

When Psychological Needs Meet Norms: Examining the Interplay of Self-determination, Group Norms, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Tuan Nguyen

*Vietnam National University, Hanoi
Hanoi School of Business and Management, Vietnam*

Abstract

In today's rapidly changing world, an organization's success depends not only on helping behavior – an affiliative/promotive act aimed at facilitating internal efficiency and social cohesion – but also on civic virtue, a more challenging/promotive and macro-level commitment to the organization as a whole. Relying on Self-Determination Theory and role perception, the present study aimed to clarify the distinct motivational mechanisms behind these two critical forms of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Findings of the two-wave survey of 428 employees across 35 groups highlighted that helping behavior is more strongly and positively associated with the satisfaction of relatedness within the immediate work group. In contrast, civic virtue is primarily driven by a principled sense of autonomy and competence, reflecting a self-endorsed choice to act for the organization's collective good. The study's key contribution, however, lies in the significant cross-level moderating effect of group cohesion. The results revealed that in highly cohesive groups, even individuals with high satisfaction of competence tend to suppress their civic virtue behaviors. This suggests a potential trade-off between maintain group harmony and encourage constructive, challenging actions like civic virtue. For managers, this implies that while fostering cohesion is beneficial, an overemphasis on harmony can inadvertently stifle the critical dissent necessary for organizational innovation and long-term adaptation.

Keywords: Ocb, Fundamental Psychological Needs, Role Perception, Group Norms, Multilevel Analysis.