



Toward a new measure of organizational environmental citizenship behavior



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ABSTRACT

Previous work has conceptualized workplace pro-environmental behaviors within the organizational citizenship behavior framework and a scale to measure these behaviors has been developed. The goal of the present research was to address conceptual and psychometric issues of this scale by: (a) conceptualizing organizational environmental citizenship behavior within the dominant target-based framework, (b) developing and refining a new, more comprehensive measure of organizational environmental citizenship behavior and (c) validating this new measure by providing evidence for its content, construct, convergent, discriminant, concurrent, incremental concurrent and nomological validity, and its internal and temporal stability. To this end, six separate studies (N = 652) were conducted, which together produced a psychometrically acceptable measure of organizational environmental citizenship behavior. Theoretical and practical implications from this research and direction for future research are discussed.

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Organizations' environmental footprints have attracted much interest over the last few decades. Although organizations contribute significantly to environmental degradation, they also have the potential to enhance environmental preservation (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). Many of the environmental initiatives organizations are implementing to improve their environmental performance involve employees engaging in pro-environmental behaviors that, while not part of their formal job descriptions, contribute to the success of formal environmental management systems. As such, these behaviors are considered to be an important contributor to organizational environmental sustainability and have attracted much scholarly interest (e.g., Boiral & Paillé, 2012; Daily, Bishop, & Govindarajulu, 2009); yet, like many newly-developed constructs, workplace pro-environmental behaviors are conceptualized and measured in different ways (e.g., Boiral & Paillé, 2012; Daily et al., 2009; Robertson & Barling, 2013), often without any organizing theoretical foundation.

Recently, scholars have looked to the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)-defined 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" (Organ, 1988, p. 4)-literature to conceptualize workplace pro-environmental behaviors. Specifically, two independent groups of researchers (e.g., Boiral, 2009; Daily et al., 2009) extended the OCB framework to conceptualize organizational environmental citizenship behavior

(OCBE) as "individual and discretionary social behaviors that are not explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that contribute to a more effective environmental management by organizations" (Boiral, 2009, p. 223). Based on this definition, Boiral and Paillé (2012) developed and partially validated a measure of OCBE that is comprised of three factors: eco-initiatives, eco-helping, and eco-civic engagement. Although an important initial step, Boiral and Paillé did not assess their measure's content and criterion-related validity, nor did they assess convergent validity with similar measures or their scale's temporal stability.

While these methodological issues limit our confidence in the psychometric properties of Boiral and Paillé's measure, our primary concerns with their scale lie within the theoretical framework on which their measure is based and their operationalization of OCBE. First, Boiral and Paillé developed their measure based on Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie's (2006) six dimensional OCB model and not the dominant target-based framework (Williams & Anderson, 1991), which is considered to be the most comprehensive, parsimonious and conceptually meaningful model into which other sub-dimensions can be subsumed (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009; Spitzmuller, Van Dyne, & Ilies, 2008). Second, we question as to how certain items reflect the factor structure of Boiral and Paillé's scale. In particular, we are uncertain how the item "I make suggestions to my colleagues about ways to protect the environment more effectively, even when it is not my direct responsibility" reflects the eco-initiatives factor (i.e., individual workplace pro-environmental behaviors) rather than eco-helping (i.e., helping colleagues to become more environmentally friendly). Third,

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although Boiral and Paillé's scale is appropriately general in the sense that it can be applied to various industries, organizations and jobs, the broadness of their measure of eco-initiatives is problematic. Specifically, this sub-scale assesses the extent to which employees engage in pro-environmental behaviors in general (e.g., "I carry out environmental actions and initiatives in my daily work activities"), and therefore, contrary to domain sampling theory (which highlights the importance of scale items adequately reflecting the construct they purport to measure; Ghiselli, Campbell, & Zedeck, 1981; Hinkin, 1998), does not include specific workplace pro-environmental behaviors (e.g., recycling and conservation). As a result, their measure does not adequately capture the full range of behaviors that comprise OCBE and only provides partial insight into the nature of them. Creating behavioral scales requires a delicate balance of precision and generalizability. Perhaps not surprisingly, Boiral, Paillé, and Raineri (2015) have indicated that future research should combine their scale with measures that assess concrete workplace pro-environmental behaviors.

Given these issues, the OCBE construct remains to be adequately defined and a fully validated comprehensive measure does not exist. Effectively conceptualizing and measuring workplace pro-environmental behavior is crucial, as the absence of a unifying framework and corresponding measure will likely hinder future research. Further, without a comprehensive measure of OCBE, organizations cannot gauge how frequently employees enact different types of pro-environmental behaviors. This is important as research shows individuals who engage in one type of pro-environmental behavior (e.g., recycling) do not necessarily engage in other types (e.g., conservation behaviors; see Steg & Vlek, 2009 for a review). As a result, companies are unable to tailor interventions to target influencing specific types of OCBE. Accordingly, our goals in this research were to: (a) conceptualize OCBE within the dominant target-based OCB framework, (b) develop and refine a more comprehensive measure of OCBE that is precise (i.e., assesses specific workplace pro-environmental behaviors) yet general (i.e., encompasses general families of behaviors that can be enacted across various contexts) in nature, and (c) fully validate this measure by providing evidence for its internal and temporal stability, and its content, construct, convergent, discriminant, concurrent, incremental concurrent and nomological validity. Doing so will enable researchers to continue to investigate the nomological network of OCBE and enhance confidence in any resulting findings, while at the same time, providing organizations with a comprehensive tool that can be used to identify the frequency with which employees engage in various types of pro-environmental initiatives.

1. Theoretical development

1.1. Extending the target-based typology to include OCBE

Workplace pro-environmental behaviors are best conceptualized within the OCB framework because the majority of them (i.e., 70–85%; Boiral et al., 2015) represent employee initiatives that are discretionary and not tied to the formal reward system. However, proposing yet another dimension of OCB is hazardous. Spitzmuller et al. (2008) note that the proliferation of OCB dimensions makes it difficult to establish a unified research domain and develop a coherent nomological network. Thus, they recommend that future research use the target-based framework proposed by Williams and Anderson (1991), and as a result, recent research is increasingly relying on this framework (e.g., Decoster, Stouten, Camps, & Tripp, 2014; Ferris, Lian, Beown, & Morrison, 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2009). The target-based framework (Williams & Anderson, 1991) includes two forms of OCB: those directed toward the organization (OCBO), which include "behaviors that benefit the organization in general" (p. 601–602); and those directed toward individuals (OCBI), which include "behaviors that immediately benefit specific individuals and indirectly through this means, contributes to the organization" (p. 602).

To avoid adding further confusion to the literature, and for reasons previously discussed, we believe workplace pro-environmental behaviors are best conceptualized within the target-based framework and a measure of such behaviors should be developed based on this framework. Thus, we define OCBE as *individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate, immediately benefits the natural environment, and indirectly through this means, contributes to the organization and benefits specific individuals*. Examples of these behaviors include recycling, conserving energy at work and encouraging other employees to reduce their environmental impact. Like Boiral (2009), we define OCBE as discretionary behavior aimed at improving the natural environment. We diverge from Boiral (2009) inasmuch as our definition is consistent with the conceptualization of Williams and Anderson's (1991) target-based typology, focusing as it does on immediately benefiting the natural environment, and indirectly benefitting the organization (consistent with OCBO) and specific individuals (consistent with OCBI).

1.2. OCBE benefits the natural environment, organizations and specific individuals

By contributing to organizations' environmental performance, OCBE will immediately benefit the natural environment, and indirectly through this means contribute to the success of the organization (see below). For example, a reduction in the amount of waste produced by an organization largely depends on employees engaging in conservation and recycling behaviors. Boiral and Paillé (2012) suggest that there are four ways in which workplace pro-environmental behavior can improve an organization's environmental performance: Individual behavior that: (a) challenges current practices and promotes new environmental initiatives or (b) improves environmental procedures, (c) individual ideas and suggestions about eco-innovations, and (d) employee involvement in environmental management systems. Supporting these claims are several studies that provide empirical support for the impact of employees' environmental behaviors on organizations' environmental performance (e.g., Boiral et al., 2015; Kennedy, Whiteman, & Williams, 2015; Paillé, Chen, Boiral, & Jin, 2014), which in turn, positively impacts the natural environment. For example, a reduction in an organization's consumption of materials that results from employees' aggregate conservation and recycling behaviors lowers greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing the need to extract, process and transport materials (Swim, Clayton, & Howard, 2011). Further, employees' conservation of energy lowers the amount of oil and natural gas an organization will burn for energy. Burning fossil fuels such as these is regarded as the largest anthropogenic contributor to global warming (National Research Council, 2010). In sum, OCBE is essential to organizational environmental performance.

A central tenant of the OCB framework is that, in the aggregate and over time, these behaviors indirectly contribute to organizational success through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., helping coordinate groups' work activities and facilitating organizations' ability to adapt to changing environments; Organ et al., 2006). Consistent with this framework, and OCBO in particular, we propose that in the aggregate, over time, OCBE indirectly impacts a firm's financial performance (i.e., organizational success) through their direct effect on its environmental performance. Specifically, we suggest that OCBE will contribute to financial performance by: (a) reducing resource expenditures (e.g., lower energy costs from employees turning equipment off), (b) helping organizations avoid costs related to environmental disasters (e.g., infractions to environmental regulations; Boiral, 2009), (c) creating a favorable external organizational image, which can attract investors and enhance access to capital markets (Beatty & Ritter, 1986), and (d) accessing different markets (Flammer, 2013). Significant empirical support for this argument comes from research that has linked a firm's environmental protection to its financial performance (e.g., Ambec & Lanoie, 2008; Flammer, 2013; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003). Further, research

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