



Are the emotionally intelligent good citizens or counterproductive? A meta-analysis of emotional intelligence and its relationships with organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior

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ABSTRACT

This research project examines whether emotional intelligence (EI) is related to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). A key question concerns the degree to which EI is related to OCB and CWB after controlling for other established predictors. The study uses meta-analytical summaries of existing research (for EI-OCB, $k = 68$, $N = 16,386$; for EI-CWB, $k = 17$, $N = 3914$). It uses meta-analytical controls to obtain the best estimates of effect sizes, incremental validity, and relative importance. This meta-analysis found that EI is positively associated with OCB and negatively related to CWB. When controlling for ability measures of EI, the Big Five personality measures, general self-efficacy, cognitive intelligence, and self-rated performance, both self-report measures of EI and mixed competency measures of EI show incremental validity and relative importance in predicting OCB and CWB. An analysis of self-report EI found that the effects of EI on OCB and CWB are stronger in health care and service industries than in industries where emotional labor demands are lower. The results imply that organizations can increase OCB and reduce CWB by recruiting employees high in EI and by training employees in emotional competencies.

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For almost a century, management scholars and practitioners held Weber's view that emotions in the workplace interfered with administrative rationality, and that emotions led to favoritism and caused conflict and other undesirable behaviors. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) quoted Weber's famous statement (translated and reprinted in 1968) that bureaucracy prospers

... the more it is "dehumanized," the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation. (Weber, 1968, p.75).

As this quote illustrates, Weber equated emotions with irrational behavior, the sort of behavior that contributes to counterproductive work behavior (CWB). However, Ashforth and Humphrey argued that emotions can be functional for organizations, and that emotions are essential to organizational commitment and positive morale. Instead of interfering with decision-making, they maintained that emotions can spur

creativity and improve decision-making when properly managed and stimulated.

The negative view of emotions began to change with the publication of Goleman's (1995) influential book called *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. According to this perspective, employees and others low on emotional intelligence (EI) may experience anger, panic, fear, jealousy, and other negative emotions when confronted with problems, and react in antisocial and other dysfunctional ways. Although people high in EI may experience these same negative emotions too, their ability to regulate their emotions allows them to more successfully handle these potentially disruptive feelings. People high on EI regulate their emotions to excel at work and in life, and perform empathic prosocial behaviors. This view suggests that EI would be an important variable predicting prosocial organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and CWB.

Goleman's (1995) book aroused considerable controversy because of his claim that EI was often more important than IQ in determining success at school and at work (see also Cherniss, 2001), and this controversy continues to this day. Although numerous studies have shown that EI is related to various positive outcomes, critics have argued that these positive relationships would disappear once the studies

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controlled for cognitive intelligence and established personality measures such as the Big Five (for a review of these criticisms, see [Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011](#), who acknowledge that the requests to demonstrate incremental validity are reasonable). Effect sizes for variables are best established by meta-analyses that summarize the effect sizes across various studies. Meta-analyses are also the best way to determine incremental validity and relative importance because they use the best estimates for the effect sizes of the different variables. No prior meta-analyses have examined the relationships between EI and OCB and CWB. Thus, a crucial question addressed by this meta-analysis concerns the ability of EI measures to predict OCB and CWB when controlling for other established predictors.

There is also considerable controversy about the nature of EI and how to measure it ([Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005](#)). Whereas some view EI as a form of intelligence that should be measured by “ability” items (e.g., [Salovey & Mayer, 1990](#)), others view EI more in trait terms ([Petrides, 2009a, 2009b; Petrides & Furnham, 2003; Smith, Saklofske, & Yan, 2015](#)). According to one popular definition of trait EI, it is “a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” ([Vernon, Petrides, Bratko, & Schermer, 2008](#), page 635, definition based on [Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007](#)). A third view treats EI as a set of mixed traits and competencies (e.g., [Bar-On, 2002; Boyatzis, Brizz, & Godwin, 2011; Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012](#)). Thus, this meta-analysis aims to cast light on this issue by examining how well ability, trait, and mixed measures do in terms of incremental validity and relative importance. A finding that the three types of measures have different associations with OCB and CWB would further support the belief that these measures are conceptually distinct and represent different concepts.

Alongside with task performance, OCB has emerged as one of the most important variables of interest to organizational psychologists and practitioners. In his early conceptualization of OCB, [Organ \(1988, p. 4\)](#) maintained that “OCB represents 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”. In an important revision of his definition of OCB, [Organ \(1997, p. 95\)](#) stated that OCB is “performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place”. This increased emphasis on the social and psychological environment suggests that EI, a trait or competency related to social skills and psychological knowledge ([Goleman, 1995; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Petrides, 2009a, 2009b; Petrides & Furnham, 2003; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004](#)), should also play a role in performing OCB as well as CWB.

To sum up, this meta-analysis aims to address several key issues. First, it is essential to understand whether EI is positively associated with the performance of OCB, and negatively related to CWB, and the overall size of these relationships. Second, because there are three major ways to conceptualize and measure EI, it is important to know how the three methods compare in their ability to predict OCB and CWB. Third, citizenship behaviors and counterproductive behaviors can be directed either toward individuals or the organization, so it is useful to know if the target influences the size of the EI - OCB/CWB relationships. Fourth, it is vital to know the relative importance of EI as a predictor when other established predictors are controlled, such as the Big Five, general self-efficacy, and cognitive intelligence. Fifth, it is useful to know if the type of work performed (i.e., industry type) influences the relationships between EI and OCB/CWB.

1. Theory and hypotheses

1.1. The importance of EI

A considerable number of scholars and researchers have developed measures of EI. [Ashkanasy and Daus \(2005, p. 441\)](#) brought clarity to

the field by classifying the scales into three streams. These have become known as the stream 1 ability measures, the stream 2 self-reports, and the stream 3 mixed competencies models. This classification system has been used in prior meta-analysis research, reviews, and textbooks ([Humphrey, 2013; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2016a, 2016b; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011; Walter et al., 2011](#)). O'Boyle and his colleagues demonstrated support for the classification system by showing that the three streams have different correlations with the Big Five personality factors and with cognitive intelligence, thus demonstrating their distinctness. They found that although the 3 streams had similar correlations with job performance, they differed in their incremental validity regarding job performance. Their study supports the view that ability measures are empirically as well as conceptually distinct from trait measures. This view is supported by [Joseph and Newman \(2010\)](#), who found that performance based measures (i.e., ability measures) had corrected correlations of 0.12 with self-report EI measures and 0.23 with mixed EI measures. Consequently, it would be useful to see if ability measures, self-report measures, and mixed measures also differ in their incremental validity with regard to OCB and CWB.

The three streams differ considerably in their conceptualization of EI. Ability measures, such as the MSCEIT V2.0, were devised to meet standard criteria for intelligence measures, with objective right and wrong answers. This matches their definition of EI as a type of intelligence ([Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003](#)). In contrast, many investigators in the self-report stream 2 category conceptualize EI in trait terms ([Andrei, Siegling, Aloe, Baldaro, & Petrides, 2016; Petrides, 2009a, 2009b; Petrides & Furnham, 2003; Petrides et al., 2007; Siegling, Vesely, Petrides, & Saklofske, 2015; Smith et al., 2015](#)). They believe that EI should be assessed the way most personality traits are measured by using self-reports, and they have argued that people's internal emotional states can best be measured by self-reports. Like the stream 2 self-reports, the stream 3 mixed competency measures use self-reports ([Bar-On, 2002; Boyatzis et al., 2011; Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012](#)); however, they are considered “mixed competencies” because they include a greater number of dimensions and subscales. Because of this greater breadth, it is possible that the mixed competency measures will show greater ability to predict outcome measures.

A number of recent reviews and meta-analyses have found that EI is related to a variety of important outcomes. Meta-analyses have confirmed that EI is positively related to job performance ([Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004](#)) after controlling for cognitive intelligence and the Big Five ([Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2011](#)). A meta-analysis has also confirmed that EI shows incremental validity and relative importance when predicting job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions ([Miao et al., 2016a](#)). Meta-analyses have also shown that EI is related to physical, mental and psychosomatic health ([Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010; Schutte et al., 2007](#)). Reviews of the literature have concluded that EI is positively related to leadership emergence, the performance of effective leadership behaviors (such as transformational leadership), and overall leadership effectiveness ([Walter et al., 2011](#)). Moreover, leaders score higher on EI than do followers ([Siegling, Nielsen, & Petrides, 2014b; Siegling, Sfeir, & Smyth, 2014a](#)). Per a recent meta-analysis, leaders' EI positively relates to subordinates' job satisfaction even when controlling for personality and cognitive intelligence ([Miao et al., 2016b](#)).

Although meta-analyses have supported the validity of EI regarding job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, mental and physical health, life satisfaction, and leadership (see above), no meta-analyses have been done to examine the effects of EI on either OCB or CWB. Because of the importance of both OCB and CWB to the workplace, it is important to understand the role that EI might play regarding OCB and CWB. Scholars have argued forcefully that EI measures need to demonstrate incremental validity over measures of cognitive intelligence and Big Five personality measures ([Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009](#)). As of yet, the incremental

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