

# Does Job Standardization Increase Organizational Citizenship Behavior?

By Li-Chan Chen, Han-Jen Niu, Yau-De Wang, Chyan Yang, and Sheng-Hshiong Tsaur

**Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is of key importance in the workplace. Researchers have discussed numerous motivation factors affecting OCB, but they have not examined the relative contributions of job standardization to OCB. This article describes an empirical study that examined the relationship between job standardization and OCB in the hospitality sector. Regression analysis of survey data from 214 hotel employees supported the relationship between job standardization and OCB. ANOVA analysis revealed that high degrees of job standardization indicate a higher level of OCB.**

**Key words:** Organizational citizenship behavior, job standardization, hospitality

**O**rganizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has received a great deal of attention from organizational behavior researchers in the past two decades. Katz first used the term OCB to name the category of extra-role behavior.<sup>1</sup> Organ defined OCB as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization."<sup>2</sup> Schnake pointed out that OCB is a "functional, extra-role, pro-social behavior, directed at individuals, groups, and/or an organization."<sup>3</sup>

Common to these definitions is that OCB includes discretionary, pro-social, ethical behavior. This behavior is voluntary and helpful, and it is not required by the individuals role or job description. Employees who display OCB can contribute to improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Research suggests that OCB results in high commitment and higher performance, even in temporary workers.<sup>4</sup>

The service and hospitality industry particularly needs employees who display such voluntary behaviors. An important avenue for customer value creation is the interaction between customer contact employees and customers. Bell and Menguc pointed out that the behavior of service employees plays a crucial role in affecting customers' perceptions of service quality.<sup>5</sup> It is widely accepted that staff and other boundary-spanning personnel will be central in determining customers' perceptions of service quality. Again, this is particularly true in the service sector, where employees'

voluntarily behaviors have a tremendous impact on customers' perceptions of service quality. Morrison's research showed that OCB is an indication of high service quality.<sup>6</sup> Recent studies have shown abundant proof that OCB is positively related to service quality.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Thus, OCB is an extremely important issue within the service and hospitality industry.

*Job standardization* is the extent to which employees follow standard operating procedures to perform their jobs. Workers in the service and hospitality industry, by definition, provide services. Because services are labor-intensive, it is difficult to make the output uniform. Standardized service delivery processes can be established and effectively executed, however.

In research into profit-oriented organizations, job standardization has been shown to be capable of narrowing the gap in service quality perceptions between service providers and customers.<sup>10</sup> Job standardization can lead to consistently high service quality perceptions because it helps to eliminate uncertainty and variability in customer value creation.<sup>11</sup> Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman postulated that task standardization could effectively translate managerial desires into specific service quality standards.<sup>12</sup> Hsieh, Chou, and Chen verified that job standardization and service quality have a significantly positive relationship.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, previous research confirms that OCB and job standardization are positively related to service quality and both of them are important factors that contribute to efficiency, effectiveness, and good service quality in the workplace. From this, we infer that there could also be a relationship between job standardization and OCB. The purpose of this study was to prove that job standardization may positively contribute to OCB.

## Literature Review

As noted above, OCB is defined as the type of behavior by employees that supports the interests of their organization even though they may not directly lead to individual benefits. This job behavior is considered of crucial importance to employers. Managers often find it difficult to reward good citizenship directly, just as it is difficult to punish the absence of such behavior directly.

Management literature commonly accepts that organizations need employees who are willing to exceed their formal job requirements.<sup>14</sup> In 1988, Organ proposed an expanded taxonomy of OCB that includes altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue.<sup>15</sup> However, previous OCB research had not demonstrated how extra-role behavior could be distinguished from in-role activities. Recognizing that the behavioral elements of OCB overlap with each other, Williams and Anderson suggested that OCB directed toward individuals (OCB-I) is distinct from *OCB directed toward the organization* (OCB-O).<sup>16</sup> Altruism and courtesy are behaviors that fit in the former category, whereas sportsmanship, civic virtue, and conscientiousness fit in the latter category.

In a similar manner, Coleman and Borman illustrated that behavioral elements that fit the general definition of OCB have proliferated.<sup>17</sup> Consistent with Williams and

Anderson's findings, the results of Coleman and Borman's analyses suggest categories of behaviors that vary with respect to the behaviors' beneficiary. Over the long run, OCB scholars generally assume the behavioral dimensions are beneficial across situations and organizations.<sup>18</sup>

In 1966, Herzberg suggested a two-step approach to understanding employee motivation (i.e., hygiene-motivational theory).<sup>19</sup> Herzberg explained that several factors can motivate employees to achieve above-average performance. Much research on OCB has since discussed the motivational basis for OCB, such as justice and job satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> The effects of job rotation and job enlargement, in particular, have been explored in detail. The effects of job standardization, however, are seldom mentioned.

According to organizational theory literature, a high level of job standardization creates a clear corporate image and an efficient operation performance. Hsieh and Hsieh illustrated that job standardization, including hard and soft technologies, "could clarify work content and context, reduce role ambiguity, decrease role conflict and elucidate the performance standards of the service firm."<sup>21</sup> Job standardization in customer-contact jobs reduces task uncertainty and, as a result of it, a higher level of service quality.

In sum, job standardization could be a forceful antecedent to OCB, but does job standardization itself affect OCB? The empirical study described in this article was undertaken in an attempt to answer this unexplored question.

Using the preceding research findings as a basis, the following hypotheses were advanced and tested:

Hypothesis 1. Job standardization is positively related to OCB.

Hypothesis 2. A high level of job standardization will explain OCB better than a low level of job standardization.

## **Research Methods**

### **Participants**

In an attempt to improve the quality of service within the hospitality industry and to control costs, most hotels have established some degree of job standardization. This study was conducted in three hotels throughout the Taipei area, Taiwan. Three hundred twenty questionnaires were distributed to hotel employees. Participation was voluntary, and questionnaires were anonymous. A total of 214 questionnaires were returned, which represents a response rate of 67%.

The profile of the sample is shown in Table 1. Of particular note are the categories of gender distribution, age, and education.

**Table 1: Profile of the Sample (N = 214)**

Demographic characteristics	Percent
Gender	
Male	33.6
Female	66.4
Age	
16–19 years old	1.9
20–25 years old	44.4
26–30 years old	21.5
31–40 years old	17.3
Over 40 years old	14.9
Department	
Consumer service	49.5
Food & beverage	24.3
Housekeeping	15.4
Back office	10.8
Marital status	
Married	28.5
Single	69.1
Other	2.4
Education	
Junior high school	1.4
High school	14.5
College degree	31.3
Bachelor's degree	50.9
Postgraduate degree	1.9

## Measures

### Job Standardization

We used Hsieh and Hsieh's definition of job standardization, according to which standardization consists of the synergistic utilization of available hard and soft technologies to perform a job.<sup>22</sup> Five items were used to assess the extent to which employees follow standard operating procedures to perform their jobs. Specifically, the survey respondents were asked, "To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1) There are no standard operating procedures in this company; (2) We are to follow strict operating procedures at all time; (3) Whatever situation arises, we have procedures to follow in dealing with it; (4) Our company effectively uses automation to achieve consistency in serving people; (5) Everyone has specific operating procedures to follow."

Employees indicated their agreement with each item, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Responses to the first item were reverse scored. Higher scores reflected higher levels of job standardization. The alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.77 (see Table 2).

## Organizational citizenship behavior

OCB was assessed using Williams & Anderson's 14-item scale (see Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire). In the present study, two classes of employee behavior were measured. The performance of OCBs covered both OCB-Is and OCB-Os. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was also used by respondents when they completed the questionnaire. Higher scores reflected higher levels of OCB. The alpha coefficient of the scale for this study was 0.90 (see Table 2).

## Results

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and interrelations among the study variables. As indicated in the table, the internal consistency reliabilities of all variables measured in this study were quite respectable. Results also indicate that the independent variable of job standardization is significantly and positively correlated with OCB and both of its components, OCB-I and OCB-O.

**Table 2: Mean, SD, Alpha, Pearson Correlation of Standardization, OCB-I, OCB-O, OCB (N = 214)**

	Mean	SD	Alpha	Standard-ization	OCB-I	OCB-O	OCB
Standardize	3.76	0.58	0.774	1			
OCB-I	3.79	0.58	0.763	0.402**	1		
OCB-O	3.42	0.43	0.671	0.383**	0.574**	1	
OCB	3.61	0.45	0.902	0.443**	0.920**	0.849**	1

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals; OCB-O = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward others; SD = standard deviation.

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

## Regression

The Pearson correlation between constructs supports the basic premise that job standardization is related to OCB, OCB-I, and OCB-O. To separate direct effect from correlation results, we performed regressions to detect the associations among the variables. Regression analysis models of the relationship between one or more response variables—in this case, OCB—and the predictor—job standardization—can also determine the magnitude of the relationships between variables and can be used to make predictions based on the models.

A regression analysis was performed using OCB, OCB-I, and OCB-O as the dependent variables. In the first stage, job standardization was used as the independent variable. In the second stage, we took OCB apart and examined its components of OCB-I and OCB-O and their relationship with job standardization.

Table 3 shows the regression analysis results obtained for the OCB variable, including the  $r^2$  value. Not only OCB, but also OCB-I and OCB-O to a lesser extent, are positively affected by job standardization. Consequently, Hypothesis 1, namely, that job standardization will explain variances in OCB, was supported.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis Model Summary: Job Standardization With OCB, OCB-I, and OCB-O**

Dependent variable	$r^2$	F	p-value
OCB	0.196	51.830	.000*
OCB-I	0.158	40.979	.000*
OCB-O	0.143	36.515	.000*

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals; OCB-O = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward others.

\* $p < .05$

### Analysis of Variance

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests the difference between the means of two or more groups. This analysis allows researchers to determine whether there is a significant difference between groups. We investigated the effect of different degrees of job standardization degrees on OCB. To do this, we categorized respondents' responses to the job standardization items as either high or low. Scores of 4 and 5 in meant a respondent's job had a high degree of standardization, while scores of 3 or lower meant a respondent's job had low standardization.

We performed an ANOVA analysis to determine the degree to which OCB was differentially affected by high and low levels of job standardization. As shown in Table 4, OCB, OCB-I, and OCB-O were more positively affected by high versus low levels of job standardization ( $p < 0.05$ ). In sum, Hypothesis 2, that a higher degree of job

**Table 4: Analysis of Variance**

	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
OCB Between groups	3.933	1	3.933	21.116	.000*
OCB Within groups	39.482	212	.186		
OCB Total	43.414	213			
OCB-I Between groups	5.738	1	5.738	18.238	.000*
OCB-I Within groups	66.696	212	.315		
OCB-I Total	72.434	213			
OCB-O Between groups	2.466	1	2.466	14.041	.000*
OCB-O Within groups	37.237	212	.176		
OCB-O Total	39.704	213			

Note. OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals; OCB-O = organizational citizenship behavior directed toward others.

\* $p < .05$

standardization will explain OCB more than a low degree of job standardization, was also supported.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to test the predictive power of job standardization with regards to OCB. The findings suggest that job standardization can help explain variance in OCB. These results are valuable because existing research findings about the effects of job standardization on employees' OCB have been vague.

The stereotypical view is that job standardization will make work dull and inflexible. It is necessary, however, to differentiate between job standardization and routinization.<sup>23</sup> *Routinization* means that people repeatedly do the same jobs the same way. Doing something the same way might not mean job standardization, however. Merely repeating the same processes does not imply that a standard is being applied or met.

Job standardization does not diminish personal accomplishment, and it does not result in perceived depersonalization. Quite the contrary, Cohen and Eimicke suggested that standardizing a job by applying specific, by-the-book rules helps to eliminate variation in tasks that are performed constantly by different employees.<sup>24</sup> Also, the stricter the standard operating procedures, the more motivated employees are to do jobs efficiently and effectively.<sup>25</sup> This implies that job standardization is a motivating factor for OCB, which our research has confirmed.

Several limitations to our study exist. First, the sample is unrepresentative of the general population. Due to time and financial constraints, we selected a convenient sample of employees within certain international hotels. Thus, the results must be interpreted with considerable caution. Second, this study is based on cross-sectional data; thus, no causal relationship should be inferred. More longitudinal studies across organizations are needed.

Human resources managers face the continuous challenge of hiring efficient and effective staff. Far from limiting OCB, job standardization can positively influence ethical and helpful behavior. What is more, higher levels of job standardization result in higher degrees of OCB. An important implication of this study's findings is that supervisors and management should design standard operation procedures for jobs not only to decrease management cost, but also to induce OCB and, thereby, make service quality steadier.

## **Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire**

### **Organizational Citizenship Behavior Directed Toward Individuals**

1. Helps others who have been absent.
2. Helps others who have heavy workloads.
3. Assists supervisor with his/her work (when not asked).

4. Takes the time to listen to co-workers' problems and worries.
5. Goes out of the way to help new employees.
6. Takes a personal interest in other employees.
7. Passes along information to co-workers.

### **Organizational Citizenship Behavior Directed Toward Others**

8. Attendance at work is above the norm.
9. Gives advance notice when unable to come to work.
10. Takes undeserved work breaks. (R)
11. Great deal of time spent with personal phone conversation. (R)
12. Complains about insignificant things at work. (R)
13. Conserves and protects organizational property.
14. Adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order.

From "Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment as Predictors of Organizational Citizenship and In-Role Behaviors," by L. J. Williams and S. E. Anderson, 1991, *Journal of Management*, 17, 601–617.

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## Authors

### Li-Chan Chen

Department of Hotel Management  
Ming Hsin University of Science and Technology  
No.1, Xinxing Rd., Xinfeng Hsinchu 30401  
Taiwan (R.O.C)  
886-3-559-3142#3759  
clchen@must.edu.tw

### Han-Jen Niu

Tamkang University  
Graduate Institute of Management Sciences  
Department of Management Sciences & Decision Making  
151 Ying-chuan Road, Tamsui 25137  
Taiwan (R.O.C)  
886-2-2621-5656#2695  
freyaniu@gmail.com

### Yau-De Wang

National Chiao Tung University  
Department of Management Sciences  
1001 Ta-Hsueh Road, Hsing Chu City 30010  
Taiwan (R.O.C.)  
ydwand@cc.nctu.edu.tw

### Chyan Yang

National Chiao Tung University  
Institute of Business & Management  
1001 Ta-Hsueh Road, Hsing Chu City 30010  
Taiwan (R.O.C.)  
nsc.professor.yang@gmail.com

### Sheng-Hshiung Tsaur

National Chiayi University  
Graduate Institute of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management  
300 Syuefu Road, Chiayi City 60004  
Taiwan (R.O.C.)  
shenght@mail.ncyu.edu.tw

**Li-Chan Chen** is a lecturer in the Department of Hotel Management at Minghsin University of Science and Technology. She is also a doctoral candidate of Department of Business Administration at National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan.

Her research interests include human resources management and organizational behavior issues in the service and hospitality industry.

**Han-Jen Niu** is an assistant professor in the Graduate Institute of Management Sciences and Department of Management Science & Decision Making at the Tamkang University. Her research areas include organizational behavior, consumer behavior, service management and technology management.

**Yau-De Wang** is an associate professor of Management Science at the National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. He earned his doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. He teaches undergraduate and master's of business administration courses in organizational behavior, organizational theory, technology and organization design, human resources management, and research methods.

**Chyan Yang** is a professor of Institute of Business & Management at the National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. He earned his doctorate in information science from the University of Washington in Seattle. His research areas include industry marketing and technology management. He has published 65 journal articles.

**Sheng-Hshiung Tsaur** is a professor of tourism, recreation, and hospitality Department at the National Chiayi University, Taiwan.

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