mean that authoritarian leaders will abuse or ignore employees in words or behaviors to achieve authority. Authoritarian leaders will keep their distance from employees to maintain their authority, which is more like being calm and unruly. Abusive supervision is a leadership behavior that is categorized as dysfunctional. This negatively affects its targets and the organization as a whole. Although authoritarian leadership may also have negative effects on employees and corporate performance, we believe that such negative effects can be improved, which is also one of the purposes of this

study, to explore the limits of the negative effects of authoritarian leadership and better understand the connotation and behavior of authoritarian leadership.

Since both servant leadership and benevolent leadership are characterized by caring for employees, they can be confused. However, servant leadership is different in meaning from benevolent leadership. Servant leadership is leadership oriented by others and gives priority to employees' interests [15]. Although benevolent leadership also shows care for employees' work and life [2], it can also identify employees' strengths, give them full trust and respect, and create a tolerant and positive corporate atmosphere. Employees will not be blamed for making mistakes at work, and they will even be given the opportunity to try and make mistakes, as well as be provided with opportunities for growth and good development [16].

In addition, the connotations of ethical leadership and moral leadership can be confused. Ethical leaders are fair, trustworthy, and honest and follow an ethical decision-making process [17]. They practice moral management and encourage their followers to act morally [18]. Similarly to moral leadership, they seek both fairness and justice to make employees have a better sense of morality and practice this sense of morality at work. However, moral leaders also believe that leaders should be role models for employees in order to truly influence their work behaviors and habits [2]. Ethical leadership, on the other hand, focuses less on encouragement and more on earning employees' trust with their own behavior.

The most important point is that paternalistic leadership is a relatively complex leadership style. Although it is divided into three dimensions according to behavioral characteristics, there will be a fusion of different dimensions in practice, which is one of the reasons why we pay attention to this leadership style. We believe that deconstructing paternalistic leadership thoroughly will help leaders understand their leadership mode. It provides a foundation for better leadership.

2.2. Employee Innovation Behavior

The employee innovation behavior model is a kind of activity stage model. The most commonly used activity stage model divides employee innovation behavior into three stages: the creation, promotion, and implementation of innovation. Scott and Bruce argued that employee innovation behavior is a multistage process in which an individual recognizes a problem for which he or she generates new ideas and solutions, builds support by constructing an innovative prototype or model, and then produces commercialized products or services [1]. Based on Scott and Bruce's three-stage model, Carmeli and Schaubroeck defined innovative behavior as the whole process in which an individual discovers a problem, proposes a new idea or solution, seeks support, and promotes and implements the new idea in the organization [19]. Shin and several scholars defined innovation behavior as the process of developing, adopting, and implementing new products or working methods in an organization [20]. Employee character [21], thinking patterns [22], organizational culture [23], leadership style [18,24], and many other factors have all been proven to affect employee innovation behavior.

2.3. Leader Humility

At present, most academic writing in the management field approaches leader humility from a leadership stance; that is, leader humility research mainly focuses on leadership by underscoring the role of leaders in an organization. The concept of leader humility is essentially derived from the concept of humility, on the basis of which we can further probe strategic choices. Owens, Johnson, and Mitchell conceptualized humility as an interpersonal trait that can be evaluated by others in interpersonal communication [25]. According to the perspective of humility behavior, there are three characteristics of leader humility: sincere appreciation of others, recognition of their strengths and contributions, and the ability to learn from others conscientiously [26]. Furthermore, humility is considered a variable quality that can be subjectively developed and determined by individuals based on their

life experience [10]. As an incremental trait [27], humility is not only a personality trait and virtue for leaders but also a strategic choice, which means that leaders can selectively exhibit humility according to the specific situation to achieve the desired result. An increasing number of scholars believe that humility is compatible with strong and effective leadership [28,29]. Leaders showcasing humility in an organization is a key advantage in daily management, whereas a lack of humility is a dangerous disadvantage [30]. Collins pointed out that only the combination of high-level professionalism and humility can give birth to the most effective and advanced leadership style [31]. Weick found that the most effective way for leaders to cope with an unknowable and unpredictable organizational environment is to remain humble [32]. Leaders with humility also help to elevate the empowerment climate and integrate the executive team more closely [33], thus creating collective humility in the team and improving team performance [34]. From an individual perspective, leader humility also affects employees positively in many aspects, such as their self-development, autonomy, relationships [35], employee satisfaction, work engagement [25], and individual performance [10].

3. Theoretical Model and Research Hypothesis

According to the upper echelons theory and social exchange theory, paternalistic leaders in new ventures usually stand from their own perspectives to judge the current difficulties and challenges faced by the company and finally formulate a development strategy for the company and influence individuals in the organization based on the leaders' personal traits [36]. For new ventures that regard innovation as their core competitiveness, leaders will use their personal traits to generate employee innovation behavior. When employees feel the positive influence of leaders, they are more inclined to exhibit positive work behavior and attitude, and their innovation potential is stimulated. Leadership style, as a mirror of leaders' personality traits, is difficult to alter and also somewhat persistent [37], which means that there are limits to the level of leadership effectiveness that can be exerted under paternalistic leadership. On the premise that it is not easy to change leadership style, leaders can choose to add leadership characteristics and select learnable leadership skills to make their leadership more effective and thereby overcome management limitations. As a variable characteristic [27] that leaders can subjectively select and develop [10], leader humility can be used as a strategic skill to enable leaders to surmount management limitations. At the same time, according to the cognitive evaluation theory, the environment, individual cognition, and behavior jointly determine the specific emotions of a person and the results of each emotion. Leader humility creates a collective humility climate in an enterprise [34] and makes an organization more integrated [33], thus increasing employee enthusiasm for innovation. Frequent employee innovation behavior also creates a more suitable environment for innovation, thus forming a virtuous circle that is conducive to the advancement of new ventures.From this, we construct the theoretical model as shown in Figure 1.
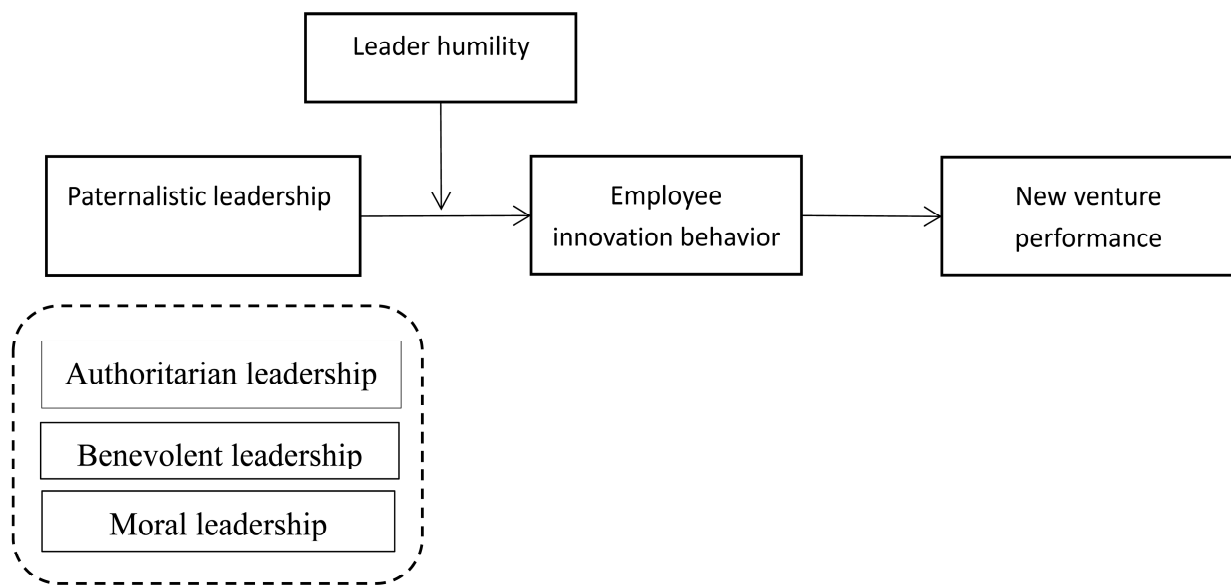
Figure 1. The theoretical model.

3.1. Paternalistic Leadership and Firm Performance

A country's culture will affect all aspects of society and life, as well as individual behavior and habits. The huge cultural differences between China and the West will also create completely different leadership styles. Paternalistic leadership is a leadership style widely found in Chinese social organizations in China and even around the world. In other words, leaders unconsciously play the role of parents and show paternal love and majesty in the process of staff management [2]. Paternalistic leadership, according to scholars, has three distinct dimensions: benevolent leadership, authoritarian leadership, and moral leadership [3–5]. Among them, authoritarian leadership has a strong desire for control and tends to demand absolute obedience from employees to reflect their absolute authority. Based on the theory of social exchange, low-quality exchange relations will only enable both parties to achieve economic exchange without bringing additional resources to organizations or individuals [13]. As a result, in addition to the dictatorship and power of the leader, employees tend to follow the leader's decisions step by step and obey the leader's command [13,14]. Leaders of newly established enterprises engaged in highly innovative projects may not necessarily have technological advantages compared to employees, but they usually start their business with the support of information and resources they can control. Absolute information and resource advantages will strengthen their control over information and resources and magnify their tendency to monopolize power. This leadership style can greatly reduce the enthusiasm and motivation of employees. In such an unequal corporate atmosphere, the realization of new venture performance depends on the correctness of leaders' decisions, which virtually increases the risk of stable enterprise development and the difficulty of achieving growth in new venture performance, as well as the innovation cost. Therefore, we believe that

H1: *In new ventures, authoritarian leadership has a negative impact on firm performance.*

Different from authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership will give comprehensive family-like concern to employees from individual to family and from work to life [2]. At the same time, benevolent leadership can also identify the advantages of employees, give them full trust and respect, and create a tolerant and positive enterprise atmosphere. Employees will not be blamed for making mistakes at work and will even be given the opportunity to try and make mistakes so that they can get the opportunity to grow and develop well [18]. According to the principle of reciprocity in interpersonal relationships, when individuals receive kindness or help from another party, they are more inclined to

give positive feedback of equal value to the other party. Therefore, on the premise that employees feel respected and valued, in return, they will be more loyal to the leader and more active, committed, and dedicated to their work. The social exchange theory believes that long-term reciprocity can promote both parties to establish a more stable exchange relation [13,38]. In addition to promoting employees to actively complete their work and achieve the expected goals of leaders [39], they are also more willing to dedicate themselves to doing any work other than the daily tasks beneficial to the enterprise so as to promote the improvement of new venture performance. Therefore, we believe that

H2: *In new ventures, benevolent leadership has a positive impact on firm performance.*

Different from the strictness of authoritarian leadership and the help provided by benevolent leadership, moral leadership is more practical, and leaders treat people equally and have strict demands for themselves, hoping to influence employees' working attitudes and behavior habits through their high morals and professionalism [2]. According to the social learning theory, the behavioral style of the core person in an organization will have a great influence on the behavioral style of other individuals in the organization [13]. Moral leaders' dedication, high professionalism, and high moral sense will be imitated by employees unconsciously, which will not only improve the work efficiency of employees but also make them more self-disciplined and focused on high moral sense. The equal treatment of virtuous leaders also makes employees trust leaders more [40] and have a greater sense of responsibility and collective honor. This responsibility not only encourages employees to dedicate themselves to their work but also motivates them to make additional contributions to the development of the enterprise, thus having a positive impact on the new venture performance. Therefore, we believe that

H3: *In new ventures, moral leadership has a positive impact on firm performance.*

3.2. The Mediating Role of Employee Innovation Behavior

Most of the new ventures make profits through the transformation of technological achievements. Innovation is indispensable to the improvement of new venture performance, whether it is the technological research and development by itself or the transformation of achievements through the purchase of patents. The core of innovation is people, that is, the employees of a new venture. Only when employees take the initiative to innovate can they achieve the ultimate breakthrough in innovation, create unique products, improve the competitiveness of products and enterprises, and naturally achieve the continuous improvement of new venture performance.

Employee innovation behavior is not only a process of generating new ideas, which is only the starting point of innovation [41]. Employee innovation behavior also includes the implementation and application of ideas [1]. This process is complicated, which is not only a challenge for employees themselves but also requires external resources to support employee innovation. Compared with mature enterprises, new ventures are small in scale and simple in structure, so entrepreneurs, as leaders, not only have more centralized responsibilities but also have the right to independently establish corporate goals [42]. At the same time, they also control the resources of the enterprise, and therefore the leader is regarded as a key factor influencing employees [43,44] and the main impetus to promote employee innovation behavior. According to the social learning theory, people can learn different behaviors through observation, and corporate leaders should consciously become role models to drive employees' enthusiasm for work and guide them to show their target behaviors. Paternalistic leadership, as a diversified leadership style with Chinese characteristics, has different influences on employee innovation behaviors.

Authoritarian leadership emphasizes the absolute authority of leaders, which is reflected in the deterrence and control of employees and requires employees to obey them unconditionally [45]. It is manifested in the reluctance to authorize, the strict control of information, the disregard of employees' suggestions, and the derogation of employees'

contributions, as well as maintaining the dignity of leaders, setting high performance requirements for employees [40], and exercising strict supervision and control over subordinates at work. Authoritarian leadership will make employees subject to more control, and the organization will easily form an atmosphere of depression and fear of making mistakes [46,47], resulting in less room for free play. In order to show respect and obedience to the leader, employees do not easily improve their working methods or put forward innovative ideas openly [40].

Benevolent leaders regard their employees as family members and not only give them guidance and care in their work and lives but also help their subordinates solve pressing problems [40]. The kindness and caring of a benevolent leader will make employees grateful [48], make leaders and employees feel emotional ties, establish a high degree of trust, and foster a harmonious relationship [24]. At the same time, leaders show tolerance and encouragement to employees when they make mistakes. Employees will take the initiative to think creatively and put forward new ideas without worrying [49], thus promoting its various innovative activities.

Moral leadership is different from authoritative leadership and benevolent leadership, which emphasize that leaders set an example in moral norms [40,46]. Moral leadership can set an example, and employees will correspondingly identify with the values and goals of the organization, thus gaining recognition and imitation from subordinates [40]. Moral leaders listen to the opinion of their subordinates, the organization forms a sense of justice and virtue, leaders lead by example and attach great importance to the organization's benefit and the fair and just treatment of the employees' information, and employees form a strong sense of responsibility and show more innovation enthusiasm in order to realize their own value and continuously explore organizational goals.

H4: *Employee innovation behavior plays a mediating role between authoritarian leadership and firm performance.*

H5: *Employee innovation behavior plays a mediating role between benevolent leadership and firm performance.*

H6: *Employee innovation behavior plays an intermediary role in the relationship between moral leadership and firm performance.*

3.3. Moderating Effect of Leader Humility

Humility was originally defined as an interpersonal trait that can be evaluated by others in interpersonal communication [25]. According to the behavioral perspective of humility, there are three characteristics of individual humility: sincere appreciation of others, recognition of their advantages and contributions, and serious learning from others [26]. To put it simply, an individual's focus on themselves is changed to a focus on others. It is precisely this shift of focus that can bring great interpersonal benefits to individuals [50,51]. After further research on humility, the scholars found that humility is a variable trait with certain plasticity, "which can be developed and determined subjectively by individuals based on their life experience" [10]. Humility displayed by individuals is sometimes seen as a strategy of impression management and does not represent the true moral level within them [52]. According to the social learning theory, employees' enthusiasm for work can be driven by setting role models, and the interpersonal relationship between role models and employees will have an impact on employees' behaviors. Based on the reciprocity attraction law of interpersonal attraction, when others satisfy the individual's psychological sense of honor and worth, individuals are more likely to form intimate relationships with others through the reciprocity mechanism. As far as the leaders of new ventures are concerned, humility will prompt the leaders to recognize the advantages of employees and meet their needs. In addition, high-quality interpersonal relationships will be established between leaders and employees. When leaders take the lead in innovation, employees are more willing to devote themselves to work in order to achieve corporate goals [53], which will

undoubtedly stimulate employees' enthusiasm for innovation and make them more active in innovation activities. Through the social contagion mechanism [34], a collective learning environment is formed [54], and a cooperative atmosphere is created, oriented by team goals [55]. The interaction between employees will also create a high-quality innovation soil and lay a foundation for the continuation and development of employee innovation. According to the social exchange theory, when an individual gives a benefit to another party, the recipient will tend to give the same benefit back to the other party. In the process of innovation, it is difficult to be smooth, and employees are bound to face large and small challenges in the process. Therefore, employees should not only have knowledge and initiative for innovation but also have the courage and determination to face risks. A leader who is good at showing humility to employees can not only help employees grow and develop psychologically but also help employees solve problems in the process of individual development [56]. It can also help eliminate employees because of their lack of ability or resources brought about by uncertainty [56]. In addition, leaders make employees more trusting and confident in the face of difficulties and challenges arising from the innovation process, and when other people encounter difficulties, employees will help them solve difficult problems and trust the feedback of the leader. Therefore, an organizational atmosphere conducive to employee innovation will be formed, and employees will be more motivated to make more contributions and devote more enthusiasm to innovation in order to balance the exchange relationship with leaders. Therefore, we believe that

H7: *Leader humility can play a moderating role in the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee innovation behavior.*

H8: *Leader humility can play a moderating role in the relationship between benevolent leadership and employee innovation behavior.*

H9: *Leader humility can play a moderating role in the relationship between moral leadership and employee innovation behavior.*

4. Research Methods

4.1. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

In this paper, online surveys were issued to the employees of Chinese new ventures, and the relevant data were collected online using a professional questionnaire company. Respondents had worked for their company for more than six months. These employees were chosen because it takes time to recognize the traits of leaders and be affected by them. The final 248 questionnaires were adopted for data analysis and testing of the research hypotheses. In the sample, 56.85% of the employees were men and 43.15% were women. Regarding the age level, 63.31% were 20–30 years old, 30.24% were 30–40 years old, and 6.45% were over 40 years old. Regarding the educational level, the employees with a bachelor's degree represented 65.32% of the sample, and 34.68% had a master's degree.

4.2. Variable Measurement

Based on the literature review, all variables involved in this study have relatively mature scales. This article used a bidirectional translation method to translate the mature English scale of each variable into Chinese and revised the Chinese scale to align it with the objectives of this study. Finally, experts in related fields were consulted to readjust the scale, determine the final scale [57], and ensure its usability.

The scale for measuring paternalistic leadership refers to a study by Cheng, in which authoritarian leadership (for example, "my boss requires me to fully obey his/her instructions") is evaluated with nine items, benevolent leadership (for example, "in addition to work relations, my boss expresses concern for my daily life") with eleven items, and moral leadership (for example, "my boss does not take credit for my achievements and contributions") with six items [40]. The scale to measure leader humility comes from Owens, Johnson, and Mitchell, including a total of nine items [25]. The scale for measuring

employee innovation behavior was developed by Scott and Bruce and included a total of ten items [1]. The scale for measuring new venture performance comes from Covin and Slevin, including a total of seven items [58].

Employee innovation behavior is the process of generating new ideas to realize innovation, which requires the accumulation of knowledge and the ability to transform knowledge into action. This involves time as a guarantee. Therefore, this paper first chooses the age of the employees as a control variable. Additionally, the educational level of the employees reflects how much knowledge they have, so it is selected as another control variable. Furthermore, women and men have different sensitivities to new information, so gender is also chosen as a control variable.

5. Empirical Research

5.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To further test the structural validity and discriminative validity of the scales of the six variables, namely, authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, moral leadership, employee innovation behavior, leader humility, and new venture performance, this study performs confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS, as shown in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the benchmark model is the six-factor model proposed in this study, including authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, moral leadership, employee innovation behavior, leader humility, and new venture performance. Table 1 shows that, compared to other models, the six-factor model best fits the actual data, indicating that the variables have good discriminatory validity and are suitable for further correlation and regression analysis.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Competition Model.

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMR	RMSEA
6-factor model (BL; ML; AL; EIB; HL; NVP)	2.70	0.92	0.91	0.93	0.05
4-factor model (BL + ML + AL; EIB; HL; NVP)	3.49	0.75	0.77	0.87	0.06
3-factor model (BL + ML + AL; EIB + HL; NVP)	3.94	0.75	0.72	0.89	0.07
2-factor model (BL + ML + AL; EIB + HL + NVP)	4.35	0.66	0.60	0.52	0.09
1-factor model (BL + ML + AL + EIB + HL + NVP)	5.55	0.60	0.57	0.41	0.09

Note: EIB denotes employee innovation behavior, LH denotes leader humility, BL denotes benevolent leadership, AL denotes authoritarian leadership, ML denotes moral leadership, and NVP denotes new venture performance.

5.2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistical results of the variables and the correlation coefficients between the variables. Table 2 shows that all dimensions of paternalistic leadership have significant correlations with employee innovation behavior and new venture performance, among which benevolent leadership and moral leadership have a positive correlation with employee innovation behavior and new venture performance ($p < 0.01$), whereas authoritarian leadership has a negative correlation with employee innovation behavior and new venture performance ($p < 0.01$). Benevolent leadership and moral leadership have a positive correlation with leader humility ($p < 0.01$), whereas authoritarian leadership has a negative correlation with leader humility ($p < 0.01$). The above results preliminarily verify and support the hypothesis on the relationship between the variables in this paper.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Results of Variables and Correlation Coefficients Between Variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Gender	Age	Education	AL	BL	AL	LH	EIB	NVB
Gender	0.7	0.47	1								
Age	3.69	1.23	0.18	1							
Education	2.48	1.18	0.14	−0.10	1						
AL	4.69	1.34	−0.07	−0.10	−0.08	1					
BL	5.38	1.26	−0.00	−0.04	0.12	−0.58 **	1				
AL	4.84	0.92	0.05	−0.12	0.09	−0.54 **	0.59 **	1			
LH	3.03	1.23	0.04	0.07	−0.11	−0.33 **	0.33 **	0.39 **	1		
EIB	4.41	0.95	0.05	−0.03	0.17	−0.39 **	0.56 **	0.42 **	0.56 **	1	
NVP	4.06	0.98	−0.02	−0.07	0.14	−0.44 **	0.24 **	0.37 **	0.37 **	0.47 **	1

Note: EIB denotes employee innovation behavior, LH denotes leader humility, BL denotes benevolent leadership, AL denotes authoritarian leadership, AL denotes moral leadership, and NVP denotes new venture performance. ** $p < 0.01$.

5.3. Hypothesis Testing

To verify the hypothesis of the model, this paper adopts the hierarchical stepwise regression analysis method to establish the multiple regression equation. Table 3 shows the test results of the influence of authoritarian leadership and the mediating role of employee innovation behavior. The control variables in Model 1 include the gender, age, and educational level of the respondents. Model 2 adds the independent variables of authoritarian leadership on the basis of Model 1. The regression results suggest that authoritarian leadership has a significantly negative impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$), which verifies H1. Model 3 adds the independent variables of employee innovation behavior based on Model 2. The regression results suggest that authoritarian leadership does not have a significant impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = -0.19$, $p > 0.05$), but employee innovation behavior has a significant positive impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$). It can be seen that employee innovation behavior plays a partially mediating role in the relationship between authoritarian leadership and the performance of the new venture, which verifies H4.

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for testing mediation effect of employee innovation behavior.

Variable	BIE					New Venture Performance					
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Gender	0.16	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.04	−0.01	0.02	0.02
Age	−0.03	−0.03	−0.03	−0.01	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.08
Education	0.21	0.14	0.14	0.07	0.19	0.20	0.12	0.18	0.11	0.16	0.11
AL		−0.21 **				−0.32 ***	−0.19				
BL			0.62 **					0.45 ***	0.06		
ML				0.47 ***						0.41 ***	0.12
BIE							0.22 *		0.62 ***		0.61 ***
R^2	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.05	0.11	0.13	0.20	0.44	0.16	0.45
ΔR^2	0.07	0.02	0.05	0.08	0.04	0.10	0.11	0.19	0.43	0.15	0.44
F	7.07 **	2.53 **	4.57 **	6.01 **	4.28 **	7.51 **	7.23 **	15.19 **	38.03 **	11.57 **	39.60 **

Note: EIB denotes employee innovation behavior, BL denotes benevolent leadership, AL denotes authoritarian leadership, and ML denotes moral leadership. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Model 4 and Model 5 show the test results of the influence of benevolent leadership on the performance of the new venture and the mediating role of employee innovation

behavior. The control variables in Model 1 include the gender, age, and educational level of the respondents. Model 4 adds the independent variables of benevolent leadership on the basis of Model 1. The regression results suggest that benevolent leadership has a significantly positive impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), which verifies H2. Model 5 adds the independent variables of employee innovation behavior based on Model 4. The regression results suggest that benevolent leadership does not have a significant impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = 0.06$, $p > 0.05$), but employee innovation behavior has a significant positive impact on new venture performance ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). It can be seen that employee innovation behavior plays a partially mediating role in the relationship between benevolent leadership and new venture performance, which verifies H5.

Model 6 and Model 7 show the test results of the influence of moral leadership on the performance of the new venture and the mediating role of employee innovation behavior. The control variables in Model 1 include the gender, age, and educational level of the respondents. Model 6 adds the independent variables of moral leadership on the basis of Model 1. The regression results suggest that moral leadership has a significantly positive impact on the performance of the new venture ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), which verifies H3. Model 7 adds the independent variables of employee innovation behavior based on Model 6. The regression results suggest that moral leadership has no significant impact on new venture performance ($\beta = 0.12$, $p > 0.05$), but employee innovation behavior has a significant positive impact on new venture performance ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$). It can be seen that employee innovation behavior plays a partially mediating role in the relationship between moral leadership and the performance of the new venture, which verifies H6.

This study uses a hierarchical regression method to test the moderating effect of leader humility. To avoid multicollinearity among the variables, the independent and moderator variables are first decentralized, and then the product term is constructed before the test is performed. Specifically, the process is as follows: first, only the control variables are incorporated into the model; second, the independent variables of authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership and the moderating variable of leader humility are included in the model; and third, the interaction terms of authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, moral leadership, and leader humility are added to the model. Model 2 in Table 4 shows that authoritarian leadership has a significant negative impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$), and leader humility has a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$). Model 3 shows that the regression effect of the interaction elements (authoritarian leadership × leader humility) on employee innovation behavior is significantly negative ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that the higher the leader's humility, the less negative the impact of authoritarian leadership on employee innovation behavior is. Therefore, H7 is also verified.

Model 4 in Table 4 shows that benevolent leadership has a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$) and that leader humility has a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). Model 5 shows that the regression effect of the interaction items (benevolent leadership × leadership humility) on employee innovation behavior is significantly positive ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that the higher the leader's humility, the greater the positive effect of benevolent leadership on employees' innovation behavior. Therefore, H8 is also verified.

Model 6 in Table 4 shows that moral leadership has a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) and that leader humility has a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$). Model 7 shows that the regression effect of the interaction items (moral leadership × leadership humility) on employee innovation behavior is significantly positive ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that the higher the humility of the leader, the greater the positive effect of the moral leader on employee innovation behavior. Therefore, H9 is also verified.

Table 4. Regression for testing leader humility moderation effect on employee innovation behavior.

Variable	Employee Innovation Behavior						
	M1	M2	M3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7
Gender	0.16	0.09	0.12	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.06
Age	−0.03	−0.06	−0.06	−0.07	−0.12	−0.01	−0.02
Education	0.21	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.01	0.01
AL		−0.32 ***	−0.38 ***				
BL				0.22 ***	0.29 ***		
ML						0.39 ***	0.38 ***
LH		0.32 ***	0.30 ***	0.55 ***	0.52 ***	0.31 ***	0.33 ***
AL × LH			−0.12 **				
BL × LH					0.12 **		
ML × LH							0.13 **
R^2	0.08	0.11	0.18	0.61	0.62	0.23	0.24
ΔR^2	0.07	0.09	0.16	0.60	0.61	0.21	0.22
F	7.07 **	5.98 ***	8.82 ***	75.70 ***	65.54 ***	14.46 ***	12.68 ***

Note: LH denotes leader humility, BL denotes benevolent leadership, AL denotes authoritarian leadership, and ML denotes moral leadership. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

6. Conclusion and Enlightenment

Based on the social learning theory, social exchange theory, and interpersonal attraction theory, this paper investigates the impact of paternalistic leadership on new venture performance and examines the mediating role of employee innovation behavior and the moderating role of leadership humility between paternalistic leadership and employee innovation behavior. The results show that (1) benevolent leadership and moral leadership in paternalistic leadership have a significant positive impact on employee innovation behavior and the performance of the new venture and (2) authoritarian leadership has a significant negative impact on employee innovation behavior and the performance of the new venture. Second, benevolent leadership and moral leadership in paternalistic leadership can positively influence the performance of new ventures through the mediating effect of employee innovation behavior. Authoritarian leadership can negatively influence the performance of new ventures through the mediating effect of employee innovation behavior. Third, leadership humility positively moderates the impact of paternalistic leadership on employee innovation behavior.

6.1. Discussion of Research Results

6.1.1. Theoretical Contribution

Based on the upper echelons theory, social learning theory, social exchange theory, interpersonal attraction theory, and existing research literature, this paper discusses the influence of paternalistic leadership on new venture performance. The main theoretical contributions are as follows:

First, it enriched the research on the influence of leadership style on the performance of the new venture. Previous studies are mainly based on the social information theory to analyze the impact of other leadership styles on the performance of the new venture. This paper is based on the social exchange theory, social learning theory, and interpersonal attraction theory. It explores how paternalistic leadership, through the mediation mechanism of employee innovation behavior, influences new venture performance and humility to adjust the impact of paternalistic leadership on employee innovation behavior. This study not only confirms that employee innovation behavior is the key factor that influences the performance of the new venture but also explores the new venture's paternalistic leadership impact on employee innovative behavior. This paper further expands the research on paternalistic leadership in new ventures. Furthermore, the research results also enrich

the factors that influence employee innovation behavior, laying the foundation for related research.

Secondly, this paper enriches research on the impact of employee innovation behavior on new venture performance. The research results confirm not only the mechanism model of "leadership style—employee behavior—firm performance" proposed by scholars but also that the innovation behavior of employees is the main driving force behind the increase in new venture performance in innovation-centered new ventures, which is important guidance for enterprises to improve their competitiveness and achieve long-term development.

Finally, based on the social exchange theory and interpersonal attraction theory, we examine the moderating effect of leader humility on the influence of paternalistic leadership on employee innovation behavior. On the one hand, the results of the test help to reveal the "black box" of paternalistic leadership in the process of influencing employees' innovative behavior and explain which factors can effectively help paternalistic leadership to better motivate employee innovation behavior. The results not only help to better understand the internal factors of paternalistic leadership influencing employee innovation behavior in new ventures but also enrich the relevant research of the social exchange theory and interpersonal attraction theory and provide an important theoretical reference for guiding and encouraging employee innovation behavior.

6.1.2. Practical Enlightenment

First of all, in this paper, the results reveal that paternalistic leadership, as a kind of leadership style with Chinese characteristics, for a long time has been part of the culture of precipitation, and due to the effect of the environment, evolving leadership style, and its continued development, has unique characteristics and advantages, and its effects on new venture performance are more representative. Different from mature enterprises, new ventures do not have an obvious corporate structure and a mature management mode. Paternalistic leadership is more direct and central in new ventures than in mature enterprises. So managers of new ventures in the process of enterprise management should avoid dictatorship by focusing on the individuals, in addition to giving full trust and respect to employees when they encounter difficulties, and also set an example, allowing employees to follow it voluntarily. This is conducive to improving the performance and development of new ventures.

Secondly, this study reveals the mediating effect of employee innovation behavior on paternalistic leadership and the performance of new ventures. Therefore, paternalistic leadership can achieve the goal of improving the performance of the new ventures by stimulating employees' innovation behaviors. To be specific, paternalistic leadership in new ventures can shorten the distance between leaders and employees by weakening their own authority, caring for and helping employees, strengthening the bond between them, taking personal responsibility, and setting themselves as examples for employees to drive their enthusiasm for innovation behaviors.

In addition, this study found the moderating effect of leader humility on paternalistic leadership and employee innovation behavior. Therefore, in the process of communicating with employees, paternalistic leadership compensates for their own shortcomings by showing their humility and strengthening their own advantages so as to better stimulate the generation of innovation behaviors in employees. To be specific, the centralized style of authoritarian leadership may weaken employees' enthusiasm for work, not to mention their enthusiasm for innovation. By showing humility, authoritarian leadership can alleviate the distance between leaders and employees, treat work strictly, recognize employees' efforts, and alleviate the negative influence of authoritarian leadership. Benevolent and moral leadership creates an enterprise atmosphere for innovation and provides information for the staff and resources protection, on the basis of showing humility to meet employees' psychological sense of value, reciprocal close relationships with employees, forming core groups of employees, and promoting more enthusiasm for innovation behavior.

Of course, the emphasis on innovation is not limited to Chinese enterprises. It is particularly important for enterprises in all countries to stimulate employees' innovation behavior. We hope that this leadership model, stimulated by China's long-term cultural accumulation and historical precipitation, can be known to many scholars and enterprise leaders, who can learn excellent lessons from it and incorporate it into their practices. Through research, we can find that although some types of existing leadership styles are similar to the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership, paternalistic leadership is softer, which can discard the negative effects brought by some extreme behaviors and amplify some positive ones. This is also the part of paternalistic leadership that is worth studying and promoting.

6.2. Research Limitations and Future Prospects

Although some valuable research results have been obtained in this paper, there are still shortcomings. The following points can be improved in future research:

(1) Although the research results show that the influence of common method bias is not serious, the results may be subjective because employees participated in the self-report questionnaire. Future research can collect data in the form of mutual evaluation between individuals and leaders.

(2) In the research process, horizontal research is adopted to study the relationship between variables, ignoring changes in variables at different stages. In the future, we can add time data to describe the relationship between variables more precisely, making the research results more convincing.

(3) Although the number of effective samples in this survey met the basic requirements of empirical research, the sample size is still limited due to a lack of research time and experience. To further reduce the measurement bias caused by the subjective attitude of the surveyed personnel, the sample size can be appropriately enriched in future research.

The research on paternalistic leadership in this paper is mainly divided into three dimensions. However, as a whole, the manifestation of paternalistic leadership in reality is more complex. Therefore, we will explore more complex forms of paternalistic leadership manifestation in future research. We believe that the same person will behave differently in different environments. In the future, we will further refine the environmental classification to find the most suitable leadership style for different types of enterprises with different atmospheres of the enterprise. We will also use foreign enterprises as research objects to explore the universality of paternalistic leadership and effective methods to promote it. We believe that it will help enterprises continuously optimize the management level.

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