



A Study of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and Its Dimensions: A Literature Review

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Abstract :

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) has been explored and researched by scholars for more than twenty five years and it continues to be an area of interest for scholars. OCB refers to the voluntary behaviour/s exhibited by the employees while in the organization, as good citizens of the organization. This paper is an effort to understand the meaning, nature and scope of OCB and the paper also attempts to study the various dimensions of OCB. There is a detailed discussion on the five dimensions of OCB given by Organ (1988) and the paper also makes reference to other dimensions of OCB given by various scholars from time to time.

Keywords : Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, extra role behaviour, altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, civic virtue

Introduction :

During the stay of an employee in the organization, there are certain behaviours which are expected from him and are abiding on him by the rules and regulations of the organization. However employees at times exhibit certain behaviours that go beyond the call of the duty. Such behaviour is called Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). OCB is also known as extra role behaviour. It is the behaviour over and above the normal course of duty and beyond the arena of legislations/rules/regulations. The concept of OCB was initially proposed and studied in the US (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Smith et al., 1983). Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) refers to behaviour that is not formally requested or directly rewarded but can be functional to the operations of an organization (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Organizations cannot survive or prosper without their members behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive behaviours. 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) and remains to be area of interest for many scholars. In the opinion of Organ, OCB is vital for the survival of the organization. Several studies have shown that OCB can have a positive impact on organizational success through improvements in productivity, better utilization of resources, group activity coordination, performance enhancement and stability, employee recruitment and ability to adapt to environmental changes.

OCB, also known as “good soldier syndrome” (Organ, 1988) is the behaviour exhibited by the committed employees in the organization. This type of behaviour includes punctuality, helping others, innovating, volunteering (Organ, 1988), as well as the tendency



to refrain from undesirable actions such as complaining, arguing and finding fault with others. Though OCB is related to job it is not linked to any formal reward system. But it helps in the effective functioning of the organization.

Organ's (1988) conceptualization of OCB includes five behaviour types – altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue – all necessary for effective organizations and enhancing effectiveness of the organizations.

OCB cannot be demanded by force. Employees cannot be forced to perform or exhibit OCB. Similarly, the employees do not or cannot expect any kind of formal rewards for exhibiting OCB. However, OCB doesn't go unnoticed. 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 behaviours are often internally motivated, arising from within and sustained by an individual's intrinsic need for a sense of achievement, competence, belonging or affiliation.

OCB is defined by Organ as “contributions to the maintenance and enhancement of the social and psychological context that supports task performance” (Organ, 1997, p. 91). Based on literature review, OCB can be categorized into seven types (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

1. Helping behaviour means voluntarily helping others. Altruism is the predecessor of helping behaviour.
2. Sportsmanship refers to maintaining positive attitudes and willingness exhibited by the employees to sacrifice own interests for the sake of organisation or for the larger interest of the organization.
3. Organisational loyalty not only means being loyal to the organization, but also making a sincere effort to promote positive image of the organization to the outsiders.
4. Organisational compliance implies obeying company rules, regulations and procedures, being a good employee and steward.
5. Individual initiative means being proactive. It refers to making sincere efforts to improve work outcomes and encouraging others to do so.
6. Civic virtue refers to taking part in the political membership of the organisation, engaging in policy issues and monitoring on behalf of the community.
7. Self-development means efforts undertaken by the employee voluntarily to improve oneself in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities to expand the contribution to the organisation.

Five Dimensions of OCB:

In defining OCB, literatures in the past have identified two main approaches viz. role and extra role behaviour. As discussed earlier, extra role behaviour is that behaviour which goes beyond the specified role requirements and is not recognized by the formal reward system. As rightly said by Castro, Armario, and Ruiz (2004) it is not easy to differentiate between “role” and “extra role” performances as managerial and employee perceptions of their subordinates' performances do not correspond and subject to the satisfaction of the subordinates in the workplace. Several researches point to the fact that there are five basic personality factors which affect most of the variance in personality (e.g. Costa & McCrae, 1992) and these dimensions are known as Big Five dimensions which are classified as conscientiousness, altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue.

According to Organ's (1988) definition, it represents "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization"

Organ (1988) identified five dimensions of OCB: conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue, courtesy, and altruism. These five dimensions cover such organizational



behaviours as helping co-workers, following company rules, not complaining, and actively participating in organizational affairs.

Altruism in simple words means helping or helpfulness (Organ, 1997: 85-97). Altruism means helping other members of the organization in their tasks. For e.g. voluntarily helping new employees, helping co-workers who are overloaded, assisting workers who were absent, guiding employees to accomplish difficult tasks et al. Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) defined altruism as voluntary behaviours where an employee provides assistance to an individual with a particular problem to complete his or her task under unusual circumstances. Altruism refers to a member helping other members of the organization in their work. Podsakoff et al. (2000) has demonstrated that altruism was significantly related to performance evaluations and correspondingly, positive affectivity.

Conscientiousness is a discretionary behaviour that goes well beyond the minimum role requirement level of the organization, such as obeying rules and regulations, not taking extra breaks, working extra-long days (MacKenzie et al, 1993, 57: 107-142). Conscientiousness is a prototype of going well beyond minimally required levels of attendance, punctuality, and housekeeping, penchant towards conserving resources, and overall giving an impression of being a responsible citizen of the organization. If the employee is highly conscientious it implies that he is highly responsible and needs less supervision (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997: 133-151). Altruism and conscientiousness are the two major or overarching dimensions of OCB (Borman et al., 2001: 52-66). Conscientiousness is used to indicate that a particular individual is organized, self-disciplined, accountable and hardworking. Organ (1988) defined it as dedication to the job which exceed formal requirements such as working long hours, and volunteer to perform jobs besides duties. It is interesting to note that Kidder and McLean Parks (1993) posited the fact that males are more likely to engage in conscientious behaviour than females in view of the fact that males have preference for equity over equality.

Sportsmanship is defined as “a willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining.” (Organ, 1990b, p. 96). It refers to person’s desire not to complain when experiencing the inevitable inconveniences and abuse generated in exercising a professional activity. Sportsmanship refers to avoid complaining unnecessarily about the difficulties faced in the workplace, being positive and tolerant towards problems experienced in the workplace. Sportsmanship is exhibition of willingness to tolerate minor and temporary personnel inconveniences and impositions of work without grievances, complaints, appeals, accusations, or protest. This helps to conserve organizational energies for accomplishment of task and to a large extent relieves managers of unnecessary load/stress (Organ and Ryan, 1995: 775-802; Organ, 1990: 43-72). Organ (1988) defined sportsmanship as the behaviour of warmly tolerating the irritations that are an unavoidable part of nearly every organizational setting. Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997) publicized that good sportsmanship would enhance the morale of the employees at the workplace and consequently reduce employee turnover.

Courtesy refers to the gestures that help others to prevent interpersonal problems from occurring, such as giving prior notice of the work schedule to someone who is in need, consulting others before taking any actions that would affect them (Organ, 1990). Courtesy or gestures are demonstrated in the interest of preventing creations of problems for co-workers (Organ, 1997: 85-97). For e.g. leaving the copier or printer in good condition for other workers’ use is an example of courtesy at work (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006)

A courteous employee prevents managers from falling into the pattern of crisis management by making a sincere effort to avoid creating problems for co-workers (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997: 133-151). Courtesy includes behaviours, which focus on the

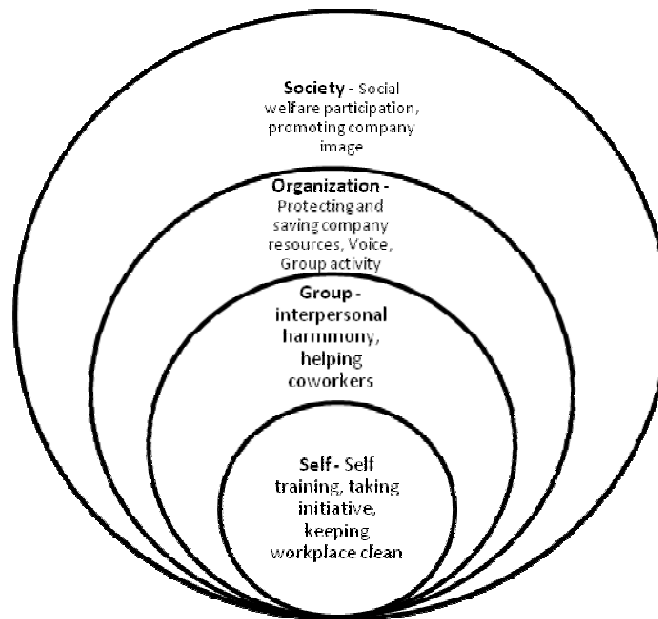


deterrence of problems and taking the necessary and timely steps in order to lessen the effects of the problem in the future. In simple words, courtesy means the encouragement given by a member to other member/s of the organization when they are demoralized and feel discouraged about their professional development. Again to reiterate, research has shown that employees who exhibit courtesy would reduce intergroup conflict and thereby abating the time spent on conflict management activities (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The main idea of courtesy is avoiding actions that unnecessarily make colleagues' work harder. It also includes giving them enough notice to get prepared when there is an addition to their existing work load.

Civic virtue refers to the constructive involvement in the political process of the organization and contribution to this process by freely and frankly expressing opinions, attending meetings, discussing with colleagues the issues concerning the organization, and reading organizational communications such as mails for the well being of the organization. Civic virtue is behaviour on the part of an individual that indicates that employee dutifully participates in, is actively involved in, and is concerned about the life of the company (Podsakoff et al, 1990, 1(2): 107-142). Civic virtue represents a macro level interest in, or commitment to, to the organization. It shows willingness to participate actively in organization's events, monitor organization's environment for threats and opportunities, to work out the best alternative for the organization. These behaviours occur when employees reckon themselves with the organization and consider themselves to be part of the organization. (Podsakoff et al, 2000: 513-563). Civic virtue is defined as subordinate participation in organization political life and supporting the administrative function of the organization (Deluga, 1998). Civic virtue refers to the responsibility of the employees to actively and willingly participate in the life of the firm such as attending meetings which are not required by the firm and keeping apprised with the changes in the organization (Organ, 1988). This dimension of OCB is actually derived from Graham's findings which stated that employees should have the responsibility to be a good citizen of the organization (Graham, 1991). These behaviours reflect an employees' recognition of being part of organization and accept the responsibilities which entail as a result of being citizen of the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Other researchers have found that civic virtue enhances the quantity of performance and help to reduce customer complaints (Walz & Niehoff, 1996).

Extended Dimensions of OCB :

Farh, Zhong, Organ (2004) have discussed five extended dimensions of OCB viz. self-training, social welfare participation, protecting and saving company resources, keeping the workplace clean and interpersonal harmony. Further they have also developed a concentric model of OCB.

Figure 1 : Concentric Model of OCB

The inner most circle is self domain and includes contributions made purely out of one's own volition. The group domain refers to the contributions that cannot be executed individually but require interactions with peers and group work / teamwork. Under organization domain are the activities which must engage some organizationally relevant attributes such as corporate resources, governance, workflow et al. Society dimension transcends beyond the boundaries of the organization and refer to contributions with reference to external environment and all the stakeholders.

Individual and Organizational OCB :

There is research to further categorize the five dimensions of OCB into two categories viz. behaviour directed towards individual that is to say OCBI and behaviour directed towards the organization that is to say OCBO (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Individual-level OCB includes altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading efforts directed at individuals. Thus OCBI broadly includes the helping behaviour and the courtesy dimensions.

Organizational-level behaviour is rapt towards the benefit of the organization. OCBO includes conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. Podsakoff, et al. (2009) established that individual-level behaviour is related to performance appraisal ratings and reward distribution allocations among employees. OCBO is found to be related to employee efficiency, organizational turnover, and productivity among employees. A 16-point scale was designed by Lee and Allen (2002) to operationalize OCBI and OCBO.

Conclusion:

OCB has been an area of interest of researchers for more than twenty-five years. Different scholars have discussed several dimensions of OCB. In addition to there being different dimensions of OCB, there are also different motives for performing OCB. There is



significant research on individual and organizational OCB too. Several scales are also developed from time to time to measure various dimensions of OCB. This paper touches upon the five dimensions of OCB given by Organ and makes a fleeting reference to other dimensions discussed by various scholars.

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