

LINKING ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR WITH ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) refers to a general set of behaviours exhibited by employees that are helpful, discretionary, and beyond normal job requirements. Researchers have suggested that high levels of OCB may lead to organisational effectiveness. OCB constructs may generally be organised into seven common themes or dimensions, namely helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development. There are several ways in which OCB may increase organisational performance. Among others, this includes enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, freeing up resources for more productive purpose, devoting less resources to purely maintenance functions, helping to coordinate the activities both within and across work groups, strengthening the organisation's ability to attract and retain the best employees, increasing the stability of the organisation's performance, and enabling the organisation to more effectively adapt to environmental changes. Empirical evidence has shown that OCB positively enhances organisational and group performance.

INTRODUCTION

Employee behaviour such as helping co-workers or leaders, willingness to tolerate inconvenience in the workplace, complying with organisational rules and procedures, and active involvement in organisational development are considered critical to the success of an organisation beyond the role-prescribed performance (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This aspect of human behaviour is now called organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Organ (1988) defined OCB as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, but not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation. By discretionary, we mean that the behaviour is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person's employment contract with the organisation; the behaviour is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable (p. 4). Research of OCB has been extensive since its introduction about 20 years ago (Bateman & Organ, 1983). There has been a very strong interest in OCB among researchers because

OCB has been identified as vital to the effectiveness of organisational and team performance (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Karambayya, 1990; Podsakoff, Ahearne & Mackenzie, 1997; Walz & Niehoff, 1996).

Theorists have conceptualised organisational effectiveness from a variety of perspectives, and numerous measurement approaches have been utilised to capture the construct, including profitability, employee development, efficiency, goal attainment, and resource acquisition (Hall, 1991). Organ (1988) suggested that high levels of *OCB* should lead to a more efficient and effective organisation and help bring new resources into the organisation. Similarly, Katz and Kahn (1978) pointed out the importance of organisational citizenship and how it can contribute to performance and competitive advantage of an organisation. Generally, *OCB* is the least expensive way to achieve organisational effectiveness and a good understanding of it can assist managers to get employees to go the extra mile purely for the organisation through altruistic motives rather than self-interest.

Since the 1990s, interest in behaviour that generally fits the definition of *OCB* has increased. However, researchers have not been completely consistent with the terminology used to label *OCB*. Several terminologies that overlap with *OCB* as described by Organ (1988) include prosocial organizational behaviour (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), organisational spontaneity (George & Brief, 1992), extrarole behaviour (Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995), and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). The aim of this paper is to review the literature on *OCB* and its relationship with organisational effectiveness. The paper will first examine the theoretical constructs of *OCB*. Subsequently, it will examine how *OCB* might affect organisational effectiveness primarily from the perspective of organizational and group performance. Finally, the paper will examine some key research that had examined the relationship between *OCB* and organizational effectiveness.

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Although there is a growing interest in citizenship-like behaviours, a review of the literature in this area reveals a lack of consensus about the dimensionality of the *OCB* construct. A study by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) found almost 30 different forms of citizenship behaviour. Podsakoff et al. (2000) also noted a great deal of conceptual overlap between the constructs. As a result of it, *OCB* constructs may be organised into seven common themes or dimensions namely helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development.

Helping Behaviour

This construct has been identified as an important form of citizenship behaviour, where it involves voluntarily helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of work-related problems. Included in the definition of helping behaviour are altruism, peacemaking, and cheerleading (Organ, 1988), interpersonal helping (Graham, 1989), interpersonal facilitation (Van Sotter & Motowidlo, 1996), and helping others (George & Brief, 1992).

Sportsmanship

This is a form of citizenship behaviour has received less attention in the literature compared to the other dimensions. Organ (1990) defined sportsmanship as “a willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining” (p.96). Podsakoff et al. (2000) argued that this definition is somewhat narrow. They expanded it into something called *good sports* where people who not only complain when they are inconvenienced by others, but also maintain a positive attitude even when things do not go their way, are not offended when others do not follow their suggestions, are willing to sacrifice their personal interest for the good of the work group, and do not take the rejection of their ideas personally.

Organisational Loyalty

Organisational loyalty essentially entails promoting the organisation to outsiders, protecting and defending it against external threats, and remaining committed to the organisation even under adverse conditions. Organisational loyalty consists of loyal boosterism and organisational loyalty (Graham, 1989), spreading goodwill and protecting the organisation (George & Brief, 1992), and endorsing, supporting, and defending organisational objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

Organisational Compliance

This dimension captures a person’s internalisation and acceptance of the organisation’s rules, regulations, and procedures, which results in a conscientious obedience to them, even when no one observes or monitors compliance. One reason why this behaviour is regarded as a form of citizenship behaviour is that even though everyone is expected to obey company regulations, rules, and procedures at all times, many employees simply do not. Consequently, employee who faithfully obeys all rules and regulations, even when no one is watching, is regarded as an especially *good citizen* (Podsakoff et al., 2000). This

dimension has generally been called generalized compliance (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983), organisational obedience (Graham, 1991), following organizational rules and procedures (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), and job dedication (Van Sotter & Motowidlo, 1996).

Individual Initiative

Individual initiative is regarded as extra-role behaviour because it involves engaging in task-related behaviours at a level that is so far beyond minimally required or generally expected levels that it takes on a voluntary form. Individual initiative behaviours include voluntary acts of creativity and innovation designed to improve one's task or the organisation's performance, persisting with extra enthusiasm and effort to accomplish one's job, volunteering to take extra responsibilities, and encouraging others in the organisation to do the same. This dimension is similar to conscientiousness (Organ, 1988), personal industry and individual initiative (Graham, 1989; Moorman & Blakely, 1995), making constructive suggestions (George & Brief, 1992), persisting with enthusiasm and volunteering to carry out task activities (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), taking charge at work (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), and job dedication (Van Sotter & Motowidlo, 1996).

Civic Virtue

Civic virtue represents a macro-level interest in, or commitment to the organisation as a whole. This is shown by willingness to participate actively in its governance (e.g. attend meetings, engage in policy debates); to monitor the environment for threats and opportunities (e.g. keep up with changes in the industry that might affect the organisation); and to look out for the organisation's best interests (e.g. reporting fire hazards or suspicious activities), even at great personal cost to the employee. This dimension has also been referred to as organisational participation (Graham, 1989), and protecting the organisation (George & Brief, 1992).

Self-Development

The final dimension is self-development. This dimension includes voluntary behaviours employees engage in to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities. George and Brief (1992) identified developing oneself as a key dimension of citizenship behaviour. According to George and Brief (1992), developing oneself includes "seeking out and taking advantage of advanced training courses, keeping abreast of the latest developments in one's field and area, or even learning a new set of skills so as to expand the range of one's contributions to an organization" (p. 155).

OCB AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

There are several possible reasons why helping, sportsmanship, and civic virtue might be positively related to work group or organisational effectiveness. Citizenship behaviours may enhance organisational performance because they *lubricate* the social machinery of the organisation, thus reducing friction, and increasing efficiency (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). There are several ways in which *OCB* may increase organisational performance. This includes enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, freeing up resources so that it can be used for more productive purposes, reducing the need to devote scarce resources to purely maintenance functions, helping to coordinate activities both within and across work groups, strengthening the organisation's ability to attract and retain the best employees, increasing the stability of the organisation's performance, and finally enabling the organisation to more effectively adapt to environmental changes.

According to Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994), *OCB* may increase the efficiency of an organisation by enhancing co-worker or managerial productivity. According to them, when more experienced employees voluntarily help new co-workers *learn the ropes*, they help the new workers to become more productive employees faster, thus enhancing the efficiency of the work group or unit. Managerial productivity may also increase when employees provide valuable suggestions for improving unit performance. Employees can also display helpful behaviour by avoiding creating problems for co-workers, as this may allow the manager to escape the trap of falling into a pattern of crisis management.

Citizenship behaviours may also enhance organisational effectiveness by freeing up various types of resources for more productive purposes (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Organ, 1988). Employees who can help each other with work-related problems may allow the manager to spend more time on productive tasks, such as strategic planning, securing valuable resources, and improving business processes. Likewise, when employees are conscientious, it frees up a manager's time because the manager may delegate more responsibility to them and thus require less supervision. Similarly, when employees display sportsmanship, a manager's time is not wasted dealing with trivial complaints. Experienced employees who help in the training and orienting of new employees may help the organisation reduce the resources that must be devoted to these activities.

OCB may also contribute to organisational effectiveness by reducing the need to devote scarce resources to purely maintenance functions (Organ, 1988) thus helping to coordinate the activities of work groups (Karambayya, 1990). A natural by-product of helping behaviour is that it enhances team spirit, morale, and cohesiveness among group members. As a result of this, helping behaviour

among group or team members may reduce the need for group or team members as well as managers to expend time and energy on group maintenance functions. Similarly, by exhibiting courtesy so as not to create problems for others may also reduce intergroup conflict. Thus there will be less time needed to spend on conflict management activities. The coordination of activities among group members and between work groups may also be enhanced when employees voluntarily attend and actively participate in work unit meetings thus avoiding creating unnecessary problems for other members.

OCB may also improve the efficiency of an organisation by enhancing the organisation's ability to attract and retain the best people (George & Bettenhausen, 1990). Helping behaviour may directly contribute to a positive work environment by enhancing morale and fostering group cohesiveness, and a sense of belonging to a team. This then would make the organisation a more attractive place to work with. Similarly, employees who exhibit sportsmanship behaviour by refraining from complaining about trivial matters, set an example of putting the interests of the work unit or group ahead of one's own interests. This then may enhance a sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization.

Citizenship behaviours may also benefit the organisation by reducing the variability in performance. Minimising variability is important because it allows managers to more easily plan and allocate scarce resources. Several things employees may do to reduce the variability in a work unit's performance include voluntary acts such as picking up the slack for others who are absent or who have heavy workloads (helping behavior), coming in early or staying late to finish important projects (conscientiousness), and going *above and beyond the call of duty* in performing one's work responsibilities (conscientiousness).

Finally, OCB may also help in increasing an organisation's ability to adapt to a changing environment. When employees who are in close contact with the marketplace volunteer information about changes in the environment and make suggestions about how to respond to them, it helps the organisation to adapt to these changes. When employees voluntarily attend and actively participate in meetings (displaying civic virtue), it enhances the organisation's responsiveness by aiding the dissemination of valuable information. Furthermore, when employees display sportsmanship by demonstrating willingness to take on new responsibilities or learn new skills, it enhances the organisation's ability to respond to changes in its environment.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF THE EFFECTS OF OCB ON ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The assumption that OCB contributes to the effectiveness of work teams and the organization has only recently been tested empirically. Nevertheless, the

research in this area remains sparse. Perhaps the first study to explore whether citizenship behaviour is related to group or organisational effectiveness was undertaken by Karambayya (1990). This study examined the relationship between work unit performance and satisfaction, and unit members' citizenship behaviours in a sample of 18 intact work groups, comprised primarily white-collar and professional employees from 12 different organisations. In her study, Karambayya obtained performance ratings for the work units from key division and heads of department, employee OCB ratings from supervisors, and self-reports of satisfaction from employees. The study found that employees in high performing work units were more satisfied and exhibited more citizenship behaviours than employees in low-performing work units. According to Podsakoff et al. (2000), although these results were promising, they were far from conclusive because unit performance was measured subjectively rather than objectively. In addition, the data for this study were obtained from raters in 12 different organisations, raising the possibility that different raters used different criteria in their evaluation of organisational success.

Podsakoff et al. (1997) examined the relationship between the quantity and quality of work group performance of 218 members of 40 work crews in a paper mill producing bond and catalogue paper in the US. The work crews in the paper mill comprised four to six workers with an average of five workers per crew. The workers responded to the OCB questionnaire on company time and passed on the questionnaire to two union stewards. This ensured greater participation among the workers. Work crew performance was assessed by quantity and quality of work. These measures were obtained from company records. Quantity was measured as the amount of paper produced as a percentage of total machine capacity for a year. Quality was measured as the percentage of paper produced that was rejected by the mill's quality control personnel or customer. The findings of the study indicated that *OCB* was positively related to work group performance. The study found that *OCB* predicted quantity of output better than quality of output. The study also found both helping behaviour and sportsmanship were positively related to the quantity of work crew performance. However, only helping behaviour was found to be positively related to the quality of work crew performance.

Walz and Niehoff (1996) conducted a study on the effects of *OCB* on group level performance of 34 limited menu restaurants (LMR) in the US. Data for the study was gathered from 34 general managers of restaurants. The general managers evaluated their employees' performance as well as *OCB*. Organisational effectiveness was measured based on a subjective assessment of the LMR performance as well as financial and customer satisfaction figures obtained from company records. The findings of the study indicated that *OCB* was related to organisational performance. The study found managers of high performing LMRs generally rated higher levels of *OCB* among their employees.

Conversely, managers in low performing LMRs rated lower levels of *OCB* among their employees.

Khalid and Ali (in press) conducted a study to determine the influence of *OCB* on turnover intention and absenteeism among hotel employees in Malaysia. Two reasons were cited by the researchers for the study of *OCB* and turnover intention and absenteeism among hotel employees. Firstly, the hotel industry worldwide is experiencing a high rate of employee turnover and Malaysia is no exception. An understanding of *OCB* could help mitigate this problem. Secondly, *OCB* is considered important to the effectiveness of a hotel because as a service-oriented organisation, extra effort on the part of employees to go beyond formal duties is necessary to ensure customer satisfaction. Thus nurturing *OCB* among employees and retaining them would benefit the hotels. Data for the study were gathered from two sources, which were full-time hotel employees and managers. Five dimensions of *OCB* were measured in the study, i.e. altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Both managers and subordinates provided ratings on these five dimensions as well as for measures on turnover intention and absenteeism. A total of 63 superior-subordinate dyad questionnaires were obtained in the study. Findings of the study indicated that civic virtue and sportsmanship was significantly and negatively related to turnover intention. Employees who were rated as having higher levels of civic virtue and sportsmanship were found to be more likely to report lower turnover intentions. The results further indicated that only conscientiousness was significantly and negatively related to absenteeism. Employees with higher levels of conscientiousness were found to be more likely to report less absenteeism. Khalid and Ali argued that from a theoretical perspective, these results suggested that employees engaging in high levels on certain dimensions of *OCB* may have a lower propensity to display turnover intentions or absence behaviour presumably in order to maintain a level of cognitive consistency. According to Khalid and Ali, Festinger's cognitive consistency theory requires an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and preferences to fit harmoniously and not to be in conflict. Thus, individuals are predisposed to experience psychological discomfort when they behave in ways that is inconsistent with their attitudes, beliefs, preferences, values, and moral standards. Individuals will endeavour to maintain agreement between their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour and thus will attempt to align these attitudes and behaviour so as to appear rational and consistent. This then requires hotel employees with high *OCB* to display low absence behaviour and intention to remain with their employer, or otherwise there will be inconsistency between cognition and behaviour.

SUMMARY

Organisational citizenship behaviour is an extra-role behaviour deemed important to the success of an organisation. Although there are various terminologies that overlap with OCB, they actually have similar meaning. These terminologies include prosocial organisational behaviour, organisational spontaneity, extrarole behaviour, and contextual performance. A review of the literature found that there is a lack of consensus on the dimensionality of the construct. Generally, the multitude of OCB constructs can be narrowed down into seven common dimensions, namely, helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development. The extensive scholarly interest in the topic of OCB has been predicated on the assumption that OCB influences organisational effectiveness. According to the literature, OCB may increase organisational performance by enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, freeing up resources so they can be used for more productive purposes, reducing the need to devote scarce resources to purely maintenance functions, helping to coordinate the activities both within and across work groups, strengthening the organisation's ability to attract and retain the best employees, increasing the stability of the organisation's performance, and enabling the organisation to more effectively adapt to environmental changes. The review of the empirical literature indicates that the assumption that OCB may affect organisational effectiveness has generally been confirmed by empirical data. Hence, OCB can play an important role for any organisation that wants to improve its competence and effectiveness.

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