



Umbrella Summary

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is organizational citizenship behavior?

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as “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” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). This definition has been further refined to specify that OCB supports task performance in organizations by enhancing the work environment where task performance takes place (Organ, 1997). OCB is one of the three main domains comprising workplace performance, along with task performance and [counterproductive work behavior](#) (CWB; Dalal, 2005). OCB is thought to be conceptually opposite to CWB; OCB is behavior that helps an organization, whereas CWB is behavior that harms an organization. Indeed, OCB and CWB are modestly and negatively related to one another (Dalal, 2005).

OCB is commonly conceptualized in two different ways. Firstly, OCB has been conceptualized based on certain types of *behaviors* of a good organizational citizen, namely altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship (Organ, 1988). Secondly, researchers have distinguished OCB based on the *beneficiary* of the behaviors (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Citizenship behavior can be targeted toward individuals (OCB-I) or toward the organization (OCB-O). Importantly, this two-factor conceptualization is still largely based on the five behavioral dimensions listed above; OCB-I includes the dimensions of altruism and courtesy, and OCB-O includes the dimensions of conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. OCB-I and OCB-O are strongly related to each other (Zhang et al., 2019b).

OCB is most commonly measured using the 24-item Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (Podsakoff et al., 1990). This scale measures the five OCB dimensions of altruism (e.g., “Willingly helps others who have work related problems”), courtesy (e.g., “Considers the impact of his/her actions on coworkers”), conscientiousness (e.g., “Obeys company rules and regulations even when no one is watching”), civic virtue (e.g., “Attends functions that are not required, but help the company image”), and sportsmanship (e.g., “Consumes a lot of time complaining about trivial manners”). Researchers and practitioners commonly consider these five dimensions individually or aggregate scores into one overarching OCB value (LePine et al., 2002).

OCB is commonly measured using either self-report or other-report methods from a coworker’s or supervisor’s perspective. Using coworker or supervisor reports to measure OCB of a certain employee is thought to be deficient, however, because coworkers and supervisors may not witness all instances of an employee’s OCB (Carpenter et al., 2014). Employees also may

perform OCB to help some coworkers more than others, which could lead to inconsistent ratings if measured from different coworkers' perspectives. Thus, using self-report measurement methods is thought to be best at eliciting the most accurate responses regarding one's frequency of engaging in OCB (Carpenter et al., 2014).

Why is organizational citizenship behavior important?

OCB involves positive and desirable behaviors that are beneficial to individuals and the organization; thus, OCB is important in its own right. OCB is also important because it strongly relates to higher task performance and is modestly related to less turnover (Mackey et al., 2019b; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Additionally, OCB not only has individual-level outcomes, but also group-level outcomes. The degree of OCB among a workgroup or department is modestly and positively related to customer satisfaction and is moderately and positively related to that group's level of productivity, efficiency, and performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009).

What contributes to organizational citizenship behavior?

Meta-analytic research on OCB thus far has focused on assessing factors that are merely associated with OCB, not on causal relationships. The following variables are associated with more OCB:

- ▶ Individual differences including extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, positive affect, cognitive ability, [political skill](#) (i.e., the ability to understand others at work and use this ability to influence the actions of others), and emotional intelligence (Chiaburu et al., 2022; Miao et al., 2017; Munyon et al., 2015; Nye et al., 2022; Pletzer et al., 2021).
- ▶ High levels of [fit](#) (i.e., person-organization fit, person-group fit) (Arthur et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).
- ▶ Job autonomy, using a variety of skills, carrying out projects from start to finish (i.e., task identity), receiving [coworker support](#), and receiving feedback (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; King et al., 2020).
- ▶ Organizational commitment, [occupational commitment](#), job satisfaction, [employee engagement](#), [psychological capital](#) (i.e., a positive psychological state characterized by hope, optimism, efficacy, and resilience), [thriving](#) (i.e., feeling a sense of vitality and learning), and perceiving one's job as meaningful (Allan et al., 2019; Avey et al., 2011; Illies et al., 2009; Kleine et al., 2019; Mackay et al., 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2011; Wang et al., 2019).
- ▶ Perceptions of an ethical work environment, [psychological safety](#), [organizational justice](#) (i.e., procedural, interactional, and distributive justice), [organizational support](#), and corporate social responsibility (Fassina et al., 2008; Frazier et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Peng & Kim, 2019; Zhao et al., 2022).
- ▶ Positive types of leadership (e.g., [transformational leadership](#), ethical leadership, [leader-member exchange](#)) and trust in one's leader (Legood et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2016; Ng, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019b).

- ▶ Getting enough [sleep](#) (Henderson & Horan, 2021).
- ▶ [Work-family enrichment](#), in which experiences in work and family roles are able to enhance one another (Zhang et al., 2018).

The following variables are associated with less OCB:

- ▶ Individual differences including negative affect, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Chiaburu et al., 2022; Ogunfowora et al., 2022).
- ▶ Moral disengagement (i.e., using cognitive tactics in order to justify and rationalize moral wrongdoing) (Ogunfowora et al., 2022).
- ▶ Facing [role ambiguity](#), [role conflict](#), job insecurity, [organizational politics](#), [psychological contract breach](#), [coworker antagonism](#), and emotional strain at work (Bedi & Schat, 2013; Chang et al., 2007; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Eatough et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007).
- ▶ Turnover intentions (Podsakoff et al., 2009).
- ▶ Negative types of leadership (e.g., destructive leadership, [abusive supervision](#)) (Mackey et al., 2019a; Zhang et al., 2019a).
- ▶ Facing [conflict between work and family life](#) (Amstad et al., 2011).

The following variables are not significantly associated with OCB:

- ▶ Neuroticism (Pletzer et al., 2021).
- ▶ Gender (Mackey et al., 2019b).
- ▶ Role overload (Eatough et al., 2011).

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ OCB consists of voluntary, extra-role behaviors that support organizational functioning.
- ▶ OCB includes five types of behaviors (i.e., altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship) that either benefit the organization or individuals within the organization.
- ▶ OCB is strongly and positively related to job performance and is modestly and negatively related to turnover.
- ▶ Group-level OCB is moderately associated with greater productivity, efficiency, and performance.
- ▶ Positive personality traits, job attitudes, job characteristics, organizational perceptions, and leadership behaviors relate to more OCB, whereas negative personality traits, environmental factors, job stressors, and leadership behaviors are associated with less OCB.
- ▶ Researchers and practitioners seeking to measure OCB should use the 24-item Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

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