How gender and political will affect employees' social network embeddedness

By: Jun Yang, Chao Liu, Chenxi Wang, and Qinghong Zhang

Abstract:

We examined the interaction between motivation (political will) and gender in affecting employees' embeddedness of advice network. We found, for males, these with high political will have higher out-degree centrality than those with low political will, but the opposite for in-degree centrality. Political will does not affect females' network positions.

Keywords: gender | political will | social networks

Article:

Introduction

Few could argue against the importance of social networks in employees' career development. This is evidenced by the prominence of social networks in job acquisition (e.g., Granovetter, 1974/1995, Ioannides & Loury, 2004; Montgomery, 1992), leader effectiveness (Balkundi, Barsness, & Michael, 2009), and job performance (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). Social network approach identifies the patterns of interpersonal relationships among a set of individuals and is gradually used as an effective tool to describe and explain organizational phenomena (e.g., Carter, DeChurch, Braun, & Contractor, 2015; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). For example, scholars have found leadership could come from informal structures and sometimes informal social network even override the function of formal hierarchical structures (e.g., Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter, & Keegan, 2012). As Carter et al. (2015) indicated "Social network approaches are highly suitable for studying leadership as relational, situated in specific contexts, involving patterned processes, and both formal and/or informal influence" (p. 599). More importantly, social network approach could help reveal both formal and informal relationships in the organization which is instrumental to understand organizational practices.

Scholars focus on two overarching research questions of social network research (e.g., Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Carpenter, Li, & Jiang, 2012): (a) What are the causes of social networks? and (b) What are outcomes and impacting process of social networks. More research works have tended to explain how social network affect the individuals, teams, and organizations (e.g., Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002; Jia, Shaw, Tsui, & Park, 2014; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). For instance, at the individual level, people with advantageous structural

position are more likely to be promoted (e.g., Burt, 1995), get higher performance appraise (e.g., Sparrowe et al., 2001), more voice behavior (e.g., Venkataramani, Zhou, Wang, Liao, & Shi, 2016), and get more information in job acquisition (e.g., Granovetter, 1974/1995, Ioannides & Loury, 2004). At the team level, scholars have found social network structure could significantly impact team performance (e.g., Mukherjee, 2016; Sparrowe et al., 2001), team creativity (e.g., Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017), team cohesion (e.g., Tulin, Pollet, & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2018; Wise, 2014), and team formation (e.g., Aldrich & Kim, 2007). Besides, at the organizational level, organizations with good structural embeddedness could have more social capital (e.g., Borgatti & Foster, 2003), make strategic collaboration easier and efficient (Cross et al., 2002), and bring better competitive performance (e.g., Ingram & Roberts, 2000).

As the outcomes of social networks positioning have been studied greatly, an equally important question, if not more important, receives surprisingly less attention. That is what individual characteristics acting as antecedents help the actors to effectively embed themselves within these networks (Kilduff & Brass, 2010, for a review). Beyond previous studies on demographic similarities (Klein, Lim, Saltz, & Mayer, 2004) and self-monitoring (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001) in affecting employee's social networks, little was known about how individual characteristics affect employees' network positions in an organization. To address this gap, this study attempts to further investigate how a different type of individual characteristics, specifically, political will that will be discussed in the following part as a motivation to engage in social network building, together with gender, affects employees' social network position in the advice network.

Mintzberg (1983) described organizations as political arenas, and organizational politics are an excellent prism for examining organizational phenomena (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Frink, 2005), especially when we are considering the power bases of social network embeddedness. An employee who engages in the political behaviors must have the ability to accurately perceive the environment and use such knowledge to influence other people (e.g., political skill), and at the same time, has the motivation to investigate the energy, time, and social capital (e.g., political will), in order to achieve his or her goal at work. As the research on political skill have been prosperous (e.g., Ferris et al., 2005, 2007; Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, & Ferris, 2005; Treadway et al., 2013), studies of political will have been scant. Mintzberg (1983) highlighted political will occupied a critical role in determining one's political skill or political behavior which affect other work-related outcomes. If we consider social network positioning as an outcome of the political process in an organization, then it is important to examine how an employee's motivational basis (political will) affects their embeddedness in the networks.

In addition to the role of political will, gender has also been found to play an important role in determining employees' embeddedness in the social networks. Research suggested that females are often in a disadvantaged position and have smaller personal networks (Pratt & Hanson, 1996). Previous research has not examined the compensating strategy used by women in particular as a disadvantaged group within networks but suggests that gender may have a more complex effect on personal networks than other traits studied (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). This study aims to integrate motivational perspective (political will) to investigate the underlying relationship between gender and social networks.

Especially in China, we find cultural elements or values such as power distance and traditionality (e.g., Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007) embedded in gender exert great influence on the formation of social network and its impacting effect. For example, for Chinese society, individuals are apt to accept the fact that power in organizations is distributed unequally (e.g., Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997; Spencer-Oatey, 1997) and leaders or males might have been recognized as ones with more authorized power. Furthermore, in China, more people tend to hold the traditional belief "Before marriage, a woman should subordinate herself to her father; after marriage, to her husband and women are more likely to surrender to male dominance" (e.g., Farh et al., 2007; Yang, Yu, & Yeh, 1989). As dominance often relates with politics, so we strongly contend that gender could play a big role in determining the effect of political will on social network embeddedness in Chinese samples. What's more, this conjecture could be collaterally verified by existing studies about gender, political skill, and social network in Chinese samples. The lens of social network in explaining organizational phenomena are often interpreted as *guanxi* network in Chinese contexts (e.g., Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013; Chua, Morris, & Ingram, 2009; Park & Luo, 2001; Wei, Chiang, & Wu, 2012; Xin & Pearce, 1996). For example, individuals with high political skill are good at developing high-quality *guanxi* with their supervisors and have more relational embeddedness with their leader (e.g., Wei et al., 2012). Bu and Roy (2005) revealed that Chinese male and female managers' career success networks (CSNs) both connect to more powerful men but differ in instrumental and expressive transactions with same- and opposite-sex CSN alters. Bian (1997) found strong ties but not weak ties of individual's social network are more helpful for the job search, contradicting to the results of Granovetter (1973, 1974/1995). These *guanxi* or social network studies help complement, extend, or contradict the conclusions of social networks in western contexts. However, it is a research gap that these studies seldom deal with gender and "political capabilities (political skill and political will)" simultaneously in investigating the formation of social network embeddedness. Moreover, the important motivational bases of political capabilities, that is, political will, are in desperate need of exploration. This study could also provide important empirical evidence about the role of gender and political will in determining social network embeddedness for further comparison between Chinese and western social networks.

This study develops an integrated model of the interaction between political will and gender on the social network embeddedness in China (see Figure 1.). We believe by examining political will (motivation) and gender (demographic) simultaneously, this article will contribute to our understanding how employees construct their social network embeddedness in organizations.
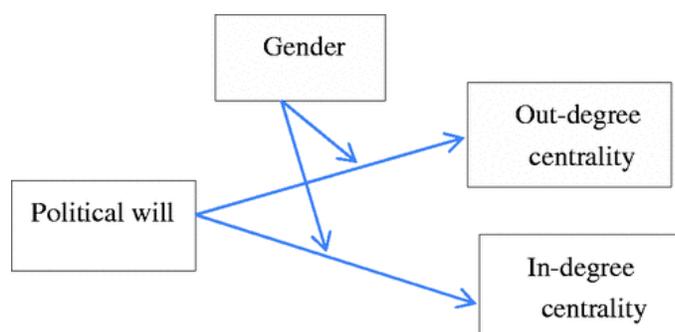
Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Political will and advice social network positioning

Political will is a concept put forward by Mintzberg (1983) and it represents an actor's willingness to expend energy in organization politics in pursuit of his goals in nature. Political will is used across various disciplines and lacks a uniform definition. In order to relate political will to leadership or individual success in the management, some researchers made effort to define and operationalize the construct of political will. In the concept constructing consistent to Mintzberg (1983), Treadway (2012) identified political will as "the motivation to engage in strategic, goal directed behavior that advances the personal agenda and objectives of the actor that inherently involves the risk of relational or reputational capital" (p. 533). On the basis of this conceptualization, Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Treadway, and Bentley (2017) validated a measure of political will using six different samples across several countries that ultimately encompasses two dimensions (i.e., self-serving and benevolent). Treadway (2012) and Kapoutsis et al. (2017) agreed that concern for self and concern for others act as major motivations to engage in political behavior.

As we view organizations as political arenas, political will is an appropriate measure of political motivational basis. Treadway et al. (2005) found individuals with high political will were more likely to engage in political behavior. Moreover, political will seems to explain variance over and above political skill in relation to influence tactics and status (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). In their study, Treadway, Campion, and Williams (2017) examined the role of political will and political skill in the face of powerlessness and its stress-related outcomes. In our study, we want to figure out the role political will play in individuals' social network embeddedness.

Social network research is distinctive in that it focuses on the relationships between actors rather than the attributes of the actors themselves (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). Research investigating social networks has focused on network centrality. Network centrality refers to the location of an actor within the larger web of relationships and how significant that position is to the functionality of a particular network. That is, the more prominent an individual's role in a social network, the greater their centrality index. After calculating an individual's centrality index for a given network, researchers treat these indices as variables to be used in empirical models in an effort to understand both antecedents of behaviors/structure and as outcomes of other behaviors/structure (Brass et al., 2004). Most researchers tend to choose out-degree centrality, in-degree centrality, and eigenvector centrality as these indicators capture the essence of power or control over some resources (e.g., Hadani, Coombes, Das, & Jalajas, 2012; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Sparrowe et al., 2001). We use out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality in this study to further explore the role of political will and gender in the advice network embeddedness. Out-degree centrality is a form of degree centrality that counts only those relations with other members reported by the focal individual. On the contrary, in-degree centrality is a form of degree centrality that counts only those relations with a focal individual reported by other members (Sparrowe et al., 2001).

Advice networks have been shown to affect several aspects of an employee's organizational experience. Research has determined that advice centrality positively predicts both in-role and extra-role performance (Sparrowe et al., 2001), perceptions of risk taking, acceptance,

information access (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993), and knowledge overlap (Wong, 2008). Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden (2001) found that placements in advice networks could have an indirect impact on salary, promotions over time, and career satisfaction.

In their examination of personality and individual differences as antecedents to centrality in team networks, Klein et al. (2004) posited that demographics, personal values, and personality all impact individuals' positions of centrality. Overall similarity across the aforementioned dimensions, with demographic similarity having the weakest effect, predicted both advice and friendship centrality. Furthermore, the personality traits of agreeableness and neuroticism predicted centrality with high agreeableness having a positive relationship and high neuroticism being negatively related. Given these results, further research is necessary to provide an improved understanding of the influence of individual differences on network positioning.

As defined, political will are understood as primary motivator for mobilizing various resources to achieve political goals. Kapoutsis et al. (2017) revealed that political will impact political behaviors such as ingratiation, upward appeals, and voice behavior. Blickle, Schütte, and Wihler (2018) demonstrated political will significantly impact individuals' objective career success and people might go out for power striving in light of their political will. Maher, Gallagher, Rossi, Ferris, and Perrewé (2018) found political will could impact the individuals' impression management strategies in combination with political skill. That is, political will is as important as political skill in understanding which strategies individuals would prefer. We argue in the study that political will is an important motivational force and rooted in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals with high political will are more intrinsically motivated to engage in behaviors that fulfill their needs such as relations and power. As we theorize network embeddedness as an outcome of employees' political behaviors, it is reasonable to argue that political will is likely to facilitate employees' embeddedness in advantageous positions in the advice network. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 1a:** Political will is positively related to employees' out-degree centrality in the advice network.

> **Hypothesis 1b:** Political will is positively related to employees' in-degree centrality in the advice network.

Gender and social network positioning

Research on gender effect on the social network has shown that males and females embed themselves in different positions in a network. For example, research showed that women of the same work experience and age have fewer connections with top government officials as their male counterparts in the public sector (Scott, 1996). There was evidence women were rated as less influential than men and often not well integrated into men's networks especially the organization's dominant coalition (Brass, 1985). On the contrary, men are more likely to have extensive and utilitarian networks at work than women. Based on the above evidence, we argue that male employees are likely to possess more central positions (both in-degree and out-degree) than their female counterparts in the advice network. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Male employees are likely to have higher level of in-degree centrality in the advice than female employees.

Hypothesis 2b: Male employees are likely to have higher level of out-degree centrality in the advice than female employees.

Interaction of gender and political will on social network positioning

As noted above, gender differentiates employees' social network positioning. Although it is evident females usually embed themselves in disadvantageous positions than their male cohort, some contrary findings suggest that the story might be more complex than that. In one study (Gill et al., 1973), the authors found that women and men differentiated in the relational dimension in five separate samples, and females are more likely to perform social interactions when they are confronted with a task or questions than men. These inconsistent findings suggested that there is an overlooked variable tangling with gender in affecting network position. In this study, we believe political will may help us clarify this issue.

In terms of out-degree centrality of advice network, as men tend to be more active in developing their utilitarian networks or seek to rush in organization's dominant coalition (Gill et al., 1987), they might possess higher out-degree centrality compared with their female counterparts. Taking together the impact of both political will and gender on out-degree centrality, we expect that males with high political will are most likely to have the highest out-degree centrality, whereas females with low political will are least likely to seek advice from the others. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3a: Gender will moderate the positive relationship between individual political will and out-degree centrality of advice network such that the relationship will be stronger when the gender is male than when the gender is female.

On the other hand, as for the in-degree centrality, Chinese people tend to hold the traditional belief "Before marriage, a woman should subordinate herself to her father; after marriage, to her husband and women are more likely to surrender to male dominance"[AQ: Please check whether the quoted text "Before marriage, a woman should subordinate herself to her father; after marriage, to her husband and women are more likely to surrender to male dominance" is correct as set. Also, please note that this quoted text is repeating twice in the article. Please check and edit as necessary.] (e.g., Farh et al., 2007; Yang et al., 1989). Thus, we predict males would get higher in-degree centrality than their female counterparts as men are always in the center of the dominant coalition (Brass, 1985). Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 3b: Gender will moderate the relationship between individual political will and in-degree centrality such that the relationship will be stronger when the gender is male than when the gender is female.

Method

Sample and procedures

The study included 181 employees from a private hospital in northeast China. Surveys were distributed by members of the research team with each questionnaire being accompanied by an endorsement letter from the company. Employees were given time during their breaks to complete the questionnaire and return their survey in a blank sealed envelope to a member of the research team to ensure confidentiality.

We used a whole social network analysis and approached all the employees of the hospital. Overall, we received 156 usable responses out of 181 surveys sent out, which yields a response rate of 86.19%. According to Costenbader and Valente (2003), even the social network is incomplete, or some network data are missing, we may still be able to take advantage of some aspects of network theory and techniques. The average age of our sample was 30.51 years (standard deviations (SD) = 8.68), and their average tenure was 3.02 years (SD = 2.89). Among them, 109 were females (69.87%) and 47 were males (30.13%).

Measures

We used mature scales or instruments used in previous researches to measure our key variables. Besides, we followed the commonly used back-translation procedure (e.g., Brislin, 1970; Chapman & Carter, 1979) to guarantee the reliability and validity of the measurement. Specifically, we asked three Doctors majoring in management to translate the original English instrument into Chinese. In the translating process, they worked independently and agreed on the final instrument. Furthermore, we invited management professors to translate the Chinese instruments back into English. By comparing and modifying the Chinese instruments several times, the final translations are nearly the same with the original English instruments. We used the final Chinese instruments to collect data and examine our model.

Political will (α = .88)

This variable was measured with an eight-item scale from Kapoutsis et al. (2017). Sample items included "I would engage in politics to serve the common good" and "Engaging in politics is an attractive means to achieve my personal objectives." All items were measured using a five-point-Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Out-degree/in-degree centrality of advice network

We followed Klein et al. (2004) and Sparrowe et al. (2001) to measure the out-degree/in-degree centrality of advice network. Specifically, we used the roster method to collect the data on the out-degree/in-degree centrality. Participants were given a list that included the names of all employees in the hospital and then asked to check names of individuals from whom they seek advice related to their work. The software UCINET was used to calculate the out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality in the advice network. This out-degree centrality represents the number of the ones from whom the employee sought advice. The in-degree centrality represents the number of others who had ever sought advice from the target employee.

Gender

In the study, Gender is coded as 0 = female and 1 = male.

Control variables

As demographic differences may influence employees' social network positioning (Klein et al., 2004), we included employees' age, position, and tenure as control variables.

Results

The means, SD, correlations, and reliability statistics of key variables in study are presented in Table 1. In general, the correlations among measures were as expected. Although political will may have little main effect on the outcomes (Table 1), we seek to find evidence when political will is moderated by gender the interaction and centrality could have significant relationship.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations among variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	30.51	8.68							
2. Position	0.71	1.16	0.43**						
3. Tenure	3.02	2.89	0.40**	0.60**					
4. Gender[a]	0.30	0.46	0.28**	–0.04	0.05				
5. Political will	2.53	0.80	–0.12	–0.12	–0.03	–0.001	**(.88)**		
6. Out-degree centrality	24.88	31.92	–0.03	0.19**	0.22**	0.38**	0.10		
7. In-degree centrality	22.10	8.177	0.41**	0.55**	0.60**	0.25**	–0.06	0.26**	

N = 156. Reliability of the scales (political will) is presented in boldface within parentheses along the central diagonal. SD = standard deviation.
[a] Gender is coded 1 = male, 0 = female. *p <0.05; **p <0.01..

Table 2. Results of HMLR analysis: Interactive effects of political will and gender on the out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality of the advice network.

	Out-degree centrality				In-degree centrality			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	24.88**	24.88**	24.88**	24.88**	22.10**	22.10**	22.10**	22.10**
Age	–0.65*	–0.62[+]	–1.26**	–1.16**	0.14*	0.14	0.06	0.03
Position	3.76	4.15	7.00**	6.76**	1.75**	1.76**	2.11**	2.18**
Tenure	2.33*	2.23*	2.07*	1.88[+]	1.12**	1.12**	1.10**	1.15**
Political will (A)		4.29	3.98	3.81		0.05	0.02	0.06
Gender (B)			33.12**	32.62*			4.11**	4.26**
A × B				9.87[+]				–2.93*
F value	4.29**	3.70**	12.33**	10.85**	38.36**	28.58**	27.50**	24.38**
R²	0.078**	0.089**	0.291**	0.304**	0.431**	0.431**	0.478**	0.495**
ΔR²	0.078	0.011	0.202**	0.013[+]	0.431	0.000	0.047**	0.017*

N = 156. SD = standard deviation; HMLR = hierarchal multiple linear regression.
[+]p <0.1; *p <0.05; **p <0.01.

Main effects of political will on out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality

Hypothesis 1a and 1b state that political will has a significant relationship with out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality. However, as demonstrated by Table 2, the results reveal

nonsignificant relationship between political will and out-degree centrality (b = 3.81, $p > 0.1$, ns) or in-degree centrality (b = 0.06, $p > 0.2$, ns). Therefore, Hypothesis 1a and 1b are not supported.

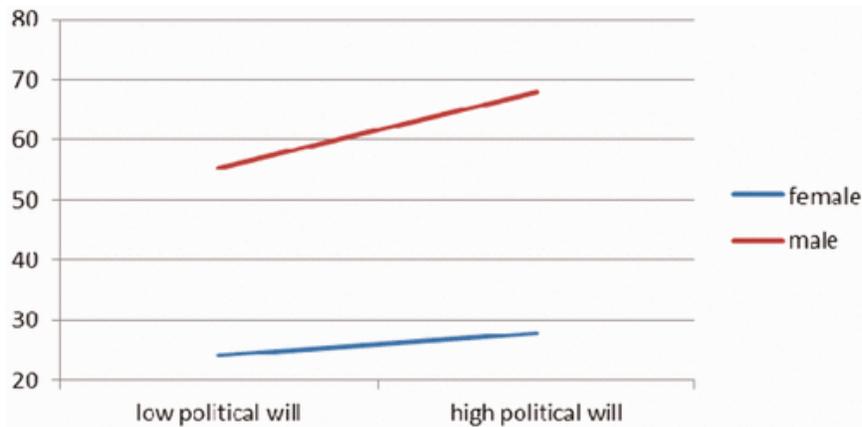Main effects of gender on out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality

The hierarchal multiple linear regression (HMLR) results shown in Table 2 provide support for Hypothesis 2a and 2b, after controlling for age, position, and tenure. Gender was significantly and positively related to out-degree centrality (b = 32.62, $p < 0.05$) and in-degree centrality (b = 4.62, $p < 0.01$). As males are coded as 1, so the results reveal male employees are likely to have higher level of in-degree centrality and out-degree centrality in the advice than female employees. Thus, Hypothesis 2a and 2b are supported.

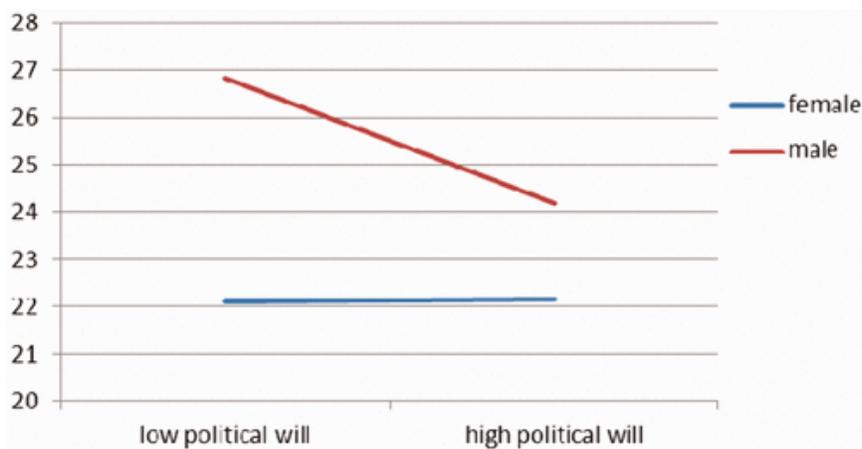Interaction of political will and gender on out-degree centrality

Hypothesis 3a suggested that gender moderates the relationship between political will and the out-degree centrality. As indicated by model 4 of Table 2, the Interaction between political will and gender is marginally significant (b = 9.87, $p < 0.1$). Following Preacher, Curran, and Bauer's approach (2006), we plotted this moderation effect and conducted simple slope tests. Figure 1 illustrates that for males, political will and out-degree centrality are positively related (simple slope value = 13.71, $p < 0.05$), whereas when employees were females, the relationship became nonsignificant (simple slope value = 3.83, $p > 0.1$, ns). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is supported. The results suggested that male employees with high political will tend to have high out-degree centrality, that is to say, they may more actively seek advice related to their work from their coworkers compared with the females.

Interaction of political will and gender on in-degree centrality

Hypothesis 3b suggested that gender moderates the relationship between political will and the in-degree centrality The HMLR results in model 8 of Table 2 show that the interaction between political will and gender was negatively related to in-degree centrality (b=−2.93, $p < 0.05$). As it can draw from Figure 2, the simple slope tests results (Preacher et al., 2006) reveal when employees were males, political will and in-degree centrality have a negative relationship (simple slope value=−2.86, $p < 0.05$). However, when the staff were females, the relationship became nonsignificant (simple slope value = 0.06, $p > 0.1$, ns). Our Hypothesis 3b was not supported. However, the results showed an interesting pattern that male employees with higher political will have less in-degree centrality. In other words, the employees are less likely to seek advice from male employees with high political will (Figure 3).

Figure 2. The two-way interactive effect of political will and gender on out-degree centrality.

Figure 3. The two-way interactive effect political will and gender on in-degree centrality.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

Despite Mintzberg (1983) apparently emphasized the value of both political skill and political will, the existing literature has been dominated by studies investigating political skill. As we have found political will seems to explain variance over and above political skill in relation to influence tactics and status (Kapoutsis et al., 2017). The exploration of this motivational or psychological variable is a huge advancement and a great supplement to the study of organizational politics when we combined the political will and social network embeddedness in our model. We depict our specific theoretical implications as follows.

First, the current findings contribute to improve our understanding of how personal attributes affect employees' social network embeddedness. Previous studies have examined individuals' demographic characteristics such as education, values such as tradition or hedonism, and personality such as the "Big Five" or self-monitoring and environmental factors to predict social network embeddedness (e.g., Klein et al., 2004; Mehra et al., 2001; Shah, 2000). However, an important motivational antecedent, that is, political will is neglected. Kapoutsis et al. (2017) indicated that it is political will that drive individuals in organizations to invest political

skill in attaining their goals. Political skill alone or an explication of ones' formal or informal power is not sufficient to predict political behavior (Mintzberg, 1983). People with high political will would choose to deal with the issues that are important to them. Thus, in essence, it is political will that define the political behavior and social network structure in the organization. Our study attempted to find out whether political will make a difference in the social network embeddedness. Specifically, this study is the first empirical attempt to investigate political will as a motivational antecedent for employee's social network embeddedness, and we found that political will seems to have no effect for female employees and does make a difference for male employees. These results explored the boundary conditions of motivational effect on employees' network embeddedness which was a good supplement to the study of Klein et al. (2004) and Mehra et al. (2001) and suggested that male and female actors may have different motives to engage themselves in central positions of the advice network. These results revealed a deeper mechanism between gender and social network positioning beyond simple surface demographics.

Second, by discovering the opposite effects of political will on male employees' in-degree and out-degree centrality, this study shed light on the interesting role of individuals' motivation on social network embeddedness. The complex network phenomenon underlying the function of political will reflects the Mintzberg (1983)'s view that organizations could be understood as political arenas. Individuals read social context and adjust their behavior under the role of political will to the social context to develop high-quality social networks (Ferris et al., 2007; Kapoutsis et al., 2017). Consistent with our theory, male employees with high political will are more proactively approach others for work-related advice. However, the same group (male and high political will) is not the target for others who seek advice from. On the contrary, male employees with low political will are in the most central positions for others to seek advice. It almost seems that these male employees are backfired by their high motivations to engage in political behaviors and might be seen as threat or less unreliable sources for work-related advice, whereas those males with low political will are seen as trustworthy target for others to seek advice. These results suggested that motivational basis do not automatically result in centrality in advice network. These findings also demonstrated the complex mechanism between individual motivations and social network embeddedness, which is worthy of future research.

Practical implications

A central position of advice networks is positively related to in-role and extra-role performance (Sparrowe et al., 2001) and information access (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). To encourage employees to embed themselves in a central position, managers will benefit from utilizing different strategies to help male and female employees. As our results showed, males with high political will are more proactively engage in advice-seeking, while females are not affected by this particular motive. Females, as previous research suggested (Kilduff & Brass, 2010), are more likely to be driven by a relationship-oriented motives. Therefore, managers and companies can implement customized training programs for male and female employees to encourage them in their personal network building.

Managers should also be aware of that male employees with high political will are usually not the most popular targets for others to seek advice. As this situation would be frustrating for these

males with high motives, managers can prepare them for the obstacles beforehand. Furthermore, managers should also encourage female workers to be more proactive in work-related information exchange and help them to benefit from the central positions in the social networks in an organization.

Limitations and future directions

First, this study is a cross-sectional design and may not support the current casual hypothesis. Analytically, the casual relationships between gender/political will and social network embeddedness could be reverse. However, it is impossible to argue that social networks affect gender; therefore, it ruled out this possibility. In addition, it also seems to counterintuitive that network positions lead people to develop their political will. Nevertheless, future studies will benefit from a longitudinal design and provide a better support for the casual relationships between individual attributes and network positioning.

Second, this study explored the model based on a Chinese hospital sample. And as previous studies argued, easterners might interpret and understand cross-cultural management knowledge and skills in different ways compared with Westerners (Shapiro, Ozanne, & Saatcioglu, 2008), we also expect future research works could expand to different cultures or industries.

Third, this study is restricted to the sample size and gender distribution of participants. In order to make our findings more generalizable to greater populations and more organizations, future studies could extend our study to more organizations and more gender-balanced participants in order to generate the findings to a broader population. Finally, we would investigate the combined effect of political will and political skill in predicting the social network embeddedness as they both are important for the success of political behavior.

Authors' Note

Chenxi Wang's new affiliation is Nanjing University Of Finance & Economics School of business administration.

Author Biographies

Jun Yang is an assistant professor at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her primary area of research is in organizational behavior and human resource management, specifically, her research addresses social influence and moral reasoning processes in interpersonal relationships, with particular reference to dysfunctional leadership, ostracism, bullying, voice, and social networks.

Chao Liu is a post-hoc researcher at Peking University, and his research focuses on abusive supervision, organizational politics and job performance.

Chenxi Wang is an assistant professor at Nanjing University Of Finance & Economics.

Qinghong Zhang is an assistant professor of management in Beijing Wuzi University. Her research focuses on workplace stress, employee relation, and organizational behaviors.

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