

Impact of Perceived Organizational Support on Citizenship Behavior of ITES Employees

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Abstract - This study attempts to investigate the effect of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) of employees on their Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). It also examines if there are significant differences in the impact of POS on OCB of employees due to demographic factors (age, gender, tenure, designation) of employees. POS indicates the perception of employees regarding the extent to which their organization appreciates their contribution and cares for their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). OCB refers to employee participation in tasks that are not formally a part of the job description, but are beneficial for the organization as a whole (Organ & Ryan, 1995). In the current business scenario, when employee turnover rate poses a serious threat to businesses, employers increasingly value employee loyalty and dedication. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to obtain the perceptions of 272 employees working in Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) Sector, Bangalore, India. The results of the study indicate that POS had a significant impact on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) of employees. Among the demographic factors, organizational tenure influenced the impact of POS on OCB. This paper has implications for employers and top management who struggle to retain their employees.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, ITES Companies

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, the ITES sector is well established. Indian ITES companies are the most preferred choice among global outsourcers. Indian ITES sector has grown exponentially in the past few decades. The rapid expansion of ITES sector and the huge demand for skilled employees have led to a high turnover rate which not only affects the profitability but also the sustainability of these ITES organizations. It is a challenging task for the top management to motivate and retain the talented employees as job opportunities are available for these talented employees in the rival companies. So, it is important to find out new ways to enhance the citizenship behavior of employees so that they remain loyal and dedicated to their organization. Past studies have indicated that citizenship behavior of employees can help in reducing their turnover intention. POS plays a vital role in determining commitment and loyalty of employees to the organization. Organizations have started investing in POS programs for their employees after realizing the influence of POS in enhancing desirable workplace outcomes. For example, Google offers a global

education leave program for those employees who are interested in pursuing higher studies. Organizations are increasingly planning and implementing employee support programs.

The Indian ITES Sector has been witnessing a rapid growth in terms of profitability and turnover for more than a decade. In spite of this growth, attrition level is high among ITES employees. With their round the clock work schedule, employees often experience work-related illness resulting in absenteeism. Hence, these employees need adequate support from the organization so that they continue to remain loyal and dedicated to the organization. In the absence of such timely support from the organization, the employees may choose to seek opportunities in rival companies. There is limited research examining the effect of POS on OCB especially in a high demanding work environment such as the Indian ITES sector. This paper attempts to empirically validate the influence of POS on OCB among the ITES employees in India.

A. Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB refers to those discretionary behaviors that are neither mandated nor compensated by the organization. These include behaviors that contribute to maintaining an organization's social system and indirectly benefit the work group or organization as a whole (Smith., Organ, & Near, 1983). Based on social exchange theory, it can be argued that employees who are treated well by their organizations may reciprocate by engaging in OCBs. This is perhaps made clearer by referring to the literature linking organizational support and organizational fairness with employee OCBs (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

OCB research indicates that organizations can create an environment which encourages their employees to engage in citizenship behaviors (Hart, Gilstrap, & Bolino, 2016). One of the ways to create such an environment is by extending organizational support to the employees. OCB also helps in reducing turnover and retaining customers (Organ, 2018). Moonman, Blakely, & Neihoff (1998) found that POS prompts employees to reciprocate with citizenship behaviors.

B. Perceived Organizational Support

POS includes the overall support that the employees perceive that they receive from their immediate peers, their supervisor and from other departments which help them to successfully perform their work duties. Past studies (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Erdogan & Enders, 2007) have found that when an employee perceives strong support from the organization, it strengthens his/her cognitive and emotional evaluation of his/her job and organization. OST suggests that the fulfillment of socio-emotional expectations of the employees enhances positive judgment about their employers leading to positive behaviors like high attendance, supporting their team and colleagues, proactively facing organizational challenges and working beyond the call of duty thereby enhancing their OCBs (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Blood good, 2003). When employees and their superiors feel they are supported by the organization, the quality of their communication increases as do their performance, perceptions of fairness, psychological well-being, and desire to remain a part of the organization (Brown & Roloff, 2015).

The turbulent economic environment and fluctuating demands in the ITES industry can result in the emotional exhaustion of the employees. Management can bank on providing organizational support to meet the socio-emotional needs of the employees and thereby reduce their emotional exhaustion (Lewig & Dollard, 2003). Neves, Mesdaghinia, Eisenberger, & Wickham (2018) found that POS acts as a resource that employees can rely on during excessive job demands. POS facilitates a favorable appraisal of stressful situations by increasing trust in the organization, optimism about the future, and a sense of fairness.

Organizational support can be provided to employees by ensuring fair compensation, supportive work-environment and by caring for their safety and well-being. There are a variety of demonstrated ways to foster POS, including ensuring organizational fairness, providing tangible resources and socio-emotional support, giving autonomy in solving problems, providing supervisory support and strengthening social networks (Eisenberger, Malone, & Presson, 2016). Various kinds of social support received from the organization, such as esteem, timely information and tangible resources contribute to POS and employees perceive their organizational support based on the fulfillment of these needs. POS can be considered as a global resource at work that serves as a buffer to many job demands (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

The effect of POS on OCB can be explained based on social-exchange theory. According to Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), POS reinforces the belief that the organization recognizes the efforts and performance of a team (thereby strengthening the performance-reward link). Also, the respect, approval and care that underlie POS are likely to meet the socio-economic needs of a team (e.g., the need for esteem or consideration). When team members

share the belief that the organization cares about their needs and well-being and values their contributions, they tend to develop a strong sense of moral obligation to reciprocate such favorable treatment (Caesens, Marique, Hanin, & Stinglhamber, 2016), by adopting extra-role behavior (Shen, 2016).

According to organizational support theory, POS meets the socio-emotional needs of employees. Based on POS, employees infer the organization's readiness to reward their increased efforts. They act in accordance to the norm of reciprocity, trading their effort and dedication towards the organization in return for the support that they receive from the organization. Employees with high levels of POS judge their jobs more favorably resulting in increased job satisfaction and reduced stress. They are willing to put extra effort in their job. This enhances their commitment to their organization and results in performance improvement and lower turnover rate (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Rhoades & Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis on POS found that there was a strong relationship between POS and extra-role performance. Extra-role behaviors, such as aiding fellow employees, taking actions that protect the organization from risk, offering constructive suggestions, and gaining knowledge and skills that are beneficial to the organization (George & Brief, 1992) often occur as opportunities arise and are not closely monitored. These behaviors constitute citizenship behavior. Recent studies also indicate that there is a positive relationship between POS and extra-role performance (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2006; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). Hence it can be interpreted that POS can enhance the OCB levels of employees.

Though the impact of POS on OCB is well established in management literature (Gupta et al., 2016, van Knippenberg, Prooijen, & Sleebos, 2015, Afsar, & Badir, 2016) such studies are limited in the ITES context (Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013) which is characterized by round the clock work schedule and very high work demands. On the basis of the above discussion, this study formulates the following hypotheses.

- H₁*: There is a significant difference in the level of POS of employees based on their gender.
- H₂*: There is a significant difference in the level of OCB of employees based on their gender.
- H₃*: There is a significant difference in the level of POS of employees based on their designation.
- H₄*: There is a significant difference in the level of OCB of employees based on their designation.
- H₅*: There is a significant difference in the level of POS of employees based on their organizational tenure.
- H₆*: There is a significant difference in the level of OCB of employees based on their organizational tenure.
- H₇*: POS has a direct positive effect on OCB.
- H₈*: Demographic factors like age, gender, designation and tenure influence the impact of POS on OCB of employees.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Sample and Procedure

The study adopted cross-sectional research design and used quantitative data collection methods. The proposed hypotheses are tested on a sample drawn from ITES Companies in Bangalore. Only those companies which had been in operation for the past 10 years and had more than 1000 employees were chosen for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select the targeted respondents in the selected ITES companies. The e-mails were sent to the ITES employees with a request to participate in the survey. Before going ahead with full scale investigation, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of 106 respondents. After assessing the validity of the questionnaire, full scale survey was conducted. Further, respondents' names were kept anonymous to obtain genuine responses from the participants. Data were collected from 272 employees (144 females, 128 males) of ITES sector of Bangalore.

B. Measures

POS was measured using the 8 item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS by Eisenberger *et al.*, 1997; Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999). The SPOS is a one-dimensional measure of perceived organizational support; hence a single SPOS score is obtained. A sample item of this scale is "the organization really cares for my well-being". The respondents indicated their responses on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The scale had a high reliability (Cronbach Alpha = 0.97). OCB is measured using the 24 items scale by Podsakoff, *et al.*, (1990). This scale identifies 5 factors of OCB namely altruism (5 items), courtesy (5 items), civic virtue (4 items), conscientiousness (5 items), and sportsmanship (5 items). All items of OCB were measured on a 7 point Likert scale. (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5= somewhat agree, 6= agree, 7= strongly agree). The reliability of OCB scale was also high with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.96 (Altruism = 0.95, Courtesy = 0.90, Conscientiousness = 0.93, Civic Virtue = 0.94, Sportsmanship = 0.95).

III. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Statistics

In the total sample, 53 percent were males. Of the 272 respondents, about 50 percent were between 30 and 40 years of age. Majority of the respondents were married (64 percent). About 59 percent of the respondents were graduates and 34 percent had completed their post-graduation. About 35 percent of the respondents had more than 10 years of experience and 32 percent of the respondents had 5 to 10 years of work experience.

B. Main Study Results

Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science version 21 (SPSS 21). Statistical techniques like

Pearson correlation analysis, linear regression analysis were used for the data analysis. The main aim of this study was to examine the relationship between POS and OCB and to analyze the influence of demographic factors on the impact of POS on OCB. Obtained data were analyzed using independent sample t-test, one way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. t-test (used to compare means of two populations) was used to find out if both the groups (male and female) varied in their perceptions of organizational support. One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance is used to compare the means of more than two populations) was used to examine if the perceptions of organizational support varied based on the designation and tenure of employees. The respondents were grouped into four categories ('team member', 'team leader', 'project manager' and 'vice president') based on their designation. Tenure-wise, the respondents were grouped into six categories ('1-2 years', '2-4 years', '4-6 years', '6-8years', '8-10 years' and 'above 10 years').

Linear regression is used to examine if the independent variable can adequately predict the dependent variable and the extent of variation caused in the dependent variable by the predictor variable. Linear regression was applied to ascertain the extent to which POS explained OCB of employees.

TABLE I MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF POS AND OCB ACROSS GENDER

Variable	Male		Female		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
POS	4.18	1.3	4.35	1.2	-1.129	0.208
OCB	4.23	0.9	4.13	0.9	0.393	0.987

Notes: (1) n= 272. SD is Standard Deviation.

POS and OCB of males and females were analyzed using independent sample t-test to find out if there was any significant difference in the perception of organizational support and the OCB levels among male and female employees. The mean and standard deviation of the two groups are presented in Table I. The results show that there is no significant difference in POS based on the gender of the respondents (t = -1.13, p >0.01). Thus the hypothesis H1 is rejected. Similarly, there was no significant difference in OCB levels based on gender (t = 0.39, p> 0.01). Thus hypothesis H2 is also rejected.

TABLE II MEAN SCORE AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF POS AND OCB ACROSS DESIGNATIONS

Designation	N	Mean		Std Dev	
		POS	OCB	POS	OCB
Team Member	175	3.80	4.03	1.07	0.93
Team Leader	67	4.66	4.15	0.97	0.94
Project Manager	22	5.93	5.01	0.33	0.74
Vice President	8	6.30	5.73	0.23	0.75

p<0.01

One-way ANOVA was used to examine if there is a significant difference in the mean level of POS and OCB among the employees of different designations. Table II presents the mean and standard deviation of POS and OCB of respondents based on their designation. The test results establish that there is a significant difference in the POS levels of respondents based on their designation ($F = 48.37, p < 0.01$). Hence hypothesis H3 is accepted. Employees who were in senior positions perceived more support from their organization when compared to those in the junior category. Similarly, there is a significant difference in the OCB levels based on designation ($F = 15.41, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H4 is also accepted.

POS levels were higher among senior managers when compared to the junior staff. Junior staff members are generally involved in operative jobs. Such jobs are characterized by highly repetitive tasks, long working hours, irregular timings and direct customer interaction. At times, these junior employees may face the ire of angry customers. In such situations, if these employees do not receive timely appreciation from their superiors, it may have a negative impact on their POS. The mean OCB levels were also higher among the employees who were in senior positions when compared to the junior staff. It could be because employees belonging to senior positions had higher levels of POS which in turn augmented their OCB levels. Team members who were junior employees are more likely to be involved in operative jobs. Such jobs are generally monotonous with less autonomy which gives fewer opportunities to get involved in extra-role behaviors.

TABLE III MEAN SCORE AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF POS AND OCB BASED ON TENURE OF EMPLOYEES

Organizational Tenure	N	Mean		Std Dev	
		POS	OCB	POS	OCB
0 - 2 years	98	3.47	3.71	1.15	0.97
2 - 4 years	72	4.06	4.08	0.90	0.89
4 - 6 years	23	4.83	4.46	0.81	0.60
6 - 8 years	22	5.00	4.62	0.83	0.95
8 - 10 years	31	5.34	4.86	0.76	0.73
Above 10 years	26	5.37	4.90	0.84	0.80

$p < 0.01$

One -way ANOVA was used to examine if there is a significant difference in the mean level of POS and OCB among the employees based on their tenure in their organizations. Table III presents the mean and standard deviation of POS and OCB of respondents based on their tenure. Employees who have more years of service perceive more support from their respective organizations when compared to those who had fewer years of service. There is a significant difference in the POS levels based on the tenure ($F = 32.38, p < 0.01$). Hence hypothesis H5 is accepted. Similarly, there is a significant difference in the OCB levels based on tenure of employees ($F = 14.59, p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H6 is also accepted. OCB level increases as tenure of employees increases in the organization. It could be because employees perceive higher levels of support from their organization as their tenure increases. Higher level of POS perceived by the employees with greater organizational tenure is reciprocated by being more attached to the organization and a higher involvement in citizenship behavior.

TABLE IV MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, RELIABILITY AND CORRELATION OF THE STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	Mean	SD	Reliability	1	2
POS	4.26	1.22	0.965	1	
OCB	4.18	0.98	0.963	0.588**	1

** $p < 0.01$

Table IV presents the correlations among the two constructs and their reliabilities. The results of the study indicated that POS correlated significantly ($p < 0.01$) with OCB ($r = 0.588$). As POS level of employees increases, their level of OCB also increases accordingly. Employees reporting high levels of POS are more involved in OCB than their colleagues who report lower POS levels.

Among the dimensions of OCB, civic virtue had the highest correlation ($r = 0.546, p < 0.01$) with POS while courtesy had the lowest correlation ($r = 0.444, p < 0.01$) with POS. The other OCB dimensions also had a significantly high correlation with POS - altruism ($r = 0.478, p < 0.01$), conscientiousness ($r = 0.482, p < 0.01$) and sportsmanship ($r = 0.476, p < 0.01$).

TABLE V IMPACT OF POS ON OCB

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.171	0.176		12.341	.000
POS	0.474	0.040	0.588	11.932	.000
R Value	0.588				
R Square	0.345				
Adjusted R Square	0.343				
F Value	142.376				
Significance	0.000				

Regression Analysis was carried out in which POS was regressed against employees' OCB levels. The regression analysis results are presented in Table V. It indicates that POS as a predictor variable, successfully predicted OCB ($\beta=0.474$, $p<0.01$; $F=142.376$, $R\text{ Square}=0.345$). This indicates strong evidence in support of Hypothesis 7. R Square value is 0.345 which implies that POS explains 35% variance in the OCB levels of employees. Further, the model is fit as the F value at 142.376 is significant at 5% level. The regression equation to predict the outcome variable is as follows.
 $OCB = 2.171 + 0.474 (POS)$.

TABLE VI IMPACT OF POS ON OCB DUE TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic Variable	Significance
Age	0.320
Gender	0.077
Designation	0.954
Organizational Tenure	0.008*

Notes: (1) n= 272. * $p<0.05$

Hierarchical regression was done to examine if there was any significant difference in the impact of POS on OCB due to demographic factors. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6. It shows that only organizational tenure influenced the impact of POS on OCB. Hence hypothesis H8 is partially accepted.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study is based on two theoretical frameworks namely Organization Support Theory (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). The Organization Support Theory posits that fulfillment of socio-emotional needs of employees evoke positive judgments about their employers thereby triggering positive behaviors such as high attendance, proactive approach in facing organizational challenges, extending support to their colleagues beyond the legal requirements which in turn enhance their citizenship behavior (Turnley *et al.*, 2003). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) maintains that employer and employee enter into reciprocal relationship to maximize their benefits based on the mutual support in the relationship (Aryee, Budhwar & Zhen Xiong, 2002). In agreement with these theoretical arguments, this study concludes that POS has a significant positive effect on OCB of employees. This is consistent with a recent study by Gupta *et al.*, (2016) which found that POS was significantly related to OCB of nurses working in large hospitals in India. Another recent study by Afsar & Badir (2016) confirms the positive relationship between POS and OCB. The study found that employees of five star hotels in China exhibited higher OCB levels when they received more support from their organization.

There was no significant difference in the POS and OCB levels of employees based on their gender. This is in agreement with the past studies by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) and Trybou, Gemmel, Pauwels, Henninck, & Clays

(2014) which have ruled out gender differences in POS of employees. Podsakoff *et al.*, (2000) and Ng, Lam, & Feldman (2016) have also found that there were no gender differences in the OCB of employees. While female employees are generally more relationship-oriented and nurturing (Kmec, & Gorman, 2010) to be involved in OCB, male employees are motivated to get favorable performance reviews due to their higher career-orientation.

V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was restricted to a sample of 272 respondents from five leading companies of ITES sector in Bangalore. It is very important to interpret the findings keeping in mind the context of the study. The results can be generalized only if the studies are undertaken with a larger sample across sectors. Absolute causality can be confirmed only if a longitudinal study is carried out. Data collection was carried out only on the basis of self-reported questionnaire. Future researchers can enhance their findings by using other approaches of data collection.

VI. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the effect of POS on the citizenship behavior of employees of ITES sector in Bangalore. Our results showed that POS has a significant, positive influence on OCB. The study concludes that when employees receive adequate support from their organization, they reciprocate by exhibiting higher levels of citizenship behavior. The more employees feel supported and valued by their organization, the more they engage in OCB as a form of reciprocity. So, the top management has to ensure that employees receive recognition, appreciation and timely support from their organization.

ITES employees are more likely to face challenges like monotonous work, stressful work environment, working in shifts and so on. Management can help employees to face these challenges by providing adequate support like valuing employee contribution, rewarding employees for their extra effort, responding to their complaints by taking appropriate action and showing care for their well-being. One of the main aspects of ITES jobs is monotony. Monotonous tasks lead to boredom and employees contemplate switching over to a different career. A supportive work-environment encourages employees to be hopeful and to adopt new and unproven methods to accomplish tasks within the organizational context.

Likewise, high organizational support acts as a contextual resource for employees to bounce back from setbacks that they may face at work. This can in turn have a positive impact on OCB and reduce the turnover intention of employees. It can also enhance all the positive work-related outcomes resulting in the competitive advantage of organizations.

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