

Besides American Value, What Else Do We Know about Organizational Citizenship Behaviors in a Non-U.S. Context?

Chi-Wei Liu

Lecturer, Department of Applied Foreign Language, HungKuang Technology University, Taiwan

Doctoral student, Graduate School of Management, I-Shou University, Taiwan, wliu01@ms15.hinet.net

Ching-Hsiang Chen

Doctoral student, Graduate School of Management, I-Shou University, Taiwan, frank813@giga.net.tw

Su-Li Lin

Lecturer, Dept. of International Trade, Kao Yuan Institute of Technology, Taiwan

Doctoral student, Graduate School of Management, I-Shou University, Taiwan, lina_lin@so-net.net.tw

Abstract

Almost the entire body of the empirical research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) are based on American value and these U.S.-based behavioral theories have been treated as applicable to a universal population. Yet, OCBs are organization-specific, and have a cultural component. This implies that without taking “culture” into consideration while investigating the socially-based citizenship behaviors, our knowledge on OCBs will be parochial. Though, an increasing growth of OCB in a non-U.S. context corresponds to the call, it is remarkable that what our understanding of OCB beyond a non-U.S. context seems so fragmental. What appears to be missing is an integrated understanding of OCB research in a non-U.S. context. Our paper aims to be at the inception of increasing our understanding about OCB research in a non-U.S. context. Specifically, it investigates the conceptual constructs of OCBs in a non-U.S. context and ends with the advance research propositions for future empirical testing.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, OCB, non-U.S. context

Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been receiving a great deal of attention from organizational behavior researchers (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Organ, 1997; George & Battenhausen, 1990) since Organ (1988) proposed that organizational citizenship behavior is related to individual and organization performance. Researches also show that these citizenship behaviors have a positive impact on increasing organization performance (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994; Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie 1997). OCB has been regarded as an

important concept in that it is thought to contribute to effective functioning of the organization, and consequently, its competitiveness (Krlowicz & Lowery, 1996).

OCBs initially did not have a very substantial impact on the field (Podsakoff, et al., 2000). According to Podsakoff's survey (2000), only 13 papers were published on OCBs topics from 1983 to 1988; whereas, more than 122 papers have been published on OCBs and related constructs during the period from 1993 to 1998. Besides, these papers show that interest in OCB research has expanded from the field of organizational behavior to a variety of different domains and disciplines, including human resource management, marketing, hospital and health administration, community psychology, industrial and labor law, strategic management military psychology, economics, leadership and international management (Podsakoff, et al., 2000).

Although the rapid growth in theory and research undoubtedly has been gratifying to those interested in organizational citizenship behavior, it has produced some unfortunate consequences (Podsakoff, et al., 2000). For example, the contextual dimensions of OCB have to do with societal culture and economic institutional framework (Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004), but only few studies took the factor of culture into consideration while they investigated the socially-based citizenship behavior (cf. Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990; Kim & Mauborgne, 1996; Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997; Chen, Hui, & Sego, 1998). Evolving research and theory suggest that people from different cultures will not necessarily conform to similar sets of beliefs and values, and therefore will have different views of situations and preferences for outcomes (Adler, 1989; Hofstede, 1980). Podsakoff, Niehoff, Mackenzie, and Williams (1993) suggested that citizenship dimensions are organization-specific, and Turnipseed & Mrukison (2000) also pointed out these behaviors had a cultural component. Whereas, cultural differences were not considered large enough to override the predictive and explanatory nature of behavioral theories developed in the United States (Fok, Hartman, Villere & Freibert, 1996), most of the studies on OCB during the period either generalize U.S. samples to a global phenomenon, or used non-U.S. samples but with OCB questionnaire based on the U.S. value. As a result, because of the limited perspective of the research generated in the United States and the lack of contrary information, many U.S.-based behavioral theories have been treated as applicable to a universal population (Boyacigillar & Adler, 1991), and this phenomenon is termed as parochial perspective by Boyacigillar & Adler (1991), which has begun to fall under increasing criticism (Fok, Hartman, Villere & Freibert, 1996). Given our focus on the impact of culture on OCB, to have a better understanding about

the prevailing development (that is, post-1998) on OCB research, especially the role of culture in those studies, this research applies a citation-based analysis, one method of Meta Research, to search for the literatures that published between January 1999 and January 2003 in those journals that listed in SSCI (Social Science Citation Index) as sample data and get 101 papers with the key word ,OCB, as indicated in Table 1, 37 papers out of them are samples from a non-U.S. context and 9 papers out of them take a culture orientation to investigate their studies (cf., Goodman, S.A.& Svyantek, D. J. 1999; Cohen, A., 1999; Brockner, J., Chen, Y. R., Mannix, E.A., Leung, K., & Skarlicki, D. P., 2000; Lee, C., Pillutla, M., & Law, K. S., 2000; Bierhoff, H.W., Muller, G.F., & Kupper, B., 2000; Wong, Y.T. Wong, C. S. & Ngo, H. Y.,2002; Smith, P. B. et al., 2002; Rob & Zemsky, 2002; Tierney, P., Bauer, T. N. & Potter, R. E., 2003). This finding seems to show that not only extensive research on OCB has been conducted in recent years but there is an increase interest in OCB research from non-U.S. cultural perspective.

| Year Searching | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | *2003 | Total |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Key word | 16 | 34 | 21 | 29 | 1 | 101 |
| Title | 11 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 35 |
| Abstract | 10 | 6 | 18 | 22 | 0 | 56 |
| Citation and Abstract | 21 | 30 | 37 | 49 | 1 | 138 |

Table 1. Yearly Publications on Organizational Citizenship Behavior in SSCI Literatures up to January 2003

In addition to the data gotten from SSCI between Jan. 1999 to Jan. 2003, by searching OCB research through ProQuest database, the researchers find 25 papers, as indicated in Table 2, interpreting issues of OCB from culture perspective or taking culture factor into consideration in their studies. The obtained results support our contention that an increasing attention has been focused on cross cultural issues and their implications for theories of behavior (cf. Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Fok, Hartman, Villere & Freibert,1996; Farh, Earley & Lin, 1997; Turnipseed & Murkison, 2000; Chhokar, Zhuplev , Fok., & Hartman, 2001; Paine & Organ, 2000; Matthew S O'Connell, Dennis Doverspike, Watts, & Hattrup, 2001; Alotaibi, 2001; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002; Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004). Specifically, researchers are beginning to ask about the extent to which culturally conditioned differences will affect an individual's behavior (cf. Paine & Organ, 2000; Chhokar, Zhuplev, Fok, & Hartman, 2001; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002). Hofstede (1980, 1984) asserted that when making any

comparisons across cultural lines, cultural differences must be taken into consideration. In accordance with the assertion, Podoskaff et al. (2000) also suggested that research was needed on the potential impact that cultural context might have on citizenship behavior. Simply put, these studies respond to Hofstede's and Padoskaff's calls and provide a further understanding about OCB in a non-U.S. country.

| Searching Method | Citation& Abstract(OCB) | Article Tile(OCB) | Article Text(OCB)/ Publication Title(Journal of International.. | Citation & Abstract (OCB + culture) |
|--------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Cumulative Publish | 280 | 129 | 103 | 25 |
| Searching Method | Citation & Abstract (OCB+ Journal of International...) | Article Title (OCB)/ Citation & Abstract(Culture) | Article Title(OCB)/Publication Title(Journal of International...) | |
| Cumulative Publish | 11 | 7 | 4 | |

Table 2. Cumulative Publications on Organizational Citizenship Behavior with cultural perspective in ProQuest database up to Dec. 15, 2003

It is exciting to notice that the growth of OCB in a non-U.S. context is on the increase. Yet, it is noticeable that what our understanding of OCB beyond a non-U.S. context seems so fragmental that it needs further investigating especially in an era of globalization, in which managers are caused to attend to issues of culture and diversity. What appears to be missing is an integrated and comprehensive understanding of OCB research in a non-U.S. context. Thus, a detailed understanding of OCB research in a non-U.S. context is another important lacuna in current research. This exploratory research, being at the inception of increasing our understanding about OCB research in a non-U.S. context, aims to make itself valuable by investigating studies on organizational citizenship behavior in a non-U.S. context. To be specific, our paper positions to be at the inception of increasing our understanding about OCB research in a non-U.S. context. The following section of the paper explores some of the conceptual comparison between the various constructs of organizational citizenship behavior in U.S. and non-U. S. dimensions. Then, variant perceptions of the constructs of U.S.-valued OCB in a non-U.S. context will be discussed and it will be ended with empirical propositions. Finally, short discussion for future research directions in a

non-U.S. context is to present.

Dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organ (1988) defines OCB as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization”. Indeed, based on our data-base, this is the position that most of OCB research took to define OCB in their studies. Whereas, Podsakoff, et al.(2000) warned that the literature has focused more on understanding the relationships between organizational citizenship and other constructs, rather than carefully defining the nature of citizenship behavior itself. As a consequence, despite the growing interest in citizenship-like behaviors, a review of the literature in this area reveals a lack of consensus about the dimensionality of this construct.

Supposed it be essential to categorize the conceptual definitions of the construct for having a further understanding about types of OCB, according to the literature examination by Podsakoff, et al.(2000), almost 30 potentially different forms of citizenship behavior were organized into seven common themes or dimensions: Helping Behavior, Sportsmanship, Organizational Loyalty, Organizational Compliance, Individual Initiative, Civic Virtue, and Self Development. Farh, et al. (2004) proposed that the partitioning and measurement of OCB derived historically from three sources. The first is the taxonomy offered, presumably on a priori grounds, in the original article by Katz (1964). Katz (1964) made a distinction between dependable role performance and innovative and spontaneous behavior. The second one originated from interviews with lower level managers, who were asked to describe actions that they like their subordinates to make, but couldn't really require them to do and could not promise any specific, definite reward for doing them. Two major factors: Altruism (those discretionary behaviors that aid a specific other person or small group in task-related matters) and Compliance (more “impersonal” contributions in the form of yeoman adherence to the rules and policies) are generated from the interviews. And, the third perspective on the nature and makeup of OCB followed from classic Greek philosophy on the concept of citizenship. These perspectives suggest Loyalty and Boosterism as significant forms of OCB. As a consequence, nine major dimensions of OCB are derived from these three sources: Altruism, Conscientiousness, Sportsmanship, Courtesy, Civic Virtue, Functional Participation, Advocacy Participation, Loyalty and Voice (Farh, et al., 2004).

Whereas, the two categorizations of the concept of OCB generated from Podsakoff, et al. (2000) and Farh, et al. (2004) were all developed in a Western social cultural

context, and this consequently arises an issue whether these concepts of OCB would reflect the same dimensionality in a non-U.S. context. Do these themes or dimensions come across different cultures? Does OCB have the identical interpretation, perception or meaning in other cultures? To respond to the wonderings, Farh et al. (1997) examined the different forms of citizenship behavior observed in Taiwan and the potential moderating effect that traditionality and modernity had on the relationship between organizational justice and citizenship behavior. They argued that they got three etic dimensions in Taiwan similar to those found in the U.S. (cf., Identification with Company (similar to Civic Virtue), Altruism toward Colleagues (identical to Western altruism in definition, very similar item contents), Conscientiousness (identical to Western conscientiousness in definition, very similar item contents). In a related study, Farh et al. (2004) used an inductive approach to examine forms of OCB in the People's Republic of China and to have a comparison with the Western society. The analysis revealed 10 dimensions of OCB and found that five out of the ten common dimensions (cf. Taking Initiative (similar to Conscientiousness), Helping Coworker (similar to Altruism or Helping), Voice (similar to Voice in western research but broader), Participation in Group Activities (similar to Civic Virtue) and Promoting Company Image (similar to Loyalty, or Loyal Boosterism) are similar to those in a U. S. context. In addition to the generated Taiwan OCB dimension (Farh et al. 1997) and Chinese OCB dimension (Farh et al. 2004), Bierhoff, H.W., Muller, G.F., & Kupper, B. (2000) proposed a German version of the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire (GOCBQ). Bierhoff et al. (2000) argued that the GOCBQ measures a general altruism orientation, which also can be interpreted as a stable trait. This finding is consistent with that of Farh et al. (1997, 2003). Accordingly, based on the results of these studies, we propose the first proposition:

Proposition 1a: Altruism is an etic dimension of OCB across variant cultures.

Farh et al. (2004) argued that the five common dimensions (Taking Initiative, Helping Coworker, Voice, Participation in Group Activities and Promoting Company Image) are similar to those that have been empirically investigated in the Western OCB literature. And they proposed that these dimensions are supposed to have broad utility across cultures in spite that the specific behaviors that constitute the construct domain of these dimensions are far from identical. However, being empirically examined, besides Altruism, Conscientiousness and Civic Virtue are the other two common dimensions found in a non-U.S. context (Farh et al., 1997; Hui, Law & Chen, 1999; Menguc, 2000; Doverspike, Norris-Watts & Hatstrup, 2001; Chen & Francesco, 2003; Farh et al., 2004; Yoon & Suh, 2003). One interesting phenomenon among these

studies is the contexts of the studies are in Asia countries with the exception of Doverspike et al. (2001) (cf. Farh et al., 1997: Taiwan, Hui, Law & Chen, 1999: China ; Menguc, 2000: Turkish; O'Connell, Doverspike & Hatstrup, 2001: Mexican; Chen & Francesco, 2003: China; Farh et al., 2004: China; Yoon & Suh, 2003: Korea). Does this information tell anything? Does it mean that Consciousness, and Civic Virtue are etic dimensions of OCB in Asia? Restricted by the limited findings, our wonderings needs further exploring. Whereas, based on our findings, we propose our following propositions:

Proposition 1b: Consciousness and Civic virtue are etic dimensions of OCB in Asia countries relative to other cultures.

Now we turn our focus on the emic dimensions of OCB in the related research. Farh et al. (1997) found that there were two other emic dimensions that appeared to be specific to the Taiwanese culture (cf. Interpersonal Harmony and Protecting Company Resources). And in the context of China, Farh et al. (2004) found that one dimension was not evident at all in the Western literature (cf. Social Welfare Participation) and four (cf. Self-learning, Protecting and Saving Company Resources, Keeping Workplace Clean, and Interpersonal Harmony) had been discussed in prior western OCB literature but do not figure importantly in established measures of OCB. On the other hand, with the limitation of language, it is a pity that we are unable to get any distinctive findings in GOCBQ, a German version, proposed by Bierhoff et al. (2000). Whereas, it is highly possible in the global OCB research, besides the emic OCB dimension we discuss in this study, there are other studies written in their native languages but failed to be understood. Thus, based on the data base of this study (cf. table 1 and table 2) and the findings we collect, we suppose that it is conceivable that emic dimension of OCB will emerge because of variant national culture. In summary,

Proposition 1c: Emic dimension of OCB will exist with respect to variant national culture.

Perception of the concept construct of U.S.-valued OCB in a non-U.S. Context

As Farh et al. discussed in their research, among the five extended dimensions of OCB (Self-learning, Protecting and Saving Company Resources, and Keeping Workplace Clean) have been mentioned by Western researchers, but they have not been empirically investigated. We wonder why these dimensions emerge in PRC sample but do not figure prominently in the Western OCB literature? It should be one of the

cultural or national consequences. But, to be precise, what national characteristic result in the difference? Farh et al. (2004) suspected it might be related to different stages of economic development because PRC is at the comparatively earlier stage of economic development to Western society. In Turnipseed & Murkison's study (2000), they also focused on the relationship between the level of economic environment and the occurrence of variant OCB by comparing the United States and Romania and found that economic situation had an effect on triggering different dimension of citizenship behavior. In their study, Romanian score for Participation were the highest, although lower than those of the U.S. Turnipseed & Murkison (2000) attributed it to that the Romanian's perceived need to fully take part in the organization to achieve job security in this period of rising unemployment. The increase in downsizing and cost cutting may influence U.S. workers to engage in organization directed OCB for the same reason. Simply put, status of economic in a country may influence the happenings of variant OCBs. Thus, another proposition in terms of the relationship between status of economic and occurrence of OCBs is:

Proposition 2a: Different status of economic in a country will exist with respect to facilitating occurrence of different OCB.

Moreover, both PRC and Romania are not only at the early stage of economic development, but they were communist bureaucracy before both countries began their economic reformation. Owing to the great difference from the U.S. in political development, it is highly possible to be one of the reasons for both countries to have different interpretation and recognition about the concept of so-called organizational citizenship behavior. In Turnipseed & Murkison's study (2000), the sample data produced difference between the two samples. The greatest difference was in Loyalty, which may reflect rebellion against the inefficient economic system and a lack of clear, goal-directed rules and regulations. Turnipseed & Murkison argued the low Romanian Loyalty scores suggest that the workers do not identify with their managers and the organization, which was intuitively acceptable given the history of the country and its economy under the Communists. Due to the influence of legacy of communist system, similar findings were reported in Farh et al. (2004). The emergence of social welfare participation, the emic dimension of OCB in PRC, as a major form of citizenship behavior in PRC is regarded as the manifestation of its association with the legacy of communist system. Hence, the next two propositions are proposed as follows:

Proposition 2b: Different political development in a country will exist with respect to interpretation about the concept of the different

dimension of OCB

- . Proposition 2c: Different political development in a country will exist with respect to facilitating occurrence of different OCB.

Now, we move the focus on the dimensions of American-valued OCB which do not appear in a non-U.S. context to discuss. Three major dimensions of OCB (Sportsmanship, Courtesy, and Advocacy Participation) in the Western literature did not emerge in PRC sample (Farh et al., 2004). Consistent with this finding, the three dimensions were present neither in Farh et al. (1997) with Taiwanese as sample nor in Lam, et al. (1999) with Chinese as sample. Lam et al. (1999) found that in comparison with employees from Australia and the U.S., employees from Hong Kong and Japan were more likely to consider sportsmanship and courtesy as in role behaviors. Farh et al. (2004) referred the findings to an issue of uncertainty avoidance as well as power distance. Uncertainty avoidance defined by Hofstede (1984) is to identify a culture's comfort with uncertainty as a part of their existence. Power distance dimension is the degree to which a culture accepts that there are inequalities between various groups within a culture, social classes and organizational hierarchy (Hofstede, 1984). Thus, it is possible that sportsmanship matters more in a low uncertainty-avoidance, low power distance culture, in which individuals might reasonably challenge decisions and actions by managers; in a cultural context of higher power distance and risk aversion, such challenges might be expected to be rare in any case.

In a similar vein, Jagdeep et al. (2001) also adopted the perspectives of uncertainty avoidance and power distance, with an aim to investigating the relationship between culture and equity sensitivity with five countries as sample: America, England, France, India and Russia. In order to look for systematic differences across cultures upon individuals' perceptions of the benevolent, with the assumption that more benevolent orientation will lead to more OCB, they proposed that in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, socialization may lead individuals toward staying with and being more committed to an employer, and thus toward higher levels of benevolence and on the other hand, in high power distance culture, employees may be more accepting of the organization's "right" to expect obedience and, perhaps, will be more oriented toward benevolence. The results showed that Indian, American and Russian samples scored the highest respectively, where the higher the score, the more benevolent the group, while the British and the French samples scored the lowest. However, the American, Russian, and British samples are not significantly different from each other. Among the five peoples, Indians (low uncertainty avoidance, high power distance) are most oriented toward benevolence. It seems that different power distance and degree of

uncertainty avoidance will cause variant interpretation or occurrence of OCBs. Hence,

Proposition 3a: Different power distance across culture will exist with respect to interpretation about the concept of the different dimension of OCB

Proposition 3b: Different power distance across culture will exist with respect to facilitating occurrence of different OCB

Proposition 4a: Different degree of uncertainty avoidance across culture will exist with respect to interpretation about the concept of the different dimension of OCB

Proposition 4b: Different degree of uncertainty avoidance across culture will exist with respect to facilitating occurrence of different OCB

Two other emic dimensions appeared to be specific to the Taiwanese culture (cf. Interpersonal Harmony and Protecting Company Resources) (Farh et al., 1997). The researchers asserted that the presence of Interpersonal Harmony and Protecting Company Resources in the Chinese citizenship behavior scale can be attributed to their cultural roots (Farh et al., 1997). The cultural root of interpersonal harmony in the Chinese citizenship behavior scale is a cherished cultural value found in Chinese societies (Yang, 1993). The reason why protecting company resources and interpersonal harmony appear to be negatively oriented citizenship behavior dimensions is also consistent with a culture stressing personal modesty in a Chinese-valued society, which may explain their apparent emic nature. Following Farh et al. (1997), these two extended dimension also been proposed as OCB dimension in PRC in Farh et al. (2004). The Chinese have long been known for their concern about harmony and unity in social relationships (Yang, 1993). Farh et al. (2004) attributed the presence of interpersonal harmony by using specificity or diffuseness in different national cultures, the term introduced by Trompenaars (1996). The notion of specificity or diffuseness in cultures is akin to the concept of individualism/collectivism identified by Hofstede (1984) to great extent. Farh et al. (2004) pointed out the individualism dimension identifies cultures where the members' "are self oriented and place an emphasis on individual initiative and achievement", and this is consistent with the concept of specificity by Trompenaars to some extent. Besides, cultures identified as displaying opposite behaviors are labeled collectivist, which may correspond to the term of diffuseness by Trompenaars. Thus, we can also explain the findings in China or in Taiwan in terms of the perspectives of individualism-collectivism. Similar findings are found in Moorman, Robert, Blakely

and Gerald's research (1995). They collected data to assess the extent of a relationship between individualism-collectivism as a within culture individual difference and self-reports of OCB. Results suggest that if an individual holds collectivistic values or norms, he would be more likely to perform citizenship behaviors. Accordingly,

Proposition 5a: Differences across culture will exist with respect to interpretation about the concept of the different dimension of OCB in terms of individualism/collectivism dimension.

Proposition 5b: Differences across culture will exist with respect to facilitating occurrence of different OCB in terms of individualism/collectivism dimension.

Conclusion

As Podsakoff et al. (2000) pointed out the rapid growth of research on OCBs has resulted in some conceptual confusion about the nature of the construct. This situation will get worse in the OCB research in a non-U.S. context for cultural context will affect the forms of OCBs observed in different countries. The findings of our paper support this concern.

Besides the conceptual similarities and differences of OCB dimensions between the American-context and non-U.S. context, the impact that culture might have on OCBs in a non-U.S. context might be embodied in the antecedents and consequences of OCBs. These directions for future research, we believe, will enhance our comprehensive understanding about OCB in a non-U.S. context.

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