Does Emotional Intelligence Influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Engineers? A Conceptual Paper

Jen Ling Gan
Faculty of Management,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia,
81310 UTM Skudai, Johor, Malaysia.
jlgan2@live.utm.my

Halimah M. Yusof
Faculty of Management,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia,
81310 UTM Skudai, Johor, Malaysia.
halimahmy@utm.my

Abstract

This article reviewed the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. It was revealed that there are inconsistency of the findings in the past studies. This has triggered a need for further exploration on the linkage between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. It is suggested that more empirical researches to be conducted in the future to provide a more concrete evidences on the linkage between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. The dimensionality of emotional intelligence should be examined in future study to yield empirical evidences on the linkage.

Keywords

Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Engineers, Conceptual Paper

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been known as one of the crucial factors that can influence the effectiveness of an organization (Podsakoff, Whitting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). It was claimed that, OCB has been quite a concerned matter in the organizational behavior field and it has been commonly adopted as a dependent variable (Azmi, Desai, & Jayakrishnan, 2016). In order to enhance the effectiveness and overall performance of organizations, managements had been searching for several methods (Ng, Ke, & Raymond, 2014). Among the methods, OCB has been recognized as one of the substantial contributors to the productivity and effectiveness of organizations (Podsakoff *et al*., 2009). It was claimed that employees tend to have higher satisfaction when they are able to contribute to the organizations' success through OCB (Schultz & Schultz, 2010). Furthermore, the environment of workplace will become more caring, healthy, and helpful which will develop organizations' success when employees exhibit OCB (Day & Carroll, 2004). Employees who behave voluntarily without being recognized by the formal reward system is known as employees that exhibit OCB, which in turn, improving the performance of organizations (Salajeghe & Farahmand, 2014). This suggests that, for the purpose to improve effectiveness of company, employees should exert more effort by working beyond the formal job scopes. Therefore, due to OCB's significance on organizations' success, scholars have been putting attention on OCB in different fields, such as engineering and nursing (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Maynes, Trevor, & Spoelma, 2014).

Organ (1988) described that, when nobody is watching employees' action, good employees are likely to remain their good attitude. This brings a meaning that, employees with OCB will behave positively and in good manner, although there is no one monitoring or supervising them. It was believed that, the positive and voluntary action might improve companies' effectiveness (Kumar, 2014). Moreover, it is also believed that, company's effectiveness will be developed because good employees tend to provide fruitful ideas to the company (Borman & Motowidlo, 2014). Besides, a positive working environment will be created when good employees exhibit OCB, which may help in retaining employees, which in turn decreasing the rate of turnover (Kumar, 2014). It can be seen that OCB plays a major role in company's growth. Hence, company should focus on the contributors that improve employees' OCB. As OCB level is unstable, the level of OCB can be decreased or increased due to contextual, dispositional, and/or attitudinal variables (Mohammad, Habib, Nik Abd Rahman, & Idris, 2015).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is identified as one of the crucial contributors that can influence the level of OCB. EI is described as the ability of employees in perceiving, regulating, understanding, and assessing the emotions and feelings (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). For the purpose of developing social relations among colleagues, EI is known as one of the best tools to improve relationship, thus, extending one's tenure in company (Siddiqui & Hassan, 2013). When employees' tenure is extended, employees might show OCB because they want to accomplish extra duty voluntarily (Carmeli & Josman, 2006). Although the contribution of EI to organizations' success is recognized, the scholars in management field have been giving less attention, especially on behavior of employees (Meisler, 2013). Past researches had revealed positive relationship between EI and OCB (Chin, Anantharaman, & Tong, 2011; James, Velayudhan, & Gayatridevi, 2010). This suggests that, when employees have high level of EI, the employees tend to exhibit OCB.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Siddiqui and Hassan (2013), EI is one of the significant variables that affect OCB. In the past 20 years, the EI concept has been explored and its significance to outcomes of life can be seen from the past studies, such as human's well-being (Song, Huang, Peng, Law, Wong, & Chen, 2010; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Johnson, Batey, & Holdsworth, 2009). Other than life outcomes, few past studies had also revealed EI's contribution to several outcomes of work, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention (Wong & Law, 2002; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010; Jordan & Troth, 2011; Meisler, 2013). This suggests that EI plays a crucial role at employees' workplace as well. However, the concept of EI has limited investigation in Asian context, such as Malaysia (Jamaluddin, Gunaseelan, & Jusoh, 2015). As reviewed, most of the EI studies were conducted on students or in education field (Abdullah, Shamsuddin, & Yunus, 2015). However, Sekaran and Bougie (2011) claimed that, the results that obtained from students are significantly different to the real corporate personnel. Furthermore, little attention was given on the contribution of EI on employees' behavior, such as OCB (Meisler, 2013). Particularly, very limited studies that had been conducted to investigate the relationship between EI and OCB (Ng *et al*., 2014). There are inconsistent findings found in the past studies, where some studies showed significant relationship, while some studies revealed insignificant relationship between the variables. Hence, inconsistency of findings has triggered the need for more investigation on the linkage between EI and OCB.

Conventionally, engineers are known as the workers who work independently and individually (Boyatzis, Rochford, &Cavanagh, 2017). Recently, it was found that engineers are needed to work in multidisciplinary team instead of working alone, where OCB is concerned in a team (Joyner, Mann, & Harris, 2012). However, it was revealed that OCB among engineers is not as high as expected (Imer, Kabasakal, & Dastmalchian, 2014). It was mentioned that, there is a dearth of studies that examine OCB among the professional employees, such as engineers (Imer *et al*, 2014). Thus, there is a need to explore the role of EI in explaining its contribution to OCB among engineers. Besides technical skills, it is important to look for which qualities that make some engineers more effective than others (Lopes, Gerolamo, Prette, Musetti, & Del Prette, 2015). Surprisingly, it was found that EI is one of the contributors that can affect the quality of engineers (Lopes *et al*., 2015). This is due to engineers might need EI to handle stress, and to keep calm in crisis (Lopes *et al*., 2015). Due to the advantages of EI within engineers, EI has gained much acceptance as a crucial success factor in several industries, which includes engineering field. Muller and Turner (2010) agreed that EI plays a critical role in ensuring success of engineering projects. Although EI contributed to the success of engineering projects, little attention was given in some of the engineering fields, such as construction industry (Love, Edwards, & Wood, 2011). According to Love *et al*. (2011), EI is important among engineers because engineer's job scopes might

need engineers' intelligence in emotional. For instance, an engineer might need high EI to cope with high level of stress when there is criticism from clients. Thus, it is suggested that the linkage of EI and OCB should be examined through the literature review of the past studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB is defined as the behavior of employees which is not recognized by the formal reward system, is not restricted to formal job scopes, and enhance the overall performance of organizations (Organ, 1988). Later, the description of OCB has been improved, where it is defined as the behavior of employees that supports social and psychology of organizations (Organ, 1997). Further definition was described by Kinicki and Kreitner (2008), where OCB is exhibited when employees work beyond formal responsibilities, such as assisting colleagues to solve problem, and taking care of the property in workplace. Dick and Ellis (2006) viewed OCB as the behavior of developing and maintaining social relations with the co-workers or colleagues, which in turn enhancing the overall performance. Furthermore, Luthan (2011) stressed that, OCB should be exhibited by employees voluntarily, instead of being influenced by reward system in workplace.

There are five dimensions developed by Organ (1988). Firstly, altruism or helping is described as voluntary action where employees offer support to co-workers to complete particular tasks (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Next, conscientiousness is exhibited by employees when they obey company's rules and focus on punctuality (Organ, 1988). Followed by third dimension, employees exhibit sportsmanship behavior when they show willingness in handling unfavorable condition without anger (Newland, 2012). The fourth dimension is known as civic virtue. Civic virtue is exhibited when employees are responsible to take part in politics of workplace, and have certain level of knowledge on critical issues in company (Organ, 1988). The last dimension is courtesy, where employees with courtesy tend to prevent issues to happen in workplace (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006).

2.2 Emotional Intelligence

Recent years, the EI concept of Salovey & Mayer's (1990) has been emerged among scholars, where EI is an ability in distinguishing emotional information to adapt to life and problem solving. In addition, EI is defined as one's ability to process emotional information competently, and to use the emotional information to do activity of cognitive, such as solving problems of life (Salovey *et al.*, 2002). This suggests that, EI is crucial in life because it can predict one's life outcomes and action. It was claimed that, if one has low level of EI, the individual tends to have weak mental health, poor social relation, and less probability to be successful in job (Ciarrochi *et al.*, 2001). Then, EI theory has been extended to several life aspects, such as real-world, personal intelligence, and societal (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985). Besides Mayer and Salovey (1990), there were EI developers that developed different concepts. For instance, Bar-On (1988) named EI as 'emotional quotient' instead of 'emotional intelligence'. Based on the concept of Bar-On (1997), EI is about non-cognitive capability, aptitudes, and skills, which will influence one's ability to manage life's demands and stress. This suggests that, Bar-On (1988) EI concept is different to Mayer and Salovey (1990) EI concept, where Mayer & Salovey (1990) assimilated both cognitive and emotions functions, while Bar-On (1998) focused non-cognitive aspect only. It can be seen that Mayer & Salovey (1990) EI concept is more comprehensive, and it has been receiving much recognition in academic world.

In Mayer and Salovey (1990) EI concept, there are four dimensions involved, which are known as regulation of emotion, self-emotion appraisal, others' emotions appraisal, and use of emotions. Regulation of emotion is described that, when a person can regulate his or her emotion, the person has the ability to control the emotion (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As for the second dimension, an individual has the ability to appraise own emotion when the individual can regulate his emotions or moods when incidents happened in his environment, and has the ability to judge, scrutinize, and adjust mood (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Followed by third dimension, the person has the ability to appraise others' emotion when the person can identify and understand other's emotion precisely (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Lastly, use of emotion is described as the ability of a person to adopt cognitive function, such as creativity, and problem solving (Salovey *et al.*, 2002).

3. Methodology

A comprehensive search on the journal databases was done on the topic of EI and OCB. Literature based on the recent studies was targeted for this review. Hence, we looked for the articles dated between 2010 to 2017 from the databases such as Elsevier and Scopus. There are five inclusions that we concerned when we did the searching of articles. The first inclusion is, we included those studies which are empirical. Second, we included the studies which were conducted on real corporate personnel sample because the linkage between the variables will be focused on corporate personnel. Third, we included the topics which are relevant to our variables. Fourth, we included the studies which their variable of OCB was self-rated instead of being rated by co-worker or superior. This is because we focus on self-rated organizational citizenship behavior. Fifth, we included those studies which reported the reliability and validity of their instruments due to it might affect the validity of the studies' result.

Other than that, in order to validate the conceptual model of the linkage between EI and OCB, a survey analysis and quantitative study will be conducted in the real study among engineers in future. The proposed conceptual model is as below:
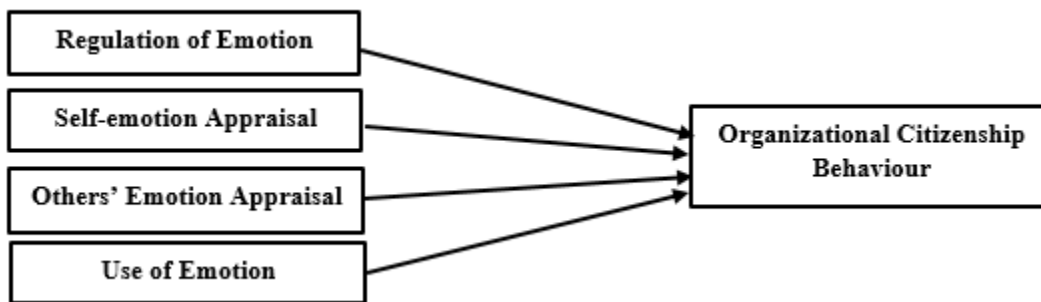

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4. Findings

In recent years, EI has been known as one of the crucial factors that contributes to the effectiveness of an organization (Sabahi & Dashti, 2016). Radford (2010) claimed that, EI is important because it can help employees to appraise and regulate their emotions, as well as others' emotions. It can be seen that, if employees can control their emotions, their work behavior will be improved. It was found that there is a linkage between EI and OCB (Jung & Yoon, 2012). However, although EI is known as the crucial factor in an organization, there are limited studies conducted to examine the linkage between EI and OCB (Ng *et al*., 2014). There are researchers found that there is significant relationship between EI and OCB. Chehrazi, Shakib, and Azad (2014) revealed that, EI is significantly related to OCB. This indicated that when employees have high level of EI, employees tend to exert OCB. For example, when an employee is able to appraise his own emotion, the employee is prone to exhibit more OCB, such as helping colleagues. However, scholars might obtain different findings due to different contexts. Sepehrikia *et al*. (2016) revealed that there is no significant relationship between EI and OCB. The study is contradictory with previous study, where the dimensions of EI indicated no significant relationship with OCB.

Specifically, EI can be divided into few dimensions based on Mayer and Salovey (1990) model, such as regulation of emotion, self-emotion appraisal, others' emotions appraisal, and use of emotions. These dimensions have been discussed by previous scholars on OCB. Firstly, *regulating emotions* was discussed. Ng's *et al*. (2014) revealed that *regulating emotions* has significant relationship with OCB. It is believed that, when the respondents are able to control emotion, they will be more likely to exert positive behavior in the organization. Another study had yielded the similar result, where Pradhan, Jena, and Bhattacharya (2016) found that, when employees have the ability to regulate emotions, they will have higher tendency to exhibit OCB in workplace. However, some scholars did not find any significant relationship between *regulating emotions* and OCB. For instance, Jung & Yoon (2012) revealed that there is no significant linkage between *regulating emotions* and OCB in their study. In addition, Turnipseed and Vandewaa (2012) claimed that there is no significant relationship between the variables as well. This suggests that the ability to perceive emotion has no influence on employees' OCB. Contradictorily, Ramachandran, Jordan, Troth, and Lawrence (2011) revealed that there is significant linkage between the variables. Ramachandran *et al*. (2011)

mentioned that, an emotional intelligent employee tend to exhibit positive behavior such as OCB. From the findings, it can be seen that the result is inconsistent.

Followed by another dimension of EI, *self-emotion appraisal* is discussed. It is revealed that *self-emotion appraisal* has significant but low relationship with OCB (Ng *et al.*, 2014). This brings a meaning that, when employees have the ability to manage their own emotions during working hours, they will be more likely to exhibit OCB in workplace. Besides, the similar finding was revealed by Mc Shane *et al.* (2010), where the scholars claimed that, there is a significant relationship between *self-emotion appraisal* and OCB. The findings of this linkage seem consistent because another significant linkage between the variables was found by Jung and Yoon (2012). Furthermore, Pradhan *et al.* (2016) yielded the similar result, where emotional intelligent workers tend to have the ability of managing own emotions, which in turn exhibiting more OCB in workplace. Ramachandran *et al.* (2011) revealed a consistent result with the past studies, where they agreed on the significant linkage between the variables. Turnipseed and Vandewaa (2012) claimed that, if an employee is able to handle own emotions, they tend to act positively, thus, exhibiting OCB.

Next, *others' emotions appraisal* is discussed. It was revealed that *others' emotions appraisal* has significant low relationship with OCB (Ng *et al.*, 2014). It is believed that, the respondents who have the ability to manage others' emotions, they will have more motivation to engage in positive behavior, such as displaying OCB (Ng *et al.*, 2014). This finding was consistent with the past study, where Jung and Yoon (2012) found that *others' emotions appraisal* can significantly influence the willingness of employees in showing OCB at workplace. In addition, Mc Shane *et al.* (2010) agreed on the significant linkage between the variable in their context as well. Although the studies are in different contexts, such as Malaysian context in the study of Yunus (2012) and Ramachandran *et al.* (2011), the studies yielded the same result, where there is a significant linkage between *others' emotions appraisal* and OCB. The results from the past studies can be considered as consistent because Turnipseed and Vandeewa (2012) revealed that OCB is significantly influenced by *others' emotions appraisal*.

Last but not least, *use of emotions* is discussed. Ng *et al.* (2014) claimed that, *use of emotions* has the highest relationship with OCB, as compared to other dimensions of EI. Ng *et al.* (2014) revealed that the respondents who have the capability to utilize their emotions, they will have more tendency to exhibit OCB. This is because the ability to utilize the emotions can help a person to adapt organization's challenges and environment's changes (Ng *et al.*, 2014). Significant relationship between the variables was found by Pradhan *et al.* (2016) as well. Pradhan *et al.* (2016) revealed that, when employees have the ability to utilize emotion to solve problems, they have higher tendency to show OCB, such as helping colleagues to solve organization's problems. Pradhan *et al.* (2016) finding is consistent with past studies, where Jung and Yoon (2012) showed the significant relationship between the variables as well. However, Turnipseed and Vandewaa (2012) found insignificant relationship between *use of emotions* and OCB among professionals. This might be due to different groups of respondents might yield different results. For instance, when Ramachandran *et al.* (2011) conducted research on non-professionals, they found significant relationship between *use of emotions* and OCB.

Overall, the relationship between EI dimensions and OCB is remained ambiguous in the past studies. There are inconsistent findings on the linkage between the variables. It seems logical to carry out more researches to examine the relationship in order to know its trend in engineering field.

5. Conclusion

The findings of literature review has enhanced our understanding on the linkage between EI and OCB. To summarize, there was a lack of attention being paid to the relationship between EI and the OCB among engineers. Besides, there are inconsistent findings found in the previous studies. These issues had triggered the awareness of the need to conduct more empirical studies in future in order to investigate the relationship between the variables among engineers in engineering-related companies. It is expected that the findings from the future empirical studies will be able to guide the human resource practitioners in managing the organizational citizenship behavior among engineers.

Acknowledgements

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Biographies

Jen Ling Gan is a full-time PhD candidate in Faculty of Management, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). She holds a Bachelor of Science (Human Resource Development) and a Master of Philosophy from UTM. Her current research interests focus on Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, Transfer of Training, Motivation, Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Justice, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Halimah M. Yusof is a full-time senior lecturer in Faculty of Management, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). She holds a Bachelor of Microbiology in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), a Master of Business Administration from Preston Tech, USA, and a PhD from UTM. Her current research interests focus on Organizational Psychology, Training and Module Development, Human Resource Development, Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Personality, and Motivation.