



INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND EXTRA-ROLE BEHAVIOR: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING MEANINGFULNESS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP AMONG SARAWAK CIVIL SERVANTS

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Abstract:

Recent reforms in Sarawak's civil service have replaced pension benefits with a contribution-based scheme for new hires, raising concerns about equity, morale, and retention. This study explores whether Volunteering Meaningfulness (VM) influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among civil servants in this changing policy environment. Guided by equity theory and intrinsic motivation literature, survey data were collected and analyzed to examine the relationship between VM and OCB. The results show that employees who find volunteering meaningful are more likely to engage in positive, discretionary workplace behaviors. These findings suggest that promoting meaningful voluntary activities can help sustain motivation and commitment despite structural changes. The study contributes to public sector research by highlighting the role of intrinsic motivation in shaping workplace behavior.

Keywords:

Volunteering Meaningfulness, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Intrinsic Motivation, Civil Servants, Public Sector, Self-Determination Theory

Introduction

In 2023, the Sarawak State Secretary, Datuk Amar Mohamad Abu Bakar Marzuki, announced a significant shift in the state's civil service retirement policy, in which newly appointed civil servants would no longer receive a pension upon retirement. Instead, they would contribute to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), a defined-contribution retirement savings scheme (The Star, 2023). This move, which was implemented in 2024, aligns with global trends, where governments are transitioning from defined-benefit pension systems to more sustainable contribution-based models (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021).

While the new policy may reduce the government's financial burden, it has raised concerns regarding fairness and equity within the civil service. Senior staff continue to enjoy pension benefits, while newly appointed staff receive different treatment despite often performing equal roles. According to equity theory (Adams, 1963), perceived inequity in the distribution of rewards can lead to employee dissatisfaction, decreased motivation, and disengagement. If such concerns remain unaddressed, the resulting dissatisfaction could reduce morale and increase turnover among new hires, undermining the stability and performance of the state's civil service (Jiang & Wang, 2021; Wu et al., 2022).

Thus, the Sarawak civil service must find a way to address these emerging morale and retention challenges. One promising approach is the cultivation of Organizational Citizenship Behavior among both pension and non-pensioned workers. Organ (1988) defined OCB as voluntary and discretionary behavior that is not directly recognized by the formal reward system but contributes to the effective functioning of an organization. Research has shown that fostering OCB can lead to higher job satisfaction (Supriyanto et al., 2020), reduce turnover intentions (Munir & Hameed, 2024), and improve organizational performance (Mahrani & Alwi, 2021).

A growing body of literature suggests that intrinsic motivation, especially in the form of meaningful work, can influence the likelihood of employees exhibiting OCB. According to Rodell (2013), employees often find meaning and purpose through volunteering, particularly when their core job responsibilities lack intrinsic meaning. Rodell's study found that "volunteering was associated with both volunteer and job meaningfulness, and that the pull of meaningful volunteer work was even stronger when employees had less meaning in their jobs" (Rodell, 2023). This insight implies that voluntary behaviors such as helping colleagues, staying late without overtime compensation, or representing one's department during off-hours may be perceived as more meaningful, which in turn enhances job satisfaction and strengthens organizational commitment (Wang & Liao, 2020).

Accordingly, this paper aims to examine whether volunteering meaningfulness can significantly influence the display of Organizational Citizenship Behavior among state civil servants. By exploring this relationship, the study seeks to offer practical insights for public sector leaders seeking to maintain employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance amid structural policy changes (Hassan & Ahmed, 2022).

Literature Review

This section outlines recent retirement policy changes, defines Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and examines how Volunteering Meaningfulness may influence OCB, supported by Self-Determination Theory.

Retirement Policy Shifts and Employee Reactions in the Public Sector

Governments across the globe are increasingly shifting from defined-benefit pension systems to contribution-based retirement schemes due to financial sustainability concerns. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021), many countries have adopted defined-contribution models, which place more responsibility on individual employees for their retirement savings. In Malaysia, this shift became evident when the Sarawak State Secretary announced that newly appointed civil servants would no longer receive pensions but instead contribute to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), a defined-contribution scheme (The Star, 2023).

Such structural changes can significantly impact employee perceptions, particularly regarding fairness and job security. The psychological contract, an unwritten set of expectations between employers and employees, can be violated when changes in benefits are perceived as unfair (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Equity theory (Adams, 1963) posits that employees compare their input-output ratio with that of their peers, and perceived inequities can lead to dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, and even turnover. In dual-benefit systems, where older staff enjoy pensions while newer staff do not, these perceptions of inequity are likely to emerge (Jiang & Wang, 2021; Liu et al., 2023).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Definition, Dimensions, and Importance

Organizational Citizenship Behavior refers to discretionary, voluntary behaviors that are not part of an employee's formal job requirements but that contribute positively to organizational functioning. Organ (1988) identified five dimensions of OCB: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. These behaviors, though not formally rewarded, enhance workplace morale and efficiency.

Research has consistently shown the positive outcomes of OCB for both individuals and organizations. Podsakoff et al. (2000) found that OCB contributes to organizational effectiveness, particularly by improving cooperation and reducing friction among employees. In public sector contexts, where resource constraints and bureaucratic structures can hinder performance, OCB becomes especially valuable (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). Furthermore, studies have linked OCB with higher job satisfaction (Supriyanto et al., 2020), lower turnover intentions (Munir & Hameed, 2024), and improved employee engagement (Kim, 2006; Li et al., 2022).

Volunteering Meaningfulness as Predictors of OCB

Rodell (2013) introduced the concept of volunteering meaningfulness, highlighting how employees often derive a sense of purpose through voluntary activities. Her study revealed that "volunteering was associated with both volunteer and job meaningfulness, and that the pull of meaningful volunteer work was even stronger when employees had less meaning in their jobs."

This insight is particularly relevant for workers who are experiencing benefit disparities. When formal rewards are perceived as lacking, meaningful voluntary activities—such as staying late to complete tasks or representing departments during off-hours—can serve as compensatory sources of job satisfaction. Grant (2008) also noted that employees driven by prosocial motivations tend to display higher levels of OCB, especially when their actions are aligned with personal values.

Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized that intrinsic motivation, unlike extrinsic rewards, fosters sustainable behavioral engagement. This perspective is supported by research from Pajo and Lee (2011), who found that employees involved in volunteering initiatives often carried their prosocial attitudes into their workplaces, resulting in increased OCB (Zhang & Xie, 2022; Zhao et al., 2021).

Conceptual Framework

This study investigates the relationship between Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among public sector employees. The conceptual framework is anchored in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci (2000), which explains how intrinsic motivation, driven by meaningful experiences, can lead to prosocial and discretionary workplace behaviors such as OCB.

Theoretical Foundation: Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that individuals are more motivated and engaged when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. When employees experience intrinsic motivation—doing something because it is inherently interesting or meaningful—they are more likely to sustain positive behavior over time (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory provides a useful lens to understand how employees' meaningful experiences in volunteer activities may extend to their behavior in the workplace.

Volunteering Meaningfulness

Volunteering Meaningfulness is defined as the perception that one's voluntary activities are purposeful, valuable, and personally significant (Rodell, 2013). Rodell's study showed that meaningful volunteer work can positively influence both personal fulfillment and professional behavior. When employees derive a sense of meaning from their volunteerism, this may enhance their intrinsic motivation to contribute more at work, even beyond their formal responsibilities.

This aligns with findings by Zhang and Xie (2022), who argued that employees with high levels of volunteering meaningfulness are more likely to exhibit Organizational Citizenship Behavior, as their actions become deeply integrated with their personal values and sense of purpose. Similarly, research by Zhao et al. (2021) suggests that the intrinsic rewards gained from meaningful volunteering experiences spill over into the workplace, driving employees to go above and beyond their job requirements.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational Citizenship Behavior refers to voluntary, extra-role behaviors that support the social and psychological environment of the workplace (Organ, 1988). These behaviors include altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. Research has shown that OCB enhances organizational effectiveness, improves collaboration, and strengthens overall morale (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

In the public sector, where rigid structures and limited material rewards are common, OCB becomes especially valuable in improving service quality and organizational performance (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). Employees driven by personal meaning and intrinsic motivation are more likely to demonstrate these discretionary behaviors (Grant, 2008; Lee et al., 2022). Recent studies have further emphasized that fostering an environment where employees can find

personal meaning in their roles contributes to the cultivation of OCB, leading to improved organizational outcomes (Zhao et al., 2021; Zhang & Xie, 2022).

The Relationship Between VM and OCB

When employees perceive their volunteer activities as meaningful, they may experience increased intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes positive behaviors in the workplace, such as Organizational Citizenship Behavior. According to Pajo and Lee (2011), individuals involved in meaningful volunteer work often carry their prosocial attitudes into the workplace. Similarly, Rodell (2013) found that volunteering meaningfulness significantly predicts job-related behaviors, including discretionary effort.

More recent studies have reinforced these findings, with Zhao et al. (2021) showing that employees who engage in meaningful volunteer activities tend to display higher levels of OCB, which improves workplace collaboration and overall morale. Furthermore, Zhang and Xie (2022) found that employees who find meaning in their volunteer work are more motivated to engage in extra-role behaviors that benefit the organization.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical foundation and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Volunteering Meaningfulness is positively associated with Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Conceptual Framework Diagram

In this framework, Volunteering Meaningfulness is treated as the independent variable, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior is the dependent variable, with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) offering the underlying theoretical explanation for the relationship.

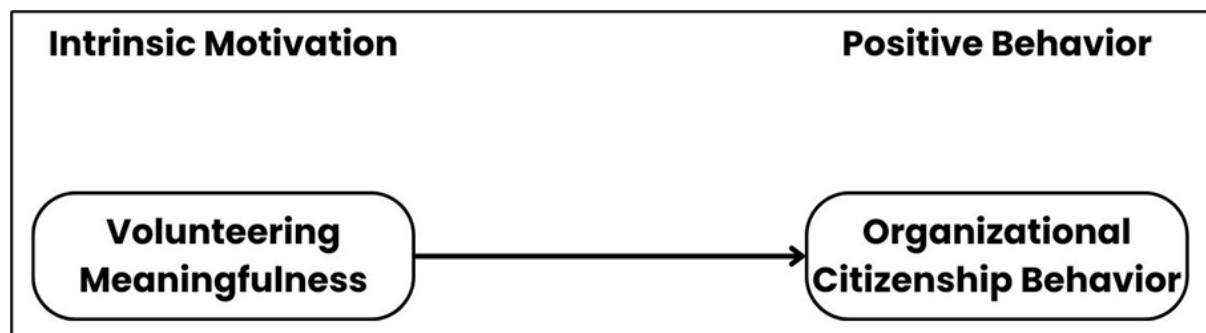


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework For This Study, Adapted From Self-Determination Theory

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among civil service employees in Sarawak. The target population comprised all 642 civil servants from 9 units operating within Wisma Bapa Malaysia, the Sarawak state government headquarters. A census approach was initially adopted, targeting all 642 civil servants across

nine units at Wisma Bapa Malaysia. However, due to constraints such as unit-level confidentiality and a one-month time frame imposed by the state for data collection, only 300 completed questionnaires were obtained and used for analysis. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process.

The questionnaire comprised three sections: (1) Respondent background, (2) Volunteering Meaningfulness, and (3) Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The Volunteering Meaningfulness scale was adapted from the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) developed by Steger et al. (2012), while OCB was measured using items adapted from Jepsen and Rodwell (2005). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot study was conducted with civil servants from other units within the Sarawak civil service, prior to actual data collection, to assess instrument reliability. The results indicated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.931 for Volunteering Meaningfulness and 0.854 for OCB.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, applying Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationship.

Results

This section presents the demographic profile of respondents and the results from the measurement and structural model assessments. Key analyses include construct reliability and validity, common method bias, collinearity, and hypothesis testing to evaluate the relationship between Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Respondent Background

A total of 300 respondents from the Sarawak civil service participated in this study. Of these, 43.3% were male and 56.7% were female. The majority of respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years. Most participants were from the support group category and held at least a bachelor's degree. In terms of work experience, the majority had served between 1 to 5 years in the civil service. Additionally, most respondents reported that they had participated in voluntary activities related to organizational matters.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Both constructs demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties.

Although Hair et al. (2017) recommend retaining indicators with outer loadings of 0.70 or higher, items with loadings between 0.50 and 0.70 were retained in this study. The decision was justified as the overall Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values remained satisfactory.

Specifically, the CR values for VM and OCB exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while the AVE values for VM and OCB met or exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50. These results indicate adequate construct reliability and convergent validity despite the retention of lower-loading indicators.

Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs, and all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, demonstrating satisfactory discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 1: Outer Loadings
Volunteering Meaningfulness

VM1	0.912	Retained
VM2	0.911	Retained
VM3	0.891	Retained
VM4	0.884	Retained
VM5	0.925	Retained
VM6	0.882	Retained
VM7	0.866	Retained
Organizational Citizenship Behavior		
OCB1	0.785	Retained
OCB10	0.684	Retained
OCB11	0.749	Retained
OCB12	0.489	Discard
OCB13	0.689	Retained
OCB14	0.595	Retained
OCB15_R	0.215	Discard
OCB16	0.375	Discard
OCB2	0.779	Retained
OCB3	0.749	Retained
OCB4_R	0.235	Discard
OCB5_R	0.205	Discard
OCB6	0.697	Retained
OCB7	0.732	Retained
OCB8	0.648	Retained
OCB9	0.593	Retained

Table 2: Construct Reliability & Validity

Construct	Composite (CR)	Reliability	Average Extracted (AVE)	Variance
VM	0.966		0.803	
OCB	0.916		0.500	

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	VM	OCB
VM	0.896	
OCB	0.627	0.707

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	HTMT Value
VM ↔ OCB	0.581

Structural Model Assessment

Following the establishment of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized relationship between Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The assessment included an evaluation of common method bias, collinearity, path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance.

Common Method Bias Assessment

Common method bias was assessed using the full collinearity VIF approach (Kock, 2015). The VIF values for all constructs were below the threshold of 3.3, indicating that common method bias is unlikely to affect the results.

Table 5: Assessment of Common Method Bias

Construct	VIF	Interpretation
Volunteering Meaningfulness	1.51	No common method bias
OCB	2.36	No common method bias

Collinearity Assessment

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all indicators were below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating no multicollinearity concerns (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 6: Assessment of Collinearity

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable	VIF
Volunteering Meaningfulness	OCB	1.36

Path Coefficient and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The results indicated a significant positive relationship between Volunteering Meaningfulness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$). This supports the proposed hypothesis that higher levels of volunteering meaningfulness are associated with increased organizational citizenship behavior.

Volunteering meaningfulness alone explained 39.3% of the variance in organizational citizenship behavior ($R^2 = 0.393$), indicating a moderate level of explanatory power (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 7: Assessment of Path Coefficient and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Hypothesis	Path	β (Path Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	R^2 (OCB)
H1	VM-OCB	0.25	5.00	<0.001	0.393

PLS-Predict

PLS-Predict analysis revealed that only OCB1 and OCB2 showed lower RMSE values in the PLS-SEM model compared to the linear model (OCB1: 0.687 vs. 0.695; OCB2: 0.663 vs. 0.666), indicating acceptable predictive relevance (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022). The other nine indicators did not meet this criterion and were therefore excluded from the predictive assessment, as indicators failing to outperform the linear benchmark suggest limited predictive capability and should be interpreted cautiously (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 8: Assessment of PLS Predict

Indicator	PLS RMSE	LM RMSE	PLS < LM?
OCB1	0.687	0.695	Yes
OCB2	0.663	0.666	Yes

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role that Volunteering Meaningfulness plays in promoting Organizational Citizenship Behavior among civil service employees in Sarawak. This is particularly relevant in the context of the state's recent retirement policy shift, which may have introduced perceived inequities between pensioned and non-pensioned employees. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, the results affirm that when employees derive personal meaning from their volunteer experiences, they are more intrinsically motivated to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit their organizations.

These findings support previous studies by Rodell (2013), Zhao et al. (2021), and Zhang and Xie (2022), who emphasized that meaningful volunteering not only enhances personal fulfilment but also spills over into workplace behavior. In Sarawak's public sector context, where newer employees may feel demotivated due to perceived benefit disparities, fostering meaningful volunteer opportunities could serve as a cost-effective strategy to enhance motivation and workplace morale.

Moreover, this study reinforces the relevance of OCB in maintaining public sector effectiveness despite structural and policy constraints. As past literature suggests, OCB contributes to smoother operations, better teamwork, and a more positive work climate (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). The fact that VM can stimulate such behaviors suggests it may be a valuable psychological resource in times of organizational transition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that Volunteering Meaningfulness positively influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Sarawak's civil servants. Amid policy changes that may challenge perceptions of fairness and employee motivation, VM emerges as a promising intrinsic motivator that public sector leaders can tap into. By promoting opportunities for meaningful volunteer work, organizations may be able to sustain high levels of OCB, thereby preserving employee engagement, reducing turnover intentions, and enhancing overall institutional performance.

Future research could explore additional mediators or moderators, such as perceived organizational support or leadership style, to further explain the mechanisms behind this relationship. Practically, public sector managers are encouraged to institutionalize structured volunteer programs and recognize informal contributions, especially among non-pensioned employees, as part of a broader employee engagement strategy.

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