A Study on the Influence of Responsible Leadership on Civil Servants' Tendency of Avoiding Responsibility

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Abstract: In the new era, why should China weaken and eliminate the phenomenon of avoiding responsibility such as "not acting as an official" and "slow acting" that still exist in some parts of the governance, and become a key point in breaking the bottleneck of China's governance capacity leap. This study focuses on 225 civil servants and their main leaders, and uses hierarchical regression method to explore the impact and mechanism of responsible leadership on civil servants' tendency of avoiding responsibility. Research has found that: (1) responsible leadership has a negative impact on the tendency of avoiding responsibility; (2) Subjective responsibility, as an intrinsic motivation, plays a complete mediating role between responsible leadership and tendency of avoiding responsibility; (3) The subjective power distance significantly positively moderates the positive impact of responsible leadership on subjective sense of responsibility; (4) The objective power distance significantly negatively regulates the positive impact of responsible leadership on subjective sense of responsibility. These research results are not only conducive to enriching and expanding the theory of responsible leadership behavior and the impact of power distance in the public sector environment, but also have practical significance in curbing the potential tendency of civil servants to avoid responsibility.

1. Introduction

After the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) theory into China's administrative reform, one of its focuses was the introduction of efficient mechanisms and management techniques of enterprises. Along with this, business management theory has taken root in the public sector, and the theory of leadership style has entered the academic field. The traditional Chinese scholars, who have long been influenced by Confucianism, have a natural affinity for the idea of "taking the world as one's own" and are more inclined to see things from the perspective of responsibility fulfillment [1]. The modern civil service group is still in the Chinese environment and is deeply influenced by this idea, such as the concept of "one side for the official, one side for the benefit. Therefore, the theory of responsible leadership style, which is in line with it, deserves to be more applied in the Chinese context.

But the opposite of responsibility is the phenomenon of "avoidance" that has long existed in the officialdom. There is still room for corruption and inaction. The political bureau of the CPC Central

Committee held a meeting on December 7, 2021 to study and deploy the construction of the clean government and anti-corruption work. The company's main goal is to build a high-quality professional cadre, enhance the political consciousness of the Two Upholds, strengthen ideological refinement, political training, practical training, professional training, know responsibility in the heart, take responsibility in the body, fulfill responsibility in action. Standing on a longer timeline, the strict discipline construction after the 18th National Congress has made the civil service team pay more attention to the fulfillment of their own responsibilities, i.e. administrative ethics. In recent years, China has proposed to put civil service team building in a prominent position, and the leadership team should be built around the dimensions of political awareness, ideals and beliefs, responsibility implementation, etc., through strengthening daily professional training and consciously fulfilling job responsibilities and social responsibilities. In reality, such as the Spring Festival in early 2021, some places have added layers of codes to restrict the return of normal people to their hometowns, in which Zhejiang has followed up on 236 outstanding clues related to the return of epidemic prevention and code increase reflected through platforms such as "Zhejiang Supervision", reflecting the "lazy government style" of civil servants The "lazy" behavior of civil servants to avoid responsibility. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, how to enhance the effectiveness of civil service leadership and reduce the tendency to avoid responsibility? Reinforcing responsibility, combating responsibility avoidance, promoting anti-corruption efforts, adhering to responsible leadership, and building a responsible government can only cure the root cause.

In addition, Liu et al. (2017) argue that the intervention of responsible leadership on outcome variables such as objective performance of members often produces effects through mediating mechanisms such as responsibility perception [2], and the influence of responsible leadership on civil servants' tendency to avoid responsibility may also need to be mediated through psychological factors such as responsibility perception. There are few empirical studies addressing this issue. Li et al. (2018) pointed out that the high power distance orientation in China's traditional culture and the hierarchical and procedural characteristics of administrative organizations have led to a strong atmosphere of authority in the public sector in China [3], and few studies have been conducted on the effects of power distance on responsible leadership and responsibility perceptions or subjective responsibility perceptions, and the existing literature is more related to the corporate level than the civil service group.

Based on the empirical data obtained from a questionnaire survey of 225 civil servants, this study will focus on the mechanism of influence of responsible leadership on civil servants' tendency to avoid responsibility, and on this basis, it will investigate the mediating role of subjective responsibility and the moderating role of power distance on responsible leadership and subjective responsibility. Through this study, on the one hand, we expect to enrich and expand the theory of responsible leadership behavior, and more profoundly understand and reveal the mechanism of action between responsible leadership and civil servants' tendency to avoid responsibility; on the other hand, we also expect to identify the special influencing factors of civil servants' subjective sense of responsibility in Chinese government organs, and provide empirical references for civil servants' groups to better practice administrative ethics.

2. Formulation of research hypotheses

2.1 Accountable leadership and the tendency to avoid responsibility

After foreign scholars Maak et al. (2006) proposed a definition of responsible leadership [4], Chinese scholars Song Jiwen et al. (2009) added that responsible leadership is a leadership behavior based on responsible actions that balance the demands of multiple parties and mutually beneficial intentions to enhance the motivation for sustainable organizational development [5]. The existing

literature on blame avoidance focuses on government governance, and Weaver (1986) explores the motivational perspective and finds that officials' actions are influenced by multidimensional motivational factors, and that government bureaucrats motivated by blame avoidance often act conservatively, trying to reduce behavioral risk to the point of opposing risky policy innovations [6]. Liu Ran (2020) abstracted the blame avoidance paths of members of administrative organizations at all levels and concluded that they consist of finding scapegoats, intervening in agenda setting, and selecting social opinions [7]. For example, the household vandalism incident of Xiaogan epidemic prevention and control in 2020 is a typical case of bureaucratic intent to avoid responsibility; to strictly prevent the surge of cases, the administration resorted to violent law enforcement behaviors, and the main person in charge at the county level was not held accountable, while the mayor of the township where the incident occurred became a scapegoat and was heavily punished. The lower the tendency of civil servants to avoid responsibility, the lower the tendency to avoid responsibility can be cut. For example, under the existing inspection and inspection system and the strong accountability mechanism since the 18th National Congress, the problem of inaction and avoidance of responsibility due to the panic of competence and other issues exposed around the country is subject to targeted governance, which is essentially the restraint of the construction of responsible leadership on the tendency to avoid responsibility, etc. The rectification of cadre morale measures have begun to bear fruit, and the tendency of public officials to take responsibility has significantly increased and the avoidance behavior has decreased, while the adoption of the tendency to avoid responsibility is easier to quantify and study.

Tian Daihong (2020) argues that civil servants and other leaders need to consolidate the construction of a sense of responsibility and gradually get rid of the inactive public life that is overly inclined to self-interest claims and only hopes to do less and make fewer mistakes, thus correcting the culture of blame avoidance [8]. In addition, under the traditional bureaucratic culture of China's officialdom, subordinate members tend to obey authority, and the responsible leadership of leading cadres may exemplify the influence of the directional flag to the organization's subordinates, and reach the demonstration of responsibility under the pressure-based system, which makes the civil service group inwardly respectful of blame avoidance, but the literature studying the mechanism between responsible leadership and the tendency of blame avoidance is scarce and lacks empirical analysis. Based on the above analysis, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1: Responsible leadership significantly and negatively affects the tendency to avoid blame.

2.2 The mediating role of subjective responsibility perception

Similar to perception of responsibility, subjective responsibility focuses on belief orientation and covers factors such as intrinsic conscience toward the organization to which they belong, distinguishing it from objective responsibility [9]. In contrast to the reality of private workers and public bureaucrats, the individual subjective sense of responsibility of both is more based on the perception of further seeking organizational or public interests based on the fulfillment of objective responsibilities such as job duties. The generation of employees' subjective sense of responsibility is achieved by responsible leaders through the transmission of symbiotic beliefs and exemplary actions for the implementation of social responsibility with those who have a stake in the organization, while the promotion of individual performance of the organization by internal officers is guided by the perception of subjective responsibility, which has a mediating effect [2]. It has a facilitative effect, which is mainly achieved by enhancing their moral identity [10]. Therefore, the promotion of responsible leaders' moral identity to their subordinates will lead to the enhancement of their sense of responsibility at the psychological level, and the strengthening of subjective responsibility will lead to the decrease of subordinates' tolerance regarding unethical and other behaviors, the increase of

resistance to similar avoidance and other behaviors, and the corresponding decrease of the tendency to avoid responsibility. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Responsible leadership significantly and negatively affects the tendency to avoid responsibility by enhancing subjective responsibility.

2.3 Moderating effect of power distance

The power distance involved in the organization Dorfman (1988) originally analyzed as the understanding or value judgment of individuals in an institution or group for the inconsistent situation of power between people at different levels [11], while Huang Jiong (2018) argued that it mainly means the dependency relationship between leaders and subordinates or the spacing of juridical position authority as the emotional spacing between them [12]. The former emphasizes members' subjective acceptance of the current division of power in the organization, while the latter is based on the actual distribution of institutional power subordinates' perception of the dependency relationship with the leader. Therefore, this paper argues that power distance should be divided into two: subjective power distance and objective power distance.

2.3.1 The moderating effect of subjective power distance on responsible leadership and subjective responsibility

Wang et al. (2021) argue that leaders with authoritative overtones positively orient members to innovative behaviors, as they contribute significantly to the smooth flow of the "obey-execute" path up and down the hierarchy and to institutional order stability and even team cohesion [13]. The work is carried out with the aim of members following and properly establishing authority, which is often referred to as "establishing authority and trust", and thus establishing the order and foundation of work. When a sense of respect for authority is gradually impregnated into members' perceptions, they are more willing to respect and actively follow their superiors, their subjective acceptance of the status quo of matching power differences in the institution they work in increases, subjective power distance widens, and leaders are more likely to promote policies within the institution or organization or to influence and shape members through paths such as social learning. In such types of institutions, the positive impact of responsible leaders on the subjective responsibility of civil servants throughout the institution will be somewhat amplified. On the contrary, when the subjective power distance is small, members are dissatisfied with the power difference situation and may respond to the unit work with negative attitudes, and the positive stimulating effect of responsible leadership on subjective responsibility at this time will be somewhat inhibited. Therefore, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H3: Subjective power distance significantly and positively moderates the positive effect of responsible leadership on subjective responsibility.

2.3.2 Moderating effect of objective power distance on responsibility-based leadership and subjective sense of responsibility

Individual members' perceptions of power distance present a state of differential distribution of power, resources, etc. in the group, while its significant negative moderation of the positive influence of transformational leadership on knowledge sharing [14]. Meanwhile, Huang Jiong (2019) points out that in high power distance oriented institutions, members are not easily treated equally and innovative behaviors are difficult to be positively motivated and outputted [12]. In units with a high degree of centralization, the "head" position has much more power than the subordinates and is less dependent on other members. The existence of objective power distance makes subordinates feel that they can influence relatively few matters and have a limited role in decision-making or even

participate in decision-making will be a formality, and the role of responsible leadership on subjective responsibility may be limited. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Objective power distance significantly and negatively moderates the positive effect of responsible leadership on subjective responsibility. In summary, the theoretical model of this study is shown in Figure 1.
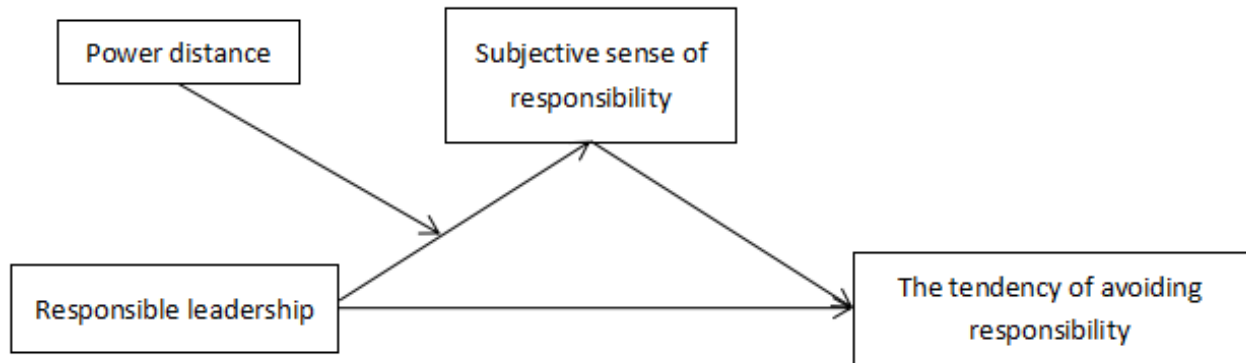

Figure 1: Research Framework Diagram

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research sample and data collection

In this study, 72 valid data were collected using the snowball method in the pre-study stage, and exploratory factor analysis was conducted on them after data collection to test whether the question item settings were reasonable and whether the research variables could be measured more accurately, and this survey mainly served for the detection and optimization of the scale. The actual survey was conducted in Yuncheng, Shanxi Province, in October 2021, and the survey subjects were mainly civil servants in Yuncheng City, and 72 valid questionnaires were finally collected. The main criteria for judging invalid questionnaires are: whether the answers to each question item are consistent, too many questions are missed, etc., the same below. In terms of gender, 63.9% were male and 36.1% were female; in terms of age, 16.7% were under 30 years old, 16.7% were 30-40 years old, 33.3% were 40-50 years old and above 50 years old; in terms of education, 16.7% were college and below, 79.2% were bachelor's degree and 4.2% were master's degree and above; in terms of rank, 43.1% were section member level and In terms of job categories, 51.4% were in general management, 8.3% in professional and technical categories, 29.2% in administrative and law enforcement categories, and 11.1% in others; in terms of leadership positions, 38.9% were in leadership positions and 61.1% in non-leadership positions.

For the scales developed by foreign scholars, two doctoral students were invited to conduct "translation-back translation" to ensure the consistency of the concepts. The formal survey was conducted at a university cadre training base from November to December 2021, and 225 valid questionnaires were collected from all civil servants who received training at the base during this period. Among them, 65.9% were male and 34.1% were female; in terms of age, 24.0% were under 30 years old, 19.3% were 30-40 years old, 32.3% were 40-50 years old, and 24.4% were over 50 years old; in terms of education, 25.6% were college and below, 65.0% were bachelor's degree, and 9.4% were master's degree and above; in terms of rank, the section member level accounted for In terms of rank, 29.9% were at section level, 18.6% at deputy section level, 25.1% at full section level, and 26.4% at deputy division level and above; in terms of job categories, 48.8% were in general management, 23.7% in professional and technical categories, 7.1% in administrative and law enforcement categories, and 20.4% in others; in terms of leadership positions, 31.9% were in

leadership positions and 68.1% in non-leadership positions. The basic characteristics of the respondents reflect the good representativeness of the respondents in this study.

3.2 Measurement tools

This study mainly used the mature scales developed by domestic and foreign scholars, which have been proved to have high reliability and validity in previous studies, and individual variables were measured by the scales developed or integrated by this study. Meanwhile, the gender, age, education, and rank of civil servants were considered as control variables. Except for the control variables, all variables were scored on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 to 7 indicating "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

3.2.1 Responsible leadership

This variable was measured by the scale developed by Guo et al. [15], which was divided into 2 dimensions of interest balance and self-improvement, with 10 items. The Cronbach's alpha value of this scale in this study is 0.968.

3.2.2 Subjective sense of responsibility

This variable measures questions summarized in this study according to the administrative scholar Starling [16], that the basic values covered by administrative responsibility are responsiveness, flexibility, competence, procedural legitimacy, responsibility and honesty, etc. Therefore, this study developed six items correspondingly, and the representative items are: "I try to consider and respond to people's reasonable demands when I need to deal with them I try to consider and respond to their reasonable demands when dealing with the public" and "In the process of performing my duties, I am good at acting flexibly according to specific situations and specific people". The Cronbach's alpha of this scale in this study was 0.962 with good factor loadings in the pre-survey and 0.931 in the formal survey. The specific questions on the scale of subjective sense of responsibility show as table 1.

Table 1: Specific questions on the scale of subjective sense of responsibility

1. When dealing with the public, I will try to consider and respond to their reasonable demands
2. In the process of performing my duties, I am good at acting flexibly according to specific situations and specific objects
3. My abilities allow me to complete my current position with ease
4. I will strictly follow the legal procedures in my work and try not to be influenced by my personal subjective will and preference
5. If there is a mistake or failure in my work, I can take responsibility for it even if it is not all on me.
6. I feel very guilty for a long time afterwards when I violate a rule such as honesty or integrity in my work, for whatever reason

Design basis: Starling, Xian Chen. Public Sector Management [M]. Shanghai Translation Press, 2003.

3.2.3 Power distance

Combining the existing literature, this study argues that there should be objective and subjective power distance, and that they reflect two completely different dimensions, the former measuring the actual power distance of the organization in which they work, and the latter measuring the subjective power distance orientation of individuals. The objective power distance was measured using a scale modified by Huang [12] with three questions, including "In the current unit, leaders rarely consult with their subordinates when making major decisions" and "In the current unit, leaders rarely consult with their subordinates about their work and suggestions "etc. The subjective power distance was

measured using the scale developed by Dorfman[11], and three items were selected, with representative items such as "Leaders do not have to consult with or seek the opinions of subordinates when making major decisions. The results of the factor analysis showed that the validity of the distinction between objective power distance and subjective power distance was good, and the Cronbach's alpha value of the former was 0.885, while the Cronbach's alpha value of the latter was 0.825.

3.2.4 The tendency of avoiding responsibility

This variable measures the question items summarized in this study according to Ni [17], Leong C [18] et al. on blame avoidance, with six entries, and the representative entries are: "A major accident occurred in the area under the direct jurisdiction of leader C. Leader C punished his subordinate who was in charge of this area heavily and simply admitted his own negligence in hiring", and "Recently, a major decision went wrong, but Leader C insisted that the decision was made by the team members collectively and he should not be responsible for it", "There was an innovative plan that could benefit the local people, but Leader C felt that it might bring risks to his career and decided to give up the plan after thinking it over. The scale covers both ex post and ex ante blame avoidance. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the pre-survey was 0.897 and the factor loading was good, and the Cronbach's alpha for the formal survey was 0.924. The specific questions on the scale of the tendency of avoiding responsibility show as Table 2.

Table 2: Specific questions on the scale of the tendency of avoiding responsibility

1. A major accident occurred in the area under C's direct jurisdiction, and C heavily punished his subordinates in charge of this area, only admitting his own negligence in hiring
2. After a violent conflict between the government and the public in an administrative enforcement was widely reported by the media, C shifted the responsibility to a temporary government worker in order to reduce the pressure of public opinion
3. Recently a major decision went wrong, C insisted that the decision was made by the team members collectively, and he should not be mainly responsible for it
4. There is an innovative plan to benefit the local people, but C feels that it may bring risks to his career and decides to give up the plan after careful consideration
5. There is a proposal for the benefit of subordinates, but C feels that it may offend his superiors, and it is also a lot of work, so he finally decided not to raise it in the meeting
6.C can always be dedicated to complete the work of superiors, but also never take the initiative to solicit things, because he feels that the current institutional environment is more to do more wrong

Design basis:
1) Ni Xing, Wang R. From Credit Claiming to Blame Avoidance: The Change of Government Officials' Behavior [J]. CASS Journal of Political Science, 2017(2):10.
2) Leong C, Howlett M. On credit and blame: disentangling the motivations of public policy decision-making behavior [J]. Policy Sciences, 2017.

4. Data analysis and hypothesis testing

4.1 Common methodological bias

The data analysis in this study mainly used SPSS22.0 and Mplus7 statistical software. In order to reduce the effect of common method bias, this study controlled for possible common method bias by using measures such as disrupting the order of variable questions, separating the fillers and separating the time of filling out the responses in the survey session. In the statistical analysis session, the common method bias was examined using Harman's one-way method by including all measurement questions for the five variables of responsible leadership, subjective power distance, objective power

distance, subjective responsibility, and tendency to avoid responsibility in the model and taking unrotated factor analysis. The test yielded a total of five factors extracted, while the first factor explained 37.150% < 40% of the variance, so this study controlled better for common method bias.

4.2 Validated factor analysis

With the help of Mplus7, this study examined the discriminant validity of the five variables by validated factor analysis. As shown in Table 3, the fit indices of the five-factor model to the actual data (χ^2=871.420, df=340, χ^2/df=2.563, CFI=0.908, TLI=0.898, RMSEA=0.084, SRMR=0.048) were at or near the standard and significantly better than the other models, indicating that the five variables in this study had good discriminant validity.

Table 3: Results of validated factor analysis (N=225)

Model	Factor	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
One-factor model	RL+OD+SD+SRS+RE	3281.211	350	9.375	0.493	0.452	0.193	0.181
Two-factor model	OD+SD;RL+SRS+RE	2835.251	349	8.124	0.570	0.534	0.178	0.181
Three-factor model	OD+SD;RL+SRS;RE	1936.885	347	5.582	0.725	0.700	0.143	0.139
Four-factor model	OD+SD;RL;SRS;RE	1173.700	344	3.412	0.856	0.842	0.104	0.104
Five-factor model	RL;OD;SD;SRS;RE	871.420	340	2.563	0.908	0.898	0.084	0.048

Notes: RL stands for responsible leadership, OD stands for objective power distance, SD stands for subjective power distance, SRS stands for subjective sense of responsibility, and RE stands for the tendency of avoiding responsibility.

4.3 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

The results of the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of the main variables in this study are shown in Table 4. the results of the correlation analysis showed that: responsible leadership had a significant negative correlation with objective power distance (r=-0.336, p<0.001) and a significant negative correlation with subjective power distance (r=-0.158, p<0.05); subjective responsibility had a significant negative correlation with subjective power distance (r=-0.323, p<0.001) and a significant positive correlation with responsible leadership (r=0.505, p<0.001); avoidance tendency had a significant positive correlation with subjective power distance. p<0.001) and significantly positively correlated with responsible leadership (r=0.505, p<0.001); tendency to avoid responsibility was significantly positively correlated with subjective power distance (r=0.366, p<0.001), significantly negatively correlated with responsible leadership (r=-0.167, p<0.05) and significantly negatively correlated with subjective sense of responsibility (r=-0.239, p< 0.001). These results provide preliminary evidence for subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of main variables (N=225)

	1	2	3	4	5
1.Objective power distance	**(0.885)**				
2.Subjective power distance	0.065	**(0.825)**			
3.Responsible leadership	-0.336***	-0.158*	**(0.968)**		
4.Subjective sense of responsibility	0.009	-0.323***	0.505***	**(0.931)**	
5.The tendency of avoiding responsibility	0.068	0.366***	-0.167*	-0.239***	**(0.924)**
Average value	4.324	2.374	5.330	6.087	1.987
Standard deviation	1.668	1.433	1.397	0.811	1.091

Notes: *** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, * indicates p<0.05, two-tailed test, bolded values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha values.

4.4 Hypothesis testing

This study used cascade regression method for hypothesis testing and the results are presented in the table below.

First, the main effect test. In hypothesis 1, there is a significant negative effect of responsible leadership on the tendency to avoid blame. To test this hypothesis, this study first set the tendency to avoid blame as the dependent variable, then added the control variables gender, age, education, and rank to the model, respectively, and finally put the independent variable responsible leadership into the model for regression. The results of the hierarchical regression are shown in Model 1 and Model 2 in Table 5. From the corresponding data results, it is clear that responsible leadership has a significant negative effect on the tendency to avoid responsibility (M2, β= -0.205, $p<0.05$) and hypothesis 1 is verified.

Table 5: Results of main effects and mediating effects regression analysis (N=225)

	The tendency of avoiding responsibility			
	Model 1	Model2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	-0.138	-0.114	-0.091	-0.088
Age	-0.049	-0.046	-0.037	-0.038
Academic qualifications	-0.101	-0.121	-0.112	-0.119
Rank	0.185	0.171	0.218	0.208
Responsible leadership		-0.205*		-0.082
Subjective sense of			-0.291***	-0.250**
F	1.829	2.867*	4.405**	3.809**
R^2	0.046	0.087	0.127	0.132
ΔR^2	0.046	0.041*	0.081***	0.046**

Table 6: Results of regression analysis of moderating effects (N=225)

	Subjective sense of responsibility				Subjective sense of responsibility			
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Gender	0.162*	0.105	0.052	0.066	0.162*	0.105	0.123	0.134*
Age	0.041	0.035	0.06	0.078	0.041	0.035	0.068	0.125
Academic qualifications	-0.037	0.012	0.035	0.011	-0.037	0.012	0.024	0.032
Rank	0.116	0.149	0.089	0.089	0.116	0.149	0.122	0.055
Responsible leadership		0.492***	0.452***	0.463***		0.492***	0.581***	0.699***
Objective power distance							0.229**	0.268***
Subjective power distance			-0.267***	-0.231**				
Objective power distance*Responsible leadership								-0.386***
Subjective power distance*Responsible leadership				0.199**				
F	1.536	11.353***	12.803***	12.825***	1.536	11.353***	11.592***	17.489***
R^2	0.039	0.273	0.339	0.376	0.039	0.273	0.317	0.451
ΔR^2	0.039	0.234***	0.065***	0.037**	0.039	0.234***	0.044**	0.134***

Second, the mediating effect is tested. In hypothesis 2, there is a mediating effect of subjective responsibility between responsible leadership and blame avoidance tendency. In this paper, we refer to Hayes' (2013) research method and use cascade regression to test the mediating effect of subjective responsibility. The regression results are shown in Model 3 and Model 4 in the table. As can be seen, model 3 is based on model 1 with the addition of the mediating variable subjective responsibility,

which has a significant negative relationship with the tendency to avoid blame (M3, β= -0.291, p< 0.001); model 4 is based on model 2 with the addition of the mediating variable subjective responsibility, the positive effect of the independent variable responsible leadership on the tendency to avoid blame (M4, β= -0.082, p > 0.05) is not significant , while the positive effect of the mediating variable subjective sense of responsibility on the tendency to avoid blame (M4, β= -0.250, p< 0.01) remained significant. Therefore, subjective responsibility has a fully mediating effect on the relationship between responsible leadership and the tendency to avoid blame, and responsible leadership will actively promote civil servants to improve their own subjective responsibility and thus reduce the tendency to avoid blame.

Finally, conditioning effects were tested. To eliminate the effect of covariance, the interaction terms were centered before regression. In Table 6, responsible leadership had a significant positive effect on subjective responsibility (M6, β= 0.492, p < 0.001) and the interaction term of responsible leadership and subjective power distance had a significant positive effect on subjective responsibility (M8, β= 0.199, p < 0.01). This indicates that the greater the subjective power distance, the stronger the positive effect of responsible leadership on subjective responsibility, and hypothesis 3 is confirmed. Models 9 to 12 then test the moderating effect of objective power distance, i.e., responsible leadership has a significant positive effect on subjective responsibility (M10, β= 0.492, p< 0.001) and the interaction term of responsible leadership and objective power distance has a significant negative effect. This indicates that the smaller the objective power distance, the stronger the positive relationship between responsible leadership and subjective responsibility, and hypothesis 4 is supported.

5. Conclusion and Prospect

5.1 Research Conclusion

In the wave of service-oriented government construction, there is a lack of empirical research on whether responsible leadership in public service constitutes a constraint on civil servants' tendency to avoid responsibility and what its influence mechanism is. This study focuses on the relationship between responsible leadership, which emphasizes the maintenance of trust with stakeholders and the implementation of social responsibility by the leadership, and the tendency of civil servants to avoid responsibility.

The results show that, first, responsible leadership has a negative effect on the tendency of avoiding responsibility. Second, subjective sense of responsibility as an intrinsic motivation plays a fully mediating role between responsible leadership and the tendency of avoiding responsibility. Third, subjective power distance significantly and positively moderates the positive effect of responsible leadership on subjective sense of responsibility. Fourth, objective power distance significantly and negatively moderates the positive effect of responsible leadership on subjective sense of responsibility.

5.2 Management Implications and Future Prospects

The implications of this study for management practice are: first, the construction of   government teams should promote the deeper development of responsible leadership by means of professional studies and other learning methods, and enhance the awareness of responsibility from the individual awareness level, or accelerate the construction of responsible leadership through the introduction of specific policies to force civil servants to enhance the awareness of job responsibility for political future considerations. Second, China's government organs should pay great attention to the effectiveness of responsible leadership in stimulating the subjective sense of responsibility of civil servants and thus reducing the tendency to avoid responsibility, and the government leadership team

should strengthen their own cultivation and be strict with themselves in performing their social and job responsibilities, so as to exemplify the role of their subordinates and attract them to follow their example. At the same time, through reasonable promotion, full trust and empowerment of subordinates and other subordinate interest demands, humanistic care for them, to stimulate civil servants to identify with their positions, so as to enhance their subjective sense of responsibility and reduce the tendency to avoid responsibility; Third, the implementation of the responsibility-based leadership process, the leadership team should be responsible for various forms of recognition of subordinates, so that the majority of cadres from the heart to enhance the subjective sense of responsibility. At the same time, the existing accountability mechanism should be strengthened and combined with responsible leadership, so that the latter has institutional protection and different degrees of punishment for cadres who avoid responsibility, but it is necessary to guard against problems such as replacing normal management with accountability and falsely accusing responsible cadres to combat the subjective sense of responsibility of civil servants. Implementing appropriate fault-tolerant mechanisms to protect the legitimate rights and interests of qualified public officials, so that they can be assured to devote themselves to their posts; Fourthly, the government should start from the system construction, the actual objective power gap is too large institutions can be streamlined, moderate downward decentralization, and with the "last position" system, strengthen the democratic atmosphere, so that members of institutions dare to speak, dare to break through, dare to do. Moderate consolidation of the existing system of chief executive responsibility, maintaining a moderate degree of centralized power, to ensure that members of the duty-oriented. It is also important to make the values of cooperation and subjective power distance between the upper and lower levels into the assessment indexes, so as to make the whole unit think in the same way, implement the documents and decisions, and respond to the feedback in time, and enlarge the overall power of the public service team, but it is also important to prevent the subjective power distance from being too large and the sense of authority compliance from being too solidified, which may lead to the possibility of autocracy.

This study also has some limitations: first, the sample in this study is concentrated on 225 civil servants in a cadre training base, which has some limitations on the influence of variables and may be constrained by other factors such as the special local official culture. Second, although this paper discusses the role of accountability mechanisms in the conclusion and insight section, the model design mainly considers the influence of responsible leadership and subjective responsibility on civil servants' tendency to avoid responsibility, but does not include the relevant accountability mechanisms, and subsequent studies can include such variables for further empirical analysis.

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