



## OCB and its role in creating Social Capital in an Organisation

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### **Abstract**

*Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is a term that encompasses anything positive and constructive that employees do, of their own volition, which supports co-workers and benefits the company. Typically, employees who frequently engage in OCB may not always be the top performers (though they could be, as task performance is related to OCB), but they are the ones who are known to 'go the extra mile' or 'go above and beyond' the minimum efforts required to do a merely satisfactory job. Though OCB is a spontaneous initiative taken by staff, you are able to promote OCB in your workplace through employee motivation, as well as giving them the opportunity to display OCB; that is, creating a workplace environment that not only allows for, but is conducive and supportive of OCB. Management should also be educated about OCB, and consider having OCB included in performance evaluations in order to actively encourage its employees.*

**Keywords:** OCB, Citizenship Behaviour, Conscientiousness, extra role behaviour.

### **Introduction**

What constitutes a good employee in a 21st century workplace? In India, where organisational hierarchical structures are vertical which strictly follow the chain of command, especially in small or medium-sized businesses, it is important to have good relationships among co-workers. Being helpful and supportive of colleagues in a way that benefits the organisation, working towards the organisation's goals – this is embodied in the definition of citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behaviour

(OCB) has garnered much academic attention since its conception. It is perceived to be something intangible; OCB is not always formally recognised or rewarded, and concepts like 'helpfulness' or 'friendliness' are also difficult to quantify. Yet OCB has been shown to have a considerable positive impact at the organisational level.

Katz and Kahn (1966) were the first to make note of autonomous work behavior by employees in an organization or workplace. However it was Organ (1988) who arranged such behavior into



a concrete form and viewed it as "organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)." Subsequently, Organ and his colleagues defined OCB as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie 2006). One requirement of OCB is that it not be covered by employees' work descriptions and regulations (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Hui 1993). Signifying so-called "extra-role behavior," this is behavior that has great significance for workplaces and organizations.

OCB refers to anything that employees choose to do, spontaneously and of their own accord, which often lies outside of their specified contractual obligations. In other words, it is discretionary. OCB may not always be directly and formally recognised or rewarded by the company, through salary increments or promotions for example, though of course OCB may be reflected in favourable supervisor and co-worker ratings, or better performance appraisals. In this way it can facilitate future reward gain indirectly. Finally, and critically, OCB must 'promote the effective functioning of the organisation' (Organ, 1988).

OCB has been shown to have a positive impact on employee performance and wellbeing, and this in turn has noticeable flow-on effects on the organisation. The effects on employee performance are threefold. Firstly, workers who engage in OCB tend to receive better performance ratings by their managers (Podsakoff et al., 2009). This could be because employees who engage in OCB are simply liked more and perceived more favourably (this has

become known as the 'halo effect'), or it may be due to more work-related reasons such as the manager's belief that OCB plays a significant role in the organisation's overall success, or perception of OCB as a form of employee commitment due to its voluntary nature. Regardless of the reason, the second effect is that a better performance rating is linked to gaining rewards (Podsakoff et al., 2009) – such as pay increments, bonuses, promotions or work-related benefits. Thirdly, because these employees have better performance ratings and receive greater rewards, when the company is downsizing e.g. during an economic recession, these employees will have a lower chance of being made redundant (Organ et al., 2006).

Citizenship behaviours come in many distinct shapes and forms. Traditionally thought of as the worker who 'goes above and beyond' the minimum requirements, it can also be the employee who takes the initiative and always offers to lend a hand; the knowledgeable, helpful and cooperative colleague; the senior staff member who is able to roll with the punches; or the friendly, approachable manager who shows the new employees around the office and introduces them to other staff. All of these types of OCB should be actively encouraged – employees support the organisation through enhancing each other's performance and wellbeing, and this is reflected in reduced costs and increased profitability at the organisational level.

In fact no organization can succeed without the employees' commitment and attempt since the committed employees devote more time and attention to their work.



Why does OCB seem to have such compelling effects on the individual and the success of an organisation? Organ et al. (2006) has offered the following suggestions. OCB can:

- enhance productivity (helping new co-workers; helping colleagues meet deadlines)
- Free up resources (autonomous, cooperative employees give managers more time to clear their work; helpful behaviour facilitates cohesiveness (as part of group maintenance behaviour).)
- attract and retain good employees (through creating and maintaining a friendly, supportive working environment and a sense of belonging)
- create social capital (better communication and stronger networks facilitate accurate information transfer and improve efficiency)

### Theoretical overview

The social exchange theory is often used to examine various aspects of employee reciprocity including OCB. This theory proposes that "gestures of goodwill" are exchanged between employees and the organisation as well as between subordinates and their supervisors when particular action warrants reciprocity (Hopkins, 2002). The obligations imposed by the norm of reciprocity may vary with the status of the participants within a society (Baron & Kreps, 1999). Integral to both social exchange and reciprocity is the fact that individuals are connected through mutual dependencies. This dependency is a characteristic of the relationship between the employees and the organisation.

The social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity explain the

analogy of maintaining the balance of social exchange between employees and the organisation. Some researchers have suggested that OCB fits into two categories. The first category consists of those behaviours that directly impact the balance of the social exchange between employees and the organisation, that is, OCB directed toward the organisation (OCBO). The second category is made up of those behaviours that have an indirect impact and are directed toward individuals (OCBI) (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Lee and Allen (2002) rationalised this position by arguing that because OCB is a deliberate attempt to maintain the balance in a social exchange between employees and the organisation, it is reasonable to suggest that this behaviour is more directly intended to benefit the organisation. Hence, OCBO is more likely to be a direct function of what employees think about their work characteristics. In contrast, OCBI primarily addresses and focuses on the individual at the work site. Although it seems to have only indirect implications, OCBI helps to maintain a balance in the organisation, fostering employee transactions.

### Five Dimensions of OCB

These five dimensions of OCB can be taken based on their nature and implications under the heads OCBO and OCBI.

- **Altruism** is defined as the desire to help or otherwise assist another individual, while not expecting a reward in compensation for that assistance. Someone exhibiting altruistic behaviour in a group setting might volunteer to work on certain special projects, voluntarily helping or assisting other employees with their work or with other tasks, and volunteering to do additional work in order to help other employees



reduce their own work load. Ex: A common example would be employee who drives his colleague to work when his car has broken down, while not expecting money or favors in compensation.

- **Courtesy** is defined as behaviour which is polite and considerate towards other people. In a business context, courtesy is usually exhibited through behaviours such as inquiring about personal subjects that a co-worker has previously brought up, asking if a co-worker is having any trouble with a certain work related project, and informing co-workers about prior commitments or any other problems that might cause them to reduce their workload or be absent from work.
- **Sportsmanship** is defined as exhibiting no negative behaviour when something does not go as planned -- or when something is being perceived as annoying, difficult, frustrating or otherwise negative. For example: Imagine an employee who submits their proposal to their superior may be expecting it to be well-received and accepted—it is rejected, instead, and the employee displays good sportsmanship by not complaining about the situation to other co-workers or individuals who may report their behaviour to others working for the business.
- **Conscientiousness** is defined as behaviour that suggests a reasonable level of self-control and discipline, which extends beyond the minimum requirements expected in that situation. In the context of a business setting, conscientiousness is observed when an employee not only meets their employer's requirements—such as coming into work on time and

completing assignments on time—but exceeds them.

- **Civic Virtue** is defined as behaviour which exhibits how well a person represents an organization with which they are associated, and how well that person supports their organization outside of an official capacity. Example, how well someone represents their business and how they may support that business are all examples of someone's civic virtue. Examples of civic virtue in a business setting include

- ✓ Speaking positively about the business to friends, family;
- ✓ Signing up for business events, such as charity walking events.

#### **Antecedents of OCB**

- Job satisfaction
- Organizational justice
- Organizational commitment
- Personality
- Task
- Leadership
- Contextual performance
- Pro-social organizational Behavior
- Extra role Behavior

#### **Factors that promotes Organizational Behavior Citizenship Behavior**

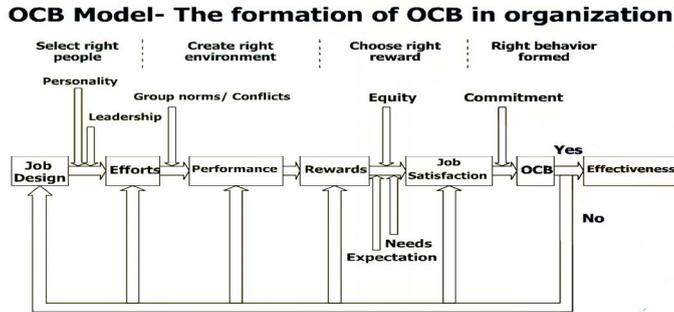
Spitzmuller, Van Dyne, and Illies (2008) identify the following as factors that determine OCB: agreeableness and conscientiousness as dispositional aspects of personality, employees' job satisfaction, organizational justice, organizational commitment, and positive feeling. In other words, OCB is facilitated when employees have (a) strong



agreeableness and conscientiousness as personality traits, (b) high job satisfaction, (c) view the organization's

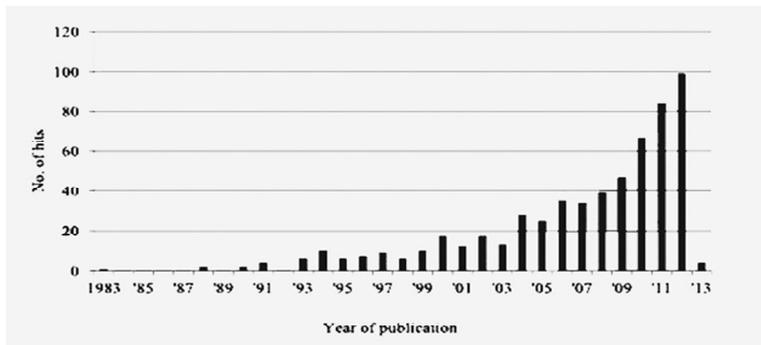
systems and procedures as fair, (d) a feeling of attachment with their organization and (e) a positive feeling.

**The formation of OCB in an organisation:**



The following takes a brief look at research trends here on OCB.

Fig. 1. Number of Papers with “Organizational Citizenship Behavior”



Note: Result of a search by Pro Quest, January 21, 2013.

Using the academic data database, a search was conducted of academic papers containing the phrase “organizational citizenship behavior” in the title. This search produced 588 hits when only papers falling under the category of “Scholarly Journals” were extracted (Figure 1). Looking at the search results, it is apparent that the number of papers is showing a distinctive upward trend (particularly from around 2000). This suggests that OCB continues to be viewed with

importance as a research topic in the realms of organizational psychology and organizational behavior.

A number of elements comprising OCB (i.e., behavioral patterns) have been proposed in much of the research concerning OCB conducted thus far. According to Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006), the classifications of OCB appearing in many OCB-related papers vary greatly; in fact, they find 40 types having different names in use. Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie



(2006) summarized these classifications to define OCB's structural elements in terms of seven dimensions: namely, "helping" (i.e., acting to help a specific individual, such as a colleague, boss, or client), "compliance" (contribution the work team, department, or organization), "sportsmanship" (choosing not to protest unfairness or show dissatisfaction to the organization or manager), "civic virtue" (readiness to participate responsibly and constructively in the political and governing processes of the organization), "organizational loyalty" (Showing pride in one's organization to people who are not members of that organization), "self-development" (taking autonomous steps to expand skills and knowledge pertaining to one's own work), and "individual initiative" (almost all behaviours that go beyond what is necessary to resolve or avoid problems). An OCB scale for Japanese workplaces was devised by Tanaka (2002, 2004). This scale is comprised of five subscales; namely "interpersonal help," "Conscientiousness," "Concentration on the job," "supporting the organization," and "cleanliness."

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