



Organizational justice and employee supra-role behaviour- an analytical study

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 4th May 2020, revised 5th August 2020, accepted 3rd September 2020

Abstract

The study investigated the association between the employee perception of “Organizational Justice” (OJ), its four dimensions and the Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). Some 400 managerial employees of the public and private sector entities of Delhi NCR region selected by convenience sampling, participated in it. The impact of OJ on OCB was analysed and it indicated positive correlation between them. The result was consistent with previous research studies. The respondents, however, in both sectors rated employee behaviour as highly positive which implied that their responses were highly discreet.

Keywords: Organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational justice, fairness at workplace, extra-role behaviour, discretionary behaviour, supra-role behaviour.

Introduction

The organizations expected their employees to take proactive initiatives, exert extra efforts transcending their job descriptions in order to contribute effectively to its success. The job description defined the formal working relationship of the employees and in addition some choose to take optional or discretionary acts solely out of their own volition for the benefit of organization. Such discretionary acts of those employees that benefit the organization are known as “Organizational Citizenship Behaviour” (OCB). Organ¹ stated that OCB was ‘a multi-dimensional concept’ comprised of all positive behaviours relevant for the organization such as ‘organizationally relevant extra-role behaviours’, and ‘political behaviours’ viz. full and responsible participation in the organizational affairs.

The idea behind the concept of OCB originated in the writings of Chester Barnard² who regarded the organizations as ‘cooperative systems’ that required willingness of the employees to render efforts beyond their routine tasks to ensure its business success. Years after, Katz³ wrote on employee extra-role behaviour and later, he along with his colleague Kahn⁴ expanded the concept further in their book *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. Building on these concepts and expanding on Organ’s⁵ research on job satisfaction and performance, in 1983, there were two studies undertaken by Organ himself and other researchers^{6,7}. These studies paved the way for the introduction of the concept of OCB. Some authors opine that the concept got introduced in 1983 through these papers whereas some others claim that Organ coined the concept only in 1988. Be that as it may, it is irrelevant for our study.

What is clear that it was ‘Katz and Kahn’ who had called OCB as *extra-role* or *supra-role behaviour*⁸ and Organ and his colleagues expanded on the idea later. The employees behaved in different ways at the workplace in organizational interest viz. preventing conflicts, obeying rules without even supervisor’s instructions, ignoring trivial issues, helping the over-burdened co-workers and so on. These acts can well be regarded as examples of OCB.

Numerous studies are available related to the association of organizational justice with OCB in developed nations. However, in India relevant studies are limited. Past research studies confirmed that perception of OJ has been a key factor that influenced the employee attitude and behaviour in the organizations^{9,10}. Moorman¹¹ found a causal relationship between OJ and OCB. Lambert et al.¹² stated that positive perception of OJ of the subordinates had the tendency to influence their better involvement in work and reflect OCB in them⁸. Thus, it is evident there is a positive association between OJ and OCB. The current study investigated the impact of the employee perception of OJ and its dimensions on OCB as a total concept in some selected public and private organizations in Delhi NCR.

Literature Review: Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB): OCB contributes significantly to organizational progress and has attracted substantial attention of researchers over the years. Organ¹ stated that OCB had five dimensions: i. Courtesy: as “the gestures that help others to prevent interpersonal problems from occurring..., consulting others before taking any actions that would affect them”¹³.

ii. Altruism: as “behaviour motivated by concern for others...rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards or to avoid punishment”¹⁴. iii. Conscientiousness: as “a spectrum of constructs that describe individual differences in the propensity to be self-controlled, responsible to others, hardworking, orderly, and rule abiding”¹⁵. iv. Civicvirtue: as “subordinate participation in organization political life and supporting the administrative function of the organization”¹⁶. v. Sportsmanship: as “the behaviour of warmly tolerating the irritations that are an unavoidable part of nearly every organizational setting”¹.

Organizational Justice (OJ): OJ refers to employee perception of justice in an organization in terms of the outcome it provides; the procedures it uses to reach to those outcomes, and the way it treats its employees. In 1964, Wendell L. French, in his book, *The Personnel Management Process* mentioned this first and drew attention to fairness issues in personnel management. After two decades, Greenberg¹⁷ coined the exact term *Organizational Justice*, and wrote at length about the employee perception of fairness at the workplaces¹⁸. The employees usually formed their perceptions of justice and equality at the workplace as they observed and experienced the policies and practices, and the culture of the organization. Their perception in turn influenced their attitude, job performance, satisfaction, and their behaviour.

Robbins and Judge¹⁹ defined “*organizational justice as a multidimensional construct with three principals and distinct dimensions*”. Colquitt, Scott, Judge and Shaw²⁰ said that “*organizational justice is a construct that explains an individual experience in an organizational setting in terms of fairness based on situational and personal factors*” and it has implications on the behaviour of the employees²¹. The research and theory development of OJ went through four major stages²² and its dimensions emerged eventually in the course of each stage.

The attention of researchers was first drawn towards distribution of resources in the organizations in a fair manner²² which was called in ancient times as *distributive justice*. Right from 1950s, this captured the interest of the researchers for almost three succeeding decades. This was the first dimension of OJ. This dimension is based on the well-known equity theory of Stacy Adams. Under the equity theory, the individual perceived his outcome as fair if his contribution matched with the contribution and outcome of others.

Leventhal²³ pointed out shortcomings of equity theory questioning that it only spoke of equity as the allocation norm which was inappropriate. Adams focused on reactions to unfair outcomes, while Leventhal emphasized on norms of allocation viz. contribution, equality, need etc. as well as the role and behaviour of the allocators. Deutsch²⁴ advocated that the norm of equity was unsuitable in non-economic matters.

The search for other dimensions of OJ persisted as it was felt that justice could not be perceived completely in terms of outcomes only. In 1974, John Thibaut and Laurens Walker, a social psychologist and a law professor respectively, along with a few fellow researchers, published two articles pertaining to their research subject on *procedural justice* in conflict resolution in the legal domain. Thibaut and Walker introduced the concept of *procedural justice* in legal context but it was Leventhal and his co-researchers²⁵ who introduced the said concept in the context of organizations²⁶ which became the second dimension of OJ. *Procedural justice* relates to the fairness of the ‘procedures and processes’ used for decision-making, allocation of resources or for reaching to outcomes. *Procedural justice* continued to attract the attention of the researchers tentatively until mid-1980s.

From mid-1980s tentatively until 2000s, attention of the researchers remained focused on interpersonal aspect of justice. Bies and Moag²⁷ advocated that in addition to outcome and processes, individuals were also concerned with their interactions at the workplace with the authorities and their experience affected their perception of fairness which the authors called as *interactional justice*. Later, Greenberg²⁸ proposed to split *interactional justice* into two categories: ‘*interpersonal* and *informational*’, which were based on certain rules of justice. While the interpersonal justice was based on the fairness of the treatment received during the enactment of processes and distribution of outcomes, informational justice was based on truthfulness and justification of the decisions, and appropriate explanation for them. Colquitt²⁹ and other researchers suggested these two new dimensions of justice had positive impact on employee behaviour and motivation. Empirical evidence showed that previous studies supported the ‘four-factor model of justice’^{29,26}.

Studies on Organizational Justice and its impact on OCB: Though OCB has five dimensions, OCB can still be studied as a total concept. There are many studies in which OCB was treated as a dependent variable and its antecedents were explored. Dimitriades³⁰ said there were five prime antecedents of OCB such as perceptions of fairness, perceptions of leadership supportiveness, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and employee morale. My research is devoted to study the association of OCB with the employee perception of fairness which is one of these antecedents.

Past Studies confirmed the association between perception of fairness and OCB^{28,31}. To name a few: i. The study of Aquino³² in Midwestern Business School found pay inequity negatively affected OCB of employees. ii. Bowen *et al*³³ studied the impact of justice on customers and stated that OCB of justly treated employees had good impact on customers. The study found that the employees were willing to listen to the needs of customers. iii. Those treated fairly in the organizations were more likely to respect the policies of workplace, show conscientiousness voluntarily, and show empathic behaviour toward others³⁴.

iv. The study of Williams et al.³¹ found that OCB increased as the employee perceptions of fairness became more and more positive. v. Liden et al.³⁵ found that employees were more than willing to do hard work as a reciprocal gesture to their just treatment. vi. Chegini³⁶ undertook a study and learnt that there was a positive association between OJ and OCB. vii. Justice in the organizations positively influenced OCB³⁷ as shown by several research studies. viii. OCB seems to be a result of procedural justice³⁸. The researchers found the positive association between procedural justice and OCB. ix. Spector and Che³⁹ found that distributive justice affected OCB in a positive manner. x. Wu and Xiao⁴⁰ studied various components of discretionary HR practices, mediated by organizational justice and found that voluntary HR practices had a significant influence on OCB. xi. Lee and Kim⁴¹ studied to find out the antecedents of OCB and discovered that procedural justice, transformational leadership had positive impact on OCB. xii. Awang and Ahmad⁴² studied the connection between OCB and OJ. They found that distributive and interactional equity had a critical connection with OCB. xiii. Ali⁴³ found a significant relationship between OJ and OCB. The study indicated that OCB got affected directly or indirectly by various OJ dimensions. xiv. Ali et al.⁴⁴ found an affirmative association between OJ and OCB. They also found that association between interactional justice and OCB was stronger in comparison to the relationships between other dimensions of OJ and OCB.

Numerous studies are available on the relationship between OJ and OCB in other countries but studies of this kind are handful in India. The current study has investigated the impact of justice in organizations on OCB in the selected Indian public and private sector organizations of Delhi NCR region 2%.

Methodology

The study's objective was to measure the impact of OJ, the independent variable, and its dimensions on OCB which is the

dependent variable. The structured questionnaire of Colquitt²⁹ comprising of 20 questions and the standardized questionnaire of Podsakoff et al.⁴⁵ of 24 questions were used in the study for OJ and OCB respectively. There were 8 other questions on demographic variables e.g. age, gender, marital status, and years of service in the current organization, qualification, type of the organization, monthly income, and family type. Likert scale was used in the questionnaire to rate the responses. Though more than 600 questionnaires were circulated across numerous organizations selected by convenience sampling method, finally only 475 responses were received. The data was collected through personal interview and e-mail. However, some 400 responses, 200 each from public and private sector, were found valid after data filtering. The mid-level managerial employees of more than 15 organizations participated in the study. The sample size was determined on the basis of Cochran⁴⁶ formula and Krejcie and Morgan's table⁴⁷. Data analysis was done through the statistical methods of regression, Cronbach alpha, correlation and ANOVA. The entire analysis was done by SPSS 25.0.

Results and discussion

Reliability Study: Cronbach Alpha values of each individual item in the questionnaires were greater than or closure to the tolerance limit of 0.70, which meant that apart from overall Cronbach alpha value, individual items in the questionnaires were also reliable for further analysis. ANOVA results with Cochran test were also significant (P-Value < 0.05) in case of both private and public organizations, which meant that at 95% confidence level, data used in the study was reliable for further analysis.

Demographic Profile of Respondents on OCB: The majority of the respondents perceived employee behaviour as quite positive in both the sectors which was a bit surprising for the researcher.

Table-1: ANOVA with Cochran's Test- OCB.

Attributes		Private					Public				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cochran's Q	Sig	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cochran's Q	Sig
Between People		1,308	199	6.6	1825.1	0.0	1,001	199	5.0	1828.6	0.0
Within People	Between Items	1,881	23	81.8			2,501	23	105.5		
	Residual	2,860	5577	0.6			3,650	5577	0.8		
	Total	5,751	5600	1.0			6,051	5600	1.3		
Total		6,059	5799	1.3			7,052	5799	1.5		
OCB		Grand Mean = 3.88					Grand Mean = 3.82				

Table-2: % Contribution of the Demographic Profile of the Respondents on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour.

Scale	Count		Cont. %	
	Private	Public	Private	Public
To a Very Large Extent	73.7	68.2	36.9%	34.1%
To a Large Extent	64.3	74.9	32.2%	37.5%
To a Moderate Extent	33.7	25.6	16.9%	12.8%
To a Small Extent	21.4	15.1	10.7%	7.5%
To a Very Small Extent	6.9	16.2	3.4%	8.1%
Grand Total	200.0	200.0	100.0%	100.0%

However, the data analysis showed that there was no significant effect of any of the demographic variables on OCB. The P-value of all the demographic variables was greater than 0.05.

Relationship between OJ, its Dimensions and OCB: At 95% confidence level, the correlation study (Table-3) indicated that there was a moderate positive association between OJ, its various dimensions and OCB (p-value < 0.05).

Table-3: Pearson Correlation.

Variables	Public	Private
Distributive Justice	0.258	0.046
Procedural Justice	0.321	0.071
Interpersonal Justice	0.396	0.385
Informational Justice	0.250	0.108
Organizational Justice	0.047	0.209

Furthermore, the descriptive analysis said that the mean score of OCB in the private sector was (3.88), which was slightly higher as compared to the score of OCB in public sector (3.82). This implied that that OCB was better in private sector.

Assessing the Impact of OJ, its Dimensions on OCB: Main Hypothesis: i. H₀: No positive association between OJ and OCB in the selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR.
 Vs.

H₁: There is a positive or significant association between OJ and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR.

Sub Hypotheses: i. H₀^a: No positive association between Distributive Justice and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR. ii. H₀^b: No positive association between Procedural Justice and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR. iii. H₀^c: No positive association between Interpersonal Justice and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR. iv. H₀^d: No positive association between Informational Justice and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR.

Hypotheses were tested with regression analysis. This R value indicated (Tables-4 and 5) the correlation between employee perception of OJ, its dimensions and OCB. The R² demonstrated the variation in the dependent variable. It showed that there was 0.2% and 4.4% impact of OJ on OCB in public and private sector respectively.

The ANOVA tables below showed that regression model predicted OCB significantly. The P-values for private and public sector are 0.003 and 0.030 (<0.05) and it indicated that the overall regression model was significant. Thus, the *null hypothesis* was rejected and the *alternate hypothesis* was accepted. This meant that there was a positive association between Organizational Justice and OCB in selected public and private sector organizations in Delhi NCR (Table-6).

Similarly, the Beta (β) and p-value in the coefficient tables also indicated that OJ, its dimensions positively predicted OCB both in public and private sectors. Evidently, the impact of employee perception of OJ was significant and positive on OCB in both sectors.

Table-4: Regression Model Summary- Public Sector -OCB

	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
DJ Public	1	.258a	0.067	0.062	0.44344
PJ Public	1	.321a	0.103	0.099	0.43471
INPJ Public	1	.396a	0.157	0.153	0.42143
INFJ Public	1	.250a	0.062	0.058	0.44449
OJ Public	1	.047a	0.002	0.003	0.45851

Table-5: Regression Model Summary- Private Sector – OCB.

	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
DJ Private	1	.046a	0.002	-0.003	0.52414
PJ Private	1	.071a	0.005	0.000	0.52335
INPJ Private	1	.385a	0.148	0.144	0.48420
INFJ Private	1	.108a	0.012	0.007	0.52161
OJ Private	1	.209a	0.044	0.039	0.51305

Table-6: ANOVA^a – Public Sector- OCB.

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
DJ Public	1	Regression	2.784	1	2.784	14.156	.000b
		Residual	38.934	198	0.197		
		Total	41.718	199			
PJ Public	1	Regression	4.302	1	4.302	22.764	.000b
		Residual	37.416	198	0.189		
		Total	41.718	199			
INPJ Public	1	Regression	6.552	1	6.552	36.893	.000b
		Residual	35.166	198	0.178		
		Total	41.718	199			
INFJ Public	1	Regression	2.599	1	2.599	13.152	.000b
		Residual	39.119	198	0.198		
		Total	41.718	199			
OJ Public	1	Regression	0.092	1	0.092	0.435	.030b
		Residual	41.626	198	0.210		
		Total	41.718	199			

a. Dependent Variable: OCB Public, b. Predictors: (Constant), INFJ Public, INPJ Public, PJ Public, DJ_Public, OJ Public.

Table-7: ANOVA^a – Private Sector – OCB.

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DJ Private	Regression	0.115	1	0.115	0.418	.019b
	Residual	54.395	198	0.275		
	Total	54.509	199			
PJ Private	Regression	0.278	1	0.278	1.015	.015b
	Residual	54.231	198	0.274		
	Total	54.509	199			
INPJ Private	Regression	8.089	1	8.089	34.501	.000b
	Residual	46.421	198	0.234		
	Total	54.509	199			
INFJ Private	Regression	0.638	1	0.638	2.347	.027b
	Residual	53.871	198	0.272		
	Total	54.509	199			
OJ Private	Regression	2.392	1	2.392	9.086	.003b
	Residual	52.118	198	0.263		
	Total	54.509	199			

a. Dependent Variable: OCB Private, b. Predictors: (Constant), INFJ Private, INPJ Private, PJ Private, DJ Private, OJ Private

Conclusion

The study found positive and very significant association between employee perception of OJ, its dimensions and OCB in both the public as well as private sector organizations in Delhi NCR region. In both the sectors, there was a consensus in the views of respondents on OCB. The respondents considered the employee behaviour in their organizations as quite positive. The result was consistent with the previous research studies on OJ and OCB^{28, 31}.

Recommendations: Though the result is consistent with previous studies, it is still suggested that researchers should undertake further studies based on bigger samples and qualitative data to receive more insight as regards employee behaviour. Such studies will unravel the precise connection between fairness scenario and its impact on employee behaviour. Since the current study is cross-sectional, it is proposed that scholars should undertake longitudinal research in future to understand if the relationships are modified over time with changes in situations.

Furthermore, the researchers should undertake studies with larger number of organisations preferably from various parts of India to get better insight on employee behaviour in other sectors. This study is done on the basis of self-reported data collected through the standardized questionnaires, therefore it is recommended that scholars should construct their questionnaires and peers, supervisors and even subordinates should be able to participate and respond on the basis of their observation and evidence.

The ideal study would be then to compare the result of self-report data with other-report data and to undertake an objective assessment of the scenario. Such new studies will significantly contribute to building new knowledge in the area and the process of generalization of results.

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