

Perceived Organisational Support (POS) and the Performance of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour: The Nigerian Sample

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Abstract

This was designed to examine the influence of perceived organisational support (POS) on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) of civil servants in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, a state in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated for the study, and data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from an instrument that had previously been used in a study. A sample size of 800 was conveniently chosen, and the collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, hierarchical multiple regression analysis, and partial correlation analysis. Findings from the study indicate that POS has a significant influence on OCB. Also, findings show that perceived organisational support (POS) significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation (OCB-O) more than the performance of citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I) within the organisation. Consequently, managers should invest more in activities and programmes that will show that the employees are valued and that the organisations recognise the value they provide through their job performance.

Keywords: *Perceived Organisational Behaviour (POS), Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), Value Recognition, Job Support, Care for Interest*

Introduction

The performance of the human resource within an organisation dictates whether the organisation succeeds or not. An organisation cannot perform successfully without employees who are committed to its objectives and strategic goals. Organisations thus need to realise that if employees are managed appropriately and effectively, success is inevitable. The perception of employees as to how fairly they are treated and how positively the organisation supports them has a direct impact on the continued competitiveness of the organisation and, by extension, its existence (Gilbert, 2020).

Perceived organisational support (POS) refers to employee perceptions regarding the extent to which their employer values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Okon and Ndem, 2021). It is the employees' perception of being valued and cared about by the organization. In an organisation, effective POS can be achieved through value recognition, job support, and care about interests (Ling *et al.*, 2006). It is suggested that the way an employee perceives how the organisation treats him or her in terms of recognising their value, supporting their job with tools and equipment for success, and caring about their interests influences employee work behaviour, especially their citizenship behaviour.

Organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) are discretionary behaviours employees exhibit to help others and benefit the organisation. These behaviours are exhibited as employees show their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is not enforceable and not part of the formal role in terms of the person's contract with the organisation, however, studies have shown that OCB contributes to the achievement of organisational goals (Akpan, Okwudu, and Imagha, 2021). Akpan, Okwudu, and Imagha (2021) classified OCB into OCB-O (organisational citizenship behaviour directed towards the organisation) and OCB-I (organisational citizenship behaviour directed towards individuals within the organisation). They opined that OCB-O is characterised by such actions as adhering to informal rules designed to maintain order, demonstrating above-average work attendance, and not taking extended work breaks, while OCB-I is more personally focused and includes such actions as assisting others who have been absent, helping colleagues who have heavy workloads, and taking a personal interest in the well-being of other employees.

Recent research on POS have primarily focused on two areas. First, several studies have explored the changing nature of employee perceptions of organisational support as well as the general decline in mutual trust between employees and their employers (e.g., Daniel, 2019; Nwabochi, 2017). These articles have generally drawn on literature to contrast past and present forms of POS while offering anecdotal evidence of the said change. Second, another line of research has investigated the negative consequences of POS on employee work behaviour, including OCB (e.g., Fredrick and Wendel, 2013; and Gentile, 2019). Research in this group suggests that when the perception of employees with regards to organisational support bothers on or tends to the negative, work outcomes such as job satisfaction, trust in the organisation, employee work behaviours, etc. also tend to the negative. This study aims to extend prior research on POS in three ways. First, most prior research has ignored the multi-dimensional nature of the POS and instead treated it as a unidimensional concept (e.g., DeConinck, 2010; and Gilbert, 2020). Therefore, this study is based on Ling *et al.* (2006) conceptualization of POS, which divided POS into three dimensions: value recognition, job support, and care about interests. Second, this research focuses on the relationship between POS and the performance

of OCB by employees. Specifically, this study is designed to examine the extent of the influence of POS on the willingness of employees to go above and beyond the call of duty. Furthermore, this study seeks to determine whether organisational citizenship behaviour that benefits individuals in the organisation (OCB-I) is more likely to be influenced by employee perception of organisational support (POS) than organisational citizenship behaviour that benefits the organisation (OCB-O). Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived organisational support (POS) does not significantly influence the performance of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

Hypothesis 2: Perceived organisational support (POS) more significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviour directed at the organisation (OCB-O) than the performance of citizenship behaviour directed at other individuals (OCB-I) within the organisation.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review

Perceived organisational support (POS) is defined as employees developing global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). It is the perception created by the employees towards the commitment of the organisation and the belief of the employees to what degree the organisation pays attention to their well-being. Putting it differently, POS is the commitment of the organisation to its employees.

This definition incorporates two dimensions: (i) a sense that the organisation values employees' contributions is underpinned by performance-reward expectations and (ii) a perception that the organisation cares about employee well-being is underpinned by the need for fulfilment of socio-emotional needs at work (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). According to organisational researchers, the employee-employer relationship is a form of social exchange relationship, and within this relationship, not only are impersonal resources such as money, services, and information exchanged, but also socio-emotional resources such as approval, respect, and support, which contribute to employees' perception of organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). This relationship is built on the voluntary actions of each party, with the expectation that the other party will reciprocate in some form. In contrast to strictly economic relationships, social exchange relationships contain commitments that cannot be articulated in advance and require the parties to the relationship to trust one another. Although the commitments that comprise these types of relationships are sometimes ambiguous, the development of these relationships is driven by a general expectation of reciprocation. Social exchange theory (SET) provides a broad framework for understanding how employees will react when they perceive their organisation as supportive.

The social exchange theory (SET) states that organisational actions favourable to employees should contribute more to POS if employees view them as voluntary rather than as the result of external constraints such as government regulations, union pressures, or competitive wages paid by alternative employers (Armeli *et al.*, 1998). Thus, employees' perceptions of organisational support are stronger when an organisation presents its actions as discretionary rather than mandatory. In accordance with the suggestions of SET, the development of POS is encouraged by employees' tendency to assign the organisation humanlike characteristics (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). This is because employees view the actions of managers and

other persons in leadership or supervisory positions as organisational actions (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). The implication is that the words and deeds of organisational leaders have the potential to influence their employees perceived organisational support and, in turn, influence employees' citizenship behaviours in the organisations (Farh, Hackett, and Liang, 2007). As proposed by Dawley, Houghton, and Bucklew (2010), organisational support is most effective when employees and employers participate in social exchanges that are beneficial to all parties.

Organisational citizenship behaviour consists of those behaviours that extend beyond specific role requirements, with the stipulation that such behaviours are performed voluntarily without expectation of material or social rewards (Wayne Shore, and Liden, 1994). In defining OCB and its benefits, Smith and Macko (2014) explains OCB as the individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that, in aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the organisation. Thus, according to Smith and Macko (2014) definition, organisational citizenship behaviour has at least three characteristics: (i) it is discretionary. By discretionary, it means that the behaviour is not an enforceable requirement of the employee's role or the job description but rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable; (ii) it is not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system; and (iii) in the aggregate, the behaviour promotes the effective functioning of the organisation.

According to Gordon (2003), OCBs are important because effective organisational functioning requires employees not only to perform their prescribed roles (referred to as in-role behaviours), but also to engage in behaviours that go beyond these formal obligations. Ferrin and Lee (2006) also argued that citizenship behaviours are important because they lubricate the social machinery of the organisation. They provide the flexibility needed to work through many unforeseen contingencies and enable participants to cope with the otherwise awesome condition of their interdependence on each other. Further to this, Sonnentag, Volmer, and Spsychala (2010) stated that OCB is essential because organisations cannot anticipate through formally stated in-role job descriptions the entire array of behaviours needed for achieving organisational goals. In agreement with these, Brief and Motowidlo (1986) opined that, though organisational citizenship behaviours are not part of individuals' assigned duties, they are still beneficial to the organisation, its members, and the employees themselves.

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be categorised into two dimensions. There is OCB that benefits individuals (OCB-I) and OCB that benefits the organisation as a whole (OCB-O). McNeely and Meglino (1994) found that OCB-I is related to individual dispositions such as empathy, while OCB-O is related to organisational context. According to them, OCB-I includes such behaviours as helping behaviour and self-development, whereas OCB-O includes such behaviours as sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, and civic virtue.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The target population for the study comprised all civil servants in the state, from which a convenient sample size of 800 was chosen. Data for this study were collected during the annual promotion and confirmation exercise conducted for all civil servants in the state by the Akwa Ibom State

Civil Service Commission. The copies of the research instrument were administered to the respondents and retrieved the same day. Participation in this study was voluntary.

The research instrument was made up of bio-data items and items on the study variables (i.e., POS and OCB). POS was evaluated along three dimensions: value recognition, job support, and care about interests. The scale to measure these dimensions, which contained 24 items, was adapted from Ling *et al.* (2006). Also, OCB was evaluated along two dimensions: organisational citizenship behaviours directed towards the whole organisation (OCB-O) and organisational citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I). The two dimensions of OCB were assessed using an adapted 12-item scale from Williams and Anderson (2011). In each case, responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The adapted questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity, and a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. Descriptive statistics (simple percentages and frequencies), hierarchical multiple regression analysis and partial correlation analysis were used to analyse the data collected.

Results and Interpretation

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

| S/N | Sample Characteristics | Number of Respondents | Respondents (%) |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Sex | | |
| | Male | 413 | 51.6 |
| | Female | 387 | 49.4 |
| 2 | Age | | |
| | < 30 | 147 | 18.4 |
| | 30 – 40 | 229 | 28.6 |
| | 41 – 50 | 313 | 39.1 |
| | > 50 | 111 | 13.9 |
| 3 | Years Spent on Present Job | | |
| | < 5 years | 103 | 12.9 |
| | 5 – 14 years | 336 | 42.0 |
| | 15 – 24 years | 292 | 36.5 |
| | > 24 years | 69 | 8.6 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Information generated by the survey revealed that male participants (51.6%) were slightly more than female participants (49.4%). Those that were less than 30 years of age constituted 18.4% of the sample; 28.6% were between the ages of 30 and 40; 39.1% were between 41 and 50 years of age; and 13.9% were above 50 years of age. In terms of years spent on their present job, 12.9% said they have spent less than 5 years on the job, 42% have spent between 5 and 14 years, 36.5% have spent between 15 and 24 years, and 8.6% have spent above 24 years on the job. These results indicate that there was a good proportion of male and female representation in the sample and that participants had the right level of maturity and job experience to respond appropriately to the items in the research instrument.

Test of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was tested using hierarchical multiple regression as shown in Table 2

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression analysis of POS on dimensions of OCB

| Independent variables | Dependent Variables | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Overall OCB | OCB-I | OCB-O |
| Value Recognition | 0.237** [0.077] | 0.176** [0.036] | 0.187** [0.059] |
| Job Support | 0.329** [0.061] | 0.195** [0.046] | 0.219** [0.049] |
| Care about Interest | 0.211** [0.057] | 0.153** [0.033] | 0.176** [0.043] |
| Constant(α) | 1.018 | 0.798 | 1.012 |
| F-value | 12.181** | 6.333** | 7.559** |
| R² | 0.363 | 0.186 | 0.217 |
| Adjusted R² | 0.334 | 0.168 | 0.206 |
| N | 800 | 800 | 800 |

Note: ** value is significant as $p < 0.05$

Values in the brackets are standard error.

Source: Data analysis, 2023.

In general, the results of the analysis in Table 2 do not support hypothesis 1. From Table 2, the combined correlation between the variables of POS and OCB was significant ($R^2 = 0.363$), and the model explained 33.4% (adjusted R^2) of the variance in OCB. This indicates that POS has a significant influence on the performance of OCB. Specifically, the amount of additional variance explained was 16.8% in the equation predicting the extent of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at colleagues (OCB-I) and 20.6% in the equation predicting the extent of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation (OCB-O). Also, the regression model was statistically significant with an F-value of 12.181 at $p < .05$. This implies that perceived organisational support (POS) significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

Test of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was evaluated by comparing the difference between the strengths of the relationships between the variables of POS and the two dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour (i.e., OCB-I and OCB-O) using partial correlations as outlined by Steiger (1980) and Cohen and Cohen (1983). The results of the partial correlation are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Partial correlation results between POS and OCB

| POS | OCB – I | OCB – O | t |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Value recognition | .173 | .291 | 2.01* |
| Job support | .143 | .265 | 1.78* |
| Care about interest | .179 | .219 | 2.56* |

*p < .05

Table 3 shows the results of the partial correlation between POS and OCB. The difference in strength of the correlations between the dimensions of POS and the OCB was significant. In each case, the extent of POS was more strongly related to OCB-O than to OCB-I. These results lend support to Hypothesis 2. As such, we conclude that perceived organisational support (POS) more significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at other organisations (OCB-O) than the performance of citizenship behaviours directed at individuals within the organisation (OCB-I).

Discussion of Findings and Managerial Implications

The results obtained in this study lend credence to the general idea that POS positively influences the performance of OCB in organisations. This research was based on two hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 stated that perceived organisational support (POS) does not significantly influence the performance of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). The results of the analysis as obtained in Table 2 did not support this hypothesis but confirmed that perceived organisational support (POS) significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This position was arrived at given the F-value of 12.181, which was significant at $p < .05$. This finding corroborated the finding of Gupta (2019) that perceived organisational support (POS) has a positive impact on the organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) of employees. He concluded that where organisations value their employees; support them in the job they do for the organisation, and generally care about their interest, growth, and wellbeing, employees, according to the tenets of social exchange theory (SET), will respond positively by going beyond and above their schedule of duty to do other things that will positively impact the achievement of organisational success. A position that is supported by DeConinck (2010).

The second hypothesis was to examine whether perceived organisational support (POS) more significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation (OCB-O) than the performance of citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I) within the organisation. The results of the analysis in Table 3 support Hypothesis 2. As can be seen by the results, the extent of the relationship between the POS variables under study and OCB-O is greater than that between the POS variables under study and OCB-I. This implies that perceived organisational support (POS) more significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation (OCB-O) than the performance of citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I) within the organisation. Thus, consistent with the premises of social exchange theory, this finding suggests that employees who perceive that they are not enjoying any support in terms of value recognition, job support, and care for interest from the organisation are more likely not to exhibit OCB that benefits the organisation as a whole rather than that which directly benefits their colleagues. According to Akpan, Okwudu, and Imagha (2021), this is because the perception the employees have is about the organisation and not their colleagues; as such,

they are more likely to withdraw and/or withhold from the performance of OCB that will be directly beneficial to the organisation. However, they opined that when employees perceive their organisation as supportive, they are more likely to respond with positive behaviours that go beyond the requirements of their official schedule as they strive to achieve organisational goals.

The findings of this study suggest that POS has significant influence on the performance of OCB in organisations. Likewise, POS more significantly influences the performance of organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation (OCB-O) than the performance of citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I) within the organisation. This implies that when employees perceive their organisations as supportive (i.e., recognise their value, support them for effective job performance, and care about their personal interest and growth), they are more likely to perform beyond and above what is officially expected of them to do, and that the organisations rather than the individual employees stand to gain more from the performance of OCB. Consequently, managers should invest more in activities and programmes that will show that the employees are valued and that the organisations recognise the value they provide through their job performance. Also, managers should strive to support the employees with the right work tools and environment for optimum performance. Furthermore, management should understand that employees have personal goals. They genuinely should show care and support for the employees growth, wellbeing, and interests.

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