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# **COHESIVENESS AS MODERATOR OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND TURNOVER INTENTION RELATIONSHIP – A PROPOSITION**

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## **Introduction**

Employee behaviors that exceed formal job duties such as helping co-workers, displaying willingness to bear inconveniences at workplace, involving actively in organization's development are examples of behaviours that are critical to organizations' achievement (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Organ (1988) labeled these behaviors as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and defines 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". These human behaviours have received extensive attention by researchers in recent years. Despite the hypothesis that OCB contributes to organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000), previous research had concentrated more on identifying factors affecting OCB and less research focus had been given to investigating its consequences. The lacking of research investigating the consequences of OCB representing one of the gaps in current OCB literature. It is important to study factors that contribute to OCB so that organizations can take appropriate actions to promote OCB among employees. Nevertheless, more empirical evidences are needed regarding the effects of the OCB so that the investment and actions taken by organizations in promoting OCB is meaningful and justify.

## **OCB and Employee Turnover**

Employees' withdrawal behaviours such as turnover and absenteeism are some of the issues facing most of industry. There is little empirical evidence that part of this issue can be addressed by promoting OCB among employees. Despite the growing extensiveness of the OCB literature, there is comparatively limited evidences of the relationship between OCB and employees' withdrawal behaviours such as turnover and absenteeism. OCBs are positive behaviors such as helping and respecting others and in an aggregate have the potential to enhance organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, withdrawal behaviors whether

physically (e.g., turnover and absenteeism) or psychologically (e.g., day dreaming) are considered as resentment and displeasure toward the organization. The fundamental justification why the individuals' level of OCB may influence their turnover intention can be drawn from the general cognitive consistency theory which proposes that individuals attempt to sustain agreement between their behaviours, beliefs and attitudes (Festinger, 1957). Given the dissimilarity in nature of both variables, the constructive behaviors as reflected through high level of OCB will possibly shape other attitudes and behaviour, for example, by having lower intentions to turnover. The limited number of studies involving samples of hotel employees and factory workers have demonstrated significant adverse relationship between certain dimensions of OCB and employees' turnover and absenteeism (Khalid et al., 2009; Chen et al., 1998; Xiong & Wen, 2020).

### **Cohesiveness as Moderator**

One of the variables that can serve as potential moderator is employees' cohesiveness. Highly cohesive work groups are characterised by the keen member's attraction to the group, friendliness, reciprocated, supportive and positive feelings about carrying out the group's task (Shaw, 1981). Generally, cohesiveness is the extent to which group players bond together and remain united in the pursuit of a collective goal and can be assessed based on interpersonal magnetism, resistance to disintegration, the aspiration of member to stick in the group, the present of social circles, similarity of opinions and status, feeling of membership and the value that members place on group membership (Dion, 2000). Since highly cohesive groups stimulate a firm social identity, individuals in a highly cohesive group are more sensitive and tolerate with others and are more willing to assist and support others (Kidwell et al., 1997). The nature of the relationship between two individuals also influences the propensity that one will conduct prosocially toward the other (Clark, 1981). Thus, the cohesiveness of a group partly determines the probability of exhibition of OCB by one member of the group toward another. Gradually, the level of OCBs of the work group members could become well established when group cohesiveness is high.

Theoretical basis that can underpinned the possible relationship between OCB and cohesion arise from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Based on social exchange theory, the beneficiaries of OCB may reciprocate in the same manner, hence enhancing the level of cohesiveness. One could expect that cohesive groups would display more positive and frequent social exchanges (e.g., helping behaviour) than noncohesive groups. Organ (1990) have suggested that OCB may reflect members' efforts to maintain exchange relationships within the group that are based more on social needs.

The belief that employees in a more cohesive work group, display greater level of OCB gained empirical support from a number of studies. Based on an individuals' perception of group

cohesion, Turnipseed and Murkison (1996) established a positive relationship between perception of cohesiveness among workers and dimensions personable, courtesy and altruistic of OCB. Later, a study at group level analysis by Kidwell et al., (1997) comprising forty-nine team work found that aggregate mean score of cohesiveness is significantly and positively associated with employee courtesy which is one of the OCB dimensions.

Group cohesiveness increases the capability of the group to hold its members. Generally, employees relish working in a constructive and helpful atmosphere with good rapport among themselves (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1997). Cohesiveness has also been mentioned by several scholars (e.g. Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Organ, 1988) theories and model such as cusp-catastrophe model of withdrawal behaviour (Sheridan & Abelson, 1983) and attraction-selection-attribution model (Schneider, 1987) as part of a process by which employees may resolve to retain in organizations. Moreover, research have also revealed that obedience is enriched in cohesive groups – members of a cohesive group are less likely to withdraw such as being late, absent or turnover (Doherty and Carron, 2003). The study on the potential moderator is in line with one of the current directions of OCB research. For instance, a study by Makhdoom, Atta and Malik (2019) have investigated perceived organizational politics as a potential moderator.

## **Proposition**

Based on the above arguments, it is possible to establish sequences of relationship among OCB, turnover intention and cohesiveness as moderator. We offer the following proposition: Cohesiveness will moderate the negative relationship between OCB and employees' turnover, such that the relationship is more negative when cohesiveness is stronger.

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