Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Motives and Strategic Potential

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Abstract
Organizational Citizenship Behavior, a multidimensional construct broadly known as OCB, has been gaining academic attention during the last three decades. Many studies have gathered empirical evidence supporting the useful and desirable influence of OCB on organizational functioning and effectiveness. While individual researchers have identified a variety of indicators of OCB, and the factors that influence such a behavior, no satisfactory attempt was made to consolidate the learning in an integrated model that can be used for strategizing organizationally beneficial behavior. Using findings of these studies as data, this paper constructs an integrated model of OCB indicators and antecedents. It also addresses the question as to why people display OCB, and provides a classificatory system to conceptually understand the motives behind OCB much better. At the end, the paper advocates how these findings can be used for strategizing the OCB as a legitimate and valuable organizational pursuit.

Keywords
Employee involvement, organizational citizenship behavior, choice behavior, work choices, interpersonal behavior, strategic & organizational change

Introduction
There has been a significant resurgence of academic interest during the last three decades on the topic of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, a multidimensional construct broadly known as OCB. With Organ’s definition of 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 1988, p 4), many studies have gathered sizable empirical evidence supporting the useful and desirable influence of organizational citizenship behaviors on workgroups and organizational effectiveness. It has been recognized that employees in a formal setting do exhibit and practice such behavior voluntarily and proactively, as an extra role, in the hope that such behavior may lead to needed welfare of appropriate individuals, groups, or organizations. It has been visualized that in this particular fashion these OCB driven employees tend to meaningfully create and/or supplement social and psychological environment that is instrumental in promoting organizational effectiveness. Over time, individual researchers have identified a variety of indicators of organizational citizenship behavior, the factors that influence such behavior, and the likely consequences. However, no satisfactory attempt was made to consolidate the learning in an integrated model that can be used for strategizing organizationally beneficial behavior; particularly understand from the OCB actor’s view point as to what motivates him to undertake OCB. Based on a comprehensive analysis of selected published articles, which highlight the ingredients of OCB as a special kind of organizational behavior, this paper (a) constructs an integrated model incorporating different empirically discovered dimensions of OCB; and (b) advocates how these
findings can be used for strategizing OCB as a legitimate and valuable organizational pursuit; to narrow the gap between academic findings and managerial functioning through strategic interventions. The paper highlights how motivational resources as well as HR can be gainfully mobilized, allocated, and committed to uphold individual-to-individual and individual-to-organization relationship-based citizenship behavior. An emerging model is presented in the paper.

**Dimensions of OCB**

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is generally described as discretionary behavior that employees choose to exhibit that goes beyond their formal job descriptions. Employees exhibit and practice such behavior voluntarily and proactively in order to improve organizational performance (Hunt 2002). The terms like contextual performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and extra-role behavior are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature.

Katz (1964) was the first to describe three types of behavior instrumental in achieving organizational effectiveness: (1) joining and staying in the organization; (2) meeting or exceeding standards of performance; and (3) innovatively and spontaneously going beyond prescribed roles to perform such actions as cooperating with and protecting other organization members, undertaking self-development, and representing the organization favorably to outsiders. As he argued, “an organization, which depends solely upon its blueprints of prescribed behavior, is a very fragile social system” (Katz 1964:132 as quoted in Coleman and Borman 2000).

These conceptualizations were further developed by Organ (1977) as OCB, which indicated that it could be considered as a part of total job performance. He further pointed out that “effective task performance beyond a particular level loses its importance, replaced in importance by the proficient execution of behaviors in the areas of regular attendance, predictability, following the rules, not making waves, avoidance of hassles, cooperation and generalized tendencies toward compliance” (Organ 1977, p.50).

Brief and Motowidlo (1986) expanded on Organ’s concept and called it a prosocial organizational behavior. This was defined as behaviors that are “(1) performed by a member of an organization; (2) directed toward an individual, group, or organization with whom he/she interacts while carrying out own organizational role; and (3) performed with the intention of promoting the welfare of the individual, group or organization toward which it is directed” (p.711). They also indicated that these behaviors could be in-role or extra-role, and therefore could be functional or dysfunctional to the organization.
George and Brief (1992), as quoted in George and Jones (1997), outlined organizational spontaneity as extra-role behaviors like helping co-workers, protecting the organization, making constructive suggestions, developing oneself, and spreading goodwill, which are voluntarily performed, and which ultimately contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Borman and Motowidlo (1993, 1997) further introduced a framework called contextual performance and related it to OCB. This framework discussed dimensions such as: “(1) persisting with enthusiasm and extra effort as necessary to complete own task activities successfully; (2) volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of own job; (3) helping and cooperating with others; (4) following organizational rules and procedures; and (5) endorsing, supporting and defending organizational objectives”.

In spite of obvious overlaps, subtle differences were noticeable between these concepts. Due to interpretation and ambiguities associated with these terms, Organ redefined OCB in the same way as contextual performance to focus on social and psychological context that supports task performance (Organ 1997, p.91). The essence is that OCB should contribute to organizational effectiveness and therefore, now OCB and contextual performance mean the same thing (Motowidlo 2000).

**Measures of OCB**

Many researchers of OCB have come up with various indicators or measures of OCB. The integrated model that this study has developed, discusses some of these indicators. Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) suggested only two distinct types of citizenship, i.e. altruistic behavior aimed at specific individuals in the organization, and generalized compliance directed at the organization. Altruism is predominantly extra-role, like suggesting new ideas for handling work, training, taking personal interest in other employees, punctuality, and seeking and asking for help when needed. Altruistic compliance is believed to improve organizational efficiency. On the other hand, generalized compliance activities directed at the organization were treated as impersonal type of conscientiousness (Turnipseed and Murkison 2000). Later, Organ (1988) came up with organizational citizenship dimensions that included altruism, conscientiousness (which is the same as generalized compliance described above), sportsmanship (not complaining about minor annoyances), courtesy (keeping others informed of matters that might affect them), and civic virtue (contributing responsibly to corporate governance by staying informed of political developments and expressing opinions about them). Recently, Organ further reduced his dimensions by emphasizing only three forms of OCB, i.e. helping (which was earlier called altruism), courtesy, and conscientiousness (see Motowidlo 2000).
Borman and Motowidlo (1993) had initially outlined five measures of contextual performance, i.e. volunteering, persisting with extra effort, helping and cooperating, following the organizational rules and procedures, and finally endorsing organizational objectives. Coleman and Borman (2000) narrowed this down further into three factors which were (1) interpersonal citizenship performance, comprising helping and altruism; (2) organizational citizenship performance, encompassing compliance, loyalty, endorsing organizational objectives, conscientiousness, civic virtue and following rules; and (3) job/task citizenship performance, i.e. persisting and extra effort.

Other measures of OCB were also developed by researchers. For instance, an earlier study by Turnipseed (1996) measured OCB in terms of ‘altruistic compliance’, “benevolence” and “personable”. Benevolence was regarded as behavior which was not directly related to organizational output, like being neat, complaining, arguing, resisting others’ influence, and taking unnecessary breaks. This behavior, or lack of it, may create an appropriate work climate influencing productivity and job satisfaction. On the other hand, personable factors comprised of personal traits that may indirectly influence productivity. Acting with impulse, finding faults, mood swings, and showing resentment were considered as indicators of personable behavior, which could result in a satisfying or a stressful work environment.

Kwantes (2003) examined the effect of organizational commitment on four different dimensions of OCB. Loyal boosterism was visualized as spontaneous behavior that promoted the company to outsiders. It included being proud of the organization, defending it against criticisms, and promoting the company’s products to family and friends. Interpersonal helping reflected assisting co-workers when they needed such assistance. Individual initiative was the third dimension which included behavior to enhance either group or individual performance in the workplace. These included, encouraging, expressing opinions honestly, and fostering good communication between co-workers.

Turnipseed and Murkison (2000) used three OCB indicators to compare citizenship behavior in samples from the US and Romania. In this study, OCB was measured on three interrelated classes of civic responsibilities, namely, obedience, loyalty, and participation. Obedience basically meant respecting the structure, rules and regulations in an organization, as well as employees’ job descriptions. Loyalty was described as adhering to the organization and its values at individual, group, and organizational levels. Participation dealt with getting involved in the organizational activities, set by the standards of integrity, and governed by the organizational rules and procedures. These OCB indicators were also used by
Gonzalez and Garazo (2006) to determine how organization service orientation (OSO) influences job satisfaction and OCB of employees who deal with customers.

**Antecedents of OCB**

If OCB is important and “a good thing,” then the question is, how can it be fostered in organizations? This question also relates to the set of motives which can trigger OCB. Here, we will review some of the research done on the antecedents of OCB.

The most obvious theoretical basis for most OCB investigations was the social exchange theory. This theory states that individuals will attempt to reciprocate those who benefit them. Recent research suggests that employees perform OCB with greater frequency when they perceive that their employers can be trusted to protect their interests. This in turn engenders an obligation to repay their employers through OCB (Bogler and Somech 2005). However, this theory has largely focused on the attitudinal variables like job satisfaction and perception of fairness and not really on the individual relationships between employees.

Other theories that evolved from the social exchange theory were the social network perspective and impression management. The social network perspective gave importance to individual relationship whilst impression management suggested that a lot of efforts put towards improving performance are to improve others’ opinions of employees rather than to reciprocate an organization’s actions (Bowler and Brass 2006).

Turnipseed (1996) sought to find out if the work environment influenced the employees’ citizenship behaviors. He did this by using workplace variables like involvement, peer cohesion, autonomy, pressure at work, and physical comfort. Another influencing factor was demographic variables. Here, besides personal descriptions, other variables like satisfaction with pay, and the amount of efforts used at work were also used to identify perceptions of OCB at workplace.

Demographic variables, dispositional variables, and workplace variables from two samples, one in the US and the other from the Middle East, were explored in a study by Tang and Ibrahim (1998). Here, the writers assumed that OCB could be linked to four dispositional variables, i.e. self-esteem, organization-based self esteem (OBSE), the protestant work ethic (PWE), and need for achievement (n Ach). Work related variables were categorized according to attitude toward job/organization, namely, job satisfaction
and commitment, the nature of work (work related stress and motivating potential score), and leader behavior.

The effect of three components of organizational commitment, i.e. affective, continuance, and normative on four dimensions of OCB, and withdrawal behaviors were analyzed by Kwantes (2003) in a cross cultural study done in the US and India. In yet another study, Rikettea and Landerer (2005) questioned whether perceived threat to organizational status could be a moderator between attitudinal organizational commitment (AOC) and work behavior.

A study by Kaufman, Stamper, and Tesluk (2001) found a positive relationship between perceived organizational support as a work place variable and OCB. Employees’ perceptions of the extent to which they are valued by their organization were developed through multiple exchanges between superior and subordinates over time.

**Relevance of Cultural Factors**

Globalization, information technology, customer choice, and renewed interest in entrepreneurship have affected almost all the organizations today, whether driven by profits or social welfare. As a result, not only new economy is emerging, but new organization, new workplace, and new worker is also emerging. Thus, a manager today has no choice but to attend to diversity and cultural issues. The possibility that cultural dimensions of countries may encourage or dissuade citizenship behaviors cannot be ruled out. Two of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, i.e. power distance and individualism-collectivism, were found to affect the perceptions, meanings, and consequences of OCB in different countries. It is also possible that national culture could affect workplace variables like job satisfaction, perception of fairness, and commitment which in turn would affect OCB. Research conducted by Paine and Organ (2000) prove that since OCB is interpreted differently across different cultures, it is also valued differently across cultures. Another study by Turnipseed and Murkison (2000) compared OCB between samples from the US and Romania. Results showed that national and organizational cultures do in fact determine OCB.

Yet another influence on OCB that was closely connected to cultural dimensions was contextual factors. George and Jones (1997) delineated three levels of contextual factors as:

- a) Individual, comprising of skill levels and role definitions;
- b) Group, comprising norms and goals; and
- c) Organization, comprising structure, policies, and sanctions.
A comparative study was done between Chinese and American managers to assess whether role definition has an effect on OCB, i.e. to determine what factors could cause an employee to classify a citizenship behavior as in-role rather than extra-role. It was found that Chinese managers were more likely to perceive OCB as in-role, i.e. part of their job. Work centrality and work locus of control were two other variables that were included as antecedents to role definition. Results indicated that the way employees defined their jobs could predict their OCB behavior. The US managers also saw OCB as part of their job if they held an internal work locus of control (see Blakely, Srivastava, and Moorman 2005).

So far, the antecedents of OCB discussed above, have been more or less related to the work setting. However, it has been proven that personal characteristics of the employee, like personality, also affect the levels of OCB in an organization. A study by Borman, Penner, Allen, and Motowidlo (2001) presented a model that explained the relationship between ability, personality, task, and citizenship performance. Here it was ascertained that personality is the main antecedent of citizenship performance. Organ and Ryan (1995)’s meta-analysis of organizational and dispositional correlates of OCB is the most comprehensive review of relationship between personality and citizenship performance. The personality traits included here were conscientiousness, agreeableness, and positive and negative affectivity. Another study by Comeau and Griffith (2005) sought to determine how the interaction of an interdependent work environment and employee personality would affect OCB. They wanted to determine whether interdependence could act as a moderator between personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness with OCB.

Based on the findings of these studies, the following picture emerged consolidating the measures and antecedents of OCB (see Figure 1).
Figure 1: Measures and Antecedents of OCB

Possible Classification of Motives behind OCB

Literature on OCB is generally silent on the question as to why do people display OCB? What motivates or inspires them to do so? What kind of rewards do they expect to receive and within what temporal framework? Why everyone in the organization does not display OCB? These questions are important to determine the content and the significance of strategy. We have therefore classified in Figure 2 the OCB-specific purposes into two dimensions as a continuum: (a) instrumental purpose (expected OCB to lead to some future desirable outcome) or (b) Consummatory purpose (not expected OCB to lead to future outcomes). Similarly we classified rewards on two dimensions as a continuum: (a) Material Rewards (OCB expected to lead to promotion, award, or a raise); and (b) Non-material Rewards (OCB expected to lead to appreciation, admiration, or satisfaction).

Based on these classifications, we assigned positions to identified attributes of OCBs on a matrix of cells to understand the motives behind OCB much better. The classification revealed that different types of OCBs can be undertaken for different purposes. This classification brings the originator or actor of OCB into the picture. Furthermore, it also detects gaps in identification of ingredients of
OCB. Can there be OCB which is undertaken for non-material rewards but which has instrumental value? May be like gaining a good reputation or making good impressions. Similarly, can there be OCB which is undertaken for consummatory purposes but has built in material rewards? For instance, like getting unanticipated assignments which has material payoffs. Future research can probably discover those ingredients. Participation as an ingredient probably lacks clarity as it can be positioned in the centre at present as it could be instrumental as well as consummatory, and at the same time it could be undertaken to aspire for material as well as non-material rewards (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Possible classification of different ingredients of OCB**

**Relevance of OCB in Present Context**

All these factors have some influence on human resource practices like recruitment, selection, and development (Paine and Organ 2000). From the discussions above, the question that arises is whether Human Resource practices and policies play a role in citizenship behavior. Good management of human capital in organizations can be a competitive advantage, and OCB could be an example of that. As discussed above, other antecedents of OCB include organizational commitment, perception of organizational support, and job satisfaction. Therefore, managers do take OCB into consideration when conducting appraisals and determining increments and promotions (Podsakoff and Mackenzie 1993). Good citizenship behavior is encouraged by HR managers when they design fair appraisal systems,
management development programs, compensation systems, and jobs that increase job satisfaction and commitment (Paine and Organ 2000).

However, the question that might be asked, is this construct of OCB likely to continue to be important in the future? According to Borman (2001) four trends suggest that the answer is yes. First, as global competition continues to raise the effort level required of employees, citizenship performance, especially organizational support and conscientiousness will become increasingly important. Second, as team-based organizations become more popular, there will be increased need for the personal-support component of OCB. Third, OCB and especially conscientious initiative will be needed as downsizing continues to make adaptability and willingness to exhibit extra effort more critical. And finally, as customer service and client satisfaction gets increasingly emphasized, all the dimensions of OCB will be important.

An analysis by Podsakoff (2000) on four studies showed that there were substantial relationships between OCB and organizational effectiveness. According to them, theoretically, there are many reasons why OCB may positively affect the effectiveness of organizations. These include enhancing employee and managers’ productivity, especially when present employees help new staff. This also enables “best practices” to be disseminated across the group. Productivity of managers may also increase when employees demonstrate civic virtue by providing suggestions on how to improve the department’s performance, and show courtesy to their colleagues by not creating problems in the department.

According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), OCB enhances the efficiency of an organization by freeing up various resources. Therefore, when employees co-operate and help each other out with work related problems, it enables the manager to spend more time on strategic planning, improving business processes. The managers are also able to delegate more and supervise less. When employees voluntarily participate in work unit meetings with other team members or members of other groups, it enhances the coordination of activities among group members and between groups. OCB may also help an organization to adapt to changing environments as it aids in diffusion of information amongst employees. Further, when employees show sportsmanship by showing willingness to take on new responsibilities, it also aids in an organization’s ability to adapt to changes.

**Emerging Strategies for Promoting OCBs**

Since it is convincingly argued that OCBs contribute to an organization’s performance and success, based on the findings of these studies, we can now recommend how organizations can strategize OCB as a legitimate and valuable pursuit:
• By changing workplace variables: job involvement, cohesion among peers, autonomy given to employees to make decisions, perception of fairness, job satisfaction, and building trust in organizational commitment

• By changing HR practices and policies: fostering good governance of human capital, professional selection and recruitment procedures, fair performance appraisals, and credible compensation systems

• By changing Leader behavior and supportiveness: type of leadership style chosen by leaders. Transformational/transactional, creating a vision and group goals, setting high performance standards and expectations, moral and ethical commitment and action

• By changing cultural dimensions: individualistic versus collectivist, universalistic versus particularistic

• By changing contextual factors: skill levels, role definitions, group norms, structures, policies

• By changing customer orientation: emphasizing good service for external customers and appropriate technology systems for employees

• By changing individuals’ personalities: promoting conscientious and extrovert behavior, influencing dispositional variables like self-esteem

Conclusion
Many studies have gathered sizable empirical evidence supporting the desirable influence of OCBs on organizational effectiveness. Over time, individual researchers have identified a variety of indicators of OCB, the factors that influence such a behavior, and the likely consequences. However, no satisfactory attempt was made to consolidate the learning in an integrated model that can be used for strategizing organizationally beneficial behavior; particularly to understand from OCB actor’s view point as to what motivates him to undertake OCB. Using selected published articles as data, this paper constructed an integrated model incorporating different empirically discovered dimensions of OCB; and advocated how these findings can be used for strategizing the OCB as a legitimate and valuable organizational pursuit. It was also discovered that literature on OCB was generally silent on the question as to why do people display OCB? What motivates or inspires them to do so? What kind of rewards do they expect to receive? Why everyone in the organization does not display OCB? While presenting a classificatory scheme based on instrumental-material reward and consumatory-non-material reward dimensions, it was argued that these questions are important to determine the content of OCB specific strategy.
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