
UNIT 18 ORGANIZATION CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Objectives

After completion of the unit, you will be able to:

- to understand the concept of Organization Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).
- to learn the dimension and implications of OCB.
- to learn how to measure OCB.

Structure

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Concept
- 18.3 Evolution of the Concept
- 18.4 Forms and Dimensions of OCB
- 18.5 Antecedents of OCB
- 18.6 Implications of OCB
- 18.7 OCB in Practice
- 18.8 Measuring OCB
- 18.9 OCB: Potential Pitfalls
- 18.10 Summary
- 18.11 Self-Assessment Questions
- 18.12 Further Readings

18.1 INTRODUCTION

In a work place, to certify someone as a good employee, certain quantifiable traits are looked for, in the performance appraisals. These quantifiable traits mostly focus on actions that are expected out of the employee, as mandated by the designation. Will these alone make a ‘Good employee’? Are there any other actions left behind, which are not mandated by the organization, but still exhibited by the employees? Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is a term that encompasses anything positive and constructive that employees do, of their own volition, which supports co-workers and benefits the company. Employees who engage in OCB, necessarily not be the top performers, but they always tend to go an ‘extra mile’, apart from satisfying the minimum requirements of his/her job. It is stated that by encouraging employees to engage in OCB, Organizations have shown to increase productivity, efficiency and customer satisfaction, and reduce costs and rates of turnover and absenteeism (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume, 2009).

18.2 CONCEPT

Whether to engage in OCB or not is a personal discretion of the employee, still organizations can promote OCB by motivating them and also providing them

with an opportunity to exhibit OCB. The organization should create a workplace environment that not only allows for, but is conducive and supportive of OCB (Organ, Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 2006). This could be done by including measures of OCB in performance appraisals and recognising and rewarding employees who exhibit OCB. Though OCB is perceived to be intangible, and difficult to quantify, it has shown to have a considerable positive impact at the organisational level, enhancing organisational effectiveness from 18 to 38% across different dimensions of measurement (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000; Ehrhart, 2004).

Definition

The term 'Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)' was coined in the late 1980. Since then it has undergone few revisions, though the basic concept remains the same. OCB refers to any spontaneous action that is executed by the employee, as desired by him/her, which is not mandated by the organization or demanded by the seniors even. The basic understanding of OCB as going 'the extra mile' or 'above and beyond' to help others at work is what many are familiar with, and that is how OCB is conceptualised. An employee extending a helping hand to a newcomer, or helping a colleague in his task or volunteering to change shifts are few typical examples of OCB. Apart from these organizational related acts like extending the shift to complete the task or volunteering to organise events without expecting any additional remuneration, also come under OCB.

Even before the term OCB was coined, Barnard (1938) came out with a definition that would rightly define OCB. He stated that "the willingness of individuals to contribute cooperative efforts to the organization was indispensable to effective attainment of organizational goals.

Katz's (1964) focussed on the notion behind the extra-role behaviour of the employees. Katz noted that "employees willingly contribute extra efforts for the attainment of the organizational outcomes."

Relying on the notions of both Barnard and Katz, Organ developed his OCB construct. According to Organ (1988) "OCB is an individual's discretionary behavior which is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and it in the aggregate that promotes the effective functioning of the organization."

Van Dyne et al. (1995) who proposed the broader construct of "extra-role behavior" (ERB), defined OCB as "a behavior which benefits the organization and/or is intended to benefit the organization, which is discretionary and which goes beyond existing role expectations".

18.3 EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

The idea of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) was initially put forth by Chester Barnard (1938) as "the willingness of individuals in organizations to cooperate". He later defined "cooperation as genuine restraint of oneself, actual voluntary service for no reward and even subjection of one's own personal interest for the betterment of the organization". He focussed on the notion of an individual while exhibiting an extra-role behaviour, alongside executing the assigned tasks, as required by their job.

In line with Barnard, Katz (1964) brought a demarcation in the concept of OCB as “innovative and spontaneous behaviors” rather than an obligatory role performance. The basis for the differentiation is whether or not such spontaneous behaviors, are found in an individual’s job description.

Research on OCB took a new pace after a formal naming and Organ (1988) defining OCB. He stated that “OCB is a voluntary individual behavior that, when aggregated across people and time, contributes to the improved performance of the organization”. OCB is termed as beneficial component for organizations, as individuals volunteered to do tasks that are not formally structured or mandated as a part of the individual’s assignment or role. Such efforts put in by the employees, are labelled by scholars as organizational citizenship Behaviour.

18.4 FORMS AND DIMENSIONS OF OCB

Forms of OCB

Scholars have always attempted to view OCB from two perspectives; Individual and Organizational. Based on the taxonomy of Organ, Williams and Anderson (1991), organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is divided into two broad categories as organizational citizenship behaviour -organizational (**OCB-O**) and organizational citizenship behaviour-individual (**OCB-I**). OCB-O describes the extra role behaviour of the employees which directly benefits the organisation like organising a ‘Clean drive’ in the campus. OCB-I deals with extra-role behaviours exhibited by the employees, towards his/her colleagues like helping them in accomplishing their tasks etc., Ozturk (2010), defines OCB-I as “set of behaviours that directly benefit individuals but indirectly and ultimately benefit the organization”. Understanding the relationships between these forms of OCB and both their antecedents and consequences is important in order to capture the multi-dimensional nature of OCB.

Dimensions of OCB

Initially Organ and his colleagues (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) described organization citizenship behaviour as having two basic dimensions— *altruism* and *generalized compliance*.

Altruism in general is defined as a helping behavior, directed towards individuals. For example when co-workers need some assistance in completing a task, altruistic people go beyond their job description to assist them. *Generalised Compliance* is defined as “people doing things ‘right and proper’ for their own sake rather than for any specific person.

Later Organ (1988) attempted to further define OCB by identifying five specific categories of discretionary behavior and also explained how they could translate into organizational efficiency.

- *Altruism* is typically directed toward other individuals but contributes to group efficiency by enhancing individuals’ performance. For eg. Extending a helping hand for a new comer in the organization.
- *Conscientiousness* enhances the efficiency of both an individual and the group. For eg. Completes assigned task before schedule and is available for tasks which are not obligatory.

- *Sportsmanship* improves the amount of time spent on constructive endeavours in the organization. For eg. Tend to find a solution rather than complaining the situation.
- *Courtesy* helps prevent problems and facilitates constructive use of time. For eg., sharing of knowledge and information among co-workers
- *Civic Virtue* promotes the interests of the organization. For eg. Volunteering and heading teams towards CSR activities of the organisation.

18.5 ANTECEDENTS OF OCB

As OCB is found to be beneficial in every organization, identifying and thoroughly investigating the factors which influences engagement in OCB, would furthermore enable people to engage in OCB. Serious attempts have been and are being made by academicians, to identify the predictors of OCB, and they have undoubtedly succeeded in doing so. “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). The predictors so far identified by researchers include, Attitude, Employee engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisory support and organizational justice. Personality variables such as conscientiousness and agreeableness also influence people to engage in OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Organ (2006) stated that *leadership* styles like Instrumental leadership, Supportive leadership and Transformational leadership, can encourage OCB in various ways if deployed effectively, provided the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) is high. Leader-member exchange deals with the interaction between a superior and a subordinate. Such interaction is characterised by mutual trust and liking, which facilitates OCB. Leadership characteristics and a healthy Leader-member exchange have a strong influence on an employee’s willingness to engage in OCB. Ultimately it is the trust between the Leaders and subordinate, that counts, rather than different styles of leadership (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The reward behaviour of the leader, that is recognising and appreciating the employees on their achievements and rewarding them appropriately, is positively related to OCB (Podsakoff et. al, 2000).

The research on the antecedents of OCB conducted by Smith & Bateman, (1983) and Organ (1983) revealed that *job satisfaction* is the best predictor of OCB. It was further substantiated by (Brown, 1993) who stated that Employees with high levels of job satisfaction are more likely to be engage in OCB. Moreover, individuals with higher levels of job satisfaction never had the intention to leave the organization (Sager, 1994).

Affective organizational commitment is another factor which is often cited as an 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). Affective commitment enhances engagement to OCB, without expecting any formal rewards. (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Organizational Justice refer to whether or not employees feel organizational decisions are unbiased, and also if employee opinion is considered before decision

making. It also refer to whether or not employees perceive that they are being treated equally with respect to training, tenure, responsibility or workload. Perceptions of fairness are positively related to OCB (Moorman, 1991)

Research on the role of *Group Characteristics* on OCB, revealed that group cohesiveness, team-member exchange, group potency and perceived team support were positively related to OCB (Organ et al., 2006).

Perceived organizational support (POS) is the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being and fulfils socioemotional needs. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. The relationship between POS and OCB has always been positive.

Perceived supervisory support (PSS) is defined as the degree to which supervisors value the contributions, opinions or gestures of their subordinates and care about their well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). As such, PSS has been conceptualized to explain why subordinates display commitment to their supervisor. PSS is defined as the degree to which supervisors value the contributions, opinions or gestures of their subordinates and care about their well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). The relationship between OCB and POS have always been positive.

18.6 IMPLICATIONS OF OCB

- Presence of high level of OCB in an organization maximises the organizational performance in various dimensions.
- The strong relationship between OCB and job satisfaction results in a positive impact on Employee performance and well-being.
- A positive relationship between Group cohesiveness and OCB increases the productivity of the co-worker and Coordinate activities within and across work groups.
- OCB enables appropriate usage of available resources for more productive purposes and scarce resources purely for maintenance functions.
- OCB strengthen the organizations' ability to attract and retain the best employees which results in increasing the stability of the organization's performance.
- Employees become more cooperative with superior and colleagues and exhibit more of extra-role behaviour.
- OCB increases Employees 'willingness to sacrifice their own comforts, so as to meet the organizational goals.
- The higher the level of OCB among employees, the lower the employer turnover and absenteeism.
- OCB brings in a positive impact on productivity, efficiency and customer satisfaction apart from enhancing cost reduction.

- OCB enhances productivity, free up resources, attract and retain good employees, and helps in creating a creating a social capital.

18.7 OCB IN PRACTICE

The different forms of OCB (helping others, civic virtue and sportsmanship) contribute to promoting organizational effectiveness in different ways. Because these extra efforts enhance organizational performance even if OCBs are not rewarded by the employer, a great deal of effort has been made to understand why employees are willing to go the extra mile. “The extent to which employees exhibit OCB is a function of ability, motivation and opportunity” (Organ et al., 2006). The antecedents identified by the academicians and researchers can be used as guidelines to improve the rate of OCB. It becomes essential for the top management and supervisors to focus on motivating employees to engage in OCB. This could be achieved by various strategies as follows:

Sense of Belongingness: Top management should always work towards increasing the sense of belongingness among employees. This can be done by encouraging staff to attend office functions, get-togethers outside office premises, cultural events and office-wide birthday lunches.

Enlightening Supervisors: Launching an awareness programme on OCB among the supervisors will make them more aware of employee displays of OCB. They can include OCB in their performance appraisals, or devise their own casual/informal reward system to encourage OCB. Supervisors should readily recognise and reward employees’ OCB.

Recruitment – While recruiting freshers, the panel should look for an outgoing, attentive, enthusiastic employee with a positive outlook and ‘can do’ attitude, who will be more inclined to engage in OCB. The panel should also look for traits related to OCB in their psychometric testing. Such employees would definitely motivate others to perform OCB.

Environment: the working environment and the process should be designed such that it is conducive for employees to engage in OCB. Certain types of group norms (e.g. everyone should only do the minimum amount of work required, no one should talk to the supervisor) can hinder the employees’ initiative and spontaneity, and this will decrease incidents of OCB.

Top Management: The top management should have an inclination towards OCB, thereby motivating the employees to engage in OCB. The process of the organization should be such that it encourages employees to exhibit extra-role behaviour.

18.8 MEASURING OCB

How do we measure OCB among Employees? The most popular dimensions used to measure OCB are found in the 5 factor model (Organ, 1988). Altruism and courtesy are grouped into individual-directed behaviour (OCB-I), while Conscientiousness, Civic Virtue and Sportsmanship are grouped into organisation-directed behaviour (OCB-O) (Williams & Anderson, 1991). The questionnaire is such that it targets each of these constructs. Statements such as ‘I help my

colleagues out wherever possible' would be OCB-I (altruism) while 'I don't mind staying back late to finish up my work even if I'm not paid' would be OCB-O (sportsmanship).

These surveys can be administered periodically so as to monitor OCB in the workplace, or to assess the effectiveness of interventions like training programmes. These constructs are also useful in terms of looking at OCB as having various dimensions. For Example if employees of an organization are lacking more in OCB-O than OCB-I, then the organization should focus on improving the OCB-O factors, such as improving civic virtue by encouraging workers to attend non-compulsory meetings.

One of the crucial elements of OCB is the fact that although it is often recognised and rewarded by managerial staff, employees do not necessarily make the connection between performing OCB and reward gain (especially OCB-I or altruism and courtesy-related behaviours), and do not expect rewards (Organ, 1997). Given that OCB has such a significant impact on the productivity and efficiency of the organisation, and workers do not expect to be reimbursed for their efforts, OCB should be considered an efficient way of improving organisational profitability and reducing costs through, for example, lowering rates of absenteeism and turnover. At the same time it increases employee performance and wellbeing, as cooperative workers are more productive, and OCB enhances the social environment in the workplace. Costs will be involved if managers actively seek out and reward workers for engaging in OCB, but these will have long-term benefits for the organisation. There may also be potential costs if supervisors require training, or a meeting that takes a few hours out of their schedule, to enhance their awareness of OCB. Evaluating OCB also involves costs in administering and analysing the results of an office- or department-wide survey. The evaluation component is critical if interventions are being implemented, especially if these interventions themselves involve costs (e.g. posters, office functions). Evaluations should take place before and after interventions have been introduced, to assess whether there has been a positive impact on the levels of OCB in the workplace.

18.9 OCB: POTENTIAL PITFALLS

There are three main issues the organizations have to be cautious of, when promoting OCB in workplace.

Gender Bias: The top management should be especially wary of implicit gendered expectations – research has shown that men are rewarded for OCB more than women (Heiman & Chen, 2005), because women are expected to engage in certain types of citizenship behaviours (such as being altruistic and courteous) more than men and are less recognised.

Organisational justice: If some supervisors reward an employee for exhibiting OCB more than others, perceived unfairness may increase among certain clusters of employees. This will not only lead to a decrease in OCB among those not rewarded for it but may have other side effects related to perceived injustice, such as an increase in counterproductive behaviour like theft and absenteeism (Marcus & Schuler, 2004).

Conditioning: If employees exhibit OCB regularly and if it is awarded regularly, the level of OCB in the organization would rise and after some time organization get habituated to it. The risk in this is, what was once considered OCB (e.g. working overtime) may become an internalised organisational norm. Then it is no longer spontaneous and voluntary but employees expected to do that.

18.10 SUMMARY

Organization Citizenship behaviours come in many dimensions and forms. Traditionally OCB is termed as a behaviour of the employee who 'goes above and beyond' the minimum requirements of his designation in the organization. It is also exhibited by an employee who takes the initiative and always offers to lend a hand to the needy. Such employees are always identified as knowledgeable, helpful as well as cooperative colleague. OCB is also said to be exhibited by a senior staff member who is able to roll with the punches. A Manager is said to be engage in OCB when he is friendly, approachable, and who offers to show the new employees around the office and introduces them to other staff. All of these types of OCB should be actively encouraged. Employees who engage in OCB, support the organisation through enhancing each other's performance and wellbeing, and this is reflected in reduced costs and increased profitability at the organisational level.

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, turnover and absenteeism, multiple source of causation is considered. 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.

18.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1) Write an essay on the evolution forms and dimensions of OCB.
- 2) Enlist the antecedents and implications of OCB
- 3) Discuss with examples how OCB can be measured.

18.12 FURTHER READINGS

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