

實習生政治技能、上下屬關係與實習滿意：正向情感的調節角色

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摘 要

為使實習生從實習中獲得最大滿足與效益，調查並瞭解影響實習滿意的關鍵因素，以確保實習滿意的機制，實是當務之急。為此，我們以社會/政治影響理論為視角，採用政治技能和上下屬關係兩個觀點，研究實習滿意之前因變數，並檢驗正向情感是否對政治技能和上下屬關係之間具有調節作用。我們對 85 名實習生進行量化研究，結果發現：(1)政治技能對實習滿意有正向影響；(2)政治技能對上下屬關係有正向影響；(3)上下屬關係對政治技能與實習滿意之關係有中介效果；(4)正向情感正向調節政治技能與上下屬關係的關係。本研究的理論和實務貢獻以及限制，討論於後。

關鍵字：實習滿意度、政治技能、上下屬關係、正向情感

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Intern Political Skill, Supervisor-Subordinate Guanxi and Internship Satisfaction: The Moderating Role of Positive Affect

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Abstract

Investigating and understanding key predictors of as well as the mechanisms by which ensuring internship satisfaction with a purpose of helping interns get the most from an internship is imperative. In this respect, through the lens of social/political influence theory, we examined the antecedent variables of internship satisfaction from political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi perspectives. We tested whether positive affect has a moderating role on the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. We performed a quantitative research involving 85 student interns and according to the findings: (1) interns' political skill positively affects internship satisfaction; (2) political skill positively affects supervisor-subordinate guanxi; (3) supervisor-subordinate guanxi mediates the political skill-internship satisfaction relationship; (4) positive affect positively moderates the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. Both theoretical and practical contributions as well as limitations of the study are addressed at the end.

Key words: Internship satisfaction, Political skill, Supervisor-subordinate guanxi, Positive affect

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I. Introduction

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020), internships have been realized as one critical component for the successful cultivation of globally competent and competitive workforce. Based on the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business standard 13 guidelines, higher education institutions, especially business schools, should employ experiential learning activities such as internships to expose students to practical world (AACSB, 2018). For students, interning at a company and experiencing first-hand the day-to-day operations of a business can be a key stepping stone to their first steps towards a career (Wang, 2021). Around the world, internships have become a crucial part of the transition from education to employment, a strong fact identified by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Alam & de Diego, 2019). Meanwhile, ILO claimed “concerns have been expressed in recent years about the role of internships in serving as an effective bridge between education and (paid) work” (Stewart et al., 2018, p. v).

Referring to findings of internships research review, one could confirm that the essence of internship effectiveness lies on the satisfaction of interns (e.g., Gerken et al., 2012; Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2014; Wang, 2021). As interns are the “most important beneficiary of the internship outcomes” (Moghaddam, 2011), investigating and understanding key predictors of as well as the mechanisms by which ensuring interns’ satisfaction with a purpose of helping interns get the most from an internship is imperative (Clark, 2003; Koo et al., 2016).

Internship satisfaction, meaning a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s internship experience, is the key ingredient to the effectiveness of internship (D’abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009). To investigate internship satisfaction, the well-known study by D’abate et al. (2009) assessed three categories of factors, namely job characteristics, work environment characteristics, and contextual factors, which may have a positive impact on internship satisfaction. Their findings revealed that job characteristics, especially task significance and feedback, and work environment characteristics, especially learning opportunities, supervisor support and organizational satisfaction, were the best predictors of interns’ satisfaction with their internships. Succeeding the work of D’abate, Youndt and Wenzel, many scholars have examined the influences of the three categories of organizational factors mentioned above on internship satisfaction (e.g., Maaravi et al., 2020; Wen, Huang, & Chen, 2018).

However, literature reviews on the determinants of internship satisfaction suggested that interns’ satisfaction with their internships does not stem narrowly from job, work environment, and context-related factors at the organizational level, but also from personal skills and characteristics-related factors at the individual intern level (Maertz et al., 2014; Ruslan et al., 2021). Indeed, for example, when investigating factors influencing internship satisfaction among Chinese students, To and Lung (2020) found that both organizational factors (i.e., supervisor support) and personal factors (i.e., perceived social values) had a direct and significant impact on internship satisfaction. Although interns’ personal factors are of critical importance to their internship satisfaction, Liu, Xu, and Weitz

alluded “the role of interns themselves in shaping internship experiences has received little scholarly attention” (2011). Thus, to complement the limited investigation and understanding of the personal aspects of interns, we sought in the current research to study internship satisfaction through an examination of interns’ personal factors.

Individual skills of interns have been proved playing a dominating role in determining internship satisfaction (Huang et al., 2019). Nonetheless, only few research studied specifically which one of the interns’ skills predisposes to success in their practice and in turn leads to the satisfying experience of the internship (Liu et al., 2011), and even fewer studies were grounded on a conceptual model in doing hypothesis testing (e.g., Bartkus, 2007; Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010).

For dealing with aforementioned issue, we investigated internship satisfaction through the lens of social/political influence theory. We adopted the advice of D’abate et al. (2009) to augment perspectives from wider organizational literature and applied the notion of Garavan and Murphy (2001) that internship is a social process. According to social/political influence theory, organizations are social and political arenas (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007; Mintzberg, 1985) and political skill is considered as the “most important” individual skill in that (Sun & van Emmerik, 2015). Political skill is defined as “the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 127). Political skill is a predictor of and has a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction in organizational literature (Munyon et al., 2015), albeit, the direct effect of interns’ political skill on internship satisfaction has not been previously studied in the context of internship (Liu et al., 2014).

Social/political influence theory poists that organizations are political battleground because the work environment of organizations are composed of multifaceted social networks in which individuals vie for finite resources as well as compete against each other for pursuing selfish ends (Mintzberg, 1985). If indeed organizations are full of politics, this reality may first be directly experienced during an internship. Naïve interns should equip with political skill in order to gain social effectiveness (Ferris et al., 2007). Political skill presents a great potential for victory to deal with the exercise of politics. In fact, the internship study of Liu et al. showed that politically skilled interns have better favoritism and liking from their supervisors on internship sites (2014). Magnusen and Kim found that interns high on political skill felt confident and assured to their internships (2016). Enjoying such positive feelings mentioned above toward their internships, interns with political skill should thus result in higher level of internship satisfaction. Thus, one aim of the paper is to test the prediction power of political skill for internship satisfaction.

A common cliché “It’s who you know, not what you know”, emphasizes that the importance and influence of relational ties in generating outcomes in organizations. Supervisor-subordinate guanxi, referring a social, emotional and personal connection between supervisors and subordinates (Chen et al., 2009), or in this case, the interns, is “the most critical interpersonal relationship in various Chinese organizational settings” (Wei et al., 2010) and a significant means of making the internship an

enjoyable one (Rose, 2013). Interns should apply their political skill to develop positive supervisor-subordinate guanxi with their supervisors they must rely on for more resources and opportunities of making their wants and needs satisfied (Law et al., 2000).

To our knowledge, there is no previous research looking into why certain interns in their internships are better able than others at forging high quality supervisor-subordinate guanxi with their supervisors and, as a result of their supervisor-subordinate guanxi, achieving a greater degree of internship satisfaction. To this end, in this study, supervisor-subordinate guanxi is investigated as an outcome of political skill and a mediator between intern political skill and internship satisfaction.

Researchers must examine more moderators in their study of internship, Maertz et al. (2014) urged. To answer this call, we assessed the moderating role of interns' positive affect to the relationship of political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. According to the seminal article of Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005), positive affect, referring to stable individual tendencies to experience pleasant emotional feelings, can make positive impacts to and/or induce a wide range of personal behaviors leading to success. Statistical results showed there is a great association between positive affect and political skill (Bedi & Skowronski, 2014). Arguably, individual differences in positive affect could influence an individual's political skill (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). There is possibility as yet unexplored that positive affect can extend the effect of political skill to supervisor-subordinate guanxi.

Drawing on social/political influence theory (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007; Mintzberg, 1985), the current study is to examine whether and how interns' political skill may affect their internship satisfaction. Specifically, we propose a conceptual model to examine political skill as the primary factor to influence internship satisfaction through the mediating mechanism of supervisor-subordinate guanxi. We further explore the moderating effect of interns' positive affect on political skill-supervisor-subordinate guanxi relationship.

Political skill can be a key as well as a robust explanation of internship satisfaction. However, considering internships as a complicated socialization process (Garavan & Murphy, 2001), political skill alone may not be sufficient for interns to thoroughly grasp the nuance and movement of their surroundings and achieve internship satisfaction. There should be several intervening variables that help explain how political skill being conducive to interns' satisfying experience. Supervisor-subordinate guanxi can be one such contributory variable because interns' guanxi with their supervisors allows them to use instrumentally their political skill to achieve greater encouraging outcomes (Rose, 2013). Besides, political skill, as an individual skill, may be modified by affective proposition such as positive affect (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Plausibly, positive affect can be an influential factor of the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. The satisfaction of internships is rooted in the keen understanding of the effects of interns' political skill, supervisor-subordinate guanxi and positive affect. Figure 1 depicted our conceptual model. We review relevant studies and explicate the theoretical basis of this research in next section.

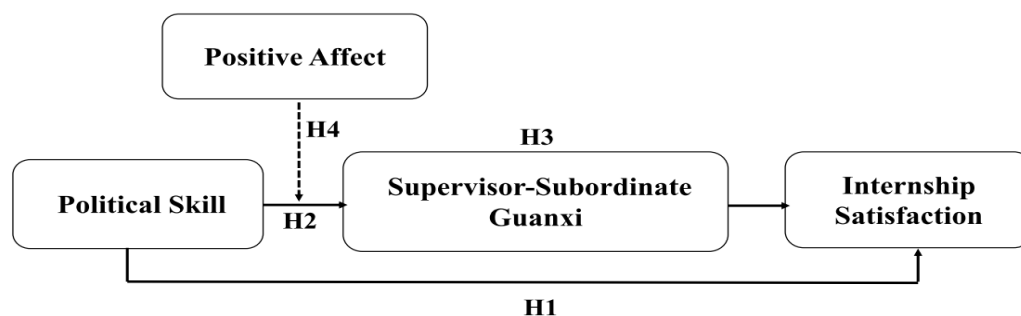


Figure 1. A Hypothesized Conceptual Model

II. Literature Review

Social/political influence theory operationalized via political skill (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007) helps clarify why certain interns may be better than others at developing satisfactory experiences. Political skill as an individual social effectiveness construct includes four distinct social interaction aspects: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity (Ferris et al., 2005). Social astuteness allows interns to understand and anticipate conditions. Interpersonal influence empowers interns to exert influences over others. Networking ability enables interns to set up effective alliances providing supports and resources. Apparent sincerity lets interns to be perceived as trustworthy and sincere in their words and deeds (Ferris et al., 2007). Interns with high political skill are good at navigating and confronting the pervasive phenomenon of politics in organizations and establishing superior social/individual status of them over others and further taking pride in their strengths and achievements (Liu et al., 2014).

In organizational literature, studies have demonstrated that superior job performers are differentiated by their political skill (e.g., Munyon et al., 2015). Abundant evidence has showed the direct influence of political skill on positive outcomes such as career success (e.g., Wei, Chiang, & Wu, 2012), job performance (e.g., Liu et al., 2007) and satisfactory experiences (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007).

Based on the above discussion, we propose that when politically skilled interns act on their political savvy to their advantage for personal goals, there are not only "natural satisfactions in exercising personal competence toward desired outcomes" (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), but it also enhances their confidence and appreciation of the internship, which in turn increases their satisfaction with the internship experience (Liu et al., 2014). We suggest that interns high in political skill should perceive higher internship satisfaction. Consequently, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Intern political skill has a significant positive effect on internship satisfaction.

Supervisor-subordinate guanxi representing close personal ties between supervisors and subordinates has been utilized widely in workplace for instrumental purposes in Chinese society (Law et al., 2000). Interns' guanxi with their supervisors is one of the most helpful social connections they form in their internship (Rose, 2013). According to social/political influence theory, individuals high in political skill are active creators of their environments and are proficient at ensuring the best fit

with their social surroundings (Ferris et al., 2005; Mintzberg, 1985).

Both theoretical argumentation (Ferris et al., 2005) as well as empirical evidence (Wei et al., 2010) have suggested that political skill could associate with supervisor-subordinate guanxi positively because politically skillful individuals “combine social astuteness with the capacity to adjust their behavior to different and changing situational demands in a manner that appears to be sincere, inspires support and trust, and effectively influences and controls the responses of others” (Ferris et al., 2005, p.127). Thus, interns with high political skill should be capable of productively accumulating their closeness with and support from their supervisors for personal gains (Magnusen & Kim, 2016).

Moreover, to interns, supervisors play an indispensable and important role in the process of an internship. Proper treatment and rich guidance regarding work specifics are paramount in contributing to an enjoyable internship experience (Gerken et al., 2012). Internship researchers have found that supervisor support per se can directly lead to internship satisfaction (D’abate et al., 2009) and resources coming from high quality supervisor-subordinate guanxi, such as mentoring, feedback and learning opportunities, are all identified as important determinants of interns’ satisfaction (Maertz et al., 2014). Limited previous research in organizational contexts has found that employees could use their political skill to establish positive supervisor-subordinate guanxi and get access for aforementioned resources and further benefit their personal objectives, such as promotion probability (Tang, Yang & Yang, 2019) and career success (Wei et al., 2010). Accordingly, we argue that the effect of interns’ political skill on internship satisfaction will be mediated by supervisor-subordinate guanxi.

Hypothesis 2: Intern political skill has a significant positive effect on supervisor-subordinate guanxi.

Hypothesis 3: Supervisor-subordinate guanxi mediates the relationship between intern political skill and internship satisfaction.

Positive affect, meaning stable individual tendencies to experience pleasant emotional feelings, can make positive impacts to and/or induce a wide range of personal behaviors leading to success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). It is proposed here that positive affect might influence the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi.

First, prior research showed there is a great association between positive affect and political skill (Bedi & Skowronski, 2014). Specifically, Liu et al. (2007) identified two predictors, affability and proactive orientation, of political skill. Affability, reflecting a likeable and pleasing interpersonal quality and proactive orientation, showing active and energized mood, are both salient displaying manners of individuals with positive affect (Dockray & Steptoe, 2010). In their study, Parker et al. (2008) found participants with higher level of positive affect also showed more social astuteness and interpersonal influence; both politically clever behaviors directed at enhancing favorable relationships at the workplace.

Further, positive affect is known to its effectiveness on social-related behaviors/skills (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Research showed that positive affect can broaden individuals’ thought-

action range (Fredrickson & Branugan, 2005), hence encouraging political skill in begetting a variety of personal resources and fostering supervisor-subordinate guanxi. For example, Ashforth, Sluss and Saks (2007) reported a positive correlation between positive affect and socializing, building a relationship with supervisors and networking.

Apparently, positive affect not only combines the two key antecedent factors of political skill but also can promote the strength of them. Positive affect appears to have a facilitating function for political skilled employees, or here, interns, to build a higher quality social context. Thus, it is reasonable to make following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Positive affect moderates the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. The positive relationship is stronger when positive affect is higher.

III. Research Method

1. Participants and procedures

Participants of the study comprised of 85 business college students of a university in central Taiwan. The sample was recruited by convenience. The participants consisted the following majors within the business college: International Business, Accounting, Finance, Tourism Management and Business Management. All of them were third and fourth year undergraduate students. They took an elective course for a 10-week internship at companies. Student interns were required to work on practical projects and on solving business problems. Students can by taking their internships to put theory into practice, knowledge into action and examine their capabilities in the real work settings (Wang, 2021). The internships were of great value to students in both educational experience and professional development.

Almost of the internship host companies were domestic privately owned, medium and small enterprises (SMEs) and geographically located in Taichung city, the biggest city in central Taiwan. The industry sectors of the host organizations belonged to the traditional and livelihood service industries, including manufacturing, insurance, hospitality, retail and international trade. Couple distinguishing organizational features of Taiwanese traditional industry SMEs clustering in central Taiwan are that they rely heavily on close personal relationships to run business and that constraints of limited resources and uncertainty force people in organizations to act politically for personal goals (Huang, 2022). Mintzberg (1985) characterized organizations with features stated above as political arenas. To student interns, confronting the political arena reality on the internship sites, possess the necessary political skill in order to survive and thrive is of great importance.

Each intern was assigned to a supervisor on the internship site who looked after him/her throughout the internship. After completing their 10-week internship, participants were required to answer an online survey via Survey Cake measuring their responses to the study variables. Neither the names nor any identifying information of the participants were recorded to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Among the participants, mean age was 21.08 years old, 51 females (60%) and 34

males (40%), 77.65% interning in Taiwan and 87.06% indicating no previous internship experience.

2. Measures

We adapted pre-validated measures when designing our survey questionnaire. To avoid “central tendency” bias amongst Chinese respondents (Yang & Chiu, 1987), in the study, all of the measures were carried out using a six-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 6 indicating “strongly agree”. For all the English items, the translation and back-translation procedures were employed. Slight modification was made to render the items to be consistent with the present research context. Two intern students who were not included in the final sample helped us examine the measurement items. Feedbacks obtained from them were used to refine the questionnaire.

We adopted the 18 item Political Skill Inventory (PSI) developed by Ferris et al. (2005) to measure interns’ perceptions of their political skill. The sample items of the scale were “I pay close attention to peoples’ facial expressions” and “I am good at building relationships with influential people”. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the measured items fit the construct of internship satisfaction. The results suggested that factor loadings of each item were all above .50. The Cronbach’s alpha for political skill in present study was .86.

Supervisor-subordinate guanxi was measured using the six item scale of Law et al. (2000), with examples of the sample items including “I always actively share with my supervisor about my thoughts, problems, needs and feelings” and “I care about and have a good understanding of my supervisor’s family and work conditions”. The results of confirmatory factor analysis of supervisor-subordinate guanxi suggested the factor loadings of each item were all above .45. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was found to be .82.

Internship satisfaction was measured using the same three item scale previously being utilized by D’abate, Youndt, and Wenzel (2009) to reflect internship satisfaction in their well-known study. The sample items were “Generally speaking, I was very satisfied with my internship” and “I frequently thought of quitting my internship”. A confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) was conducted to check whether the measured items fit the construct of internship satisfaction. The results suggested that factor loadings of each item were all above .55. The Cronbach’s alpha for internship satisfaction showed fair reliability ($\alpha = .75$).

Positive affect was measured by asking participants to check the 10 item positive affect scale from Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988). The 10 items ask “Thinking about yourself and how you normally feel, to what extent do you general feel?”. The sample items of the 10 items measuring positive affect including “excited” and “inspired”. A confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the measured items fit the construct of positive affect. The results showed that factor loadings of each item were all above .45. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .73.

Four categories of control variables were included in the study: age, gender, location of internship and having internship experience.

IV. Data Analysis

1. Correlation analysis

The descriptive statistics, means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. Having previous internship experience was positively related to supervisor-subordinate guanxi ($r = .23, p < .01$), internship satisfaction ($r = .21, p < .01$) and positive affect ($r = .19, p < .01$). Political skill had significant positive associations with supervisor-subordinate guanxi ($r = .35, p < .01$) and internship satisfaction ($r = .31, p < .01$).

There was a positive relationship between supervisor-subordinate guanxi and internship satisfaction ($r = .39, p < .01$). Positive affect was positively related to political skill ($r = .41, p < .01$), supervisor-subordinate guanxi ($r = .47, p < .01$) and internship satisfaction ($r = .32, p < .01$).

2. Hypothesis testing

Table 2 shows the regression analysis results of the study. Hypothesis 1 nominates that political skill is positively related to internship satisfaction. From Model 2 of Table 2, we can see political skill was found to be significantly related to internship satisfaction ($\beta = .44, p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. According to Hypothesis 2, political skill is positively associated with internship satisfaction. As shown in Model 4 of Table 2, political skill had a significantly positive effect on supervisor-subordinate guanxi ($\beta = .57, p < .01$). This finding supports Hypothesis 2.

Applying the analysis strategy of Baron and Kenny (1986), Model 3 of Table 2 tested the mediating effect of supervisor-subordinate guanxi between political skill and internship satisfaction. Political skill was found to be positively associated with internship satisfaction (H1); when both political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi were entered into the regression equation, it was found that the effect of political skill to internship satisfaction decreased ($\beta = .27, p < .01$). The results therefore provide support for Hypothesis 3.

According to Hypothesis 4, positive affect might have a moderating effect on the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. Presented in Model 5 of Table 2, the testing results revealed a significant interaction effect ($\beta = .29, p < .05$). Following the procedure of Aiken and West (1991) to graphically illustrate the interaction effect in Figure 2, the patterns of interaction are consistent with Hypothesis 4; that is, the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi is stronger at higher level of positive affect than at lower level, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Age	21.08	1.74							
2.Gender	.40	.49	.12						
3.Internship Location	.22	.42	-.17	-.08					
4.Having Internship Experience	.13	.34	.06	.04	-.04				
5.Political Skill	4.58	.63	.19	.24*	-.06	.16			
6.Supervisor-Subordinate Guanxi	4.36	.94	.14	.16	.02	.23**	.35**		
7.Internship Satisfaction	4.71	.76	.11	.23*	-.12	.21**	.31**	.39**	
8.Positive Affect	4.71	.83	-.02	.22*	.08	.19**	.41**	.47**	.32**

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .1$

Table 2. Regression Analysis Results

Variables	Internship Satisfaction			Supervisor-Subordinate Guanxi	
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5
Control variables					
Age	.03	.00	.03	-.07*	-.06*
Gender	.23*	.19	.15	.14	-.06
Internship location	.18	.17	.16	.06	.12
Internship experience	.29**	.27**	.21+	.33*	.24
Independent variables					
Political Skill		.44***	.27**	.57***	.51**
Supervisor-Subordinate Guanxi			.25**		
Positive Affect					.43***
Interaction variables					
Political Skill x Positive Affect					.29*
R ²	.20	.31	.38	.33	.46
△R	.16	.27	.33	.29	.41
F	4.85***	7.06***	7.79***	7.90***	9.40***

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .1$

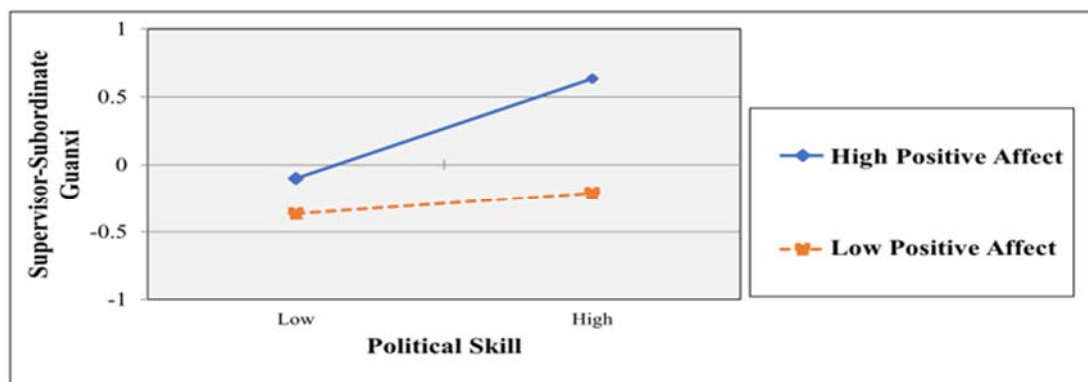


Figure 2. The Interactive Effect of Political Skill and Positive Affect on Supervisor-Subordinate Guanxi

V. Discussion

1. Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the internship literature both in theory and practice. Theoretically, using the tenets of social/political influence theory as a guide, the research corroborated the proposition that there is a positive link between interns' political skill and internship satisfaction. Thereby, this finding lends support to assertions that political skill plays an instrumental as well as predictive role in determining internship satisfaction (Brandon-Lai et al., 2016).

Taking the suggestion of D'abate et al. (2009), we brought the concept of supervisor-subordinate guanxi from organization literature into the realm of internships. Data gained from the research statistically supports the intervening role of supervisor-subordinate guanxi on interns' political skill. This is a primary study to test supervisor-subordinate guanxi within the area of internships, for this reason providing a previously missing empirical substantiation regarding supervisor-subordinate guanxi served as an explanatory mechanism between political skill and internship satisfaction.

An important implication stemming from our findings, resonating with the discussion of Magnusen and Kim (2016), is that politically skilled interns are more likely to develop a strong positive connection with their supervisors, and from that vantage point, further use their social effectiveness to forge favorable outcomes, such as tutelage and learning opportunities, paramount job characteristics and work environment characteristics in contributing to wonderful internship experience as well as to internship effectiveness (D'abate et al., 2009; Maertz et al., 2014; Sapp & Zhang, 2009).

Additionally, the study verified the moderating effect of positive affect between political skill and supervisor-subordinate guanxi. As an enhancer of socially relevant behaviors/skills (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), positive affect of interns builds the bridge to political skill and therefore increases favorable supervisor responses.

Previous research of Garavan and Murphy (2001) argued that internships are a complex socialization process and that satisfaction of interns is influenced by a range of personal as well as

work environment variables. The findings of our study not only support their viewpoint but also provide an explanation for the relationships among these variables. Specifically, we singled out political skill, as one personal variable, may be of particular benefit to interns in their pursuit of internship satisfaction. Our study lends support for the theoretical case that intern political skill is associated with internship satisfaction.

However, we found that political skill is unlikely to lead to satisfying experience in the absence of productive *guanxi* with supervisors, which is consistent with the findings of Wei et al. (2010). We brought one work environment factor, namely supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*, to light by showing the constructive power of supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* between intern political skill and internship satisfaction. With an integrative perspective to link the relationship between the variables, our findings suggested that supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* can be an important mediating mechanism to explain how political skill affects internship satisfaction. Thus, congruent with the proposition of To and Lung (2020), another valuable insight about internship satisfaction provided by our results is that the acquisition of personal skills (i.e., political skill) alone is not sufficient to maximize the satisfaction experience of an internship. It is important to consider and incorporate other relevant organizational factors, such as supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*, in internship programs.

Our research revealed positive affect, a personal affective variable, as a boundary condition of the effect of political skill on supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*. Our study indicated that intern positive affect can exert more positive impact of political skill on supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*. Overall, our study provided a clear picture of how political skill, supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* and positive affect interact to influence internship satisfaction.

Practically, the current research, investigating the relationships among political skill, supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*, positive affect and internship satisfaction, sheds more light on how to enhance internship satisfaction and wherefore internship effectiveness. The results of the study bring attention to the importance of strong political skill to ensuring internship satisfaction. The paper found that the supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* appears to represent an indicative measure of the process through which political skill may impact internship satisfaction. Positive affect was identified as a moderator influencing positively the relationship between political skill and supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*. While both political skill and positive affect are individual skills and partially innate, they are trainable and malleable (Ferris et al., 2007; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Given the short duration of internships, the scenario of internships does not provide enough time for interns to manage *guanxi* building with their supervisors (Rose, 2013), suggesting that interns' preparation of political skill as well as positive affect is a prerequisite. Thus, it would be fruitful to put more effort into cultivating interns' political skill as well as positive affect in order to trigger positive supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* for creating internship satisfaction.

2. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

Some limitations of the paper must be noted before closing. Because we collected our data using the same method and from the same source, the results of our study are susceptible to common method

variance (CMV) (Spector, 2006). To reduce the potential threat of common method variance in our analysis, we followed the suggestions of Chan, Witteloostuijn and Eden (2010) and interspersed all variables throughout the survey to lessen participants' perception of any direct connection between variables. In addition, we provided anonymity for each respondent in our research design (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We ran a Harman's single factor test to diagnose CMV. The total variance explained by a single factor was less than 39%, which is below the threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although the test result showed that in our data there was no one single factor which explained the majority of the variance, the risk associated with CMV still needs to be recognized. Future studies should employ more appropriate research methods to eliminate CMV.

The study employed cross-sectional research design to examine the proposed relationships, therefore the causality in the hypothesized relationships cannot be definitely established. It is suggested that future researchers need to adopt a longitudinal approach to investigate the causality among the variables.

The relative small sample size of only Taiwanese students (interns) and all of them coming from one higher education institution in Taiwan may lead the conclusion of the study being tentative. Besides, to Chinese employees, including interns, supervisor-subordinate guanxi is an inherent part of their work life (Law et al., 2000). Given the guanxi oriented culture of Chinese society (Cheng et al., 2009), the results of the current study may be culturally specific. The impact of supervisor-subordinate guanxi in the model may have been amplified. The degree of generalizability of the findings to non-Chinese internship contexts should be cautiously noticed.

Nevertheless, as a preliminary study to test a conceptual model with political skill as the primary factor to influence internship satisfaction through the mediating mechanism of supervisor-subordinate guanxi and further exploring the moderating effect of interns' positive affect on political skill-supervisor-subordinate guanxi relationship, the findings of the study are of great value.

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