

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: ITS NATURE AND ANTECEDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Theory and research on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) has presumed OCB as a set of desirable behaviors that contributes to the organizational effectiveness. So far OCB has been connoted as one of the antecedents of organizational performance. However, the antecedents of OCB are not thoroughly investigated. This study explores various existing definitions of OCB and then examines the dimensions of OCB. Based on the discussion on the dimensions of OCB, a number of antecedents were identified. When the antecedents are known, managers would be able to promote OCB among their employees for better performance.

Key words: Organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, role perceptions, leadership behaviors and leader-member exchange, fairness perceptions, individual dispositions, and motivational theories.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is referred as set of discretionary workplace behaviors that exceed one's basic job requirements. They are often described as behaviors that go beyond the call of duty. Research of OCB has been extensive since its introduction nearly twenty years back (Bateman & Organ, 1983)^[1]. The vast majority of OCB research has focused on the effects of OCB on individual and organizational performance. There is consensus in this particular field that OCB addresses silent behaviors for organizational enterprises (Barbuto, Brown, Wilhite, & Wheeler, 2001)^[2]. Successful organizations have employees

who go beyond their formal job responsibilities and freely give of their time and energy to succeed at the assigned job. Such altruism is neither prescribed nor required; yet it contributes to the smooth functioning of the organization.

Organizations could not survive or prosper without their members behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive behaviors. Because of the importance of good citizenship for organizations, understanding the nature and sources of OCB has long been a high priority for organizational scholars (Organ, 1988)^[3] and remains so. Organizational citizenship behavior has been defined in the literature as a multi-

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dimensional concept that includes all positive organizationally relevant behaviors of organizational members including traditional in-role behaviors, organizationally pertinent extra-role behaviors, and political behaviors, such as full and responsible organizational participation (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994)^[4].

Organ (1988)^[3] argued that OCB is held to be vital to the survival of an organization. Organ further elaborated that organizational citizenship behavior can maximize the efficiency and productivity of both the employee and the organization that ultimately contribute to the effective functioning of an organization. Prominent current organizational researchers such as Brief have supported Organ's position regarding the importance for effectiveness of those behaviors which he labeled as organizational citizenship behavior (George & Brief, 1992)^[5]. Although the current authors know of no studies, which have specifically investigated the nature and extent of the relationship between OCB and organizational effectiveness per se, it is widely accepted among contemporary organizational behavior theorists, that organizational citizenship behaviors have an accumulative positive effect on organizational functioning (Wagner & Rush, 2000)^[6].

The purpose of this study is to offer a framework to comprehend the antecedents of OCB in a better way. Such a framework should provide a means of understanding the various findings produced by numerous empirical studies related to the antecedents of OCB. This study will first discuss the concept of OCB comprehensively. Then a clear and precise definition of OCB will be presented. After that the dimensions of OCB will be explored, and the antecedents of OCB will be identified for model building. Finally, a revised set of antecedents will be presented as a framework of OCB for future research.

THE CONCEPT OF OCB

While there is total agreement on the existence of OCB, there is much less convergence on the theoretical underpinnings of these desired behaviors. OCB was the proposed construct coined by Organ during his initial attempt to understand these as-yet-unnamed behaviors as a better representation of "performance" in the "satisfaction-causes-performance" controversy (Organ, 1977)^[7]. This work has led to various

studies examining a variety of predictors of OCB, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of justice (Moorman, 1991^[8]; Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993^[9]; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986^[10]; Organ & Konovsky, 1989^[11]; Organ & Ryan, 1995^[12]; Robinson & Morrison, 1995^[13]; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983^[14]; Van Dyne et al., 1994^[4]; Williams & Anderson, 1991)^[15], state or trait personality characteristics (George, 1991^[16]; Moorman & Blakely, 1995^[17]; Puffer, 1987^[18]), and leadership behaviors (Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990^[19]; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993^[20]; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990^[21]). In their meta-analysis, Organ and Ryan (1995)^[12] found that the attitudinal variables (e.g., satisfaction, fairness, and commitment) showed the strongest relationships with OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995)^[12]. But support for personality predictors of OCB has been inconsistent, as studies have failed to replicate findings across samples (Organ, 1994^[22]; Organ & Ryan, 1995)^[12]. OCB have also been viewed as "affiliative" and "promotive" behaviors that demonstrate the actor's desire to maintain a relationship with the target (i.e., coworkers or the organization) and contribute to the target's success (Van Dyne et al., 1995)^[4]. On the other hand, others have portrayed OCB as socially desirable behaviors.

Walz and Niehoff (1996)^[23] noted that OCB represents a set of desirable organizational behaviors, which demonstrate multi-dimensional relationships with positive organizational consequences. What has been missing, however, is a conceptually sound framework for understanding why OCB occurs. Historically, each new study suggested, and to an extent found support for, a new antecedent of OCB. But it is evident that a convergence for coherence in the conceptual underpinnings of OCB is literally missing. It is argued here that this lack of convergence in the search for antecedents is not due to any measurement issues; rather OCB has been primarily studied as an impetus for better organizational performance along with other commonly recognized organizational variables. Specifically, the researchers examined OCB in relation to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or procedural justice to investigate the employees' contributions to organizational performance. Moreover, the researchers failed to identify why employees in the first place engage in OCB in an organizational context.

Before discussing the framework for OCB, it is required to understand the concept of OCB more clearly. In the next section, the discussion will examine various definitions of OCB pronounced by different authors.

Definitions of OCB

The willingness of participants to exert effort beyond the formal obligations dictated by their positions has long been recognized as an essential component of effective organizational performance. For example, more than a half century ago, Barnard (1938)^[24] stated that the willingness of individuals to contribute cooperative efforts to the organization was indispensable to effective attainment of organizational goals. Barnard elaborated that efforts must be exerted not only to perform the functions that contribute to the goals of the organization but also to maintain the organization itself. Individuals differ in their willingness to contribute to the "cooperative system", and this individual differences in behavior cannot be explained by individual differences in ability. Maintaining the organization could be interpreted to up-lift the organization by exercising discretionary ownership. Regarding the cooperative system, Katz and Kahn's (1966)^[25] extended this argument further. In any organization, they claimed, the system would break down were it not for the "countless acts of cooperation" exhibited by the employees. They further noted that the incentives that motivate such spontaneous, informal contributions are different from those that motivate task proficiency. These insights prompted much of the subsequent research in the area. Several positive work behavior constructs (e.g., pro-social organizational behavior: Brief & Motowidlo, 1986^[26]; organizational spontaneity: George & Brief, 1992^[5]; extra-role behavior: Van Dyne et al., 1995)^[4] have subsequently been mooted, but the most attended one is OCB (Organ, 1977)^[7] and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993)^[27] that prompted numerous empirical research.

According to Organ (1988)^[3] in OCB an individual's behavior is discretionary. This behavior is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and it in the aggregate that promotes the effective functioning of the organization. Katz's (1964)^[28] paid heed to the notion of employees' extra-role behaviors. Katz noted that employees willingly contribute extra

efforts for the attainment of the organizational outcomes. Organ relied on both the notions of Barnard (1938)^[24] and Katz (1964)^[28] to develop his OCB construct.

Despite the proliferation of research in this area, debate continues over the precise definition or operationalisation of OCB. This is partly because most of the OCB research has focused on understanding the relationships between OCB and other constructs, rather than carefully defining the nature of the construct itself. Notwithstanding, a distinguishing feature is that supervisors cannot demand or force their subordinates to perform OCB. Similarly, the employees do not or cannot expect any kind of formal rewards for these discretionary behaviors. However, as Organ (1997)^[29] has noted, the supervisors do regularly take into account and reward OCB exhibited by the subordinates both directly and indirectly (e.g. preferential treatment, performance ratings, promotions, etc). Another important assertion, especially in Organ's (1988)^[3] founding work on OCB, is that these behaviors are often internally motivated, arising from within and sustained by an individual's intrinsic need for a sense of achievement, competence, belonging or affiliation.

Organ (1988)^[3] argued that OCB is distinct from related constructs (such as "organizational commitment") developed by organizational researchers. While OCB may be empirically related to organizational commitment (Cohen & Vigoda, 2000)^[30], it is important to emphasize that OCB refers to a particular class of employee behaviors, while constructs such as organizational commitment is essentially attitude-based (as originally operationalized in the organizational commitment questionnaire of Mowday *et al.*, 1979)^[31], which is typically measured by seeking employees' responses to such scale item statements as "I find that my values and the organization's are very similar". The unique contribution of Organ was to identify a class of employee work behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors) whose relationship with job satisfaction, among other variables, might be meaningfully examined in the search for a practically significant workplace behaviors related to employee job attitudes.

A second definition of OCB comes from Van Dyne et al. (1995)^[4], who proposed the broader construct of "extra-role behavior" (ERB), defined as "behavior which benefits the organization and/or is

intended to benefit the organization, which is discretionary and which goes beyond existing role expectations" (p. 218). Organ (1997)^[29] suggested that this definition did not provide much clarity, noting that one's "job role" is dependent on the expectations of and communication from the role sender. The "sent role" could thus be less than or greater than the actual job requirements. This role theory definition thus places OCB or ERB in the realm of phenomenology, unobservable and completely subjective in nature. Distinctions between antecedents and behaviors become blurred, completely dependent on the "eyes of the beholder."

This definition also presumes that the actor's intentions are "to benefit the organization." Once again, the behavior should be defined independent of its presumed antecedents.

Borman and Motowidlo (1993^[27], 1997^[32]) proposed another construct called 'contextual performance' related to OCB that contribute to the effectiveness of the organization by shaping the organizational, social, and psychological context that serves as the catalyst for task activities and processes. As opposed to "task performance" (i.e. the effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to the organization's technical core) by "contextual performance" these authors referred to those behaviors that employees engage in many work behaviors that fall outside the rubric of task performance. Their taxonomy of contextual performance includes persisting with enthusiasm and extra effort as necessary to complete own task activities successfully, volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of own job, helping and cooperating with others, following organizational rules and procedures, and endorsing, supporting, and defending organizational objectives. Van-Scotter and Motowidlo (1996)^[33] suggested that contextual performance should be separated into the two narrower constructs of "interpersonal facilitation" and "job dedication," which are similar to Organ's interpersonally-directed and organizationally-directed factors respectively (which will be discussed under the section of Dimensions of OCB).

However, Organ (1997)^[29] suggested that Borman and Motowidlo's (1993)^[27] construct of "contextual behaviors" has provided a more tenable definition of OCB. Contextual behaviors do not support the

technical core itself so much as they support the broader organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993)^[27]. This definition is not clouded by any notions of discretion, rewards, or intent of the actor. This definition only assumes that the behaviors should support "the organizational, social, and psychological environment" rather than the "technical core." There is no specific motive presumed of the actor, nor are there any other antecedents inferred. A certain degree of subjectivity will remain surrounding the fuzzy line between what is and is not included in the technical core. This ambiguity is likely to persist.

As an endnote on the various definitions of OCB the distinction between the in-role/extra-role for desired discretionary work behaviors is problematic. Therefore, the solution is to define OCB along the lines of contextual performance. This accomplished, the two constructs become virtually identical. Organ (1997)^[29] also has suggested similar view regarding the use of OCB for the future researchers.

A recent review of the literature by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000)^[34] identified a major weakness of this stream of research on OCB. The authors argued that the literature has focused more on understanding the relationship between OCB and other constructs, rather than carefully defining the nature (dimensions) of citizenship behavior itself. Podsakoff et al. (2000)^[34] warned that unless more attention is paid to the conceptualization of OCB and its measures, we are in danger of developing a stream of literature that may prove of little worth to the field in the long run. Thus, the conceptualization of OCB could be manifested in a better way by discussing the dimensions of OCB in the following section.

Dimensions of OCB

McClelland (1961)^[35] argued that OCB can be best understood when OCB is viewed as motive based behaviors. McClelland's work suggested that all people have some degree of achievement, affiliation, and power motives. The achievement motive pushes people to perform in terms of a standard of excellence, seeking the accomplishment of a task, challenge, or competition. The affiliation motive pushes people

toward establishing, maintaining, and restoring relationships with others. The power motive pushes people toward status and situations in which they can control the work or actions of others.

Organizational citizenship behavior was described by Organ and his colleagues (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983)^[14] as having two basic dimensions—altruism and generalized compliance.

Altruism is helping behavior directed at specific individuals. When individuals have specific problems, need assistance, or seek help, altruistic people go the extra mile in assisting them. The other class of citizenship behavior is generalized compliance, which is a more impersonal conscientiousness: doing things “right and proper” for their own sake rather than for any specific person. Organizational participants’ behavior far surpasses any enforceable minimum standards; workers willingly go far beyond stated expectations.

In attempting to further define organizational citizenship behavior, Organ (1988)^[3] highlights five specific categories of discretionary behavior and explains how each helps to improve efficiency in the organization.

- Altruism (e.g., helping new colleagues and freely giving time to others) is typically directed toward other individuals but contributes to group efficiency by enhancing individuals’ performance.
- Conscientiousness (e.g., efficient use of time and going beyond minimum expectations) enhances the efficiency of both an individual and the group.
- Sportsmanship (e.g., avoids complaining and whining) improves the amount of time spent on constructive endeavors in the organization.
- Courtesy (e.g., advance notices, reminders, and communicating appropriate information) helps prevent problems and facilitates constructive use of time.
- Civic Virtue (e.g., serving on committees and voluntarily attending functions) promotes the interests of the organization.

Empirical research on the dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) has generated somewhat conflicting results. A few researchers have been successful in identifying four categories of OCB (Moorman & Blakely, 1995)^[17], but the weight of the factor analytic evidence suggests a two-factor structure. Williams (1988)^[36] also found a two-dimensional definition of OCB:

1) benefits to the organization in general, such as volunteering to serve on committees (OCBO), and 2) benefits directed at individuals within the organization, such as altruism and interpersonal helping (OCBI). More recently, Skarlicki and Latham (1995)^[37] examined OCB in a university setting; their data also supported a two-factor structure, (organizational and interpersonal) could be referred as OCB.

In two separate factor analytic studies, DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2001)^[38] found that there are not five separate dimensions of the construct, or even two for that matter, but rather that one dimension captures all aspects of OCB. In other words, both benefits to the organization (helping the organization) and benefits to the individual (helping individuals) combine into a single, bipolar construct.

Since Organ (1988)^[3] introduced the concept of OCB into organizational research, it has tended to be conceptualized in terms of positive contributions to the colleagues and to the organization, which implies an active positive contribution. Yet the operationalization of OCB (Farh et. al., 1997)^[39] reveals a different picture. There are two types of citizenship behaviors exist in the OCB measures: (1) active positive contributions or commissions (e.g., helping others) and (2) avoiding to engage in behaviors that are harmful to others or to one’s organization (e.g., not abusing others’ rights). This latter behavior that tends to be labeled as omission is a passive behavior that is based on the moral rule “Do no harm,” or more specifically “Do no harm through action” (Baron, 1998)^[40].

Discussion on dimensions of OCB is carried further for a through conceptualization of OCB by investigating the various antecedents of OCB. For this purpose the researchers attempted to examine various antecedents of OCB pronounced by different scholars of this field. Finally, a revised set of antecedents triggering OCB is presented.

Antecedents of OCB

A wide range of employee, task, organizational and leader characteristics are consistently found to predict different types of OCB across a range of occupations (Podsakoff et. al, 2000)^[34]. The search for a host of reliable predictors of OCB has been increasing during the last two decades, during this time span the researchers tried to figure out various

enabling factors of OCB, with varying degrees of predictive merit: personality (Organ, 1990^[41], Organ, 1994^[22], Organ & Lingl, 1995^[42], Penner, et al., 1997)^[43], procedural justice (Moorman, 1991^[8], Aquino, 1995^[44], Skarlicki & Latham, 1995^[37], Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997^[45], Schappe, 1998^[46]), leadership characteristics (Deluga, 1995^[47], Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Bommer, 1996^[48]), motivational theories (Kemery, Bedeian, & Zacur, 1996^[49], Tang & Ibrahim, 1998^[50]), and interview styles (Skarlicki & Latham 1995^[37]). Most of these studies provided more questions than answers, with low correlations and little variance accounted for in the data (Barbuto et. al., 2001)^[2].

Smith, et al. (1983)^[14] and Bateman and Organ (1983)^[11] conducted the first research on the antecedents of OCB, finding job satisfaction to be the best predictor. After two decades of research, job satisfaction is still the leading predictor of OCB (Organ, 1997)^[29]. This is problematic because, descriptively, job satisfaction is in and of itself a challenging outcome sought by organizational managers. The resulting implications are restricted to suffice that OCB is likely when worker are satisfied. Many scholars believe job satisfaction is too broad a construct for the accurate prediction of OCB (Deluga, 1995^[47]; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997^[43]). This section considers the various individual and organizational variables commonly found to affect an employee's willingness to engage in OCB.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Job satisfaction has been found to have a positive relationship with job performance and OCB. Which in turn has a significant influence on employees' absenteeism, turnover, and psychological distress (Davis, 1992)^[51]. Workers with high levels of job satisfaction are more likely to be engage in OCB (Brown, 1993)^[52]. Furthermore, individuals with higher levels of job satisfaction demonstrate decreased propensity to search for another job (Sager, 1994)^[53], and a decreasing propensity to leave.

Along with job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment is frequently cited antecedent of OCB. Affective commitment is conceptualized as a strong belief in, and acceptance of, an organization's goals and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Van Dyne et al., 1995)^[4]. Because affective commitment maintains

behavioral direction when there is little expectation of formal rewards (Allen & Meyer, 1996)^[54], it would seem logical that affective commitment drives those behaviors (i.e. discretionary behaviors) that do not depend primarily on reinforcement or formal rewards.

Role perceptions

Role perceptions include perceptions such as role conflict and role ambiguity, both of which have been found to be significantly negatively related to OCB. On the other hand, role clarity and role facilitation are positively related (Podsakoff et. al., 2000)^[34]. However, since both role ambiguity and role conflict are known to affect employee satisfaction, and satisfaction is related to OCB, it is likely that at least a portion of the relationship between ambiguity, conflict and OCB is mediated by satisfaction.

Leader behaviors and Leader-member exchange

Leadership appears to have a strong influence on an employee's willingness to engage in OCB. However, rather than being associated with a particular leadership style, research finds that it is the *quality* of an employee's relationship with his or her leader that counts (Podsakoff et al., 2000)^[34]. The quality of the relationship between a subordinate and a leader is often called leader-member exchange (LMX). Another leadership variable positively related to OCB is the leaders' contingent reward behaviors, such as expressing satisfaction or appreciation for good performance (Podsakoff et. al, 2000)^[34]. Leadership behaviors may also influence OCB indirectly via employee perceptions of fairness or justice in the workplace.

Fairness perceptions

Fairness or justice perceptions refer to whether or not employees feel organizational decisions are made equitably and with the necessary employee input (usually called *procedural justice*) and whether or not employees perceive that they are fairly rewarded given their level of training, tenure, responsibility or workload (called *distributive justice*). Perceptions of fairness are positively related to OCB (Moorman, 1991) [8].

Individual dispositions

Personality variables including positive affectivity,

negative affectivity, conscientiousness and agreeableness have all been found to predispose people to orientations that make them more likely to engage in OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995)^[12]. OCB does not seem to depend on personality traits such as extraversion, introversion, or openness to change. The fact that OCB is conceptualised as a set of behaviours primarily influenced by perceptions of the workplace (rather than by enduring personal traits) might be why measures of personality have not been widely applied in studies of OCB. Nonetheless, personality may be an important measure in order to control for its influence on behaviour or to investigate any moderating effects it may have.

Motivational theories

Recent research using motivation to measure an individual's disposition has renewed interest in examining Organ's (1990)^[41] model proposing that an individual's motives may relate to his or her organizational citizenship behaviors (Kemery, et al., 1996^[49]; Tang & Ibrahim, 1998^[50]). Penner, et al. (1997)^[43] explored the impact of personality and motivation on OCB. Since no previous research had used motivation to predict OCB, they developed their propositions from the volunteerism research.

Recently a new typology of motivation sources was proposed by Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl (1999)^[55]. The researchers proposed five sources of motivation measured include intrinsic process, instrumental, selfconcept-external, selfconcept-internal, and goal internalization. Barbuto et al. (2001)^[2] argued that though the motivational theories work as antecedents for OCB, but the researchers cautioned that an individual's sources of motivation could have an impact on his or her level of OCB. As individual progress upward in an organization, motivational theories tend to be less applicable as antecedent.

Employee age

The proposition that younger and older worker may view work and self in fundamentally different ways is not new. Wagner and Rush (2000)^[6] pointed out that early years (20-34) are the years of establishment and settling down; later years (35-55) are strong sense of self and location vis-a-vis life and work. The authors argued that younger employees coordinate their needs with organizational needs more flexibly; by contrast, older employees tend to be more rigid in adjusting their needs with the organization. Therefore, younger and older workers may differ in their orientations toward self, others, and work. These differences may lead to different salient motives for OCB among younger and older employees.

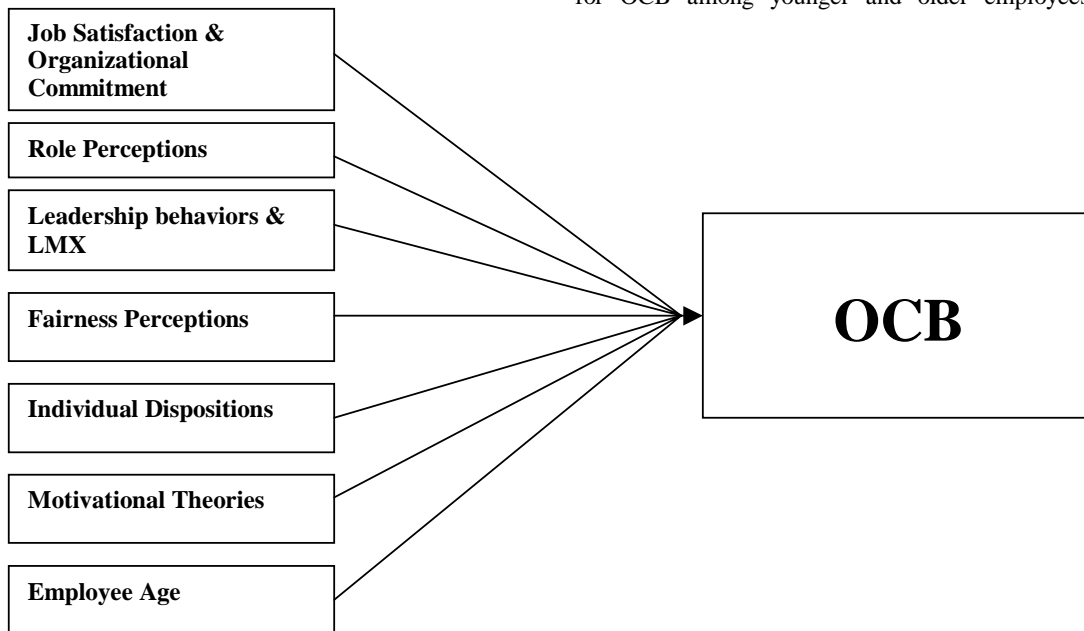


Figure 1: Antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Proposed Conceptual Framework

To give direction to the future researchers on OCB, the current authors developed a conceptual framework based on the insights gained from literature review. The study adopted five antecedents (i.e. job satisfaction and organizational commitment, role perceptions, leadership behaviors and LMX, fairness perceptions, and individual dispositions) from Hannam and Jimmieson (2002)^[56] study. In addition, two more antecedents of OCB, which are derived from the review of OCB literature, were added in the model. They are motivational theories and employee age.

Theoretical framework for all other classes of organizational behavior, from job performance to turnover to commitment, includes multiple sources of causation (Niehoff, 2001)^[57]. It makes sense to apply the same rationale for OCB.

In this study, it was revealed that a number of antecedents trigger OCB. To develop the framework, the current authors applied the antecedents as a mean of understanding why employees exhibit OCB.

CONCLUSION

The review of the recent literature on OCB has distinguished between various dimensions of OCB and has examined the relationships between them. Based on the discussion on OCB dimensions, the concept of OCB has been articulated. Thereafter, a host of antecedents for OCB was identified and armed with these antecedents a theoretical framework for OCB is suggested.

Antecedents to OCB are the factors that enhance or impede the level of employees' performance in an organization. It is revealed from the various empirical studies that there is a positive relationship between OCB and the performance of the organization (Cardona, Lawrence, & Bentler, 2004^[58]; Hodson, 2002)^[59]. For practicing managers, the main implication of the current study is that knowing the antecedents managers could be better able to foster employees' OCB. Apart from the traditional measures of employee productivity, it is important for managers to monitor that set of work behaviors that goes beyond the role description but also are important contributors to the effectiveness of the organization.

Exploration on the dimensions of OCB suggested that like most behaviors, OCB are also subject to multiple antecedents. That is, there is no single cause of OCB. Theoretical frameworks for all other classes of organizational behaviors, from job performance to turnover to absenteeism, consider multiple source of causation. Therefore, it makes sense that applying the same rationale to OCB. It is hoped that testing these suggested antecedents in different organizational context will help the researchers to enrich the understanding of how various work conditions affect an employee's willingness to engage in OCB. When the antecedents of this particular class of behaviors are better understood, managers would be more effective to cultivate the OCB among their employees.

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