

The Association between Training and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in the Digital World

Kamarul Zaman Ahmad

College of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Abstract

This research investigated the association between five training variables i.e. availability of training, support for training, motivation to learn, training environment and perceived benefits of training and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). OCB was made up of 5 components – altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship and courtesy. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 120 employees in Malaysia whose work involved heavy usage of computers and never communicate directly with customers. The training questionnaire was adopted from Ahmad and Raida (2003). OCB was measured by the 21-item questionnaire developed from Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990); Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994). Support for training, motivation to learn, training environment, and benefits of training are all significantly correlated with all components of OCB with the exception of sportsmanship. This suggests the need for organizations in Malaysia to provide more soft skills training such as changing the mindset and building positive attitudes, even among employees who predominantly work with computers.

Keywords: Training, Organizational citizenship behaviour, computers

1-Introduction

The world is looking for high performance organizations. Ahmad and Raida (2003) have found that there is a relationship between training variables and organizational commitment (which was comprised of affective, normative and continuance commitment). However, it is felt that organizations should not only pay attention to organizational commitment, and also to in-role performance, but more

importantly, they should also take notice of extra-role performance, i.e., OCB. For this reason, organizational researchers have developed the concept of OCB to characterize productive behaviors by employees that go above and beyond organizational requirements (Farh, Early and Lin 1997; Organ 1988) and it is extremely important to explore the reasons why employees exhibit OCB. Most employers verbally support the principle that “people are our most important

asset" but this claim does not always translate into management practices. Organizations have shifted from the use of strict hierarchical structures and individualized jobs. Instead, somewhat autonomous team-based work structures have been implemented, and this implementation has increased the importance of individual initiative and cooperation (Ilgen, 1999). As a result of this new requirement, the workforce has to be re-trained to work effectively in this new environment. Bearing in mind the relationship found between training and organizational commitment in Ahmad and Raida (2003), it would be interesting to see whether a similar relationship between training and organizational citizenship can also be found among employees whose work primarily involves heavy use of computers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is a unique aspect of individual activity at work, first mentioned in the early 1980s. Bateman and Organ (1983) first used the term "organizational citizenship" to define the beneficial behaviors of workers that were not prescribed but occurred freely to help others achieve the task at hand. According to Organ's (1988:4) definition, it represents the "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". Actions that exemplify OCB include such things as volunteering for activities not related to an individual's job description (e.g. planning the company picnic) or assisting others (e.g. a salesperson helping a vendor to unload a truck) (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Even seemingly "required" behavior such as "upholding workplace rules and procedures regardless of personal inconvenience" has been cited as OCB

(Organ and Ryan, 1995).

In short, many different definitions have been posited in the attempt to describe specific dimensions underlying the concept of OCB. However, the most frequent working definition of the overall construct is those sets of individual behaviors that contribute to the social and psychological context in which the task performance of a job must function (Organ, 1990). Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000) identified five categories of OCB: (1) altruism: the helping of an individual coworker on a task, (2) courtesy: alerting others in the organization about changes that may affect their work, (3) conscientiousness: carrying out one's duties beyond the minimum requirements, (4) sportsmanship: refraining from complaining about trivial matters, and (5) civic virtue: participating in the governance of the organization.

2.2 Altruism

Helping behavior has been identified as one of the important dimensions of OCB and is defined as voluntarily helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of work related problems (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Smith, Organ, and Near's (1983) measure of altruism is the most commonly used measure that falls into this category. George (1991) suggested that a positive mood state at work is related to the willingness of employees to help others (altruism dimension of citizenship behavior) and thus, is an important part of OCB. Building on this premise, George and Brief (1992) set forth the conceptual proposition that positive mood would consistently be related to helping behaviors. The explanation of why positive mood state would tend to influence helping behavior is perhaps nested in affect priming. Through priming, an individual in a positive mood is more likely to feel positive toward co-workers and is more likely to help them (Forgas, 2002).

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Consistent with this relationship, other researchers have suggested that good moods result in an enhanced social outlook, which facilitates helping behavior (Carlson, Charlin, and Miller, 1988).

2.3 Civic Virtue

Civic virtue is shown in an employee's willingness to participate in meetings, engage in policy debates, and keep the company's best interest in mind, even at great personal costs. Many studies have focussed specifically on civic virtue in OCB (Avery and Quinones, 2002; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Robinson and Morrison, 1995). It is consistent with Organ's (1988) initial delineation of citizenship as multidimensional. Understanding predictors of civic virtue citizenship behavior is important because prosocial behaviors based on employee initiative and active participation are increasingly critical to ongoing organizational performance, given the dynamic nature of the competitive environment.

2.4 Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship is defined as the "willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining" (Organ, 1990). Sportsmanship is somewhat similar to organizational loyalty and compliance. Organizational loyalty entails promoting the organization to outsiders, defending it against external threats, and remaining committed to it regardless of the circumstance. Organizational compliance or generalized compliance represents a person's obedience to, and compliance with, organizational rules, regulations, and procedures, regardless of who is watching.

2.5 Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness can be defined as paying attention to the details, and following rules, regulations and procedures. Conscientious

employees maintain predictable work schedules and thus increase the reliability of the service (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1991). Providing ideas that enhance customer service would qualify as acts of civic virtue, as long as they are not part of employees' official job description (Hammer and Champy, 1993).

2.6 Courtesy

Similar to altruism, these are supportive behaviors. However, unlike altruism, courtesy behaviors are not aimed at any specific person. Instead, they are more general in nature, aimed at preventing potential problems from happening. An example would be an employee coming across a piece of information that might not bear much relevance to him / her, but could be important for other colleagues and thus passing the information to them. In a recent meta-analysis of the past fifteen years of organizational citizenship research, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000) outlined the extent to which a compendium of variables influenced various dimensions of OCB. Among those variables that showed consistent relationships with OCB were task-related variables such as intrinsically satisfying tasks, task routinization, and task feedback. Although there has not been much empirical attention given to the relationships among other task-related variables (such as training) and OCB, the meta-analysis of Podsakoff et al. (2000) suggests this to be a fruitful area of study and thus investigated in this research.

2.7 The Availability of Training

The provision of training to employees to cope with the new demands can be perceived by the employees as organizational support. Previous studies have shown that perceived organizational support is positively correlated with commitment (Cheung, 2000; Meyer, Allen and Gellatly, 1990). Similarly, perceived organizational support is also positively related

with a tendency to help coworkers (Shore and Wayne, 1993). This suggests that availability of training can be related positively to OCB and thus investigated in the current research.

2.8 Motivation to Learn

Learning motivation can be defined as the specific desire of a learner to learn the content of a training program (Noe, 1986; Noe and Schmitt 1986). Noe (1986) suggested that, when there is no motivation, individuals, who may have the ability to master the training content, might fail to do so. In general, past studies have revealed that higher levels of motivation to learn, result in improved performance in learning (Quinones, 1995). Studies done by Cheng (2001) revealed that learning motivation and learning transfer is positively related to OCB. In fact, in a study of U.S. Navy recruits, OCB was found to increase following participation in training (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers, 1991).

Therefore, trainee motivation and attitudes play an important role in determining training effectiveness within their organization. Trainees with a high level of job involvement are more likely to be motivated to learn new skills. This is because participation in training activities is perceived by individuals as a way to increase skill levels, improve job performance and elevate feelings of self-worth (Noe and Schmitt, 1986). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) connect motivation and job satisfaction to the citizenship process. Thus OCB begins to form when an individual is motivated.

2.9 Training Environment

There have been many studies concerning the environment in training. According to Forehand and Gilmer (1964), work climate is the set of characteristics that describe one organization and distinguish the organization from other organizations; are relatively enduring over time; and influence the behavior of people in the

organization. It has also been argued that employees are frequently sensitive to relevant environmental and organizational constraints that might limit the ability to provide them with desired rewards (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch, 1997). Whether an employee is undergoing training or working, the immediate environment function plays a vital role in affecting OCB. Simon (1969) also believed that the environment determined the conditions for goal attainment. Montesino (2002) found that several factors are known to affect the effectiveness of training such as the behaviour of the individual learner, the training program, the training environment and the support from the trainee's immediate supervisor. Hence, training environment, among other things, plays an important role in ensuring that training objectives are met.

2.10 Benefits of Training

Training offers many benefits to employees and to the organization as a whole. Employees become more confident, open to change and supportive of each other (Donovan, Hannigan and Crowe, 2001). In addition, employees are more motivated to achieve improved performance as a result of training. The perceived benefits of training have been found to affect participation and commitment in training. Nordhaug (1989) identified three types of benefits that employees obtain from training which are personal, career, and job-related benefits. Those who reflect positively on training benefits are thought to exhibit stronger feelings of citizenship to the organization that provided the training.

3. Research Objectives

This study explores a new way to evaluate the outcome of training in organizations, by examining the relationship between training and OCB. The purpose of the present research was to test the hypotheses regarding the relations

between the variables in training and OCB. These variables can form a model that can be used by top management to enhance the level of OCB of their employees. Therefore the main objective of this study is to investigate the association of social support for training, motivation to learn, training environment, and benefits of training on the one hand, with altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, and courtesy and the overall OCB on the other.

4. Development of Hypotheses

In line with the issues raised in the literature review, the following hypotheses were developed:
 Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between social support for training on the one hand and altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, courtesy and overall OCB on the other.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between motivation to learn in training on the one hand and levels of altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, courtesy and overall OCB on the other.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between training environment on the one hand and altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, courtesy and overall OCB on the other.

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between the recognized benefits of training on the one hand and altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, courtesy and overall OCB on the other.

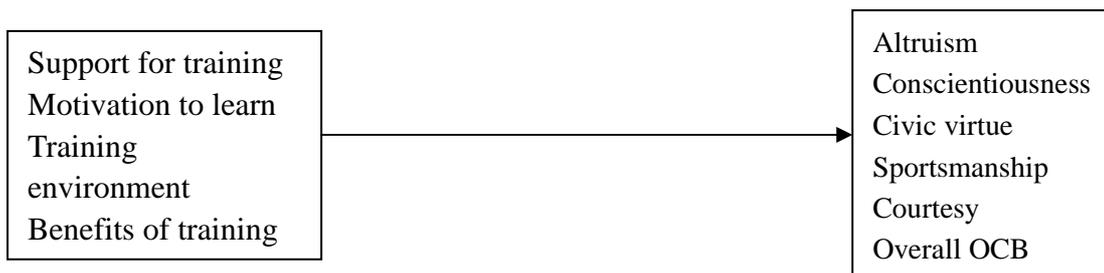


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

5. The Measures

According to Brown (1990), organization size can be used as a control variable and previous research has shown that organizations with more than one hundred employees provide more training. In this study a convenience sample was used. 250 questionnaires were distributed to a large organisation with several branches and with a total of approximately two thousand employees in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The target respondents are those whose work involved heavy usage of computers and never communicated directly with customers. 120 questionnaires were returned and used for the

final analysis. This represents an overall response rate of 48 percent.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Section A was designed to collect demographic information of the respondents to give a meaningful interpretation of the results. This section covers gender, age, race, education level, annual income, job status, tenure, types of training used in the organization, frequency and duration of the training sessions. Section B contained 21 general statements regarding OCB. Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994) 21 items scale was incorporated in this section. The

respondents need to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements by circling the appropriate numbers (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) which represents the following meaning: 1, Strongly Disagree; 2, Disagree; 3, Uncertain; 4, Agree; or 5, Strongly Agree i.e. on a Likert Scale. Scores on negative items were reversed. The 21 questions were also categorised into 5 sub-variables as follows:

OCB Variable 1: Altruism (Questions 1-3). Altruism was measured using 3 items from Podsakoff et al, (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994) altruism scale. Sample items were, "Willingly give up my time to help others out who have work-related problems" and "I am willing to take time out of my busy schedule to help with recruiting or training new employees."

OCB Variable 2: Conscientiousness (Questions 4-10). Conscientiousness was measured using 7 questions developed by Podsakoff et al, (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994). Sample items were, "Coming to work early if needed" and "Obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching."

OCB Variables 3: Civic virtue (Questions 11-14). Civic virtue was measured using 4 questions developed by Podsakoff et al, (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994). Sample items were, "I attend training/information sessions that I am encouraged to, but not required to attend" and "I attend and actively participate in company meetings."

OCB Variables 4: Sportsmanship (Questions 15-18). Sportsmanship was measured using 4 questions developed by Podsakoff et al, (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994). Sample items were, "I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters" and "I usually focus on what is wrong with my situation rather than the positive side of it."

OCB Variables 5: Courtesy (Questions 19-21). Courtesy was measured using a scale developed by Podsakoff et al, (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1994). Sample items were, "I usually 'touch base' with others before initiating actions that might affect them" and "I act as a 'peacemaker when others in the company have disagreements."

Section C had questions that measured training. Training was viewed as the independent variable and comprised of 4 sub-variables as follows:

Training Variable 1: Social support for training (Question 22). Few statements from the survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Ahmad and Raida, 2003) were used to assess levels of support from top management as well as from the organization. A sample item is, "Organization gives me sufficient opportunities to improve myself through training."

Training Variable 2: Motivation to learn (Question 23-26). The statements were specifically related to the respondent's motivation to learn in training such as, "I am willing to put a great deal of effort in training, beyond what is normally expected, in order to improve my performance and the organization as a whole."

Training Variables 3: Training environment (Question 27-29). The statements were developed to examine whether the training environment plays an important role in enhancing organizational citizenship. A sample item is, "The work space that is designed for training is comfortable."

Training Variables 4: Benefits of training (Question 30-35). The statements were developed to explore whether the respondent believed that training is important. A sample item is, "Training gives me great self-confidence

in my work.”

The survey was conducted over a two-week period using self-administered methods. Each of the survey questionnaires included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey. The subjects were told that filling out the questionnaire was optional and were assured that their anonymity would be protected. To ensure anonymity, they were not required to write their name on the questionnaire sheets.

6. Results

There were more female respondents than male respondents in this sample. There were 74 females (61.7%) as compared to 46 males (38.3%). Majority of the respondents were below 30 years old (69.2%). Also in the sample, a large proportion of the respondents report that they

have obtained a bachelor degree (65.8%), while the remaining only completed high school (1.7%), diplomas (28.3%), and masters (4.2%).

With respect to training, the organization conducted both, informal and formal, types of training. The organization often performed formal training approximately more than three times a year and the average duration of each formal training session was often one day. In the sample, a large population of the respondents reported that they earned yearly income below RM 25,000 (68.3%), the job status of executive level and below (71.7%), and tenure with the current organization of 1-5 years (76.7%). Malays comprised the largest ethnic group (41.7%) followed by Indians (38.3%) and Chinese (15.8%).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Statement	Cronbach's Alpha values N=120
Statement 1-Statement 3	0.80
Statement 4-Statement10	0.87
Statement 11-Statement14	0.81
Statement 15-Statement18	0.93
Statement 19-Statement 21	0.77
Overall Statement	0.70

Since, according to Nunnally (1978), an alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is necessary for an exploratory research or survey to be considered reliable, this questionnaire can be therefore be regarded as reliable (see Table 1). In this study,

Bivariate Pearson Product-moment correlation was used to test the relationship between the independent variables of training and the dependent variables of OCB.

Table 2: Correlations

	Support for Training	Motivation to Learn	Environment for Training	Benefits of Training
OCB1 Altruism	.490**	.579**	.514**	.641**
OCB2 Conscientiousness	.311**	.568**	.375**	.540**
OCB3 Civic Virtue	Not Sig	.428**	.188*	.274**
OCB4 Sportsmanship	Not Sig	Not Sig	Not Sig	Not Sig
OCB5 Courtesy	Not Sig	.390**	.185*	.359**
OCB Total	.248**	.583**	.306**	.481**

It can be seen from Table 2 that all four variables of training i.e. support for training, motivation to learn, environment for training and benefits of training are significantly positively correlated with the total scores for OCB at the 0.01 level (0.248, 0.583, 0.306 and 0.481 respectively). All four training variables aforementioned were also significantly correlated with the OCB variables of altruism and conscientiousness. The highest correlation is between benefits of training and the OCB variable of altruism (as high as 0.641). Motivation to learn, environment for training and benefits of training were also significantly correlated with OCB variables of civic virtue and courtesy. The OCB variable of sportsmanship was not significantly correlated with any of the training variables.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The major findings of this study suggest that even though the respondents' work primarily involved data entry and/or heavy use of computers, individual perception of training plays an important role in affecting organizational citizenship. It was found that all four variables of training i.e. support for training, motivation to learn, environment for training and benefits of training are significantly positively correlated with the total scores for OCB. This suggests that if organizations are desirous of increasing the level of OCB of their employees,

they should invest more in training their workers. They could do this by giving employees sufficient opportunities to improve themselves through training (as measured by the variable of support for training). The place in which the training is conducted should be suitable and comfortable (as measured by the variable of training environment). The training must also allow the employees to acquire new skills, improve their self-confidence and overall performance (as measured by the variable of benefits of training). All this will improve their overall OCB.

Results also suggest that training will also improve the individual components of OCB. For example, it appears that improved support, motivation and benefits of training as well as the training environment, will result in the employees exhibiting a higher level of altruism. This means that after the training, employees are more likely to be willing to give up some of their time to help others out who have work-related problems and willing to take time out of their busy schedule to help with recruiting or training new employees. Investing in training workers will improve the employees' level of conscientiousness, meaning that they are more prepared to come to work early if needed and will obey company rules and regulations, even when no one is watching. Their level of civic virtue will also increase resulting in their attendance in training sessions that are

encouraged but not made compulsory. They will also attend and actively participate in company meetings. Finally, investing in training will also improve the employees' level of courtesy. They are more likely to "touch base" with others before initiating actions that might affect them, and act as a "peacemaker" when others in the company have disagreements.

It is worthy to note that the highest correlation is between benefits of training and the OCB variable of altruism (as high as 0.641 i.e. accounting for as much as 41% of the variance). This provides strong evidence that if employees perceive that the training provided has allowed them to acquire new knowledge and skills, gives them self-confidence in their capability to do their job and enhances their overall performance, then they are more likely to be willing to give up some of their time to help out others and to help in recruiting and training new employees.

Motivation to learn, environment for training and benefits of training were also significantly correlated with OCB variables of civic virtue and courtesy. Surprisingly however, the OCB variable of sportsmanship was not significantly correlated with any of the training variables. Perhaps the reasons are due to the nature of the variable of sportsmanship itself and how it was measured. A low level of sportsmanship would mean that a person would spend a lot of time complaining about trivial matters, always find fault with what the company is doing, make mountains out of molehills or focus on what is wrong with the situation rather than focusing on the positive side of it. This would indicate a negative attitude on the part of the employee. This can mean that soft skills training currently provided by trainers are not effective in creating and improving on a positive attitude among the employees. Furthermore, it is possible that technical training is overemphasized whereas soft skills training such as building positive

attitudes are often neglected or not sufficiently addressed. If this interpretation is correct, then it follows that human resource and training managers should critically review the kinds of training that they had in the past. In the future, they should look for new and more high-impact programs to change the mindset of the employees and build their positive attitude.

8. Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to a targeted population within Malaysia only - it focused on only on employees whose work primarily involved heavy usage of computers. However, it is conceivable that the same relationship would exist in other occupations. On the positive side, the study was for the most part consistent with previous studies conducted in Western countries. Future research should be conducted on people with other jobs, and perhaps other countries in Asia.

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