



ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: ITS DEFINITIONS AND DIMENSIONS

¹Dr. T. Thiruvankadam, ²Mr. I. Yabesh Abraham Durairaj

¹Associate Professor, SSN School of Management, Chennai.

²Research Scholar / Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies,
Panimalar Engineering College, Chennai.

ABSTRACT

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is a term that encompasses anything positive and constructive that employees do, of their own choice, which supports co-workers and benefits the company. Typically, employees who frequently engage in OCB may not always be the top performers, 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. Theory and research on OCB has presumed OCB as set of desirable behaviors that contributes to the organizational effectiveness. So far OCB has been indicated as one of the precursors of organizational performance. However, the precursors of OCB are not thoroughly investigated. This study explores various existing definitions of OCB and then examines the dimensions of OCB.

Key words: Organizational citizenship behavior, Helping behavior, Sportsmanship, Organizational loyalty, Organizational compliance, and Individual initiative

What is OCB?

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) has undergone subtle definitional revisions since the term was coined in the late 1980s, but the construct remains the same at its core. 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 recognized or rewarded by the company, through salary increments or promotions for example, though of course OCB may be reflected in favorable 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 organization’ (Organ, 1988, p. 4).

Currently, OCB is conceptualized as synonymous with the concept of contextual performance, defined as ‘performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place’ (Organ, 1997, p. 95). While this reflects the flexible nature of workers’ roles in the modern workplace, and acknowledges the fact that employees do get recognized and rewarded for engaging in OCB (Van Scotter, Motowidlo & Cross, 2000; Werner, 1994), the colloquial understanding of OCB as going ‘the extra mile’ or ‘above and beyond’ to help others at work is an idea that many are familiar with, and these ideas continue to be a popular way of conceptualizing OCB. Typical examples of OCB include offering to help a newcomer become familiar with his/her role and the office, a colleague who may be struggling with deadlines, or volunteering to change shifts. Importantly, OCB also encompasses organizational-related acts such as working overtime without (expectation of) remuneration, or volunteering to organize office-wide functions.

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) 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 these 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) 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.

According to Organ (1988) in OCB an individual’s behavior is discretionary. This behavior is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and it is in the aggregate that

promotes the effective functioning of the organization. Katz's (1964) 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) and Katz (1964) to develop his OCB construct.

Despite the proliferation of research in this area, debate continues over the precise definition or operationalization 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) 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) 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) 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), 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), which is typically measured by seeking employees' responses to such scale item statements as "I find that my values and the organizations 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), 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) 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, 1997) 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) 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 this section of Dimensions of OCB).

However, Organ (1997) suggested that Borman and Motowidlo (1993) 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). 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 or 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) 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) 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) 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

Different scholars have different views about OCB dimensions. Scholars have developed a variety of taxonomies to classify these citizenship behaviors (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994; Williams & Anderson, 1991). After Bateman and Organ introduced the term “Organizational Citizenship Behavior” in 1983 researchers have identified thirty different forms of OCB (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Pain & Bachrach, 2000).

1. In 1983, Smith, Organ and Near (1983), conducted factor analysis taking 16-item measure of OCB which resulted in two factors,
 - a. Altruism and
 - b. Generalized compliance (also called conscientiousness).

2. Later on Organ developed a five factor model by deconstruction which was composed of five dimensions:
 - a. Altruism refers to voluntarily helping others with a specific work related task, such as assisting a co-worker with heavy work load.
 - b. Courtesy involves discretionary behaviors that aim at preventing work related problems, for example-providing advance notice to colleagues when something is changed by you which may affect them.
 - c. Conscientiousness refers to exceeding the minimum role requirements of the organization (Law, Wong, & Chen, 2005). It involves punctuality, adherence to company rules, regulations and procedures when no one is watching.

- d. Sportsmanship means willingness of employees to tolerate less-than-ideal organizational situations without complaining and sacrificing one's own personal interest.
- e. Civic virtue refers to employees deep concerns and active attention in the existence of the organization (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2005), such as giving one's own suggestions for development in a meeting.

Most of the conceptualizations of OCB focus on some variations among these five dimensions as suggested by Organ (1988).

3. In 1991, Lin developed a six dimension scale which includes;
 - a. Identification with the organization,
 - b. Assistance to colleagues,
 - c. Harmony,
 - d. Righteous,
 - e. Discipline, and
 - f. Self –improvement.

4. Later on Williams and Anderson (1991) categorized OCB in terms of target of the behavior. They organized OCB construct by dividing into two dimensions of OCB consisting of OCB-individuals (OCBI) and OCB-organization (OCBO).
 - a. OCBI contributes to the organization indirectly by benefiting peers and co-workers. It is directed towards other individuals in the organization like altruism and courtesy, for example-making additional copies of the meeting agenda for the co-workers, helping a new employee in performing his tasks etc.
 - b. OCBO includes behaviors intended for the organization as a whole, like punctuality, making suggestions for organization advancement and obeying rules.

5. Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch (1994) introduced three dimensions for OCB. Those are obedience, loyalty and participation.
 - a. Obedience refers to respect for orderly structures and processes.
 - b. Loyalty involves promoting and protecting community and contributing additional effort for the common good.

- c. Participation involves contributing to the process of community self-governance.

Table No.: 1 – Dimensions of OCB

1.	Smith, Organ & Near (1983)	Altruism General Compliance
2.	Organ (1988)	Altruism Conscientiousness Sportsmanship Courtesy Civic Virtue
3.	Lin (1991)	Identification with the organization Assistance to colleagues Harmony Righteous Discipline Self -improvement
4.	Williams & Anderson (1991)	Individual –directed OCB (OCBI) Organization –directed OCB (OCBO)
5.	Van Dyne, Graham & Dienesch (1994)	Obedience Loyalty Participation
6.	Podsakoff et al. (2000)	Helping behavior Sportsmanship Organizational loyalty Organizational compliance Individual initiative Civic virtue Self-development

6. After reviewing the existing literature regarding OCB and other related constructs Podsakoff et al. (2000) found seven common dimensions of citizenship behaviors. These were as follows:

- a. First, helping behavior refers to voluntarily helping behaviors toward others.
- b. Second, sportsmanship refers to individuals who do not complain when they are inconvenienced by others and who can maintain their positive attitudes even in the challenging situations.
- c. Third, organizational loyalty refers to employees promoting organizations to outsiders and committing to organizations even under adverse conditions.

- d. Fourth, organizational compliance refers to obedience toward the organization's policies and procedures (Van Dyne et al., 1994).
- e. Fifth, individual initiative refers to employee's performance of duties beyond the expected levels what is required to solve a problem (Organ et al., 2006).
- f. Sixth, civic virtue involves responsible and constructive participation (Organ, 1990).
- g. Finally, self-development refers to employee's voluntary behavior to improve his knowledge, skills, and abilities for better performance in job (George & Brief, 1992).

But as mentioned by Podsakoff et al.(2000), the last dimension, self-development, has not received any empirical confirmation.

However, the dimensions developed by Organ are widely accepted. The literature reviewed describe unanimous acceptance of these five dimensions. The dimensions developed by other scholars are overlapping in nature and in some other cases the dimensions are inadequate to describe the entire framework of OCB.

Conclusion

Managers should give adequate importance to OCB because it is accepted as an indispensable condition for increased organizational performance and effectiveness (Barnard, 1938; Organ, 1990). OCB has got many positive influences on the organization like increasing satisfaction of employees, increasing retention etc. But simultaneously the darker side of this construct should not be forgotten which may lead to decreased organizational performance and effectiveness. The review of the recent literature on OCB has distinguished between various dimensions of OCB and has examined the relationships between them. Exploration on the dimensions of OCB suggested that like most behaviors, OCB are also subject to multiple antecedents. 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. The paper will also help researcher to carry out empirical studies on OCB and its related outcome variables. This will further facilitate the understanding of employees extra role behavior in organizational analysis.

References

1. Barnard, C.I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2. Bateman, T. S., & Organ, D. W. (1983). Job satisfaction and the good soldier: The relationship between affect and employee citizenship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26, 587-595.
3. Borman, W. C. & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds.), *Personality selection* (pp. 71-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
4. Borman, W. C. & Motowidlo, S. J. (1997). Task performance and contextual performance: the meaning for personnel selection research. *Human Performance*, 10, 99-109.
5. Cohen, A & Vigoda, E. (2000). Do good citizens make good organizational citizens? *Administration and Society*, Vol. 32, 596-624.
6. George, J. M., & Brief, A. P. (1992). Feeling good-doing good: A conceptual analysis of the mood at work-organizational spontaneity relationship. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 310-329.
7. Katz, D & Kahn, R. L. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations*. New York: Wiley.
8. Katz, D. (1964). Motivational basis of organizational behavior. *Behavioral Science*, 9, 131-146.
9. Law, S. K., Wong, C., & Chen, X. Z. (2005). The construct of organizational citizenship behavior: Should we analyze after we have conceptualized? In D. L. Turnipseed (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational citizenship behavior*, 47–65, New York: Nova Science Publishers.
10. Lin, S. J. (1991). Relationship between compensation equity, procedural justice, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Doctoral dissertation, National Chengchi University, Taiwan.
11. Mowday, R., Steers R., & Porter, L. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 14, 224-47.
12. Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington, MA: Lexington.
13. Organ, D. W. (1990). The subtle significance of job satisfaction. *Clinical Laboratory Management Review*, 4, 94-98.

14. Organ, D. W. (1997). Organizational citizenship behavior: It's construct clean-up time. *Human Performance, 10*, 85-97.
15. Organ, D. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & MacKenzie, S. B. (2005). *Organizational citizenship behavior: Its nature, antecedents, and consequences*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.
16. Organ, D. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & MacKenzie, S. B. (2006). *Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Its nature, antecedents, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
17. Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management, 26*(3), 513-563.
18. Smith, C. A., Organ, D. W., & Near, J. P. (1983). Organizational citizenship behavior: Its nature and antecedents. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 68*, 653-663.
19. Van Dyne, L., Cummings, L. L. & McLean Parks, J. (1995). Extra role behaviors: In pursuit of construct and definitional clarity (a bridge over muddied waters). In L. L. Cummings & L. Van Dyne, J. Graham & R. M. Dienesch, (1994). Organizational citizenship behavior: construct redefinition, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*, 765-802.
20. Van Dyne, L., Graham, J. W., & Dienesch, R. M. (1994). Organizational citizenship behavior: Construct redefinition, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*, 765-802.
21. Van Scotter, J. R. & Motowidlo, S. J. (1996). Interpersonal facilitation and job dedication as separate facets of contextual performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*, 525-531.
22. Van Scotter, J. R., Motowidlo, S. J., & Cross, T. C. (2000). Effects of task performance and contextual performance on systemic rewards. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*(4), 526-535. doi: 10.1037//0021-9010.85
23. Werner, J. M. (1994). Dimensions that make a difference: Examining the impact of in-role and extra-role behaviors on supervisory ratings. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 79*(1), 98-107.
24. Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management, 17*, 601-617.