

Study on Employee Engagement in the Retail Industry of Guangzhou China in the
Post-Epidemic Era

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Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the case study is based on my original work except for quotations and citations that have been duly acknowledged. I also declare it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK) or other institution.



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Abstract of the project paper submitted to the Senate of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Business Administration

Exploring the influencing factors of employee engagement in the retail industry of Guangzhou China in the post-epidemic era

By

Huang Siqi

February 2023

The covid-19 pandemic seems to be over. I have to lament that in the past three years, whether it is the current epidemic or the post-epidemic era, it has had an irreversible impact on all walks of life. This has put the entire society and enterprises under great pressure. Of course, It also accelerates the transformation of the global labor market because it is a pervasive pressure. Throughout the covid-19 pandemic, the retail industry has always supported the basic necessities of every individual, especially during the lockdown period, many people can only purchase food and daily necessities through online retail or nearby community retail to ensure basic supplies Daily needs. During the epidemic period, retail enterprises have become part of the infrastructure construction of the country's major disaster relief. After the Great Tohoku Earthquake in 2011, especially under the huge social panic caused by the Fukushima nuclear leak, Japanese convenience stores, mainly 7-11, took on the important role of food supply and stabilizing people's hearts. 7-11 also proposed that as the infrastructure for national disaster relief, they hope that in the event of a major disaster, any disaster victim can see 7-11 within a few hours. During this epidemic, when local governments required various commercial places to close, they consistently included supermarkets and home-service fresh food e-commerce companies in the list of enterprises that ensure people's livelihood. As long as retailers can still buy products, whether online or offline, people's hearts will be stable. (Yang et al., 2020). However, the retail industry, which plays such an important role in these difficult times, is also facing substantial pressure on its workforce. Under epidemic control, travel and health monitoring are closely related, and the commute of retail employees has also been affected to a certain extent. Due to travel restrictions, household consumption has also been magnified, especially for just-needed goods and medical supplies. On the other hand, affected by the sharp reduction in consumer traffic, the market demand for optional consumer goods has dropped sharply, and traditional offline subdivisions such as department stores and shopping centers have suffered from poor operations, which also put a certain amount of pressure on the income of retail practitioners. China's human resources service provider 51job reviewed the basic living conditions of retail workers during the epidemic. The income

of retail staff is closely related to the market environment. More than 70% of the respondents said that their income during the epidemic was greater than before the epidemic. decrease in magnitude. At the same time, more than 40% of the interviewees felt a career crisis due to the new consumption model that benefited from the epidemic. (Ge et al., 2020) For the retail industry, the importance of employees is beyond doubt. Especially in the current market environment, with a series of challenges such as rising operating costs, supply chain disruption, and human resource shortage, the importance of retail employees is even more prominent. Therefore, the retail industry needs to rethink carefully and support employees as one of the important tasks. (SLD, 2022) Whether a retail enterprise has absolute support for employees is most directly reflected in employee engagement. Marcus Buckingham (Hayes et al., 2019) pointed out that business leaders are eager to improve employee engagement, maintain employee stability, and attract competitive employees to join the enterprise team. Employee engagement directly affects the company's financial situation, production efficiency, and customer satisfaction. The benchmark of employee engagement is mainly the degree of employee engagement in work, that is, whether employees agree with the organization, whether they can concentrate on work and whether they have a risk-taking spirit in work. As we all know, under the influence of the epidemic situation, although the employees of retail enterprises shoulder heavy social responsibilities, they are faced with difficult and uncertain factors, and their own or external pressures can easily lead to a decline in work engagement, resulting in a loss of professionalism. Consumers are at the end of consumption in the retail industry. In an era when retail is also closely connected with consumers, if the degree of dedication of retail employees is slightly reduced, consumers who have the most direct impact on retail companies will have the most direct impact on brand value and brand value. The negative evaluation of the service, in turn, affects the overall efficiency of the retailer. Therefore, in difficult times, how to improve employee engagement has become a key consideration for the retail industry. (Bhalla et al., 2022)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The sudden outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has caused a huge blow to the global human economy, and the market demand has dropped sharply. In the critical period of business differentiation and retailer transformation, the competition of retailers has long been transformed into a competition for talents and organizational competitiveness (Peng et al., 2022) to enhance employee engagement and skills to increase employees. The stickiness with the organization enhances the value recognition of retail brands, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the organization. China's labor supply is sufficient, and the lack of talent has become a major bottleneck in the development of the industry due to the impact on the industry. (Peng et al., 2022) The lack of talent first comes from various uncertainties, and in principle, retail practitioners should treat their work with the most positive attitude whenever and wherever possible, this is the professional ethics that retailers should have. However, as the epidemic affected all aspects of life, the employees were shaken. They would worry about the impact of policies on work, the conditions and duration of confinement, and the impact of the actual number of days of attendance on salary. I also gradually lost confidence in the industry and career.

A defining feature of the coronavirus pandemic is the human resource uncertainty it has created for organizations around the world (Ruffolo et al., 2021; Sibley et al., 2020). The pandemic has raised anxiety among workers about their future. McKinsey & Company report revealed that when organizational environments are changing, one of the best ways to help employees engage and adapt to new ways of working is to ensure respect, equality, and justice (Emmett et al., 2020). This situation highlights the relevance of Uncertainty Management Theory, which states that when uncertainty is high, managers need to assign justice. (Van den Bosch et al., 2002).

Many scholars have conducted research on how to improve engagement and found that engagement can be enhanced by creating a good organizational environment and adopting a leadership style that matches the individual characteristics of employees. In the post-epidemic era, due to the uncertainty of life and work, employee engagement has been redefined and measured. Future research will further broaden the research field and research perspective and use a new theoretical framework to study the differences between different factors on engagement in order to expand the depth and breadth of research on engagement. In view of this, it is of great practical significance to study the engagement issues derived from it.

Kincentric released the 2022 Kincentric Report: Global Trends in Employee Engagement, a large-scale report on employee engagement trends over the past three years, based on the opinions of 12 million employees in more than 125 countries and regions. The report reveals that while employee engagement levels appear to be relatively stable from year to year, engagement levels vary widely from quarter to quarter, reflecting global turmoil events that have had a significant impact on employees across the globe. The report found that employee engagement peaked at 73% in the second quarter of 2020, before dropping to 67% in the fourth quarter. Employee engagement will remain between 65% and 69% in 2021, falling to 62% in the first quarter of 2022. (Kincentric, 2022)

1.2 Problem Statement

Although the level of employee engagement around the world does not appear to have changed much over the past three years, a quarter-by-quarter study reveals real ups and downs in employee engagement. This change shows that we are still in a turbulent work environment, and while many companies are exploring new ways of operating through experimentation, learning and improvement, others are holding back and hoping that things will return to “normal”. (Kincentric, 2022)

The frequent city closures in various places in 2022 have further impacted the original accumulation. Layoff decisions, team conflicts, store closure decisions, and corporate cash flow crises are fermented within the company, increasing the anxiety of retailers. The projection of these various worries into the enterprise will make the organizational atmosphere tense and employees' self-confidence lowered because this has prompted a widespread sense of crisis, performance is not as good as expected, the period of closure is uncertain, and the company is worried about layoffs. At the same time, internal conflicts intensify, and interest trends or tribal culture run rampant, leading to internal factional struggles or conflicts of goals, resulting in greater hidden costs or waste of resources. At the same time, different identities and family situations also have specific anxieties, such as unresolved cash flow crisis, continuous impairment of Taurus business, internal control security, performance gap, negative growth, and other issues. When these issues are mentioned, employees will fall into a bad state. Work attitude, when anxiety and stress cannot be broken down, employees' negative emotions and mentality will continue to deteriorate, and then they will respond to work with lazy, negative, and casual attitudes. The final direction of the overall chain of the retail industry is the end consumer. When employee engagement is not enough, it will affect the purchase sentiment and decision-making of consumers, which will directly have a fatal impact on the entire retail product. In good times, this makes the chances of prompting a deal even slimmer. Therefore, if employee engagement is not taken seriously enough by the retail industry, it is very likely to pose a fatal risk to retailers.

Employee engagement is a psychological state in which employees take an interest in the company's success and are motivated to improve performance beyond job requirements. (Sridevi et al., 2010) For businesses, the pandemic should be seen as an opportunity to deepen the connection between the business and its employees. Based on this connection, by acting in a more fair and ethical manner, employees will be more informed about the business and leaders, so they can fully contribute to the growth and development of the business. Looking back on the changes that have occurred due to

the impact of the epidemic in the past two years, we should strengthen the organization's perception of justice in the enterprise, and employees will also adjust their work behavior according to the degree of perceived justice. (Aguilar-Quintana, et al., 2020). As the basis of inter-organizational cooperative behavior, justice will not only affect the input of employees but also affect the production efficiency of enterprises. It is the key for organizations to build harmonious labor relations (Bhatti et al., 2020). Meanwhile, ethical leadership focuses on justice and motivation. (Collins et al., 2021) Integrity, honesty, and candor in ethical leadership are key foundations of employee trust. When employees trust the organization and leadership, they will just believe that their own efforts are worthwhile and equal to the rewards, they will have a sense of job security and are willing to take innovative actions to achieve higher job performance (Schwepker et al., 2021). Therefore, enterprises should actively create a fair and positive organizational atmosphere for employees, so that employees have enough dedication to work with peace of mind, be willing to contribute and seek more aggressive development for the enterprise.

Therefore, it is fair and just to understand the current thoughts of employees, communicate with them on an equal footing, take pictures of them in an ethical leadership way, guide them to achieve a better career journey in the future, and give team members more care and support. Be considerate, communicate more to understand their difficulties and appeals, closely maintain the bond between employees, colleagues and work, and create a sense of happiness and belonging for employees, and it is very important and extremely important to promote employees to fully develop their potential. meaningful. Especially in the current post-epidemic era, under the influence of various unstable and uncertain social factors, retailers should continue to pay attention to the impact of employee engagement on the organization.

1.3 Research Objectives

In special times, the relationship between employee engagement and corporate management is more profound. Having an identified workforce can provide an organization with a source of sustained competitive advantage, as employees who identify with their job and the organization will adopt more positive attitudes and behaviors at work, thereby benefiting the organization (De Roeck et al., 2014; Scrima et al., 2014). The retail industry has played an important role in providing basic life during the epidemic, and its employee engagement directly affects the quality of the organization's operations. This article aims to explore the impact and role of these factors on the engagement of retail practitioners from the perspective of the organization's employees on distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership.

This study explores the influencing factors of Employee Engagement among retail practitioners in Guangzhou, China in the post-pandemic era from four aspects: Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice, Interactive Justice, and Ethical Leadership. The research objectives are as follows:

- a) Explore whether Distributive Justice has an impact on Employee Engagement.
- b) Explore whether Procedural Justice has an impact on Employee Engagement.
- c) Explore whether Interactional Justice has an impact on Employee Engagement.
- d) Explore whether Ethical Leadership has an impact on Employee Engagement.

1.4 Research Questions

Many organizations around the world are currently reassessing employee engagement amid uncertainty. Work engagement refers to the sustained physical, cognitive, and emotional effort an employee puts into doing a job and improving productivity and

performance (Kropp, 2021). Previous research has shown that employees' perception of job justice is an important factor influencing job engagement and that there is a significant relationship between the two (Lambert et al., 2019; Malhotra et al., 2020). Since employees care about justice to the extent that certain psychological needs are met (Cropanzano et al., 2001; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009), psychological need satisfaction (PNS) may provide supportive mechanisms for understanding how and why justice affects not only the employee's identification with the organization will also affect the employee's identification with the job. Moreover, employees often face a range of challenges and ethical dilemmas when generating and implementing new ideas, highlighting the role that ethical leadership can also play in promoting ethics, autonomy, and self-responsibility at work. (Ye et al., 2022)

In the post-epidemic era, it is the key to this research to conduct in-depth research on specific industries based on regional characteristics. Under China's anti-epidemic policy, retail practitioners have undergone fundamental changes in their mentality, which has directly led to changes in employee engagement compared with before the epidemic. This study aims to use retail practitioners who need to face consumers and cooperators in Guangzhou China as a sample, aiming to explore the relationship between employee engagement and distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership, so as to explore the possibility of improving employee engagement and provide a reality for further research.

1.5 Significance of Study

Exploring the theoretical model of influencing factors related to employee engagement, and then revealing the effect mechanism of different dimensions of factors on employee engagement, will help to enrich the research on the relationship and effectiveness of employee engagement under distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership in the post-epidemic era. At the same time, distributive

justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership also provide the necessary support for the sense of organizational climate and have an important impact on employees' innovative thinking and risky behavior at work, which is the essential analysis of this study. This study focuses on the employees of retail enterprises in Guangzhou China during the post-epidemic era. The significance of this research lies in:

It is helpful to understand the relevant factors that directly affect employee engagement in retail enterprises. The retail industry has assumed a very important social role during the epidemic. Affected by various factors during the epidemic, the working hours and work pressure of the retail industry have changed to varying degrees. The degree of investment in the company to actively deal with the negative impact of unfavorable factors. What kind of impact distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership can have on employee engagement is a question worth exploring.

Explain the influence process of employee engagement and distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership from an organizational perspective. The impact of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice on identification (De Roeck, 2014; Ollkkonen et al., 2006) and uncovers a key underlying psychological mechanism to better understand how and why a sense of justice encourages organizational identification and work engagement among employees. At the same time, empowering ethical leadership on the basis of organizational justice will have specific effects on employee engagement. Exploring this mechanism and role will help to interpret the relationship between them and employee engagement.

To promote the change of the concept of enterprise managers on employee engagement. Employee engagement should not only be the focus of the human resources department. Julie Gebauer, Managing Director of Towers Perrin's Employee Performance

Management business unit, said: "The importance of engaged employees to the operation of enterprises cannot be doubted. This global human resources management research has confirmed the decisive link between engagement and financial performance, and for the first time. This relationship is quantified. The results show that enterprises are trying their best to find ways to enhance their competitive advantages, but employees themselves are the greatest competitive potential." (Askform, 2015; Wenmibang, 2019) Towers Perrin surveyed 90,000 employees in 18 countries. The survey covers key factors that determine workplace engagement, including the ability to participate in decision-making, encouragement of innovative thinking, tasking to improve job skills, and executive concern for employee wellness, among others. Through the survey, the researchers found the following: about 21% of the respondents are fully dedicated to their work, and they are willing to "do more" for the employer to a certain extent; about 38% of the respondents are basically disengaged or not at all; the remaining 40% are so-so. The relationship between its relevant factors helps to help retailers achieve higher enterprise value x.

Conducive to providing decision-making support for business managers. Employee engagement affects the company's products, services, sales, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and this series of reflections will ultimately determine the company's financial results and future development. Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric of the United States, attached great importance to "employee engagement". He once pointed out: "There are three indicators to measure the stability of a company, namely cash flow, customer loyalty, and employee engagement." Employee engagement Management is the wind vane that really affects the performance of the enterprise. If employee engagement can be evaluated and measured as an important indicator in corporate strategy and decision-making, then truly dedicated employees may also commit to this strategy and decision-making and do their best to help the company maintain efficient operations. Continuously bring benefits to the enterprise. Accordingly, this study of this subject has practical significance. (Business Awakening Society, 2021)


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CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the state of employees' cognition, emotion and behavior when they participate in work and perform their own roles, and the result of the organization's expectations occurs under the joint action of these states. (Kahn, 2010; Shuck et al., 2010) Engaged employees are committed to and persistent in achieving their goals at work, are willing to do their jobs well, and are willing to take corrective or evaluation steps when necessary. (Aini, et al., 2022) Employee engagement should be positive and satisfying, and this attitude at work will clearly show that the employee is energized, dedicated and engrossed. Employee engagement refers to feelings and states of mind that are genuinely consistent, not prioritizing objects, specific times, or specific behaviors. (Sihag, 2021)

Employee engagement shows how enthusiastic employees are about their work. When employees are willing to devote enough enthusiasm to the core work of the company, it indicates the behavior that comes with employees feeling engaged in their work. (Mulang, 2022) Various experiences have confirmed that employee engagement is an important factor in producing changes in desired or expected outcomes if it is required for overall organizational performance and business success (Bakker et al., 2008). As long as employees have sufficient understanding and concern for the organization, they can strive to provide achievement at work. (Saks, 2006)

Improving employee engagement is a key factor affecting business profitability, and employee engagement has an impact on business performance, such as profit and market share, productivity, profit, quality, and customer satisfaction. (Chen et al., 2021; Rees et al., 2013; Sundaray, 2011) Especially in difficult times, employee engagement

is crucial to the growth and development of the company, because the higher the level of engagement, the higher the productivity, so during the period of special circumstances, enterprises should pay more attention to employee engagement. (Chanana et al., 2020)

2.2 Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to employees' full perception of the organization's justice when the organization distributes rewards. (Byrne et al., 2001)

When employees contribute their time and energy to the organization, YEONGONG hopes to get a corresponding return as the organization's recognition of their efforts. In this case, employees' understanding of justice should not be limited to rewards. Because employees refer to inputs and outputs relative to the rewards of individual or group contributions within the organization to generate views about justice (Folger et al., 1998). However, in many kinds of literature, distributive justice is only considered as a reward or other returns, which is a relatively limited definition of distributive justice. Therefore, the focus of realizing distributive justice should be the concept of justice. (Biswas et al., 2012) Therefore, relative to the various allocations they receive, the contribution of employees, including the allocation of rewards, punishments, resources, etc., may affect their investment and participation in the organization. degree.

Being able to receive results that correspond to their own efforts means that employees are accountable for the results of their efforts, so it is necessary for organizations to meet employees' autonomous needs (Mayer et al., 2008). When a person obtains a fair result, he will naturally feel the recognition and care of the organization, which is conducive to establishing the confidence of the employees in the organization, because they feel valued and respected in the organization. (Malhotra et al., 2020) This is a causal cycle relationship. When employees are fully invested in their work to obtain

corresponding satisfaction, they will be willing to invest more in subsequent jobs to obtain more satisfaction. Justice in distribution can make employees get more satisfaction, and can realize the satisfaction brought by employees because of their efforts.

In addition, distributive justice also provides incentives for those who underperform. For underperformers, under the principles of distributive justice, one may wish to make an effort to change their behavior in order to obtain more objective rewards (Kelley, et al., 1962). Therefore, under the premise of fair distribution, employees' gains are directly proportional to their efforts. To a certain extent, they all activate their investment in work in the hope of obtaining corresponding returns.

2.3 Procedural Justice

Procedural justice can be a good way to help employees demonstrate their true abilities, because when the process is ethical, unbiased, transparent, and fair, the most capable people are easily seen, discovered, and recognized (Mayer et al., 2008). Therefore, the more employees pay attention to procedural justice, the stronger their views on maintaining the psychological contract norms of the organization. (Tekleab et al., 2005).

Procedural justice can help employees feel respected by the organization, which is conducive to improving employees' sense of security. When employees are affirmed and supported by the organization, their sense of security at work will increase, which will better encourage employees to freely express their opinions and suggestions, and actively participate in work participation. (Arnéguy et al., 2020). When employees spontaneously believe that the organization supports and cares about their well-being, they respond by being more active and working harder to fulfill their work tasks, thus making them more engaged in their work. (Rhoades et al., 2002).

2.4 Interactional Justice

Interactional justice refers to the sense of justice in the relationship between leaders and employees in an organization. (Ando et al., 2010) Interactional justice needs to pay more attention to the way of interaction between people and the perception of justice. In enterprises, it emphasizes the perception of justice generated by employees when they interact in the organization. (Ando et al., 2010)

Interactional justice should also include the attitudes and behaviors of the objects of interaction. (Collie et al., 2002) Because when employees feel that their leaders treat them fairly, employees will be full of enthusiasm and morale will be high. This is their sense of justice when being treated based on the premise of justice in interaction. (Ando et al., 2010) When employees are treated fairly by leaders, they feel valued. When employees feel fair and their sense of belonging and psychological needs are met when interacting with their supervisors (Blader et al., 2000), it will mean that employees are considered competent by their supervisors. (Mayer et al., 2008) Therefore, a good relationship between employees and leaders can promote employees to produce more positive results at work. Based on this relationship, employees can be more enthusiastic and more aggressive in their work, which makes interaction justice may play a unique role in employee work engagement.

2.5 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership refers to the behaviors of supervisors on the moral level in their own behaviors and interactions with others, and through the two-way communication between supervisors and employees, relationship strengthening, and decision-making, etc., to stimulate employees to be motivated in their work. (Nazir et al., 2021). Managers with ethical leadership, in addition to restraining themselves from ethical behavior, will continue to guide and encourage their followers through effective communication and communication with employees to ensure that their relevant

behaviors comply with ethical standards to the greatest extent. (Ilyas et al., 2020).

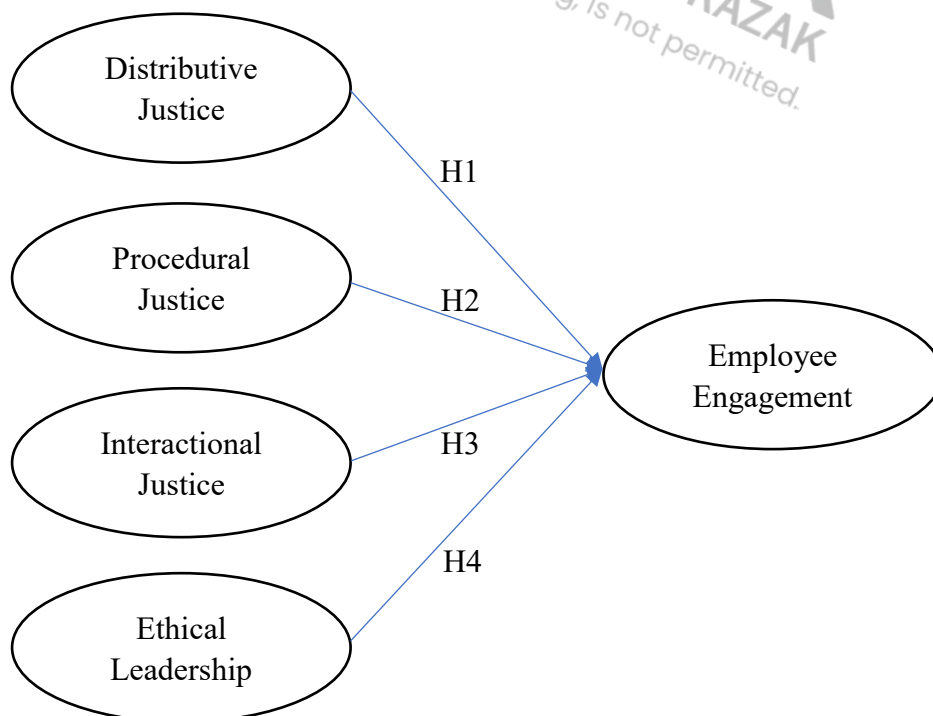
Ethical leadership contains relevant characteristics, including honesty, trustworthiness, caring for others, caring for society, justice, etc. These characteristics will enhance employees' self-efficacy and satisfaction when applied to the communication between leaders and subordinates. (Laajalahti, 2018)

In this way, employees will be more willing to give and invest in their work, making them more confident in making suggestions, reporting problems proactively, and even willing to pay for extra work or make extra work commitments. Therefore, ethical leadership can better increase the emotional benefits of employees and allow employees to enhance their work engagement (Shafique et al., 2020).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The following is an overview of the conceptual framework of this research:

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



2.7 Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis in the research is formulated as follows:

H1: Distributive justice has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement.

H2: Procedural justice has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement.

H3: Interaction justice is conducive to improving employee engagement.

H4: Ethical leadership is conducive to improving employee engagement.



CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population, Sample & Sampling Technique

The object of this questionnaire survey is the retail industry practitioners in Guangzhou, China, and the empirical research and data collection are carried out by means of a questionnaire survey. The employees participating in the questionnaire survey of this research are the sales-related departments of retail enterprises. These employees need to deal with consumers and partners. They represent the image of the brand to the outside and are the first door for external personnel to directly deal with retailers. They work together to create a culture and atmosphere related to retail operations.

This study employs a quantitative approach by analyzing the numerical data obtained from the survey results. The survey is based on practitioners in various departments of retail enterprises in Guangzhou, China, and this study is conducted from November to December 2022.

3.2 Accessibility and Ethical Issues

After three years of the epidemic, facing the adjustment of various lockdown policies and the constant changes in consumption habits in mainland China, China's retail industry has gradually formed a completely inconsistent business model and commercial atmosphere, which is not the same as it was before the epidemic. During the questionnaire survey period for this study, Guangzhou, China, experienced the most severe times of the blockade and sudden release. There were various frustrations about the blockade and anxiety about not having any medical preparations. All walks of life, if there is no relevant reaction to the temporary measures of the epidemic in the past three years, I am afraid this is another fatal blow. Taking the fashion retail industry as an example, November and December should be the peak season for sales. Whether

online sales or offline sales, various festivals are coming one after another, which should provide a rare opportunity for consumption. At the same time, the unit price of autumn and winter products is much higher than that of spring and summer. Unfortunately, since the epidemic outbreak, December 2022 will be the worst time, and major retailers have to lament that there were no customers at the time of the lockdown period, and now they even have neither consumers nor employees as most citizens had to rest at home while infected by the covid-19 because no relevant medical plan was implemented by the government when the blockade was lifted suddenly.

It can be seen that the impact of the epidemic on the retail industry is long-term and profound. For those working in the retail industry, it affects all aspects of life to some degree, both physically and mentally. As a result, the state of work is also far different from the past, which is the most direct reflection of employee engagement.

3.3 Measurement of Variables

This questionnaire is formulated for research by sorting out the literature and materials, combined with the labor force characteristics and industry status quo of China's retail industry in the post-epidemic era. The questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part is revised based on Hewitt's engagement measurement questionnaire combined with Kahn's three dimensions of employee engagement. The scale is measured from three dimensions physical investment, cognitive investment, and emotional investment, with a total of 15 questions. The second part is to measure the 4 dimensions of employees' distributed justice, procedural justice, interactive justice, and ethical leadership, with a total of 20 questions. Both parts use the Likert five-scale scoring system. The options range from 1 to 5, representing from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The third part of the questionnaire is demographic information, including 5 items of gender, age, education, working years, and department.

3.4 Data Collection Method

In accordance with the unified standards and requirements, this study sends questionnaires online to retail practitioners in Guangzhou for investigation through the WJX data collection platform. WJX belongs to Changsha Ranxing Information Technology Co., Ltd which was established in 2006 and it aims to provide data collection, storage, and analysis tools based on questionnaires. A total of 220 questionnaires were sent out via mobile phone, and 208 were received with a response rate of 94.5%.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

This study uses SPSS 27.0 to analyze the relationship and influencing factors between employee engagement and distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership.

SPSS frequency statistics show that: in the valid samples, males accounted for 51.4%, females accounted for 48.6%; in terms of age distribution, 1.4% were 18 years old and below, 6.5% were 18~25 years old, 18.8% were 26~30 years old, 31~40 years old Aged 40.9%, 41~50 years old accounted for 26%, 51~60 years old accounted for 5.3%, 60 years old and above accounted for 1.4%; education level distribution, high school/vocational school/technical school accounted for 16.8%, junior college accounted for 32.7.6% , undergraduates accounted for 44.7%, masters and above accounted for 5.8%; in the distribution of working years, 1 year and below accounted for 5.3%, 1~2 years (including 2 years) accounted for 6.3%, 2~3 years (including 3 years) accounted for 6.7% %, 3~5 years (including 5 years) accounted for 8.7%, 5~8 years (including 8 years) accounted for 39.4%, 8~10 years (including 10 years) accounted for 19.7%, 10~15 years (including 15 years) Accounted for 7.7%, 15-20 years (including 20 years) accounted for 3.8%, 20-30 years (including 30 years) accounted for 1.9%, 30 years or more accounted for 0.5%; From the perspective of the

distribution of survey respondents, retail stores accounted for 20.7%, sales and operation department accounted for 23.6%, e-commerce department accounted for 16.8%, development department accounted for 16.3%, marketing department accounted for 11.1%, customer service department accounted for 11.5%. Table 1 is the basic information about the surveyed objects.

Table 1: Basic information about the survey object

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent(%)
Gender	Male	107	51.4
	Female	101	48.6
Age	Under the age of 18	3	1.4
	18~25	13	6.3
	26~30	39	18.8
	31~40	85	40.9
	41~50	54	26
	51~60	11	5.3
	Over 60	3	1.4
Education	High School/Vocational/Technical Secondary/Skill Worker School	35	16.8
	College	68	32.7
	Undergraduate	93	44.7
	Postgraduate and above	12	5.8
Seniority	1 year or less	11	5.3
	1~2 years(including 2 years)	13	6.3
	2~3 years(including 3 years)	14	6.7
	3~5 years(including 5 years)	18	8.7
	5~8 years(including 8 years)	82	39.4
	8~10 years(including 10 years)	41	19.7
	10~15 years(including 15 years)	16	7.7

	15~20 years(including 20 years)	8	3.8
	20~30 years(including 30 years)	4	1.9
	over 30 years	1	0.5
Department	Retail Store	43	20.7
	Sales and Operations Department	49	23.6
	E-Commerce Department	35	16.8
	Business Development Department	34	16.3
	Marketing Department	23	11.1
	Customer Service Department	24	11.5

According to the information collected in the questionnaire, T-test was used to test gender in demographics, and Oneway was used to perform on age group, education level, working experience, and department, as shown in (Table 2). The significance is greater than 0.05, which means that in this questionnaire survey, there are no significant differences in gender, age group, education level, working experience, department in employee engagement, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership. That is, the different groups of people shown in demographics will not affect the various dimensions involved in this questionnaire survey.

Table 2: The significance of demographics

	Sig. Independent Sample Test	Sig. ANOVA			
	Gender	Age	Education	Seniority	Department
Employee Engagement	0.354	0.393	0.1	0.084	0.533
Distribution Justice	0.998	0.052	0.098	0.031	0.792

Procedural Justice	0.723	0.504	0.681	0.111	0.818
Interactional Justice	0.946	0.032	0.116	0.367	0.673
Ethical Leadership	0.606	0.216	0.174	0.017	0.389

It can be seen from (Table 3) that employee engagement is significantly positively correlated with distributive justice, procedural justice, interactive justice, and ethical leadership. The correlation coefficients are 0.482, 0.452, 0.441, and 0.474. In this study, distributive justice has the greatest positive impact on employee engagement, and procedural justice has the least impact on employee engagement.

Table 3: Correlations

	Employee Engagement	Distribution Justice	Procedural Justice	Interactional Justice	Ethical Leadership
Employee Engagement	1				
Distribution Justice	.482**	1			
Procedural Justice	.452**	.140*	1		
Interactional Justice	.441**	.328**	.310**	1	
Ethical Leadership	.474**	.251**	.293**	.298**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

3.6 Reliability Test

From Table 4 we can see that the composite reliability (CR) of each latent variable is greater than 0.85, which indicates that the scale is reliable. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values of all variables are higher than 0.8, which indicates that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate and effective for the data in this questionnaire survey.

Table 4 also shows that all Cronbach's α coefficient values are greater than the recognized minimum level of 0.4, which indicates that the scale has good reliability. Exploratory factor analysis was used to test the structural validity of the scale. We can see from the factor loading of each item corresponding to all variables in the table that the scale has good structural validity (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4: Composite Reliability

Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	KMO Bartlett's test	CR	AVE
Employee Engagement	PE01	0.686	0.946	0.968	0.937	0.497
	PE02	0.725				
	PE03	0.686				
	PE04	0.690				
	PE05	0.709				
	CE01	0.679				
	CE02	0.706				
	CE03	0.715				
	CE04	0.725				
	CE05	0.740				
	EE01	0.639				

	EE02	0.759				
	EE03	0.720				
	EE04	0.725				
	EE05	0.711				
Distributive Justice	DJ01	0.695	0.843	0.863	0.859	0.551
	DJ02	0.719				
	DJ03	0.767				
	DJ04	0.774				
	DJ05	0.752				
Procedural Justice	PJ01	0.771	0.883	0.886	0.889	0.616
	PJ02	0.793				
	PJ03	0.782				
	PJ04	0.794				
	PJ05	0.785				
Interactional Justice	IJ01	0.755	0.869	0.873	0.878	0.59
	IJ02	0.777				
	IJ03	0.798				
	IJ04	0.760				
	IJ05	0.750				
Ethical Leadership	EL01	0.779	0.855	0.866	0.867	0.566
	EL02	0.771				
	EL03	0.750				
	EL04	0.730				
	EL05	0.731				


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CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The results of multiple regression analysis in this study show that the four independent variables of distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership affect 47% of the dependent variable in employee engagement. The result value of Durbin-Watson is 2.142, it meets the requirement of data independence. (Table 5)

Table 5: Model Summary^b

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Durbin-Watson
0.693 ^a	0.480	0.470	2.142
a. Predictors: (Constant), Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice, Interactional Justice, Ethical Leadership			
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement			

The regression equation is significant, $F=46.829$, $p<0.001$, indicating that at least one independent variable explains a part of the variation of the dependent variable, so that the regression variation becomes larger, the residual variation decreases, and the model is successfully established. (Table 6)

Table 6: ANOVA^a

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	67.050	4	16.763	46.829	0.000 ^b
Residual	72.665	203	0.358		
Total	139.715	207			

- a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice, Interactional Justice, Ethical Leadership

From the residual histogram, it can be seen that the data in this study obey the normal distribution, the mean is close to 0, and the standard deviation is close to 1 (Figure 2), which means that the linear regression can be achieved under the condition of normality. The P-P plot also shows that the normality condition is met. (Figure 3)

Figure 2: Histogram Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

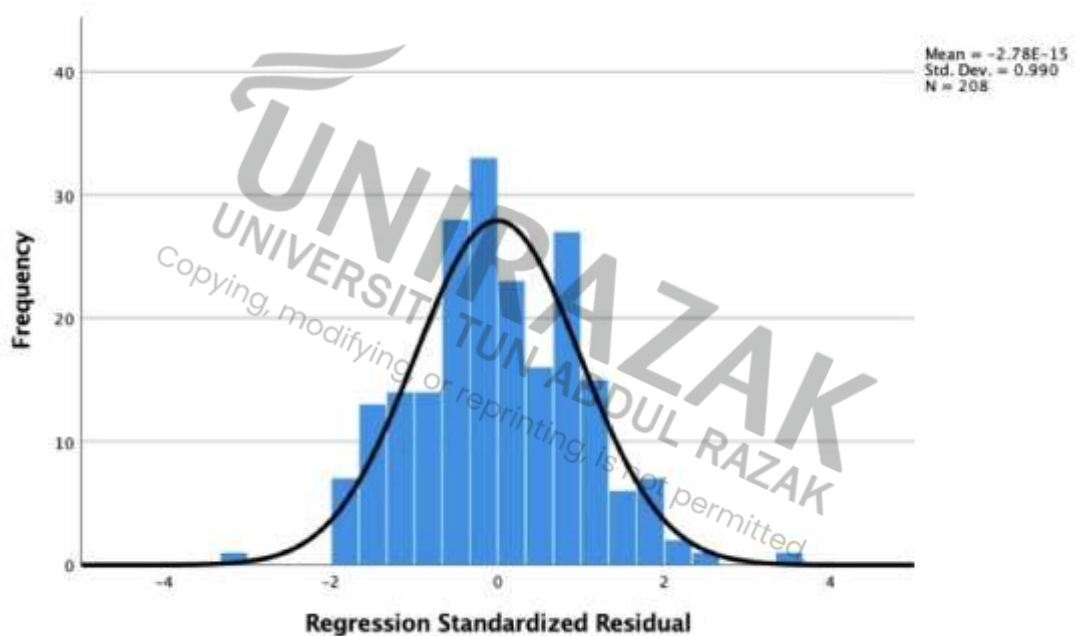
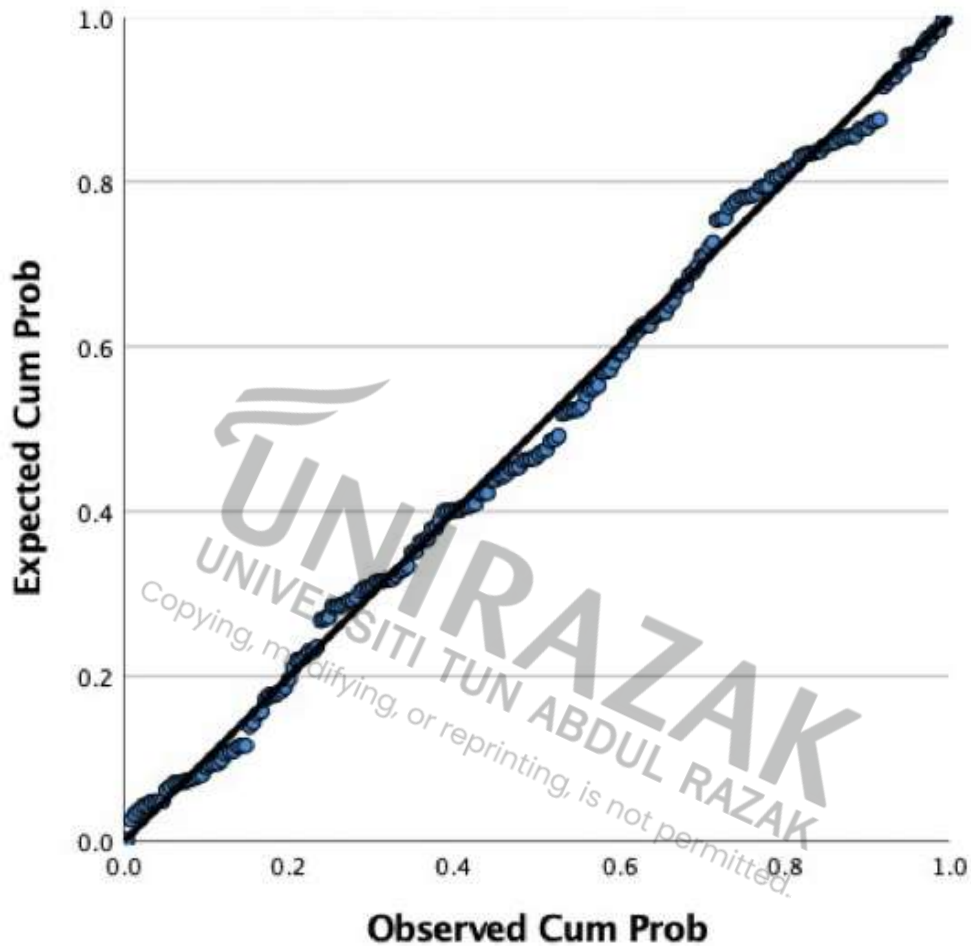


Figure 3: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement



4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Through this survey, we learned that employees in the retail industry have an average employee engagement score of 3.70 during the special period, which is close to the level of not very dedicated. Employees are basically dissatisfied with retail companies in terms of distributional justice, procedural justice, interactive justice, and ethical leadership. (Table 7)

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee Engagement	208	1.13	4.93	3.6987	0.82156
Distributive Justice	208	1.2	5	3.8375	0.82704
Procedural Justice	208	1	5	3.6269	0.96691
Interactional Justice	208	1.2	5	4.0615	0.79203
Ethical Leadership	208	1.2	5	3.9827	0.79009

From table 8, it can be analyzed that distributive justice ($\beta=0.322$, $p<0.001$), procedural justice ($\beta=0.277$, $p<0.001$), interactional justice ($\beta=0.172$, $p<0.001$), ethical Leadership ($\beta=0.261$, $p <0.001$) was significantly positive to employee engagement, which means that the above four factors can positively predict employee engagement.

Table 8: Coefficients^a

	Unstandardized B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Distributive Justice	0.319	0.322	5.916	0.000
Procedural Justice	0.236	0.277	5.082	0.000

Interactional Justice	0.178	0.172	3.031	0.003
Ethical Leadership	0.271	0.261	4.735	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement				

For the testing of Hypothesis 1, distributive justice has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement. As Greenberg observes, "Justice is an essential requirement for the effective functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction of employees." The perceived input-output ratio is what employees receive relative to the reference individuals or groups decide what is fair or unfair (Folger et al., 1998). When employees contribute their time and energy to the organization, employers also compensate them through appropriate rewards and recognition, which will make employees more willing to actively participate in work, whether it is physical, cognitive or emotional, more Willing to pay for it. Therefore, receiving fair rewards has a positive impact on employee engagement. Compared with employees in other industries, the salary structure of retail practitioners is somewhat different. The composition of basic salary is largely proportional to the time on duty, while the performance part is more directly proportional to operating income. During the epidemic, strict epidemic prevention policies restricted the arrival time of retail employees, resulting in uncertainty in obtaining basic salaries. It also affected the opportunities for end consumers in the retail industry to shop in stores, resulting in business Income is also uncertain, so performance pay becomes uncertain. Accordingly, they had a certain impact on employee engagement during the epidemic due to the uncertainty of income distribution. (Biswas et al., 2012)

For the testing of Hypothesis 2, procedural justice has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement. Procedural justice refers to employees' perceptions of the justice of formal procedures used to distribute rewards and benefits at work. When

employees observe justice in processes, they perceive organizational activities to be beneficial and practice them (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Employees who perceive their organizational decision-making and other related processes to be fair and non-discriminatory will be motivated to comply with the organization's demands and demands (Bies, 2005). The modern enterprise management system empowers each company to formulate various employee management systems. Through the setting of the SOP process, employees can complete the application for various approval processes on any mobile device. At the same time, these processes should also be more efficient in principle. Conducive to the company's management of employees. However, in the post-epidemic era, procedural humanization will be defined as another kind of justice. (Biswas et al., 2012) Telecommuting is one of the examples. Many retail companies worry that employees will not work hard when telecommuting, and set up more goals and planned document work in the system. We found in the survey and contact that such Complaints are not uncommon. Employees even spend more time completing the paper work arranged by HR, submitting the work plan for the day before working hours, and providing a work summary for the day before the afternoon of the same day. This makes employees spend more time completing non-job duties. Is such a remote working system also a part of procedural justice? In this way of remote work, can employees absolutely devote themselves to the essential work physically and mentally? This is also worth pondering for every retail enterprise.

For the testing of Hypothesis 3, interaction justice is conducive to improving employee engagement. Sociologist John R. Schermerhorn defines reciprocal justice as the degree to which those affected by a decision are treated with dignity and respect. When the communication between supervisors and subordinates is active, it should be respected and encouraged. In our common sense understanding of job levels, the subordinate relationship between superiors and subordinates is easily defined as an unequal relationship, so traditionally we define communication between superiors and subordinates more as orders and instructions. However, interaction should be two-way.

The communication between leaders and employees and communication between employees and leaders should follow the principle of justice, which can be called interactive justice. During the epidemic, many retail companies have transitioned their main offline sales to online sales due to travel restrictions, and employees need to cooperate to varying degrees. For example, she was originally an offline salesperson, but she needs to change her role to become a network anchor for sales. This transformation process is more likely to be a work order, and the business will consider this as an aspect of sales work. In this process, if communication is not sufficient during the interaction process, there will be considerable conflicts. If the retailer can better listen to the voices of employees, respond patiently to every feedback, fully respect employees and at the same time give certain Support and encouragement. Then, employees will be more willing to devote themselves to more challenging work. (Muzumda, 2012)

For the testing of Hypothesis 4, ethical leadership is conducive to improving employee engagement. Ethical leadership has received increasing attention due to its ability to inspire positive attitudes among employees toward everyday tasks in the workplace (Neubert et al., 2009). The extent to which leadership influences employee attitudes and behavior is not limited to managerial aspects; however, it also has ethical implications (Li et al., 2014). Dirks and Ferrin believe that the status of a leader is a vehicle for a powerful position, which mainly affects employees' work attitudes and behaviors in but not limited to two areas. A leader's ethical attitude of being honest, and trustworthy, and giving employees autonomy and opportunity makes employees feel responsible to return respect, care, and support with positive work-related attitudes. Under the influence of the 3-year epidemic and its prevention and control policies, many citizens have endured physical and mental pressure to varying degrees, which may be due to concerns about health, movement restrictions, and unstable economic sources (Dirks et al., 2002). And worries about various factors in the family. It is already difficult for retailers to use the pre-epidemic leadership style to manage employees. At

this time, giving employees a positive management culture in management may help employees worry and worry to a certain extent. Leaders output emotionally and spiritually positively to their subordinates with a positive, sincere, and upright attitude, and retail practitioners will pass on the received positive energy to colleagues, partners, and consumers, thereby improving their work experience. If you contribute, you will be more devoted and dedicated to your work.



CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings show that distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership significantly impact employee engagement. During the research period of this article, I also communicated with the senior HR of a well-known fast fashion brand in Guangzhou and learned that retail enterprises in Guangzhou, China generally adopt a flexible employment method to arrange the arrival time of employees to adapt to the policy requirements of different stages of the epidemic. Flexible employment refers to a temporary, part-time flexible form of work, which is a derivative during the epidemic. When the business is in an unstable period, the allocation of human resources can be flexibly arranged in response to the volume of business and workload. In a sense, flexible employment is conducive to the control of human resource costs for enterprises and plays a certain role in alleviating tight capital turnover. However, for employees, the irregular arrival time due to flexible employment is the main reason for the direct decrease in income. Due to the particularity of the retail industry, more salary structures use the arrival time as the basic salary. Under the influence of this atmosphere, the attitude shown by employees will not be understanding and consideration for the company, but the first to see that the company treats its own income distribution unfairly. Therefore, even when employees return to the company to carry out normal work after a long lockdown, they will not be more engaged in their work. They mind the unfair income distribution before and complain that the company lacks a two-way communication mechanism during difficult times. As a result, the interaction between managers and executives is insufficient, so they do not feel any care from the company, and even the daily due process is instantly broken, and various application approval procedures are carried out in an abnormal process, and the company has the consistent explanation for the change is the epidemic. Employees believe that the justice of the

process should not be affected by any factors. The epidemic is just an excuse for the company's negative management. Among the many areas of enterprise management, personnel management is the most complicated, because people are born with subjective initiative and have their own value system, and what enterprises face is the diversity of employees and values. The difficulty of management is getting higher and higher, and this feature has been magnified during the epidemic.

In the face of uncontrollable epidemic prevention policies, employees hope that the leaders will give more flexible humanistic care, respect the differences between individuals, and be willing to understand the thoughts of employees. Sincere and effective communication will help build a two-way trust relationship. As the leader of the employees, he is given the right to manage the company and should also fulfill the corresponding obligations. His values, words, and actions must also be consistent, maintain an open dialogue, accept feedback, and disclose relevant information. Ethical leadership go hand in hand, and ethical corporate managers can help improve the bond between employees and the company.

5.2 Recommendation

Employee engagement is the focus of this study. Through various data collection, research, and analysis in previous chapters, it is not difficult to find that employee engagement has a positive relationship with distributional justice, procedural justice, interactive justice, and moral leadership. Employee engagement suffers when companies and their managers fall short in any area. Especially in the post-epidemic era, the mentality of employees has changed a lot. Employees are under greater physical, psychological and economic pressure due to reasons such as isolation at home, and their relationship with companies has also changed. They hope to have richer material rewards, diversified employee benefits, support for telecommuting, and more comprehensive physical and mental health protection, etc. Therefore, this paper

suggests that retail enterprises in Guangzhou, China, should fully consider the four factors of distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and ethical leadership when formulating plans to enhance employee engagement.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Direction

This study only conducts research on the engagement of employees in Guangzhou's retail industry during the epidemic period. The results of this study may not be applicable to other regions or industries, especially when social events have a substantial impact on people's lives. This may be a reference for subsequent social idiosyncratic events affecting employee engagement, but further research is still needed to verify the findings of this paper and the generalizability of the extension. Future research on employee engagement can also focus on different regions and different industries, and an expert group can be set up to verify the validity of the results of this study by combining knowledge in social, psychology, modern business management, and other related fields.

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NAME OF AUTHOR : HUANG SIQI

The undersigned certify that the above candidate has fulfilled the condition of the project paper prepared in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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