The Importance of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Among Hotel Employees

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Given today's competitive business environment, hotels must look into new ways to improve their competitiveness. Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is particularly important in the service sector such as hotels. This article proposes extra-role behaviours such as OCB, in the continuing effort to improve the quality of hotel services for customers and to enhance hotel operational efficiency. This study examines the levels of OCB among 557 employees from 63 star-rated hotels in the states of Perlis, Kedah and Pulau Pinang. The results suggest that a majority of the respondents engaged in at least moderate levels of OCB. The implications of these findings for hotel operators are discussed.

Introduction

The product sold by the multi-billion-dollar hotel industry is service. The main tool to achieve success has always been the human factor. Careers in the hotel industry, one way or another, do require an understanding of direct contact with guests. Employees in the hotel industry must use their own personal philosophies or specific approaches to service delivery (Walsh, 2000). Bolino and Turnley (2003) emphasised that high organisation performance is not possible through ordinary employee effort. Rather, it is the ability of the organisation to elicit employee behaviour that goes beyond formal duty that can be a key asset that is difficult to be imitated by competitors. In that connection, one of the human factors believed to be an important ingredient for organisational success, but to date has been given little attention, is the employees' organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This study examines the levels of organisational citizenship behaviour among non managerial hotel employees in the northern region of peninsular Malaysia. By examining the levels of OCB among non managerial hotel employees, we intended to increase our knowledge of the nature of OCB in this particular group of employees. Below we first present the concept of OCB. Then we discuss the importance of

OCB among hotel employees, after which the research design of the study is outlined, and the results of the study are reviewed and discussed.

The Concept of OCB

The concept of OCB, first introduced by Bateman and Organ (1983) and Smith et.al. (1983) originated from the work of several people including Barnarderger and Dickson, and Katz and Kahn (Organ, 1988). The central idea is best expressed by Katz and Kahn (1978) in the discussion of "spontaneous" or extra-role behaviour as one of the three necessary patterns of behaviour elicited by effective organisations. Katz and Kahn (1978) further discussed the three basic types of behaviours essential for functioning organisations. First, organisations must attract and induce people to remain within the system. Second, organisations must ensure that members carry out specific roles, meet or exceed some minimal quantitative and qualitative standards, and third, members must exhibit innovative and spontaneous behaviour, that is, performance above formal role requirement for the accomplishment of organisational functions. With respect to the third category, they have presented several examples of innovative and spontaneous behaviours such as cooperative behaviours with co-workers, actions to protect the organisation, suggestions of ideas for the benefit of the organisation, self-training for additional contribution, and appropriate actions taken to promote the organisation in an external environment.

The behaviours described in the previous paragraph were label and discussed in greater detail by Organ in 1988. Organizational citizenship behaviour has been defined as, "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly nor explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" (Organ, 1988). The word discretionary, according to him means that the behaviour is not a requirement of a formal job description. Organisational citizenship behaviour is a matter of personal choice and failure to exhibit such behaviour is not generally considered as cause for punishment. Organ (1988), defines aggregate as summing OCB actions across time for a person, and also across persons in groups or departments that will improve the functioning of the organisation. From this definition, it is clear that OCB is different from other related constructs such as organisational commitment (Murphy et. al., 2002). While OCB may be empirically related to organisational commitment, it is important to emphasise that OCB refers to a particular class of employee behaviour, while construct such as organisational commitment is more attitude-based (Murphy et al., 2002).

There is no clear consensus within the literature on the number of OCB dimensions. However, there are five categories of OCB that are commonly identified in research, that is, altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue (Organ, 1988). Altruism includes behaviours such as

helping another person with an organisationally relevant task or problem. Sportsmanship is the willingness to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining. Courtesy involves preventing work-related problems with others from occurring. Civic virtue is defined as the responsible participation in the life of the organisation. Conscientiousness refers to instances in which organisational members carry out certain role behaviours well beyond the minimum required levels (Organ, 1988).

What is important is that these behaviours which are helpful to the organisation, yet they are not behaviours considered as part of the core elements of the job. Managers often find it difficult to directly reward good citizenship as well as punish directly the absence of such citizenship. A good citizen is an employee who offers support to the organisation, even when such support is not verbally demanded (Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

Organ (1997) further redefines OCB as those behaviours that "contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the social and psychological contexts that support task performance". Therefore, OCB is considered as a separate construct from task performance in that it involves those behaviours that are not required of the job, but are performed by the employees in order to enhance the job environment and contribute indirectly to organisational effectiveness.

The Importance of OCB Among Hotel Employees

The organisational format of most hotels is still the same as in the past. This common form is the functional organisation. One of the weaknesses of functional hotel organisational structure is the unwieldy cross-function coordination. One of the strategies to overcome these weaknesses is to use interdepartmental committees to help coordinate the activities of different departments that must work together, improve communication among departments that serve each other's customers and provide a forum for averting problems (Nebel et. al., 1994). While interdepartmental committees provide the opportunity for coordination, they do not ensure it, unless the hotel employees who become the members of the committees are willing to take part actively by offering constructive ideas (e.g., how to make their working environment better or how to handle dissatisfied customers), willing to accept opinions of others, or willing to render full cooperation with members of other departments for the benefit of the hotel as a whole. In other words, high levels of citizenship behaviour among hotel employees will help to ensure the success of the interdepartmental committees. Taking an active part in informal meetings by providing constructive suggestions on how to improve hotel services or solve operation problems would qualify the act of civic virtue. Stamper and Van Dyne (2003) stated that hotel employees may also exercise civic virtue by making suggestions for innovations and improvements in policies and procedures. Restaurant

employees may suggest menu items, point out problems in the service process (e.g. hosts are slow to greet guests), or provide feedback about customers' likes and dislikes to managers. Similarly, the act of courtesy will ensure that employees treat their co-workers from other work units with respect. Another weakness of functional structure is unclear overall responsibility. In this connection, OCB is important among hotel employees in order to eliminate the "it's not my job" syndrome due to unclear responsibility for certain jobs and overall performance, for instance, conflicts between the room-service and housekeeping departments as to whose responsibility it is to remove dishware from guest rooms and corridors that never seem to be solved (Nebel et al., 1994).

Altruism or helping behaviour is an important dimension of OCB that encourages hotel employees to cooperate and work as a team. Teamwork should facilitate to enhance the pool of energy, expertise and knowledge among hotel employees and this will make the task of customer service to be performed speedily and accurately. For instance, restaurant employees frequently help others with their work during busy meal times (e.g., taking drink orders for another server's table, helping others clear plates, showing a new employee how to prepare salad) and others. On the other hand, conscientious hotel employees who always put in great effort by always being punctual and present at the work place will ensure that hotel business operations will run smoothly and enhance the reliability of services offered. Excellent hotel services and operational efficiency also depend on the hotel employees' willingness to be patient or tolerate the occasional inconveniences at the work place and consider customers as paramount to the hotel operation.

While the hotel industry will continue to require a large amount of labour to provide the necessary services (Cho & Wong, 2001), information and communication technology has quickened the pace of modernisation in the work environment. Information technology also helps give a technological edge over competitors. Labour that is specially trained in information technology is very expensive for hotels, and becomes unaffordable for small and medium size hotels. It is therefore important that hotel employees willingly allocate time to learn new skills in information technology and deploy new approaches toward work. For instance, hotel employees may equip themselves with information technology to keep track of guest details, such as birthdays and preferences such as which newspaper they prefer daily or even the type of pillow they liked (Peterson, 2003). This task may be even more difficult to be accomplished without high levels of citizenship behaviour among hotel employees.

Organisational citizenship behaviour is also important among hotel employees in the case of employee turnover. The remaining staff within a work unit frequently have to bear the burden to fulfil the numerous responsibilities that were previously performed by a co-worker who left before a new worker is employed to replace the outgoing employee. Human never find it easy to accept

change. People tend to like things just the way they are. However, the act of altruism, courtesy or sportsmanship will ensure that the remaining employees do not complain and are able to tolerate the inconvenience of having to take extra responsibility to perform numerous tasks as well as providing informal training to new workers and committing themselves fully to the efficient running of the hotel operations. In this regard, Cho and Wong (2001), stated that it is important that hotel operators select employees with attributes such as initiative, enthusiasm, teamwork, willingness to help and flexibility.

Offering a high level of quality services to customers and increasing operational efficiency involves extra-role behaviours at work among individual employees as well as utilisation of work groups or teams. This is particularly true within the hotel industry where the perceptions of quality are highly dependent on the human element (Getty & Getty, 2003). The hotel industry has become very competitive and extra effort in providing good service and being courteous to co-workers as well as customers indicates high levels of citizenship behaviour. Determining in advance what the guest wants and fulfilling that desire even before the guest articulates the need also indicate high levels of citizenship behaviour and will help the hotels to achieve a higher standard in the industry. Hotel employees must be working under pressure to ensure customer satisfaction which is a holy grail of the hospitality operation. Each employee must remain cordial and effective, even when they are asked to perform tasks far beyond any reasonable expectation, for example, a hotel bell staff who has to unload much luggage upon a customer's impromptu request. High levels of OCB will ensure that hotel staff treat their job demand with care and go the "extra-mile" and perform beyond duty without letting work pressure affect their emotions (Enz, 2001).

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

Allen et. al. (2000) stated that the overall level of OCB is likely best captured by rating from multiple sources. In line with this suggestion, we used two different sources of rating, that is, self-ratings and superior ratings. The sample for this study consisted of 557 subordinate-superior dyads. Data on self-ratings of OCB were collected from 557 hotel employees (subordinates) with positions ranging from unskilled to supervisory level working in 63 star-rated hotels in the states of Pulau Pinang (n = 232), Kedah (n = 303) and Perlis (n = 22) and their superiors. In total, 287 superiors (managers or heads of departments) were involved in the evaluation of their respective employees' ievels of OCB (superior ratings). Superior ratings constituted one to five employees each but the majority ratings constituted only two employees.

Data collection began with the sending of a cover letter that explained the study, together with invitation for participation. Additionally, samples of subordinate and superior questionnaires were also enclosed. These documents were sent via the postal method to human resource managers/executives of 70 hotels in the states of Kedah, Perlis and Pulau Pinang. The person responsible for human resource was identified through telephone calls to each hotel. This task was carried out in stages within the period of two and a half months beginning from the end of December 2003 until early March 2004. Then telephone calls were made personally to the respective human resource manager/executive/ hotel manager of each hotel after one or two weeks, to obtain permission for data collection and to seek appointment. Upon receiving permission, personal trips to each hotel were made. During the first trip, the researcher again explained the objectives of the study and method of data collection, especially the ratings procedure. Effort was made to obtain a complete list of non-managerial employees arranged in alphabetical order. In some hotels, due to lack of cooperation, the list was not obtained. For those hotels where the lists were available, systematic sampling was used to select 12 employees per hotel (850 pairs of questionnaires/ 70 hotels).

Each selected employee was given an envelope that contained subordinate questionnaire, cover letter (printed on the front page of the questionnaire), supporting documents and envelope for returning the completed questionnaire form. Each subordinate was given a code number and the subordinate questionnaires were coded accordingly for the purpose of matching with superior questionnaires. Similarly, the heads of departments were also given an envelope each that contained superior questionnaire forms (depending on the number of subordinates to be evaluated), supporting documents, instructions, a cover letter and envelope for returning the whole set of questionnaires. The names of subordinates to be evaluated were stated on the superior questionnaires.

Of the 63 participating hotels, 17 did not submit a list of their employees' names. In this case, the employees were selected using the convenience sampling technique, whereby the human resource manager/executive himself/herself determined the 12 employees to participate. These employees work in 4 to 6 different work divisions. Some hotels were not willing to accept too many questionnaires and in other situations, due to good cooperation, more than 12 pairs of questionnaires were distributed. The subordinate and superior questionnaires were distributed by the human resource manager/executive and he/she then collected sealed questionnaires from the employees and handed them in to the researcher. The participants were given a gift for their contribution. Both sets of questionnaires were collected during the second trip to each of the participating hotels. The collection of questionnaires ended by the end of May 2004.

OCB Scales

Overall, there are 42 items measuring the construct of OCB; 20 items adapted from Podsakoff and MacKenzie (as cited in Niehoff & Moorman, 1993) and 22 new items. The 20 items scale developed by Podsakoff and Mackenzie (as cited in Niehoff & Moorman, 1993) consist of five OCB dimensions, that is, altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue. These dimensions have been conceptualised by Organ (1988) and selected for this study because they have been most frequently examined by researchers (LePine et. al., 2002). The 22 new items are generated based on Organ's (1988) conceptualisation of OCB in an effort to capture broader citizenship behaviours among hotel employees. Initially, 26 items were generated and presented to a group of subject consisting of 5 hotel managers and 5 human resource managers to make sure that the items captured those behaviours that were not part of employees' formal job description, but were considered important for hotel organisational functioning. The whole process lasts around one and a half months, which started from middle of August to end of September, 2003. After several discussions, 22 items were added and 4 items were deleted because from the view points of hotel managers and human resource managers/officers, those items were not applicable across job levels and not considered as extra role. Superiors and subordinates were asked to indicate the extent to which they or their subordinates typically demonstrated the various citizenship behaviours at work, using a 5-point Likert scale format from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The words "organisation" and "company" were replaced by the word "hotels". For the self-ratings of OCB, the word "I" was added to each item. For superior questionnaire, every statement started with the words "This employee....".

Results

Characteristics of the Sample Respondents

The subordinates hold a variety of positions such as waiters, guest service agents and chefs, but they can be grouped into three broad job categories, that is, supervisory, skilled/semi-skilled and unskilled. As seen in Table 1, skilled/semi-skilled employees constitute the largest group (75.8%), followed by supervisory (16.0%) while the remaining 8.2 percent are unskilled employees. This profile was also expected, since hotel have, in general, a large number of entry and skilled level jobs (Wong, 2004). With reference to gender composition, generally, Table 1 shows an even distribution of male and female respondents in the sample. The sample was made up of 307 (55.1 percent) males and 251 (44.9 percent) females. This sample mirrors the Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (2000)

reports, where the majority of hotel employees were males (60.49%) in comparison to females (39.51%). The vast majority of the respondents, that is, 77.2 percent are Malays; 12.9 percent are Chinese; 7.7 percent are Indians and the remaining 2.2 percent represent other races. The subjects came from the three main ethnic groups of the Malaysian population, namely, the Malays, Chinese and Indians. In terms of marital status, nearly one-half (48.0 percent) of the respondents are married; 48.9 percent are single; 1.8 percent are widowed; 1.1 percent are divorced and others constitute 0.2 percent. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 56 years, with a mean of 29.72 years (SD = 7.90) and a median of 28.00 years. On average, the employees had been with the hotels for 4.26 years (SD = 4.11) with a median tenure of 3 years.

Table 1: The Main Characteristics of the Sample (n = 557)

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Job Level		
Supervisory	89	16.0
Skilled/Semi-Skilled	422	75.8
Unskilled	46	8.2
Gender		
Male	307	55.1
Female	250	44.9
Race		
Malays	430	77.2
Chinese	72	12.9
Indians	43	7.7
Others	12	2.2
Marital status		
Married	268	48.0
Single	272	48.9
Widowed	10	1.8
Divorced	6	1.1
Others	1	0.2

Factor Analysis of OCB Construct

A principal components factor analysis using varimax rotation for superior ratings of OCB items resulted in the emergence of five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 63.1% of the variance. These factors were labelled as helping behaviour, sportsmanship, patience, conscientiousness and civic

virtue. Factor analysis on the self-ratings of OCB items yielded six dimensions with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 61.9% of the variance. These dimensions were labelled as courtesy, altruism, conscientiousness, effort expended, sportsmanship and civic virtue. The complete analysis of the factor analysis for superior ratings and self-ratings of OCB items are available upon request from the first author.

Reliability Coefficient of the OCB Construct

Table 2 summarises reliabilities for the study variables in subordinate and superior questionnaires. As can be seen, all the variables used in the study show high scale reliabilities, ranging from .67 to .94. The majority of the composite reliabilities exceed .70 which suggest that the specified indicators are sufficient for use (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2: Cronbach Alphas for the Study Variables

No of items	Variables	Ratings	Alpha
14	Helping Behaviour	Superior	.94
6	Sportsmanship	Superior	.88
4	Conscientiousness	Superior	.82
3	Patience	Superior	.76
3	Civic virtue	Superior	.81
7	Courtesy	Self	.87
4	Altruism	Self	.80
4	Effort expended	Self	.67
3	Conscientiousness	Self	.78
3	Civic virtue	Self	.70
3	Sportsmanship	Self	.71

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for OCB Dimensions

The data in Table 3 indicate that the overall means on the superior ratings of OCB dimension scales of all employees are rather moderate and exceed the scale midpoint of 3. The highest mean for superior ratings of OCB dimensions is 3.66 (helping behaviour and conscientiousness), followed by 3.57 (sportsmanship), 3.45 (patience) and 3.32 (civic virtue). The standard deviation for superior ratings of OCB dimensions is rather small, ranging from .59 to .81. This indicates that most respondents are close to the mean on all the OCB

dimensions. Comparison of means among the three states revealed that, generally, hotel employees in Perlis have the highest level of OCBs.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Self-ratings of OCB Dimensions

OCB Dimensions	Mean (Overall)	SD	Mean (Perlis)	SD	Mean (Kedah)	SD	Mean (Pulau Pinang)	SD
Overall OCB	3.59	.59	3.66	.51	3.58	.56	3.58	.64
Helping Behaviour	3.66	.64	3.74	.52	3.66	.58	3.65	.72
Sportsmanship	3.57	.81	3.54	.79	3.57	.80	3.57	.82
Conscientiousness	3.66	.71	3.77	.55	3.62	.71	3.68	.75
Patience	3.45	.73	3.58	.70	3.47	.70	3.39	.78
Civic Virtue	3.32	.75	3.46	.76	3.26	.77	3.37	.71

Table 4 describes the overall means of each self-ratings of OCB dimensions as well as means for each state. From this table, it can be seen that the overall means on all self-ratings of OCB dimensions are moderate, exceeding the scale midpoint of 3. The highest mean for self-ratings of OCB dimensions is 4.11 (courtesy and sportsmanship), followed by 3.92 (conscientiousness), 3.89 (effort expended) and 3.79 (altruism) and 3.63 (civic virtue). The standard deviation for the overall means is not high, indicating that most respondents are close to the mean on all the OCB dimensions. Again, hotel employees in Perlis have the highest level of OCBs as compared to employees in Kedah and Pulau Pinang.

Table 4: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Self-Ratings of OCB Dimensions

OCB Dimensions	Mean (Overall)	SD	Mean (Perlis)	SD	Mean (Kedah)	SD	Mean (Pulau Pinang)	SD
Overall OCB	3.93	.49	4.03	.46	3.99	.41	3.83	.57
Courtesy	4.11	.61	4.16	.58	4.17	.54	4.02	.69
Altruism	3.79	.69	3.97	.62	3.82	.62	3.72	.78
Effort Expended	3.89	.75	4.02	.61	3.95	.71	3.77	.82
Conscientiousness	3.92	.74	4.04	.68	3.96	.70	3.86	.81
Civic Virtue	3.63	.68	3.74	.81	3.69	.63	3.52	.70
Sportsmanship	4.11	.78	4.12	.75	4.22	.67	3.94	.89

Discussion

Given today's competitive environment due to the dynamics and unpredictable environment such as seasonality, customer expectations and economic conditions, hotels must continuously look into new ways to improve their competitiveness. OCB is particularly important in the service sector such as hotels, given the unpredictability of guests' demands. Employees who have to meet or exceed customers' expectations often have to cope with the highly individualised nature of guests' needs. In the quickly changing environment of today's organisations, there is a growing need for additional contributions beyond what is formally required of employees. For service organisations like hotels, the extra-role behaviour such as OCB is increasingly essential as a strategy to face the challenges, especially for improving service quality. It is important that the hotel management understands the concept of OCB and attempts to attract and retain those employees capable of exhibiting such behaviour. The present study found that non managerial hotel employees have a moderate level of OCB's. Nevertheless, since the level of OCB's were not excessively high, efforts should be taken to improve the overall OCB as well as certain dimensions of OCB, such as civic virtue and patience.

Managers should take the necessary steps to stimulate their employees' interest to engage in OCB such as by getting them involved in the organisational activities and functions. Employees with lower level of OCB should be trained to make them understand the relevance of OCB for themselves, co-workers, superiors and organisation. Managers may also identify employees with high or low level of OCB as a way of predicting the likelihood of their employees' levels of turnover intention and absenteeism. This is easier than knowing their turnover intention. With such knowledge, actions can be taken to minimise the costs of withdrawal behaviour (eg. by persuading poor performers or those with low level of OCB to stay or by anticipating turnover and planning for replacements).

Managers may be able to foster high OCB performers by creating a positive work environment. Since supervisory fairness and conduct may influence OCB (Bateman & Organ, 1983), a work environment characterised by equitable and competent supervision may be expected to result in some degree of OCB among employees. Similarly, managers should enhance employee morale and identity since studies show that high morale goes along with OCB. One way to do that is to treat employees fairly regardless of race and sex. By fostering a sense of identity among the employees, managers can enhance group cohesiveness and OCB. Relatedly, it is also reasonable to suggest that managers should be more sensitive to the issue of reciprocity, job satisfaction and trust. For example, an atmosphere of reciprocity may be created by promoting teamwork and camaraderie with work-group, and by recognizing and providing organisational rewards to employees on the basis of group performance. OCB theory and

research also say that employee satisfaction is important because it leads to OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995). Hotel managers can do so by making sure that procedures used to allocate organisational rewards are perceived as fair, supportive and considerate. Podsakoff et. al., (1990) found that the more employees trusted their managers, the more they engaged in OCB. Additionally, managers should provide an appropriate model for employees to follow by exhibiting citizenship behaviour themselves in order to communicate to employees that such behaviours are valued by the management. Managers are role models for their employees especially as they are the primary educators in terms of gaining organisational commitment from their subordinates.

Other mechanisms focus on human resource activities such as recruitment practices and performance evaluation. Several steps are possible such as improving policies and procedures concerning performance evaluation in such a way so as to include certain dimensions of citizenship behaviour. Recruitment practices include hiring employees with high level of OCB by determining whether applicants have performed beyond the minimum standard in their previous working experience or during school.

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