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Being Positive

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Assistant Professor, India Institute of

BEING POSITIVE AND BEHAVING POSITIVELY

Abhishek Goel

Faculty, Behavioral Sciences Group
Indian Institute of Management Calcutta
agoel@iimcal.ac.in

Correspondence may be addressed to:

Abhishek Goel
E-203, NTB, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta
DH Road, Joka, Kolkata – 700104 INDIA
Ph: +91-33-24678300 to 04 (Ext: 523)
agoel@iimcal.ac.in

Being Positive and Behaving Positively

ABSTRACT

It has been proposed that some organizationally relevant positive psychology constructs would be able to explain positive outcomes for organizations. This study tested the presence and extent of relationship between an individual's six positive characteristics, his/her superior's perception of these characteristics, and his engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Results showed a small but significant positive relationship between self report of hope, resilience, SWB and one OCB report of the superior. But the relationship between positive perception of characteristics of an individual, SWI, and one OCB report of the superior was not significant. The relationship between positive perception of characteristics of an individual, SWI, and one OCB report of the superior was not significant.

Being Positive and Behaving Positively

Positive psychology (PP) proposes that a positive approach be taken towards studying people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) organizations (Cameron, Dutton, Quinn, 2003) and their combinations (Luthans, 2005). Often an implicit assumption of a relationship between positive characteristics and positive outcomes exists (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Youssef & Luthans, 2007) however, the exact nature of relationship between positive characteristics and attitudes and behaviors of organizational importance is yet to be established. This study tries to bridge this gap.

From organizational viewpoint, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) represent a set of behaviors that have positive outcome for both the person engaging in them and the organization (Vandynne, Cummings, McLean Parks, 1995). Similarly job satisfaction has been found to have a positive influence on the individual's performance and is one of the most studied attitudes in organizational context (Judge & Bono, 2001). Despite a lot of research on both antecedents and consequences of OCB and job satisfaction, there is no clarity about their relationships with positive dispositional characteristics (e.g., Luthans et al., 2007). It is proposed here that test of organizationally relevant positive characteristics suggested by Luthans (2005) in relation to OCB and job satisfaction would highlight the utility of studying such constructs and build scientific credence of the claims of positive constructs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS

Organ (1977) questioned a simplistic link between job satisfaction and subsequent (improved) performance. Drawing from the human relations tradition he argued that better performance of satisfied workers could also be seen as repayment of social debt by employees (Gouldner, 1960) through extra effort or helping behaviors (Bateam & Organ, 1983; Organ,

1977; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Organ (1988) also argued that organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are driven by intrinsic motivation of individuals and they do not seek any gain out of it, defining it as,

“...individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988, p. 4).”

Over the course of two decades OCB has been conceptualized to have seven dimensions (Organ, Podsakoff, & Mackenzie, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). These dimensions are altruism, sportsmanship towards organization, civic virtue, individual initiatives, compliance to organization, and self-development. All dimensions except for self-development and organizational loyalty have been empirically verified and established.

Altruistic behaviors represented helping behaviors like voluntary help directed at people in need. Helping behaviors have been classified into work-related help (Podsakoff et al., 2000), cheerleading, peacemaking and interpersonal help to others. Sportsmanship behaviors such as handling minor errands and irritations of the job without whining or complaining, maintaining a positive attitude, taking criticism in stride and not getting offended by it (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The third OCB dimension is Organizational Loyalty, such as spreading goodwill about the organization; talking up about organization and promoting it (Moran & Blakely, 1995). This dimension is also theoretically reported to be distinct from other dimensions but its uniqueness has not been empirically demonstrated (Organ et al., 2006). Civic Virtue is the fourth OCB dimension referring to employee's commitment to organization and its governance with the overriding concern being of contributing to the well-being of the organization (Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004; Organ, 1988, 1990). Individual Initiatives or conscientiousness behaviors are the

ones that require the individual to go beyond call of duty and perf

in the Big-5 model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987) (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) to study their relationship with OCB and its dimensions. Agreeableness has been found to be related to courtesy and civic virtue, while conscientiousness has been found to be related to organizational compliance and civic virtue (Konovsky & Organ, 1996). It has been reported that the variance explained by these characteristics was small and non-significant especially when common method variance (CMV) was controlled for (Borman, Penner, Allen & Motowidlo, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Organ et al., 2006). Few studies use other personality characteristics such as dispositional affectivity and service orientation and their influence on OCB (Bettencourt, Gwiner, & Meuter, 2001; George 1990; George & Brief, 1992). They find that relationship with these characteristics is weakly positive. To conclude on the basis of limited evidence that individual differences are not significant predictors of OCB may be premature for several reasons. The use of Big-5 model of personality may be inadequate. The dimensions in this model have been factorially statistically derived (Costa & McCrae, 1988; McCrae & Costa, 1987). Owing to the statistical analysis' tendency to regress towards mean, some interesting psychological phenomena and thematic details could be missed out (Hogan, 1991). It might indeed be beneficial to look beyond Big-5 characteristics. Triad constellations rather than complete models could be a good starting point in studying the influence of dispositional characteristics on some behaviors of interest (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Borman et al., 2001; Hogan, Hogan, & Bursch, 1984; Organ et al., 2006).

Only two out of the five traits (conscientiousness and agreeableness) are defined and measured in positive terms. Also, these have been found to have a larger and more significant effect on OCB. Thus it could be argued that positive psychology traits may be more likely to

predict who would engage in OCB even when the situation is held constant. The question this study would therefore explore is, would more positive people be likely to do more OCB? and would positive people be also more positive in their attitude?

Some of the organizationally relevant positive characteristics from the pool of positive characteristics that are focused on in positive psychology are subjective well-being, optimism, generalized self-efficacy, hope, emotional intelligence, and resilience (Luthans 2002, 2005). However, emotional intelligence is a multi-dimensional construct and several of the dimensions are not yet accepted within the literature and thus no clear categorization is possible (Bar-On, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). It also comes close to the Psycap set chosen by Luthans et al. (2007). However, there are two reasons for using these individual characteristics rather than Psycap. Firstly, the measures used in studies involving psycap take a swing between disposition and state, thus creating confusion. However, this confusion serves well in calling these constructs “state-like” (Luthans & Avolio, 2007). Secondly, these constructs have been found to be dispositional in nature (for example Judge et al., 1998; Scheier & Carver, 1992; Snyder, 2000) that lie at the core of an individual. Though the argument for a shifting core may sound fascinating to practitioners, still the state like properties are yet to be established in the body of literature.

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Subjective well-being (SWB) is an individual's emotional and cognitive interpretation and evaluation of one's own life. The SWB is comprised of satisfaction with own life events from significant others' viewpoints, satisfaction with external but relevant factors like work, family, friends, etc., and presence of feelings of joy along with absence of negative affect (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). It has been found that SWB is largely

“individuals’ perception of their ability to perform across a variety of different situations”

(Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998, p. 170). This generalized form

OPTIMISM

Optimism is treated as a global expectation that the future holds more of good than bad (Scheier & Carver, 1992). Commonly optimists are people who expect good things to happen to them (Carver & Scheier, 2003). They also persev

extended here to argue that optimistic employees showing greater satisfaction (Youssef & Luthans, 2007), less irritability and promise to stay longer are more likely to engage in helpful behaviors towards their colleagues (e.g., Aspinall & Taylor, 1992), complain less about irritants, maintain a cheerful workplace, participate more in organizational processes/organizational change processes, and fully comply with legitimate demands of the organization. In short, more optimistic employees are more likely to engage in OCB. Also given that optimists stay calm, focused on problem and better (Scheier et al., 1986), in times of distress optimists are more likely to persevere towards achieving desired organizational goals. Based on the above possibilities from the literature it is hypothesized that

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive relationship between an individual's optimism and engaging in OCB.

HOPE

Hope has been conceptualized as "the subjective capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes (Snyder, 2000: 8)." Thus, a more hopeful individual would be able to find more routes mentally towards desired goals and would also be motivated to tread those routes in order to reach the goals than a less hopeful person.

Hope has been found to be helpful in predicting positive outcomes in stressful situations and has led to increased satisfaction, profitability and lesser turnover (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Peterson & Luthans, 2003). findings have been verified in different contexts that include sports, leadership, entrepreneurship, and labor intensive work situations. It was also found to have a moderating effect on burnout (Rodriguez-Hanley & Snyder, 2000) and handling pressure at work (Snyder, 1994).

Relationship between Hopefulness and OCB

OCB are generally shown in situations requiring thinking on the spot and action to troubleshoot or move ahead when an obstacle is encountered (Mischel, 1977). Conceptually, more hopeful employees are more likely to find creative ways to respond to such situations and be more motivated to follow alternatives. They are more likely to take initiatives, show loyalty towards organization and coworkers, and show civic virtue and conscientiousness. It is expected that more hopeful people will take responsibilities beyond their job descriptions especially in tough situations like change/downsizing where such tasks are of paramount importance for people who stay in the organization (Ozaga, 2006). Secondly, hope has been found to be related to job satisfaction (e.g., Youssef & Hans, 2007). As argued above job satisfaction and OCB have been found to be related. So it is expected that,

Hypothesis 4. There is a positive relationship between hope and engaging in OCB.

RESILIENCE

Resilience could be best understood as adaptability (Block & Kremen, 1996), or the tendency of bouncing back from adverse situations as individuals adaptively encounter the vagaries of environmental context in long and short term (Klohn, 1996). It is therefore, “a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk” (Masten & Red, 2002, p.75). Resilient people are seen as more resourceful and more capable of understanding a situation and solving a problem (Block & Kremen, 1996).

Resilience of individual members has been found to impact resilience of the family (Hawley & Deehan, 1996, as cited in Greeff & Roodman, 2005). By extension, it can be argued that if team members are high on resilience, the team is likely to be more resilient. In leadership development resilience has been found to be an important trait (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa,

Luthans, & May, 2004). It has been related to increasing commitment to leadership and organization (McCarthy, 2003) and for organizations' growth as well (Luthans, 2005).

Relationship between Resilience and OCB

As argued above, resilience involves understanding a difficult situation, maintaining calm, staying focused on problem and persevering to achieve desired success in the task (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Resilience has been

Posi.7,ve characteristics and psi.7,ve behaviors

contrasting behavior profiles of two individuals; one who engaged in OCB, and the other who did not engage in OCB. The superior then identified individuals based on his or her experience of working with the individual. To make sure that a pattern rather than one-off instance of behavior was considered, at least 6 months search were only considered. Once the individuals were identified, the superior was asked about names and every individual employee who was going to be rated on OCB was assigned a code. After receiving his or her set of OCB rating questionnaires for the employees, the superior introduced the researcher to his or her team members in a training room or conference room. The individuals were told that this is a study on personality characteristics on employees in various organizations, and that they were being rated by their superior on OCB patterns, was disclosed to them. The participants were assured that all data would remain confidential and their responses would not be shared with their superior. At this point the superior was asked to leave.

Once the team members were assembled in a conference room or a training room, the participants were distributed coded questionnaires on personality characteristics and attitude. The instructions for the questionnaires were read out to the participants by the researcher. They were explained the scoring scheme for marking the responses. To ensure that mid-point response was not a reflection of lack of understanding about the item, the participants were urged to mark 6 (Can't say) only after ensuring that they understood the item clearly and could not choose on any other rating. In case a participant could not understand an item it was read again and explained by the administrator. In the mean time the superior filled OCB reports for his team members in parallel in his or her cabin. This method allowed data on positive characteristics and behaviors to come from independent sources and therefore common method variance could be controlled for (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

Respondents

A total of 334 usable responses were collected. Of these 334 responses, 75.8% respondents were men. The average age of respondent was 31.8 years (youngest being 20 years and the oldest being 59 years old) with mean total work experience of 107.89 months (minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 444 months) of which an average of 52.14 months (minimum 6 months and maximum 444 months) were spent in the current organization. The 81 supervisors had been working in the current organization for an average of 68.5 months (ranging from 6 months to 214 months). The respondents in this study were employed in a variety of organizations. These organizations are engaged in activities such as scientific research labs, project management consulting, banking, sales marketing, manufacturing, designing, energy generation, teaching, retailing, telecommunication, and social work.

Measures

Filled by the superior - OCB measure

OCB was measured using the scale developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). Its content, convergent and discriminant validity has been well established (Klein & Verbeke, 1999; Lam, Hui, & Law, 1999; Pillay, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Van Yperen, Van Der Berg, Willering, 1999). Here, three out of five negatively worded items in sportsmanship subscale were reworded as positive items. The items were rated on a six point scale for frequency of engaging in behavior. A score of

Filled by the individual - Positive characteristics and job satisfaction

All scale structures were tested for their reliability and usability using confirmatory factor analysis. The unidimensional satisfaction with life scale (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used to measure SWB of respondents. The validity of SWLS has been established in several studies (see Pavot & Diener, 1993, 1998). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .717. New General Self-efficacy (NGSE) scale was used for measuring generalized self-

Positive characteristics and positive behaviors

to 11 (Completely applicable to me) with 6 as the mid-point (Can't say). All items for positive characteristics and job satisfaction were pooled together and randomized to control for response bias.

behaviors. The correlation coefficients were $r = .139$ (Adj. $R^2 = 1.6\%$, $p < .05$) and $r = .132$ (Adj. $R^2 = 1.4\%$, $p < .05$) for hope and resilience respectively. Likewise, only SWB of an individual showed to have some positive and significant bearing on engagement in sportsmanship behaviors ($r = .130$, $p < .05$, Adj. $R^2 = 1.4\%$). The conscientiousness and trust dimensions of OCB did not show a noticeable relationship with any of positive characteristics. The relationship with SWB and hope was somewhat positive for both dimensions though non-significant.

As results in tables 1 and 2 show, civic virtue dimension showed comparatively stronger positive relationships with all five positive characteristics. All relationships except for optimism were significant at $p < .01$, with variance explained ranging between 1.2% for hope and 3.6% for SWB. The results therefore indicated stronger relationship of positive characteristics and civic virtue. Thus, while optimism and GSE did not have a relationship to engagement in overall OCB, the support for their relationship with civic virtue form of OCB was unequivocal.

Positive characteristics and Job Satisfaction

Table 2 presents results correlation and variance explained for relationship between job satisfaction and positive characteristics.

Insert Table 2 about here

From Table 3 it can be seen that all positive characteristics showed moderate to strong positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction. The variance explained varied between 8.7% for optimism-job satisfaction relationship up to 22.2% for SWB-job satisfaction relationship. The results therefore supported hypothesis 6 about expecting a positive relationship between positive characteristics and job satisfaction of an individual.

Superior's perception of positive characteristics and OCB

Positive characteristics and positive behaviors

Various dimensions also showed a consistently high and positive relationship. Minimum

(Podsakoff et al., 2003). A low explained variance is quite common in personality traits-organizational behaviors linkages (Allen, Barnard, Rush, & Russell, 2000; Organ, 1994). After a detailed review of OCB and its antecedents, Organ et al. (2006) have suggested that correlations of this magnitude are consistent and these are the expected strengths in personality-behavior relationships. This could be because personality is more likely to influence the motive or manner rather than substance (Organ &

more at peace with themselves and those around them, and this helps them focus better by staying away from wasteful arguments or discussions over minor issues.

The civic virtue dimension showed a consistently positive and significant relationship with all positive characteristics. Civic virtue consists of behaviors such as being well-informed about what is going on in the organization and giving recognition to the organization and the department through increased participation in outside events. From the results of this study it can be said that generally satisfied, self-confident, forward looking, hopeful and adaptable people showed a tendency to take pride in their organization's governance. Therefore, the attitude towards organizational systems is positive in people with positive characteristics and this positive attitude is reflected in their behaviors in the workplace.

Conscientiousness is related to going beyond the prescribed taskwork for the team or the organization and maintain a conduct that benefits an ideal employee for a task. Its relationships with positive characteristics varied in magnitude making it difficult to ascertain any trend from these results. At best, hope and BSW could be inferred to have weak positive

in studies (see Judge & Bono, 2001). It is quite likely that the Indian value emphasis on feeling content with whatever one has could have led to general higher levels of satisfaction with the job. This could be an area of future study. Job satisfaction was found to be also positively related to hope, resilience, and optimism. This

his or her motive or intention behind such behavior, and the other is th

An important implication of this study is the utility of studying further the link between positive dispositions, state of mind, attitudes, and behaviors in organizational context. The studies on positive traits and their relationships with positive outcomes have often been criticized as being a fad and lacking substance to stand on its own or explain relevant outcomes for individuals and organizations (e.g., Gazarus, 2003). In contrast to such claims, the results of this study have shown that positive characteristics do indeed predict relevant attitudes and behaviors. This is however, just the beginning. Their advantage could be better established by designing studies and longer term programs that can compare and contrast between the strength of relationship between variables such as conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness etc., and positive characteristics with commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. The results of this study also underline the need to study

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TABLE 1
Mean, S.D. and Correlation between Variables

	N=334	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 OCB		109.192	18.105	(.907)										
2 Altruism		21.713	4.839	.891	(.890)									
3 Consc		23.904	4.182	.840	.663*	(.844)								
4 Courtesy		23.075	4.602	.884	.728**	.680**	(.842)							
5 CVirtue		17.269	3.518	.713**	.611**	.514**	.494**	(.754)						
6 Sport		23.231	4.272	.868**	.705**	.674**	.773**	.470**	(.837)					
7 SWB		39.763	8.042	.143*	0.087	0.106	0.103	.198**	.130*	(.717)				
8 GSEff		73.533	8.496	0.093	0.086	0.056	0.015	.187**	0.072	.498**	(.828)			
9 Optimism		51.608	8.204	0.075	0.089	-0.007	0.034	.124*	0.086	.425**	.512**	(.673)		
10 Hope		72.569	9.054	.129*	.139*	0.084	0.083	.154**	0.092	.565**	.444**	.737**	(.804)	
11 Resilience		119.189	15.165	.119*	.132*	0.056	0.069	.164**	0.09	.473**	.480**	.628**	.648**	(.765)

Figures in parentheses show Cronbach's alpha for the scale

* p < .05 (2-tailed).

** p < .01 (2-tailed).

TABLE 2
Relationship of Job Satisfaction with Positive Characteristics

	SWB	GSE	Optimism	Hope	Resilience
Correlation	.474	.308	.299	.348	.334
Adj R ²	.222	.092	.087	.118	.109

All correlation and Adj R

TABLE 3

and Adj. R² of OCB and its dimensions by superior perception of positive characteristics

Superior's report	OCB	Altruism	Conscienti ousness	Courtesy	Civic virtue	Sportsma nship
SWB	.653 (.425)	.543 (.293)	.595 (.352)	.566 (.318)	.402 (.159)	.629 (.394)
Gen Self- efficacy	.655 (.427)	.600 (.358)	.575 (.329)	.522 (.270)	.531 (.280)	.533 (.282)
Optimism	.672 (.450)	.599 (.357)	.567 (.319)	.567 (.319)	.474 (.223)	.614 (.375)
Hope	.653 (.424)	.561 (.313)	.555 (.305)	.546 (.296)	.479 (.227)	.604 (.363)
Resilience	.667 (.443)	.593 (.350)	.597 (.350)	.553 (.304)	.503 (.304)	.558 (.310)

Adj. R² is shown in parentheses, N = 334

All and Adj. R-square explained were significant at p < .001