THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL MOBILITY PREFERENCE ON
COMPULSORY CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

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Based on the social exchange theory and the boundaryless career perspective, this study used a questionnaire method to examine the mechanism by which employees’ preferences for organizational mobility influence their obligatory citizenship behavior. The results showed that: (1) employees’ organizational mobility preference positively predicted their compulsory citizenship behavior; (2) employees’ preference for organizational mobility had negative and positive effects on employees’ relational and transactional psychological contracts, respectively; (3) both relational and transactional psychological contracts partially mediated the influence of employees’ preferences for organizational mobility on their compulsory citizenship behavior, with the mediation effect of transactional psychological contract being stronger; (4) organizational development support positively moderated the mediation effect of transactional psychological contract, but the moderating effect of organizational development support on the relationship between employees’ preferences for organizational mobility and relational psychological contract was not significant.

Keywords: organizational mobility preference; boundaryless career; compulsory citizenship behavior; psychological contract

Introduction

Organizational psychologists Katz & Kahn (1966/1978) note that a well-functioning organization must exhibit three basic behaviors: first, members of the organization must be encouraged to enter and remain in the system; second, they must perform their role responsibilities in a reliable manner; and third, they must demonstrate behavior beyond their role responsibilities, and achieve organizational goals through innovative and voluntary behavior. Extra-role employee behavior, including organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), has become a key driver of corporate competitiveness. OCB refers to individual voluntary prosocial organizational extra-role behavior.
The study has shown that in the context of high-power distance in China, compulsory citizenship behavior (CCB) is prevalent, which is contrary to an individual’s autonomous will and is one of the important sources of workplace.

This study attempts to answer the following three questions: First, does employee OMP positively predict employee CCB? Second, if so, can the typical binary classification of psychological contracts, namely, transactional and relational psychological contracts, still explain the mechanism of their action? Third, can perceived organizational developmental support that promotes employee human capital development moderate the influence of employee OMP on CCB through psychological contracts?

This study may contribute to previous research in the following aspects: first, it breaks through the research framework examining the antecedents of individual CCB under the traditional career development model, expands the outcome variable of OMP, and inspires future preventive measures for CCB for individuals with high OMP.

Second, it confirms the empirical proposition that, against the backdrop of a boundaryless career, the psychological contract between organizations and employees shifts from a long-term development type to a short-term transactional type (Guo & Van der Heijden, 2006), attempting to explain the mechanism by which individual OMP influences CCB.

**Literature review and hypotheses**

**Organizational mobility preference and compulsory citizenship behavior**

Compulsory citizenship behavior (CCB) is a concept derived from organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and refers to non-voluntary behavior exhibited by employees due to pressure from the subject, object, and environment (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

It includes three basic characteristics: self-serving motivation, compulsory feelings, and extra-role behavior. Due to boundaryless career orientation, employees with higher OMP tendencies have a clearer intention to leave, and their motivation to actively end their exchange relationship with the organization is stronger. They engage in job mobility to maximize their personal interests, with a prominent utilitarian orientation. To cope with the volatile job market, they are more inclined to accelerate their investment in their own human capital (Sun, 2020) and fully play the agent role in their career development.

This orientation weakens their willingness to make efforts and fully invest themselves in the organization. In addition, according to the conservation of resources theory, time and energy are valuable resources for human survival and development, and any stimuli that are detrimental to these resources are perceived as stressors (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

People will strive to take action to avoid the loss of resources and prevent the occurrence of an imbalanced psychological state of “loss without gain”. Therefore, their motivation to engage in prosocial organizational extra-role behaviors, which consume their resources but are not included in the formal salary scope, is weaker. In other words, in practice, people with high OMP tendencies are unlikely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors voluntarily, but are more likely to engage in them due to various civic pressures or instrumental motives. These behaviors are organizational citizenship behaviors under controlled motives, namely CCB. Based on this we assume:

H1: Organizational mobility preference has a positive effect on compulsory citizenship behavior.
Organizational mobility preference and relational and transactional psychological contracts

A psychological contract is a belief in mutual responsibilities formed by an individual based on promises, trust, and intuition in the context of the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989).

It is the invisible expectation of both parties in an employment relationship, which represents the implicit mutual expectations and subjective cognition of an individual, and it is an exchange relationship that benefits both parties. It not only involves expectations between two parties, but also contains a requirement or obligation component (Li & Sun, 2009).

Although it is not written, the psychological contract is a powerful determinant of behavior in organizations (Schein, 1980). Psychological contracts are mainly divided into two categories: relational and transactional. Individuals who hold a transactional psychological contract tend to exchange direct economic, material, or work environment benefits only for their clearly defined job responsibilities (i.e., in-role behavior), while individuals with a relational psychological contract focus on fulfilling their broad, abstract, and generalized responsibilities based on broad, long-term, socioemotional exchange relationships. They perceive wide and flexible social and economic exchange scope with the organization.

As mentioned above, the boundaryless career model depicts a new type of employment relationship, one of its prominent features is that it values employees’ contributions to the organization and the employees mainly hold transactional psychological contracts. In terms of behavioral characteristics, if an individual has a high organizational mobility preference, they have a weak interest in staying in one organization, and therefore, they will not pay too much attention to the maintenance and establishment of long-term relationships with the organization and colleagues. The study has shown that organizational mobility preference is significantly negatively correlated with emphasis on relationship and self-presentation in individual career management (Yu, 2014), and is also significantly negatively correlated with work engagement and organizational engagement (Wu, 2017), organizational (affective) commitment (Çakmak-Öltuoğlu, 2012; Wang et al., 2020). Lower levels of organizational commitment and employee engagement indicate a more fragile emotional identification, attachment, and psychological link between individuals and the organization. Therefore, we assume:

H2a: Employee organizational mobility preference negatively affects relational psychological contract.

H2b: Employee organizational mobility preference positively affects transactional psychological contract.

The incentive-contribution theory suggests that organizations can elicit employee contributions by providing various incentives. These inducements are incentives that organizations offer to satisfy employee needs, while contributions refer to employee behaviors that support organizational goals. Inducements generally include economic incentives (such as salary and compensation), development incentives (such as promotions and training), and environmental incentives (such as cultural climate and interpersonal relationships). The inducements provided by the organization interact with employee contributions.

When employees achieve a balance between inducements and contributions, they are satisfied and motivated to work towards achieving organizational goals.
High organizational mobility preference and low willingness to stay in the organization may indicate that employees perceive the inducements offered by the organization as being less than their own contributions. In this situation, employees may reduce their level of effort to maintain psychological balance, naturally narrowing their role breadth perception and adopting a negative attitude towards prosocial organizational extra-role behavior that is not included in the formal compensation system. In the view of employees, this imbalanced exchange relationship is based on their own judgement of the degree of match between mutual responsibilities and obligations between themselves and the organization.

Therefore, we speculate that in the process of the influence of OMP on CCB, psychological contracts, whether they are relational or transactional, play a certain mediating role. Hence, we assume:

H3a: Relational psychological contracts mediate the relationship between organizational mobility preference and compulsory citizenship behavior.

H3b: Transactional psychological contracts mediate the relationship between organizational mobility preference and compulsory citizenship behavior.

**Moderating role of organizational support for development**

Organizational support for development refers to employees’ overall perception of the developmental programs and opportunities that help them improve their professional skills and management abilities within the organization (Kraimer et al., 2011).

It is a type of organizational support that emphasizes the investment of human capital in employees to enhance their work-related capabilities. For employees, organizational support for development is a typical developmental incentive. As mentioned earlier, individuals with a clear tendency towards boundaryless careers prioritize employability over long-term employment relationships in their self-organization relationship orientation.

Therefore, developmental support from the organization is perceived as a utilitarian incentive that meets the needs of high OMP individuals, making it a strong motivator that reinforces the positive impact of transactional psychological contracts on OMP.

In the process of OMP affecting employees’ relational psychological contracts, employees perceive the support from the organization and, driven by the reciprocity principle, strengthen their commitment to the organization, thereby weakening the negative impact of OMP on relational psychological contracts. Thus, we assume:

H4a: Organizational development support negatively moderates the relationship between preference for organizational mobility and relational psychological contracts.

H4b: Organizational development support positively moderates the relationship between preference for organizational mobility and transactional psychological contracts.

Based on the above analysis, the model for this study is presented below:
Research methods

In this study, electronic questionnaires were distributed through the paid data collection platform Credamo to increase representativeness of the sample. To control for potential common-method variance, the study strictly limited the sample occupation types and only included respondents with a history of survey completion with an acceptance rate greater than 70% and a credit score of over 70 in Credamo. To improve the quality of the sample responses, controls were also implemented, such as adjusting the page numbering of the questionnaire and adding screening questions to automatically reject non-serious respondents.

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, with 217 valid questionnaires collected, representing a valid response rate of 86.80%. The 217 samples were collected from 97 cities in 26 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions across the country. Males accounted for 40.6% of the sample, with more than half (51.6%) having a monthly income between 3001 and 10,000 yuan. Those with a monthly income of more than 20,000 yuan accounted for 14.7%, while those with a bachelor’s or graduate degree accounted for 23.0% and 68.7%, respectively. Low-level, mid-level, and ordinary staff positions accounted for 21.2%, 23.0%, and 29.0%, respectively, and those who worked with their supervisors for less than 1 year or more than 10 years accounted for a total of 9.2%.

Data analysis and hypothesis testing

Correlation analysis between variables

Tab. 1 shows that the correlation coefficients among the main variables are all below the benchmark value of 0.700, indicating that there is no serious problem of multicollinearity in the data of this study.
Preference for organizational mobility is significantly positively correlated with compulsory citizenship behavior ($r=0.370$, $p<0.01$), significantly negatively correlated with the relational psychological contract ($r=-0.464$, $p<0.01$), and significantly positively correlated with the transactional psychological contract ($r=0.329$, $p<0.01$). Hypotheses 1, 2a, and 2b are preliminarily supported, which provides a basis for further analysis.

Table 1 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients among Variables (N=217)
(made by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CCB</th>
<th>OMP</th>
<th>PCR</th>
<th>PCT</th>
<th>OSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCB</td>
<td>3.178</td>
<td>1.070</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4OMP</td>
<td>2.167</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td></td>
<td>.855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5PCR</td>
<td>4.081</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>-.376</td>
<td>-.464</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4PCT</td>
<td>2.220</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.329</td>
<td>-.681</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6OSD</td>
<td>4.154</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td>-.319</td>
<td>-.251</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>-.543</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Regression analysis**

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the main effect relationship between preference for organizational mobility and compulsory citizenship behavior, as well as the mediating effect of psychological contracts and the moderating effect of organizational development support. Table 3 shows the specific results of the hierarchical regression.

It can be seen that preference for organizational mobility has a significant positive effect on compulsory citizenship behavior ($M1$, $\beta=0.345$, $p<0.001$) and transactional psychological contract ($M3$, $\beta=0.281$, $p<0.001$), and a significant negative effect on relational psychological contract ($M2$, $\beta=-0.401$, $p<0.001$), which further verifies Hypotheses 1, 2b, and 2a.

After adding the mediator variable, the effect of preference for organizational mobility on compulsory citizenship behavior ($M4$, $\beta=0.263$, $p<0.001$) remains significant, and the partial mediating effect of relational psychological contract ($M4$, $\beta=-0.205$, $p<0.05$) is significant, supporting and verifying Hypothesis 3a.

Similarly, after adding the mediator variable, the effect of preference for organizational mobility on compulsory citizenship behavior ($M5$, $\beta=0.296$, $p<0.001$) remains significant, and the partial mediating effect of transactional psychological contract ($M5$, $\beta=0.173$, $p<0.05$) is significant, which supports and verifies Hypothesis 3b.
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Table 2 - Regression Analysis (N=217)
(made by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>PCR</th>
<th>PCT</th>
<th>CCB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M2</td>
<td>M6</td>
<td>M3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.136*</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed.</td>
<td>0.141*</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>-0.224***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JobL</td>
<td>-0.137*</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cowork</td>
<td>0.203*</td>
<td>0.099*</td>
<td>-0.207*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>-0.401***</td>
<td>-0.288***</td>
<td>0.281***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>OMP x OSD</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>0.151***</td>
<td>0.441***</td>
<td>0.074***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, we tested the moderating effect after centering the independent variable and moderator separately. After controlling for demographic variables such as gender, education level, job level, and length of time working with the leader, we analyzed the interaction effect of preference for organizational mobility and organizational support for development on relational and transactional psychological contracts, respectively (moderating the influence of the first stage).

We found that the product of preference for organizational mobility and organizational development support had no significant effect on relational psychological contract (M6, $\beta=-0.038$, $p>0.05$), and Hypothesis 4a was not supported, indicating that organizational development support did not significantly moderate the influence of preference for organizational mobility on the relational psychological contract.

However, the product of preference for organizational mobility and organizational development support had a significant effect on the transactional psychological contract (M7, $\beta=0.117$, $p<0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 4b.

To more clearly reflect the moderating effect of organizational development support, we built a moderating effect graph.

Fig. 2 shows that under high organizational development support, the positive relationship between preference for organizational mobility and transactional psychological contract is stronger.
Figure 2 - Moderating effect of organizational development support on the relationship between preference for organizational mobility and transactional psychological contract (made by the author)

**Moderated mediation analysis**

Based on the verification of Hypotheses 3a and 3b, this study conducted a moderated mediation analysis using Preacher's sub-group analysis method and Hayes index of moderated mediation. The analysis was conducted using Model 7 in the SPSS Process plugin to calculate the direct, indirect, and mediated moderation effects of organizational support for development.

Bootstrap re-sampling was performed 5,000 times to construct a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. If the confidence interval did not include 0, the corresponding effect was considered significant. The results of the analysis are presented in Tab. 3.

**Table 3 - Moderated Mediation Analysis (N=217)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>Moderation Effect</th>
<th>Moderated Mediation Effect</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95% CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Grade Group</td>
<td>PCT</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>[-0.021, 0.063]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Grade Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>[0.014, 0.149]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Group Difference</td>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>[0.001, 0.136]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Grade Group</td>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>[0.009, 0.128]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Grade Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>[0.027, 0.156]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Group Difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>[-0.038, 0.107]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The effect size represents that of the indirect effect
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According to Tab. 3, when the perceived organizational support for development is low, the indirect effect of employees’ preference for organizational mobility on CCB through transactional psychological contract is not significant (β=0.019, 95% confidence interval [-0.021, 0.063], including 0), whereas it becomes significant (β=0.068, 95% confidence interval [0.014, 0.149], not including 0) when the perceived organizational support for development is high.

The difference between the two groups of effect sizes is in the 95% confidence interval, not including 0, and the index value is 0.038, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.001, 0.105], which does not include 0. The inter-group difference is significant. Both indicators indicate that the transactional psychological contract has a moderated mediation effect. Similarly, when the perceived organizational support for development is low, the indirect effect of employees’ organizational mobility preference on CCB through the relational psychological contract is significant (β=0.063, 95% confidence interval [0.009, 0.128], not including 0), and it is also significant when the perceived organizational development support is high (β=0.081, 95% confidence interval [0.027, 0.156]).

Robustness check

To more precisely test the mediating effect of psychological contracts between preference for organizational mobility and CCB, this study used the bias-corrected bootstrap method for robustness check. As shown in Tab. 4, the indirect effect coefficient of the relational psychological contract between preference for organizational mobility and CCB is 0.060, accounting for 14.35% of the total effect; the indirect effect coefficient of the transactional psychological contract between preference for organizational mobility and CCB is 0.100, accounting for 23.92% of the total effect.

Therefore, Hypotheses 3a and 3b are supported again.

Table 4 - Mediation effects and their confidence intervals by bootstrap method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Relational Psychological Contract</th>
<th>Transactional Psychological Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>[0.267,0.568]</td>
<td>[0.014,0.120]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and conclusions

This study examined the effects of OMP on CCB through the mediating role of relational and transactional psychological contracts, and the moderating effect of perceived organizational development support in the context of an employee’s boundaryless career from a social exchange perspective.
The results showed that OMP had a significant positive effect on CCB, while negatively and positively affecting relational and transactional psychological contracts, respectively. Both relational and transactional psychological contracts partially mediated the relationship between OMP and CCB.

Organizational development support had a significant positive moderating effect on the relationship between OMP and transactional psychological contract, indicating that the stronger an employee’s perception of organizational development support, the stronger the positive impact of OMP on CCB through transactional psychological contract. However, the moderating effect of organizational development support for the relationship between OMP and relational psychological contract was not significant.

The direct impact of OMP on CCB. Previous studies have found that CCB, as a common role pressure, significantly predicts turnover intentions (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006; Nie, 2016; Song & Cheng, 2021). However, this study confirms that when employees have a clear turnover intention, they are not enthusiastic about working beyond their organizational responsibilities to the organization, and work of this kind becomes a new source of work pressure. In other words, according to the traditional career model, CCB as one of the workplace stressors, positively predicts employees’ turnover intention.

However, in certain situations, such as people with a new career orientation, the turnover intention can positively predict CCB. This suggests that there is more than just a static and unidirectional linear cause-and-effect relationship between CCB and turnover intention. Additionally, the moderating effects of employees’ variable career orientation (negative moderation) and their self-perceived external employability (positive moderation) on the threshold effect were examined.

The mediation effect of psychological contracts. This study suggested that in the process of OMP affecting CCB, both transactional and relational psychological contracts played a linking role. As shown in Tab. 4, the mediation effect of transactional psychological contract was 9.57 percentage points higher than that of relational psychological contract, indicating that the effect of transactional psychological contract is more prominent in the process of OMP positively influencing CCB. This finding validates the judgment that in the context of boundaryless careers, the employee-organization contract relationship tends to become short-term and instrumental. It also suggests that psychological contracts, as implicit but powerful psychological basis for economic and social exchange between individuals and organizations, remain unchanged in essence in both traditional and new career settings. Perhaps, the only change is the proportion of the two dimensions (i.e., relational and transactional) of the psychological contract.

The moderating effect of organizational development support. From a social exchange perspective, organizational development support supports a positive inducement and a “developmental reward” provided by companies, which can promote employees’ willingness to reciprocate positively, thereby reducing the negative impact of OMP on relational psychological contracts (H4a).

However, data analysis shows that H4a is not supported. A review of literature suggests that this is due to the “double-edged sword” effect of training, including organizational development support, as well as the study’s failure to consider an important dummy variable, namely, the internal employability of employees.

Training does enhance employees’ professional competence, making them feel that they should reciprocate organizational demands and enhancing their emotional attachment to
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the organization. At the same time, training has a significant external positive effect, improving employees’ external employability and bargaining power, helping them “seek better employer”, and negatively affecting organizational commitment (Ling & Qing, 2013).

However, if employees perceive high levels of both organizational support for development and internal employability, the turnover incentive is greatly reduced, and the positive effects of training become more prominent. The results of the “double-edged sword” effect depend on the strength of the comparison between individuals’ willingness to reciprocate the organization and their self-development attitudes after receiving training.

In this study, employees who have more emotional involvement with the organization and a broader range of exchange content will experience a more prominent cognitive conflict between their desire to reciprocate emotionally and their rational self-choice when they receive high levels of organizational development support without considering the change in their internal employability.

This, in turn, affects their perception of the extra-role behavior expected by the organization, and the moderating effect of organizational development support is masked. On the other hand, employees who want to make short-term, direct, and specific benefit exchanges with the organization, they prioritize their individual direct benefits and have a low level of emotional cognition when it comes to reciprocity with the organization.

Organizational developmental rewards are primarily used for individuals’ career growth rather than organizational development, which reinforces their instrumental motives and attitudes towards organizational development support, and thus the positive moderating effect is significant.

References:


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