

An Empirical Study on the Influence Mechanism of Work Alienation on Positive and Negative Work Behavior in Chinese Enterprises

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Abstract: Work Alienation is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon in enterprises, and it is also a hot spot in western academic circles. However, compared with western countries, there are relatively few research on work Alienation in China's theoretical circles, especially the empirical research on the influence of work Alienation on employees' work behavior in China. Therefore, this study uses quantitative empirical methods to explore the influence mechanism of employees' work Alienation on employees' positive and negative work behaviors in China. After collecting questionnaires, the results of statistical analysis show that work Alienation significantly negatively affects organizational citizenship behavior and positively affects employee deviation behavior. Therefore, this study provides specific management suggestions on how to control work Alienation, promote employees' positive behavior and reduce their deviant behavior.

1. Introduction

The frequent incidents of employees jumping off buildings in Foxconn have attracted the attention of researchers all over the world. The internal reason why employees end their lives in this extreme way is the focus of attention. Some scholars pointed out in tracing the deep-seated reasons of the above incidents that the living environment of employees has changed, from the familiar countryside to the completely unfamiliar city, which separates them from the previous relationship. In addition, they repeat boring workday after day and extremely strict internal control, and their lives are too depressed and their mental pressure is too great, which leads to a sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness in their work, and even generalizes this emotion to life situations, thus self-doubt and despair (Sun Letao, Guo Weiqing, Wang Tianding, 2013). This isolated negative emotion is the essence of work Alienation, and it is very likely to be an important reason for employees' extreme negative deviation behavior.

Most of the existing theoretical explanations and corrective management practices about work Alienation are developed in western countries. Therefore, the early research on work Alienation in China is based on the relevant research results of foreign countries, and there is a lack of systematic analysis of the internal relationship between work Alienation and different social and cultural backgrounds of the East and the West. the arrangement of the questionnaire is also lack of basic theory, so it is difficult to get the results with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, it is even more necessary for researchers to take the differences between the specific social and cultural backgrounds and social realities in the East and West as the theoretical basis and logical starting point and make an empirical study on the influence of work Alienation of Chinese employees on their positive work behavior (organizational citizenship behavior) and negative work behavior (employee deviation behavior).

2. Literature Review

The Concept and Content of Work Alienation. The word alienation comes from the Latin word "Alienatio" which means alienation, externalization, separation and "Alienare" which means transfer, alienation, separation, domination by alien forces, domination by others. The Oxford Dictionary interprets Alienation as "alienation of action and isolation of state". Banai and Reisel (2004) believes that the sense of work Alienation is caused by the fact that employees can't meet their own needs and expectations, resulting in a psychological state of isolation and restricted by work. Moch (1980) believes that the sense of work Alienation reflects the attitude and behavior of employees who are generally indifferent to their work and only to get external pay. Based on the research of western scholars, this study holds that work Alienation means that employees are difficult to meet their own internal needs because they perceive the gap between the work situation and their expectations, and then breed a state of psychological separation and behavioral alienation from work and workplace (Ashfoth,1989).

Dimension Structure of Work Alienation. Based on the literature review of the connotation and dimension structure of work alienation, it is found that most of the existing papers are based on western cultural background with obvious western scene embeddedness. As to the connotation and dimension structure of Chinese enterprise employees' work alienation, it is necessary to conduct a pioneering research with the help of quantitative empirical method in combination with the local situation. Based on the literature review on the definition and structure of work alienation in western countries, this study found that work alienation often refers to certain specific objects. Objects can be specific and material items, such as work itself, working conditions, interpersonal relationships; It can also be an abstract spiritual aspect, such as self and culture. Therefore, we believe that the specific objects that employees contact with themselves at work include three categories: work tasks, interpersonal relationship, and work environment, which may form a sense of alienation related to work tasks, interpersonal relationship, and work environment. All three types are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and corporate practice. Based on this, this study explores the impact of work alienation on positive and negative work behaviors of employees from three dimensions: work task alienation, work interpersonal alienation and work environment alienation.

Research on the effect of work alienation on employees' work behavior. Western scholars' research on the influence of work Alienation on employees' work behavior can be divided into positive work behavior and negative work behavior. The results show that employees' work alienation will reduce their positive work behavior and increase their negative work behavior.

As for the impact of positive work behavior, scholars focus on the study of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior. Mendoza and Lara (2007) studied the relationship among individual-organization matching, work alienation and organizational citizenship behavior. The results showed that work alienation had a significant negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior. In the research on the impact of negative work behavior, western scholars mainly analyzed the relationship between work alienation and employee's illegal behaviors (such as alcoholism, drug abuse, absenteeism, etc.). The study of Greenberg and Grunberg (1995) proved that there is a significant positive correlation between work alienation and alcoholism. However, so far, the academic research has mainly analyzed the effect of work alienation on some specific illegal behavior but has not systematically studied the overall impact of work alienation on negative work behavior (such as employee deviation behavior). This study hopes to analyze the impact of work alienation systematically and comprehensively on employees' positive organizational citizenship behavior and negative employee deviation behavior in Chinese context, compare the differences between Chinese and Western cultural situations, and put forward targeted management countermeasures.

3. Research Methods and Questionnaires

Research Methods. This study adopts quantitative research methods, mainly applied to the effect of work alienation on employees' positive and negative work behaviors. Specific methods include reliability analysis, Pearson correlation analysis and structural equation model. The survey data were analyzed by SPSS and AMOS statistical software.

Questionnaires. This study mainly explores the mechanism of the influence of work alienation on employees' positive and negative work behaviors by means of questionnaire matching, to avoid corresponding errors in the research results. During the investigation, a set of questionnaires with matching codes will be sent to the respondents. Employees fill in the question of job alienation, and the employee's immediate supervisor fills in the evaluation of the employee's work behavior. After they completed the questionnaire and stamped it independently, they mailed it to the researchers. The collected questionnaires are matched by quantity, and the unmatched questionnaires and waste papers are removed. A total of 380 valid matching questionnaires were obtained, among which 53.2% were male and 46.8% were female.

There are three main ways to collect the questionnaire: (1) classroom survey, mainly conducted in business management courses, MBA courses, adult, and expert management courses; (2) business survey, mainly by means of internal random sampling and recycling; and (3) commissioned survey, mostly commissioned for enterprise graduates to conduct training before implementation.

4. Analysis of the Influence Mechanism of Work Alienation on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Employee Deviation Behavior

4.1. Analysis on the Influence Mechanism of Work Alienation and its Dimensions on Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior refers to the voluntary behavior of organizational members that goes beyond the requirements of their job responsibilities and helps to improve the operational efficiency of the organization (Erich, Robert & Daniel, 2012). Although the research results of some scholars show that there is a negative correlation between work alienation and organizational citizenship behavior (Mendoza & Lara, 2007), the above research is mainly based on the western cultural background or directly borrows the western scale to carry out the survey, lack of real sense of "localization" and the specific impact of different dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior. According to the dimensional structure of localized work alienation, combined with relevant studies at home and abroad, this study holds that work alienation is a specific negative emotional experience in the workplace, which will significantly inhibit individual prosocial behavior. There are three main reasons for this. First, the boring and uncertain work erodes the employees' enthusiasm for work and life, and it is difficult to show the positive behavior that the organization expects, full of vitality and construction. Secondly, the complex and isolated interpersonal atmosphere makes it difficult for employees to establish "reciprocal" interpersonal communication with others, so it is difficult to produce helpful behavior and do not expect to get help from others. Finally, individual alienation from the work environment has a strong sense of diffusion, driven by a variety of negative emotions, employees are bound to reduce organizational citizenship behavior. Based on this, the research hypotheses are put forward:

H1: Work alienation has a significant negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

H1a: Work task alienation has a significant negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

H1b: Work interpersonal alienation interpersonal has a significant negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

H1c: Work environment alienation has a significant negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

4.2. Analysis on the Influence Mechanism of Work Alienation and Its Dimensions on Job Deviation Behavior

Robinson and Bennett (1995) define work deviation as the behavior that the members of the organization engage in spontaneously, threaten the welfare of the members of the organization, and violate the norms, policies, or systems of the organization. Existing theories and models all believe that there is a very close relationship between employee deviation behavior and employees' emotion

and cognitive state. Employees' behavior is not only the result of rational processing, but also likely to be caused by emotion (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Miner & Glomb, 2010).

Employees' negative emotional experience has a positive impact on their employee deviation behavior, and work alienation is a very typical and long-standing negative emotion concentrated in the workplace. From the existing research on work alienation, the positive correlation between work alienation and employees' illegal behavior has been widely confirmed (David & Tonatiuh, 2009). This study believes that employees with a higher degree of work alienation show more indifference to the people and things around them, even depression, malaise and so on. In the long run, the bad mood accumulated in their hearts is in urgent need of venting. Work deviation itself is not easy to be identified by the organization and colleagues around, even if it is identified, the price paid by employees is relatively small, which makes employees more inclined to take such deviation behavior to ease their dissatisfaction. Based on this, the research hypotheses are put forward:

H2: Work alienation has a significant positive effect on employee deviation behavior.

H2a: Work task alienation has a significant positive effect on employee deviation behavior.

H2b: Work interpersonal alienation has a significant positive effect on employee deviation behavior.

H2c: Work environment alienation has a significant positive effect on employee deviation behavior.

Based on the above analysis, the relationship between the study variables is shown in figure 1:

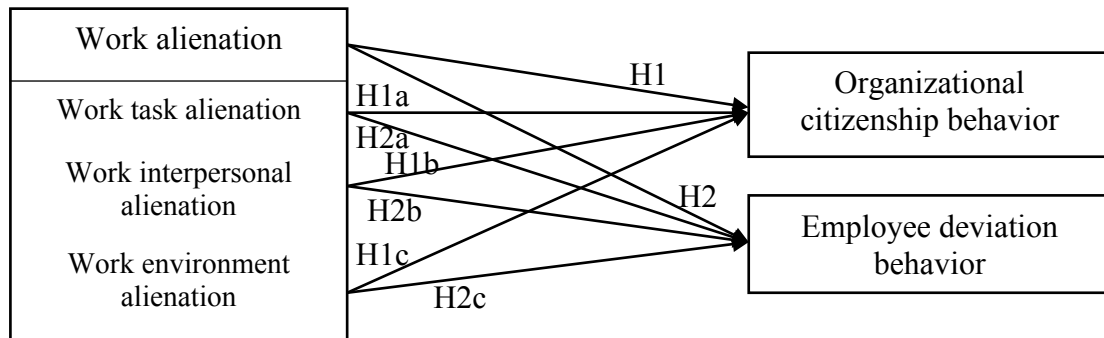


Figure 1. Research model of the influence of work alienation on work behavior

4.3. Statistical Results of the Influence of Various Dimensions of Work Alienation on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Employee Deviation Behavior

This study analyzes the influence of three dimensions of work alienation on employees' organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior adopts the scale of 18 items developed by Lee and Allen (2002), and employee deviation behavior adopts the scale of 19 items developed by Robinson and Bennett (2000). In the process of using the two scales, the translation-back translation procedures were carried out by the relevant experts of human resource management.

When analyzing the effect of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior, 380 sets of matched questionnaire data were used. First, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire are tested: the Cronbach's α reliability coefficients of organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire and employee deviation behavior questionnaire are 0.86 and 0.93 respectively, which are higher than the standard of 0.70, indicating that the two questionnaires have good reliability. Secondly, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the construct validity of the questionnaire (see Table 1). The results showed that the χ^2/df index values of the two questionnaires were lower than 5, the RMSEA values were less than 0.08, and the other indicators were more than 0.9, indicating that the organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior questionnaire has good construct validity. The results of descriptive statistical analysis of work alienation and dimensions, organizational citizenship behavior, employee deviation behavior and Pearson correlation analysis among variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Validity test results of measurement tools(N=380)

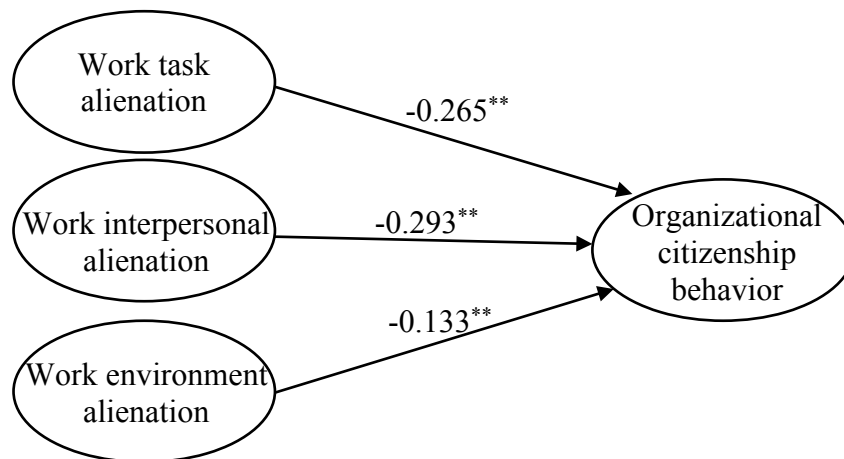
Index Name of scale	χ^2/df	RMSEA	AGFI	GFI	IFI	CFI	NFI	NNFI
organizational citizenship behavior	2.963	0.076	0.906	0.936	0.979	0.989	0.934	0.937
employee deviation behavior	2.462	0.065	0.890	0.913	0.967	0.967	0.946	0.960

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient(N=380)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Work task alienation	2.30	0.88	(0.87)					
2. Work interpersonal alienation	2.44	0.86	0.657**	(0.87)				
3. Work environment alienation	2.55	0.96	0.709**	0.665**	(0.87)			
4. Work alienation	2.44	0.78	0.888**	0.872**	0.898**	(0.93)		
5. Organizational citizenship behavior	3.79	0.58	-0.403**	-0.442**	-0.376**	-0.474**	(0.87)	
6. Employee deviation behavior	2.17	0.80	0.288**	0.233**	0.285**	0.303**	-0.196**	(0.93)

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; The numbers in brackets on the diagonals are the reliability of the scale.

Table 1 shows that from the three dimensions of work alienation, the work task alienation experience is slightly lower ($M=2.30$), while the work interpersonal alienation and work environment alienation experience is slightly higher ($M=2.44$; $M=2.55$). It shows that interpersonal relationship and work environment have a greater impact on the work alienation of employees in Chinese enterprises.

**Figure 2.** The influence of three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior(N=380)

($\chi^2/df=4.022$; RMSEA=0.089; AGFI=0.938; GFI=0.992)

Table 2 Pearson correlation analysis showed that work alienation and three dimensions were significantly negatively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior, which was consistent with hypothesis H1 and sub-hypothesis H1a, H1b and H1c, and positively correlated with employee deviation behavior. It is consistent with hypothesis H2 and sub-hypothesis H2a, H2b and H2c.

To further examine the specific effects of the three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior, structural equation model was used to analyze.

Figure 2 shows that the three dimensions of work alienation have a significant negative effect on

organizational citizenship behavior, which supports hypothesis H1 and sub-hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c. However, there were significant differences among the three dimensions. Task alienation and interpersonal alienation had a strong inhibitory effect on organizational citizenship behavior ("p < 0.01). On the other hand, the negative effect of work environment alienation on organizational citizenship behavior is relatively weak (" p < 0.05).

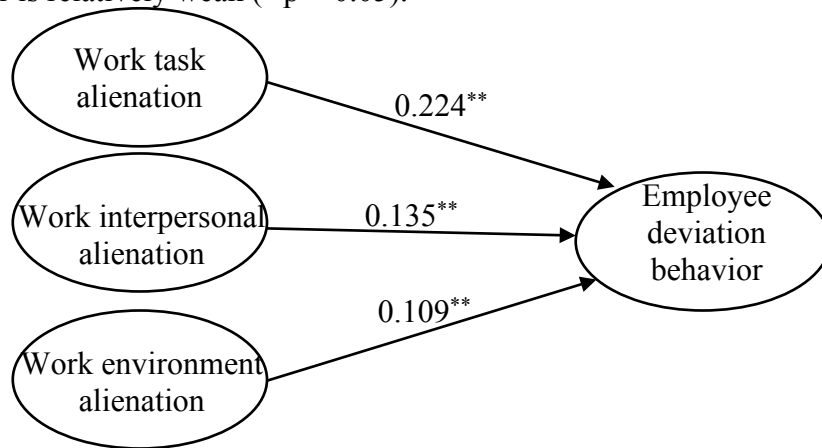


Figure 3. Influence of three dimensions of work alienation on deviant behavior of employees(N=380)

($\chi^2/df=1.989$; RMSEA=0.051; AGFI=0.969; GFI=0.996)

Figure 3 shows that the three dimensions of work alienation have a significant positive effect on employee deviation behavior, which supports the research hypothesis H2 and sub-hypotheses H2, H2b and H2c. Comparing figure 2 with figure 3, it is found that the inhibitory effect of the three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior is stronger than that on employee deviation behavior.

4.4. A Competitive Model of the Influence of Various Dimensions of Work Alienation on Employees' Positive and Negative Work Behavior

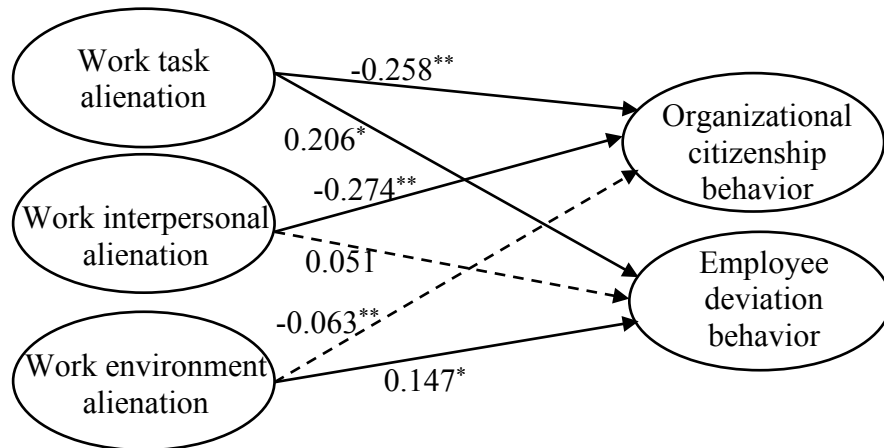


Figure 4. The competitive impact of work alienation on OCB and employee deviant behavior(N=980)

($\chi^2/df=1.839$; RMSEA=.047; AGFI=0.961; GFI=0.989; →means the coefficient is significant; ->means that the regression coefficient is not significant)

As the typical positive and negative work behaviors of individual employees, organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior may exist in the same employee at the same time because of the different situation or environment. Work alienation has different effects on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior of the same employee. To further clarify these differences, it is necessary to analyze the differential effects of the three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation

behavior. The structural equation model is used to analyze the competitive effects of the three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior. The results are shown in figure 4.

In figure 4, the competitive influence model of three dimensions of work alienation on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior shows that task alienation has a significant impact on organizational citizenship behavior and employee deviation behavior. Work interpersonal alienation has a significant impact on organizational citizenship behavior, but has no significant effect on employee deviation behavior, while work environment alienation has no significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior but has a significant impact on employee deviation behavior. Work interpersonal alienation has the strongest negative effect on employees' organizational citizenship behavior ($\beta = -0.274^{**}$).

5. Result Discussion and Management Enlightenment

5.1 Result Discussion

From the empirical research data, work task alienation has a greater impact on both positive and negative behaviors of employees, which may be related to the age distribution of the survey subjects. The survey subjects in this study are mainly post-80s and post-90s (the age of 35 and below accounts for 75.9% of the total sample size). The post-80s and post-90s employees generally adhere to the work value concept of "work is for life". They pay more attention to the self-control of work and the challenge of work. Once employees feel the tedium of work, they will have a mentality of rejection or even resistance to work, forming estrangement or antagonism with work, which will affect the negativity of their work behavior.

The competitive impact of three dimensions of work alienation on OCB finds that work interpersonal alienation has the strongest negative impact on OCB. Although China has a tradition of attaching importance to harmonious interpersonal relationships, due to fierce market competition, enterprises' nearly semi-militarized management, mechanized assembly lines, highly centralized control and excessive pursuit of production efficiency and expansion speed, alienate employees into production tools, resulting in a lack of trust between people, which may lead to alienated interpersonal patterns and inhibit individual positive behavior.

The influence of work environment alienation is mainly focused on inducing employees' work deviation behavior, which indicates that work environment alienation has great harmfulness in the organization. Chinese enterprises are mostly labor-intensive processing enterprises. Many employees live in unhealthy or even hazardous working environment for a long time, and even their basic safety needs are not guaranteed. When employees feel that the work environment closely related to their own safety cannot be controlled, it will inevitably cause mental tension and depression, which may turn into anxiety and dissatisfaction, resulting in negative and deviation of employees' behaviors. The possible reasons for the insignificant influence of work environment alienation on OCB are the randomness and high inducement of relative deviation, while OCB is mainly a rational and reciprocal behavior based on social exchange theory. OCB has a relatively clear direction. The occurrence of its own OCB is more from inner judgment than controlled by external factors. Although employees feel the oppression and discomfort of work physical environment, based on inner rational judgment, it may not necessarily reduce the occurrence probability of OCB.

In addition, the effect of interpersonal alienation at work on employee deviation behavior is not significant, which is very interesting. This is related to the staff's complicated psychology of dealing with disharmony and isolation between people. Chinese people are often not used to using "vengeful behavior" to "openly" harm already fragile interpersonal relationships, driven by the ideas of "face-blocking" and "at least maintaining superficial harmony". However, they often use more "hidden" and "hidden" methods. This results in, as the research results show, the sense of interpersonal alienation at work can significantly inhibit individual OCB, but at the same time it will not significantly induce deviant behavior.

5.2 Management Enlightenment

The results of this study show that employees' sense of work alienation will reduce their organizational citizenship behavior and induce employee deviation behavior. Enterprises should carry out differential and effective intervention and control according to the three dimensions of employees' sense of work alienation.

In view of the alienation of work tasks, enterprises should change the traditional and rigid work design mode. Modern job design should reflect the characteristics of humanization, meet the various needs of employees in the process of work, enhance the intrinsic motivation of work, and carry out job design according to the requirements of the positive job characteristic model (diversity of skills, integrity of work, importance of tasks, work autonomy and feedback of tasks) proposed by Hackman & Oldham (Bai Aizheng, 2011), so that employees can experience the significance and value of work.

In view of interpersonal alienation at work, enterprises should actively promote mentoring, on-the-job coaching, and teamwork forms among employees, to help employees to quickly integrate into corporate culture and reduce their "peripheral sense" at the edge of the organization. Attach importance to the organizational socialization management of employees, enhance their continuous adaptability to the organization, and strengthen the implementation of institutionalized tactics, including the implementation of systematic training, all-round support system and perfect corporate culture; At the same time, we should give full play to the advantages of individual tactics, tailor-made to provide employees with targeted career development channels, differentiated salary and benefits, etc., and enhance employees' job satisfaction, organizational identity and sense of belonging (Hu Dongmei et al., 2012).

In view of the sense of alienation in the working environment, enterprises should make comprehensive use of various subject knowledge, such as physiology, psychology, ergonomics, environmental science, etc., make use of modern science and technology, vigorously improve the working environment, establish a management system of "man-machine-environment" harmonious coexistence, make the working environment suitable for employees' physical and mental characteristics, create a clean, tidy and comfortable workplace and space environment for employees, and reduce the tension caused by the environment.

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