

Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Sector-Based Comparative Investigation

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Abstract

The present study examined the role of organizational commitment and sector type (public vs. private) on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Drawing upon the three-component model of commitment and contemporary OCB literature, this research investigated (a) sectoral differences in OCB and (b) the relative contribution of organizational commitment to OCB. A cross-sectional design was employed with employees from public and private sector organizations. Results indicated significant sector-based differences in OCB, with private sector employees reporting higher levels of OCB. Organizational commitment emerged as a strong positive antecedent of OCB. The findings reinforce the attitudinal foundation of citizenship behavior and highlight the importance of fostering commitment across sectors. Implications for organizational practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, Organizational citizenship behavior, Public sector, Private sector, Sector comparison

Introduction

Organizational effectiveness depends not only on formal role performance but also on discretionary behaviors that extend beyond prescribed job duties. These extra-role behaviors, conceptualized as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), contribute significantly to organizational functioning (Dennis Organ, 1988). Simultaneously, organizational commitment represents a critical psychological bond between employees and their organizations, influencing their willingness to remain and contribute (John Meyer & Natalie Allen, 1991).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been conceptualized through multiple theoretical lenses, including attitudinal, behavioral, normative, and multidimensional approaches. The most widely accepted framework is the Three-Component Model (TCM), which identifies affective, continuance, and normative commitment as distinct but related components (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment and identification with the organization. Continuance commitment refers to perceived costs associated with leaving. Normative commitment denotes a felt obligation to remain. These components differ in their motivational basis yet converge in predicting organizational outcomes.

Meta-analytic evidence suggests that affective commitment, in particular, demonstrates robust associations with performance and OCB (Meyer et al., 2002). Employees who “want to” remain in the organization are more likely to exhibit discretionary behaviors than those who “have to” remain due to costs.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB was introduced as a construct describing discretionary behaviors not formally rewarded yet essential for organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). OCB encompasses behaviors such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue.

Research consistently indicates that OCB enhances team functioning, productivity, and organizational climate. Podsakoff et al. (2000) identified multiple dimensions of OCB and emphasized its contribution to organizational efficiency and reduced resource strain.

Organizational Commitment and OCB

The theoretical linkage between commitment and OCB is grounded in social exchange theory. Employees who perceive a strong psychological bond reciprocate through behaviors that exceed formal requirements. Empirical studies demonstrate that affective commitment shows the strongest positive association with OCB, while continuance commitment may show weak or negative relationships (Chen & Francesco, 2003; Meyer et al., 2002).

Sector Type as a Contextual Variable

Public and private sector organizations differ in structure, reward systems, job security, bureaucratic processes, and performance expectations. These contextual differences may influence both commitment and discretionary behaviors.

Research comparing sectors has shown variability in commitment patterns (Yoon & Jong, 2003). Public sector employees often demonstrate higher normative commitment due to service orientation, whereas private sector environments may foster performance-driven OCB. However, empirical findings remain mixed, warranting further comparative investigation.

Hypotheses

- H1: There will be significant differences in OCB between public and private sector employees.
- H2: Organizational commitment will have significant impact on OCB.
- H3: Sector type and organizational commitment will significantly impact OCB.

Method

Research Design

The present study employed a 2 × 2 factorial research design to examine the effects of sector type and organizational commitment on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The independent variables were:

1. Sector Type (Public vs. Private)
2. Level of Organizational Commitment (High vs. Low)

The dependent variable was Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Participants

The study included **160 mid-level managers** (80 public sector, 80 private sector), aged 35-50 ($M = 42.3$), each with 10-25 years of experience and at least five years in their current organizations. Managers were evenly split by sector and commitment level (40 high, 40 low per sector). The initial pool was 200; participants were selected based on commitment scores.

Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select managers from nationalized (public) and private sector banks. After obtaining institutional permission, participants were approached during working hours and informed consent was obtained.

Organizational commitment scores were used to classify participants into high and low commitment groups using a median split procedure.

Measures

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was measured with Balaji's (1979) 15-item scale, which assesses employees' psychological attachment, loyalty, and identification using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Scores range from 15 to 75; higher scores indicate stronger commitment. The instrument demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity, with a Cronbach's alpha of .84 in this study. Participants were grouped by median split for factorial analysis.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

OCB was measured using Dennis Organ's (1988) 25-item scale covering altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. Items use a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always), with total scores from 25 to 125; higher scores reflect greater extra-role engagement. This scale is reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .88), and only total OCB scores were used for statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Statistical methods used:

- Independent Samples t-test
- Two-Way ANOVA (2×2 factorial design) tested sector, commitment, and interaction effects on OCB.

All analyses used $p < .05$ for significance.

Results

Total Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Descriptive statistics indicated that committed managers reported substantially higher total OCB than non-committed managers in both the public (156.72 vs. 136.57) and private sectors

(162.57 vs. 132.20). When collapsed across sectors, committed managers ($M = 159.64$) scored 25.26 points higher than non-committed managers ($M = 134.38$). In contrast, overall sector differences were negligible (Private: $M = 147.38$; Public: $M = 146.64$; Mean Difference = 0.74).

The 2 (Sector) \times 2 (Commitment) ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 0.08$, $p > .05$, but a strong main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 102.09$, $p < .01$, indicating that committed managers exhibited significantly higher total OCB. The Sector \times Commitment interaction was significant, $F(1,156) = 4.18$, $p < .05$, suggesting that the effect of commitment was somewhat stronger in the private sector. Independent samples t-tests showed that committed private-sector managers scored significantly higher than committed public-sector managers, $t = 2.43$, $p < .01$, whereas no sector difference emerged among non-committed managers. Within both sectors, committed managers scored significantly higher than non-committed managers (Public: $t = 5.04$, $p < .01$; Private: $t = 10.19$, $p < .01$).

Dimension-Wise Results

For altruism, committed managers scored higher than non-committed managers in both sectors. The ANOVA showed no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 0.50$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 81.19$, $p < .01$. The interaction effect was not significant. Within-sector comparisons confirmed that committed managers scored significantly higher than non-committed managers in both public and private organizations.

For justice, committed managers again reported higher scores. The ANOVA indicated no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 0.92$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 44.76$, $p < .01$. The Sector \times Commitment interaction was significant, $F(1,156) = 7.20$, $p < .01$, indicating that the commitment effect differed across sectors and was stronger in the private sector. Commitment-based differences were significant within both sectors.

In peer relations, committed managers demonstrated higher scores than non-committed managers. There was no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 0.05$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 85.85$, $p < .01$. The interaction effect was significant, $F(1,156) = 3.73$, $p < .05$. Committed private-sector managers scored significantly higher than their public-sector counterparts, and commitment differences were significant within both sectors.

For organization-based self-esteem, committed managers reported higher scores than non-committed managers. The ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 1.76$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 44.69$, $p < .01$. The interaction effect was significant, $F(1,156) = 3.79$, $p < .05$, with committed private-sector managers scoring higher than committed public-sector managers. Commitment differences within each sector were also significant.

Finally, for interdependence, committed managers scored higher than non-committed managers in both sectors. The ANOVA showed no significant main effect of sector, $F(1,156) = 2.86$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect of commitment, $F(1,156) = 59.66$, $p < .01$. The interaction effect was not significant. Within both sectors, committed managers scored significantly higher than non-committed managers, while sector differences within commitment levels were nonsignificant.

Discussion

The present study examined the effects of sector type and organizational commitment on different dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and total OCB. Three clear patterns emerged: sector type did not independently influence OCB, organizational commitment strongly predicted OCB across all dimensions, and interaction effects appeared for selected dimensions and total OCB.

Sector Type and OCB

The main effect of sector type (public vs. private) was non-significant for altruism, justice, peer relations, organization-based self-esteem, interdependence, and total OCB. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was rejected. Despite structural differences between public and private organizations (e.g., political vs. market constraints), these distinctions did not translate into differences in discretionary citizenship behaviors.

This aligns with arguments that public–private differences may be overstated (Bozeman, 1987; Boyne, 2002). In the Indian socio-cultural context, managers across sectors likely share similar norms and work values. Therefore, OCB appears to be shaped more by shared cultural ethos than by ownership structure.

Organizational Commitment as a Determinant of OCB

In contrast, organizational commitment showed a strong and significant effect across all OCB dimensions and total OCB. Committed managers consistently reported higher altruism, justice, peer relations, organization-based self-esteem, interdependence, and overall OCB. Hypothesis 6 was supported.

These findings reinforce the well-established theoretical link between commitment and OCB. Commitment reflects psychological attachment and identification with organizational goals, which naturally translate into extra-role behaviors. Prior research (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 2000) similarly identifies commitment as a key antecedent of OCB. Employees who feel emotionally bonded to their organization are more willing to go beyond formal role requirements.

Interaction Effects

The interaction between sector and commitment was significant for justice, peer relations, organization-based self-esteem, and total OCB, but not for altruism and interdependence. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was partially supported.

The significant interactions suggest that commitment has a stronger behavioral impact in private sector settings for certain dimensions. Performance-driven environments may amplify the expression of commitment into observable citizenship behaviors. However, in the absence of commitment, sector type alone did not increase OCB.

Overall, organizational commitment emerged as the central determinant of OCB. Sector type, by itself, did not influence citizenship behavior but moderated the strength of commitment's impact on selected dimensions. These findings indicate that discretionary behaviors are primarily driven by psychological attachment rather than structural differences between organizations.

Practical Implications

First, organizational commitment should be treated as a strategic asset. Practices that enhance identification, fairness, participation, and leadership support can strengthen commitment and, in turn, foster OCB.

Second, since sector differences were minimal, both public and private organizations can cultivate high OCB by focusing on relational and psychological factors rather than structural reform.

Third, private organizations may be particularly effective in converting commitment into discretionary performance. Public sector organizations may benefit from stronger recognition, autonomy, and performance reinforcement systems.

Given the established link between OCB and organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff et al., 2000), strengthening commitment can enhance teamwork, coordination, and overall performance.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions. Self-report measures may introduce common method bias. The use of median split for commitment may have reduced statistical precision. The sample was limited to managers within a specific cultural context, restricting generalizability. Finally, the study did not distinguish between affective, normative, and continuance commitment, which future research should examine separately.

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