

A Consideration on the Causal Relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Organizational Retaliatory Behavior

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Abstract

Organizational Retaliatory Behavior (ORB) refers to the modest tit-for-tat behavior of employees dissatisfied with an organization and is in contraposition to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Although factors influencing OCB have an oppositional impact on ORB, OCB and ORB also have a direct relationship. This study empirically examined how job satisfaction and organizational commitment influence the OCB-ORB relationship by utilizing the data collected from 312 Japanese employees. The specification search of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) revealed that the model which assumes a sequential causal relationship from antecedents to OCB to ORB is the best in terms of measures of fit. Some theoretical and practical implications are also proposed.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, organizational retaliatory behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment

Introduction

Employees' discretionary behaviors contributive to the organization have been viewed as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) by organizational behavior (OB) researchers since the early 1980s and have received much attention (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Currently, conceptual or empirical study on OCB has been conducted throughout most of the world. In contrast, subtle reprisal behavior of employees who feel a sense of dissatisfaction with an organization or its treatment is known as organizational retaliatory behavior (ORB). Although the concept of ORB was first proposed by Scarlicki and Folger (1997) more than 20 years ago, it has still attracted much less attention from OB researchers compared with OCB.

The reason that OCB has received much attention from OB researchers is that accumulated OCBs can make a large contribution to the functioning of the organization even though each OCB is small and powerless to the overall organization. Similarly, each ORB is also a modest recalcitrant behavior of employees that has a minor negative

impact on the organization. However, OB researchers should pay more attention to ORB because if these small behaviors are accumulated over a long period of time, they could have a fatal impact on the organization.

Because ORB is conceptually in contraposition to OCB, the factors influencing OCB are expected to have an oppositional effect on ORB. On the other hand, OCB might have a directly negative impact on ORB, or conversely, ORB might negatively influence OCB. However, the moral licensing theory assumes that OCB and ORB would have a positive relationship because one kind of behavior sometimes prompts the other. While considered an interesting view, empirical confirmation of this model has not yet been conducted.

This study aims to empirically reveal the relationship among OCB, ORB, and some attitudinal factors that were found by past studies to affect OCB. Concretely, by using the specification search of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), we made comparisons of measures of fit of various model candidates and specified the best model representing the relationship between OCB, ORB, and attitudinal factors.

The Definition and the Range of ORB

Employees' behaviors that negatively influence the functioning of the organization are referred to using various terms, and the relationships among these different terms are still ambiguous. First, ORB is defined as "adverse reactions to perceived unfairness by disgruntled employees toward their employer" (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997, p.434). In contrast, employees' behaviors negatively affecting the organization are generally termed as Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) (Sackett, Berry, Wiemann, & Laczó, 2006). By definition, CWB is broader than ORB. For example, CWB includes behavior such as physical aggression by an employee toward other employees or a supervisor, which is not related to unfair treatment of the organization. Such behaviors which reflect employees' personality and values but are not triggered by an unfair relationship with the organization are not included in ORB.

However, the above definition of ORB might be considered a little too broad to be positioned as the concept contrapositive to OCB. If a contributive behavior is to be called OCB, it has to meet the condition that it is not performed on the premise of the organization's formal system of recognizing and rewarding the behavior (Organ, 1988; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Similarly, ORB should not include employees'

behaviors that formally require the organization's institution to improve the current unfair situation in which they find themselves. For example, although whistle-blowing is an important activity to improve an unfair situation in the organization, it should not be included in ORB because it is a formal appeal to the upper institution in and around the organization to improve the situation (Parmerlee, Near, & Jensen, 1982).

ORB, on the other hand, consists of small, modest treasonable behavior of employees toward the organization. Most ORBs do not provide substantive benefits, for example, acquiring expensive goods, or an improvement in their real situation. For example, employees' taking home office consumables like a cheap ballpoint pen without permission is seen as a typical ORB. Although a ballpoint pen is low-cost, for most employees it makes almost no sense to take it home; their discontent will never be changed by such consumables. The implicit motive of this behavior is not to acquire the actual goods but to derive a good feeling or comfort. Thus, ORB should be defined as modest tit-for-tat behaviors of employees who feel dissatisfaction with the organization, as they are not only too small for the organization to blame these employees, but also for employees themselves to improve their real situation. Conceptualizing ORB in this way makes it beneficial to consider the relationship with OCB.

The Relationship Between ORB and OCB

Given the fact that ORB is conceptually in contraposition to OCB, it might simply be considered that the factors influencing OCB have an oppositional effect on ORB. The following factors that have been found to influence OCB are expected to have an impact on ORB (Organ, et al., 2006; Ueda, 2004, 2010, 2016, 2019a for a review).

The first is job satisfaction. As can be seen by the fact that OCB research was started with the motive to find out the effect of job satisfaction on a widely defined performance of employees including extra-role behaviors (Organ, 1977), job satisfaction is one of the most basic factors that has been consistently found to have a positive impact on OCB. As it has been shown that satisfied employees reciprocate the organization, it is easy to consider that employees who are dissatisfied with their job tend to perform ORB to the organization out of spite.

Along with job satisfaction, organizational (affective) commitment has also been recognized as one of the factors affecting OCB. An employee with a high organizational commitment has a strong motivation to exhibit OCB that contributes to the organization.

On the other hand, employees with low organizational commitment are considered to recognize a wider gap of values between the organization and self and perform more ORB than employees with high organizational commitment.

However, even though ORB is contraposed to OCB, the ease of these behaviors (how easily employees conduct these behaviors) is not necessarily the same. While OCB often increases the burden of employees, ORB sometimes reduces it. Then, a strong impact of attitudinal factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment are needed for employees to accept an increased burden. However, the effect of such attitudinal factors might not be needed to prompt the behaviors decreasing a burden for employees. Further, aside from the idea that common attitudinal factors affect them, an alternative idea is proposed that there is a direct influence on the relationship between OCB and ORB. For example, an ORB relating to “slacking off” in a job is considered to have a negative effect on an OCB associated with “extra effort” in it.

On the other hand, Bergeron’s (2007) resource-allocation framework assumes that the time and energy of employees are finite resources, and they allocate their resources to their formal job and OCB. Then, if employees are engaged in OCB, this can sometimes put them at odds with their formal job. If employees apply some of the resources to OCB overly through ORB, the relationship between OCB and ORB would be positive. This might sound strange, but it can happen in a situation where the range of the formal job includes some ambiguity or leeway. For example, lecture preparation is a formal job for a university professor, but how earnestly he or she does it is ambiguous and entirely up to them. Some might serve on a government committee or an academic society (OCB) which is at the expense of the resources (time) which should be used for lecture preparation (ORB). Although this situation may be exceptional, it shows that we should not simply assume the relationship between OCB and ORB is always negative.

Further, Klots and Bolino (2013) considered the possibility of a positive relationship between ORB and OCB from the standpoint of moral licensing. Moral licensing is the situation that an immoral behavior of a moral person is sometimes “licensed” or accepted by him or her and the other persons around. This idea is based on the moral balance model (Nissan, 1990) that describes how a person with a good moral character sometimes behaves immorally when faced with a situation where his or her moral judgment is needed.

The reason why a moral person might sometimes behave immorally is that he or she recognizes his or her moral equilibrium and moral regard. The position of moral equilibrium is the ideal moral point for a person, while moral regard refers to a current moral point. The former is stable, at least in the short term, while the latter moves according to each of his or her moral or immoral behaviors. A person tries to bring their moral regard in line with their moral equilibrium (Figure 1). If they recognize that their moral regard lies to the left of their moral equilibrium, they will try to behave more morally and bring their moral regard to the right. In contrast, if a person behaves morally and recognizes that their moral regard has moved to the right of their moral equilibrium, they will consider themselves to be licensed or permitted to do something immoral, and move to the left of their moral equilibrium. Thus, according to this notion, a person behaving immorally is motivated to do something moral or, conversely, a person active in moral behavior is facilitated to behave immorally simultaneously. In other words, ORB and OCB positively influence each other.

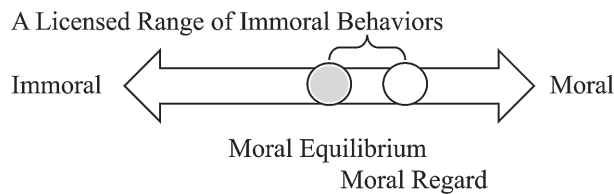


Figure 1 Moral Licensing Model

These views on a positive relationship between OCB and ORB, which are counter-intuitive, are very interesting. However, it is quite difficult to avoid considering a negative relationship between OCB and ORB in most work situations. A positive correlation between them based on Bergeron's (2007) resource-allocation framework might be established in unusual work situations such as university professors in Japan. Professors' formal jobs are not clear-cut in most Japanese universities; and even their lectures, which are regarded as one of their formal duties, are not subject to formal evaluation.

If the assumption of the moral licensing theory is valid, employees performing OCB would tend to facilitate ORB without changing the current level of OCB. However, in most real work situations where they perform OCB of their own free will, these employees first inhibit OCB before facilitating ORB if they recognize that their current

moral regard lies to the right of their moral equilibrium. If they cannot inhibit OCB, it could be considered that they are forced to continue OCB. Further, even if it is considered that employees performing OCB will be tempted to ORB, it is quite difficult to consider that employees engaging in ORB will be active in OCB.

Therefore, while these views are of interest, the relationship between OCB and ORB is expected to be negative in most real work situations.

Alternative Models and Hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1-1: Job satisfaction will have a positive impact on OCB.

H1-2: Job satisfaction will have a negative impact on ORB.

The positive impact of job satisfaction on OCB has been consistently confirmed by past OCB studies. And, because ORB consists of unsatisfied employees' small tit-for-tat behaviors toward the organization, an effect of job satisfaction on ORB is naturally considered to be negative.

H2-1: Organizational commitment will have a positive impact on OCB.

H2-2: Organizational commitment will have a negative impact on ORB.

As with job satisfaction, organizational commitment is considered to have a positive impact on OCB and a negative impact on ORB. However, while job satisfaction is related to employees' attitude toward concrete targets such as their own jobs, organizational commitment is associated with attitude toward more broad, abstract objects, for example, the whole organization. Due to this difference, there is significant value in confirming the effects of both attitudinal factors empirically.

H3: OCB will have a negative impact on ORB.

H4: ORB will have a negative impact on OCB.

Although the moral licensing model assumes a positive relationship between them, as already described in the previous section, this model is somewhat removed from most employees' actual situations. Thus it may only be applicable in rather exceptional situations. OCB and ORB are contradictory behaviors to each other. Furthermore, most people, including those employed, would consider themselves as someone consistent in their beliefs, attitude, and behaviors. If employees were to practice OCB and ORB simultaneously, they would feel a high sense of self-contradiction. It could then be considered that employees actively exhibiting OCB have a high motivation to inhibit

ORB, while employees engaging in ORB in secret tend to refrain from OCB. Figure 2 depicts these four hypotheses.

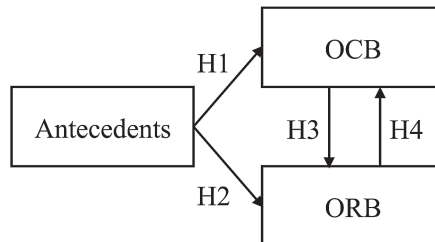


Figure 2 Our Model and Hypotheses

Research Method

Sample

For this study, we utilized The Net research service of Macromill, Inc., which many people had registered for as potential respondents. We requested the company to collect data from people who, either as regular or non-regular workers, work with someone else in their workplace because we were interested in respondents' human relationships with a supervisor and coworkers and their helping behavior toward them. The final sample size was 312 (male:177, female: 135). The ages of respondents varied from 20 to 65, with 38.23 being the average age. Of 312 respondents, 169 were married and 143 unmarried. There were 178 childless respondents, while 134 had at least one child.

Measures

All original English measurement items were translated by the author into Japanese.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Williams and Anderson (1991) classified OCB into two categories: organizational citizenship behavior for individuals (OCB-I) and organizational citizenship behavior for the organization (OCB-O). We utilized only OCB-I as our OCB variable because some items of OCB-O might be considered as formal duties for Japanese employees. In this study, the 7-item OCB-I scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) was utilized. This OCB-I scale includes various kinds of helping behaviors toward a supervisor, coworkers, and newcomers. While we translated each item into Japanese, the expression "a personal interest in other employees" in one of the original items was changed to "empathetic to other employees" because the former could give a false impression to Japanese people.

Cronbach's alpha for these seven items was 0.825.

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

Job satisfaction. Spector (1985) developed 36 items to measure nine aspects of job satisfaction (four items per aspect). These include pay, promotion, supervision, benefit, rewards, operating procedure, coworkers, work itself, and communication. In this study, only the four items to measure satisfaction with work itself were utilized because this scale was expected to have a stronger effect on OCB and ORB. Cronbach's alpha for the four items was 0.755.

Organizational commitment. We used the 6-item overall organizational commitment scale introduced by Marsden, Kalleberg, and Cook (1993). Considering the relatedness of Meyer and Allen's (1984, 1991) organizational commitment classification which comprises affective, normative, and continuance commitments, this scale is closely related to affective commitment. Cronbach's alpha for the six items was 0.829.

Gender: Although gender (male = 1, female = 2) is not an item related to our hypotheses, it is included in our analysis for reference with correlation analysis.

Result

Basic Statistics

Table 1 shows the basic statistics regarding variables. A significantly negative correlation between OCB and ORB ($\gamma = -0.333$, $p < 0.01$) is in accordance with our inference based on their concepts, although it is contrary to the moral licensing model. Significant positive correlations of OCB with job satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.269$, $p < 0.01$) and

organizational commitment ($\gamma = 0.143$, $p < 0.05$) were also as expected. Relating to a negative correlation between OCB and ORB, the latter had significant negative correlations with job satisfaction ($\gamma = -0.202$, $p < 0.01$) and organizational commitment ($\gamma = -0.116$, $p < 0.05$). This was also as expected. Although not related to our hypotheses, female employees tend to perform more OCB ($\gamma = 0.128$, $p < 0.05$), less ORB ($\gamma = -0.232$, $p < 0.01$), and have less organizational commitment ($\gamma = -0.162$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlation regarding Variables

variables	means	std. dev.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	1.430	0.496	-				
2. OCB (OCBI)	3.609	0.671	0.128*	(0.825)			
3. ORB	1.900	0.676	-0.232**	-0.333**	(0.822)		
4. Job Satisfaction	3.149	0.906	-0.069	0.269**	-0.202**	(0.755)	
5. Orgnaizational Commitment	2.684	0.793	-0.162**	0.143*	-0.116*	0.627**	(0.829)

n=312, **: $p < 0.01$, *: $p < 0.05$

Hypotheses Testing

The specification search of Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis was adopted for testing the hypotheses. Usually, SEM is utilized to confirm the model that reflects a researcher's hypotheses. However, by using the specification search of SEM, the best model can be explored among multiple model candidates. Here, eight alternative models ($2^3 = 8$) were created by removing each of the three path arrows of our hypothetical model and comparing them in terms of measures of fit. This process is important because there are alternative model candidates and it would not be sufficient to confirm whether our hypothetical model is the best one.

Table 2 shows measures of fit of each model with job satisfaction, OCB, and ORB. While models No.2, No.5, No.6, and No.8 assumed an effect of OCB on ORB, the final four models (No.9 to No.12) conversely assumed a causal flow from ORB to OCB. According to this table, the No.5 model had the best measures of fit ($C/df = 1.894$, $CFI = 0.921$, $TLI = 0.910$, $RMSEA = 0.054$). This model assumed a sequential causal flow where job satisfaction has a positive effect on OCB which, in turn, influences ORB. This model does not assume a direct effect of job satisfaction on ORB. Figure 3 displays the path coefficients of the best model at a 5% significant level. Therefore, among our hypotheses, this empirical result supports H1-1 and H3 but not H1-2 and H4.

Table 2 SEM Result of Alternative Models (Job Satisfaction)

models	parameters	df	C	C/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1. No Arrows	57	152	346.326	2.278	0.885	0.871	0.064
2. OCB -> ORB	58	151	304.214	2.015	0.909	0.897	0.057
3. JS -> OCB	58	151	327.141	2.166	0.896	0.882	0.061
4. JS -> ORB	58	151	338.089	2.239	0.889	0.875	0.063
5. JS -> OCB -> ORB	59	150	284.075	1.894	0.921	0.910	0.054
6. JS and OCB -> ORB	59	150	302.118	2.014	0.910	0.897	0.057
7. JS -> OCB and ORB	59	150	316.463	2.110	0.902	0.888	0.060
8. JS -> OCB and ORB; OCB -> ORB	60	149	282.844	1.898	0.921	0.909	0.054
9. ORB -> OCB	58	151	304.214	2.015	0.909	0.897	0.057
10. JS and ORB -> OCB	59	150	291.378	1.943	0.916	0.905	0.055
11. JS -> ORB -> OCB	59	150	294.464	1.963	0.915	0.903	0.056
12. JS -> OCB and ORB; ORB -> OCB	60	149	282.844	1.898	0.921	0.909	0.054

JS: Job Satisfaction

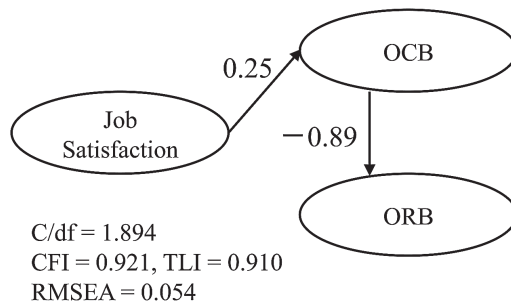
**Figure 3 The Best Model (Job Satisfaction)**

Table 3 shows the result of the specification search of SEM for alternative models with organizational commitment. As is the case with the models using job satisfaction in Table 2, the No.5 model had the best measures of fit ($C/df = 1.888$, $CFI = 0.914$, $TLI = 0.903$, $RMSEA = 0.053$). This model also assumed a sequential influence flow, from organizational commitment to OCB to ORB. In other words, there is no direct effect of organizational commitment on ORB. Path coefficients of the best model at a 5% significant level are depicted in Figure 4. Like Figure 3, organizational commitment positively affects OCB which, in turn, negatively influences ORB. This means that H2-1 and H3 are supported, but H2-2 and H4 are not.

Table 3 SEM Result of Alternative Models (Organizational Commitment)

models	parameters	df	C	C/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1. No Arrows	63	189	402.497	2.130	0.889	0.877	0.060
2. OCB -> ORB	64	188	360.386	1.917	0.911	0.900	0.054
3. OC -> OCB	64	188	395.597	2.104	0.892	0.880	0.060
4. OC -> ORB	64	188	399.182	2.123	0.891	0.878	0.060
5. OC -> OCB -> ORB	65	187	353.024	1.888	0.914	0.903	0.053
6. OC and OCB -> ORB	65	187	359.565	1.923	0.911	0.900	0.054
7. OC -> OCB and ORB	65	187	391.556	2.094	0.894	0.881	0.059
8. OC -> OCB and ORB; OCB -> ORB	66	186	352.553	1.895	0.914	0.903	0.054
9. ORB -> OCB	64	188	360.386	1.917	0.911	0.900	0.054
10. OC and ORB -> OCB	65	187	355.729	1.902	0.913	0.902	0.054
11. OC -> ORB -> OCB	65	187	356.623	1.907	0.912	0.901	0.054
12. OC -> OCB and ORB; ORB -> OCB	66	186	352.553	1.895	0.914	0.903	0.054

OC: Organizational Commitment

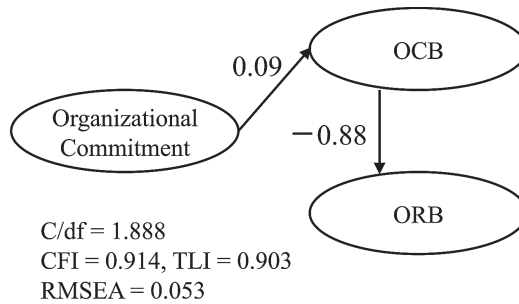


Figure 4 The Best Model (Organizational Commitment)

Discussion

As described in the previous section, a correlation between OCB and ORB is significantly negative, which means that moral licensing theory is not empirically confirmed. And through the specification search of SEM, the model assuming that an effect of an attitudinal factor on ORB is fully mediated by OCB has the highest validity with the best measures of fit. In other words, a direct effect of an attitudinal factor on ORB does not have to be considered.

As has already been described, we can explain the process that ORB is influenced by OCB by the fact that human beings generally seek to maintain consistency in their behaviors, statements, attitudes, and beliefs. An employee actively exhibiting OCB recognizes him or herself as a person who is willing to take an action that contributes to the organization. Therefore, to keep such self-recognition, they tend to avoid performing

ORB because it is recognized as an undesirable action for the organization. In contrast, an employee who has a passive stand toward OCB tends to perform ORB because he or she recognizes that they have different thinking and values from the organization. Thus, we can logically attribute an increase or decrease of ORB to OCB without supposing an effect of attitudinal factors.

However, looking closely at the values in Tables 2 and 3, it turns out that the No.8 model, which assumes not only an effect of OCB but also that of an attitudinal factor on ORB, has the second-best measures of fit behind No.5. Thus, it cannot be concluded that assuming a direct effect of attitudinal factors on ORB is completely wrong. Further, even more interesting is that among models assuming an effect from ORB to OCB, No.11 model, which does not assume a direct effect of an attitudinal factor on OCB, has relatively bad measures of fit, but No.12, which considers that an effect of an attitudinal factor on OCB is partially mediated by ORB, has very good measures of fit. Thus, it would be true to say that any clear conclusions about other causal relationships have not been learned from this study, while the consistent effect of attitudinal factors on OCB is confirmed.

Conclusion

Although ORB was proposed as the contrapositive concept of OCB more than 20 years ago, it seems to have received much less attention from academic researchers than OCB. Despite being preliminary research, this study has the potential value of more focus on ORB and empirically examining how common antecedents impact both OCB and ORB.

One of the main limitations of this study was dependent on Scarlicki and Folger's (1997) views concerning extracting concrete items of ORB. As OCB researchers sought Asian OCB items and dimensions after Western OCB researchers had established their dimensions (Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997), it will be essential for future studies to establish new ORB items and dimensions reflecting national cultural differences. We hope this study will motivate many OB researchers to pay more attention to ORB.

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