Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is an important concept of organizational behavior. Since 1983 Organ proposed OCB, the research about it had been continued. In recent years, study about OCB got into hot water. This paper focuses on organizational citizenship behavior and reviews some important researches about OCB ------ researches based on the context, the mechanism of OCB, and the dark side of OCB, in addition, analyzes the dilemma of OCB. Through the review, we find the shortage of resent study of OCB, propose five directions for future research.

Keywords: *OCB;current situation;dilemma;mechanism;dark side;future directions*

1 Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is an important concept in field of organizational behavior[1]. Since Organ (1983) proposed the concept, study of OCB had continued.

Since the study of OCB is too much, there are some scholars conduct literature reviews of OCB to sum the outcomes of that period, these reviews including the definition and dimension of OCB, the factors, the positive or negative aspects of OCB and so on, but with the study of OCB has improved, and the dilemma about OCB study, researches on OCB reduce, organizational citizenship behavior research appears to have reached an impasse, and scholars less concern about it. Now most of the studies are repeatability study, lacking of new discoveries. Therefore, we want to know current situation of OCB, analyze the development of OCB, and try to explore the future directions of OCB.

2 Definition of organizational citizenship behavior

For the generation of OCB, it can be traced back as 1938, Barnard proposed a concept -------"willingness to cooperate". Subsequently, Katz and Kahn (1978)[2] proposed the concept ------"organizational citizenship", pointing out that three categories of behaviors are required to achieve high levels of organizational effectiveness. First, people must join and remain in the organization; second, they must perform dependably the roles assigned to them; third, they must perform dependably the roles assigned to them, and they engage in occasional innovative and cooperative behavior beyond the requirements of role but in the service of organizational objectives. These studies propose the foundation to the concept of

"organizational citizenship behavior" of Organ (1983).

In 1955, Bray and Crockett study the relationship of employee attitudes and employee performance, find that only less or no relationship between them, then scholars fall into a debate about the relationship between the two variables, Organ participates in the debate, and in 1983 he proposes the concept of "organizational citizenship behavior", and points out some of the empirical research that could not verify the assumption "job satisfaction leads to higher job performance", may be because of the definition of "performance" is too narrow, and thus extends the range of the "performance" includes OCB. In 1993, Organ formulates the concept of organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined 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". Most of the scholars follow the definition.

In-depth development of academic researches, stable concept is the important basic. Scholars questioned "Organizational citizenship behavior" since the concept was proposed, and then because of the concept-------"contextual performance", the two concepts appear with fuzzy boundaries, OCB falls into a dilemma, even Organ modify its definition many times.

Summarize the academic questions about the definition of OCB, including the following three points:

First, according to the definition of Organ, the OCB should be implemented by the employees voluntarily, and be independent of the formal specification of the organization or the job requirements, is an extra role behavior, but scholars have pointed out that, some dimensions of OCB may not the extra role behavior, or it is difficult to distinguish whether it is an extra role behavior, such as a dimension------conscientious behavior, it can be seen as role behavior.

Second, according to the definition of Organ (1988), OCB has nothing to do with the formal reward system, or be not recognized by the formal reward system. However, MacKenzie and his colleagues(1993) find that, the supervisors of salesmen evaluate their job performance by both role behaviors and OCB, salesman which showed more OCB would get a better evaluation results of job performance. Allen and Enrush's (1998) study also showed that, employee which showed better OCB could gain supervisor's positive emotions, so as to obtain a better evaluation results; at the same time, OCB also affects supervisors' decision-making on training, reward distribution and promotion decisions. These findings indicate that, OCB can bring some substantial rewards for employees.

Third, according to the definition of Organ (1988), OCB should be an informal behavior, a selfless and altruism behavior, and a behavior that benefit the organization. But Hui and Lam (2000) find that certain organizational citizenship behavior of employees with significant instrumental motivation. For example, to gain more opportunities to promotion, some employees would show more OCB when they have chance for advancement, at this time, OCB is used as a means of promotion. In addition, Bolino(1999) find that some employees would like to enhance their image through the implementation of OCB.
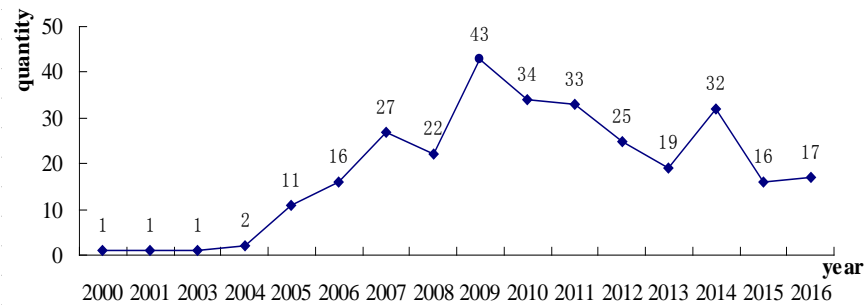
3 Research of organizational citizenship behavior

Figure 1 Research about OCB Since 20th

We conduct "organizational citizenship behavior" or "OCB" as the theme, to search in CNKI.NET, and with restrictions ------ EI, SCI, SSCI, we get 300 valid results. Then we draw the number of articles changes over time (Figure 1). It can be seen that, in 2000-2004, only few studies about OCB, from 2004, the number of these studies on the rise, and peaking in 2009, from 2009, as a whole, the number of research is downward ,and in 2015 and 2016 remain around 16.

Reviews national and foreign academic articles on OCB, we find that current study generally fall into the following categories: the research based on the context of OCB, the mechanisms of OCB, the development dilemma of OCB, the negative and active aspects of OCB.

3.1 Research based on the context

Research on Chinese context has been an important part of the field of management research. Under Chinese special cultural background, management researches in Europe and America not apply to China, and China as the largest economy and most populous country, to explore appropriate management methods according to their own situation is necessary.

Wang, Chu and Ni (2010)[3] study Chinese tradition, and find that LMX is positively related to OCB, and perceived insider status fully mediates the relationship between LMX and OCB; Chinese tradition moderates the effect of LMX on perceived insider status. Ning and Zhou(2012)[4] find that authority leadership positively influences employee's OCB through the mediating effect of collectivism; and collectivism is capable of moderating the main effect. Zhang and Luo(2015)[5] study "*quanzi*", a unique phenomenon for China, and find different *quanzi* roles have a positive impact on OCB of employees, OCB in *quanzi* can benefit organization, and also make the role of the individual legitimacy.

Some scholars are also keen on study OCB of special people. Such as Dekas and his colleagues(2013)[6] , they use knowledge workers from Google as samples, point out that the field's understanding of what behaviors constitute citizenship behavior has evolved incrementally over time. In the era of knowledge economy, for knowledge workers, a set of new behaviors(e.g. employee sustainability) that had not surfaced in previous research emerged.

3.2 The mechanism of organizational citizenship behavior

Many of the studies about OCB explore its mechanism, including its antecedents, its outcomes, its mediators and moderators. Studies on individual OCB antecedents are rich, relatively rare energy on outcomes (see table 1). For OCB outcome variables ------ performance, perhaps because OCB is recognized has positive impact on the performance, so scholars rarely study it. Some study almost research the impact on individual performance, relatively rare research on team or organizational performance [7].

Table 1 Antecedents and outcomes of OCB

Antecedents	individual character	positive\negative emotions, role ambiguity, role conflict, (job\career) satisfaction, (organizational\professional) commitment, sense of fairness, pro-social values, impression management, organizational concerns, psychological contract, psychological capital, etc.
	leadership	quality of mentoring relationships, leadership type, LMX, leadership development, etc.
	task character	Feedback, routine, etc.
	organization character	perceived organizational support, organizational culture type, team psychological safety , Organizational socialization, etc.
Outcomes	performance	Individual, team, organizational

There are many researches about how individual or organizational characters, and leadership impact on individual OCB, but for task characters, national scholars pay no attention.

3.3 The dark side of organizational citizenship behavior

Not all results shows that OCB and organizational performance have a significant positive relationship [7]. Therefore, some scholars have begun to explore the dark side of OCB [8].

First, compulsory citizenship behavior (CCB) could have negative impact on performance. OCB of employees may be involuntary, if which forced by the pressure, namely organizational citizenship behavior of employees is compulsory citizenship behavior. CCB will not only reduce individual job satisfaction, in-role behavior and job performance, but also increase job pressure and willingness to leave [9,10]. Especially in China, compared to the West, because of the collective culture, the CCB is more obvious; compulsory citizenship behavior negatively affects employee performance and organizational commitment [11].

Second, the more energy spends on OCB, the less will spend on task performance. Bolino and Klotz (2013)[7] point out that among employees who is less optimistic, the relationship between OCB and job satisfaction is curvilinear, this indicates that there can be negative personal and professional outcomes for employees who go the extra mile for their organizations.

Third, darker OCB motives----- impression management. Studies have shown that impression management and helping behaviors significant positive correlation [12], but the impression management driven OCB may rarely conducive to the organization, staff show OCB in order

to improve their image and not just to contribution to the organization, the staff is a "good actor" rather than "good soldier".

4 Problems and future research directions

Through review the literature, we find some problems about OCB, and propose future research directions.

First, definitions and dimensions of OCB are not reach a consensus, and in recent years there are only few thoughts of dimensions. Cultures, situations, work characters and so on, these factors make the dimensions different. Thus, national scholars should learn to Dekas (2013), to explore dimensions in certain culture or new situations. Besides, scholars should analyze what make the definitions and dimensions of OCB not reach a consensus.

Second, the definition points out that OCB will promote the effective functioning of the organization, and in organization, factors from different levels may also impact OCB. However, the study of OCB mostly focuses on the individual level, although scholars have begun to study OCB on group level[13], OCB based on social network [14], but is relatively rare, in the future we need to deepen and improve the overall framework of the impact mechanism.

Third, studies on individual OCB antecedents are rich, relatively rare energy on outcomes, in addition the conclusions of outcomes are differences, so we should strengthen the research on the outcomes. Besides, although there are many results about OCB, but academia is still short of integrated model of OCB, and future research can integrate existing researches, propose a comprehensive model.

Forth, scholars have already started thinking about the dark side of OCB systematically [7], but relatively little evidence support it, in the future, scholars may provide further evidence about the dark side of the OCB . In addition, researches on the dark side of the OCB has been pointed out, OCB in the organization will evolve, but the evolutionary mechanism is unclear [7], should pay more attention on this field.

Fifth, China is generally considered having collective culture and having a high power distance, research about OCB based on Chinese context have a big difference with the West, OCB research can continue to undertake specific industries, certain national context. Under Chinese context, the individual will be more likely to identify themselves as a part of a group, and in order to maintain their status as members of the group, individuals become more sensitive, more inclined to comply with social norms, thus social norms in groups should pay attention to China.

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