



Linking the ‘Big Five’ Personality Domains to Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore the linkages between personality and organization citizenship behavior (OCB) using a field sample. Big-Five personality model was used to explore the relationship between personality and OCB. The participants in the study were 187 doctors working in medical college in north India. Four of the ‘big five’ factors except Neuroticism were positively correlated with OCB. Hierarchical regression analysis on data after controlling for demographic variables indicated that, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism were valid predictors for OCB. However, Openness to experience showed no significant relationship with overall measure of OCB. Theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: Personality, OCB, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, India

1. Introduction

Nearly four decades ago, Katz (1964) pointed out the importance of a class of discretionary and spontaneous behaviors that are beyond explicit role requirements, but that are essential for organizational effectiveness. Smith, Organ and Near (1983), in a report of empirical research on the nature and antecedents of such behaviors, conceptualize these contributions as “organizational citizenship behavior” (OCB), later defined by Organ 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). These behaviors are rather a matter of personal choice, such that their omission is not generally understood as punishable. OCBs are thought to have an important impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of work teams and organizations, therefore contributing to the overall productivity of the organization.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) are discretionary behaviors on the part of the worker, which are neither expected nor required, and therefore cannot be formally rewarded or punished for the presence or lack of, by the organization. Schnake (1991) gives three reasons why OCB are not affected by organizational influences: (1) OCB are subtle and therefore hard to objectively rate, which makes for difficult inclusion in appraisals; (2) Some forms of OCB may pull people away from their own work to assist another; and (3) Because OCB cannot be contractually required (if they were required behaviors, they would be contractual behaviors, not OCB), the organization cannot punish employees for not performing them. For this reason, OCB is commonly defined in terms of social exchange (Moorman, 1991).

In recent years, there has been increasing interest among the researchers to explore the contextual and dispositional factors responsible for eliciting “Organization Citizenship Behavior” (OCB). Researchers have started to pay more attention to understand the dynamics of and to develop normative theories of extra-role employee behavior that are thought to contribute positively to overall organizational performance (Erturk, Yilmaz & Ceylan, 2004). Every factory, office, or bureau depends daily on a myriad of acts of cooperation, helpfulness, suggestions, gestures of goodwill, altruism, and other instances of what we might call citizenship behavior. A workforce that is committed and go beyond the demands of the duty is a key asset of the organizations in today’s world of competition where survival of the organizations itself is a big challenge. Organizations could not survive or prosper without their members behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive organization-relevant behavior. OCBs are thought to have an important impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of work teams and organizations, therefore contributing to the overall productivity of the organization. Because of the importance of good citizenship for organizations, understanding the nature and sources of (OCB) has long been a high priority for organizational scholars (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988) and remains to be so. Paine and organ (2000), pointed out that OCB is an important construct in organization behavior and in current westernized business literature.

Although there has been augmented research in the field of OCB, but all these studies have been done in western countries and explored its relationship with other variables rather than personality constructs. As such, the application of the ‘Big Five’ model may provide much needed integration in this literature. However, to date, we are not aware of any studies that have investigated the relationship between the ‘Big Five’ and OCB in Indian context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill this research gap and assess the relationship between these constructs to better understand the dispositional basis of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB).

1.1 The Five-Factor Model of Personality

The ‘Big Five’ model implies that personality consists of five relatively independent dimensions that altogether provide a meaningful taxonomy for the study of individual differences. These five dimensions are Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Each of the Big Five dimensions is like a bucket that holds a set of traits that tend to occur together. Our interpretation of the Big Five directly corresponds to our measurement of the five-factor model of personality. **Openness to experience** refers the number of interests to which one is attracted and the depth to which those interests are pursued. The behavioral tendencies typically associated with Openness to Experience include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent (Digman, 1990), and having a need for variety, aesthetic sensitivity, and unconventional values (McCrae & John, 1992). **Conscientiousness** refers to the number of goals on which one is focused. It is related to dependability and volition and the typical behaviors associated with it include being hard working, achievement- oriented, persevering, careful, and responsible (Barrick & Mount, 1991). **Extraversion** refers to the level of sensory stimulation with which one is comfortable. The behavioral tendencies used to measure this factor include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991). **Agreeableness** refers to the number of sources from which one takes one's norms for right behavior. The behavioral tendencies typically associated with this factor include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). **Neuroticism** refers to the number and strength of stimuli required to elicit negative emotions in a person. Typical behaviors associated with this factor include being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

1.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) are a special type of work behavior that are defined as individual behaviors that are beneficial to the organization and are discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system. These behaviors are rather a matter of personal choice, such that their omission is not generally understood as punishable. OCBs are thought to have an important impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of work teams and organizations, therefore contributing to the overall productivity of the organization.

Dennis Organ is widely credited with introducing OCB in academic literature. In the last three decades, it has grown to become a prominent stream of research. Scholars hold different views with respect to the dimensionality of OCB. Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) conceptualized OCB with two dimensions: altruism (behavior targeted specifically at helping individuals) and generalized compliance (behavior reflecting compliance with general rules, norms, and expectations). Later Organ (1988) identified five dimensions belonging to OCBs: Altruism - selfless concern for the welfare of others, helps others who have been absent, or helps others who have very high work loads. Courtesy- to take steps to try to prevent problems with other workers and not to abuse the rights of others. Civic Virtue- Attends meetings that are not mandatory, but considered important and keep abreast of changes in the organization. Conscientiousness- Does not take extra breaks. Obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching and Sportsmanship- Does not consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters. Focuses on the positive side rather than what’s wrong. Largely based on Organ's (1988) five-dimension taxonomy, Williams and Anderson (1991) proposed a two-dimensional

conceptualization of OCB: OCB-I (behaviors directed toward Individuals; comprising altruism and courtesy) and OCB-O (behaviors directed toward Organization; comprising the remaining three dimensions in Organ's (1988) conceptualization). Some scholars also have utilized a unidimensional or overall OCB measure in their research (e.g., Decktop, Mangel, & Cirka, 1999). A most recent meta-analysis conducted by Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, and Woehr (2007) suggested that "current operationalizations of OCB are best viewed as indicators of a general OCB factor..., there is likely little to be gained through the use of separate dimensional measures as opposed to an overall composite measure" (p. 562). LePine, Erez, & Johnson (2002) on the basis of meta-analysis of 133 studies also suggested that the relationships among the dimensions of OCB are generally as high as reliability estimates and that there are no meaningful differences in relationships with predictors across dimensions. They also reported that, it appears that predictive relationships with the broader OCB criterion were as good as, or superior to, those with the narrower dimensional criteria. Accordingly, the dimensions of OCB as currently operationalized by the majority of scholars perhaps may be best thought of as imperfect indicators of OCB. Consistent with this idea, it might be worthwhile to begin explicitly defining OCB as a latent construct. To date, such a conceptualization has not been explicitly stated in the literature. In consistent with the suggestion based on the meta-analysis of Lepine et al. (2002), we used an overall composite measure of OCB as opposed to the use of separate dimensional measures.

1.3 Relationships between the Big Five and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Interestingly, the theoretical basis for predicting behavior from personality and the prediction of behavior from general attitudes rests on very much the same considerations. That is, measures of personality hardly account for much variance in specific behaviors in tightly controlled situations (Organ, 2004). Personality has predictive power only in what Mischel (1977) calls "weak situations." Weak situations are those devoid of compelling external incentives and lacking in "demand characteristics" for behavior. Furthermore, Epstein (1980) demonstrated that measures of personality attain maximum predictive power when the behavioral criterion is an aggregate of thematically related behaviors across time and situations.

It would seem that OCB by its very nature would represent behavior that occurs in weak situations. Moreover, if OCB is measured by ratings of how participants characteristically respond to such situations--i.e., the extent to which they spontaneously respond in cooperative, altruistic, and conscientious fashion--we would expect that such ratings would operationally capture aggregation trends across many instances and opportunities for so responding. In sum, we should expect to find in OCB the kind of "performance" that is attributable to personality.

1.3.1 Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is marked empirically by such adjectives as imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent (Digman, 1990), and having a need for variety, aesthetic sensitivity, and unconventional values (McCrae & John, 1992). Importantly, individuals high on openness to experience display a preference for variety, they enjoy grasping new ideas, and they have an intrinsic interest in and appreciation for novelty. Thus, the study expects that persons high on openness to experience are more likely to show OCB. Thus,

Hypothesis 1: Openness to experience will be positively related to OCB.

1.3.2 Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness refers to the number of goals on which one is focused. It is related to dependability and volition and the typical behaviors associated with it include being hard working, achievement-oriented, persevering, careful, and responsible. People who are high in conscientiousness generally perform better at work than those who are low in conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientious individuals can perform their part of the work with a minimum of oversight (Morgeson, Reider & Campion, 2005). Moreover, conscientious individuals are dependable, efficient, and hardworking. They are predisposed to take initiative in solving problems and are more methodical and thorough in their work (Witt, Burke, Barrick & Mount, 2002). It seems reasonable that these traits would result in higher OCB performance. Thus,

Hypothesis 2: Conscientiousness will be positively related to OCB.

1.3.3 Extraversion

Extraversion refers to the level of sensory stimulation with which one is comfortable. The behavioral tendencies used to measure this factor include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Barrick, et al. (2005) has described extraversion as key dispositional determinant of social behavior. Thus, those who are highly extraverted display more flexible behaviors that make them more likely to show OCB.

Hypothesis 3: Extraversion will be positively related to OCB.

1.3.4 Agreeableness

Agreeableness refers to the number of sources from which one takes one's norms for right behavior. The behavioral tendencies typically associated with this factor include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In work contexts, agreeable employees show higher levels of interpersonal competence (Witt et al., 2002) and collaborate effectively when joint action is needed (Mount et al., 1998). Thus, it is expected that persons high on agreeableness are more likely to perform OCB.

Hypothesis 4: Agreeableness will be positively related to OCB.

1.3.5 Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers to the number and strength of stimuli required to elicit negative emotions in a person. Persons who are high on this dimension are usually anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Barrick, et al. (2005) has described neuroticism as key dispositional determinant of social behavior. Thus, those who are low on this dimension should be able to display OCB.

Hypothesis 5: Neuroticism will be negatively related to OCB.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Procedures

This study includes 187 doctors working in medical college in north India. The sample was defined as permanent staff members who have been working in the present organization for more than two years. The gender composition of the sample was 53.47% male (N = 100) and 46.52 % female (N = 87). The age of the employees ranges between 32 and 42 with mean age of 38.47 years (SD= 5.42). Respondents have been in their present organization an average of 4.06 years (SD= 1.37). 200 questionnaires were filled but 13 were rejected as they were incomplete. The analysis of this research was based on 187 complete questionnaires.

2.2 Variables

2.2.1 Control Variables – Gender and Tenure

Although Organ and Ryan's (1995) meta-analysis did not find any significant relationships with gender and tenure, it was based on a very small number of studies (four to five), and there have been some studies that found gender to be associated with extrarole behaviors (e.g., Allen, 2006; Morrison, 1994). We therefore controlled for age, gender (1 =male, 0 =female) and occupational tenure (measured in years) in this study.

2.2.2 Predictor Variables – Big Five Personality Factors

We used the 50 items scale (10 items for each facet) from International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) to assess the five-factor model of personality. This fifty-item scale is measured on a Likert-type anchoring ranging from very inaccurate (1) to very accurate (5), and contains five dimensions corresponding to the five factors of personality: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Openness, and Conscientiousness. Sample items for each of the dimensions are as follows: "I make friends easily" (for Extraversion), "I have frequent mood swings" (for Neuroticism), "I accept people as they are" (for Agreeableness), "I enjoy hearing new ideas" (for Openness), and "I make plans and stick to them" (for Conscientiousness). The reliabilities for each facet were as follows: Extraversion (.86), Neuroticism (.83), Agreeableness (.77), Openness (.82), and Conscientiousness (.81).

2.2.3 Dependent Variable – Organization Citizenship Behavior

OCB was measured with the 30-item scale developed by Bakhshi and Kumar (2009). Responses were made on a five-point scale (*Never-1, Rarely-2, Sometimes-3, Frequently-4, Always*). A sample item states, "I help my coworkers in non-work matters." The test is standardized on Indian sample and the reliability of the scale was 0.82.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 lists the means, standard deviations, partial correlations, and reliabilities for the variables. The partial correlations provided some initial support for our hypotheses. In support of Hypothesis 1, Openness to experience was positively correlated with OCB ($r = .18, p < .05$). Conscientiousness was positively correlated with OCB ($r = .28, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2. In support of Hypothesis 3, Extraversion was positively correlated with OCB ($r = .17, p < .05$). Agreeableness was positively correlated with OCB ($r = .50, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 4. In support of Hypothesis 5, Neuroticism was negatively correlated with OCB ($r = -.23, p < .01$).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to test our hypotheses for overall measure of OCB. Our goal was to determine if the BIG FIVE personality dimensions added a unique contribution in the prediction of the criterion (OCB) above and beyond the control variables. As such, we first entered the control variables (e.g., demographics) into the

equation. Next, we added the hypothesized personality dimensions. In the discussion of our results all reported coefficients are standardized.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 shows that, as a set of predictors, the big five personality domains explained an additional 23% of variance in the criterion over and above the control variables ($\Delta F = 3.72, p < .05$). Specifically, Conscientiousness significantly related to overall OCB Measure ($\beta = .32, p < .01$), supporting hypothesis 2. In support of hypothesis 3 and 4 extraversion ($\beta = .19, p < .05$) and agreeableness ($\beta = .53, p < .01$) are also related with OCB. Also neuroticism is negatively related with overall OCB measure ($\beta = -.27, p < .01$), providing support for hypothesis 5.

The present study examines the relationship between personality traits, as expressed by the five factor model, and overall OCB. The results, in general, support FFM as a predictor of OCB. Current results suggest that the five-factor model serves as an informative framework in examining the dispositional sources of organizational citizenship behavior. Specifically, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism emerged as the most consistent predictor, significantly relating to OCB. Consistent with the previous findings from a variety of meta-analytic research studies have found that conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability are positively related to different aspects of contextual performance (e.g., Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hough, 1992, Hertz & Donovan, 2000; Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Thus, the interaction between extraversion, agreeableness and OCB is the main contribution of this study. The results show that extraversion and agreeableness are important predictors of OCB. However, these results are contrary to the previous studies that report the lack of any significant relationship between both extraversion and agreeableness, and OCB. One possible explanation for this finding is individuals who score high on extraversion display more flexible behaviors that make them more likely to show OCB and individuals who score high on agreeableness tend to be courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant; all individual traits that would result in higher OCB performance. Thus, this research suggests that extraversion and agreeableness are an important personality trait in order to predict OCB. However, Elanain (2007) found that openness to experience is the most important predictor of OCB.

Konovsky and Organ (1996) predicted that agreeableness would relate particularly with altruism, courtesy, and sportsmanship, whereas conscientiousness would relate with generalized compliance. The statistically significant correlations they came up with were quite weak: 0.12 between agreeableness and courtesy and 0.15 between conscientiousness and generalized compliance. The results of regression analyses showed that, with the exception of generalized compliance, the dispositional variables could not predict significant variance in OCB beyond that predicted by work attitudes. However, in the case of generalized compliance, the personality dimension of conscientiousness was the strongest predictor of all, accounting for unique variance on the impersonal dimension of OCB. Finally, the results of a recent study conducted in Greece did not show any significant relationship between personality and OCB (Nikolaou and Roberston, 2001).

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that when assessing how effective one is in performing OCB, all of the big five personality domains will be important predictors. Among these five traits, the present study suggests that conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism are the most important predictor of OCB.

3.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the current results suggest that that individual difference play an important role in predicting whether an employee would exhibit OCB, extending the validity of the dispositional basis of OCB. Hence, the present study suggests that some people, because of who they are, would be more likely to show OCB. The results also imply that the Big Five is a useful framework to explain the personological basis of OCB. It should be noted that other frameworks such as the PA NA typology of affective dispositions can, and have, been used to explain the dispositional sources of OCB. Nevertheless, two reasons encourage the use of the five-factor model. First, compared to the PA-NA typology, the five-factor model contains three additional traits that are important to the prediction of overall OCB. Second, as Judge, Heller and Mount (2002) argued, PA and NA are less stable than other dispositional measures and may be confounded with life satisfaction. Practically speaking, the past two decades have witnessed a revolution in personnel selection largely due to the publication of meta-analyses demonstrating that the Big Five have significant correlations with important job criteria (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). The results of this study suggest that OCB may be placed on an important place on this list of constructs that are related to personality. Given that OCB's are very important for the smooth functioning of the organization and its direct effect on work performance, instead of only focusing on post-entry work experiences, organizations may also adopt selection procedures based on personality measures to evoke high levels of OCB from their employees.

3.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Like all research, this study also has certain limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, the data were cross-sectional in nature and this restriction prevents the inference of causality. At a minimum, a longitudinal design is

required to infer any causality that may exist among these variables. Second, the results may have been affected by common method bias because all of our data were collected from self-report measures. A primary concern of common method variance is that the relationships observed between variables may be due to the measurement method rather than the hypothesized relationships between constructs (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In addition, research has suggested that the effects of common method variance may be reduced if items on a questionnaire are reordered such that the dependent variable follows the independent variable (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). This method was followed in the design of our questionnaire.

Finally, the effect sizes for the relationships of interest were relatively small. This suggests the possibility of unknown moderator or mediator variables on the personality-OCB relationship, such as job satisfaction and perceived organizational justice. Unfortunately, data were not collected in regard to possible moderators or mediators because such hypotheses were beyond the scope of this study. These limitations aside, our findings have practical implications for organizational selection. Future studies may seek to explore the utility of using personality tests to predict organizational citizenship behavior in a selection setting.

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations, partial correlations, and coefficient alphas of study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	38.47	5.42						
Gender	.53	.43						
Occupational tenure	4.06	1.37						
1. Openness to experience	3.87	1.23	(.82)					
2. Conscientiousness	3.58	1.27	.06	(.84)				
3. Extraversion	3.30	1.35	.22**	.23**	(.81)			
4. Agreeableness	4.09	1.29	.14	.27**	.20**	(.88)		
5. Neuroticism	2.89	1.56	-.19*	-.21**	.90**	-.26**	(.90)	
6. OCB	4.12	1.32	.18*	.28**	.17*	.50**	-.23**	(.86)

Notes: N = 187.

*p < .05.

**p < .001 (two tailed).

Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis for big five personality domains and overall OCB measure

Step	Predictors	β (Step 1)	β (Step 2)
1	Intercept	4.51**	3.79**
	Age	.04	.03
	Gender	-.05	-.05
	Occupational Tenure	.07	.06
2	Openness to experience		.15
	Conscientiousness		.32**
	Extraversion		.19*
	Agreeableness		.53**
	Neuroticism		-.27**
	R ²	.02	.08
	Change in R ²		.23
	Overall F	.54	1.08
	Change in F	.68	3.72*

Note: N = 187.

*p < .05.

**p < .001.