RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Workplace Marginalization on Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Property Management Personnel in Public Health Emergencies

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Abstract

In public health emergencies, property personnel in communities have become a key line of defense to ensure the safety of residents. However, in practice, it has been observed that there is often a significant mismatch between the characteristics of these personnel and their roles during such emergencies. The behavior of these employees at work is influenced by various factors. This study, beginning with grassroots personnel, aims to explore the impact of their perception of workplace marginalization on their organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, the study analyzes the moderating effect of organizational incentives to provide theoretical guidance for emergency management practices. Through data analysis, it has been found that the perception of workplace marginalization among these personnel has a negative impact on their organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, organizational incentives do not significantly moderate this relationship.

Keywords: Workplace marginalization, Organizational citizenship behavior, Organizational inducement, Public health emergencies, Property management personnel.

1 Introduction

With the advancement of China's urbanization, an increasing number of urban residents reside in residential properties. In case of a public health emergency, property managers take center stage, assuming responsibility. However, as frontline property personnel, Unlike hospital nurses—renowned as "angels in white"—property personnel not only confront suspected patients but also care for property owners within their purview. Unlike police officers with enforcement powers, they lack such authority and must safeguard the lives of property owners. Some of them are compelled to forego their leaves and return to work to address sudden increases in tasks, including daily disinfection and daily home screening of suspected patients. This poses both a physical challenge and a psychological shock. They must face potential crises while also providing exemplary warm home property services.

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From the perspective of emergency management, exploring how to effectively guide property personnel towards displaying more positive behaviors and minimizing negative ones is a crucial aspect to consider in enterprise emergency management. Given the significance of protecting people's lives during public health emergencies, the role of property management personnel becomes particularly crucial.

2 Literature Review

According to the definition provided by Organ [1], organizational citizenship behavior refers to behaviors that are not formally required by the organization but are beneficial to it in addition to the work performance that is explicitly required. Farh et al. [2] further broke down the seven-dimensional structure of organizational citizenship behavior, emphasizing the unique cultural context of China, where organizational participation and self-development are key dimensions. March et al. [3] introduced the concept of "organizational incentives," which refers to tangible or intangible rewards provided by an organization (or group) to encourage employees to perform behaviors that meet organizational requirements. Workplace marginalization, on the other hand, refers to a state where individual employees feel excluded or isolated from other members of the organization or team, despite being legally part of the organization (or team).

3 Hypotheses Development

Liu et al. [4] posited that the greater the civic behaviors displayed by an employee, the less likely they are to be marginalized within the organization. This is because their behavior aligns with the principles of a "strong collectivism spirit." As employees engage in more behaviors that are beneficial to the organization, they are more likely to be recognized and valued by both the organization and its individual members. Rensun et al. [5] found that being marginalized in the workplace can strengthen employees' turnover intentions. Conversely, Cropanzano et al. [6] identified a cycle between employees and managers driven by incentive exchange. If turnover intentions disrupt this balance, it can lead to employees being reluctant to perform extra-role behaviors that are beneficial to the enterprise. In other words, when employees feel marginalized in the workplace, they are less likely to display behaviors that are conducive to the enterprise and may even express a willingness to quit. Conversely, Wang et al. [7] found that employees who perceive high levels of organizational support exhibit more cooperative behavior. This support, whether tangible or intangible, results in employees engaging in higher levels of civic behavior. Extending this logic, the present study proposes that organizational incentives may also serve as a moderator rather than merely a direct predictor. Specifically, when employees experience workplace marginalization, those who perceive strong organizational incentives (e.g., recognition, material rewards, or career support) may be more likely to maintain their organizational citizenship behavior, as the perceived inducements offset the negative effects of exclusion. Conversely, in the absence of such incentives, the negative impact of marginalization on OCB is likely to be amplified. Therefore, this research hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H1): Workplace marginalization has a significant negative predictive effect on employees' OCB;

Hypothesis (H2): Organizational incentives play a moderating role in the relationship between workplace marginalization and organizational citizenship behavior.

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of workplace marginalization on the organizational citizenship behavior of property management personnel and to explore the moderating role of organizational incentives. Figure 1 presents the theoretical hypothesis architecture diagram of this study. To further investigate this relationship, this study examines the moderating effect of organizational incentives and explores how workplace marginalization affects the organizational citizenship behavior of property management personnel. The theoretical hypothesis architecture diagram for this study is depicted below:

4 Method

4.1 Sample

The target population of this study consists of property practitioners who have encountered significant public emergencies. The participants were recruited through a network-based electronic questionnaire survey. The pre-survey questionnaire was primarily distributed to large real estate properties in Baiyun District, Guangzhou, China. The formal questionnaire was then distributed and promoted through social platforms to employees in each community.

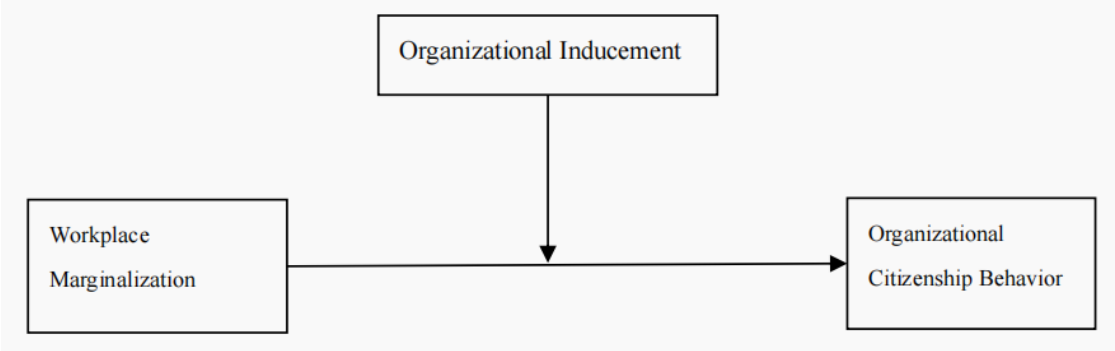


Figure 1. The theoretical hypothesis architecture diagram.

4.2 Measures

Organizational Inducement. This study utilizes the discussions presented in the book by Chen et al. [8] and the recent research conducted by Eisenberger et al. [9], in combination with the actual practices of various property management centers, to develop the scale for organizational incentives.

Workplace Marginalization. The scale for workplace marginalization used in this study is derived from the one developed by Liu et al. [4]. It consists of four items, which are as follows: My behavior has no impact on the image of the unit; My absence (whether for vacation or business trips) does not affect my work; Leaders often take my advice; and More people recognize me at work than I do. Please note that the last two items are reverse-scored entries.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Chen et al. [8] conducted empirical analysis and research to summarize the organizational citizenship behavior scale in the Chinese context, which encompasses 11 dimensions. In this study, we adopted Professor Fan Jingli's scale and made local modifications and additions based on the specific situation.

Control Variable. To enhance the measurement of variables in the aforementioned hypothesis, it is essential to incorporate control variables in the analysis of this study. Following consultations with management personnel from relevant property companies, we have opted to incorporate variables such as gender, age, property position, and years of experience.

4.3 Data Analysis

The primary method of questionnaire distribution was through an online electronic questionnaire, which was dispatched through the questionnaire star platform, primarily to the staff members of the property center. A total of 287 questionnaires were distributed, with 287 responses received. After data processing, 253 valid questionnaires were obtained.

Based on the distribution of demographic characteristics of the samples, male employees accounted for 64.8% and female employees accounted for 35.2%. The majority of the participants were aged between 26 and 55 years old (77.08%). In terms of job position, the majority were from the security department and cleaning personnel; most had 1-6 years of work experience (64.03%).

Table 1 presents the mean values, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for each variable. The results of the statistical analysis reveal that workplace marginalization is negatively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior ($r = -0.593, p < 0.01$) and organizational incentives ($r = -0.493, p < 0.01$). Conversely, there is a positive correlation between organizational incentives and organizational citizenship behavior ($r = 0.767, p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Correlation analysis table.

	M	SD	1	2	3
1.WM	4.148	0.670	1		
2.OI	2.735	0.565	-0.493**	1	
3.OCB	2.732	0.627	-0.593**	0.767**	1

Note. WM=Workplace Marginalization;
OI=Organizational Inducement;
OCB=Organizational Citizenship Behavior
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level.
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of workplace marginalization on organizational citizenship behavior and to explore the moderating role of organizational incentives in this relationship. Using the test method proposed by Hayes et al. [10] and the approach employed by Aiken et al. [11],

we examined the moderating effect of organizational incentives on the aforementioned relationships. The relevant variables were normalized, and data was analyzed using the SPSS26.0 macro PROCESS 3.4.

Table 2 presents the regression analysis results, with organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable and workplace marginalization as the independent variable. The analysis reveals that workplace marginalization significantly explains the dependent variable ($\beta = -0.697, p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that workplace marginalization is negatively associated with organizational citizenship behavior, supporting hypothesis H1.

Table 2. Regression Results of the WM Against the OCB.

Variable	OCB	
	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	2.434**	5.603**
Gender	0.185	-0.036
Age	0.010	-0.035
Position	0.160	0.038
Years	-0.218**	-0.078
WM		-0.697**
Adjusted R2	0.079	0.499
F	6.403**	51.246**

Note.WM=Workplace Marginalization;
OI=Organizational Inducement;
OCB=Organizational Citizenship Behavior
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level.
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis, with organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable, and workplace marginalization, organizational incentives, and their interaction term (workplace marginalization × organizational incentives) as independent variables. The analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro (Model 1) in SPSS 26.0.

The regression coefficient of workplace marginalization on organizational citizenship behavior was significant ($beta = -0.425, p < 0.01$). However, the regression coefficients for organizational incentives and the interaction term were not significant. These results indicate that organizational incentives do not significantly moderate the relationship between workplace marginalization and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is not supported.

Table 3. Examination of the regulatory effect of organizational incentives.

Variable	OCB	
	β	se
independent variable		
WM	-0.425**	0.125
moderator variable		
OI	0.397	0.205
Interaction		
Interaction effect term	0.045	0.044
Controls		
Gender	0.1026	0.0536
Age	-0.011	0.0247
Position	0.0338	0.0167
Years	-0.0561	0.0284
R^2	0.6834	
Adjusted R^2	0.67	
F	75.5457	

Note.WM=Workplace Marginalization;
OI=Organizational Inducement;
OCB=Organizational Citizenship Behavior
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level.
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

5 Discussion

Employees' perception of their status in the workplace has a negative impact on their organizational citizenship behavior. When employees feel marginalized, they may strive to maintain their psychological balance by deviating from organizational management requirements and seeking to improve their psychological well-being, such as through increased willingness to quit. Therefore, if an organization (team) wishes to reduce employee turnover and encourage more organizational citizenship behaviors, it is crucial to prioritize employees' mental and psychological well-being. This ensures that employees can effectively embody their work values within a high-pressure working environment. During public health emergencies, property management personnel bear additional work responsibilities, experience heightened sensitivity to workplace marginalization, and exhibit reduced civic behavior. Reducing the workplace marginalization of property workers and enhancing their sense of happiness and fulfillment can significantly promote their civic behavior.

Based on the results of regression analysis, there is a significant negative correlation between the

duration of employees' property tenure and the level of organizational citizenship behavior in Model 1 ($\beta = -0.218$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, as the duration of employment increases, the level of organizational citizenship behavior tends to decrease. However, this relationship becomes non-significant in the full model that includes workplace marginalization ($\beta = -0.078$, $p > 0.05$).

Organizational incentives do not significantly moderate the relationship between workplace marginalization and organizational citizenship behavior. In other words, the influence of workplace marginalization on OCB is not altered by the incentives provided by the organization. This finding warrants further explanation.

A possible explanation lies in the public health emergency context of this study. During such crises, property management personnel may be driven primarily by intrinsic motivations (e.g., sense of responsibility, professional mission, and altruism) rather than extrinsic inducements. Additionally, face culture—a core value in Chinese society—may lead individuals to suppress negative emotions and continue performing positive behaviors regardless of how they are treated by the organization. Under these conditions, the marginalizing experience itself exerts a strong negative effect on OCB, while organizational incentives, whether tangible or intangible, are insufficient to counteract or buffer this effect. Consequently, the moderating role of organizational incentives is not statistically significant.

6 Conclusion

Through a combination of data analysis and practical examples, this study has found that in public health emergencies, grassroots frontline staff—whether in non-governmental or public institutions—hold high expectations of themselves and do not perceive their positive behaviors as additional work requirements. This finding aligns with traditional Chinese cultural values, where a strong sense of national mission and responsibility leads individuals to impose higher demands on themselves than organizations require.

In practice, organizations can support their employees through tangible or intangible rewards, such as collective incentives, individual praise, and material recognition. Such support not only maintains employee morale but also fosters a sense of belonging and organizational commitment. Furthermore, creating a more equal and harmonious working environment can reduce employees' perceptions of marginalization or exclusion, thereby promoting positive work outcomes.

It is crucial for organizations to recognize the importance of supporting their grassroots frontline staff during public health emergencies. By providing appropriate support and creating an inclusive work environment, organizations can help ensure that their employees feel valued and empowered to perform their duties effectively.

Although people may exhibit a more positive side in public events, this should not be used as an excuse for individuals to be undervalued or for organizations to disregard the rights and interests of individuals regardless of their feelings.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

Mudan Yu is affiliated with the Guangdong Tobacco Shaoguan City Co., Ltd, Shaoguan 512029, China. The authors declare that this affiliation had no influence on the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or the decision to publish, and that no other competing interests exist.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Not applicable.

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