

# The Effect of Role Breadth Self-Efficacy on Employee Taking Charge: The Mediating Role of Willingness to Take Risks

Hanyi Lou<sup>1, a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Management, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.

<sup>a</sup>hanyi\_1108@163.com

## Abstract

There have been studies on the relationship between role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge, but insufficient are the researches on the mechanism between them. By the answers to the questionnaires, we explore the mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge, and particularly study the intermediary function of willingness to take risks. The empirical analysis of 283 sample data indicates that role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge are significantly correlated, and that willingness to take risks partially mediates the two factors mentioned above. These findings not only help to further enrich the achievements of taking charge and clarify the inherent mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy affecting employee taking charge, but also are of great significance to guide enterprise practice.

## Keywords

Role breadth self-efficacy; Willingness to take risks; Taking charge.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the changing business environment, enterprises are facing great challenges. To adapt to the unpredictable future development trend, enterprise change is an unchangeable choice. As the practitioners of enterprise change, employee taking charge has become an important source for organizations to gain competitive advantages. Therefore, how to effectively stimulate employee taking charge has become the focus of scholars.

Scholars generally believe that individual factors are important variables that affect employee taking charge. Taking charge has potential risks, so the cognition of self ability plays an important role in accepting and adapting to change. Role breadth self-efficacy is the level of self-confidence to perform a series of more extensive and active tasks, which reflects individual's cognitive judgment about capability. Role breadth self-efficacy's effect in promoting taking charge has also attracted scholars' attention. Some researches have explored the relationship between role breadth self-efficacy and taking charge. The results show that role breadth self-efficacy is one of the important factors affecting employee taking charge, but its mechanism needs to be further explored.

Taking charge is often accompanied by risks. Employees need not only certain ability, but also strong willingness to take charge. The higher role breadth self-efficacy, the smaller constraints of the external situation, so the stronger ability or responsibility of risk-taking. According to motivation theory, individuals with high risk tendency prefer high risk and high return, and tend to show a high degree of catering to uncertainty. Therefore, employees with high willingness to take risks are willing to challenge the current situation and bring greater benefits to the organization through taking charge, which is an important guarantee to effectively put the motivation of "being able" to take charge into action. However, it is still lacking in the existing

literature about the research on the mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge from the perspective of willingness to take risks. So it is worth further study. Based on this, this study introduces willingness to take risks, and reveals the role of willingness to take risks in the mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge.

In conclusion, based on motivation theory, this study explores the influence mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge from the perspective of willingness to take risks. The research results are expected to have reference value for enterprises to effectively stimulate employee taking charge.

## **2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

### **2.1. Taking Charge**

In the past, the research on extrarole behavior mainly focused on some more conservative behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior. Morrison and Phelps believe that although these behaviors also play a crucial role in the development of the organization, in today's environment, the organization also needs employees to bring constructive changes to the organization. In this context, Morrison and Phelps propose the concept of taking charge, that is, employees take constructive actions to promote the functional change of organizations within the contexts of their jobs, work units, or organizations. It is similar to other forms of extrarole behavior in that it is discretionary. However, compared with other forms of extrarole behavior, taking charge emphasizes spontaneity, change orientation and great risk, aiming to promote the operation of all aspects of the organization. For example, it includes changing work strategies to improve work efficiency, changing nonproductive or counterproductive organizational rules or policies, and eliminating redundant or unnecessary procedures.

### **2.2. Role Breadth Self-Efficacy and Taking Charge**

Individual cognition is an important factor in the individual-level factors that affect employee taking charge. Cognitive differences bring about different proactivity and sense of responsibility. As a kind of ability cognition, role breadth self-efficacy can help employees to break the shackles of established roles to implement interpersonal and integrated tasks (such as solving long-term problems, improving work procedures, etc.). Employees with high role breadth self-efficacy will think that they have abilities to complete tasks beyond the scope of work responsibilities, and promote the development of the organization in a more effective way. At the same time, in order to give full play to their abilities, they will be more willing to take charge. Role breadth self-efficacy reflects the level of self-confidence of employees, which enables employees to think systematically about the organization, so as to lay the foundation for finding and solving the problems existing in the organization. Some scholars have confirmed that role breadth self-efficacy is significantly related to employee taking charge. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Role breadth self-efficacy relates positively to employee taking charge.

### **2.3. The Mediating Role of Willingness to Take Risks**

Willingness to take risks refers to the psychological cognition that individuals are willing to bear potential losses in order to obtain positive results that are beneficial to the organization. Risk is inevitable, and different individuals are willing to take different degrees of risk.

The level of self-confidence is conducive to improving individuals' psychological security and enhancing the willingness to take risks. Employees with high role breadth self-efficacy are more confident in perform behaviors that entails risks. Therefore, they pay more attention to the benefits of taking charge and less attention to the possible failures and errors. This is conducive

to creating a sense of psychological security for employees, so that they can respond to the risk of taking charge with positive attitudes.

Willingness to take risks has a positive impact on employee taking charge. Taking charge is a high-risk behavior, and failure of change will bring loss. According to motivation theory, individuals with high risk tendency prefer high risk and high return. Taking charge is a kind of behavior with high risk and high return. Employees with high willingness to take risks are willing to challenge the uncertainty of taking charge, break the rules and strive for the benefits brought by the success of change.

Therefore, willingness to take risks may be a bridge between role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge. The higher role breadth self-efficacy breaks the psychological barrier of fear of risk for employees and forms a higher willingness to take risks. Therefore, they are willing to actively explore and try taking charge with certain risk. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 2: Willingness to take risks mediates the relationship between role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Design

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the analytic sample

Sample Characteristic	Category	Sample Size	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	123	43.5
	Female	160	56.5
<b>Age</b>	≤25	37	13.1
	26-35	135	47.7
	36-45	66	23.3
	≥46	45	15.9
<b>Education</b>	High school or below	42	14.8
	College degree	59	20.8
	Bachelor degree	148	52.3
	Master degree or above	34	12.0
<b>Tenure</b>	≤1	40	14.1
	1-3	74	26.1
	3-5	45	15.9
	5-10	52	18.4
	≥10	72	25.4
<b>Position</b>	General staff	156	55.1
	First-line manager	73	25.8
	Middle manager	44	15.5
	Senior manager	10	3.5

The participants in this study were composed of employees in China. In this research, data were collected by means of on-the-spot questionnaire investigation. Before the formal survey, the researchers contacted the senior managers of enterprises to explain the purpose of the survey. With the consent of them, the contacts of enterprises shall be designated. Under the organization of the contacts, the questionnaires shall be distributed to the employees of each

department. Before the questionnaires were sent out, in order to eliminate the concerns of the participants, it was explained that the survey was conducted anonymously, and the survey data was only for academic research and never leaked.

A total of 335 questionnaires were distributed, and 319 questionnaires were returned. After deleting invalid and incomplete cases, a total of 283 constituted the final sample for this study, representing approximately 84.5 percent of the respondents we surveyed. Table 1 reflects the demographic characteristics of the data.

### 3.2. Measurement

All materials were presented in Chinese. Following the translation and back-translation procedures, we created Chinese versions of scales for measuring role breadth self-efficacy, willingness to take risks, and taking charge. The scale of role breadth self-efficacy was measured on a 5-point Likert scale asking for self-confidence of the behaviors listed (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident); other scales were measured on a 5-point Likert scale asking for agreement with the statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

**Role breadth self-efficacy.** Parker, Williams, and Turner's (2006) seven-item scale of role breadth self-efficacy was used to measure this construct. A sample item is "Presenting information to a group of colleagues" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.94$ ).

**Willingness to take risks.** Dewett's (2006) eight-item scale of willingness to take risks was used to measure this construct. A sample item is "When I think of a good way to improve the way I accomplish my work, I will risk potential failure to try it out" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

**Taking charge.** Morrison and Phelps's (1999) ten-item scale of taking charge was used to measure this construct. A sample item is "I often try to adopt improved procedures for doing my job" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90$ ).

**Control variables.** Consistent with prior research on taking charge, we used participants' gender, age, education, tenure, and position as control variables.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Factor Analysis

To examine the discriminant validity of the multi-item variables in our study, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses with AMOS 21.0. Table 2 shows that the hypothesized three-factor model fits the data better than any of the alternative models ( $\chi^2/df = 3.03$ , CFI = 0.88, IFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.87, RMSEA = 0.09). These results provide support for the discriminant validity of role breadth self-efficacy, willingness to take risks, and taking charge.

**Table 2.** Confirmatory factor analysis

Model	Structure	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
<b>Three-factor model</b>	RBSE, WTR, TC	3.03	0.88	0.88	0.87	0.09
<b>Two-factor model</b>	RBSE, WTR+TC	6.09	0.70	0.70	0.67	0.13
<b>One-factor model</b>	RBSE+WTR+TC	8.99	0.53	0.53	0.49	0.17

Note: RBSE represents role breadth self-efficacy, WTR represents willingness to take risks, TC represents taking charge.

#### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among all the study variables and the control variables. According to table 3, role breadth self-efficacy is positively correlated with taking charge ( $r = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), role breadth self-efficacy is positively correlated with willingness to take risks ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and willingness to take risks is positively correlated with taking charge ( $r = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These are consistent with the expected hypotheses, which provide preliminary support for the following hypothesis tests.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>1.Gender</b>	1.57	0.50	-							
<b>2.Age</b>	2.42	0.91	-0.02	-						
<b>3.Education</b>	2.61	0.88	-0.09	-0.44**	-					
<b>4.Tenure</b>	3.15	1.42	0.05	0.67**	-0.25**	-				
<b>5.Position</b>	1.67	0.86	-0.22**	0.35**	0.04	0.41**	-			
<b>6.Role breadth self-efficacy</b>	3.15	0.84	-0.33**	0.25**	0.12*	0.30**	0.59**	-		
<b>7.Willingness to take risks</b>	3.19	0.69	0.01	-0.03	-0.02	0.02	0.10	0.32**	-	
<b>8.Taking charge</b>	3.58	0.56	-0.12*	0.26**	0.03	0.24**	0.39**	0.55**	0.44**	-

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 4.** Hierarchical regression analysis

Variable	Taking charge				Willingness to take risks	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Gender</b>	-0.04	0.07	-0.05	0.03	0.02	0.13*
<b>Age</b>	0.19*	0.16*	0.24***	0.21**	-0.13	-0.16
<b>Education</b>	0.10	0.03	0.13*	0.07	-0.07	-0.14*
<b>Tenure</b>	0.01	-0.04	0.01	-0.04	0.03	-0.03
<b>Position</b>	0.30***	0.06	0.24***	0.09	0.14*	-0.08
<b>Role breadth self-efficacy</b>		0.51***		0.35***		0.48***
<b>Willingness to take risks</b>			0.43***	0.33***		
<b>F</b>	11.88***	22.34***	25.52***	28.32***	1.13	8.28***
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.18	0.33	0.36	0.42	0.02	0.15
<b>ΔR<sup>2</sup></b>	0.18	0.15	0.18	0.09	0.02	0.13

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

#### 4.3. Hypothesis Testing

In this study, multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. According to Model 2 in Table 4, when controlling for the control variables, role breadth self-efficacy is significantly related to employee taking charge ( $\beta = 0.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

According to Model 6 in Table 4, role breadth self-efficacy is significantly related to willingness to take risks ( $\beta = 0.48, p < 0.001$ ). According to Model 4, when role breadth self-efficacy and willingness to take risks enter the model at the same time, willingness to take risks is significantly related to taking charge ( $\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$ ), role breadth self-efficacy is still significantly related to taking charge, but the regression coefficient is reduced ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$ ). This shows that willingness to take risks partially mediates the relationship between role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge. To further test the mediating effect of willingness to take risks, we used the PROCESS macro for SPSS developed by Hayes. In our research, indirect effect was computed based on bias-corrected confidence intervals using 5000 bootstrap samples. The results show that the indirect effect of willingness to take risks between role breadth self-efficacy and employee taking charge is significant (boot 95 percent CI [0.07, 0.16]). Taken together, Hypothesis 2 receives support.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on motivation theory, this study explores the mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge. The results reveal that role breadth self-efficacy positively influences employee taking charge, and willingness to take risks functions as a mediator for this influence.

### 5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical contributions of this study are as follows. First, based on the background of today's business environment, this study expands the antecedent research of taking charge. This study finds that role breadth self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on employee taking charge. This conclusion is also consistent with previous studies. Second, this study expands the theoretical perspective of role breadth self-efficacy on employee taking charge. Although some scholars have confirmed that role breadth self-efficacy has a positive impact on employee taking charge, few researches have explored the mechanism between them. From the perspective of willingness to take risks, this study enriches the research on the mechanism of role breadth self-efficacy influencing employee taking charge. Third, this study takes role breadth self-efficacy as an independent variable, enriching the research of its outcome variables. Role breadth self-efficacy has been regarded as a mediator in most of the studies, but less as an independent variable. This study provides a new way to enrich the research of role breadth self-efficacy.

Our findings also have significant implications for practice. First of all, this study verifies that role breadth self-efficacy is conducive to promoting employee taking charge. Managers can encourage employees to make bold attempts, give affirmation to their performance, and treat inevitable problems with inclusive attitudes, so as to enhance employees' confidence in taking charge. In addition, the results of this study show that willingness to take risks has a positive impact on employee taking charge. Managers can give employees the legal rights related to proactive behaviors, and take the possible consequences for the risk. Then, willingness to take risks of employees will be improved.

### 5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is not without limitations. First, in order to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the survey data, this study uses the method of on-the-spot questionnaire investigation. Therefore, due to the limitation of capital and energy, participants in the research are all from China. Although the sample includes various types of enterprises, covers many fields, and involves many kinds of jobs, whether the research results are universal remains to be confirmed by further large-scale research. Second, in order to accurately obtain employees' psychological perception and behavior performance, the data are all from employees' self-reports. The follow-

up research can collect data through self-reports and coworker-reports to improve the validity of the research. Third, this study only verifies the role of willingness to take risks as a mediator. In the future, more mediators can be explored to enrich the research on the trigger mechanism of taking charge.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bandura, A. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change[J]. *Psychological Review*, 1977, 84(2): 191-215.
- [2] Dewett, T. Exploring the role of risk in employee creativity[J]. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 2006, 40(1): 27-45.
- [3] Fuller, J. B. Jr., Marler, L. E., Hester, K. Bridge building within the province of proactivity[J]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 2012, 33(8): 1053-1070.
- [4] Hung, S. Y., Durcikova, A., Lai, H. M., et al. The influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on individuals' knowledge sharing behavior[J]. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 2011, 69(6): 415-427.
- [5] Lebel, R. D., Patil, S. V. Proactivity despite discouraging supervisors: The powerful role of prosocial motivation[J]. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2018, 103(7): 724-737.
- [6] Li, S. L., He, W., Yam, K. C., et al. When and why empowering leadership increases followers' taking charge: A multilevel examination in China[J]. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 2015, 32(3): 645-670.
- [7] Morrison, E. W., Phelps, C. C. Taking charge at work: Extrarole efforts to initiate workplace change[J]. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1999, 42(4): 403-419.
- [8] Parker, S. K. Enhancing role breadth self-efficacy: The roles of job enrichment and other organizational interventions[J]. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1998, 83(6): 835-852.
- [9] Parker, S. K., Williams, H. M., Turner, N. Modeling the antecedents of proactive behavior at work[J]. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2006, 91(3): 636-652.
- [10] Wu, C. H., Deng, H., Li, Y. Enhancing a sense of competence at work by engaging in proactive behavior: The role of proactive personality[J]. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2018, 19(3): 801-816.