

An Analysis of Paths to Enhancing the Sustained Participation Willingness of Primary Militia Based on Multi-Theory Integration

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Abstract: Primary militia are a crucial component of China's armed forces, and the stability and combat effectiveness of their contingent directly affect the effectiveness of national defense mobilization. However, under the conditions of a market economy and prolonged peace, the characteristics of annual reorganization and high personnel mobility pose challenges to the sustained participation willingness of primary militia. Based on social exchange theory, psychological contract theory, and self-determination theory in organizational behavior, this paper proposes specific measures to enhance the sustained participation willingness of primary militia from four dimensions: optimizing institutional guarantees, innovating management models, strengthening spiritual incentives, and constructing a supportive environment. The research aims to provide reference for strengthening the construction of militia contingents in the new era.

Keywords: Primary militia; Sustained participation willingness; Organizational behavior; Countermeasures

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1. Introduction

Militia are a mass armed organization led by the Communist Party of China that does not separate from production. They are part of the armed forces of the People's Republic of China and serve as assistants and reserve forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army^[1]. As the backbone of the militia organization, the level of primary militia's sustained participation willingness directly impacts the stability of the militia contingent and the quality of militia training. Therefore, enhancing their sustained participation willingness is conducive to strengthening the construction of primary militia contingents and improving the efficiency and quality of national defense mobilization.

1.1. Research Background

As a key component of China's armed forces, the generation and maintenance of primary militia's combat effectiveness are directly related to the effectiveness of national defense mobilization. Currently, primary militia

organizations implement a dynamic management model of “annual reorganization.” While this mechanism ensures the vitality of the contingent, it also poses severe challenges to the long-term retention of core backbones. At present, the low sustained participation willingness of primary militia in some regions cannot be ignored—their enthusiasm for participating in training and performing tasks is insufficient, and problems such as difficulty in gathering personnel, implementing scheduled time, and carrying out activities are prominent. Against the backdrop of deepening market economy development and prolonged peace, how to effectively address the tension between personal development, family responsibilities, and national defense obligations, and stimulate the sustained participation enthusiasm of primary militia, has become an important issue urgently needing to be resolved in militia construction in the new era.

1.2. Research Significance

At the theoretical level, this study applies social exchange theory, psychological contract theory, and self-determination theory from organizational behavior to the special group of primary militia, expanding the explanatory boundaries of these theories and providing a new perspective for understanding the sustained participation behavior of members of quasi-military organizations. At the practical level, exploring effective paths to enhance sustained participation willingness can provide theoretical basis and action reference for optimizing militia work policies and innovating management models, which has positive practical significance for consolidating the foundation of national defense reserve force construction.

1.3. Research Content

This paper aims to systematically explore specific measures to enhance the sustained participation willingness of primary militia. First, on the basis of defining core concepts and elaborating theoretical foundations, it analyzes the current status and challenges of primary militia’s participation willingness. Then, the core part of the paper focuses on constructing countermeasures, systematically proposing a set of interconnected and synergistic enhancement paths from four dimensions: improving institutional guarantees, innovating training management, strengthening spiritual incentives, and building a supportive environment.

1.4. Research Methods

This study mainly adopts literature research and theoretical analysis methods. By systematically sorting out academic literature and policy documents related to organizational commitment and militia management at home and abroad, combined with social exchange theory, psychological contract theory, and self-determination theory, in-depth theoretical deduction and analysis are conducted to construct the logical framework and countermeasure system of this paper.

2. Related Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Core Concepts

2.1.1. Primary Militia

According to the provisions of the “Regulations on Militia Work of the People’s Republic of China,” primary militia refer to the backbone forces selected from the Chinese militia organization based on political, physical, and professional conditions. Compared with ordinary militia, primary militia implement the team-building standards of “organizational implementation, political implementation, and military implementation.” Their core feature

lies in being “both soldiers and civilians”: they engage in their own occupations in daily life, participate in regular military training, and shoulder the important missions of being the first to be mobilized for military service, supporting the front line, and defending the rear in wartime or emergency situations. The key to understanding primary militia lies in grasping the duality of their identity, the legality of their obligations, and the particularity of their management.

2.1.2. Sustained Participation Willingness of Primary Militia

The sustained participation willingness of primary militia refers to the stable psychological tendency and behavioral intention of individuals who meet the recruitment criteria of primary militia and have joined the militia organization. Based on recognizing the core responsibilities of primary militia—“serving in peacetime, responding to emergencies in times of crisis, and engaging in warfare in wartime”—and the institutional premise of “annual reorganization” of primary militia, they voluntarily continue to participate in organizational tasks such as militia training, combat readiness duty, and emergency rescue in the future period, and take the initiative to maintain their membership and participation enthusiasm. From the perspective of the stability of the primary militia contingent, a high level of sustained participation willingness is the cornerstone of contingent stability. When primary militia have a strong willingness to participate, the personnel turnover rate will decrease, and the organizational structure and personnel allocation of the contingent can remain relatively stable. This is conducive to forming a tacit cooperative relationship within the contingent, accumulating work experience, and improving overall combat effectiveness.

2.2. Research Theories

This study mainly relies on the following three theories, which explain the psychological mechanisms affecting the relationship between individuals and organizations from different perspectives.

2.2.1. Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory holds that all human social activities can be regarded as exchange behaviors, and exchange relationships are formed on the basis of mutual benefit. That is, when one party provides help or support to the other, the other party has the obligation to repay, but the repayment behavior cannot be predicted, so this exchange relationship is uncertain and risky^[2]. Only based on trust can it further develop into a long-term exchange relationship. The core of embedding this theory into the governance practice of primary militia is to enhance their consciousness of sustained participation, and the key is to build a “social exchange agreement” with both stability and fairness. Primary militia invest time, bear task risks, and fulfill their responsibilities for the organization; the organization needs to provide corresponding returns and guarantees through standardized mechanisms. When primary militia perceive the fairness of this exchange, their consciousness of sustained participation will be significantly enhanced.

2.2.2. Psychological Contract Theory

The psychological contract has narrow and broad senses. In the broad sense, the psychological contract refers to the sum of a series of unwritten expectations existing between each member of the organization and between members and leaders. It includes two levels: individual-level expectations and organizational-level expectations. In the narrow sense, the psychological contract refers to the belief system of employees’ individual responsibilities

and obligations between themselves and the organization in the context of employment relations. It is a two-way relationship based on employees' subjective cognition, emphasizing employees' individual perception of the responsibilities the organization should bear and the responsibilities they themselves should assume^[3]. The psychological contract reflects a series of subtle and implicit psychological expectations held by the organization and employees towards each other. While expecting the other party to meet certain expectations, they hope the other party will behave in a way they desire. Applied to the group of primary militia, the content of the psychological contract includes in-depth expectations such as organizational care, skill training, social recognition, and sense of honor and belonging. If organizational management practices fail to meet the psychological expectations of primary militia, there is a risk of psychological contract breach leading to negative emotions and further reducing participation willingness. Therefore, understanding and proactively managing the psychological contract of primary militia is of great significance for maintaining their participation willingness.

2.2.3. Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory is a cognitive theory proposed by Deci and Ryan in the 1980s to explain human intrinsic motivation. It holds a metatheoretical belief in positive human nature and insists that everyone has internal resources to promote development and change. The theory believes that people will have a tendency towards self-integration, improvement, and learning with the support of society and the external environment, and the relationship between individuals and the environment is an organic interaction^[4]. Applying this theory to primary militia means that their participation willingness can come from experiencing autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the organization, transforming their participation behavior from “being required to participate” to “wanting to participate.”

2.3. Analytical Framework of This Study

Based on the core concepts and related theoretical foundations defined earlier, this study proposes a systematic countermeasure path to enhance the sustained participation willingness of primary militia by constructing an analytical framework: taking social exchange theory as the core support to form the countermeasure of “improving institutional guarantees,” implementing the organization’s relevant responsibilities in the “explicit contract” by building a fair and credible system of salary, welfare supply, and rights protection, meeting the most basic exchange demands of primary militia and laying a solid material and safety foundation for their sustained participation; establishing specific measures of “building a supportive environment” under the guidance of psychological contract theory, focusing on fulfilling the mutually default “implicit contract,” deepening military-civilian cooperation, strengthening family care, and enhancing social recognition to respond to the primary militia’s demands for social emotions such as respect and belonging, and consolidating the emotional connection with the organization; relying on self-determination theory to set corresponding “innovative training management models” and “strengthened spiritual incentive mechanisms,” optimizing training content and implementation forms to meet individual needs for ability development, implementing participatory management to meet the demand for autonomous choice, building an honor system and fostering organizational culture to respond to the need for relatedness, activating the intrinsic motivation of primary militia from the source, and forming an inherent and sustainable participation willingness. The three theories complement each other and jointly focus on the core goal of enhancing the sustained participation willingness of primary militia. The following will elaborate on specific implementation methods in detail from four dimensions based on this analytical framework.

3. Countermeasures to Enhance the Sustained Participation Willingness of Primary Militia

3.1. Improve the Institutional Guarantee System and Lay the Material Foundation for Sustained Participation

Institutional guarantee is a fundamental condition for stimulating and maintaining the sustained participation willingness of primary militia. A sound institutional system can not only solve the worries of militia but also enhance the credibility and attractiveness of the organization through clear expectations and stable returns.

3.1.1. Establish a Scientific and Reasonable Salary and Welfare System

Relevant military and local departments should improve the social insurance system for primary militia, and in accordance with regulations, guarantee accident insurance and medical insurance for primary militia during training and task execution. On the basis of maintaining the original standards of wages, bonuses, and other welfare benefits of primary militia during training and task execution, explore the establishment of a subsidy system for primary militia and clarify the on-duty subsidy standards. Implement a differentiated subsidy payment standard for primary militia based on differences in professional positions, skill levels, and task types, in line with the core principle of “distribution according to work and rewarding excellence.”

3.1.2. Improve the Comprehensive Rights Protection Mechanism

Establish a coordination mechanism for protecting the rights and interests of primary militia to provide professional legal support for militia; smooth the green channel for protecting the rights and interests of militia, and give priority to accepting and quickly handling cases involving the rights and interests of militia. Focus on the career development rights and interests of primary militia. Incorporate militia service experience into the personal professional credit system as an important reference for employment, entrepreneurship, loans, and other important social activities. For primary militia who start their own businesses, provide supportive policies such as entrepreneurial guaranteed loans and tax reductions and exemptions, transforming the militia identity from a “political honor” into visible “social capital.”

3.1.3. Optimize the Pension and Preferential Treatment Policy System

For primary militia who are injured, disabled, or sacrificed during training, exercises, or task execution, as well as their families, a sound pension and preferential treatment policy system should be established. In accordance with relevant national regulations, timely and fully issue pension funds, and establish a mechanism for increasing pension standards in line with the level of economic and social development. At the same time, pay attention to humanistic care, establish a regular visit and condolence system, and promptly understand and solve the actual difficulties in the lives of disabled militia and the families of martyrs.

3.2. Innovate Training and Management Models and Enhance the Intrinsic Attractiveness of Sustained Participation

The quality and effect of training and management are directly related to the participation experience and sense of gain of primary militia. Innovating training and management models is a core link in enhancing the sustained participation willingness of primary militia.

3.2.1 Promote the Reform of Training Content and Methods

The practicality and combat effectiveness of training content are important factors affecting the participation motivation of primary militia. Efforts should be made to promote the innovation of training content, closely follow actual combat needs and the reality of militia, and increase the proportion of practical skill training such as emergency rescue, disaster prevention and reduction, and UAV operation. In terms of training methods, on the basis of training in accordance with regulations, modern training methods such as simulated confrontation and artificial intelligence should be actively introduced to improve the technological content and actual combat atmosphere of training. Break the traditional model of “you speak and I listen, you teach and I practice,” and vigorously promote discussion-based, case-based, and experiential teaching methods to enhance the interactivity and participation of training.

3.2.2. Implement Participatory and Active Management

In the management of primary militia, full respect should be given to the subject status of militia, a militia representative conference system should be established to regularly listen to the opinions and suggestions of militia on management work, and enhance their sense of autonomy. Establish a mentor system of “veterans leading new recruits,” allowing experienced militia to take on the role of trainers, which not only recognizes their abilities but also strengthens the sense of belonging within the team. Establish a talent pool of militia, focus on training outstanding militia, and provide opportunities for promotion to militia cadres or recommendation to more important positions.

3.2.3. Improve the Assessment, Evaluation, and Incentive Mechanism

Establish a scientific assessment and evaluation system, taking the performance of militia in training, mastery of skills, and quality of task completion as core evaluation indicators to correctly guide the behavioral direction of primary militia. In terms of the incentive mechanism, a point-based management system can be implemented, quantifying participation, training results, and task performance into points, which serve as important bases for selecting excellent individuals and promoting militia cadres. Government departments can appropriately set up a special reward fund for primary militia, and give additional performance rewards to those who perform outstandingly in major exercises, training, flood control, disaster relief, and other tasks.

3.3. Strengthen Spiritual Incentives and Organizational Identity and Consolidate the Ideological Foundation for Sustained Participation

Spiritual incentives and organizational identity are high-level needs beyond material incentives^[5], and have special significance for the group of primary militia with a dedication color. Strengthening spiritual incentives and enhancing organizational identity are powerful spiritual motivations for improving the sustained participation willingness of primary militia.

3.3.1. Construct a Multi-Level Honorary Commendation System

A four-level honorary system for primary militia covering the national, provincial, municipal, and county levels can be established to form a hierarchical and comprehensive commendation pattern. In addition to the annual summary and commendation, an immediate commendation mechanism can also be established to give circular praise, medals, and other rewards to those who perform outstandingly in daily training and community services. Actively coordinate local media to publicize the advanced deeds of excellent militia, and set up a column “Militia

Style” in newspapers, television, the Internet, and other media. Through grand ceremonies and extensive publicity, enhance the professional pride and sense of honor of militia.

3.3.2. Deepen Organizational Culture Construction and Identity

Efforts should be made to strengthen the organizational culture construction of primary militia and create a distinctive militia cultural brand. By regularly organizing militia days, military camp open days, and other activities, enhance the sense of belonging and identity of militia to the organization. Continuously strengthen the construction of militia's identity through forms such as enlistment oaths and regular organizational life. Carry out education on “excellent traditions of militia” to cultivate their sense of historical mission and responsibility. Organize thematic education activities in conjunction with major festivals and anniversaries to integrate the red gene into the blood of militia.

3.3.3. Strengthen the Guidance of Mission and Value

Adopt methods such as theoretical lectures, situation analysis, and case teaching to help militia recognize the current security challenges, and enhance their sense of crisis and mission. Pay attention to linking macro national security with the specific responsibilities of militia, making them realize the direct connection between their own work and national security and social stability. Through continuous value guidance, enable primary militia to integrate the realization of personal values into the cause of national defense, forming an internal and lasting participation motivation.

3.4. Build a Social Support Network and Create a Good Atmosphere for Sustained Participation

Individual behavioral choices are deeply influenced by the social environment^[6]. Building an extensive social support network and creating a social atmosphere of “honor to be a militia” are important external conditions for enhancing the sustained participation willingness of primary militia.

3.4.1. Strengthen Military-Civilian Coordination and Policy Connection

Promote the inclusion of primary militia work into the performance appraisal system of local Party and government leaders to enhance the attention paid by local governments to militia work. At the policy level, strengthen the connection and matching of military and local policies. Clarify the responsibilities and obligations of enterprises and institutions in supporting militia work to ensure that the salary and treatment, promotion, and other aspects of militia are not affected during their participation in training and task execution. Provide policy incentives such as tax reductions and exemptions and priority in projects for enterprises and institutions that actively support militia work, forming a positive interaction mechanism.

3.4.2. Expand Family Support and Community Participation

A care mechanism for militia families should be established to regularly carry out visits and condolence activities, and establish militia family service centers as appropriate to provide help for family members in employment training, child care during tasks, and other aspects. Organize the selection of “excellent militia family members” to enhance the sense of honor and support of family members. Organize militia to participate in community security patrols, civilized city creation, voluntary services, and other activities to enhance their social identity and sense of existence. Community militia workstations can be established in conjunction with village and community militia

companies to serve as a bridge between militia and the community.

3.4.3. Cultivate a Social Culture of Respecting the Military and Valuing Martial Spirit

Strengthen national defense education for all people, and integrate the concept of integrated military-civilian development into the national education system. Take the opportunity of National Defense Education Day and National Defense Education Month to organize various forms of publicity and education activities to improve the social awareness of militia work. Guide the media to actively publicize the status and role of militia and their advanced deeds, showing the good image of militia in the new era. Through continuous cultural cultivation, form a good social atmosphere of caring for national defense and supporting militia in the whole society, providing a profound social foundation for militia work.

4. Conclusion

Enhancing the sustained participation willingness of primary militia is a systematic project that requires joint efforts and comprehensive measures. The countermeasure system constructed in this paper from four dimensions—institutional guarantees, training management, spiritual incentives, and social support—takes into account the special requirements of primary militia as “soldiers” and their ordinary needs as “civilians,” reflecting the unity of rights and obligations, incentives and constraints, and material and spirit. Enhancing the sustained participation willingness of primary militia requires continuous exploration and innovation. Only by adhering to systematic thinking and taking multiple measures can we effectively stimulate the intrinsic motivation of primary militia, making them a reliable reserve force that “serves in peacetime, responds to emergencies in times of crisis, and engages in warfare in wartime,” and providing solid guarantees for consolidating national defense and maintaining social stability.

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