A REVIEW OF THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Scholarly interest in the concept of organizational citizenship behavior has increased but the notion is still in its emerging stage of development. Therefore, this study intends to review a scholarly research on the conceptualization of organizational citizenship behavior and its development. This study searched for organizational citizenship behavior related articles available at the academic research databases namely *Scopus* and *Web of Science*. The keywords that were used for searching articles were "organizational citizenship behavior", and "extra-role behavior". This study found that organizational citizenship behavior comprises of mainly five dimensions namely altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. Lastly, implications are provided.

Keywords: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Extra-role Behavior.

1.   Introduction

In the contemporary world, organizations are striving to get a competitive advantage over its competitors, and are expecting from its employees to go beyond their job description in assisting the organization achieving its goals (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). Thus in previous literature, these behaviors where employees go beyond their job description have been termed as organizational citizenship behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to those behaviors that are not part of an individual job description and include acts like helping other, taking additional responsibilities, putting extra hours, defending organization and openly speaking about important issues of organization (Organ *et al.*, 2006). According to Dekas *et al.* (2013), there has been a growing interest of scholars and practitioners on the concept of OCB, as, since its inception, more than 650 research articles have been published on it. This interest is because of the reason that OCB is associated with several key individuals and organizational outcomes (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2009).

In previous literature OCB have been conceptualized in a number of ways over the years (cf. (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Dekas *et al.*, 2013; Organ, 1988, 1997; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000; Smith *et al.*, 1983; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Moreover, according to Yen *et al.* (2008), there is a lack of consensus among previous researchers, regarding a model for OCB. They further added that multidimensional approach has been used in defining the construct of OCB, having variations in the dimensions. Therefore, the objective of this study is to review the previous literature on OCB, thereby providing key dimensions offered by several different scholars and further highlight the dimensions of OCB on which majority of the scholars have consensus for their importance in the conceptualization of OCB.

2. Literature Review

The concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) was initiated by Barnard (1938), who while using system approach in analyzing organizations, examined the nature of organizations. It was the first study which recognized formal and informal systems in organizations. While the concept of formal system includes the rules, regulations, and procedures of organizations and where relationship among individuals rely on achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of organizational goals. On the other hand, the informal systems make the foundation of the concept of OCB. The informal system has been defined by Organ *et al.* (2006) as "contributions by individuals that go beyond the content of contractual obligations, obedience to legitimate authority or calculated striving for remuneration as mediated by the formal organization" (p.48). Moreover, Katz (1964) in his study distinguished between the in-role performance which is also termed as dependable role performance and instinctive behavior. Katz (1964) was of the opinion that for any organization to function well requires three types of behavior. Firstly, employees must be induced not only to enter but also to remain with the organization. Secondly, employees must have the ability to perform the job requirements or any specific role, as and when assigned. Lastly, employees must have characteristics of innovation and perform spontaneously, that is beyond their job description (Werner, 2000).

The construct of OCB in previous literature can be reviewed since last 30 years, where different researchers provided their own conceptualization and instruments for OCB. The first study on OCB was conducted by Smith *et al.* (1983) where they referred a group of performance as citizenship behavior and termed them important for the organization. They conducted a study of two large banks with the aim of determining the nature and antecedents of OCB. The respondents of their study were 422 employees and their respective supervisors from 58 departments. Smith *et al.* (1983) developed a measurement instrument for OCB and used supervisors feedback regarding employees' behavior which is beyond their job description. They were further asked to elaborate the behavior of those employees, who in their opinion, go beyond their job description during their conduct at work. The results of the study showed that OCB has at least two different dimensions that are altruism and general compliance. Behaviors such as helping a colleague in any work assignment or providing useful training to a new inductee, which is not the part of an employee's job description were termed as altruism. Moreover, general compliance is being punctual at duty and giving prior information in case of not being able to attend. Their study also uncovered leader supportiveness, an element of workplace environment as one of the important findings. This aspect of leader supportiveness was helpful in employee's job satisfaction, which helps in increasing the level of altruism dimension of OCB. The leader supportiveness also had a direct impact on generalized compliance aspect of OCB. The overall results of the study showed that the organizational environment and employees personality have a significant contribution towards job satisfaction and resultantly increase employees' OCB (Smith *et al.*, 1983). Moreover, Organ (1988) identified five key dimensions of OCB which are altruism, courtesy, civic virtue, conscientiousness, and sportsmanship which are further described in Table 1.

Table 1. Five Dimensions of OCB

Dimension	Definition
Altruism	Selfless behavior of employees, where employees show concern for welfare of others.
Courtesy	Polite behavior of employees enabling them to avoid conflicts and interpersonal work-related problems.

Civic Virtue	Cultivating of habits which are not compulsory but are deemed as important and enables them to keep abreast with changes in the working environment of the organization.
Conscientiousness	The care of employees towards the rules and regulations of the organization for the genuine benefit of the organization.
Sportsmanship	Behavior of employees which enable them not wasting time complaining about small issues in the organization.

Source: Organ (1988)

Williams and Anderson (1991) in their study suggested two broad categories of OCB. The first category they termed as Organizational Citizenship Behavior at Organization level (OCB-O), which benefits the organization, for instance, prior information in case of not being able to attend work or following the informal rules. The second category was called Organizational Citizenship Behavior at Individual level (OCB-I), which has immediate outcomes for the individual but has long term benefits for an organization like helping others or providing training to a new inductee.

Lee and Allen (2002) further conducted a study on registered nurses in Ontario city of Canada and derived their own instrument using a combination of previously developed OCB instruments of Smith *et al.* (1983) and Williams and Anderson (1991). The aim of their study was to observe the impact of employee feelings and judgments on OCB and undesirable workplace behaviors. The reasons of Lee and Allen (2002) developing their own instruments included firstly creating a scale, which may help in identifying OCBs aimed for an intended recipient and secondly developing a scale which may help in differentiating OCB and undesirable workplace behavior. The results of their study showed great similarity to Williams and Anderson (1991) in term of both OCB-O and OCB-I which have a close relation to the judgment of employees related to the workplace. However, the study of Lee and Allen (2002) showed that the feelings of employees play a rather more significant role in the determination of employees OCB-I, which was contrary to the findings of the study of Williams and Anderson (1991). This variation in result was due to the reason that in the study of Lee and Allen (2002), employees themselves rated their own OCB levels, while in the study conducted by Williams and Anderson (1991), the supervisors rated the OCB levels of their employees.

In another study conducted by Settoon and Mossholder (2002) developed an OCB instrument also using a combination of previously developed elements including Smith *et al.* (1983) and Williams and Anderson (1991). In their study, Settoon and Mossholder (2002) intended testing of a model, whether quality and context of relationships were antecedents of citizenship behavior. In their study, citizenship behavior comprised of two parts which were person focused and task focused. Both these elements had relation with the element of altruism of Smith *et al.* (1983) and OCB-I of Williams and Anderson (1991). The result of their study showed that trust and the characteristics of seeing things for other's point of view had a strong correlation with empathic concern, leading to both person and task focused citizenship behaviors. Furthermore, the result also had some traces, not to a great extent, of closeness among employees leading to person and task focused citizenship behaviors.

LePine *et al.* (2002) in their study which was based on 133 studies proposed that generally high level of relationship exists between dimensions of OCB. They were also of the opinion that it is better to have predictive relationships with overall dimensions of OCB. Moreover, Cardona *et al.* (2004) conducted a study on social and work exchange as to how these can influence employee OCB. In their study, they proposed that OCB is facilitated by the positive perception of social exchange, while economic exchange has no facilitation role for OCB. Economic exchange looks relatively clear as it is an exchange of certain actions for financial reasons. However, social exchange seems more transitory, as it involves expectations of change, but the time and nature of payback cannot be traced on the timeline as can be done in the case of economic or work exchange. Furthermore, work exchange, as third exchange relationship was introduced in their study, which helps in the facilitation of OCB not only in addition but also independent of social exchange. These relationships which involve assumptions regarding work-related tasks are helpful in lending explanation to the perceptions of work characteristics like task variety, autonomy, and freedom. They are also helpful in the prediction of OCB, however, they are not seen as predictors in social exchange model (Cardona *et al.*, 2004).

Moreover, Podsakoff *et al.* (2000) in their review of Organizational Citizenship Behavior provided seven common themes of OCB that are helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development as shown in below Table 2.

Table 2. Seven Themes of OCB

Behavior	Definition
Helping/Altruism	voluntarily helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of, work related problems
Sportsmanship	a willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining
Organizational Loyalty	promoting the organization to outsiders, protecting and defending it against external threats and remaining committed to it even under adverse conditions
Organizational Compliance	internalization and acceptance of the organization's rules, regulations, and procedures, which results in scrupulous adherence to them, even when no one observes or monitors compliance
Individual Initiative	engaging in task-related behaviors at a level that is so far beyond minimally required or generally expected levels that it takes on a voluntary flavor
Civic Virtue	a willingness to participate actively in organizational governance; to monitor its environment for threats and opportunities; and to look out for the its best interests, even at great personal cost
Self-Development	voluntary behaviors employees engage in to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities

Source: Podsakoff *et al.* (2000)

Furthermore, due to the varying antecedents and conditions that influence organizational behavior, it has been termed as a complex phenomenon. According to Organ *et al.* (2006), "The extent to which an employee exhibits organizational citizenship behavior is a function of the employee's ability, motivation, and opportunity" (p. 93). The reasons of employees exhibiting OCB had been linked with attitudes and dispositional variables. Subsequently, an employee engaged in OCBs was explained in more details by leadership and environmental factors which lead researchers to focus on these factors. Conversely, the causal relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and personality characteristics has not been supported by strong evidence. The meta-analysis conducted by Organ and Ryan (1995) stated that OCB is strongly predicted by job-related attitudes and satisfaction. However, in their study, they also stated that "dispositional measures did not correlate nearly as well with OCB" (p. 775). In previous literature, Chiaburu and Baker (2006) were of the opinion that "behaviors such as helping colleagues with workloads, attending functions that are not required, and obeying informal organizational norms might be constructed as supporting the status quo and perpetuating organizational behaviors and routines that are less than perfect for enhanced performance" (p. 621).

A review of past literature also shows that OCB helps in enhancing productivity, facilitates organization to compete regardless of limited resources, also helps in better coordination among employees thus also helping the organization to overcome employee turnover, enhance organization adaptability, increase profitability and customer satisfaction (Koys, 2001; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). Specifically, the role of OCB is crucial in the knowledge-based economy, where due to the rapidly evolving nature of the external environment, there is less role clarification. In these situations, organizations increasingly look to their employees' in filling the gap between what they, in particular, are awarded for and the emergent behaviors required for the organization to be competitive (Dekas *et al.*, 2013).

Furthermore, Dekas *et al.* (2013) in their study examined the evolution of dimensions of OCB since the inception as if there has been any evolution in the dimensions of OCB and how they have evolved since its inception, in the specific context of knowledge workers at Google organization using a focus group. In their study, they used the same process of Farh *et al.* (2004), who examined the existing conceptualization in the People Republic of China. Dekas *et al.* (2013) while identifying the typology of OCB for knowledge workers, developed a new scale called OCB-

KW which had dimensions of employee sustainability, social participation, civic virtue, voice, helping, knowledge sharing, individual initiative, and administrative behavior.

Rose (2016) in their study focused on OCB with special consideration to the learning and development component of HRD. According to Rose (2016), OCB has a significant role in contributing to the organization's performance through the social systems existing at any workplace. It also facilitates the enhancement of work of teams and groups, specifically in those groups which are having an internal dependency on its members. OCB has also its contribution to individuals' performance by giving them an indication about an individual's helpfulness, reliable and cooperative nature. Thus, OCB can be enhanced by development activities like workplace learning, mentoring and productive feedback (Rose, 2016).

Moreover, it is believed that employee engagement in OCB is due to the positive motives or desire to give in return to their organization or other individuals for what they have received (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1997). However, due to assumptions regarding the stability of purpose and trend of reciprocity, this lens has relative stability implications in a pattern of OCB, which means that individuals engaged in OCB will continue to be engaged in OCB unless changes in the environment take place, which changes their urge or motivation to engage in OCB. This perspective is indeed reflected in terms such as "the good soldier syndrome", a label used in literature for those employees who are engaged in a high level of OCB (Bolino *et al.*, 2015).

3.   Conclusion

Review of the previous literature shows that OCB consists of the following key elements: a behavior that is not part of an individual job description, a discretionary behavior, a behavior which neither will have direct reward nor it will be recognized in the formal structure of the organization, yet it is the behavior which has great deal of importance for the performance and operational success of organization (Barroso Castro *et al.*, 2004; Netemeyer *et al.*, 1997; Shahin *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, in previous literature, OCB is identified mainly having five dimensions namely altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue (Akinbode, 2011; Bogler & Somech, 2005; Kim, 2006; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000; Salehzadeh *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, this study implies that managers/leaders should try to motivate subordinates to exhibit OCB. As leadership plays an important role in an organization (Khan *et al.*, 2014; Yasir, Imran*, et al.*, 2016; Yasir & Mohamad, 2016; Yasir, Rasli*, et al.*, 2016). And previous literature shows that some of the key determinants of organizational citizenship behaviors are employees perceptions of leadership behavior and fairness (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010; Ehrhart, 2004; Organ *et al.*, 2006; Smith *et al.*, 1983; Wang *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, top-management while recruiting should focus on selecting those individuals who are having the propensity to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors leading towards creating a work environment that will further encourage employees to exhibit OCB.

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