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Does Mood Influence Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Intentions? An Experimental Manipulation of Affective State

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Abstract

An experimental study involving 114 employees from a variety of American industries, organizations, and positions which randomly manipulated affective state (positive, negative, and neutral mood) found that when mood became more positive, the likelihood that organizational citizenship behaviors would occur increased. After controlling for established patterns of organizational citizenship behaviors, demographic characteristics, and dispositional differences, manipulated mood was found to be marginally related to the intention of performing specific organizationally beneficial activities. Implications for the findings within the Asian context are also discussed.

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are those employee actions that are “discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988: 4). Constructive behaviors such as helping coworkers with their work, assisting others in learning new tasks, orienting new organizational members, and volunteering to perform beneficial tasks are deemed by OCB researchers as essential to successful organizational operation (Organ, 1988, 1990). While it is clear that behaviors like enduring job-related inconveniences without complaint, treating others with courtesy while at work, duty above the minimal job requirements, participation and promotion of company events, and loyalty to the company benefit overall effectiveness, the question remains as to what businesses can do to bring about or increase the occurrence of these desirable employee activities.

A number of antecedents to OCB, such as job satisfaction (Williams & Anderson, 1992), organizational commitment (Becker, 1992), perceptions of fairness (Moorman, 1991), and interpersonal trust (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990) have been reported as influencing an employee’s decision to perform organizational citizenship behaviors. The purpose of the current study is to determine the influence of individual affective state (i.e., mood) on the intention of employees to perform organizational citizenship behaviors.

Studies in related social psychological areas have indicated that prosocial and helping behaviors tend to increase when individual mood becomes more positive (Isen, 1970, 1987; Isen & Baron, 1991). Recently, Williams and Wong (1999) reported that the amount of positive affect currently experienced by employees significantly influenced their intention of performing specific organizational citizenship activities. After controlling for historical OCB, individual demographic characteristics, and the traits of positive/negative affectivity, Williams and Wong (1999) found that the willingness of employees to perform OCB increased as their self-reported mood became more positive. Although mood was found to influence OCB intentions in their study, causality was difficult to establish since respondent affective state was simply measured, as opposed to experimentally manipulated. To address this limitation, a fully randomized experimental design was undertaken to test the extent to which employee mood influenced the intention to perform OCB. That is:

Hypothesis: OCB intentions increase as employee affective state becomes more positive.

Method

Subjects. In an attempt to increase external validity, employees from a variety of industries (e.g., manufacturing (15%), financial services (18%), information technology (4%), petroleum (6%), banking (16%)) and a range of organizational sizes (e.g., 17% with less than 100 employees and 69% with more than 300) from a large American southwestern city were asked to participate. Of the 144 employees contacted, 114 completed questionnaires were

returned for a response rate of 79%. This high response rate was primarily due to the selection and involvement of human resource managers in a variety of companies who expressed an enthusiastic willingness to participate in “a comprehensive study of organizational behaviors and attitudes.”

59% of the respondents were female, and the average age was 36. 76% of those who participated had at least a bachelor's degree, 90% held some type of management position, their average tenure with their present company was around five years, and the average number of years within their industry was greater than six years. Employees from finance (41%), personnel (9%), marketing (11%), production (9%), administration (8%), engineering (2%), general management (4%), and a variety of other departments were included in the survey.

Measures

Historical OCB. As in the study by Williams and Wong (1999), established or learned patterns of OCB (i.e., past OCB practices) were measured using the OCB scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989). Using a 7-point interval scale with higher values indicating greater OCB, the 15 historic OC items included measures of consideration (e.g., “I help others who have heavy workloads.” and “I give my time to help others with work problems willingly.”), civic virtue (e.g., “I keep up with developments in the company.” and “I keep abreast of changes in the organization.”), conscientiousness (e.g., “I do not take extra breaks.” and “I do not take unnecessary time off work.”), and sportsmanship (e.g., “I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters.” and “I tend to make ‘mountains out of molehills’.” which were reverse-coded). The fifteen items in the original study exhibited a reliability coefficient of .83, while the current study resulted in a reliability of .72.

OCB Intentions. As with Williams and Wong (1999), the extent to which employees were likely to exhibit specific OCB actions was measured using the OCB intentions instrument developed for their study. These 11 items asked respondents to indicate along a 7-point interval scale (again, higher values indicated greater OCB willingness) the extent to which they were likely to perform the specific behavior described, including altruism (e.g., “a colleague seems to be having some work problems. Your workload is rather heavy. How likely are you to volunteer your help?”), conscientiousness (e.g., “Your boss is not in the office and you can actually return from lunch late without him/her noticing. How likely are you to go back to work on time?”), civic virtue (e.g., “The company's newsletter has just arrived. How likely are you to take a copy to read up on the latest developments in the company?”), and sportsmanship (e.g., “Someone has just made a minor mistake. How likely will you make a fuss out of this?” [reverse-coded]). The reliability coefficient reported in the original study for these 11 items was .62, while the current study resulted in a reliability of .65.

Personality. Mood is a transitory, fleeting condition that fluctuates and changes throughout the day (Isen & Baron, 1991). To control for probable trait characteristics on individual mood state, personality effects were gauged as in the Williams and Wong (1999) study. The dispositional traits of positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA) were measured using twenty items developed by Watson and Tellegen (1985). Respondents indicated on a 5-point interval scale anchored with “Very slightly or not at all” and “Extremely” the extent to which they “generally feel this way.” The ten items which comprised each scale were summed and averaged with higher values indicating higher levels of both PA and NA. PA (mean=3.90, S.D.=.58) exhibited a reliability coefficient of .87, and NA (mean=1.58, S.D.=.49) exhibited a reliability coefficient of .83.

Mood Induction. Mood was randomly induced by having respondents complete a section of the survey instrument prior to the OCB intentions scale which asked them to try to remember as vividly as possible a work-related event which they had experienced which made them feel really good for the positive affect condition, really bad for the negative affect condition, or to recall the events that happened during a recent day at work (preferably yesterday) for the neutral condition. This manipulation asked participants to try to remember the emotional aspects of the event, to picture how they actually responded, and to try to experience the same thoughts and feelings for all three conditions. Respondents were requested to write their descriptions in the provided space within a five-minute time allotment. This form of mood induction has been reported to be generally effective in evoking both happy and sad feelings (Gerrards-Hesse, Spies and Hesse, 1994).

Mood was assessed three times during participation. The beginning of the survey instrument presented the 7-point faces scale (Kunin, 1955) as a premanipulation assessment; higher values indicated happier states (PREMOOD mean=5.20, S.D.=1.22). After completing the historic OCB and personality measures, participants were randomly exposed to either the positive, negative, or neutral affect manipulation. Immediately following this induction was a manipulation check using 4 adjective-anchored items (e.g., sad, cheerful; unhappy, happy; depressed, elated; bad, good). These items asked respondents “How does the event you just described make you feel now, at this moment?” with higher values on the 7-point interval scales indicating higher levels of positive affect. The four items following the mood manipulation were summed and averaged (MOOD mean=4.62, S.D.=1.7) and exhibited a reliability coefficient of .96. Following the manipulation check was the OCB intentions scale, which was followed by a 1-item, 7-point interval post-treatment check which asked respondents how they felt “right now” (negative, positive) with higher values indicating more positive feelings (POSTMOOD mean=5.35, S.D.=1.31). The final section contained demographic questions.

An ANOVA using LSD found significant ($p < .05$) mood differences among the three experimental conditions. The post-treatment mood mean for the positive affect group ($n=29$) was 5.67 (S.D.=1.52), for the neutral affect group ($n=40$) the mean was 4.74 (S.D.=1.37), and for the negative affect group ($n=45$) the mean was 3.38 (S.D.=1.71), suggesting that the mood treatment was successful in altering respondent affective state. Since ANOVA revealed

that the mood induction treatment was generally successful, the mean ($M=4.62$, $S.D.=1.7$) for MOOD, which assessed respondent affective state prior to completing the OCB intention scale, was used in all subsequent statistical analyses.

Results

Age ($M=35.8$, $S.D.=9.07$) was considered a continuous variable; gender ($M=1.58$, $S.D.=.49$) was coded as 1=male and 2=female; educational level ($M=2.94$, $S.D.=1.07$) was coded as 1=high school or GED, 2=associate's degree, 3=bachelor's degree, 4=master's degree, and 5=doctorate; type of industry ($M=5.63$, $S.D.=2.55$) was a categorical variable coded as 1=manufacturing, 2=advertising/marketing, 3=trading, 4=financial services, 5=information and technology, 6=petroleum, 7=banking, and 8=other; organizational size ($M=3.27$, $S.D.=1.18$) was coded as 1=less than 100, 2=101-200, 3=201-300, and 4=more than 300; employee level within the organization ($M=2.61$, $S.D.=.83$) was coded as 1=entry, 2=lower, 3=middle, and 4=upper; type of department ($M=3.36$, $S.D.=2.65$) was a categorical variable coded as 1=finance/accounting, 2=human resources, 3=marketing/sales, 4=operations/production, 5=administration, 6=engineering/R&D, 7=general management, and 8=other; the respondent's number of years in the industry ($M=2.16$, $S.D.=1.37$) was coded as 1=less than 5, 2=6-10, 3=11-15, 4=16-20, and 5=more than 20; and the employee's current tenure ($M=1.71$, $S.D.=1.08$) was coded as 1=less than 5 years, 2=6-10, 3=11-15, 4=16-20, and 5=more than 20 years.

Zero-Order Correlations

The correlations for all the variables in this study are displayed in Table 1. Respondent mood was slightly but significantly related to OCB intentions ($r=.18$), as well as the trait of PA ($r=.23$) and the post-treatment mood measure ($r=.24$). This latter statistic suggests that the effects of the mood manipulation carried over to some extent to influence the participant's mood toward the end of the survey instrument. Not surprisingly, the dependent variable of OCB intentions was strongly related to historic OCB ($r=.46$) and the trait of PA ($r=.46$). Due to multicollinearity among many of the variables of interest, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which mood influenced employee OCB intentions.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Age	-														
2 Sex	-.07	-													
3 Education	.03	-.07	-												
4 Industry	-.09	.10	-.07	-											
5 Size	.15	.06	.13	.01	-										
6 Level	.42	-.25	.05	-.11	.12	-									
7 Department	.15	-.08	.01	.04	-.33	.17	-								
8 Years in Ind.	.65	-.07	.00	-.08	.15	.45	.03	-							
9 Tenure	.50	-.15	-.06	.02	.19	.34	.04	.74	-						
10 Historical OCB	.05	.02	.09	.28	.04	.02	.01	.18	.10	-					
11 OCB Intentions	.03	.13	-.02	.29	.19	-.06	.07	.11	-.03	.46	-				
12 NA	-.18	-.05	.11	.14	-.25	-.20	-.06	-.17	-.02	-.09	-.15	-			
13 PA	-.03	.15	-.13	.14	.04	.01	.01	-.02	-.11	.51	.46	-.18	-		
14 PREMOOD	-.13	.12	-.02	.00	-.04	.02	.05	-.05	-.22	.23	.28	-.34	.37	-	
15 MOOD	.00	.03	-.04	.03	-.08	-.05	.10	.02	.04	.17	.18	.06	.23	.10	-
16 POSTMOOD	.10	.15	-.09	.07	.00	-.02	.16	.04	-.11	.25	.41	-.40	.48	.48	.24

$r > .18$ ($p < .05$), $r > .23$ ($p < .01$), $r > .31$ ($p < .001$)

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

To control for the effects of shared variance with the dependent variable (Cohen & Cohen, 1983), the independent variables were entered into the regression equation in blocks prior to including respondent mood. By partialling shared variance with previously entered variables, any significant increase in R^2 for OCB intentions would be due solely to the effects of respondent mood, the variable entered in the final step (Table 2).

Table 2.
Multiple Regression Analysis Dependent Variable – OCB Intentions

Variables entered in the equation	Change in R^2	Significance of F	Beta	Significance of F
Historical OCB	25%	.0001	.499	.0001

Variables entered in the equation	Change in R ²	Significance of F	Beta	Significance of F
Age			-.10	n.s.
Department			.15	n.s.
Industry			.13	n.s.
Level			-.06	n.s.
Education			-.10	n.s.
Organizational Size			.30	.001
Gender			.05	n.s.
Tenure			-.31	.015
Years in Industry	14%	.018	.31	.029
PA			.20	.04
NA	3%	n.s.	-.02	n.s.
Mood	2%	.096	.14	.096

Historic OCB was entered in step one and resulted in a significant ($p < .000$) 25% change in OCB intentions. In step two, the demographic characteristics of age, department, gender, education, industry, employee level, organizational size, employee tenure, and years in current industry resulted in a significant ($p < .02$) 14% change in R² for OCB intentions. However, only organizational size ($p < .001$), employee tenure ($p < .02$), and number of years in current industry ($p < .03$) accounted for this incremental change. The dispositional traits of PA and NA were entered in step three: the pair failed to result in a significant increase in OCB intentions variance. Mood, entered in the final step, resulted in an almost significant ($p < .096$) increase of 2% in OCB intentions variance.

Discussion

As with the findings of Williams and Wong (1999), this study found that the likelihood of performing specific OCB activities increased, albeit marginally, when respondents were placed in a more positive mood. When their affective state became more positive, their intention of performing organizationally beneficial behaviors tended to increase.

Studies in related areas have indicated that helping and other socially desirable behaviors tend to increase when mood becomes more positive (Isen, 1970, 1987). It may be that employees who are experiencing more positive affective states may perceive the organization and its members as more deserving of extra-role assistance (Isen, Shalker, Clark & Karp, 1978), or that those who feel good are more willing to perform OCB in an attempt to prolong or extend their positive feelings (Forest, Clark, Mills & Isen, 1979).

The finding that mood may influence the likelihood of OCB is particularly of interest to Asian companies that operate under tight labor market conditions. For example, Singapore is characterized by extreme labor shortages at all skill levels and in all sectors, as well as by consistently low unemployment rates in the 1.6 to 2.6 percent range (Bian & Ang, 1997; Goh, 1994). Under conditions of chronic labor shortages which result in high external mobility, the high opportunity costs associated with staying in the same job are likely to result in decreased job satisfaction (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991). Workers who are comparatively dissatisfied with their jobs may not be motivated to exhibit OCB since they have little difficulty finding a replacement job requiring fewer extra-role behaviors in a market where the number of jobs far exceeds the supply of workers. That is, external factors like the tight labor market in Singapore and other southeast Asian economies may result in decreased employee motivation to display OCB that are reflected in positive work-related attitudes as well as high levels of performance and cooperation. However, while Asian companies may have no control over economic conditions influencing their employees' attitudes, they do have some level of influence over conditions which trigger employee moods. Companies desiring to elicit OCB from their workforce may be able to focus attention on aspects influencing their employees' affective state which are likely to lead to an increase in organizationally desirable activities.

Individual mood which was randomly manipulated in this study was found to influence OCB intentions, even though the significance of the change in R² was marginal. One possible reason why this effect was not stronger might be the lack of reliability for the independent variable. The coefficient alpha for the OCB intentions scale in this study was .65; Nunnally (1978) has suggested that lower reliabilities are likely to result in attenuated findings. If OCB intentions would have been measured more accurately, it appears likely or possible that the resulting relationship between mood and OCB intentions would have been stronger. A more accurate assessment of OCB intentions (or actual OCB if possible) would likely result in stronger relationships. Also, given the relatively minor estimated effect size associated with mood ($r = .18$), it may be necessary to sample a larger portion of the population to more adequately assess the relationship between mood and OCB intentions, although power analysis indicated that the given sample of 114 achieved power of .80 (i.e., an eight in ten chance that the statistical test will be significant and the null hypothesis rejected) if the actual population effect size for mood is at least .18 (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

The results of this study should be viewed in light of possible limitations. All data were collected at the same time, and results derived from cross-sectional designs can only presume causality, not confirm it. Similarly, common methods variance is possible since all variables were measured from the same source. Additionally, this study gauged OCB intentions defined as the likelihood that an employee would be willing to perform a specific citizenship behavior. Although behavioral intention is a necessary antecedent to activity, actual employee behavior was not

measured (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

This study does exhibit strengths as well. Respondents came from a variety of industries and companies, which increases the external generalizability of the reported findings. Additionally, this study experimentally manipulated participant mood using a fully randomized design. This design gives greater support for the direction of causality between employee mood and OCB intentions since mood was manipulated prior to measuring an employee's likelihood of exhibiting OCB. Although a number of other factors may influence an employee's decision as to whether to perform a given OCB, it appears that those who were in more positive moods were marginally more likely to express the intention of assisting the organization with their extra-role behaviors. The findings reported here suggest that individual affective state may be a relatively small but potentially important antecedent to actual organizational citizenship behaviors.

An individual's mood state tends to be transitory in nature, relatively short-term in duration, and influenced by commonplace or mundane occurrences (Isen & Baron, 1991). Since employee mood is relatively fleeting and difficult to ascertain, more research is required to confirm its advent and extent. It may also be beneficial to determine if specific types of mood tend to be associated with different kinds of OCB intentions. Studies have demonstrated that common influences like components of specific job-related tasks (Kraiger, Billings & Isen, 1989), unexpected small gifts (Isen & Geva, 1987), and environmental aspects like employee workspace (Isen & Baron, 1991) can alter a person's affective state. Companies have a variety of mood-altering possibilities available to them since many of the factors which could potentially influence an employee's mood, such as the tasks assigned or an environment which is supportive and conducive to more pleasant states, can be controlled to some degree by organizations. Organizations that are particularly concerned with OCB may benefit from paying attention to the moods of their employees. The results of this study suggest that it may be necessary or desirable for organizations striving to elicit organizational citizenship behaviors to focus attention on creating more pleasant atmospheres that lead to more positive affective states for their employees. It appears likely that employees who are induced to be in more positive moods are more likely to be good corporate citizens contributing desirable organizational actions.

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