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Relationship between Personality and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Does Personality Influence Employee Citizenship?

Hossam Abu Elanain*

This study examines the relationship between personality and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Hierarchical regression analysis on data from 164 employees working in the service sector in Dubai-after controlling for work locus of control and organizational justice- indicated that openness to experience, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were valid predictors for OCB. However, both extraversion and agreeableness showed no significant relationship with OCB. The intriguing finding of this study is that openness was significantly related to OCB. This differs from prior research on openness that found few significant relationships. The current study shows that openness to experience is a crucial personality characteristic that is related to a person's capability to perform OCB.

Field of Research: Personality, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, UAE.

1. Introduction

There have been a large number of studies that examined the relationship of personality traits to job performance. These studies have shown that there are significant relationships between personality traits and performance dimensions (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, and Judge, 2001; Barrick, Parks, and Mount, 2005; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Salgado, 1999).

Personality traits refer to enduring patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that are not likely to change over time and explain people's behavior across different situations (Costa & McCrae, 1989; Funder, 2001). The Five-Factor Model of personality (FFM) or "Big-Five" has influenced the field of personality during the last two decades, providing a significant degree of convergence in the trait-factor analytic psychology (Robertson & Callinan, 1998).

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Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which is described as a discretionary behavior, has emerged as a popular area for study (Organ, 1990). Citizenship behaviors are behaviors which are helpful to the company, yet they are not behaviors considered part of the core elements of the job. Citizenship behaviors are often performed by employees to support the interests of the organization even though they may not directly lead to individual benefits (Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

Previous studies have shown that there is a substantial variance in personality-performance relationship that remains unexplained (e.g., Barrick et al., 2001; Barrick, Parks, and Mount, 2005; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Nikolaou and Roberston, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995). This is significant because it indicates that there are other individual variables and situational conditions that facilitate or constrain the influence of personality traits on performance, and influence the relationship between personality traits and performance. Hence, the present study used two control variables - one individual factor (work locus of control) and one situational factor (organizational justice) - in order to control their effects on OCB. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Big Five personality traits and OCB after controlling the impact of the control variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Five-Factor Model (FFM) of Personality

The FFM has achieved popular acceptance as a meaningful description of personality traits (Saucier & Ostendorf, 1999). The FFM of personality has also provided research in personality with a clear measurement framework and is responsible for the growth of interest to personality in the field of work and organizational psychology. These five factors have been identified across a number of cultures and different languages, providing further support for the existence of the FFM and its universal application (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Nikolaou and Roberston, 2001).

The five factors are usually labeled Extraversion (sociable vs. introverted), Agreeableness (cooperative vs. competitive), Conscientiousness (organized and planful vs. unorganized and careless), Emotional Stability (emotional stability vs. instability), and Openness to Experience (intellectual curiosity vs. preference for routine) (Costa & McCrae, 1989).

2.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Organ (1988, p. 4) defined OCB as “the 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”. By discretionary, Organ (1988, p. 4) described OCB as the type of behavior that is not a part of the job description, but “rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable”.

Most of the studies examining the structure of OCB have agreed that it is a multidimensional concept (e.g. Graham 1989; Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter, 1990). Graham (1989), for example, proposed a four-dimension model of OCB consisting of: interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry, and loyal boosterism. Interpersonal helping involves helping co-workers in their jobs when such help is needed. Individual initiative is communicating to others in the work place to improve individual and group performance. Personal industry includes the performance of specific tasks above and beyond the call of duty. Finally, loyal boosterism involves the promotion of the organizational image to outsiders (Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

2.3 Predicting OCB from personality

Studies on contextual performance have suggested that personality traits are likely to be particularly good predictors of contextual performance (e.g., Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Morgeson, Reider, and Campion, 2005; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). 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; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Organ & Ryan, 1995).

There is increasing empirical evidence that personality affects individuals' performance once they are hired into an organization (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Tett, Jackson, and Rothstein, 1991). Organ (1990) argued that individual differences play an important role in predicting whether an employee would exhibit OCB. Hence, it is believed that some people, because of who they are, would be more likely to show OCB.

Few studies examining the relationship between individual differences and OCB have been conducted, and provided contradictory results (e.g., George, 1991; Nikolaou and Roberston, 2001; Organ and Konovsky, 1989; Smith, Organ' and Near, 1983). For example, Organ and Lingl (1995) examined the hypothesis that agreeableness and conscientiousness accounted for commonly shared variance between job satisfaction and citizenship behaviors. Their results showed that although agreeableness and conscientiousness were significant predictors of work satisfaction - positively and negatively, respectively - it was only conscientiousness that showed a reliable connection to OCB and only in respect to the dimension of generalized compliance. In a meta-analysis published in the same year, Organ and Ryan (1995) found weak relationship between agreeableness and conscientiousness, the two personality dimensions included in their analyses, and OCB dimensions.

In another study, 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).

Given these results, the search for individual differences predictors of OCB is still unsettled. Hence, the purpose of this study is to understand an individual difference which may cause OCB.

3. Hypotheses Development

The present study examines the relationship between personality traits and OCB. Barrick, et al. (2005) have described extraversion as key dispositional determinant of social behavior. People who are high in extraversion are generally sociable, assertive, active, bold, energetic, adventuresome, and expressive (Goldberg, 1992). In contrast, those who are low in extraversion are timid, submissive, silent, and inhibited. Thus, those who are highly extraverted display more flexible behaviors that make them more likely to show OCB.

Hypothesis 1: Extraversion will be positively related to OCB.

Empirical evidence showed that agreeableness is significantly related to interpersonal performance (Mount, Barrick & Stewart, 1998). People who are high in agreeableness are generally friendly, good natured, cooperative, helpful, courteous, and flexible (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Witt, Burke, Barrick & Mount, 2002). 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 2: Agreeableness will be positively related to OCB.

Regarding the personality trait of conscientiousness, 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 et al., 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 et al., 2002). It seems reasonable that these traits would result in higher OCB performance. Thus,

Hypothesis 3: Conscientiousness will be positively related to OCB.

Barrick, et al. (2005) have described emotional stability as key dispositional determinant of social behavior. People who are high in emotional stability are generally calm and even-tempered in the way they cope with daily life (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Those who are emotionally stable usually do not express much emotion. They tend to be less

anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, worried and insecure. In sum, those who are emotionally stable should be able to display OCB. Thus,
Hypothesis 4: Emotional stability will be positively related to OCB.

The conceptual nature of openness to experience suggests a close relationship with other dispositional traits as creativity, inquisitiveness, unconventionality, autonomy, and change acceptance (Goldberg, 1992). “Open” individuals tend to seek out new and different experiences. On the other hand, “closed” individuals tend to be more traditional, conservative, and uncomfortable with complexities (Williams, 2004). Open individuals also differ from more closed individuals in social attitudes, and attitudes toward accepted values and assumptions. Importantly, open individuals 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 5: Openness to experience will be positively related to OCB.

In summary, the present study examines the relationship between individual personality and performing OCB. The study especially investigates if individual personality (as measured by the Big Five) predicts OCB.

4. Control Variables

Many studies have shown that situations can limit the extent to which an individual can behave in accordance with his or her personality (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1993; Barrick, et al., 2005; Beaty, Cleveland & Murphy, 2001; Gellatly & Irving, 2001; Hochwarter, Witt & Kacmar, 2002). Previous studies have been suggested linking OCB to some situational factors such as job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983), perceptions of fairness (Moorman, 1991), task characteristics (Farh, Podsakoff & Organ, 1990), and interpersonal trust (Podsakoff et al, 1990). Equally important is the idea that certain characteristics of individuals may also restrict behavior, which in turn constrains the expression of personality traits (Moorman & Blakely, 1995). For example, the literature showed that personality traits interact with one another to determine behavior (e.g., George & Zhou, 2001; Witt et al., 2002).

To explain the main effect the individual personality traits might have on OCB, the present study has identified two control variables that could explain some of the variance in rating of OCB. These variables are classified into one personal-based variable (work locus of control) and one situation-based variable (organizational justice).

Work Locus of Control (WLOC). Individuals differ in terms of their beliefs about whether they control the outcomes in their lives (i.e., internal locus of control) or the outcomes are controlled by factors such as luck and other people (i.e., external locus of control) (Rotter, 1966). Considering work domain, Spector (1988) developed the WLOC scale which was considered as a strong predictor of work related behaviors. Employees with an internal WLOC are not likely to be constrained by rigid job roles in order to retain control over events in the work place. Hence, internals are more likely to perform

organization citizenship behaviors than externals (Blakely, Srivastava & Moorman, 2005).

Organizational justice. Previous studies in the area of organizational justice have suggested that employee perception of both distributive and procedural justice influence OCB (e.g., Farh et al., 1990; Moorman, 1991; Organ, 1988). That is, if employees perceive the outcomes of their evaluations to be fair or perceive the process by which outcome allocation decisions are made to be fair, they will be likely to perform OCB (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993).

5. Methodology and Research Design

5.1 Participants and Procedures

A survey of 230 employees working in a variety of service organizations in Dubai was performed using anonymous questionnaires. The study questionnaire containing measures of FFM, OCB, WLOC, and organizational justice was distributed to employees using the drop-off method. The response rate was 71 %, leading to a sample of 164 individuals. Forty nine percent of the respondents were females and the average respondent age was 32.5 years with a standard deviation (*S.D.*) .75. Respondents had been with the organization an average of 5.5 years (*S.D.* = 1.0) and had been in their present job 3.0 years (*S.D.* = .74).

5.2 Measures

Personality measure. The Big Five personality dimensions were assessed using the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999). The BFI shows high convergent validity with other self-report scales and with peer ratings of the Big Five. The BFI items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

OCB measure. OCB was measured with the 21-item scale developed by Moorman and Blakely (1995). Responses were made on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The four dimensions included are: interpersonal helping (six items), individual initiative (five items), personal industry (five items), and loyal boosterism (five items).

WLOC measure. WLOC was measured with the 16-item scale developed by Spector (1988). Responses were made on a five-point scale anchored from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

Organizational justice measure. To measure organizational justice, the study used the three-dimension scale developed by Niehoff & Moorman (1993). The scale consists of one dimension measuring perceptions of distributive justice and two dimensions measuring perceptions of procedural justice. Distributive justice was measured using

five items assessing the fairness of different work outcomes. Procedural justice was measured with items designed to tap both formal procedures and interactional justice. Formal procedures (six items) measured the degree to which job decisions included mechanisms that insured the gathering of accurate and unbiased information, employee voice, and an appeal process. Interactional justice (nine items) measured the degree to which employees felt their needs were considered in job decisions. All items used a five-point response scale anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

5.3 Analysis

To test the relationship between the FFM of personality and overall OCB, the two control variables were entered into the regression equation- WLOC and organizational justice. Next, the five personality factors were entered on the second step of the regression analysis to test the study's hypotheses.

6. Results

The four OCB dimensions, summated to create a measurement of overall OCB, were as follows: (1) Interpersonal Helping ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .64$), (2) Individual Initiative ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .63$), (3) Personal Industry ($M = 3.8$, $SD = .63$), and Loyal Boosterism ($M = 3.7$, $SD = .70$). Descriptive statistics, reliability estimate and the inter-correlation matrix of all study's measures are presented in Table 1. As shown, all Alphas were at an acceptable level. All FFM dimensions were positively related to overall OCB. The strongest correlation with OCB was openness to experience ($r = .47$, $P < .01$).

Table 2 presents results of the hierarchical regression analyses. The control variables as a block contributed significant variance to the explanation of OCB scores. Entering the five personality dimensions in step 2 added significant variance ($\Delta R^2 = .52$, $P < .01$) over-and-above the control variables. The β -coefficients presented in Table 2 were those derived at the second step, so the relative contribution of main effects of the predictors can be more easily compared. Accordingly, openness to experience was the strongest predictor of variation in OCB ($\beta = .35$, $P < .01$). Next in sequential order are conscientiousness ($\beta = .20$, $P < .01$) and emotional stability ($\beta = .13$, $P < .05$). Hence, hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were accepted. On the other hand, neither extraversion ($\beta = .02$) nor agreeableness ($\beta = .01$) was significantly related to OCB. Hence, hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected.

7. Discussion

The present study examines the relationship between personality traits, as expressed by the FFM, and overall OCB in the UAE. The results, in general, support FFM as a predictor of OCB. Employees high in openness to experience, conscientiousness, or emotional stability achieve the highest levels of OCB. This result is consistent with the results of Mount et al. (1998) who reported that openness to experience, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were important predictors of interpersonal

performance. Also, the result is consistent with previous studies which showed that conscientiousness and emotional stability are positively related to different aspects of contextual performance (e.g., Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Furthermore, the interaction of openness to experience and OCB is one of the main contributions of the current study. This is contrary to previous studies reported weak relationship between that personality trait and performance (e.g., Barrick et al., 2001; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mount et al., 1998; Organ & Ryan, 1995). One possible explanation for this finding is individuals who score high on openness to experience tend to be imaginative, curious and creative; all individual traits that would result in higher OCB performance. Thus, this research suggests that openness to experience is an important personality trait in order to predict OCB.

Table1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix for all Variables (N = 164)

	M	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Overall OCB	3.8	.45	(.89)							
2. Extraversion	3.3	.48	.27**	(.72)						
3. Agreeableness	3.8	.54	.36**	.26**	(.79)					
4. Conscientiousness	3.7	.52	.42**	.31**	.29**	(.75)				
5. Emotional stability	3.2	.56	.24**	.24**	.19*	.29**	(.70)			
6. Openness to experience	3.7	.52	.47**	.32**	.24**	.23**	.16*	(.74)		
7. Work locus of control	3.3	.43	.42**	.23**	.37**	.27**	.21**	.27**	(.72)	
8. Organizational justice	3.4	.63	.33**	-.03	.10	.04	.09	.04	.26**	(.93)

Note: *Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) from our sample are presented in the diagonal in brackets*

* $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Results Testing the Relationship between the Five Personality Traits and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (N = 164)

β Values for dependent variables

Predictors	OCB
Step 1: Control variables	
Work locus of control	.19
Organizational justice	.16
Adjusted R^2	.21**
Step 2: The five personality traits	
Extraversion	.02
Agreeableness	.01
Conscientiousness	.20**
Emotional stability	.13*
Openness to experience	.35**
Adjusted R^2	.52**
ΔR^2	.31**

Note: *The β 's presented are those derived at the second step.*

* $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$

One additional finding that deserves mentioning is the lack of any significant relationship between both extraversion and agreeableness, and OCB. Similar results were reported in previous studies (e.g., Nikolaou and Roberston, 2001). However, previous studies showed that agreeableness as FFM trait is significantly related to measures of interpersonal performance (Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Mount et al., 1998). Moreover, extraversion was reported as a valid predictor of performance in jobs characterized by social interaction, such as sales personnel and managers (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer & Roth, 1998). Thus, the present study recommends that the relationship between OCB and both emotional stability and extraversion merit further examination in the same culture in the future.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that when assessing how effective one is in performing OCB, openness to experience, conscientiousness, or emotional stability will be important predictors. Among these three traits, the present study suggests that openness to experience is the most important predictor of OCB.

8. Limitations, Strengths, and Future Research

As with any research, our study undoubtedly has limitations. OCB was measured subjectively by staff not by their managers. Ratings were obtained from the same source, employees contributed ratings of personality and OCB dimensions. Also, common variance problems cannot be ruled out since data on both independent and dependent variables were collected at the same time and using the same questionnaire. This potential bias could be prevented by the use of longitudinal approaches.

Despite the limitations of this research, the study has strengths. The present study used two control variables in order to determine the main effect of the FFM on OCB. The study also entered the five personality traits as a block in the regression equation in order to be able to compare the relative importance of each of the five personality factors in predicting OCB.

There are several areas for possible future research. First, replication is needed to determine how the findings reported here correspond to the results of studies conducted in other work environments to ensure proper generalizability. Future researches also need to consider the moderating influences of person and situation-based factors on the relationship between FFM and OCB. Additionally, researcher may consider the respondents' position in future studies as findings may differ across jobs and contexts. Finally, future studies need to examine the relationship between the five personality dimensions and each of OCB dimensions, not the overall score of OCB in order to better understand the relationship between personality and OCB.

9. Conclusion

This research tested the relationship between personality and OCB. What is especially encouraging about the study's results is that the study has found evidence supporting that an individual differences correlate with citizenship behavior. Thus, the findings

reinforce the notion that an individual's personality plays a significant role in workplace behaviors. Furthermore, the results from this study have important practical implications in the employee selection process. The results show that openness to experience, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are the most important personality traits in predicting OCB. Hence, the present study suggests that employee selection process could target applicants who are high on those traits especially to improve staff OCB.

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