

Citizenship Behavior, Customer Evaluation of Service Firms, and Customer Voluntary Performance – An Empirical Study of Taiwanese Banks

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Abstract

Citizenship behavior has been found to facilitate the occurrence of exceptional service performance. The contribution of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) to organizational effectiveness seems to be a reasonable argument but empirical studies for the relationship between aggregated OCB and organizational-level performance indicators remains limited. In addition, citizenship behaviors may be manifested toward customers. Two different types of citizenship behaviors were examined in this study, OCB and customer-oriented citizenship behaviors (COCB) that are citizenship behaviors targeted toward at customers. While both forms of citizenship behaviors may enhance organizational effectiveness, the study examined their comparative impacts. More specifically, there has been no effort to examine whether organizational effectiveness is more strongly related to these customer-oriented citizenship behaviors than organizational citizenship behaviors.

On the other hand, customers may act as “partial” employees or a partner of the firms to maximize their contribution, which can be considered as citizenship behaviors manifested at the customers’ side. The voluntary performance in customers and their evaluations of service firms/employees were measured to indicate organizational performance in this study. Data were collected from 26 branches of a Taiwanese bank, with 515 customers and immediate supervisors of 253 employees participated. All measured used in this project showed appropriate to good scale reliabilities (ranging from .70 to .92 of Cronbach Alpha Coefficients). The correlation and regression analyses showed that measures of organizational effectiveness were in general more likely to associated with dimensions of COCB than with OCB. The results also suggested that citizenship behaviors targeted toward customers, compared with OCB, had relatively stronger effects on customers’ evaluations and voluntary performance. The findings not only add to the literature about business consequence of citizenship behavior, also provide important management implications for managers.

1. Introduction:

Service excellence and customer satisfaction have been the primary issues and challenge for managing services in the past decade. It has been suggested that service-encounter employees play a key role in achieving excellent service and customer satisfaction. Employees’ efforts extending formal role requirements to help co-workers were found to facilitate the occurrence of exceptional service performance [1] [2]. The efforts to do “extra-work” were labeled by Organ [3] as “organizational citizenship behavior” (OCB) which refers to “actions of individuals that in the aggregate improve the functioning of organizations”. Despite the facts that other constructs of extra-role behaviors have been proposed in the literature [4] [5] [6], Organ [3] was the one has explicitly linked OCB to organizational effectiveness. The contribution of OCB to organizational effectiveness seems to be a reasonable argument, but empirical supports for the relationship between aggregated OCB and organizational-level performance indicators remains limited.

Previous studies have examined relationship between OCB and various indicators of individual- and group-level performance [7] [8] [9]. However, they have not answered the issue regarding the links between OCB and organizational effectiveness, and Organ strongly suggested that acts of OCB should not be viewed in isolation. Hence, the current study aimed to investigate the link of OCB to organizational effectiveness.

Employees may involve in voluntary acts toward customers, which has been suggested to associate with favorable perception of service quality [10]. The customer-oriented citizenship behaviors, although rarely investigated, are important employee behaviors facilitating organizational performance particularly in service context. While employees may choose to practice citizenship toward the organization, their co-workers, or the customers, which citizenship behavior would be more strongly linked to organizational effectiveness. This previously overlooked issue is addressed in this paper.

Different performance measures can be used to indicate organizational effectiveness, and among them

financial performance is frequently used. With the specific nature of service organizations, customers' evaluations of the service organization and their willingness to provide voluntary assistance may represent another type of performance index. In specific, favorable customers' evaluations and voluntary performance are both important for maintaining customer relationship that is suggested to create value for the organizations. Therefore, this paper examined customers' evaluations and voluntary performance as organizational outcomes of the two types of citizenship behaviors.

In sum, this study examined the relationship between the two types of citizenship behavior and organizational effectiveness. This study is important that it provides information to the relationship between aggregated citizenship behavior and organizational effectiveness, which has very limited in current literature. In addition, this study investigated a different type of citizenship behavior that was rarely addressed in previous studies, which represents critical front-line employee behavior for excellent service. Finally, this study explores the feasibility of applying customer voluntary performance that is a form of citizenship behavior demonstrated by customers as a performance measure of service organizations.

2. OCB and Organizational Performance

2.1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Organizational Performance

Prosocial behavior refers to positive social acts performed to produce and enhance the well-being and integrity of others. Meeting or exceeding specific standards of performance can illustrate prosocial behavior in organization. During the past decades, various issues of organizational citizenship behavior as a form of prosocial behavior have received considerable attention. According to Organ [3], OCB refers to behaviors that employees are not explicitly rewarded for exhibiting nor punished for not exhibiting. Also, employees do not learn OCB from explicit job description and were not trained to perform. Organ [3] proffers five dimensions of OCB, including altruism, sportsmanship, courtesy, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Each of these dimensions of OCB exhibited by employees are expected to facilitate work relationship among employees, and consequently result in better unit performance.

Although researchers have suggested that the focal outcome of OCB is enhancing organizational functions, very few empirical studies have been conducted to address this issue directly. In other words, the issue regarding the impacts of aggregated OCB on organizational effectiveness remained unanswered. According to Organ [3], OCB has to be considered as an aggregated acts to improve the function of the organization. It is important to treat OCB from the group, unit, or organizational perspective to capture the essence of OCB, because positive social acts of one employee in an unit will not improve the unit's productivity. Only two published studies [8] [11] have used an aggregated measure of OCB. The appropriate method of aggregation used in the two studies was to measure OCB at the individual level and aggregated across employees for a unit-level measure of OCB. This method of aggregation was used in the current study as well as individual-level measure to test the relationship between OCB and organizational performance.

2.2 Customer-Oriented Citizenship Behavior

While "employees' performance above and beyond requirements" has received increasing attention in recent literature, the closer exploration of voluntary acts in customer service is relatively recent [12] [10]. There were two type of customer-oriented citizenship behavior (COCB), role-prescribed and extra-role customer services, examined in this study.

Role-prescribed COCB refers to expected employees behaviors in serving the firm's customers [4] [13]. Employees may develop expectations for these behaviors from implicit norms in the workplace or from explicit obligation forms [4] [14]. Service behaviors such as exhibiting common courtesy, demonstrating accurate knowledge of policies and products, greeting and saying "thank you", and cross-selling are all instances of role-prescribed customer service behavior [12]. Extra-role COCB refers to discretionary behaviors of contact employees extended their job requirement to serve the customers [12]. Contact employees providing any extra work or attention to their customers may win customers' favorable evaluations and promote the firm's image. Furthermore, the voluntary help from service employees may evoke comparable behaviors from the customers, such as providing constructive suggestions.

2.3 Customer Evaluations of Service Firms/Employees as Organizational Performance

There is a renewing interesting in studying relationships between business and their customers in marketing research [15] [16]. Due to the relative lack of objective criteria for evaluating products and the facts that many services products are basically relying on interpersonal relationship in the service industry[17], building strong

customer relationship is becoming a major means for gaining competitive advantage [18] and realize the full profit potential of customers [19].

Previous empirical studies have focused on relationship marketing and relationship quality. Some factors tested in previous studies of relationship marketing and relationship quality are used in this study to represent customer evaluations as results of OCB and COCB. In specific, this study includes perceived support for customers, relationship benefits, and contact intensity as the variables represent customer evaluations of service firm/employees.

(1) Perceived Support for Customers

Perceived support for customers was a concept borrowed from perceived organizational support (POS), but the latter refers to the relationship between employees and the organization. Therefore, supports for customer refers to customers' global beliefs regarding the organizational value of their contributions and their well beings [20] [21]. Feeling supported by the organization provides the function of enhancing one's esteem and affiliation with the organization, and reducing uncertainty [20][21][22].

The organization can show their support for customers with various performance, including fairness of interpersonal treatment [23] [24] [25], effective recovery [26] [27], keeping promises and providing reliable service [24] [25] [28], and spontaneous employee behaviors and response to special requests [26]. These employee behaviors are more likely to show in organizations with a higher level of OCB and OCB, and lead the customers to perceive a higher level of support from the service firm.

(2) Relationship Benefits

Individuals maintain the relationships that result in more benefits. Relationship benefits have been suggested to be a critical competitive strategy for partner selection in relationship marketing [29]. The idea of treating customers as business partner is gradually developed for consumer. For example, customers voluntarily provide suggestions to the corporation is considered as a category of partnership behavior. For customers who expect/receive valuable benefits from their relationship with the firm, they will commit themselves to maintaining and developing relationship with such partners. That is, one motive for customers to maintain the relationship and commit to helpful behaviors is the expected benefits of the interchange between the customers and the organization. These outcomes should be considered as a form of effectiveness in service firms. The underlying rationale is consistent with the perspective of social exchange. That is, a service firm with employees exhibiting OCB and COCB has a greater likelihood to produce a feeling of benefit on the customers.

(3) Contact Intensity

Contact intensity, in relational selling context, means that frequency of the salesperson's communication with the customers either for personal or business purposes [30]. This attribute did not only refer to the salesperson's but also to the organization's efforts to keep the communication channel open with the customer, and to show their commitment to the relationship with customer. The efforts to communicate with the customer and to show the commitment have received empirical support for their importance on relationship maintenance in insurance [31] and many other selling fields. In service contexts where employees are willing to perform above and beyond requirement, customers are expected to evaluate the firm and employees as showing a greater degree of contact intensity than in the context that employees don't exhibit OCB and COCB.

(4) Professional Expertise

Expertise is the salesperson's knowledge or competencies in the service and/or products. The attribute of expertise shown in the communicator/salesperson has been identified to associate positively with successful influence on the audience/customers [32] [33]. Other than providing information, salesperson also exhibits their expertise from problem-solving assistance which expands the salesperson's consultative role [30]. The possibility of transcending traditional service roles may build up more trust on the customer. According to social exchange perspective, customers perceiving the employees' extra efforts to provide professional help may in return show greater interest to give advises or to cooperate with the employees during the interaction. This also explains the phenomenon that training in salesperson's product knowledge has been the most pervasive investment in sales organization [34]. Based on above discussion, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Dimensions of OCB will have a positive relationship with organizational performance indicated by customer evaluations of service firm/employees.

Hypothesis 2: Role-prescribed and extra-role COCB will be positively associated with organizational performance indicated by customer evaluations of service firm/employees.

2.4 Customer Voluntary Performance As Organizational Performance

The idea of customer voluntary performance is formed based on the concept of employees' voluntary

behaviors in the organization. The employees' voluntary behavior has been termed as organizational citizenship behavior or extra-role behaviors. According to [35], citizenship behaviors refers to the discretionary behaviors from the organization members to promote the function of the organization. The same functional and prosocial behaviors can come from the customers as well.

It has been assumed that customers having a good relationship with the firms will have the tendency to develop more prosocial behavior toward the firms. This is probably why many firms gradually place more emphases on relationship marketing. It would be an interesting issue for both managers and scholars why customers are willing to act prosocially toward the organization.

The voluntary behaviors exhibited by customers were constructed as "customer voluntary performance" (CVP) by Bettencourt in 1997. Integrating previous discussion, Bettencourt [36] suggested that customers may contribute to the firms by playing their roles as a promoter, as human resource or co-producer, and as consultant of the organization. These roles are each associated with one category of customer voluntary performance, namely, loyalty, cooperation, and participation.

The first category of customer voluntary performance, loyalty, refers to the role of being promoters for the firms. In specific, customers show their loyalty by repeating purchase and spreading favorable word-of-mouth and recommendation [37]. Positive word-of-mouth and recommendation are important for their impacts on developing favorable firm image and higher evaluation of service quality [38].

The second category of customer voluntary performance, cooperation, occurs when the customers take the role of human resource or co-producer of the firms. Demonstrating the behaviors that facilitates successful service delivery is considered as cooperation from the customer, and these behaviors may have implications for the customers themselves and other customers in the service setting [39]. To be respectful for the service employees and take the time to understand the rules of the service firms in order to facilitate the service delivery process are extra-role performance for the customers, and are voluntary in nature. The cooperative behaviors may benefit the firms by bring additional human resource into the firms to help the customers themselves and other customers.

In addition to being loyal and cooperative, customers may actively involve with the firms' development. That is, customers may play the role of organization consultant, and exhibit the third category of voluntary performance – participation [35]. As a consultant, the customers are willing to provide suggestions or express their complaints to the firms. Suggestions or comments from the customers has been seen as valuable to the firms because the customers' experiences with the service put them in an unique position for their contribution [40]. Customers' suggestions and comments not only help the firm to remedy their current service, but also promote the development of new products [41] [42].

Past researches on customer reactions primarily focused on service quality and customer satisfaction, and voluntary behavior is another potential outcomes important to the firms. As described above, these customer performance represents a different form of organizational performance other than financial outcomes. It is predicted that service firms with employees demonstrate high level of citizenship behavior toward their co-workers and the customers should be more likely to induce the customers to exhibit the voluntary performance listed discussed above. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Dimensions of OCB will have a positive relationship with organizational performance indicated by customer voluntary performance.

Hypothesis 4: Role-prescribed and extra-role COCB will be positively associated with organizational performance indicated by customer voluntary performance.

The coexistence of COCB and OCB in the daily operation of an organization creates a level of complexity to "performance above role requirements." While both forms of such performance may enhance organizational effectiveness, which has the strongest impact? Given that employees choose where they will focus their behavior, is it more beneficial for them to "go above and beyond" for customers, their coworkers, or the organization? The citizenship behavior performed toward co-workers and the organization may increase work morale and cohesiveness, therefore, will produce a more favorable image on customers. On other hand, when employees are willing to serve customer above role requirement, the citizenship behavior toward customers is expected to evoke reciprocal behaviors from the customers. Based on these ideas, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 5: Dimensions of OCB will have independent effects on customers' evaluations of service firm/employees beyond the impacts of dimensions of COCB.

Hypothesis 6: Dimensions of COCB will have independent effects on customers' voluntary performance beyond the impacts of dimensions of OCB.

3. Research Methods

Retail banking was selected for the current project due to various characters. These characters includes that contact employees are of moderate important, customer performance expectations are moderate, employee contacts are low to moderate, and the service is provided on a discrete basis [43] [44]. Also, there are few inhibitions to switching service provides or voicing complaints and suggestions [43] [27]. A retailing bank in Taiwan agreed to participate this study, and the primary data were collected from the 26 branches of this bank.

3.1 Participants:

Customer data were collected from the 26 branches of the participating bank. Customers visiting the bank branches during the period the survey were asked to fill out the questionnaire in the lobby of the bank. There were a total of 530 bank customers agreed to participate in this study, approximately 20 customers from each branch. The questionnaires with more than 1/3 of the questions unanswered were deleted, resulted in a total of 515 valid cases.

Data was also collected from bank employees' direct supervisor. The supervisors reported their employees' citizenship behaviors (i.e., OCB and COCB). Information about 10 employees' (varied based on the size of the branches) citizenship behavior were collected from each participating branches. There was a total of 260 employees participated this study.

3.2 Measures

(1) Measures Reported by Customers

Customers were asked to report their responses on the following variables: (1) customer voluntary performance (CVP) which is composed of three sub-scales, loyalty, cooperation, and participation; (2) evaluation of service organization/employee including service expertise; contact intensity; supports for customers; and relationship benefits.

Customer Voluntary Performance (CVP):

Loyalty: The assessment of customer loyalty is adapted from the measure developed by [45]. There are three items in this measure.

Cooperation: There are seven items developed to measure customer cooperation. These items were developed based on the measure of customer technical and functional quality used by [46] and the measures of employee cooperation [35].

Participation: Seven items measured customer participation were developed based on the measure of employee participation and a one-item measure of internal response in Zieithaml et al., [45].

Evaluations of Service Firm/Employees :

Professional Expertise: This construct refers to customer perception of salesperson competence on service or products. Five items were modified to assess expertise of salesperson in the context of retail banking, based on the items developed by Crosby et al., [30].

Contact Intensity: Contact intensity perceived by customer was assessed with eight items originally developed in previous studies [30] [47]. The eight items developed for whole insurance industry were revised to fit the research setting of this study to measure the contact intensity between the service provider (i.e., salesperson and the bank).

Perceived Support for Customers: The measure for perceived support for customers was the same as the assessed used by Bettencourt [36]. The measure were adapted from the measure of perceived organizational support. Minor modification were made to change the word from "organization" to the "bank" on nine items used by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa [20]. Five items in the assessment were modified based on the context of retail banking. There are a total of 14 items to measure perceived support for customers.

Relationship Benefits: Four items were developed based on the two scales used by Anderson and Narus [48] to measure "outcome given comparison level" and "comparison levels given alternatives". These two scales were first developed to assess buyers' perception of benefits by maintaining a relationship with the supplier. These items were revised to measure customers' perception of benefit from the bank given comparison with other banks.

(2) Measures Reported by Employees' Immediate Supervisor

There are basically two different scales of citizenship behaviors assessed in this study, respectively OCB and COCB. The former refers to employees' voluntary behavior for the organization or for other employees. The measure of OCB is composed of sixteen items measuring four dimensions, including altruism (assisting other employees), civic virtue, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness. The items were developed based upon the conceptual construct proposed by Organ [3] and by Podsakoff et al. [49].

Ten items used by Bettencourt and Brown [12] to measure extra-role and role-prescribed COCB were applied in the current study. The two dimensions of customer service behavior were generated based on the conceptual

distinction between role-prescribed and extra-role organizational citizenship behavior proposed by Organ [3]. The items were developed by Bettencourt and Brown [12] with specific reference to customers to match the purpose of assessing customer service behavior.

4. Result

4.1 Aggregation of OCB and COCB Measures

Since Organ's [3] prediction of the impact of OCB on consequences implies that it is aggregated OCB that influences performance, it was decided that the branch level was the appropriate level for assessing hypothesized relationships. Thus it was necessary to aggregate the OCB and COCB data, as well as the customer evaluations of service firm/employees and voluntary performance in order to obtain one score for each variable per branch [8] [11].

Rousseau [50] suggested that data aggregation is appropriate when: (a) aggregation adds meaning to the individual-level data, (b) within-group variance is less than between group variance, and (c) the theory of interest supports aggregating the individual scores on the variable of interest. In response to the first criteria, there is empirical support for validity of the OCB construct at the individual-level of analysis [49] [51]. Also, Organ [3] clearly proposes that it is the aggregate actions of individuals exhibiting OCB that improve organizational functioning. Therefore, aggregation adds meaning to individual-level data, particularly for the relationships being investigated. Second, ANOVAs were calculated comparing the variance within the branches to the variance between the branches. For each of the aggregated variables (i.e., 6 dimension of OCB, 2 dimensions of COCB, and both service quality measures), there was significantly greater variance between branches than within branches (all F-values significant at $p < .05$). Empirically, it appears that aggregating the data at the branch level would be appropriate. Finally, as Organ has noted, one employee engaging in OCB will not likely make a dent in organizational effectiveness; it is only the actions of many employees that result in improvements. Thus, the theory suggests that it is the combined behaviors of the group of employees, rather than the individual behaviors, which are likely to influence the organizational effectiveness concepts of efficiency and customer perceptions. Based on these empirical and conceptual reasons, it was determined that data aggregation by branch was appropriate.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Table 1 shows the correlations among all measured variables, and reliability coefficients of those variables for which coefficient alpha could be computed.

Hypotheses 1 and 3 predicted that the four dimensions of OCB positively correlated with organizational effectiveness indicated by customers' evaluations of service/firm and customer voluntary performance. As shown in Table 1, only altruism and conscientiousness are positively correlated customers' evaluation of employees' professional expertise, and no significant relationship was found between other dimensions and other customers' evaluations. In addition, a greater level of customers' willingness to participate was significantly related to higher level of employee altruism, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness. The other two type of customer voluntary performance, loyalty and cooperation was not found to significantly correlated with any OCB dimension. In summary, hypotheses 1 and 3 were only partially supported in this study.

Hypotheses 2 and 4 predicted that extra-role and role-prescribed COCB will be positively related with organizational effectiveness indicated by customers' evaluations of service/firm and customer voluntary performance. The results showed that a higher degree of extra role COCB exhibited by employees was associated with more favorable evaluations of professional expertise, contact intensity, support for customers, and a greater willingness to participate from the customers. Similar pattern was revealed for role-prescribed COCB, except that it was not significantly correlated with customers' evaluation of contact intensity, and was positively associated with willingness to cooperate.

Multiple regression were performed to test hypothesis 5 and 6, with dimension of OCB and COCB as the predictors and with either customers' evaluation or voluntary performance as dependent variables. The results were summarized in Table 2. Hypothesis 5 was only partially supported. Extra-role COCB was the most significant predictor of customers' evaluation of professional expertise, contact intensity, and support for customers (all Betas $\geq .110$, all $ps < .05$). However, the effects of civic virtue on evaluation of professional expertise, and the effects of civic virtue and sportsmanship on perceived support for customers were significant, but they were found to be negatively related to customers' evaluation once the effects of COCB were partialled out (see Table 2). Hypothesis 6 was support for customers' willingness to cooperate and to participate, and role-prescribed COCB was the only significant predictor of customer voluntary performance.

5. Conclusion

This paper represents one primary effort to examine the separate impacts of OCB and COCB on organizational

effectiveness in the same study. The study revealed that COCB was in general more highly related to organizational performance indicated by customers' responses, in comparison with COB. In fact, COCB was the only significant predictor on some customers' evaluation and willingness to act prosocially toward the organization. This research builds on previous work, and adds to the flowing body of research on the consequences of citizenship behavior. This study also extended the prior findings to the banking industry, as well as the Taiwanese culture. For managers, this study provides implication for the comparative impacts of the two types of citizenship behaviors, and should heighten the managers' interest in OCB. There are a few limitations of the study. First, the data were static, so the causal direction between OCB and organizational effectiveness can not be determined. A second limitation is the sample size for the study. Only 26 branches were involved with the study, which can lead to the problem of low power of statistical test. Despite its limitations, the results of the present study are interesting and compelling. It would be interesting for future studies to examine the processes intervening between OCB and effectiveness criteria.

6. Reference

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Table 2: Regression Analysis for OCB ,COCB ,and Organizational Effectiveness Indicators

Employee Behavior		Professional Expertise	Contact Intensity	Support for Customer	Cooperation Work	Participation
Organizational Citizenship Behaviors:	Civic Virtue	-1.71**		-0.157***		
	Altruism					
	Sportsmanship			-0.129**		
	Conscientiousness					
Customer-Oriented Citizenship Behavior	Extra-Role COCB	0.215***	0.110**	0.296***		
	Role-Prescribed COCB				0.093**	0.135***

Note: Coefficients shown for employee behaviors are standardized betas.

* indicates $p < .05$

** indicates $p < .01$

Table I: Correlations Between OCB, COCB and Effectiveness Indicators

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Civic Virtue (1)	3.84	.32	(.86)															
Altruism (2)	3.95	.30	***	(.86)														
Sportsmanship (3)	4.44	.29	n.s.	***	(.81)													
Conscientiousness (4)	3.77	.36	+	***	***	(.71)												
Extra-Role COCB (5)	4.01	.38	***	***	n.s.	***	(.79)											
Role-Prescribed COCB (6)	4.08	.27	***	***	+	***	***	(.83)										
OCB (7)	4.03	.43	***	***	+	***	***	***										
COCB (8)	4.05	.51	***	***	+	***	***	***	***									
Professional Expertise (9)	3.84	.57	n.s.	+	n.s	+	+	+	n.s.	+	(.87)							
Contact Intensity (10)	3.45	.70	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s	+	n.s.	n.s.	+	***	(.92)						
Relationship Benefits (11)	3.55	.60	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	***	***	(.83)					
Support For Customers (12)	3.68	.49	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s	+	+	n.s.	+	***	***	***	(.92)				
Loyalty (13)	3.77	.66	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	***	***	***	***	(.86)			
Cooperation (14)	4.10	.49	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s	n.s.	+	n.s.	+	***	***	***	***	***	***	(.87)	
Participation (15)	3.89	.52	n.s.	***	+	+	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	(.87)

1. Cronbach's alpha for applicable scales are shown on the diagonal in parentheses.

2. * indicates $p \leq .05$

3. ** indicates $p \leq .01$