THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

A Risk Regulation Model of Employee Felt Appreciation in Response to Supervisor Gratitude Expression
By

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Date : 23 Apr 2025 (Wed)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : M802, PolyU

Abstract

Feeling appreciated is integral to developing and sustaining high-quality relationships, but many employees do not feel appreciated at work. We build a risk regulation model (RRM) delineating the relationships among supervisor gratitude expression, employee felt appreciation, and employee voice at work. We argue that when supervisors express gratitude in an agentic or communal manner that matches employees' preferences, employees will feel more appreciated and engage more frequently in voice. We first performed a systematic analysis using an inductive multi-step process with pilot studies, to develop a typology of supervisors' agentic and communal gratitude expression at work. We then tested our model in a field survey involving supervisor-employee dyads (coupled with supplementary experiments). Results showed that the frequency of supervisor gratitude expression that was congruent (incongruent) with employee preference was positively (negatively) related to employee felt appreciation, with distinct patterns observed for the two types of gratitude expression. Felt appreciation mediated the effect of the gratitude expression frequency/preference congruence on employee voice. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between the two types of supervisor gratitude expression and aligning gratitude expression with employee preferences, while outlining new avenues for research on gratitude expression and felt appreciation at work.

Prof. Dejun "Tony" Kong (Ph.D. Washington University in St. Louis) is an Associate Professor of Organizational Leadership and Information Analytics (OLIA) in the University of Colorado Boulder's Leeds School of Business. He is Director of OLIA PhD Program and Faculty Director of the Leadership Certificate Program at the Leeds School of Business. He is a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and a top 2 percentile scientist (based on single years) in the world (ranked by Elsevier BV and Stanford University). He is also a Poets & Quants 40-under-40 Best Business Professor (2019). He has published over 70 journal articles, many of which appear in top journals in *Management and Psychology*, and 1 co-edited book. His research addresses the following overarching question: How can we enable people to be more prosocial (to promote others' or collective interests)? To address this question, he focuses on three streams of research: (1) fostering individuals' positive experiences, (2) fostering excellent organizational systems, and (3) fostering a high-trust society. He has received many awards for his research, teaching, and service. He is an associate editor of the *Journal of Management* and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. In 2024, he was elected to be Program Chair-Elect (a five-year leadership track) of the Academy of Management's Conflict Management Division.

All interested are welcome.

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