

# Effects of Various Types of Job Satisfaction on Organizational Retaliatory Behaviors

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## Effects of Various Types of Job Satisfaction on Organizational Retaliatory Behaviors<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Organizational retaliatory behavior (ORB) is at the opposite spectrum of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Although individual ORBs are minuscule and often overlooked, organizations must pay attention to them because once accumulated, ORB could have a negative impact on the effectiveness of an organization. This study empirically examines whether four kinds of job satisfaction have an impact on ORB. Results show that work, supervisor, and coworker-related satisfaction negatively influences ORBs as expected. In contrast, income satisfaction has no effect on ORB. Male employees tend to perform more ORBs when they have a problem with their supervisors, and female employees tend to display more ORBs when they have a bad relationship with coworkers. A particular problem accompanying ORB research is also discussed.

**Keywords:** organizational retaliatory behavior, job satisfaction, gender difference

### Introduction

Organizational policies and managerial decision-making and behaviors desirable to employees encourage employees to exhibit various discretionary behaviors contributive to the organization. Such contributive behaviors are also called organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and have been focused on by organizational behavior (OB) researchers around the world since the publication of two pioneering studies relating to OCB in 1983 (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Consequently, OB researchers have found that various dispositional or attitudinal factors such as personality traits, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational justice have a significant effect on OCB (reviewed by Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Ueda, 2004, 2010, 2016, 2019).

In contrast, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) proposed the idea that employees perform covert behaviors that impair organizational effectiveness when they face organizational unfairness, and they termed these behaviors organizational retaliatory behavior (ORB). Each ORB is so subtle that nobody cares about its negative impact on the organization.

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1 上田 泰：「組織報復行動に対する多様な職務満足の影響」

However, opposite in nature to behaviors of OCB, ORB could have a large impact on the organization if they accumulate for a long time, and therefore, like OCB, ORB is also a very important research theme in OB studies. However, compared to OCB, ORB has received insufficient attention from OB researchers, in particular, Japanese OB researchers have exhibited very little interest in ORB so far.

ORB was first considered employees' behaviors by responding to organizational unfairness (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). However, as researchers have found that OCB is affected by various factors in addition to perceived organizational justice, ORB is also considered to be influenced not only by organizational injustice but also by other factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and personality factors. This study aims to empirically investigate how job satisfaction influences ORB. Traditionally, job satisfaction has been found to have a positive impact on OCB even in the earliest researches on the topic (Organ, 1977; Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983). Further, several meta-analyses were conducted to measure the impact of job satisfaction on OCB. Thus, for an initial study of ORB, similar methods are considered extremely desirable in order to focus on the effect of job satisfaction on ORB.

Studies revealing this effect on OCB have largely treated job satisfaction as one variable. However, employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with various aspects of the organization. This study considers work, pay, supervisor, and coworker-related satisfactions separately, and examines whether each of these satisfactions influences ORB. Differentiating between the impacts of these satisfactions on ORB might lead us to propose a more effective way to prevent employees from performing such behaviors.

## **The Concept of ORB**

Although ORB encompasses employees' negative behavior to the organization, all negative behaviors are not (or should not be) classified as ORB. Moreover, a range of behaviors included as ORB also have some ambiguities. First, as aforementioned, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) proposed the concept of ORB as adverse reactions to the perceived unfairness of organizational decisions and managerial actions, as they described, "(t) he present study focused on a subset of such negative behaviors, those used to punish the organization and its representatives in response to perceived unfairness, as ORBs" (p.435). Through these behaviors, employees hope to "punish the unfair organization", and "get even for the unfairness of the organization".

In relation to the proposal of the ORB concept, many researchers have addressed counterproductive work behavior (CWB) as employees' behaviors which have a negative impact on the organization. Although the concept of CWB seems similar to ORB, CWB

is often used as a broader term to refer to all employees' negative behaviors towards the organization. CWB is employee behavior that goes against the legitimate interests of an organization (Sackett, Berry, Wiemann, & Laczko, 2006). In contrast to ORB, which is a reprisal behavior to organizational treatment, CWB does not assume such a countermove. For example, behaviors such as instances of irritable employees addressing coworkers in an angry tone, or indigent employees stealing organizational property, are also included in CWBs, but not in ORBs.

Even if the concepts of CWB and ORB are clearly distinguished, the exact specifications of the concept of ORBs have some ambiguity. According to Skarlicki and Folger (1997, p.435), "Some ORBs may not appear to be as dangerous as more overtly aggressive acts but, in the aggregate, may detract from effective organizational functioning". In other words, the concept of ORB generally included small, subtle behaviors, and many other employees are often unaware of an employee's ORB. In this sense, ORB is considered to be positioned at the opposite end from OCB. However, ORB sometimes refers to a legitimate behavior seeking compensation for illegal behaviors at the organization, such as whistleblowing (Parmerlee, Near, & Jensen, 1982). These kinds of behaviors aim for an actual resolution of the detriment of an employee or inequality among employees, and are different from those on the opposite spectrum of OCB. Although such legitimate actions by employees are important, each study addressing ORB should clarify behaviors classified as ORBs.

In this regard, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) also included different kinds of items as typical of ORB and proposed 17 such behaviors. Among them, for example, "on purpose, damaged equipment or work process" is considered to have a significant effect towards actually "punishing" the organization, but is easily upturned, and it might be difficult for the employee to escape being punished by the organization for his or her evincive behavior. In contrast, an impact of "took supplies home without permission" on the organization is considered so insignificant that managers and other workers might not care about it because, in most cases, supplies like a ballpoint pen or an eraser are usually inexpensive.

However, ORB should be distinguished from employees' explicit retaliatory behaviors actually requiring fair treatment by the organization or their managers, such as launching legal action. Although such explicit behaviors are visible and can change a negative situation, ORB is not necessarily a behavior that aims to improve actual situations of employees. Further, ORB should be also differentiated from behaviors that the organization can easily discover and formally condemn. Instead, they are covert, small, tit-for-tat behaviors that console the employee mentally and perhaps emotionally, without being noticed by others in the organization. ORB should be distinguished from explicit retaliatory behaviors, similar to OCB, which is distinguished from ordinary task performance.

This study targets the ORB which was conceptually considered by Skarlicki and Folger (1997). Then, a question arises as to why employees perform ORB when facing unfair treatment of the organization. One must apply the reason an employee exhibits OCB instead of task performance in return for excessive benefits from the organization to answer this question. The degree and range of task performance are formally defined in a job description or organizational rules, and an employee has to fulfill this. Therefore, to reciprocate a favor from the organization, the said employee attempts a reciprocal relationship by exhibiting extra-role behaviors contributive to the organization, and the extent to which these extra-role behaviors are exhibited are left up to such employees.

In contrast, if an employee reneges formal obligation regarding task performance facing unfair treatment from the organization or a manager, this behavior is informally or formally condemned, and, at worst, the employee is likely to be fired due to this omission. Pursuing legal action due to such unfair treatment requires a significant amount of time and energy, and there is no way to ascertain its success. Each individual employee holds significantly less power than the supervisor or organization. There is a high possibility that an employee's overt retaliation will result in a net loss to him or her. Therefore, if the employee adopts a small, covert retaliation to not actually but mentally balance a budget of income and expenditure from the organization.

For example, consider "took supplies home without permission", indicated as an ORB item by Skarlicki and Folger (1997). Even if an employee carries a disposable pen home without permission, the organization actually receives no damage even though it may slightly increase the supplies expense. More importantly, a ballpoint pen is of little value to the employee who takes it home and they will not consider the organization really affected by this kind of small behavior. In other words, the employee adopts this behavior not with an aim to increase costs of the organization, nor to provide an actual benefit to themselves, but with an aim to change their mental state positively; hence, a product carried home bears no special significance to the employee.

As aforementioned, ORB was defined as an employee's "tit-for-tat" behavior toward organizational unfairness or injustice. However, as evinced by the fact that OCB is influenced by various factors in addition to organizational justice, ORB is also considered to be recipients of the impacts of various factors.

## **Effect of Job Satisfaction on ORB**

Although research investigating antecedents of ORB is less advanced, findings of past OCB research can be referred to when considering factors influencing ORB. A basic factor considered as an antecedent of OCB is job satisfaction. It is widely known that an open

question encouraging OB researchers' to expand their view on the range of performances to include OCB was the reason that empirical research found a much weaker impact of job satisfaction on performance than expected in the real business world (Organ, 1977). Ever since, job satisfaction has been considered one of the most basic antecedents of OCB, and several studies adopting meta-analysis also confirmed a positive effect of job satisfaction on OCB. For example, LePine, Erez, and Johnson's (2002) meta-analysis found that uncorrected population correlation was 0.25, and population correlation corrected for unreliability was 0.24; Lapierr and Hackett (2007) also found average corrected correlations between job satisfaction and OCB was 0.36; Ilies, Fulmer, Spizmuller, and Johnson (2009) found job satisfaction had the higher true-score correlation with overall OCB ( $\rho = 0.28$ ) than personality traits ( $\rho = 0.18$  and  $\rho = 0.24$  for agreeableness and conscientiousness).

Traditionally, most studies on OCB dealt with job satisfaction as unidimensional even though multiple question items were utilized to measure it. In contrast, some studies considered the multidimensionality of job satisfaction and found that different kinds of job satisfaction had a different effect on OCB. For example, in their examination of job satisfaction, Chiu and Chen (2005) mediated job characteristics and OCB relationship, and considered effects of extrinsic and intrinsic satisfactions separately; Organ and Lingl (1995) also treated various kinds of job satisfaction as explanatory variables of OCB and found that overall job satisfaction influenced altruism, and co-worker satisfaction had an impact on general compliance.

As a concept contrary to OCB, ORB is also considered to have a relationship with job satisfaction. Particularly, countering the positive effect on job satisfaction via OCB, ORB is considered to produce a negative effect of job satisfaction. Further, also as with OCB, it might be considered that different kinds of job satisfaction have a different effect on ORB.

## **Hypotheses**

In light of previous discussions, this study considers four different kinds of job satisfaction, specifically, satisfaction with work, pay, supervisor, and coworkers are considered. According to the traditional dichotomization of rewards from the organization, pay is considered to be an extrinsic reward, while the other three are intrinsic rewards. Employees can receive various benefits from extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. If they perceive that they are receiving excessive rewards from the organization, they will perform less ORB (and more OCB). In the event they felt more dissatisfied with these rewards, they were inclined to exhibit more ORB (and less OCB). In other words, it is hypothesized that various kinds of job satisfaction will have a negative effect on ORB, as follows:

H1. Work satisfaction will have a negative effect on ORB.

- H2. Supervisor satisfaction will have a negative effect on ORB.
- H3. Coworker satisfaction will have a negative effect on ORB.
- H4. Pay satisfaction will have a negative effect on ORB.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

For this study, we utilized the net research service of Macromill, Inc., which many people had registered for as potential respondents. We asked the company to collect data from people who, as regular or non-regular workers, work with someone else in their workplace because we were interested in respondents' human relationships with their supervisors and coworkers, and negative behaviors toward them. Through the Internet survey, the final sample size was 312 individuals (175 males, 135 females). The ages of respondents varied from 20–65, and the average age was 38.23 years. Of 312 respondents, 169 were married and 143 were unmarried; 178 had no kids, and 134 had at least one kid. We did not ask the nationality of respondents, but the questionnaire was written in Japanese, therefore most of the respondents are considered to be Japanese.

### *Measures*

All original English items of measures were translated by the author in to Japanese.

ORB: The 17-item ORB scale was developed and proposed by Skarlicki and Folger (1997). However, of these only 10 items were utilized to measure ORB in this study for the following two reasons: first, they conducted exploratory factor analysis on the responses to these 17 items, and concluded, from the examination of eigenvalues, that single-item factor was the most appropriate as an ORB variable. Table 1 in the former study mentioned above, showed relatively high values of each item's factor loading, which implies these original items have common characteristics as ORB. Second, from a standpoint of Japanese employees, some items did not meet the definition of ORB as previously described. Some items were not appropriate for measuring ORB of Japanese workers because expressions of these items seem to be punishable as a crime or subject to disciplinary action, such as "on purpose, damaged equipment or work process", and "disobeyed a supervisor's instructions". Cronbach's alpha for the remaining ten items was 0.822.

Job satisfaction: Spector (1985, 1997) developed 36 items to measure nine aspects of job satisfaction (four items per aspect). These aspects include pay, promotion, supervision, benefit, rewards, operating procedure, coworkers, work itself, and communication. In this study, only 20 items to measure pay, supervision, co-workers, work itself, and communication considered to have a stronger effect on OCB and ORB were utilized.

However, because good communication with coworkers is based on a good relationship with these coworkers and vice versa, eight items of coworkers and communication were combined as one variable representing coworker satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for each of the four job satisfaction aspects was as follows: 0.844 for pay satisfaction; 0.790 for supervision satisfaction; 0.743 for coworker items; and 0.755 for work itself.

ORB and job satisfaction were measured using a 5-point regular Likert scale ranging from (1) "disagree" to (5) "agree".

Gender: Because past studies have found that females have a stronger tendency to perform OCB than males, gender was included as a control variable. Gender was measured as (1) "male" and (2) "female".

## Result

Table 1 shows basic statistics (mean, standard deviation, and inter-correlation) of variables. Cronbach's alpha values are depicted on the diagonal line. ORB has a negative correlation with gender, which means male employees are more inclined to perform ORB than females. ORB has significant negative correlations with four kinds of job satisfaction, as expected.

Table 1 Basic Statistics of Variables

variables	means	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 gender	1.430	0.496	—					
2 work satisfaction	3.149	0.906	-0.069	0.755				
3 pay satisfaction	2.673	0.944	-0.179**	0.347**	0.844			
4 supervisor satisfaction	3.183	0.901	-0.111	0.368**	0.353**	0.79		
5 coworker satisfaction	3.203	0.665	-0.005	0.454**	0.346**	0.583**	0.743	
6 ORB	1.978	0.644	-0.185**	-0.229**	-0.117*	-0.265**	-0.311**	0.822

N = 312, \* :  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* :  $p < 0.01$

Table 2 depicts a result of simple multiple regression analysis with ORB as a dependent variable and four kinds of job satisfaction as independent variables. Also, gender was input as a control variable in the equation. According to Table 2, female respondents were found to perform less ORB than males as expected. Work satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, and coworker satisfaction have significantly negative impacts on ORB, and is in line with result expectations. However, pay satisfaction has no significant effect on ORB. The possibility of multicollinearity is considered to be very small due to low values ( $< 2.0$ ) of all the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF).



Table 2 also shows the results of multiple regression analysis of male and female samples, respectively. Interestingly, while only supervisor satisfaction has a significantly negative impact on ORB when male employees were analyzed, only coworker satisfaction has a significantly negative effect on ORB for the female sample. This might imply that male employees tend to see the relationship with their supervisor as an important, but irresolvable problem, and female employees tend to consider the relationship with coworkers more burdensome than that with the supervisor. If male and female employees are dissatisfied with their respective most influencing factor, they tend to perform more ORB instead of seeking formal reprisal.

Table 2 Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

model	whole sample			male sample			female sample		
	Beta	t-values	sig.	Beta	t-values	sig.	Beta	t-values	sig.
gender	-0.210**	-3.902	<0.001						
work satisfaction	-0.109*	-1.784	0.075	-0.114	-1.414	0.159	-0.064	-0.652	0.515
pay satisfaction	-0.005	-0.076	0.939	-0.033	-0.425	0.671	0.044	0.478	0.634
supervisor satisfaction	-0.142**	-2.139	0.033	-0.242**	-2.548	0.012	<0.001	-0.003	0.997
coworker satisfaction	-0.179**	-2.590	0.010	-0.150	-1.629	0.105	-0.246**	-2.224	0.028
adj r2 / F-values	0.144 / 11.428***			0.176 / 10.400***			0.073 / 2.551**		

N = 312, \* :  $p < 0.1$ , \*\* :  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* :  $p < 0.01$

## Discussion

As previously described, only pay satisfaction, among four kinds of job satisfaction, had no significant effect on ORB. This tendency remained unchanged when male and female samples were separated. Needless to say, pay is one of the most important factors for employees, and the amount of pay is easily measured. Even so, why does it not influence ORB?

ORB comprises tit-for-tat behaviors of employees to console themselves mentally as they recognize their lack of sufficient power to actually change their undesirable situation. Therefore, instead of trying to change a real situation, they perform small, meaningless ill behaviors to emotionally address the imbalance between their task performance and the reward received from the organization.

Pay is indeed an important factor for all employees. However, compared to human relationships in the organization, which are invisible and difficult to define, pay is a visible factor; hence, pay dissatisfaction would generally encourage not small behaviors like ORB, but overt actions that correct lower pay situations, such as union bargaining.

Understandably, it makes no sense to take an inexpensive pen home as a tit-for-tat behavior to low pay because the cost of such a pen is inadequate to compensate for low pay.

As aforementioned, it is worth noting the difference in results when separately evaluating male and female employee data. While male employees tend to perform more ORB when they feel dissatisfaction towards the relationship with their supervisor, female employees exhibit increased ORB when they have a problem with their coworkers.

Supervisory satisfaction is slightly higher in male employees as compared to females ( $p < 0.05$ ), and there is no significant difference in coworker satisfaction between the genders. It is possible that these original differences of satisfaction between different genders have no or little effect on this result. Rather, for males, it is more important to maintain a good relationship with supervisors than coworkers. On the other hand, it is crucial for female employees to have an amicable relation with coworkers but not with supervisors. However, despite their importance with these employees, they might also be considered insufficient to directly improve a situation. In these circumstances, employees tend to exhibit more ORB to resolve the problem mentally instead of proactively. Of course, this is just an inference, and future studies must determine the cause of this difference.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the importance of ORB, it has not been given sufficient attention by OB researchers. Although each ORB is a small, venial behavior, accumulated ORBs could have a harmful impact on the functioning of an organization. As OB researchers have already examined OCB as one of the most important behavioral factors of employees that can influence organizational effectiveness, similarly they should also focus on ORB as an important research theme.

As a concept, ORB directly contrasts OCB, however, an empirical study on ORB poses a particular problem because it tends to be more difficult to collect data regarding bad behaviors of employees. In an empirical study on OCB, employees' OCB is often evaluated by the employees themselves or by supervisors. Employees are considered to be willing to express their good behaviors, and supervisors have little reluctance to evaluate subordinates' good behaviors for the organization or other coworkers because these good behaviors are considered to stem from their own good management—to at least to a certain degree. In contrast, people are usually reluctant to expose their own or other coworkers' negative acts, even if these are negligible. Let alone self-exposure of bad behaviors, subordinates' ORB is also regarded by a manager as his or her lack of sufficient skill and power to prevent subordinates from exhibiting such behaviors. Although we collected ORB data by asking respondents about their own bad behaviors, future studies should contrive a better way to

collect data that includes such sensitive information.

However, although this is a preliminary study with a limitation, as described above, to reveal the relationship between job satisfaction and ORB, we believe this study is an important initial step to entice OB researchers to devote more attention to ORB than they do currently.

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