Can entry-level employees become good soldiers? A study on their Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract
Though Organizational Citizenship Behavior is often deemed important, few studies have explored the role of entry-level employees in this context and their roles are often undermined in today’s organizations. This study seeks to throw light on how these employees, in spite of being relatively new to the organization, can be molded to become ‘good soldiers’.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior – Concept and Definition
Organizational Citizenship Behavior was first introduced in the mid 1980s by Dennis Organ who defines it 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) argued that OCB is held to be vital to the survival of an organization. Organ further elaborated that organizational citizenship behavior can maximize the efficiency and productivity of both the employee and the organization and ultimately contribute to the effective functioning of an organization.

Katz and Kahn (1978) pointed out that organizational citizenship is important in organizations. Organizational citizenship can be extremely valuable to organizations and can contribute to performance and competitive advantage (Nemeth and Staw 1989)

These behaviors are rather a matter of personal choice, and their absence/omission is not punishable. According to Organ et al. (2006) OCB seems to have a great impact on the individual as well as the success of an organization due to the following.

OCB can:
* enhance productivity (helping new co-workers; helping colleagues meet deadlines)
* free up resources (autonomous, cooperative employees give managers more time to clear their work; helpful behaviour facilitates cohesiveness (as part of group maintenance behaviour).
* attract and retain good employees (through creating and maintaining a friendly, supportive working environment and a sense of belonging) and
* create social capital (better communication and stronger networks facilitate accurate information transfer and improve efficiency)

Organ (1990) described five types of OCB:
- Altruism means that the employees help others working with them.
- Civic virtue suggests that employees sensibly take part in the political life of the organization
- Courtesy indicates that the employees value their coworkers and treat them with respect, admiration and esteem
Conscientiousness means that employees execute job behaviors well ahead of the minimum obligatory levels and
Sportsmanship states that employees do not criticize but have positive and encouraging attitudes

Implications of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

In today’s highly competitive environment, organizations are looking for new ways to maximize employee’s performance. They are in the process of exploring new possibilities to make their employees contribute more. Successful organizations need employees who will do more than their usual job duties and provide performance that goes beyond expectations. The work that the individual employee performs on the job will play an important role in deciding the organizational performance as well. It is therefore very important to understand what decides the employees’ behavior in the organization, their attitude towards the job, towards co-workers and the organization as a whole. Organizational Citizenship Behavior becomes very important in this aspect because it helps managers understand what motivates entry level employees and improves their performance. The employee satisfaction of entry level employees is also a major factor of concern, because it is at this level that employee turnover is predominant. It becomes imperative that organizations motivate their employees. They should also consider improving employee loyalty so that the organization can look at long-term success. It is in this context that Organizational Citizenship Behavior becomes crucial. When the employees feel that the organization considers them as valuable assets, they also start attaching more value to the organization and this leads them to go beyond the call of duty.

For an organization to succeed, employees should engage in positive behaviors that would be beneficial not only to them, but also their co-workers and the organization. The challenge that organizations face today is in encouraging this kind of positive behavior in the employees.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of OCB of employees. The outcome of this study will facilitate administrators to recognize the nature of OCB and work on ways to encourage, promote and recognize such behaviors in their organization.

Theoretical framework

This study focuses only on three dimensions of OCB, namely Altruism, Civic virtue and Courtesy. The following literature clearly states that these three variables play a vital role in the OCB of employees.

Todd (2003) found that Altruism, for instance, usually is interpreted to reflect the willingness of an employee to help a coworker, also is referred to and explained as the selflessness of an employee towards organization. Also, as per Redman & Snape, (2005) ‘Altruism’ is concerned with going beyond job requirements to help others with whom the individual comes into contact. Altruism is accounted as a one of the significant antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), reason being, as Pare’ & Tremblay (2000) explains - behaviors such as helping a colleague who has been absent from work, helping others who have heavy workloads, being mindful of how one’s own behavior affects others’ jobs, and providing help and support to new employees represent clear indications of an employee’s interest for its work environment. Altruism or helping coworkers makes the work system more efficient because one worker can utilize his or her slack time to assist another on a more urgent task (Neihoff & Yen, 2004).

‘Civic Virtue’ refers to behaviors that demonstrate a responsible concern for the image and wellbeing of the organization (Redman & Snape, 2005). Borman et al. (2001) defines civic virtue as responsibly involving oneself in and being concerned about the life of the company. Civic virtue is behavior indicating that an employee responsibly participates in, and is concerned about the life of the
company (represented by voluntary attendance at meetings) (Todd, 2003). Baker (2005) explains Civic Virtue is responsible, constructive involvement in the political processes of the organization. If employees identify strongly with the organization (i.e., high civic virtue), one would expect them to exert extra effort to improve their productivity, resulting in improved efficiency (Neihoff & Yen, 2004).

- Courtesy includes behaviors, which focus on the prevention of problems and taking the necessary step so as to lessen the effects of the problem in the future. In other words, courtesy means a member encourages other workers when they are demoralized and feel discouraged about their professional development. Early research efforts have found that employees who exhibit courtesy would reduce intergroup conflict and thereby diminishes the time spent on conflict management activities (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

The Present study

The present study aims to examine the organizational citizenship behavior of entry level employees. Entry level position is the starting position for a person with little or no experience. In India, much work has not been done to explore the perceived organizational citizenship behavior of the entry level employees and organizations must realize that their performance contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of the organization.

With this objective, 226 recent engineering and IT graduates and post graduates who are presently occupying entry level positions across various companies in Chennai were randomly considered for this study. The questionnaires were given randomly without any uniform pattern, considering only the availability and interest of the respondents. Data collection was carried out during January - March, 2013. The sample consisted of 133 males and 93 females. Their job tenure ranged from 2 months to 2.5 years with a mean tenure of 7 months (S.D = 6.03). Their ages ranged from 21 to 26 years with a mean age of 22.46 years. (S.D = 1.26). The employees were asked to fill a questionnaire which measured their responses to the different variables.

The Organizational Citizenship Scale adopted from P. M. Podsakoff, S. B. MacKenzie, R. H. Moorman, and R. Fetter, (1990) was used to collect data. The questions focused on three dimensions as antecedents of OCB: Altruism, Courtesy and Civic virtue. Each dimension had 5 questions, with equal unary weights attached to every question. Also, the responses were recorded on a 5 point Likert’s scale with 1 corresponding to Never, 2 - Seldom, 3 - About half the time, 4 – Usually and 5 - Always. Totally 226 Responses were collected and following are the major inferences.

Altruism, Courtesy and Civic virtue were found to have a mean of 3.77, 4.28 and 3.71 respectively. Furthermore the Standard deviations for the data set was identified which were 0.62, 0.62 and 0.89 respectively. Also, the median value for Altruism, Courtesy and Civic virtue for the population is 3.8, 4.4, and 3.6 respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that the population exhibits higher level of Courtesy when compared to the nominal levels of Altruism and Civic virtue.

Correlation between each of the antecedents was carried out. There was a moderate positive correlation between altruism and courtesy with a value of 0.31 via a fuzzy-firm linear rule. Also, there was a moderate positive correlation between civic virtue and altruism with a score of 0.41. Weak positive correlation existed between civic virtue and courtesy of 0.23 via shaky linear rule. Hence it can be concluded that each of the antecedents does not extensively affect one another or relate to each other in an individual employee. Further, these are supported by the meek covariance values determined between Altruism & Courtesy which is 0.12, Courtesy & Civic virtue which is 0.11, Courtesy & Altruism which is 0.21 as revealed in Table 1.
Table 1: showing Covariance Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>Civic virtue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic virtue</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, from the individual antecedent scores, a comprehensive score in OCB for each respondent was arrived at as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: showing correlation between the dimensions and also consolidated score for all the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Altruism</th>
<th>Civic virtue</th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure(months)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age(years)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Virtue</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these the consolidated score of the entire population was determined at mean of 3.83, median of 3.87, and SD of 0.51. Hence, it can be concluded that the entire population was lying in the range of mediocre to above average in exhibiting OCB.

An interesting outcome of the study is the fact that there existed almost none or a very weak negative correlation between the tenure served in the organization and the OCB exhibited by the respondents. It is established through the negative correlation coefficient of -0.04 between tenure served in the organization and the comprehensive OCB score for the respondents.

It is common insight that employees who continue in an organization for longer gain more knowledge of their job and the organization and thus their performance is much better than employees with less tenure. Studies conducted on the length of service and organizational citizenship behavior indicated that the duration in which an individual works in an organization is significantly related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Hunt (2002) for instance found that OCB was positively associated with tenure. In a recent meta-analysis of the relationship between organizational tenure and job performance, Ng and Feldman (2010) found that organizational tenure is favorably associated with performance. However, the relationship between tenure and performance was quite weak overall. In fact, Ng and Feldman demonstrated that Citizenship behaviors are best predicted by tenure in the first three years of employment. By cultivating and encouraging the OCB of these entry level employees, managers can develop a workforce who will be willing to perform extra-role functions and go above and beyond their role requirements.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to discern the Organizational Citizenship Behavior of entry level employees. It is observed from our findings that entry level employees also demonstrate Organizational citizenship behavior. Although Altruism and Civic virtue are also considered important, the respondents were found to exhibit higher levels of Courtesy. Courtesy indicates that the employees value their coworkers and treat them with respect, admiration and esteem. This will give rise to a healthy social life in the organization.
In spite of being new to the organization and also to their career, entry level employees are found to exhibit a mediocre to above average level of OCB. These are the employees on whom the organization should concentrate on to spread positive behavior throughout the organization. This will lead to better relationships in the organization and eventually nurture employee satisfaction thereby resulting in improved performance.

References


