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When Working from Home Reduces Helping at Work

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Purpose
This study investigates how Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB) fluctuate within individuals across daily work settings, with a focus on understanding why employees help less when working from home. Prior research has largely compared OCB between individuals using cross-sectional designs, offering limited insight into how Work-from-Home (WFH) and Work-from-Office (WFO) contexts shape prosocial behaviour on a day-to-day basis. This study addresses that gap by examining the mechanisms and conditions that drive within-person variability in citizenship behaviour.

Methodology
A total of 119 hybrid employees completed the survey twice: once on a WFH day and once on a WFO day, reporting their OCB-I, OCB-O, social interaction, and other contextual factors. Multilevel modeling, mediation, and moderation analyses were conducted to capture within-person fluctuations and contextual influences.

Key Findings
OCB-I was significantly lower on WFH days, whereas OCB-O remained stable across both work settings. The reduction in social interaction partially mediated the decline in OCB-I during WFH, accounting for 26.6% of the effect. Job autonomy emerged as a strong moderator: employees with higher autonomy maintained their levels of OCB-I even when working remotely, while those with lower autonomy showed more pronounced reductions. Task interdependence and managerial support did not moderate the relationship between work setting and OCB-I.

Relevance to Conference Theme

By demonstrating that working from home can reduce day-to-day helping behaviors toward colleagues, this study highlights a critical interpersonal challenge in hybrid and flexible work environments. The findings emphasize the need for human-centric HR strategies that foster social interaction, empower employees with autonomy, and support prosocial engagement in remote contexts—directly contributing to discussions on building effective and connected hybrid workplaces.

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Introduction

While the hybrid work models existed long before the pandemic, COVID-19 certainly brought it to the forefront, prompting organizations to adopt flexible, hybrid, and fully remote models, thereby accelerating a trend that was already in motion (Kniffin et al., 2021; Roy, 2022). This evolution has stirred up new questions about the ways employees exhibit Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

OCB is defined as a voluntary behavior that an employee performs at their discretion (D. Organ, 1988; P M Podsakoff et al., 2000; C. A. Smith et al., 1983). Historically, OCB has been studied as a 'between-person' construct, focusing on stable individual differences in behavior at work (Philip M. Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, emerging research on the subject suggests that OCB is not limited to the reflection of "who you are", but also "where you are and what you are experiencing today" (Dalal et al., 2009). Considering that work setting changes day to day in a hybrid work arrangement, it is highly likely that employees' citizenship may ebb and flow differently depending on contextual factors.

OCB directed towards an individual within the organization through behaviors like helping a colleague, mentoring, providing emotional support, etc., is termed as OCB-Individual (OCB-I), whereas OCB towards the organization as a whole through actions like being punctual, adhering to rules, avoiding criticizing, etc., is called OCB-Organization (OCB-O) (Williams & Anderson, 1991). OCB-I may be more vulnerable to the remote context than OCB-O. This seems plausible because OCB-I often relies on spontaneous, informal social interactions which are naturally limited in remote settings (Methot et al., 2020). In the absence of these informal moments of bonding, employees might struggle to recognize when their colleagues need help or lack the opportunity to engage in everyday acts of kindness and support. On the other hand, OCB-O does not excessively depend on physical presence or informal social moments. The studies suggest that OCB-O is driven more by internalized organizational values (Allen et al., 2000; D. Organ et al., 2006; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Hence, employees continue to engage in these behaviors irrespective of where they are working from.

This study positions itself as a "next generation OCB study" that advances the field from static between person research to within person dynamic analyses. Recently, scholars have begun to acknowledge and explore within person variability. For example, (R. W. Smith et al., 2020) conducted a multilevel study exploring how emotional exhaustion fluctuates across work settings, influencing helping behavior. Their work marks an important step forward in understanding within person variability in prosocial behaviors. Their primary focus was on wellbeing (exhaustion) as the driver of helping behavior, using mood as the key predictor, and did not specifically compare OCB-O and OCB-I or examine any boundary conditions. Their design primarily addressed helping behavior as a broad construct rather than examining different recipients of citizenship behavior, leaving room for investigation of mechanisms and boundary conditions of work setting related OCB change.

Here is how our study contributes to the existing body of literature and followed by proposed hypotheses:

Contextualizing OCB in the Hybrid Work Era: We test how daily work setting (WFH vs WFO) influences OCB-I and OCB-O, answering *where* we are helpful.

H1: OCB-I will be lower on WFH days compared to WFO days.

H2: OCB-O will not significantly differ between WFH and WFO days.

2. Exploring Mechanism and Mediator: We propose that social interaction is a key mediator explaining why OCB-I may decline on WFH days, answering *why* we are helpful.

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H3: The relationship between work setting and OCB-I will be mediated by daily social interaction. On WFH days, reduced social interaction will explain lower OCB-I.

3. Testing Boundary Conditions and Moderators: Building on Conservation of Resources Theory, we investigate how job autonomy, task interdependence, and managerial support may buffer or amplify the influence of work setting on OCB, answering *under what conditions* are we helpful.

H4: Job autonomy will moderate the effect of work setting on OCB-I. Specifically, the negative effect of WFH on OCB-I will be weaker for employees with higher job autonomy.

H5: Task interdependence will moderate the effect of work setting on OCB-I. The negative effect of WFH on OCB-I will be weaker when employees perceive high interdependence with colleagues.

H6: Managerial support will moderate the effect of work setting on OCB-I. Employees receiving higher levels of supervisory support will show less reduction in OCB-I on WFH days.

Method

Participants

The inclusion criteria required participants to be a full-time hybrid employees India, with at least one switch from home to office in a week. This allowed us to capture within person variation in work setting. Each participant had to complete the survey twice, once from home and once from the office. The sequence was flexible, allowing participants to choose which work setting they preferred according to their schedule. Initially, participants were instructed to generate their unique codes (a combination of the first three letters of their name and birthday) to allow for confidential matching of their responses across days while maintaining anonymity. Participants were recruited via LinkedIn, Reddit, and snowballing. All the data was collected via Google Forms between 20th May, 2025, to 2nd September, 2025. A total of 310 responses were recorded. All the questions were marked mandatory; hence, the risk of missing data was mitigated.

Participant demographics

The sample primarily consisted of early-career employees, with a balanced gender distribution and majority of them working as individual contributors (Table 1)

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants. Source: Generated via R.

Variable	*Category*	*n*	*%*
Age	20–30	85	71.5%

	30–40	32	27.3%
	40–50	3	2.5%
	50–60	0	0%
Gender	Female	63	52.9%
	Male	53	44.5%
	Prefer not to say	3	2.5%
Job Role	Individual Contributor	83	69.8%
	Manager	19	15.9%
	Specialist/Expert	9	7.6%
	Consultant	5	3.4%
	Executive	3	2.5%
Job Tenure	Less than 1 year	10	8.4%
	1–3 years	31	26.1%
	4–6 years	44	37.0%
	7–9 years	17	14.3%

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10+ years	17	14.3%

Measures

Participants' OCB was measured using a 16-item scale by (Lee & Allen, 2002), consisting of two subscales: OCB-Individual (8 items) and OCB-Organization (8 items). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never and 5=Very Often), and mean scores were computed for each construct. The Cronbach's alpha for both subscales was above the accepted threshold (OCB-I: α = .60; OCB-O: α = .71). The lower OCBI reliability reflects high within-person behavioral variability (ICC = 13% between-person, 87% within-person), where daily contextual factors produce substantial fluctuation. This pattern indicates OCB-I is situationally responsive rather than trait-like, which is consistent with within-person EMA methodology and supports the appropriateness of our multilevel modeling approach. Participants were asked to indicate their work setting by selecting 'Home' or 'Office', which was later coded to 1 and 0, respectively.

The mediating variable, social interaction, was measured using a three-item scale, recording responses on the behavioral (frequency and time spent collaborating) and experiential (perceived meaningfulness) aspects of coworker interaction. The reliability of the scale was 0.80.

The moderating variable, Job autonomy, was assessed using a three item scale adapted from (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), reflecting decision making and process autonomy. The reliability of this scale was found to be 0.72. Other moderating variables, Task interdependence and Managerial support, were assessed using one item. Similarly, control variables (Daily mood, Workload, and Interruption) were also measured using single items. Despite the limitations of three and single items, this approach is consistent with Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) methodology (Bolger et al., 2003; Shiffman et al., 2008).

Before analysis, all moderating variables were grand mean centered to ensure clear interpretation and reduce multicollinearity.

Data analysis and power consideration

R (version 4.3.1) was used for all the analyses. For descriptive statistics and reliability analyses, we used the 'psych' package. Multilevel models were estimated using 'lme4' and 'lmerTest', specifying random intercepts for participants to account for within person nesting. Mediate function was utilized for mediation analysis.

We based our a priori calculation on a paired sample t-test as a conservative baseline, approximating 34 participants would yield 80% power to detect a moderate effect (Cohen's d=0.50) at α=0.05. To enable detection of smaller effects (d≈ 0.30), we aimed to collect 120-150 paired responses, allowing for attrition and accommodating multilevel modeling (MLM) with repeated daily measures, which increases effective sample size by leveraging within person variance. Although a priori calculation employed a paired sample t-test, hypotheses were analyzed via MLM, which provides the appropriate within person differences when accounting for covariates and random effects, making a separate t-test illogical and inconsistent with the analytical plan. Post hoc power analysis confirmed adequate power (>95%) to detect the observed work setting effect on OCB-I (b= -0.28, d≈ 0.56). However, power

was limited to (60% -70%) for detecting small interaction effects (d < 0.30) and indirect pathways in moderated mediation models.

Data Preparation and Cleaning

Any case where a participant had only completed the survey once was removed. An attention check question was embedded in the study and had to be passed both times for the response to be considered eligible. Participants failing both were duly removed. Responses were paired using the unique identifiers provided by participants.

Post filtering, a final dataset of 119 participants was finalized, resulting in 238 observations (119 WFH and 119 WFO).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and bivariate patterns for all primary study variables appear in Table 2. On average, participants reported relatively high levels of both OCB-I (M = 4.14, SD = 0.50) and OCB-O (M = 4.24, SD = 0.39). Social interaction showed moderate levels (M = 3.51, SD = 0.71), and job autonomy was high overall (M = 3.94, SD = 0.53). The distribution of OCB-I was negatively skewed (skewness = -2.43), with a leptokurtic shape (kurtosis = 12.02), suggesting a ceiling effect common in daily OCB research. OCB-O exhibited mild negative skewness but remained closer to a normal distribution.

Table 2: A correlation matrix with descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha (M, SD, α) in the top rows (* p < .05, ** p < .01). Source: Generated via R.

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. OCB-I Mean	4.15	0.51	.60	—							
2. OCB-O Mean	4.24	0.39	.71	.45**	—						
3. Social Interaction	3.93	0.71	.80	.38**	.31**	—					
4. Job Autonomy	3.94	0.53	0.72	.29**	.24**	.30**	—				

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5. Task Interdependence	3.29	0.77	—	.27**	.26**	.28**	.40**	—			
6. Managerial Support	3.42	0.86	—	.25**	.21**	.32**	.28**	.33**	—		
7. Mood	3.60	0.90	—	.22**	.17*	.34**	.25**	.21**	.29**	—	
8. Workload	3.05	0.91	—	-.18*	-.11	-.16*	-.12	-.14	-.18*	-.23**	—

Detailed item-level statistics and alpha-if-item-dropped tables are available in **Supplementary Table S1**. **Preliminary analysis using intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) showed that only 13% of the variance in OCB-I was due to differences between individuals, while 87% resulted from within-person fluctuations. This supports the appropriateness of a within-person analytic approach and justifies using day-level predictors in subsequent models.**

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Work Setting and OCB-I

A multilevel model tested whether OCB-I was lower on WFH days compared to WFO days. Controlling for daily workload, mood, and interruptions, the fixed effect of work setting was significant and negative ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = -3.07$, $p < .003$). Thus, participants reported fewer interpersonal citizenship behaviors on WFH days. None of the control variables significantly predicted OCB-I (workload: $p = .55$; mood: $p = .48$; interruptions: $p = .69$).

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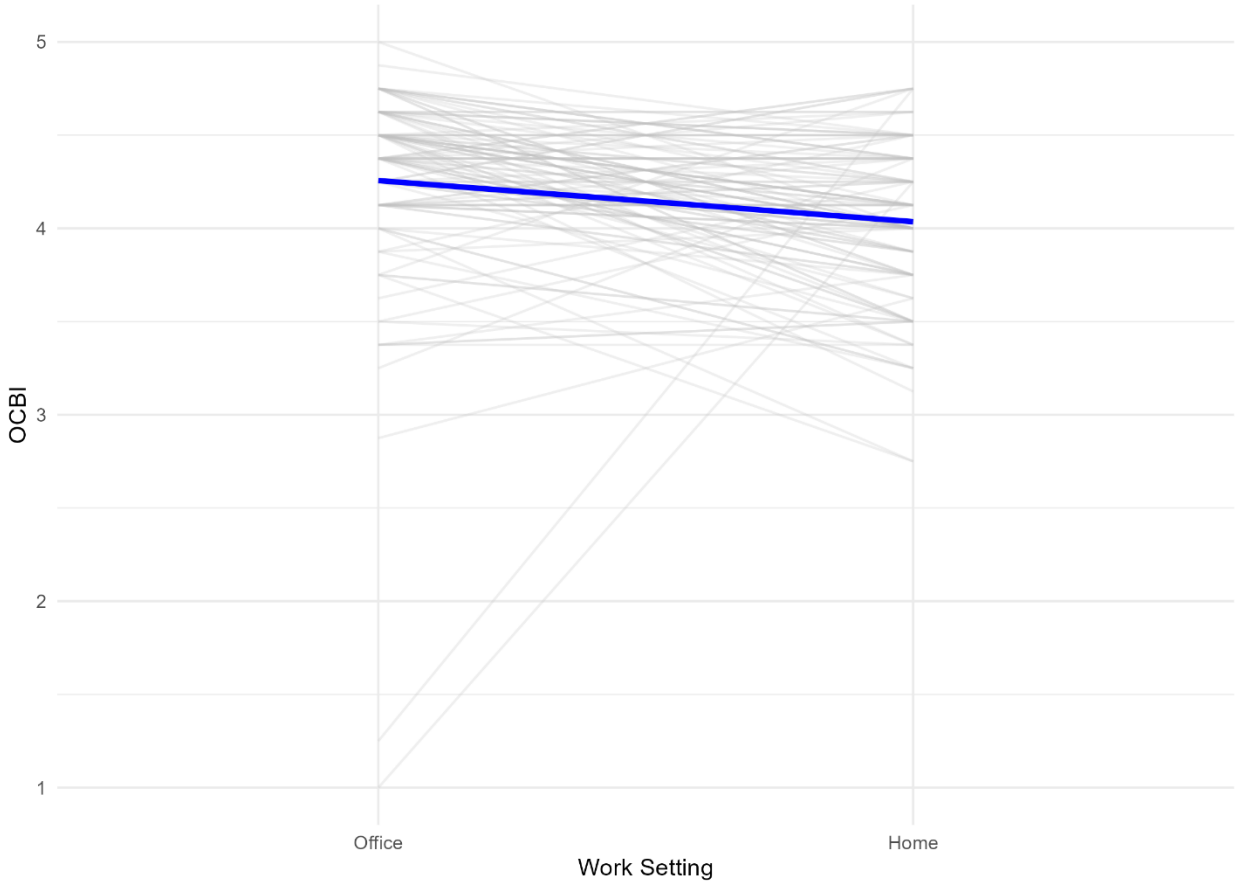

Figure 1: (Spaghetti Plot of OCB-I by Work Setting) Source: generated via R.

H2: Work Setting and OCB-O

For OCB-O, no significant difference emerged between WFH and WFO days (b = 0.09, SE = 0.06, t = 1.36, p = .176). Workload, mood, and interruptions were also non-significant predictors (all p > .40). These results confirm the **stability of organization-directed citizenship behaviors across work contexts**.

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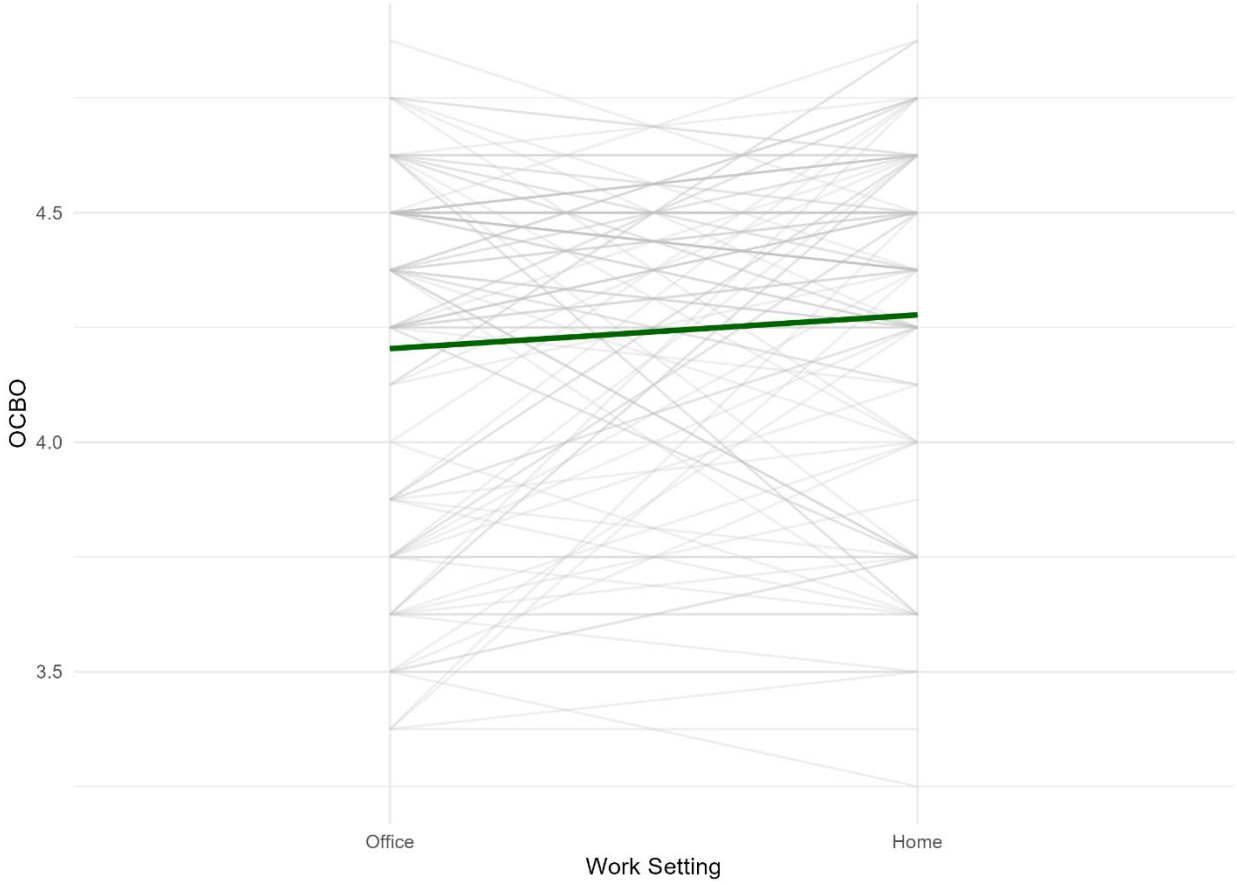

Figure 2: (Spaghetti Plot of OCB-O by Work Setting) Source: generated via R.

H3: Mediation via Social Interaction

Mediation analysis tested whether social interaction explained the effect of work setting on OCB-I. The indirect effect (a × b path) was negative and significant (Estimate = -0.074), while the direct effect remained significant (c' = -0.208). The total effect was (c = -0.278).

A bootstrap analysis (1,000 simulations) using the mediate package yielded:

ACME (Indirect Effect): −0.074, 95% CI [−0.139, −0.027], p = .001

ADE (Direct Effect) (c'): −0.208, 95% CI [−0.329, −0.086], p < .001

Total Effect (c): −0.278, 95% CI [−0.417, −0.139], p < .001

Proportion Mediated: 26.6% (95% CI [-0.081, 0.561])

These findings indicate **partial mediation**; reduced social interaction explains part of the OCB-I decline in WFH settings, but a substantial direct effect remains, suggesting that additional mechanism beyond social interaction drive the work setting effect on OCB-I

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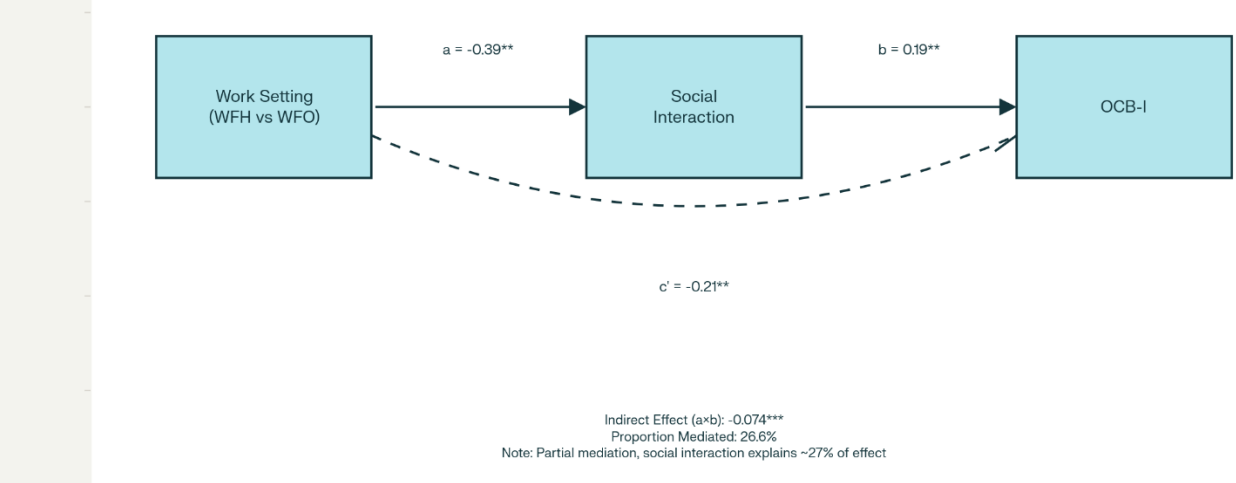

Figure 3: Mediation Path Diagram: Work Setting → Social Interaction → OCB-I. Source: Generated via R.

H4: Job Autonomy as Moderator

Hypothesis 4 tested whether **job autonomy buffered the work setting effect on OCB-I**. The interaction between work setting and job autonomy was significant (b = −0.417, SE = 0.122, t = −3.418, p = .000745***).

Simple slopes revealed that:

At **low job autonomy (–1 SD)**, the WFH effect was stronger (b = -0.687, p < .001)

At **high job autonomy (+1 SD)**, the effect was non-significant (b = -0.067, p = .629)

Furthermore, Johnson-Neyman analysis indicates the negative effect of WFH on OCB-I was significant for employees with below average job autonomy (autonomy_c < -0.72), While for those with average or higher autonomy, WFH did not affect OCB-I significantly. This suggests that **job autonomy mitigates the interpersonal costs of remote work**.

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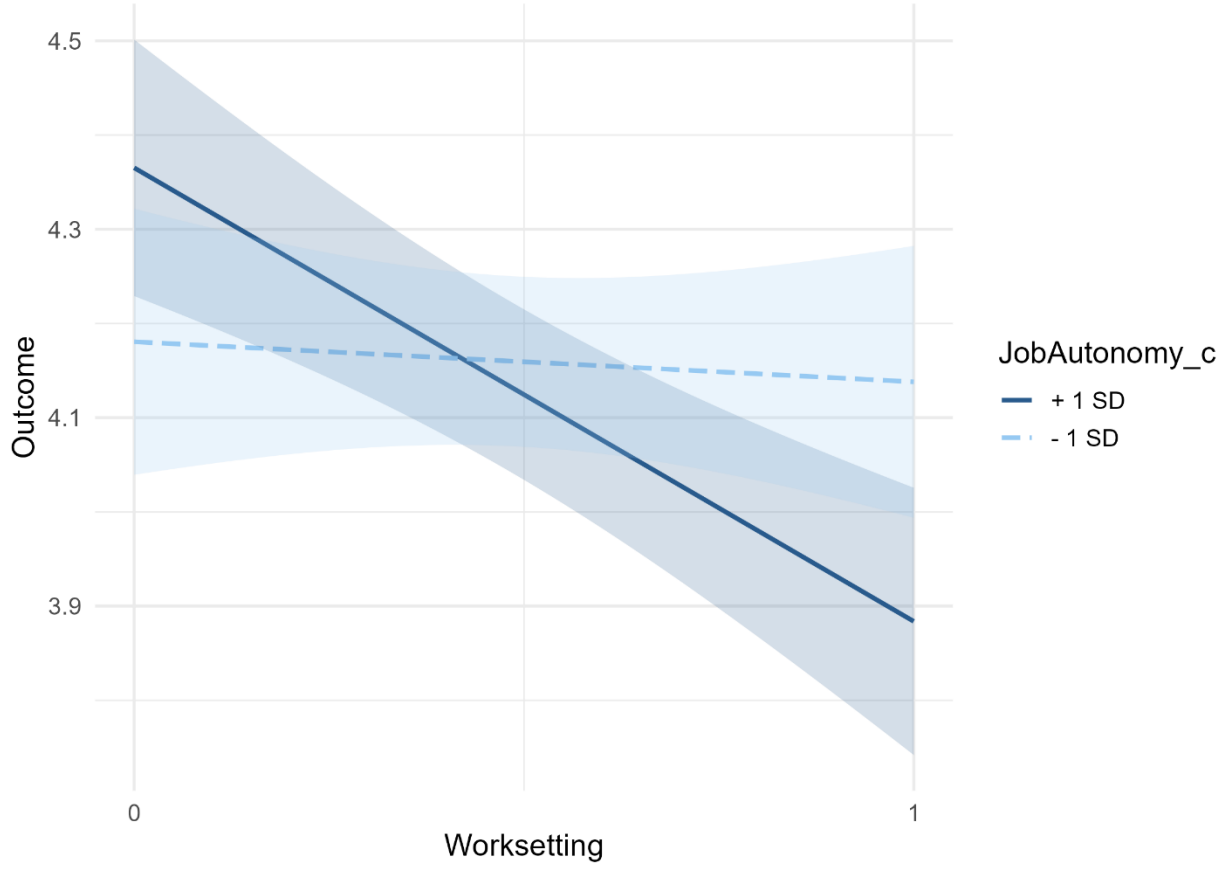

Figure 4 Interaction Plot: Work Setting × Job Autonomy on OCB-I. Source: Generated via R.

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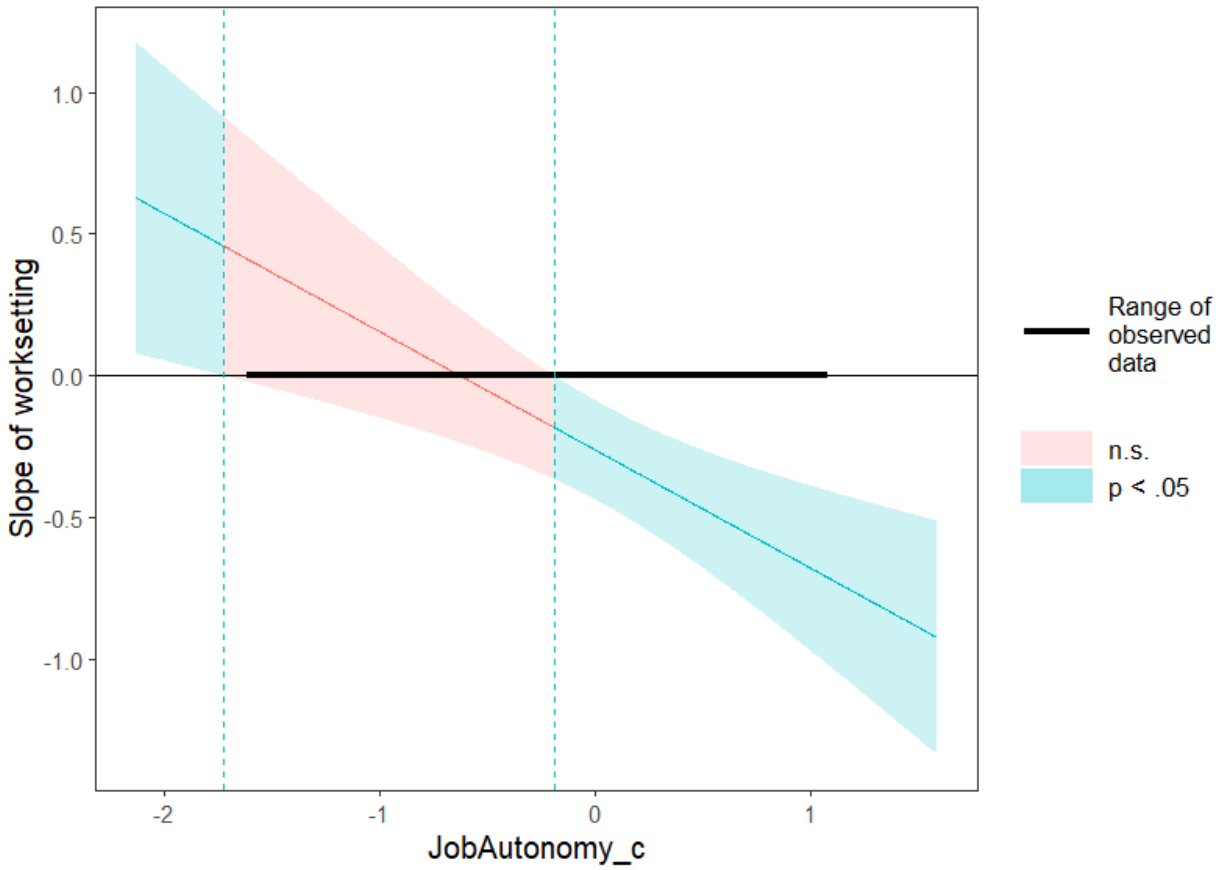

Figure 5 Johnson-Neyman Plot: Work Setting × Job Autonomy on OCB-I. Source: Generated via R.

H5: Task Interdependence as Moderator

Task interdependence exhibited a marginal interaction with work setting (b = -0.133, SE = 0.092, t = -1.440, p = .151). The interaction failed to reach the conventional levels of significance and did not evidence the theoretically predicted buffering effect. Simple slopes indicated that the negative effect of working from home on OCB-I persisted across levels of task interdependence, and Johnson–Neyman analysis showed that the effect remained significant throughout the observed moderator range. Full plots are reported in Appendix.

H6: Managerial Support as Moderator

The interaction between managerial support and work setting was non-significant (b = -0.092, SE = 0.090, t = -1.015, p = .311). Consistent with this, both simple slopes and the Johnson–Neyman analysis indicated that working from home was associated with lower OCB-I at all levels of managerial support. Plots are provided in Appendix X. Thus, **managerial support did not moderate the relationship between work setting and OCB-I** in this sample.

Exploratory Analyses

E1: Three-Way Interactions: Mood and Autonomy as Contextual Amplifiers

Exploratory models examined whether mood interacted with job autonomy and work setting to influence OCB-I. The three way interaction failed to reach statistical significance (b = -0.195, SE = 0.173, t = -1.123, p = .263). However, post hoc inspection of predicted values suggested descriptive trends. These should be treated as exploratory and potentially spurious considering the absence of inferential evidence.

A) Worst Case Scenario: (Low autonomy + Low mood + WFH) In such scenarios the decline in OCB-I was most pronounced, with predicted values dropping to 3.89.

B) Best Case Scenario: (High autonomy + High mood + WFH) The WFH related decline in OCB-I attenuated, with predicted values remaining near 4.20.

C) Moderate Scenario: Intermediate patterns reflecting different combinations.

Figure 6 (Three-Way Interaction Plot: Work Setting × Job Autonomy × Mood on OCB-I). Source: Generated via R

E2: Moderated Mediation – Do Moderators Alter the Indirect Pathway?

Exploratory moderated mediation analyses were conducted to assess whether job autonomy, task interdependence, and managerial support altered the indirect effect of work setting on OCB-I through social interaction.

E2a: Job Autonomy:

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Table 3: Indirect (ACME) and Direct (ADE) Effects of Work Setting on OCB-I Across Levels of Job Autonomy

Level	ACME (Indirect Effects)	95% CI	P	ADE (Direct Effects)	P
-1 SD	-.0.025	[-0.088, 0.023]	.301	Marginal	.052
Mean	-0.075	[-0.140, -0.027]*	.001	Sig	<.001
+1 SD	-0.129	[-0.237, -0.047]*	.001	Sig	<.001

The indirect effect was found to be non-significant at low autonomy (-1 SD), as the confidence interval included zero. However, at mean and higher levels it became significant, with Cis excluding zero.

E2b: Task Interdependence

Table 4: Indirect (ACME) and Direct (ADE) Effects of Work Setting on OCB-I Across Levels of Task Interdependence

Level	ACME (Indirect Effects)	95% CI	P	ADE (Direct Effects)	P
-1 SD	-.0.087	[-0.167, 0.029]	.072	NS	.220
Mean	-0.069	[-0.132, -0.022]	.088	NS	.180
+1 SD	-0.049	[-0.128, -0.008]	.168	NS	.095

Both direct and indirect effects were found to be non-significant (NS) across all levels of task interdependence.

E2c: Managerial Support:

Table 5: Indirect (ACME) and Direct (ADE) Effects of Work Setting on OCB-I Across Levels of Managerial Support

Level	ACME (Indirect Effects)	95% CI	*P*	ADE (Direct Effects)	*P*

-1 SD	-.0.084	[-0.155, 0.028]	.064	Marginal	.064
Mean	-0.075	[-0.147, -0.025]	.075	Sig	.039
+1 SD	-0.066	[-0.146, -0.009]	.075	Sig	.008

The indirect effect was failed to reach the level of significance at low levels of managerial support (-1 SD), as the CI included zero. At mean and high managerial support it became significant with Cis excluding zero.

Summary of Findings

The transition toward hybrid and remote work arrangements has altered how employees interact, collaborate, and function in an organization. The study aimed to investigate how daily work settings, Work from Home (WFH) and Work from Office (WFO) influence OCB at within person level. Using a repeated measure design where participants completed the questionnaire once from home and once from the office, we collected real world data of 119 respondents, yielding 238 observations. The data collected reflected respondents' OCB-I, OCB-O, social interactions, job autonomy, workload, mood, and interruptions. The key findings are as follows:

1. Work setting exclusively affects OCB-I, not OCB-O: (H1 supported, H2 supported) OCB-I was significantly lower for WFH days, while OCB-O remained statistically unchanged across work settings. This underscores that remote work selectively reduces prosocial behaviors aimed at colleagues but not those directed at the organization itself.

2. Partial mediation via social interaction: (H3 partially supported) Reduced social interaction during WFH partially explains the drop in OCB-I, accounting for approximately 27% of the total effect. This was partially supported, suggesting additional mechanisms may be at play.

3. Job autonomy as a critical moderator: (H4 strongly supported) The negative effect of impact of WFH on OCB-I was buffered by Job autonomy, suggesting that employees with a higher degree of autonomy are better equipped to maintain helping behavior in a remote context. Johnson-Neyman plot confirms this effect across the range of autonomy values.

4. Task interdependence and managerial support show no significant effects: (H5 not supported, H6 not supported) Task interdependence and managerial support did not significantly interact with work environment context albeit the theoretical promise. Task related collaboration does not help in sustaining OCB-I, and managerial support did not buffer the remote work effect.

5. Mood and autonomy do not jointly amplify work settings effects: (E1) Although three way interaction failed to reach the significance level, the descriptive trends suggest that the largest drop in OCB-I occurred when both autonomy and mood were low, where as high mood and high autonomy appeared to attenuate the decline.

6. Moderated mediation pathways remain weak: (E2a-E2c) Across job autonomy, task interdependence, and managerial support, we found no robust evidence of any moderator significantly altering the indirect (social interaction) pathway linking work setting to OCB-I. We did find some indirect effect that reached statistical significance at mean or higher levels of autonomy and managerial support, although they remained weak as well.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on OCB by reconceptualizing OCB as a dynamic, context sensitive phenomenon and illuminating on mechanisms and boundary conditions that shape daily prosocial behavior in a hybrid work setting.

OCB as Context-Sensitive and Episodic:

OCB has been conceptualized as a stable, trait like tendency in the literature (D. Organ, 1988; Philip M. Podsakoff et al., 2000). Based on between-person differences, employees have been labeled as "good citizens" or "poor citizens" without acknowledging how the context, *"where"*, could affect the employee behavior. This static view is challenged by recent scholars (Abbasi & Wan Ismail, 2023; Bolino et al., 2015; Dalal et al., 2009; D. W. Organ, 2018), suggesting that OCB is episodic and situationally activated.

Our findings strongly support this emerging perspective. Using a within person design, we report how the same person behaves differently depending on the day's work setting. Specifically, OCB-I was consistently lower on WFH days, while OCB-O remained stable. This aligns with Trait Activation Theory (TAT) (Tett & Burnett, 2003), which asserts that behavioral expression is shaped by the presence or absence of situational cues. In-office setting, where verbal and visual cues of coworkers need help triggers OCB, whereas when working remotely, the cues are attenuated or absent, leading to a lower display of OCB-

Social Interaction as a Resource-Based Mechanism:

The mediation analysis showed that social interaction only explains (26.6%) of the work setting effect on OCB-I, leaving 73.4% to direct effects. Remote work reduced the frequency of interaction among coworkers, and this reduction resulted in the decline in the OCB-I, consistent with Trait Activation Theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Such modest indirect effects are typical within person research, where multiple contextual factors operate simultaneously, making our finding substantively meaningful. These results also highlight that social interaction acts as a day level interpersonal resource that provides opportunities and cues for helping (Methot et al., 2020). At the same time, the remaining direct effects suggests that social interaction is a key but not the only mechanism linking work setting to OCB-I. Other factors that might be affecting this relationship could be lower ambient social cues or reduced relational energy or digital communication fatigue, etc.

Boundary Conditions: Job Autonomy, Task Interdependence, and Managerial Support:

Job autonomy emerged as a robust boundary condition in our study. Higher autonomy significantly weakened the WFH related decline in OCB-I, aligning with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which underscores the motivational benefit of having discretion over one's work. Job autonomy allows employees to structure their work day in a manner where they get the **task done as well as gives them time for social check-ins, helping a colleague, and maintaining interpersonal connections even when working remotely. The Johnson-Neyman analysis further provides evidence for this effect by pointing that the negative impact of WFH on**

OCB-I was statistically significant only for those with below average job autonomy autonomy_c < –0.72*),* for employees with average or higher job autonomy, WFH had no significant effect on OCB-I. **This highlights that job autonomy not only fosters intrinsic motivation but also helps in sustaining prosocial engagement under flexible work conditions**.

Although it was expected that task interdependence would significantly dampen the effect of WFH-related drop in OCB-I, since it naturally generates opportunities for collaboration and interaction, it failed to reach level of significance at all levels. These task-related interactions do not automatically translate into OCB-I when colleagues are not co-located. In the WFH context, these interactions may become procedural and transactional, reducing the possibility of spontaneous helping behaviors that are more common in an in-office context. The Johnson-Neyman analysis provides evidence by showing that negative effect of WFH on OCB-I is significant across almost complete observed range of task interdependence values, with no evidence of buffering at any level. This indicates that while interdependent work requires collaboration, the lack of informal exchanges in WFH settings may exacerbate the OCB-I cost

Surprisingly, managerial support did not significantly moderate the relationship between work setting and OCB-I. Albeit the wide recognition of supportive leadership for promoting engagement and wellbeing, our findings suggest that for that, for the specific domain of daily interpersonal helping, structural enablers, such as job autonomy, may outweigh managerial support. This reinforces the idea that sustaining OCB when in a WFH context may require empowering work designs as much as, if not more than, interpersonal managerial interventions.

Emotional Context: Exploratory patterns requiring replication

The three-way interaction among work setting, job autonomy, and mood was not statistically significant (p= .263), and therefore does not provide any inferential evidence for joint moderation. However, the descriptive patterns hint at a possible trend. The decline in OCB-I appeared most pronounced when both mood and autonomy were low. Conversely, when both mood and job autonomy were high, the OCB-I difference between WFH and WFO was negligible. These exploratory patterns are broadly consistent with Affective Events Theory (Cropanzano, 1996) which highlights the role of daily emotions in influencing discretionary behaviors. In WFH, reduced social cues and fewer interactions may compound the effects of low mood, especially for those who have less structural freedom to manage their work. Nonetheless, these observations are suggestive rather than conclusive, pointing toward emotional-structural contexts as a promising direction for future scholarship rather than a verified mechanism in the current study.

Moderated Mediation Insights

Moderated mediation analysis of job autonomy, task interdependence, and managerial support tested the indirect effect of work setting on OCB-I via social interaction revealing nuanced findings. Job autonomy (E2a) changed the magnitude of the indirect effect, but it did not meaningfully alter the social interaction pathway itself. Instead, autonomy influenced the overall work setting primarily through direct mechanisms, possibly by allowing employees to independently manage their time, ensuring task completion and interpersonal connection. For task interdependence (E2b) it was observed that it did not substantially alter either mediated or direct pathways through which work

setting affects OCB-I. Task based collaboration seems to be orthogonal to the mechanisms that drive within person OCB-I fluctuations across work settings. Managerial support (E2c) showed a similar pattern to autonomy. The observed pattern suggests that managerial support influences overall work setting effect, primarily through direct pathways rather than by altering the social interaction mediation mechanism. Implying, supportive leadership may increase the likelihood of OCB-I but does not shift how social interaction dynamics mediate the work setting effect. The work setting effect on OCB-I operates primarily through direct mechanisms that are not substantially redirected by these moderators. This departure from the theoretical expectation suggests that additional unmeasured mechanisms may drive the work setting effect such as the availability of cues, diminished relational energy, altered psychological distance, etc.

Practical Implications

The findings offer a roadmap for organizations trying to rework their hybrid work arrangements. A key insight is that prosocial collaboration, particularly OCB-I, is not guaranteed in the WFH context. It must be fostered and encouraged through design, technological support, and cultural reinforcement. Some of the implementable ways in which organizations can achieve this are:

Fostering Prosociality in Remote Work
We have already established that although task interdependence requires collaboration, this is purely work related and does not help in reducing the drop in OCB-I when working from home. Remote work, by design, removes the incidental encounters that foster bonds and lead to helping behavior. To counteract this effect, organizations should focus on creating informal, non-task-related interactions, such as virtual "watercooler" spaces, short check-ins during meetings, and casual team meetups from time to time.

Leveraging Autonomy as a Strategic Enabler
Job autonomy's strong buffering effect ($b = -0.417$, $p < .001$) underscores its value for sustaining OCB-I in remote context. Organization should shift from perspective time tracking and rigid schedules to outcome based expectation with flexibility in how work is structure. This flexibility will preserve intrinsic motivation and empower employees to maintain interpersonal connections in a way that feels organic, rather than forced.

Designing Hybrid Schedules Around Social Needs
It's clear from the literature and the data that OCB-I is more pronounced when employees share physical space. Work designs should be re-worked in a way that in-office days are reserved for collaboration-intensive work and relationship building, whereas WFH is reserved for focus oriented independent tasks. By aligning work settings with task demands, the best of both is maximized and ensures that opportunities for helping are not left to chance.

Supporting Mood and Well-Being
Mood plays an exploratory role in affecting the relationship among job autonomy, work setting, and OCB-I. Based on this, organizations can incorporate mood supportive practices in daily routines such as brief mood check ins, access to mental health and stress management, and encouraging restorative breaks. This positive culture would allow employees to remain more inclined towards exhibiting OCB-I, even when WFH, where social cues are weaker, or sometimes not even present at all.

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Leveraging Digital Collaboration Tools for Prosocial Cues

In the absence of visible triggers for help during WFH, technology could be leveraged to restore them. Platforms can integrate "help required" indicators, shared dashboards for volunteer assistance, or peer support channels for problem solving. This would allow the need or the social cues to be expressed in real time and also lower the psychological barrier of offering help, as employees can volunteer without feeling that they are being intrusive. Integrating such cues into daily workflow allows incidents of OCB-I to grow naturally rather than relying on chance. Additionally, recognition tools can highlight and reward, reinforcing them as a valued organizational norm. Over time, this would embed citizenship behavior into work culture, making it as natural as in-office setting.

Shift leadership from support to empowerment

Although managerial support is important, the lack of moderation effects hints that organizations should emphasize empowerment too. Managers and leadership should focus on removing barriers, providing clear objectives, and trusting autonomy rather than offering constant check ins or support.

Training for Remote Prosocial Behaviors

Last but not least, is the challenge of helping all the employees to adapt to helping behaviors in the WFH context. Not everyone adapts intuitively. Training can build awareness and competence by inculcating proactive outreach strategies, ways to request help, and techniques for maintaining relations without overwhelming a colleague.

In the end, sustaining OCB-I when working from home or any remote location, for that matter, is a design challenge. By embedding autonomy, interaction opportunities, mood, support, technological cues, and targeted training interventions, organizations can preserve the social fabric that underpins collaboration, trust, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Limitations and Future Research

Although our study offers a nuanced view of OCB, several limitations point toward fertile ground for future research.

Measurement reliability: The OCB-I scale achieved $\alpha = .606$, which is below accepted threshold. While it is acceptable as per EMA standards, this reduced internal consistency may reflect measurement limitation. Future research should consider item refinement for within person design.

Sample Characteristics: The participants of this study came from diverse professional backgrounds. While this does help in generalizing the results, it also misses out on industry specific nuances. Future research could explore how industry specific nuances affect the findings and how mechanisms observed here operate in different settings.

Self-Report Design: The reliance on self-reports introduces potential bias. Although within person approach is efficient in capturing day to day variability, but is not free from its limitations. Future work could integrate peer or supervisor ratings, digital traces, or observational methods to triangulate the findings.

Temporal scope: Hybrid working policies are still in their formative stages. As norms change, the relationship between work setting and citizenship behavior may shift, too. Future research could explore the same subject via a longitudinal study and could explore whether our observed patterns represent transitional dynamics or sustained effects.

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Alternative mechanisms: The modest mediation effect (26.6%) leaves ample room for exploration. Additional unmeasured mechanisms, like psychological distance, relational energy, or availability of cues may affect the relationship.

Conclusion

This study reorients OCB as a dynamic and situationally activated behavior that shifts with work setting. Rather than focusing on which kind of helping is more prevalent in which setting, our findings speak to broader insights. OCB thrives when work design, job autonomy, and social resources align, regardless of work setting. The challenge ahead is not only to adapt OCB theory to a flexible work context but also to ensure that evolving work arrangements nurture, rather than erode, the social glue that makes organizations resilient.

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