

## Effect of department structure on the organizational citizenship behavior–department effectiveness relationship

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the variable of organizational structure is related to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational effectiveness within an organizational setting at the department level. Survey data were analyzed from a sample of 101 firms in the U.S., though missing data leaves only 78 complete cases. To avoid common method bias, both supervisors and subordinates provide data for this study. Two competing models are examined: a moderated model versus a mediated model testing the impact of OCB on the structure–department effectiveness relationship. A strong mediated relationship is found while the moderated model is insignificant. Thus, the relationship between structure, measured on an organic–mechanistic scale, and departmental effectiveness is partly driven by OCB.

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### 1. Introduction

Though the majority of research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been conducted at the individual level of analysis, there are theoretical reasons to believe that unit-level outcomes associated with OCB are important too (Ehrhart and Naumann, 2004). In the aggregate, OCB makes for a more effective organization (Organ, 1988), a proposition that is gaining empirical support (e.g., Koys, 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1997). However, the question remains of whether or not the emerging support for the effects of OCB on organizational effectiveness will hold over all sets of organizational circumstances and environments. Little research has examined the conditions under which high levels of unit-level OCB are likely to form (Ehrhart and Naumann, 2004). For example, the organizational structure of a firm could impede or facilitate the

impact of OCB on organizational outcomes (George and Jones, 1997). Thus, an investigation of an organizational condition, such as unit-level structure, should add to our understanding of the effects of OCB on organizational effectiveness.

The specific purpose of this study is to examine how an organizational unit's structure, defined as how the tasks, decision-making hierarchy and goals are specified, might influence the relationship between OCB and the unit's effectiveness. The reason for examining this relationship is that two conflicting perspectives (one with structure as an antecedent and the other with structure as a moderator of the OCB-effectiveness relationship) have evolved from and been suggested in previous research and theoretical development (George and Jones, 1997; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997; Van Dyne et al., 1995). Our study is an initial step to examine this disjoint in the literature. We will do this by first discussing the evolution of OCB and its dimensionality, then review the literature on OCB and its effects on the macro-level variables of organizational effectiveness and structure. Two competing models that could explain the relationships among this study's variables are outlined and empirically tested. We then discuss the implications of our findings in this under researched area.

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### 1.1. Dimensionality of performance

Research on job performance dimensions indicates that organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) augments task performance (Organ, 1988; Smith et al., 1983). Also referred to as contextual performance in the literature (e.g., Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994), OCB was originally theorized to be a behavior that tends to be discretionary and not organizationally rewarded. Since it was considered discretionary, OCB was separate from an individual's job or task requirements. However, more recent conceptualizations of this construct have suggested that OCB and contextual performance are now essentially the same construct and that the discretionary part of the definition is unneeded (Organ, 1997). Behavioral examples of OCB include helping others, speaking well of the organization, and cooperating. This performance dimension has been shown to be distinct from task performance (e.g., Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994) and is best predicted in individuals using personality variables (Van Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996; Bott et al., 2003). A recent, rigorous construct validity study shows that citizenship behaviors are conceptually and empirically distinguishable factors of job performance ratings (Scullen et al., 2003).

Task performance and OCB both affect the performance of the organization positively, but through very different mechanisms. Task performance, typically included in a job description, contributes to the organization through its input to the primary economic goal or purpose of the organization. Task performance allows the effective and efficient functioning of the organization including acquisition of inputs, transformation of inputs into outputs, distribution of outputs and the planning, coordinating and supervising that ensures the smooth functioning of organizational activities. As will be discussed later, OCB contributes to organizational performance through interpersonal, helping behavior involved in the context of performing the work.

### 1.2. Dimensionality of OCB

Much of the literature conceptualizes OCB as a multi-dimensional performance variable (e.g., Organ, 1988; Williams and Anderson, 1991) comprised of two dimensions (e.g., Smith et al., 1983) up to seven dimensions (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The seminal piece by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) conceptualized and developed a two dimension scale – altruism and generalized compliance – which were used as the basis for much research over the following 20 years. These two dimensions map onto the Coleman and Borman Integrated Model dimensions, “interpersonal citizenship” and “organizational citizenship” performance, but Coleman and Borman (2000) discuss the need for a third dimension, “job/task citizenship” performance. Interpersonal citizenship is defined as behaviors that assist, support, and develop organizational members through cooperative and facilitative efforts that go beyond expectations; organizational citizenship performance is defined as behavior that demonstrates commitment to the organization through allegiance and loyalty and compliance with rules, etc.; and job/task conscientiousness is defined as

extra efforts that go beyond role requirements and that demonstrate dedication to the job (Coleman and Borman, 2000). Given the parsimonious, but encompassing, nature of this integrated model, these three dimensions were used in this study. However, the number of dimensions is an ongoing discussion in the literature.

LePine, Erez, and Johnson (2002) have argued that OCB may best be conceptualized as a latent construct defined as a tendency to be cooperative and helpful in organizational settings. In their multi-faceted meta-analysis analyzing the results of 37 studies, all analyses pointed to a singular measure of OCB as most appropriate. They showed that behavioral dimensions were highly related to each other, that relationships between predictors and OCB do not depend on the behavioral definition of OCB, and that there is no advantage to measuring OCB dimensions when results were compared to over all estimates of OCB. Drawing on this evidence, we adopt a similar conceptualization of OCB and measure this variable as a latent second-order construct.

### 1.3. OCB link to organizational effectiveness

OCB contributes to organizational effectiveness through its impact on the context in which the task is performed (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). These behaviors are important and desirable for an organization to the extent they achieve results such as more effective communication that allows best practices to be shared among work groups or allows more coordination between work groups. While constructive change-oriented communication, or voice, is related to contextual performance, it does not relate directly to task performance, though it should contribute in the aggregate to organizational effectiveness (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001). Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997) argue that the presence of OCB in an organization can increase effectiveness through mechanisms such as increased managerial and co-worker productivity, more effective use of scarce resources, or increased organizational flexibility.

In an attempt to summarize the evidence supporting the relationship between OCB and organizational effectiveness, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997) reasoned that this behavioral dimension of performance should increase group, department and organization performance “by ‘lubricating’ the social machinery of the organization, reducing friction, and/or increasing efficiency (pg. 135).” Empirical evidence shows that OCB is related to outcomes such as increased sales unit effectiveness in insurance companies (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1994), increased profits in restaurants (Koys, 2001), work group performance in paper mills (Podsakoff et al., 1997), and organizational effectiveness in restaurants (Walz and Niehoff, 1996). Thus, existing research indicates that OCB does positively affect organizationally desirable outcomes which in turn must have positive effect on organizational effectiveness.

### 1.4. OCB link to organizational structure

Although research has indicated OCB is related to organizational performance and certain factors such as change-oriented

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