

# The Influence of the Matching of Leader's Authorization Behavior and Employee's Authorization Expectation on Employee's Active Behavior: Based on the Theory of Personal-Environmental Matching

Xiaotun Chen, Mimi Yin\*, Bingjie Yang

School of Economics and Management, Shaanxi University of Science and Technology, Xi'an, China  
Email: 631084045@qq.com, \*2423256082@qq.com, 3026030092@qq.com

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Based on the theory of personal-environment matching, from the perspective of matching a leader's authorization behavior with an employee's authorization expectation, this paper explores the question of when the authorization utility is maximized. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** Polynomial regression and response surface analysis were used to analyze the two-stage matching data of 45 leaders and 303 subordinates. **Findings:** It is found that when the leader's authorization behavior and the employee's authorization expectation are in "high-high" agreement, the employee's harmonious work passion and positive behavior are the highest, and harmonious work passion plays an intermediary role between the leader's authorization behavior and employee's authorization expectation and employee's positive behavior. **Practical Implications:** The findings provide a helpful reference for management practitioners on how to authorize better, stimulate employees' harmonious work passion, and promote employees' positive behaviors. **Originality/Value:** First, from the dual perspective of leaders and subordinates, comprehensively and dialectically analyzes how to maximize the effectiveness of authorization. Second, from the standpoint of positive emotion cognition, the emotional driving mechanism of an employee's positive behavior is demonstrated by matching the leader's authorized behavior with the employee's authorized expectations.

## Keywords

Leader's Authorization Behavior, Employee's Authorization Expectation,

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Harmonious Work Passion, Employee's Positive Behavior,  
Personal-Environment Matching Theory

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## 1. Introduction

Opportunities and challenges coexist in the growth of businesses in the VUCA era. We require dedicated individuals who can take the initiative to finish tasks and be accountable for the development of the organization in addition to knowledgeable and responsible leaders to make the organization run more smoothly and customers answer inquiries more quickly. In this situation, it is essential to encourage employees' passion for their work and to support their positive behavior by authorization.

A leader's authorization behavior refers to the behavior in which the leader grants power to subordinates so that employees can manage and make decisions independently (Arnold et al., 2000; Manz & Sims, 1991). Authorization can effectively stimulate internal motivation, shape subordinates' self-concept, and have a beneficial impact on their work behavior and creativity (Cheong et al., 2019; Konczak et al., 2000). However, in recent years, scholars have found that authorization is not "universal", and it will have adverse effects (Konczak et al., 2000). Over-authorization or under-authorization will lead to role conflict and misunderstanding among subordinates in the process of cognitive conversion, resulting in the exhaustion of emotional and mental resources and emotional exhaustion (Wang & Sun, 2019), the "empowerment" of the leader's delegation to his subordinates will also result in "burden" (Xiang et al., 2020). The inconsistency of the above research also fully shows that the effectiveness of leadership authorization has boundary conditions, and assignment does not exist in a vacuum. As the receiver of leadership authorization, subordinates will also impact the generation and implementation of leadership approval. In other words, in the process of approval, it is the interaction between leaders and subordinates that shapes the validity of the authorization. When implementing authorization, leaders should also consider the expectations of subordinates. It is incomplete to analyze the fact of approval only from the perspective of the leader's center, but the perspective of subordinates. It is to say, it needs to be analyzed from the dual perspective of leaders and subordinates, to explain when the effectiveness of authorization will be maximized.

Humborstad and Kuvaas put forward the concept of employee authorization expectation, which refers to the standard cognition of employees about the duties and obligations of leaders in the organization when they grant power (Humborstad, 2012). From the viewpoint of subordinates, this idea examines the duties and responsibilities of leaders during the delegating process (Yin et al., 2021). As a cognitive schema, employee authorization expectation is also a necessary reference standard for measuring the effectiveness of leadership empowerment; the point of empowerment depends on the consistency of evaluation scores be-

tween leadership empowerment behavior and employee empowerment expectation. The higher the consistency of evaluation scores, the more influential the authorization is.

The theory of person-environment fit P-E Fit is often used to explain the adaptability between the individual and the work environment when their characteristics match well (Cable & Derue, 2002). There are two types of matching: similar and complementary matching (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Cable presented a three-factor model of personal-environment matching and noted that value matching is primarily meant by similarity matching (P-V matching) (Cable & Derue, 2002), while complementary matching can be divided into demand-supply matching (N-S matching) and demand-ability matching (D-A matching) (Zhang et al., 2010). However, in the practice of management, the individual and the environment are not always matched. According to the different decks, there will be four combinations (high-high, low-low, high-low, low-high) in the double level, which means that the leader's authorization behavior is inconsistent with the employees' expectation of authorization. Therefore, this paper discusses the influence of different matching between leaders' authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation on personal work behavior.

Positive behavior (PB) is active and self-driven behavior taken by employees beyond their existing roles in a highly uncertain environment, characterized by innovation, innovation, and forward-looking (Parker et al., 2010). The positive emotions of individuals and the leadership behaviors in the organization are essential factors that influence the positive behaviors of employees (Parker & Collins, 2010). Work passion is a strong tendency for individuals to invest time and energy in work (Vallerand et al., 2003). Work passion can be categorized into two main types: obsessive type and harmonious type, depending on how each individual is motivated. The former internalizes external pressure, which will often lead to negative results, such as job burnout and pro-organizational immoral behavior (Kong, 2015; Li & Feng, 2017). The latter comes from one's deep love for work. It is a positive state of emotional cognition, which will produce positive results, such as promoting suggestions (Zhang et al., 2014). According to the theory of emotion, positive emotion can lead to an individual's continuous positive behavior. Based on this, we predict that harmonious work enthusiasm is more likely to trigger employees' positive behaviors than compulsive work enthusiasm. Therefore, it is the leading research content of this paper to analyze the influence of leaders' authorization behavior and employees' expectation of authorization on employees' positive behavior in different matching situations, and whether harmonious working passion can conduct influence leaders' authorization behavior and employee' authorization on employee' positive behavior.

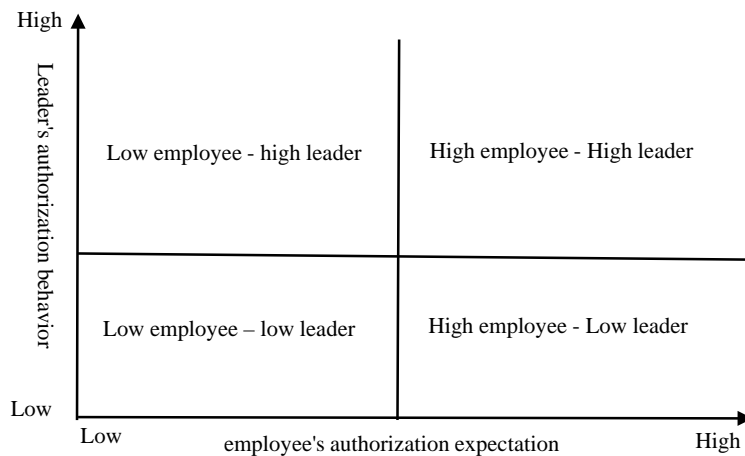
In China, influenced by the idea of harmonious management in traditional culture, organizations and individuals all hope to be consistent and compatible

with each other in terms of values, goals, missions, and visions, to achieve harmony inside and outside the organization (Cable & Derue, 2002; Zhang et al., 2010). This study will start from the dual perspective of leaders and subordinates, combine the theory of individual-environment matching, and adopt multiple regression and response surface methodology to analyze the impact of the matching of leaders' empowerment behavior and employees' empowerment expectations on harmonious work passion and initiative behavior. I hope to explain theoretically the reason why authorization is not universally applicable, and answer the question, "When will the effectiveness of authorization be maximized". It will also provide a useful reference for management practitioners on how to authorize better, stimulate employees' harmonious work passion, and promote employees' positive behaviors.

## 2. Theory and Hypothesis

### 2.1. Leadership Authorization Behavior and Employee Authorization Expectation and Their Matching

Leader's authorization behavior refers to the conduct of leaders delegating power to employees, encouraging subordinates to self-manage, and self-make decisions. Its core characteristic is to provide independent support for subordinates. Previous studies have pointed out that empowerment can improve subordinates' internal identity cognition and job involvement (Park et al., 2017), to enhance subordinates' work confidence and enhance their work performance (Hao, He, & Long, 2018; Singh & Sarkar, 2012). Employees' expectation of authorization refers to employees' cognition of leaders' responsibilities and obligations during authorization. The personal cognitive model defines the behavior that leaders should show in their relationship with employees (Yin et al., 2021). Further, when, why, and how do employees expect leaders to delegate. Personal-environment matching theory points out that when the leader's behavior in subordinates' cognitive schema is consistent with the leader's behavior, employees will respond positively to the leader's authorized behavior (Zhang & Fan, 2011), showing a high degree of work participation, and internal motivation will have better performance in work. The more consistent the leader's authorization behavior is with the employee's authorization expectation, the higher the employee's satisfaction will be (Lorinkova & Perry, 2014). However, previous studies primarily focus on the leader's authorization behavior or employee's expectation of authorization from a single perspective of the leader or subordinates, which led to incomplete and primary research at present. To more fully and dialectically illustrate the impact of leadership empowerment and employee empowerment expectations on individual emotional cognition and work behavior, this study incorporates the leadership-centered perspective and the employee-centered perspective into the model. There are also four basic combinations of the leader's empowerment behavior and employee's empowerment expectation at the dual level, as shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Matching of leader's authorization behavior with employee's authorization expectation.

The leader's high authorization behavior and the subordinates' high authorization expectation ("high-high consistency"), and the leaders' low authorization behavior and the subordinates' low authorization expectation ("low-low consistency"), may be used to categorize them ("low-low consistency"); Inconsistency can also be divided into two types: leader's high authorization behavior is irresponsible with his subordinate's low authorization expectation ("high-low" inconsistency), and the leader's low authorization behavior is inconsistent with his subordinate's high authorization expectation ("low-high" inconsistency). The first two are compatible matches, and the last two are incompatible matches. Compared with incompatible matching, compatible matching can bring better results, but compared with low-level matching, high-level matching can trigger employees' positive emotional state and work behavior more. On the one hand, when the leader's authorization behavior and employees' expectation of authorization are "low-low", it shows that the leader is more inclined to "centralization" than "authorization". Chinese traditional culture believes that "the wood is beautiful in the forest, and will be destroyed by the forest air", and when the leader perceives the threat from a subordinate's position, the authority will be reduced (Yi et al., 2021). On the other hand, it also shows that employees have low work autonomy, and they expect to finish their work step by step according to the leadership's orders, instead of solving problems independently and taking the initiative to take on work tasks, so they will not have high passion and initiative for their work. Therefore, this study will analyze in detail the changes in employees' enthusiasm and positive behavior toward harmonious work when the leader's delegation behavior is consistent with employees' expectations of delegation "high-high", "low-low", "high-low" and "low-high".

## 2.2. The Influence of the Match between a Leader's Authorization Behavior and an Employee's Authorization Expectation on Employees' Positive Behavior

Parker From the perspective of behavior pattern, it is pointed out that active be-

havior is an individual's behavior to change himself or make himself a better match with the organization (Parker & Collins, 2010). Changing the work system and role is an individual's voluntary attitude, and the leadership behavior in the organization and the positive emotions of individuals are the important factors that affect the positive behaviors of employees. Therefore, when discussing the relationship between a leader's authorization behavior, employees' authorization expectations, and employee positive behavior, we first discuss the influence of a leader's authorization behavior and employee's authorization expectation on employee positive behaviors from the perspective of consistent matching. On the one hand, authorization is a risk-taking behavior based on trust (Xie & Wang, 2014). When a leader exhibits high levels of authorization, it also means that the leader is prepared to accept the potential risks associated with authorization, expecting to increase subordinates' level of work autonomy as well as their ability to contribute and level of job satisfaction through authorization; On the other hand, the employee's expectation of authorization reflects the employees' preference for job characteristics and their inherent need for autonomy (Yin et al., 2021). When an employee has high expectations for authorization, it indicates that they are capable of self-management and job completion as well as expecting to be given autonomy in their work (Humborstad, 2012). The spillover effect of leadership empowerment will make employees show higher initiative. The theory of individual-environment matching also points out that the higher the fit between the individual and the organization, the stronger the adaptability to work (Yu et al., 2019). According to this, we speculate that when the leader's authorization behavior is in "high-high" agreement with the employees' authorization expectation, the subordinate leaders and subordinates have a high tacit understanding, and the employees' active behavior is highest (Peng & Wang, 2018).

Secondly, when the leader's authorization behavior is in a "low-low" agreement with the employees' expectations of authorization, although it is the same situation, the result may be very unsatisfactory. When the leader's authorization behavior is consistent with the employees' expectation of authorization, both the leader and employees have a low expectation of independence and independence. To avoid the uncertainty risk brought by authorization, leaders tend to centralize power instead of authorization, which will not give subordinates greater autonomy and flexibility, especially when employees have insufficient self-management ability. It was difficult to reduce their role cognition differences by actively adjusting their role cognition (Poitou, 1966), and expecting to get clear instructions from the leader to complete the tasks. Therefore, in this case, although the leader's authorization behavior is consistent with the employees' expectation of authorization in the general direction, employees will have role pressure because the leader gives his subordinates low autonomy in their work and the employee cannot actively adjust their roles (Stamper & Johlke, 2003), it's hard to show a high degree of initiative. In summary, when the leader's authori-

zation behavior is in “low-low” consistency with the employees’ authorization expectation, it will lead to lower positive behavior.

Finally, when the leader’s delegation behavior is inconsistent with the employees’ expectation of delegation, it is difficult for employees to show positive behavior. Precisely, “low-high” and “high-low” correspond to over-authorization and under-authorization, respectively, representing the imbalance between leaders’ authorization behavior and employees’ authorization expectations (Brian et al., 2010). On the one hand, when the authorization is insufficient, there is a gap between subordinates’ perceived leadership authorization behavior and their expected leadership authorization behavior. According to the expectation gap theory, people become emotionally worn out and less committed to their work when there is a discrepancy between their expectations and the leader’s actual behavior (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Yin et al., 2021), and they are more likely to complete routine, established tasks and engage in less creative, practical activities (Chen et al., 2020). On the other hand, when the leader’s authorization exceeds the expectation of employees’ authorization, the leader’s ultra vires behavior may even be interpreted by subordinates as laissez-faire leadership behavior of shirking responsibility (Wong & Giessner, 2018). These tasks and responsibilities beyond one’s abilities will all be regarded as a workload on subordinates (Jiang & Xu, 2020), which will increase the working pressure on subordinates (Dekker & Barling, 1995; Zhu et al., 2019). The resource preservation theory also points out that when individuals feel that their resources are exhausted, they tend to preserve their existing resources to cope with the stressful situation and avoid the uncertain risks in their work (Kim & Beehr, 2020; Liao et al., 2022). Therefore, when the supply and demand of authorized leaders are inconsistent, employees will not show higher initiative. Based on this, this paper puts forward the hypothesis.

H1: Compare the matching of the leader’s authorization behavior with the employee’s authorization expectations “high-low”, “low-high” and “low-low”. When the leader’s authorization behavior is consistent with the employees’ authorization expectation of “high-high”, employees’ positive behavior is the highest.

### **2.3. The Influence of the Matching of Leader’s Authorization Behavior and Employees’ Authorization Expectation on Harmonious Work Passion**

Work passion (WP) refers to the strong tendency of the employees’ to invest time and energy in activities they like (Perrewe et al., 2013), which will be enhanced with the rise of personal-environmental fit (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). Some studies divide work passion into harmonious work passion (HWP) and obsessive work passion (OWP). Although these two kinds of work passion are both driven by individual independent motives, they are different. The former comes from a strong love of work, believing that work is meaningful and can independently internalize work into action (Baum & Locke, 2004), The former

comes from a strong love for work, believing that work is meaningful, and can independently internalize work into action. The latter comes from external pressure, that is, taking part in work activities to gain organizational recognition, work reward, and so on, which leads to hostile experiences and behavior, thus leading to individual job burnout. According to the double passion model, the independent support of environmental factors to individuals is an essential source of personal passion. For example, a participatory leadership style is more helpful in predicting harmonious working passion, because it provides an independent and supportive environment (Li et al., 2021). However, the transactional leadership style has firm control over the working environment and interpersonal relationships, and it is easier to generate compulsive work passion. As an essential environmental factor, the most apparent feature of leadership empowerment is to provide independent support for subordinates' development and encourage independent decision-making. Employees' expectation of authorization also represents an individual's self-determination. Therefore, this article will mainly discuss the influence of the matching of leadership authorization and employee authorization expectations on employees' harmonious working passion.

According to the theory of individual-environment matching, when a leader's authorization behavior is "high-high" in agreement with a subordinate's expectation of authorization, it indicates that the subordinate and the organization have first reached an understanding of shared values and goals. This means that both parties acknowledge the shared goal and vision and anticipate receiving (being given) power. From the employees' point of view, the leader's authorization supply (independent support, participation in decision-making, etc.) is consistent with the employees' authorization demand (work autonomy, reduction of constraints, etc.). From the leader's point of view, it also means that the organization's work requirements are consistent with the employees' abilities. The psychological contract framework formed by the reciprocal exchange relationship between both parties will have positive effects. An individual's pleasant psychological experience of work is what is known as a "harmonious love for work", and it is a long-lasting happy mood (Baum & Locke, 2004). The higher the fit between the individual's passion and the environment, the more it can stimulate the passion of the individual to work in harmony. We speculate that when the leader's authorization behavior is consistent with the employees' authorization, the employees' enthusiasm for harmonious work is the highest.

However, when the leader's authorization behavior is in "low-low" agreement with the employees' authorization expectation, the independent support from the organization perceived by the individual is limited. When the work resources are reduced, the individual's concentration and love for work will be diminished. It is easier to produce controlled work emotions instead of highly harmonious work passion. In the case of inconsistency, when the leader's authorization behavior is high, and the employees' expectation of authorization is low, the re-



sponsibilities and tasks entrusted by the leader exceed the employees' expectations, which will lead to the employees' negative evaluation of the work goal and negative perception of the organizational situation. According to the theory of person-environment matching, when the work tasks in the organization are inconsistent with personal expectations, individuals with low self-expectation will think that they are interfering with their work. When faced with too many tasks, they will reduce their sense of identity with their work. Similarly, when the leader's authorization behavior is low and the employees' expectation of authorization is high, it means that the employee needs the leader's autonomy from the leader, and is eager to get support and care from the organization. However, at this time, the leader's subordinate authorization behavior ignores the authorization needs of subordinates, which violates the principle of being cared for and respected (Zhang et al., 2010). Obviously, in the case of inconsistency, employees' enthusiasm for harmonious work is low.

H2 Compare the matching of the leader's authorization behavior with the employees' authorization expectations "high-low", "low-high" and "low-low". When the leader's authorization behavior is consistent with employees' authorization expectation of "high-high", employees' enthusiasm for harmonious work is highest.

#### **2.4. The Mediating Role of Harmonious Work Passion**

Research on work passion points out that the internalization of individual external motivation is the primary source of passion, and the degree of independent support from the organizational environment (leadership, work atmosphere, etc.) is an essential factor that influences the formation of work passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). The dual passion model predicts that harmonious work passion, as opposed to compulsive work passion, will produce more favorable and adaptable outcomes. For example, harmonious work passion will promote the individual's positive emotional experience, vitality, and mobility (Forest et al., 2011). To better understand how leaders' empowering conduct, employees' authorization-empowerment expectations, and employees' positive active behavior line up, this study will examine the mediating role of harmonious working passion. The reason for this is that the higher an individual's level of self-support and environmental fit, as well as the more positive emotional experience and internal motivation for work, will be generated, the more likely they are to demonstrate harmonious working passion rather than compulsive working passion. As a positive extra-role behavior, an employee positive behavior refers to the behavior that employees actively improve their working methods, complete their work tasks, and take on organizational responsibilities, and it will be affected by positive personal emotions and intrinsic motivation (Parker et al., 2010). Therefore, compared with the negative results caused by compulsive working passion, harmonious working passion can better predict the positive behavior of employees. Buerker pointed out that individuals with harmonious work passion

show higher career commitment and job satisfaction in a cross-cultural background, while compulsive work passion will lead to nonadaptive behaviors such as unethical behavior of pro-organization (Vallerand et al., 2003). Therefore, this study tries to further explain the internal mechanism of employees' positive behavior from the perspective of harmonious working passion by matching the leader's authorization behavior with employees' expectations of authorization. Based on this, this article puts forward the hypothesis.

H3 Harmonious work passion plays an intermediary role between the matching of leaders' authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation and employees' positive behavior (Figure 2).

### 3. Methods

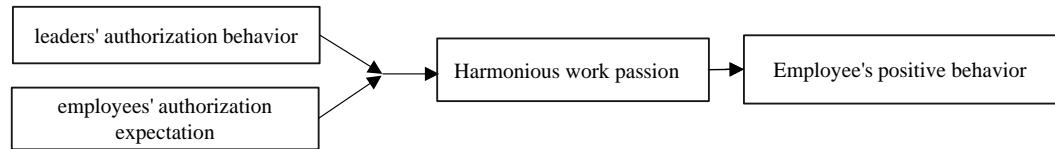
#### 3.1. Sample and Data Collection

Through the school-enterprise cooperation base and alumni network construction project, 75 supervisors and 400 employees were contacted as research objects, and data were collected by questionnaire. Before the survey, every leader and subordinate had codes, such as leader "1", and the corresponding principles of several subordinates were "1001", "1002" and "1003", etc. In the investigation, employees received questionnaires with their codes and leaders received evaluation subordinate evaluation with their corresponding subordinate codes, so that leaders could evaluate employees' positive behavior. Time 1, Questionnaires were distributed to 75 supervisors and 400 employees. The measurement contents included: 1) Survey employees: demographic variables, employee empowerment expectations, and harmonious working passion; 2) Research leaders: Demographic variables and leaders' empowering behaviors. In this stage, 62 effective leadership questionnaires and 352 employee questionnaires were recovered. Months later, a questionnaire was sent to employees to measure their positive behaviors. A total of 327 valid questionnaires were collected. Finally, according to the codes of leaders and employees, the collected questionnaires were paired, and 45 useful questionnaires were obtained for leaders and 303 useful questionnaires for subordinates. On average, each leader had seven subordinates, and the validity of the questionnaire was 60% for the leader and 75% for subordinates. The demographic information of effective leaders and employees is shown in Table 1.

#### 3.2. Measures

The scales selected in this study were graded by the Likert five-point scale (1 = very inconsistent, 5 = very consistent).

Leaders' authorization behavior. Leaders' authorization behavior adopts the scale developed by Ahern et al. (Ahearne et al., 2005). It has 12 entries, which are divided into four dimensions. Evaluate your own delegated behavior, such as "I allow my employees to change and optimize the work sequence and process." The reliability coefficient of this scale in this study is 0.752.



**Figure 2.** The research model of this paper.

**Table 1.** The basic information distribution of the sample.

Variable	Category	Percentage
	Leader	
Sex	Men	75%
	Women	25%
Education	High school and below	20%
	Bachelor's degree	51%
	Graduate degree	29%
	Employee	
Sex	Men	58%
	Women	42%
Education	High school and below	16%
	Bachelor's degree	58%
	Graduate degree	26%
Average working time		2.93

Employee empowerment expectation. Employees' expectation of empowerment refers to the practices of Wong and Humborstad and the leadership empowerment scale developed by Ahearne (Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013). It is adapted and measured by changing topics, such as "I expect my boss to allow me to change and optimize my work order and process." In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.747.

Harmonious work passion. the harmonious work passion adopts Vallerand et al. Work Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003), and selected 7 projects to measure the harmonious work passion. Employees evaluated their harmonious work passion, such as "I am passionate about work." The reliability coefficient of this scale in this study is 0.761.

Employees' positive behavior. the employees' positive behavior adopts the scale of positive behavior developed by Griffin (Griffin & Parker, 2007). There are three items in it. Leaders evaluate the compliance of the employees' positive behavior, such as "he/she will create a better way to accomplish important tasks." In this study, the reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.826.

Control variables. For control variables, refer to Wong and Matta's practice (Humborstad, 2012). In the treatment of control variables, first virtualize the differences in gender and education level between leaders and subordinates (0 =

the same gender/education level, 1 = different gender/education level). Second, the age difference is the absolute value of the age difference between subordinates and leaders. Finally, the differences in gender, age, education level, and working hours of the leaders under controlled variables are obtained.

### 3.3. Analytical Strategy

1) In this study, multiple regression and Response Surface Methodology were used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Bai et al., 2018). The specific operation is the regression of dependent variables, harmonious work passion, and employees' active behavior to control variables, and five polynomials, including leader's authorization behavior (LAB), employees' authorization expectation (EAE), the court of leader's authorization behavior (LAB<sup>2</sup>), the square of employees' authorization expectation (EAE<sup>2</sup>), and the interaction between leader's authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation (LEB × EE),  $b_0$  is the intercept time,  $b_1$  to  $b_5$  are the regression coefficients of each term, and  $e$  is the interference term.

$$Z = b_0 + b_1LAB + b_2EAE + b_3LAB^2 + b_4LAB \times EAE + b_5EAE^2 + e$$

2) Intermediary effect test. According to the method of Block Variable proposed by Edwards, etc., the independent variables LAB, EAE, LAB<sup>2</sup>, LAB × EAE, EAE<sup>2</sup> are multiplied by their respective regression coefficients to form a new independent variable, and then the mediating effect of harmonious work passion is tested by the Bootstrapping program in SPSS Process (Cable & Derue, 2002; Ye & Wen, 2013). Previous studies have also shown that the application of block variables will not change the interpretation of dependent variables by the original polynomial terms (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Homologous Error Analysis

To avoid homologous errors, the method of multi-point and multi-source data acquisition is adopted in the research and design. The hazard single factor test showed that the first factor explained 30.848% of the exploratory factor analysis without rotation. Still, it did not exceed 40%, which preliminarily indicated that there was no serious deviation from the standard method in this study.

### 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In this study, AMOS23.0 was used for confirmatory factor analysis of critical variables. As can be seen from **Table 2**, the four-factor model has the best fitting effect ( $\chi^2 = 1.728$ , NFI = 0.912, CFI = 0.960, TLI = 0.949, RESEA = 0.049), which indicates that the measurement has good discrimination validity.

### 4.3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient

The average value, standard deviation, correlation coefficient, and significance

level of related variables in this study are shown in **Table 3**. From the data presented, it can be seen preliminarily that the leader's empowerment behavior is significantly positively correlated with harmonious work passion and employees' positive behavior ( $r = 0.3, p < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.454, p < 0.01$ ), and there is a significant positive correlation between harmonious work passion and employees' positive behavior ( $r = 0.385, p < 0.01$ ).

#### Hypothesis test

**Figure 3** and **Figure 4** are the result analysis diagrams of response surface, which intuitively show the results of employees' active behavior and harmonious work passion when the employee's authorization behavior matches with the leader's authorization expectation. In the response surface diagram, the back corner represents the result when "high-high" is consistent. When the result of consistent matching is better, the back corner is significantly higher than the front corner, the left corner and the right corner.

**Table 2.** Summary of fitting indexes of model confirmatory factor analysis.

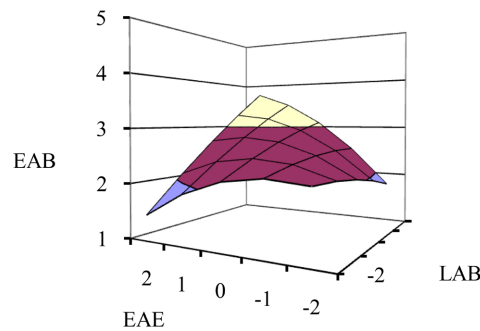
Model	$\chi^2$	$df$	$\chi^2/df$	RESEA	NFI	TLI	CFI
Four-factor model (LAB, EAE, HWP, EAB)	122.67	71	1.728	0.049	0.912	0.949	0.960
Three-factor model (LAB + EAE, HWP, EAB)	382.712	74	5.172	0.118	0.724	0.707	0.762
Two-factor model (LAB + EAE, HWP + EAB)	504.814	76	6.642	0.137	0.636	0.604	0.669
Single factor model (LAB + EAE + HWP + EAB)	617.071	77	8.014	0.152	0.555	0.508	0.583

Note: LEB = leader's authorization behavior, EAE = employees' authorization expectation, HWP = harmonious working passion, EAB = employees' positive behavior.

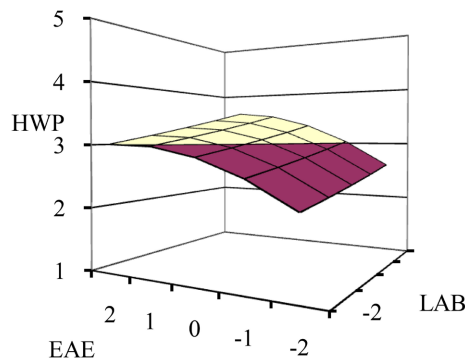
**Table 3.** Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient of each variable.

Variable	AVE	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SEX	0.46	0.499							
2. AGE	7.15	5.508	0.058						
3. EDU	0.59	0.493	0.066	-0.128*					
4. TIME	2.93	1.608	0.025	0.079	-0.022				
5. LAB	3.23	0.607	0.016	0.018	0.033	-0.026			
6. EAE	3.40	0.659	0.053	-0.045	-0.023	-0.039	0.134*		
7. HWP	3.09	0.714	-0.035	-0.023	-0.055	-0.038	0.300**	0.328**	
8. PB	2.87	0.911	-0.012	0.023	0.035	-0.073	0.454**	0.286**	0.385**

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , SEX = gender difference between leaders and employees; AGE = age difference between leaders and employees; EDU = indicates the difference in education level between leaders and employees; TIME = indicates the working time of the leader-employee.



**Figure 3.** The influence of the match between leader's authorization behavior and employee's authorization expectation on employee's positive behavior.



**Figure 4.** The influence of the matching of leader's authorization behavior and employee's authorization expectation on harmonious work passion.

From model 4 in **Table 4**, it can be seen that the regression result of employees' positive behavior to three quadratic terms is significant, and the curvature of the response surface along the inconsistent diagonal line is negative and reaches a significant level ( $\beta = -0.274$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates that employees' active behavior increases with the increase of the consistency between leader's authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation, that is, the consistency between leader's authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation is better than inconsistency; However, the slope of the curved surface along the consistent diagonal is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.394$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates that the employees whose leader's authorization behavior is consistent with employees' authorization expectations are "high-high" and have higher active behaviors than those who are consistent with "low-low". The response surface of **Figure 3** presents the hypothesis test results more intuitively. In the case of consistency, employees' positive behavior is better than inconsistency. Compared with the cases of "low-low", "high-low" and "low-high", employees' positive behavior is the highest when "high-high" is consistent. The analysis results support hypothesis 1.

From model 2 in **Table 4**, it can be seen that the regression results of harmonious work passion to the three quadratic terms are significant, and the curva-

ture of the response surface along the inconsistent diagonal line is negative but does not reach a significant level ( $\beta = -0.068, p > 0.05$ ), which indicates that harmonious work passion does not increase with the increase of the degree of agreement between leader’s authorization behavior and employees’ authorization expectation, that is, the agreement between leader’s authorization behavior and employees’ authorization expectation is not necessarily better than disagreement; However, the slope of the response surface along the consistent diagonal line is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.360, p < 0.01$ ), which indicates that when the leader’s authorization behavior is in “high-high” agreement with the employees’ authorization expectation, the employee has higher harmonious work passion than when it is in “low-low” agreement. From the response surface of **Figure 4**, it can also be seen that the harmonious work passion of the rear corner is higher than that of the front corner, the right corner, and the left corner, and the employees’ harmonious work passion is the highest when the leader’s empowering behavior is consistent with the employees’ empowering expectation. The analysis results support hypothesis 2.

**Table 4.** Polynomial regression results and response surface analysis.

variable	Harmonious work passion				Employees’ positive behavior			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant (intercept)	3.225	0.117	3.072	0.122	2.921	0.150	2.716	0.141
SEX	-0.040	0.083	-0.007	0.076	-0.027	0.106	-0.053	0.088
AGE	-0.003	0.008	-0.083	0.007	0.006	0.010	0.002	0.008
EDU	-0.083	0.085	-0.004	0.077	0.071	0.108	0.044	0.089
TIME	-0.016	0.026	-0.061	0.024	-0.042	0.033	-0.018	0.027
LAB			0.125**	0.031			0.235**	0.036
EAE			0.232**	0.041			0.159**	0.047
LAB <sup>2</sup>			0.006	0.016			-0.023	0.020
LAB × EAE			0.011	0.027			0.170**	0.031
EAE <sup>2</sup>			-0.060**	0.028			-0.081**	0.032
R <sup>2</sup>	0.006		0.194		0.008		0.334	
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-0.007		0.170**		-0.006		0.313**	
Line consistency (LAB = EAE)								
Slope ( $b_1 + b_2$ )			0.360**				0.394**	
Curvature ( $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$ )			-0.044				0.066	
Inconsistency line (LAB = -EAE)								
Slope ( $(b_1 - b_2)$ )			-0.104**				0.077	
Curvature ( $(b_3 - b_4 + b_5)$ )			-0.068				-0.274**	

To test the mediation effect of harmonious work passion, LAB, EAE, LAB<sup>2</sup>, LAB × EAE, and EAE<sup>2</sup> are weighted into block variables, and the mediation effect is tested by using the Process plug-in in SPSS26.0. The test results are shown in **Table 5**. The indirect effect of the matching of leader's authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation through harmonious work passion is positive and significant (0.148,  $p < 0.01$ ), and the 95% confidence interval are (0.084, 0.244), excluding 0, which indicates that harmonious work passion plays an intermediary role between the matching of leader's authorization behavior leader's empowerment behavior and employees' authorization expectation and employees' positive behavior. The analysis results support hypothesis 3.

## 5. Discussion

The main conclusions of this study are as follows: First, comparing the three matching situations of leader's authorization behavior and employees' expectation of authorization: "high-low", "low-high" and "low-low", when the leader's authorization behavior is consistent with employees' expectation of authorization, employees' positive behavior is the most obvious; Second, compared with the matching situation of leaders' authorization behaviors and employees' authorization expectations, employees' enthusiasm for harmonious work is the highest when leaders' authorization behaviors are consistent with employees' authorization expectations. Third, the leader's authorization behavior matches the employees' expectation of authorization and affects the employees' positive behavior through harmonious work passion.

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contributions of this study are as follows: First, from the dual perspective of leaders and subordinates, comprehensively and dialectically analyzes how to maximize the effectiveness of authorization. In this paper, the leader's empowerment behavior and employees' empowerment expectation are regarded as a group of parallel variables, which form four combinations at the dual level. The changes in employees' harmonious work passion and positive behavior under different combinations are discussed respectively. Through the empirical analysis, it is found that only when the leader's authorization behavior is in a "high-high" consistency with the employees' authorization behavior can the influence of authorization on employees' emotional cognition and work behavior be maximized, that is, employees' harmonious work passion and positive

**Table 5.** Intermediary effect test.

dependent variable	Effect category	Effect value	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
				upper limit	lower limit
Employees' positive behavior	Total effect	0.451**	0.074	0.306	0.597
	Direct effect	0.303**	0.075	0.155	0.452
	Indirect effect	0.148**	0.037	0.084	0.244



behavior are the most obvious. This is consistent with Kong Ming et al. research when analyzing the influence of leader-member liking thickness on employees' work engagement (Kong et al., 2017). When leaders and members like to be in "high-high" consistency, employees' work participation is also the highest. Therefore, this study explores the dual standpoint of leaders and subordinates and makes up for the deficiency of previous studies that only analyze leaders' or employees' behaviors from a single perspective of leaders' authorization behaviors or employees' authorization expectations. Second, from the perspective of positive emotional cognition, the emotional driving mechanism of employees' positive behavior is demonstrated by matching the leader's authorized behavior with employees' authorized expectations. Most of the previous studies are based on motivation and identity (Parker & Collins, 2010). However, studies have pointed out that an individual's behavior is also closely related to the emotional cognitive state. This paper accepts this view and regards harmonious work passion as a mechanism to match the leader's authorization behavior and employees' authorization expectation. From the perspective of emotional cognition, this paper opens the "black box" of the formation process of an employee's positive behavior in the process of authorization, enriching the related research in the field of employees' positive behavior.

## 5.2. Practical Implications

It is pointed out that the realization of organizational goals depends on the overall harmony within the organization, whether it is the theory of individual-environment matching or the harmonious management thought in Chinese traditional culture. Its essence is that organizations and employees share common values, goals, and visions, value each other's needs and interests, fulfill their responsibilities, share weal and woe, and make concerted efforts. Therefore, the practical significance of this study is as follows: First, in HRM practice, we should first pay attention to the consistency of values, goals, missions, and visions among employees, leaders, and organizations. Further, when recruiting personnel, we should give priority to employees who have a high recognition of corporate values, and infiltrate corporate culture into all aspects of organizational training and daily management, to improve employees' sense of organizational identity and belonging, and strengthen the core competitiveness and organizational cohesion of enterprises. At the same time, when authorizing, the role of communication should not be ignored. Organizations should also pay attention to employees' values and goals, combine their characteristics and needs, give them independent support and reward on time and make clear their abilities and work attitude, to know people well and be suitable for them so that their rights, responsibilities and interests are in a matched and appropriate state.

Second, the empirical results show that different matching between leaders' authorization behaviors and employees' authorization expectations have other influences on employees' harmonious work passion. Still, harmonious work passion plays a vitally important role as the transmission mechanism of leaders' au-

thorization behaviors and employees' authorization expectation affecting employees' positive behaviors. Specifically, organizations can stimulate employees' enthusiasm for harmonious work by enhancing independent support, encouraging participation in decision-making, providing learning opportunities, and creating an equal, open, harmonious, and friendly communication environment. Employees who are passionate about harmonious work can get more positive behaviors conducive to the organization's development through promotion and performance rewards.

### 5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

There may be the following limitations in this study: First, according to the definition of work passion, work passion includes two dimensions: harmonious work passion and compulsive work passion. However, this study only discusses the mediating role of harmonious working passion from the perspective of positive emotions. It does not make a comparative analysis of harmonious working passion and compulsive working passion. Therefore, on the one hand, it is possible to combine the two methods for comparative analysis; on the other hand, when the leader's authorization behavior is inconsistent with the employees' expectation of authorization, it will also lead to negative emotions of subordinates. You can also talk about it from the perspective of negative emotions in the future. Second, in this paper, there is no match between leaders' authorization behavior and employees' expectation of authorization for the boundary conditions that affect harmonious work passion and initiative. Although the existing research takes power distance and uncertain organizational environment as the boundary conditions for empowerment to influence employees' behavior performance, it is still unclear what the boundary conditions are when leaders' empowerment behaviors and employees' empowerment expectations are in different matching situations. Therefore, in the future, we can further clarify the boundary conditions of leaders' authorization behavior and employees' expectation of authorization under different matching situations and enrich the relevant research on authorization matching.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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