



## Organizational citizenship behaviour – Optimistic behaviour of engaged employees

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### Abstract

Organizational Citizenship Behavior is a unique social behavior of highly engaged employees that promotes the effective functioning of the organization and a part of an organization's routines, daily work process and culture practices. It is supportive, motivated and discretionary behavior of employees. Dyne has defined it as "behavior which benefits the organization and/or is intended to benefit the organization, which is discretionary and which goes beyond existing role expectations". It is functional, extra-role, pro-social organizational behaviors directed at individual, groups and / or an organization. The highly engaged employees are anticipated to go beyond the level of their work engagement. They will be involving in helping others, teaching the work situations to others, supporting to co workers in work difficulties and so on. The helping behaviors are not formally prescribed by the organization and for which there are no direct rewards or punishments. This paper focuses on discussing the Organizational Citizenship Behavior, OCB dimensions, Leadership characteristics to encourage OCB, potential pitfalls, how to encourage engaged employees to OCB in workplace.

**Keywords:** Organizational citizenship behavior, extra role behavior, pro- social organizational behavior, engaged employee

### Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior is a key employee's psychological and behavioral aspect of an organization to the organization's effective functioning and performance. Since 1970, it has been conceptualized by many researchers globally. Dennis Organ, the father of OCB (1988) has defined OCB as "Individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization." He discusses the three critical aspects of OCB. First, OCBs are thought of as discretionary behaviors, which are not part of the job description, and are performed by the employee as a result of personal choice. Second, OCBs go above and beyond that which is an enforceable requirement of the job description. Finally, OCBs contribute positively to overall organizational effectiveness.

**Contextual performance:** Contextual performance is defined as non-task related work behaviors and activities that contribute to the social and psychological aspects of the organization. It consists of four dimensions: persistence of enthusiasm, assistance to others, rule and proscribed procedure following, and openly defending the organizations objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) [2]. OCB and contextual performance share their defining attributes as they both consist of behaviors other than those needed to perform the routine functions of the job. These behaviors are discretionary and each employee chooses the amount and degree to which they will perform them. While contextual performance and OCB share a good part of their content domain, there are some important differences between the two constructs. One of the main requirements of OCBs is that they are not formally rewarded, which is not the case for contextual performance. Organ (1997) contends that OCBs may at some point encourage some sort of reward, but that these rewards would be indirect and uncertain.

**Pro-social Organizational Behavior:** POB is defined as behavior within an organization that is aimed at improving the welfare of another person (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986) [3]. The important distinction here is that this type of behavior, unlike OCB, can be unrelated to the organization. Thus, someone exhibiting pro-social behavior could be helping a coworker with personal matter.

**Extra-Role Behavior:** ERB is defined as "Behavior that attempts to benefit the organization and that goes beyond existing role expectations" by Van Dyne, Cummings and Mclean-Parks (1995). While similar in many aspects, there do exist some important differences between OCB and ERB. Two interesting concepts are a part of ERB that are not included in OCB: whistle blowing and principled organizational dissent. Whistle blowing involves the reporting of one employee by another so that unethical and or illegal practices are brought to the attention of authorities (Near & Miceli, 1987). Principled organizational dissent is when employees protest the organization because of some kind of injustice (Graham, 1986, as cited in Organ *et al.*, 2006). Both of these ideas contribute to ERB in the sense that their purpose is to further good for the organization and that they are not included in the formal job description.

### OCB Dimensions

The construct of OCB, from its conception, has been considered multidimensional. Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) [5] first proposed two dimensions: Altruism and General compliance. These behaviors can both be directed within or outside of the organization. There is no direct link, or one-to-one relationship, between every instance of helping behavior and a specific gain for the organization. The highly engaged employees may have the chances of being altruistic and optimistic in workplaces. Later, Organ (1988) deconstructed the dimension of general compliance and added additional dimensions of OCB. This deconstruction resulted in a five-factor model consisting of altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and

sportsmanship. Many research studies have found that these behaviors were commonly observed in highly engaged employees in workplaces.

**A. Altruistic behavior of engaged employee:** is defined by discretionary behaviors that have the effect of helping a specific work colleagues with an organizationally relevant task or problem.

**B. Engaged employees may be conscientious:** the behaviors that go well beyond the minimum role requirements of the organization. These behaviors indicate that employees accept and adhere to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the organization.

**C. Engaged employees are civic virtues:** The behaviors that indicate the employee's deep concerns and active interest in the life of the organization (Law *et al.*, 2005). This dimension also encompasses positive involvement in the concerns of the organization (Organ *et al.*, 2006). Examples of civic virtue in daily affairs such as attending meetings and keeping up with what is going on with the organization in general.

**D. Courtesy of being engaged:** The discretionary behaviors that aim at preventing work-related conflicts with others. This dimension is a form of helping behavior, but one that works to prevent problems from arising. It also includes the word's literal definition of being polite and considerate of others (Organ *et al.*, 2006).

**E. Sportsmanship quality of engaged employees:** The willingness on the part of the employee that signifies the employee's tolerance of less-than-ideal organizational circumstances without complaining and blowing problems out of proportion. Organ *et al.* (2006) further define sportsmanship as an employee's "ability to roll with the punches" even if they do not like or agree with the changes that are occurring within the organization.

Williams and Anderson (1991) divided up the dimensions of OCB into two different types of OCB based on whom the behaviors were directed at. *Organizational citizenship behavior – individuals (OCBI)* include behaviors that are aimed at other individuals in the workplace. Altruism and courtesy are actions aimed at other employees and thus fall under the umbrella of OCBI. *Organizational citizenship behavior - organizational (OCBO)* includes behaviors directed at the organization as a whole. Conscientiousness, Civic virtue, and Sportsmanship are behaviors intended for the benefit of the organization and can subsequently be considered OCBOs.

**Leadership Characteristics to encourage OCB**

The leadership styles can encourage OCB of engaged employees in various ways if deployed effectively (Organ *et al.*, 2006), though the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) is also important.

**Instrumental Leadership:** Facilitates role clarity—supervisor should inform subordinates clearly what is expected of them.

**Supportive Leadership:** Concern for employee wellbeing more likely to be reciprocated with altruistic behaviors.

**Transformational Leadership:** Facilitates motivation – inspire and support employees, high (but not unreasonable) performance expectations. Good quality LMX (which is simply the exchange relationship and manner of interaction between a superior and subordinate) is characterized by mutual trust and liking, and both parties feel inclined to reciprocate courteous and altruistic acts, which facilitates OCB.

**Group Characteristics:** Four factors have been identified in this area (Organ *et al.*, 2006) – Group cohesiveness (facilitates trust and satisfaction; desire to remain in group), Team-member exchange (TMX) (influences motivation and group cohesiveness), Group potency (generates synergy and enables cooperation) and Perceived team support (concern for each other's wellbeing). Improvements in any of these four areas will lead to an increase in (co-worker directed) OCB, especially if the organization is group- and teamwork-oriented.

**Pitfalls of OCB**

**Discrimination:** Be especially wary of implicit gendered expectations – research has shown that men are rewarded for OCB more than women, as women are expected to engage in certain types of citizenship behaviors (such as being altruistic and courteous) more than men.

**Organizational Justice:** In addition to the gender bias, if some supervisors reward 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 behavior (e.g. theft, absenteeism) (Marcus & Schuler, 2004).

**Habituation:** If OCB is rewarded regularly, you may find that OCB levels will rise across the organization over time. What was once considered OCB (e.g. working overtime) may become an internalized organizational norm, and is no longer spontaneous and voluntary but expected of workers. Research into this phenomenon, termed citizenship pressure, is relatively recent, and though contested, it may impact negatively on employee stress levels. (Organ *et al.*, 2006, p. 93)

**Encouraging OCB in the workplace**

**Office social environment:** A working environment is that promotes or is conducive to engaged employees to demonstrating OCB. Certain types of group norms (e.g. everyone should only do the minimum amount of work required, everyone should mind his/her own business, no one should talk to the supervisor) can stifle worker initiative and spontaneity, and this will decrease incidents of OCB. Group norms may be difficult to break but other things can be done to make workers more social – such as encouraging staff to attend office functions or having more office functions, or office-wide birthday lunches. (Organ *et al.*, 2006, p. 93)

**Supervisor awareness:** Training or educating management about OCB will make them more aware of employee displays of OCB. They may choose to include OCB in their

performance appraisals, or devise their own casual/informal reward system to encourage OCB.

**Hiring practices:** The impact of personality on OCB is small, an outgoing, attentive, enthusiastic employee with a positive outlook and 'can do' attitude will be more inclined to engage in OCB. If psychometric testing is a part of your interview/hiring process, consider looking out for traits related to OCB, and have these staff motivate others to perform.

### Conclusion

Citizenship behaviors of engaged employees come in many distinct shapes and forms. Traditionally it is believed and practiced as the worker who 'goes above and beyond' the minimum requirements, it can also be the employee who takes the initiative and always offers to lend a hand to all; the knowledgeable, helpful and cooperative colleague; the senior staff member who is able to roll with the punches; or the friendly, approachable manager who shows the new employees around the office and introduces them to other staff. All of these types of OCB should be actively encouraged the employees to be engaged in creating the support work environment in the organizations through enhancing and encouraging each other's performance and wellbeing, and this is reflected in reduced costs and increased profitability at the organizational level.

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