

[Research Note]

Reconsideration of the Essence of the “OCB for the Organization” Dimension

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Abstract

This study addresses the problem of the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) scale, which has been established in previous literature on OCB. Past OCB research basically divided OCB into OCB for individuals and OCB for the organization. However, the scale items of the latter seem to measure the degree to which workers fulfill formal obligation. This study analyzes the OCB data collected from workers in Japan and indicates that OCB for the organization should be interpreted as OCB for a good, constructive atmosphere in the organization. Based on the idea that all the three OCB dimensions are related to human aspects of the organization, this study further confirms the interactive relationship among three OCB dimensions. Research implication for future studies is also introduced.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, OCB-I, OCB-O

1. Introduction

To develop an empirical study for any research topics on organizational behavior, it is highly important to establish scale items with high reliability, which is commonly recognized and used by researchers. Even if the same construct is focused by several researchers but concrete scale items for the construct have not been established, it is obviously impossible to compare the results of these empirical studies. It is fair to say that there is little hope of academically evolving the area without established scale items.

This applies to the research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which is well known as one of the most important research topics on organizational behavior. Even Bateman and Organ (1983) and Smith, Organ, and Near (1983), which are generally recognized as the first pioneering researchers that indicated the importance of OCB to the academic society, faced the difficult challenge of establishing the OCB scale items.

First, Bateman and Organ (1983) proposed the definition of OCB to managers and asked them to reply with the concrete behaviors that met the definition. While they ultimately identified 30 concrete behaviors as the OCB scale items, they had no idea about the “dimensions” of OCB or the similarity and the differences among these behaviors.¹

One the other hand, using a process similar to that of Bateman and Organ (1983), Smith et al. (1983) established two dimensions of OCB: altruism and general compliance. Altruism is considered as OCB for managers and coworkers in the organization, and general compliance is related to OCB for the organization. In addition, this classification of OCB came down to OCB-I (OCB for the individuals) and OCB-O (OCB for the organization) by Williams and Anderson (1991), and it is well known among researchers that these two dimensions have become one of the most basic dichotomization of OCB. However, are this classification and the scale items based on it always unquestionable as those that meet the definition of OCB without considering how these behaviors contribute to the organization?

OCB is generally defined as an “individual behavior 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, p.4). Both formal role behaviors and OCB are necessary and effective for the functioning of the organization. Even so, OCB has a different process or role to improve organizational performance from formal role behaviors because OCB is “not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal system”. Then, scale items are needed that do not cause respondents to confuse discretionary behaviors with formal role behaviors. While it is true that papers and presentations are highly evaluated when using the scale items established by pioneering researchers, it is not desirable to unconditionally accept this scale as “the standard” or the “almighty” card, ignoring what effect these behaviors might have on the organization.

This study focuses on the OCB dimensions and confirm these OCB dimensions by analyzing data regarding OCB collected from workers in Japan. It considers the reason

¹ Later, Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006), by referring to Turnipseed and Murkison (2000), indicated that these 30 items could be classified into three dimensions, although they criticized this scale as involving some ambiguous scale items, such as “seeks other’s help when he or she needs it,” as this item did not indicate who helps him or her.

why OCB includes the scale items representing the behaviors that seem to be formal obligations for workers in working places for the organization by seeing how these items and the other items bond together through exploratory factor analysis. Our conclusion is that one of the most important roles of OCB-O is to build a good, constructive organizational atmosphere in the organization that facilitates task performance or organizational effectiveness. Based on the idea that all OCB are related to the human aspects of the organization, this study further confirms the interactive relationship between these different but related OCBs.

2. The Problems of the OCB Scale

Then, what is the problems of the current OCB scale items? Although OCB should be discretionary behaviors according to its definition, some OCB scale items seem to be not discretionary but formal obligations. This is particularly true for the scale items of general compliance, or OCB-O. For example, Smith et al. (1983) listed the following scale items to measure general compliance.

Punctuality.

Takes undeserved breaks.

Attendance at work is above the norm.

Coasts towards the end of the day.

Gives advance notice if unable to come to work.

Great deal of time spent with personal phone conversations.

Does not take unnecessary time off work.

Does not take extra breaks.

Does not spend time in idle conversation.

For example, among these items, “attendance at work is above the norm” might be actually considered to be discretionary if the “norm” of this item is interpreted as one of the organizational rules. However, it seems that many other items are required as part of the formal obligation for workers because they are asking about unworking or underwork situations. If a worker violates these items, he or she cannot complain about getting a disciplinary punishment.

This is also true regarding the OCB-O of Williams and Anderson (1991). Four of their seven OCB-O items are quite similar to those of Smith et al. (1983), and the remaining three items are described as follows.

Complains about insignificant things at work (R)

Conserves and protects organizational property

Adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order

Still, a formal obligation is also included. For example, a worker who intentionally breaks organizational goods has to undergo disciplinary punishment in most of the organizations.

Even so, it is completely wrong to literally catch the texts of these items and consider that OCB means adhering to organizational rules. Regarding the reason why compliance with organizational rules is included in OCB, Organ et al. (2006) considered that every organization has an allowable range of rule violation. For example, although punctuality is a rule, no one will make a fuse when one person arrives a few minutes late for once. This is because a few minutes late for once is within the allowable range of rule violation. This type of allowable range of rule violation is widely known in the organization. Even so, if a person sticks to the rule and does not receive the benefit from this allowable range, it can be said that he or she performs not his or her formal roles but OCB, according to Organ's idea.

However, because this allowable range is not explicit, such a subtle, implicit meaning cannot be exactly expressed in a text of an OCB question item. If a respondent is asked about whether he or she sticks to the organizational rule, he or she does not understand whether it means a superficial formal rule that many workers do not necessarily obey, or a minimum rule that will cause them punishment if violated. Depending on his or her interpretation of "the organizational rule" in the text, he or she answers to it differently. Because of such instability of answers, the reliability as an OCB measurement scale is also doubtful.

What we need to do is not to try to literally understand OCB-O from the text of the scale but to investigate what aspects of discretionary behavior, inferred from the text of the scale, is really contributive to the organization.

3. Establishment of Three NEW Dimensions of OCB

(1) Result of Exploratory Factor Analysis

This time, the author asked the Macromill Inc. to send an OCB questionnaire to workers in Japan. Although this questionnaire was originally prepared to collect data to reveal the relationship between the worker's OCB and his or her coworkers' OCB, this

study analyzes only the data of worker’s OCB.

This questionnaire required respondents to answer about the degree to which they perform OCB with a regular five-point scale ranging from “not applicable” to “applicable.” Concrete scale items are indicated as follows (The original items are Japanese).

1. I always strive to help a coworker (newcomer) when he or she is not familiar with the work environment.
2. I always strive to help a coworker when he or she is stumped about his or her job.
3. I always strive to cover a coworker when he or she is tired from overwork.
4. I always strive to cooperate and communicate with coworkers.
5. I always strive to take my work seriously and make no mistakes.
6. I always strive to stick to the organizational conventions and rules even when no one sees me.
7. I always strive to tackle a new challenge with a positive spirit.
8. I always strive self-development to improve the quality of my work.
9. I always strive not to talk behind my supervisor’s or coworkers’ back.
10. I always strive not to perform unethical behaviors and break down the balance or the atmosphere in the workplace.
11. I always strive not to behave selfishly and cause waves in the workplace.
12. I always strive not to abuse my position and authority for personal advantage.

The author initially intended that the first four items be related to OCB-I and the items from 5 to 9 associated with OCB-O. In fact, these items were formed based on previous literature on OCB. Items from 10 to 12 were newly created by the author considering the Japanese collectivistic values important to harmonic human relations or constructive atmosphere in human relations in the workplace.

We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for these 12 items and achieved three factors as shown in Table 1 (The cumulative rate of eigenvalues for the first three factors is 49.713%). Regarding the first factor, the values of items 1 to 4 are relatively high. The second factor has the high values of no. 5, 6 and 9-12 items, and the values of no. 7 and 8 are high on the third factors.

Table 1. Result of the exploratory factor analysis (pattern matrix)

Pattern Matrix			
	Factor		
	1	2	3
2.(OCB-I)	0.981	-0.012	-0.081
1.(OCB-I)	0.904	-0.061	0.008
4.(OCB-I)	0.657	0.096	0.087
3.(OCB-I)	0.541	0.034	0.108
10.(Harmony)	-0.006	0.831	-0.065
11.(Harmony)	0.089	0.779	-0.025
12.(Harmony)	0.223	0.646	-0.09
9.(OCB-O)	-0.199	0.441	0.264
6.(OCB-O)	0.006	0.403	0.348
5.(OCB-O)	0.321	0.394	0.105
8.(OCB-O)	-0.025	0.017	0.797
7.(OCB-O)	0.143	-0.081	0.785

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Regarding the characteristics of these factors, the first factor has characteristics directly related to traditional OCB-I. This also means that this scale is comprised of the items relating to the helping behavior within the workplace regardless of who is actually helped, as well as why he or she is helped.

The interpretation of the second factor is rather complicated. Initially, the items measuring the contribution to the harmonic relationship were considered to be closer to OCB-I, not OCB-O. However, these items and several items of OCB-O constitute the second factor.

Among these OCB-O items, item 9 is one of the “sportsmanship” items. Although sportsmanship has been commonly recognized and used by OCB researchers as one of the traditional OCB items (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990), this study has not considered deeply why “not talk behind a supervisor’s or coworkers’ back” should be considered as an OCB. Of course, backbiting is an absolutely unethical behavior. Then, it is easily assumed that this has a bad effect on organizational functioning. However, if a worker is talked about behind his or her back, he or she does not notice it in most settings. If he or she does not notice it, he or she is not discouraged with such mud, and his or her productivity is not affected. Even if this is true, backbiting is not desirable to the organization because other workers who often hear it develop a negative feeling toward human relationship in the organization, regardless of whether

they agree or disagree with it. In other words, this backbiting worsens the atmosphere in the organization. In this manner, no backbiting is also related to improvement of good or constructive atmosphere in the organization similar to No. 10 to 12 items.

Regarding items 5 and 6, making no mistakes and sticking to the organizational rules are superficially regarded as formal job responsibilities. Even so, the reason why these items are usually included in OCB is that, as described above, a worker who makes a mistake once or violate a trivial rule is not necessarily subject to punishment. Every organization has some allowance range of rule violation and if his or her violation is permitted if it is within this range. Even so, a worker who repeatedly behave in this allowance range creates a bad atmosphere of “win by skipping work.” Further, this bad atmosphere could make other workers lose their motivation to work seriously, or to cooperate with each other. Then, we can interpret that both items 5 and 6 also have a function to improve the healthy atmosphere in human relations in the organization.

Previous research defined OCB-O as “OCB for the organization.” However, under the expression “for the organization,” the line between formal role behaviors and discretionary behaviors are rather ambiguous. Then, instead of “OCB for the organization,” OCB for the atmosphere in the organization is more appropriate. By limiting behaviors belonging to OCB-O only to behaviors that contribute to make good, constructive organizational atmosphere, it is possible to differentiate the role of these discretionary behaviors from that of formal role behaviors.

Further, if traditional OCB-O is considered as OCB for the organizational atmosphere, this aspect of OCB is also related to human aspects in the organization. In other words, the difference between this dimension and OCB-I is not contribution to the human being on the one hand, and contribution to the institution. Both dimensions are related to human relations. While OCB-I is one-to-one interpersonal relationship between helping and helped persons, OCB for the organizational atmosphere is associated with the contribution to all human relations of the organization.

Finally, the third factor is strongly related to items 7 and 8. These scale items are associated with self-development. Organ et al. (2006) raised an alarm over the tendency of spreading OCB dimensions among OCB studies and proposed seven common OCB dimensions. Self-development is one of such common OCB dimensions. Self-development as OCB has a feature of indistinguishability between the one based on self-interest and the other based on a pure contributive motive to the organization (Ueda,

2012, 2018).

As observed above, it is more desirable to consider all the OCB dimensions from the perspective of the effect on workers in the organization. The first OCB dimension is OCB for a worker him/herself in the organization, and this is based on the most microscopic view. The second OCB dimension is OCB for the one-to-one interpersonal relations in the organization. The final one is OCB for the atmosphere in the whole human relations in the organization. Hereafter, we call them *OCB for self* (OCB-S), *OCB for interpersonal relationship* (OCB-IR), and *OCB for the organizational atmosphere* (OCB-OA), respectively.

(2) Establishment of the Scale through Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We also adopted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the reliability of these OCB dimensions. Although first we tested the scales items according to the result of EFA, we found that the AVE of the items of OCB-OA was under 0.5 as λ of item 9 is low. Then, after removing item 9 from that OCB dimension, we achieved a satisfactory result as shown in Table 2. Although the OCB scale for OCB-S-S are statistically sufficient because they are only two items, a new three-dimensional OCB model is established.

Table 2. Result of the confirmatory factor analysis

OCB	Reliability			Correlations	
	AVE	CR	alpha	1	2
1. OCB-S	0.663	0.767	0.794		
2. OCB-IR	0.651	0.880	0.873	0.553	
3. OCB-OA	0.547	0.857	0.856	0.588	0.778

CMIN/DF = 5.023, CFI = 0.948, TLI = 0.931, RMSEA = .088

4. Interactive relationship among OCB dimensions

In contrast to the traditional idea that OCB is divided into one for individuals and one for the organization, the author considers that all these OCBs are discretionary contributions to the workers in the organization, and OCB should be divided in terms of the differences of reach of such contributions.

Regarding the benefit in considering that all OCBs are related to some contribution to workers, if we adopt the OCB model for the individuals and OCB for the institution

as before, we tend to consider these two types of OCB as independent from each other. In fact, most of past OCB studies adopted and examined the models that assumed that each of OCB dimensions would be influenced by some antecedents, such as attitudinal or personality factors, or each of them would influence some consequent factors without considering interactive relationships among OCBs.

Of course, this is not a mistake of early researchers. It might have been natural that they did not consider on an interactive relationship between multiple OCBs because only just wanted to discover various discretionary factors other than formal jobs in return for the benefit from the organization, such as job satisfaction. If they had assumed the relationship between these factors from the start, they would not have the model to examine the role of job satisfaction on these discretionary factors.

However, do we not have to consider about the relationship between two OCBs? As a social psychologist, Takagi (1997) provided the model according to which a helper recognizes self-development through his or her own helping behavior to others, and such self-recognition encourage he or she to have more helping behaviors subsequently. Some researchers confirmed the validity of his model (Takagi & Senoo, 2006; Senoo & Takagi, 2011).

By adopting this model to understand the process of performing OCB, we might be able to explain how an OCB performer is motivated to do another OCB by recognizing the benefit of performing OCB. Through this process, the forms of OCB are also becoming increasingly diverse. And, it is much easier to assume such an interaction between OCB if we have an idea that all OCB is a contribution to *some* workers in the organization.

There are two ideas on such self-growth process of OCB (Figure 1). The first idea assumes the process is making progress from self-development to the whole workers in the organization. For example, a worker satisfied with his or her job tends to have a strong motivation to improve his or her job skill. He or she might not be interested in helping others at the outset. Even so, as a skillful worker, he or she has to face the opportunity to help other workers in trouble with their job. Then, he or she gradually recognizes telling others how to do a job is the good opportunity to reconsider on his or her own skill and to further improve his or her skill. He or she starts to proactively help others, and then, he or she gradually find out the good human relations with other workers through his or her helping behavior are also contributive to enhance his or her

own productivity. Finally, he or she also makes consideration on the atmosphere in the organization because it is quite important to the organizational functioning.

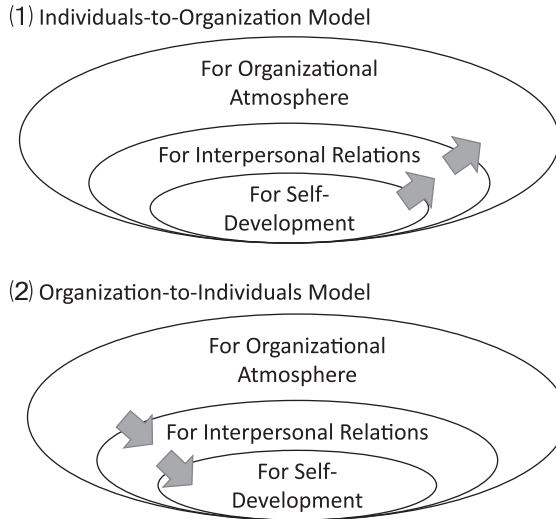


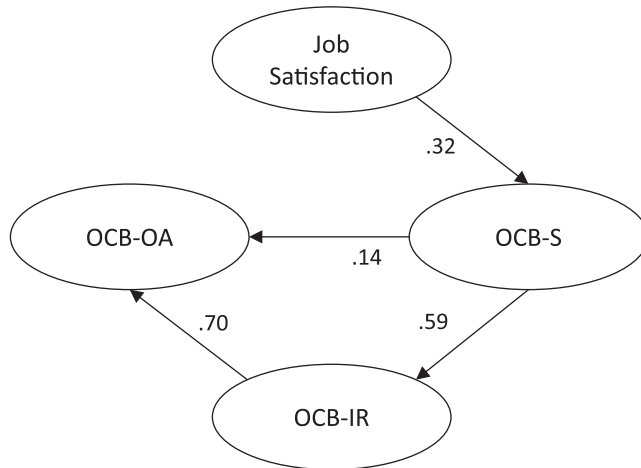
Figure 1 Two Models of Interactional Relationship between OCBs

The other ideas assume the flow from the whole organization to worker's self-development. A worker who gives attention to the atmosphere in the organization might notice the importance one-to-one relationship between workers to maintain good atmosphere and start helping behaviors to others. Additionally, he or she also tries to improve his or her own skills because he or she recognizes a high level of skills is needed for good helping behavior.

The above stories are just imaginary. Even so, we examined the model that assumed job satisfaction would influence three kinds of OCB and these OCBs would also have an effect on other OCBs by structural equation modeling (SEM). The results of this analysis are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Here, a path (arrow) means the effect is significant at the 0.05 significant level. Figure 2 exhibits the model regarding OCB-S to OCB-OA. Because the direct effect of job satisfaction on OCB-IR and OCB-OA was not significant, we acquired the model that assumed job satisfaction influenced only OCB-S as the best one. As shown in Figure 2, all the paths from OCB to other OCB are significantly positive.

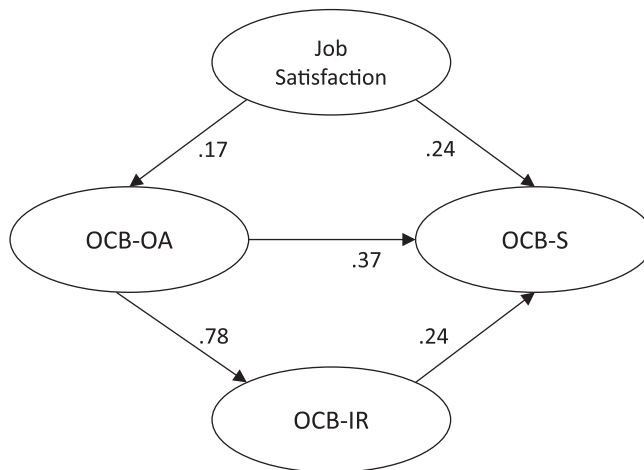
When we assumed the flow from OCB-OA to OCB-S, the effect of job satisfaction on OCB-IR was not significant. Then, by removing this insignificant path, the best

model is displayed as in Figure 3. Still, all the paths from OCB to other OCB are significant and as expected.



CMIN/DF = 4.085, CFI = 0.941, TLI = 0.927, RMSEA = .077

Figure 2 Result of Analysis by SEM (1): From OCB-S to OCB-OA



CMIN/DF = 4.120, CFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.926, RMSEA = .078

Figure 3 Result of Analysis by SEM (2): From OCB-OA to OCB-S

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused on the dimensions of OCB and aimed to reveal that the essence of OCB for the organization is not OCB for the institution or the organizational rules, but OCB for human relations in the organization, or atmosphere in the organization, through analysis of data collected from workers in Japan. Further, this interpretation encourages OCB researchers to consider an interactive relationship among OCB. This study tentatively examined the model that assumed these interrelationships using the SCM of the data.

Thus, because the data were only from Japanese workers, the conclusion of this study might be somewhat unique to Japanese workers, or the Japanese culture. However, considering the discussion by the Western studies that OCB is contextual performance in essence (Organ, 1997), OCB for the organization is actually OCB for human relations, even in the Western societies, because all human relations in the organization decisively influence the organizational context that facilitates task performance.

When pioneering OCB researchers asked managers to point out the behaviors that meet the concept of OCB, many managers answered “punctuality.” Then, this behavioral aspect has been included in OCB. However, what did these managers actually consider when giving this answer? Why is punctuality contributive to the organizational effectiveness informally? We should not consider that this is because punctuality is a formal rule. Rather, we should consider that a worker’s punctual arrival has a strong influence on other workers’ way of considering how workers should do in this organization. This influence could promote a constructive atmosphere in the organization. This effect might hold true regardless of differences in any business, or national cultures.

This study is preliminary. Only 12 items are not enough to comprise the various types of OCB and their complicated relationships. Further, we need more persuasive argument on these interactions between OCB dimensions. Therefore, we hope this study provides evidence to reconsider OCB dimensions for many OCB researchers.

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