Does Organizational Justice Influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Engineers? A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

This article reviewed the relationship between organizational justice 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 organizational justice 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 organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior. The new dimensions of organizational justice, namely Temporal Justice and Spatial Justice should be included in future study to yield empirical evidences on the linkage.

Keywords
Organizational Justice, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Engineers, Conceptual Paper

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been known as one of the vital factors that can affect the effectiveness of an organization (Podsakoff, Whitting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). OCB has been quite a concerned problem in organizational behavior field and it has been commonly used as a dependent variable (Azmi, Desai, & Jayakrishnan, 2016). For the purpose 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). 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 compassionate, healthy, and supportive 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, cultivating 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 importance 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 observing employees' action, good employees are likely to remain their good attitude. This suggests that, employees with OCB will behave positively and in good manner, although there is no one watching or controlling 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 productive ideas to the company (Borman & Motowidlo, 2014). Besides, a progressive 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).

Among the factors that can affect OCB, organizational justice (OJ) is known as one of the influential variables, where the perceptions of employees towards the fairness in organizations (Chen & Jin, 2014). The attention of justice and fairness in management discipline has been triggered when the trend of employment contracts in workplace has been growing (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002). OJ is known as crucial variable to be studied by researchers because employees' perceptions on justice can affect the outcomes of work and employees' behaviour (Pillai, Williams, & Tan, 2001). As compared to other attitudinal variables that influence OCB, OJ is the variable that affect OCB utmost (Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, Conlon, & Wesson, 2013; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002). Hence, it suggests that, when employees perceive fairness in their workplace, the tendency of showing OCB will be increased among employees, which in turn enhancing company's effectiveness.

1.2 Problem Statement

Organizational justice is known as the perception of employees to the justice of treatment in organizations (Fernandes & Awamleh, 2006). It was revealed that OJ is one of the crucial factors that affect the degree of OCB among employees (Ismail, 2015). It suggests that, if the employees perceived injustice in their workplace, they will be less likely to exhibit OCB. In contrast, they will display OCB such as taking care of company's image, when they perceived justice in their workplace. Traditionally, OJ consists of four dimensions, namely distributive justice, procedural justice, informational justice, and interpersonal justice. In recent years, there are two new dimensions had been developed by Usmani and Jamal (2013) that are temporal justice and spatial justice. However, little attention was given to the new dimensions of OJ in the literatures related to the organizational behavior. This issue has been raised by Azami, Ahmad, and Choi (2016), hence, future researchers are suggested to contribute empirical proofs on the new dimensions of OJ. In addition, most of the past studies did not study OJ from one dimension to another, thus, this becomes one of the gaps in the literature of OJ (Akram, Lei, Haider, Hussain, & Puig, 2016a). It is important to study the dimensionality because OJ might consist of different features of justice that are needed to be explored (Akram *et al*., 2016a). Furthermore, it is also crucial for organizations to comprehend precisely which dimension explains most variance on OCB (Hooi, 2016). Hence, the two new dimensions should be included in future study to reduce the gaps in OJ literature. It is claimed that, OJ is known as the factor that affect OCB utmost, hence, OJ should be given main attention in research (Akram *et al*., 2016a). Although OJ is the dominant factor that affecting OCB, there is a dearth of study on OJ and OCB in Asian context, for instance, Malaysia (Ponnu & Chuah, 2010; Akram, *et al*., 2016a). Moreover, the linkage between OJ and OCB is remained ambiguous in the past studies. Some scholars revealed there is a relationship between the variables, while some scholars found that there is no significant relationship between OJ and OCB. For instance, Burns and DiPaola (2013) and Daniel (2016) revealed that OJ has relationship with OCB. On the other hand, Schilpzand, Martins, Kirkman, Lowe, and Chen (2013) as well as Gupta and Singh (2013) revealed that there is no significant relationship between OJ and OCB. It can be seen that, the findings of linkage between OJ and OCB is inconsistent from one study to another. Hence, more investigations are needed to examine the linkage between OJ and OCB, as different nations' culture might have some effect on the relationship between the variables (Nik Abd Rahman, 2001).

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). To reduce the gaps mentioned above, future study should investigate OCB among engineers by studying the dimensionality of OJ as independent variable. New dimensions of OJ should be included to enhance the findings in future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB is defined as the behavior of employees which is not acknowledged by the formal reward system, is not limited to formal job scopes, and boosting 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 further than formal responsibilities, such as supporting colleagues to solve problem, and taking care of the property in workplace. Dick and Ellis (2006) viewed OCB as the behavior of developing and sustaining social relations with the co-workers or colleagues, which in turn improving 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 Organizational Justice

OJ is considered as one of the crucial aspects that can affect employees' behavior. OJ is described as the perception of employees to the treatment's fairness in an organization (Fernandes & Awamleh, 2006). Employees have a tendency to exert positive behavior when they perceived justice in their workplace (Fatt, Khin, & Heng 2010). This suggests that, if employees perceived injustice from the management side, employees will reduce the tendency of exerting positive behavior during their working hours. Due to the contributions of OJ on employees' behavior and attitude, the need of research to discover OJ has been increasing (Cropanzano, Goldman, & Benson, 2005). It is vital to understand how employees perceive justice to job-related issues through studying OJ in research (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). OJ has been slowly receiving attention in the discipline of organizational behavior because it was revealed that OJ has big impact on organizations' daily function (Greenberg, 1990). OJ can help in producing positive outcomes, as well as making employees feel well-regarded and valued (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2005).

Distributive justice was the first dimension that was included when the scholars examined OJ in researches. *Distributive justice* is defined as the extent to which the employees perceived fairness in the provision that they have received (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). The next dimension under OJ is *procedural justice*. Greenberg and Baron (2008) described that, *procedural justice* happened when the people perceived fairness all the way through the procedures to reach an outcome for them. Besides, *interpersonal justice* is known as the extent to which the people are treated in the courteous way, with dignity, and being respected by the parties who involve in the procedures and decision outcomes (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesser, & Porter, 2001). Next, *informational justice* is defined as the degree to which the explanations were made to communicate on why procedures were conducted in a particular way, or why certain outcomes were circulated in a particular manner (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Followed by a new dimension of OJ which is developed by Usmani and Jamal (2013), *temporal justice* is about how fair the time is distributed to the employees. Last of all, Usmani and Jamal (2013) defined *spatial justice* as the fairness perception of the employees about the geographical distance of the resources provided by the organization, or the comparison of facilities between branches of organization.

3. Methodology

A comprehensive search on the journal databases was done on the topic of OJ 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 exclusions that we concerned when we did the searching of articles. The first exclusion is, we excluded those studies which are non-empirical. Second, we excluded the studies which were conducted on students' sample or education settings because the linkage between the variables will be focused on corporate personnel. Third, we excluded the topics which are irrelevant to our variables. Fourth, we excluded the studies which their variable of OCB was rated by co-worker or superior. This is because we focus on self-rated organizational citizenship behavior. Fifth, we excluded those studies which did not report 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 OJ and OCB, a survey analysis and quantitative study will be conducted in real study among engineers in future. The proposed conceptual model is as below:
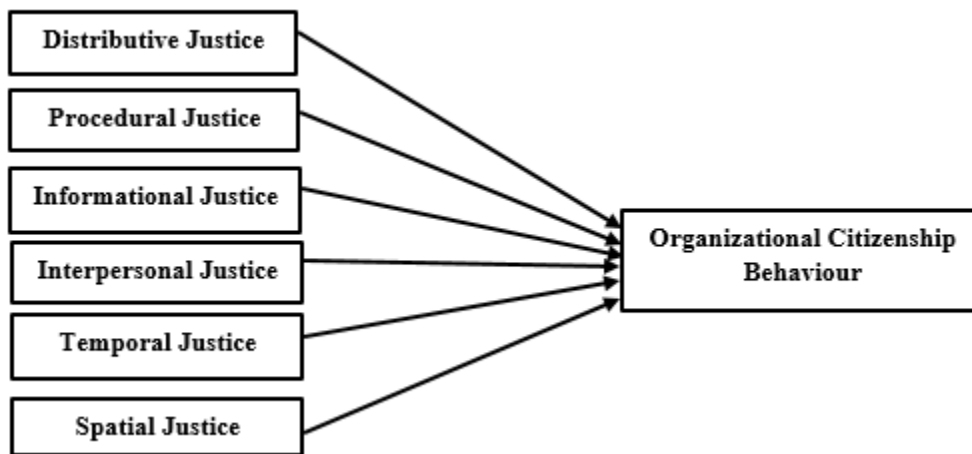

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4. Findings

Past literature helps this paper to reveal the findings on the relationship between OJ and OCB. The positive relationship between OJ and OCB has been widely agreed by other researchers, such as Zeinabadi and Salehi, (2011) and Guh, Lin, Fan, and Yang (2013). When the organization treats the employees in a fair way, employees will be more likely to show their OCB. This result is consistent with Rauf (2014) research, in which, employees who are treated fairly in the organization, will exhibit OCB in workplace. However, although Rauf (2014) found that there is relationship between the variables, the relationship is rather low, as compared to another study that was conducted by Shahzad, Siddiqui, and Zakaria (2014). Besides the past studies in overseas, studies in Malaysia obtained similar result as well, which there is positive and significant linkage between OJ and OCB (Khan & Rashid, 2012; Awang & Ahmad, 2015; Jihad *et al.*, 2016). It was mentioned that, OJ can influence the willingness of employees to exhibit OCB (Awang & Ahmad, 2015). If the employees are given unfair treatment, the employees will be less likely to exhibit OCB. It can be seen that OJ is influential in an organization, thus, management should not overlook OJ issue in organizations.

Besides the discussions on the linkage between overall OJ and OCB, this paper discussed the relationship between the dimensions of OJ and OCB as well. The past literatures revealed that the result of the linkage can be different when different dimensions were measured. The first dimension is *distributive justice*. *Distributive justice* was found to have linkage with OCB (Damirchi, Talatapeh, & Darban, 2013). This brings a meaning that, employees concern about the fairness of reward distribution. When the distribution is fair, employees are more likely to exhibit OCB at their workplace. This finding is similar with another study. Nandan and Azim (2015) revealed that there is significant relationship between *distributive justice* and OCB. When employees do not perceive fairness in distribution, employees will be less likely to show OCB. Contradictorily, Lambert and Hogan (2013) revealed different

finding on the linkage between *distributive justice* and OCB. They found insignificant relationship between the variables. Schilpzand, Martins, Kirkman, Lowe, and Chen (2013) did not find any significant linkage between the variables as well. This suggests that, in their studies, the fairness of distribution is not the key contributor in affecting the level of OCB. It can be seen that the linkage between distributive justice and OCB is not consistent.

Followed by the second dimension, *procedural justice* is discussed. Significant linkage between *procedural justice* and OCB was revealed by Damirchi *et al*. (2013). Besides, Lambert and Hogan (2013) found the similar findings as well. This suggests that, employees focus on the fairness of procedures in their workplace. When they perceive fairness throughout the procedures, they tend to exhibit OCB, such as taking care of the company's reputation. The significant relationship was indicated by Wee, Ahmad, and Fen (2014) as well. Although the findings prone to have significant relationship between *procedural justice* and OCB, there are scholars who revealed insignificant relationship as well. For instance, Schilpzand *et al*. (2013) did not find any significant linkage between procedural justice and OCB. This suggests that the willingness of employees to exhibit OCB is not affected by the fairness of procedures in organizations. It can be seen that the findings on the linkage is inconsistent.

Next, the third dimension is *informational justice*. Goudarzvandchegini, Gilaninia, and Abdesonboli, R. (2011) found that there is significant relationship between *informational justice* and OCB. This brings a meaning that, the fairness of communicating information within organizations has influence on the tendency of showing OCB among employees. The same finding was yielded by Hooi (2015), where there is significant relationship between the variables. Cheung (2013) claimed that, *informational justice* is significantly related to OCB. This can be seen that the findings are consistent from one study to another. It suggests that, the fairness of communicating information is important in affecting the level of OCB among employees.

Followed by the fourth dimension, *interpersonal justice* is concerned in exhibiting OCB among employees. This is because significant relationship between *interpersonal justice* and OCB is indicated by Cheung (2013). Besides, Damirchi *et al*. (2013) found that, *interpersonal justice* plays a significant role in affecting the level of OCB among employees. The findings seem consistent because Goudarzvandchegini *et al*. (2011) revealed the same significant linkage between the variables. The consistency of findings suggests that, employees concern on the fairness in the social interactions at workplace, such as gaining respect from superiors. When they perceived *interpersonal justice* in daily social interactions, they tend to exhibit OCB, such as helping the colleagues when they face difficulties.

Other than the four traditional dimensions of OJ, *temporal justice* and *spatial justice* are newly introduced by Usmani and Jamal (2013). Till to date, there is no previous study conducted to examine the relationship between *temporal justice*, *spatial justice*, and OCB. However, the possible linkage between the variables can be inferred through some employees' behavioral studies. Surprisingly, Akram, Haider, and Feng (2016b) found that *temporal justice* is the dominant contributor in affecting employees' behavior. Besides, Akram *et al*. (2016a) revealed that, *spatial justice* explained the most variance to employees' behavior, as compared to other dimensions of OJ. These findings suggest that, *temporal justice* and *spatial justice* are possible to affect OCB because they showed significant relationship with employees' behavior.

In a nutshell, the linkage between OJ and OCB remained inconsistent in the past studies. It can be seen that some of the scholars mentioned there is significant relationship between the variables, while some scholars found that there is no significant relationship between OJ and OCB. Nik Abd Rahman (2001) mentioned that different national culture might have different effect of OJ towards OCB. Besides, more future studies are needed to include the new dimensions for further investigation.

5. Conclusion

The findings of literature review has enhanced our understanding on the linkage between OJ and OCB. To summarize, there was a lack of attention being paid to the relationship between OJ 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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