

## The Linkage Between Stress And Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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**Abstract:** In today's volatility environment, organizations constantly looking for a way to engage their employees. The demand for Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is increasing in views of OCB contribute to long-term profitability. However, it is truly depends on the willingness of the employees to perform OCB. As such, it is interesting to know if employees who suffered from stress will or will not willing to perform OCB. A sample of 472 bank officers from commercial banks in Malaysia were participated in this survey. The results of multiple regression analysis showed a significant negative impact of emotional stress on organizational citizenship behavior. It is critical for bank managers to be aware of employees' stress and help them reduce their stress which could in return increase their willingness to engage in organizational citizenship behavior in organization.

**Key words:** Stress, types of stress, organizational citizenship behavior, commercial bank, Malaysia

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### INTRODUCTION

The demand for organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is increasing especially in today's highly competitive environment. OCB is a spontaneous behavior (Katz, 1964) where it includes all positive behaviors in the organization. For example, employees are willing to take up extra job activities, helping their colleague on the job duties, volunteering to train newcomers and staying late at office to follow up on-hand tasks. The beauty of OCB is it is truly depends on the willingness of the individual employees where they have a choice whether or not to perform it. If the employee refuse to exhibit OCB, he/she will not be punished or discriminated against by the organization.

Organizations should encourage their employees to embrace on OCB because it would help organization to obtain abetter competitive advantage and performance. However, today's employees are faced with fast changing and demanding working environment which could cause them frequently exposed to stress. Indeed, high level of stress can impede employee's job performance and consequently impact on organizational effectiveness. Moreover, employees with high level of stress not only will drive to lower job performance but also reduce their willingness to perform extra-role behaviors which is OCB (Cheung and Cheung, 2013).

It is envisaged that employees who suffered from stress will resist to engage in extra-role behaviors. Thus, it is interesting to know whether stressed employees can be a good citizen by performing OCB or they will likely to reduce their willingness to perform OCB. Therefore, this research will reveal the linkage between stress and OCB.

We will also addressed different levels of stress and examined whether these stresses improve or impede the willingness of employees to perform OCB.

### Literature review

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB):** OCB is generally referred as discretionary behavior that promote effective functioning of the organization but is not directly recognized in the formal reward system (Organ, 1988). The growing importance of OCB is reflected on the increment of organizational performance, efficiency and effectiveness also the reduction of employee's intention to leave and absenteeism in an organization. Besides, OCB was also found to indirectly increase organizational performance through the improvement of in-role performance (Marshall *et al.*, 2012).

OCB did also functions in strengthen the social network relationship by establishing and maintaining a strong interpersonal relationship (Griffin and Moorhead, 2012) with both internal and external customers. Employees who exhibit OCB to their colleagues could generate a helping atmosphere and promote more courtesy in the communication and hence induce a conducive and cooperative working environment. Employees displayed OCB to external customers for instance, going the extra mile to understand customer's needs rather than just selling the products will make customers feel valued and thus increase their satisfaction.

Koys (2001) in his longitudinal study on chain restaurant found that OCB has positively contributed to employee satisfaction. Probably when the employee going to extra mile to understand customer's needs, taking

initiative to attend customer's requirement or placing customer's concern at priority, customers are likely to feel pleased and satisfied with the services and hence become loyal to the organization.

**Stress:** Stress is generally referred to the feelings of worry, tense, nervousness, anxiety and depression. It is a physiological or psychological adaptive response to the interaction of external events such as people and environment (Gibson *et al.*, 2009). There has aranging effects of stress on emotions, moods and behaviors when the demands of external situation exceeds individual's ability to cope (Montgomery and Rupp, 2005). Each individual will experience a different types of stress when endure to a stressful situation.

The American Psychological Association in 2015 stated that around 60% of the employees viewed their job is stressful. In Malaysia, about seven out of ten people are suffered from stress. It was found that about 50% of private sector employees (Yin-Fah *et al.*, 2010) and 43% of government officers (Mahajar, 2011) in Malaysia are experienced with high level of stress.

Stress can results in poor quality of works, low commitment, high turnover, decline in organizational productivity, performance and effectiveness (Biswas and Biswas, 2010; Yin-Fah *et al.*, 2010). Hemp (2004) reported that employees who suffered from depression significantly decreased 7.6% of workplace productivity. About 69% of workers reported they became less productive due to health problem which caused by stress (Newstrom and Davis, 2002).

Employees who suffered from high level of stress will certainly not happy working with the current organization, hence have less commitment over their works, not going to contribute their best level and refrain from engaging OCB and consequently have the intention to leave the organization (Boerner *et al.*, 2008; Mosadeghrad *et al.*, 2011).

**Stress and OCB:** Stress has been linked with performance where employees who are suffered from stress have significant lower job performance and are less willingness to perform OCB (Maslach and Leiter, 2008). Chill and Tsai (2006) used 296 dyads of paired employees and leaders from twelve hotels and restaurants in Taiwan to examine the effect of burnout on OCB. Burnout is measured by emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment and depersonalization. They found a negative effect of emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment on OCB but they find no evidence on the effect of depersonalization on OCB.

Chu *et al.*, (2006) investigate the relationship between job stress and OCB. They used a sample of public health nurses in Taiwan. They are managed to collect a total of 231 respondents through mail survey to public nurses. Job stress is measured by role ambiguity, role conflict and workload. They found that role ambiguity and workload have a direct impact on OCB but they found no support for the effect of role conflict on OCB. Role ambiguity was found to be negatively related to OCB but workload was found to be positively related to OCB. Their study further found that high employee workload simultaneously increases feelings of personal accomplishment and work identification, subsequently avert employees stress.

Whereas Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the effects of emotional exhaustion on OCB in two years. OCB was measured by two directions, i.e. organizational citizenship behavior directed toward organization (OCB-O) and organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals (OCB-I). They used two separate samples which are fire fighters and working adults. At the beginning of the first year, they are able to get 66 fire fighters and 395 working adults to respond on their questionnaires. At the end of the second year, they managed to get only 64 fire fighters and 383 working adults responded to the questionnaires. The results found evidence that emotional exhaustion negatively affect OCB-O but positively affect OCB-I.

Previous empirical studies although have examined the relationship between stress and OCB, but they are either focused on extreme level of stress, i.e., burnout or on organizational performance, i.e., in-role performance (Chang *et al.*, 2007; Taris, 2006). Lack of empirical evidence are focused on the different types of stress on employee's OCB. Therefore, this study fills the gap by examining the linkage of stress to OCB.

**Theoretical framework and hypotheses:** The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory posits individuals are frequently seek to acquire and maintain resources, i.e. self-esteem, social support, security, time and money and stress can be occurred when there is athreat of lossof resources (Hobfoll, 1989). As such, stressed employees choose not to engage in OCB because they fear that their resources loss such as time and energy is greater than the resources gain such as good appraisal and performance. With the underpinning of COR theory, a proposed

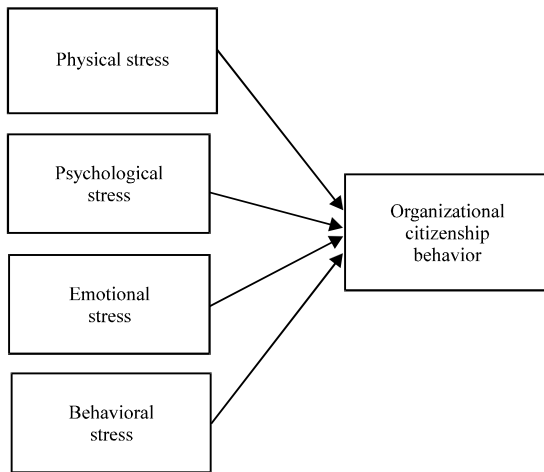


Fig. 1: Proposed framework for stress and organizational citizenship behavior

framework has been presented in Fig. 1. This framework provides a picture of the linkage between stress and OCB. For the purpose of studying the linkage between stress and OCB, this study therefore proposes the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Physical stress is related to OCB
- H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological stress is related to OCB
- H<sub>3</sub>: Emotional stress is related to OCB
- H<sub>4</sub>: Behavioral stress is related to OCB

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Participations:** This study approached the bank officers from nine commercial banks in Malaysia as the sample of respondent. A cover letter that guaranteed for confidentiality of the respondent, together with the questionnaire were sent to the bank officers. Bank officers are promised to have a right to withdraw or not to participate in this research. After the process of collecting and excluding incomplete questionnaires, a total of 472 responses from bank officers were used for the analysis.

**Measures:** The measurement of OCB were adapted from Podsakoff *et al.* (1990). Twenty items were used to measure OCB, for example, “I help others who have heavy workloads”, “I take steps to prevent problems with other workers”, “I do not complain about trivial matters”, “I do not take extra breaks”, “I attend functions that are not required, but help the bank’s image”, etc. All the items were measured by a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), to 4 (strongly agree) with uniform descriptive anchors.

Stress is measured based on different types of stress, i.e., physical stress, psychological stress, emotional stress and behavioral stress. The measurement were adapted from several surveys, e.g., health and safety stress questionnaire, Layne, Pejtersen and Kristensen and UCU model stress questionnaire. For example, physical stress was measured by the items like headaches, trouble sleeping, backache, etc. Psychological stress were measured by items such as feel very tense, problem concentrating, become short tempered, etc. Emotional stress were measured by items such as depression, anxiety, etc. Behavioral stress were measured by absent from work, getting behind work schedule and etc. Respondents are requested to rate how often they experience with stress on a four-point rating scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always).

The questionnaire was administered in dual languages, i.e. English and Bahasa Melayu, the national language of Malaysia. The purpose of using dual language in questionnaire is to provide respondents a better understanding on the questions and the procedure of translating is complied with Brislin (1970).

## RESULTS

**Profile of respondents:** A total of 472 bank offices are responded to our questionnaire. About 39% is male respondent while 61% is female respondent. The respondents are comprises from three ethnic groups namely Malay, Chinese and Indian (3.6%). Most of the respondents aged 40 and below and majority of them were married. All officers had at least high school certificate. The profile of the respondents are shown in Table 1 below.

**Stress level for various types of stress:** The level of stress is the stress experience from bank officers/executives and are recorded into high, moderate and low level. Types of stress is comprised of physical stress, psychological stress, emotional stress and behavioral stress. The overview of stress level for various types of stress by bank officers are shown in Table 2 below.

The findings indicated that bank officers are eventually experience a high to moderate levels of physical stress, psychological stress and emotional stress while a low to moderate levels of behavioral stress. Nearly one-in-five reported that they are frequently suffered from aches, headache and backache which are the indicators of physical stress; felt tense, exhausted and became short

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Respondents	Background	Total	%
Gender	Male	183	38.8
	Female	289	61.2
Race	Malay	196	41.5
	Chinese	259	54.9
	Indian	17	3.6
Age	Below 30	181	38.4
	31-40	202	42.8
	Above 40	89	18.8
Marital Status	Single	171	36.2
	Married	301	63.8
Education	High School	236	50.0
	Undergraduate	236	50.0

Table 2: Result summary of stress level

Types of stress	Low %	Moderate %	High %
Physical stress	19.1	57.6	23.3
Psychological stress	12.5	61.4	26.1
Emotional stress	16.7	63.8	19.5
Behavioral stress	27.3	64.8	7.8

Table 3: Result summary of multiple regression analysis

Independent variables	OCB
Physical stress	0.18*
Psychological stress	0.11
Emotional stress	-0.29**
Behavioral stress	-0.06
F value	7.17
P value	0.0001
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.05

\*, \*\*p < 0.05, 0.01 (2-tailed)

tempered at the workplace which are the symptoms of psychological stress and experienced emotional stress like anxiety and depression. Only a few bank officers are suffered from intensive behavioral stress which are loss of appetite, make mistake at work and frequently getting behind work schedule.

**Hypotheses testing:** To determine the negative relationship between stress and OCB, this study used a multiple regression analysis. The multiple regression results presented in Table 3 below indicated a significant relationship,  $R = 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $R^2 \text{ adj} = 0.05$ ,  $F(4, 451) = 7.17$ ,  $p < .0001$ . The F test indicates that the regression model was significant and the relationship between stress and OCB was linear.

The results showed in Table 3 that only physical stress and psychological stress have a significant relationship with OCB. Physical stress ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $t = 2.50$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) was found positively related to OCB while emotional stress ( $\beta = -0.29$ ,  $t = -4.61$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ) was negatively related to OCB. The results found no support for the relationship between psychological stress and behavioral stress on OCB.

## DISCUSSION

The interest of this study is to find the linkage between stress and OCB. It is well noticed that most of the bank officers are experiencing stress, regardless whether is at mild level of stress or excessive level of stress. Each individual may differ in the ways they confront to the stress (Dolbier *et al.*, 2001). As such, it is clearly evidenced that not all bank officers are suffered from the same types or same levels of stress. Some of them may suffered from high physical stress while some of them may suffered more from psychological stress.

Surprisingly, physical stress was found to be positively related to OCB. This relationship was quite unexpected. This implied that although bank officers are experiencing high physical stress, they can still willing to exhibit OCB to both internal and external customers. One plausible explanation for such relationship could be, despite the fact of bank officers endured with aches, headaches and backaches, this could not hinder them from being helpful and courtesy because the physical stress that encountered by them is function at the optimal level which is useful for employees to call up resources to respond to given challenges (Mcshane and Von Glinow, 2000). Hence, employees are more encouraged and motivated to perform at an even higher level of performance and work extra hard to achieve goals.

Emotional stress was found to be negatively related to OCB, which indicates that bank officers who suffered from high levels of emotional stress are less likely to perform OCB. High level of emotional stress may makes bank officers to experience exhausted and drained of their emotional resources. Hence, they are too tired to invest additional time and effort in their work. Thus, it is likely for bank officers who suffered from high emotional stress to withdraw their spontaneous behaviors. In the other words, employees who suffered from high anxiety, high depression and other forms of emotional condition may be less courteous and unlikely to tolerate minor inconveniences.

Psychological stress and behavioral stress do not found any significant relationship with OCB. The findings showed a positive relationship between psychological stress and OCB while a negative relationship between behavioral stress and OCB. The finding suggests that employees who are tense and exhausted may viewed it as eustress and keep them perform even better while employees who are suffering from a high level of behavioral stress may be experiencing work-related problems such as being absent from work, getting behind work schedule and make mistakes frequently in work. Consequently, the overwhelming behavioral stress erodes their motivation to work and their sense of competence.

As a result, this may influence their OCB. However, with the absence of confirmatory data, such as absenteeism and performing data, this reason remains speculative.

### CONCLUSION

This study presents an empirical works to discover the linkage between stress and OCB. The findings of this study showed that emotional stress has a relatively strong negative relationship with OCB which implies that emotional stress emerged as a barrier for employees to engage in OCB. Emotional stress happens when employees evaluate a given situation that is difficult to deal with and it is associated with the feeling of anxiety, depression, helplessness and hopelessness. Thus, it is crucial for bank managers to be aware on employee's emotions. If bank managers failed to manage employees' stress at the initial stage, it will become dangerous and unhealthy when stress becomes intensive and prolonged.

Banks can establish and promote some programmes for stressprevention. The key idea of such programmes is to introduce technique of reducing stress and provide tips in managing employee's stress Banks can educate their employees with the necessary stress information and provide support for employees who suffered from stress. In addition, banks can also promote some health programmes which consist of fitness activities, lifestyle counselling or injury prevention programmes in order to help employees cope with stress.

As a conclusion, high level of stress is viewed as dysfunctional to all positive workplace behavior such as OCB. Employees who are suffered from high level of stress may be less likely to contribute and perform OCB. Hence, it is important to aware and manage employees stress at the initial stage and implement some stress-prevention programmes to reduce employees stress. If employees feel the care and concern from theirmanagers, they will more likely to contribute in OCB as reciprocate of the appreciation.

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