

# Organizational Citizenship and Generation Y Turnover Intention

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**To Link this Article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAREMS/v2-i4/104> DOI:10.6007/IJAREMS/v2-i4/104

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**Published Online:** July, 2013

## **Abstract**

The purpose of the paper is to examine the role of organizational citizenship behavior in determining turnover intention among Generation Y employees. Survey questionnaires that contained measures of OCB, turnover intention and demographic information were distributed among a group of 159 employees working with a Malaysian multinational corporation. The levels of OCB among respondents were above the mid-point of 3 on a 5-point Likert scale. The mean of 2.54 on a 5-point scale for turnover intention indicates that most of the Generation Y employees are neither bent on leaving nor staying. Analyses conducted using multiple regressions indicated that sportsmanship and civic virtue significantly and negatively related with turnover intention.

**Keywords:** Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Turnover Intention, Generation Y

## **Introduction**

Previous research on organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) has focused more on identifying factors contributed to OCB. Relatively, a limited number of studies have examined the outcomes of OCB. This study is one of the few empirical studies examining the relationship between OCB on turnover intention. The concern in OCB arises primarily from the belief that these productive behaviours contribute to organisational, group and individual effectiveness or performance. A great number of researches have attempted to investigate the

subordinates, task, organisational characteristics and leadership behaviours as antecedents to OCB. Relatively, not much concentration has been given to empirically test consequences of OCB on individual effectiveness or indirect measures of effectiveness such as employee withdrawal behaviours. This situation signifies one of the gaps in current OCB literature. In a review of literature, Podsakoff et al., (2000), stated that over 160 studies examined antecedents of OCB have been published. However, only a few empirical studies have attempted to investigate the outcome of OCB. This has been supported by Werner (2006) that states, the number of studies examining the consequences of OCB remain small.

In this connection, to date, only a small number of studies have investigated the relationship between OCB and withdrawal behavior (e.g., Chen et al., 1998; Khalid et al., 2009). This limited number of studies does not allow much generalization. The present study attempts to deal with this empirical gap by examining the relationship between several facets of OCB and employee turnover intention among a group of Generation Y employees.

Generation Y or Millennial Generation, is a term used to portray those who were born after Generation X. Even though there are no exact starting and ending dates of Generation Y, generally it can be said that Generation Y are those born between the year 1980 and 2000 (Meier et al., 2010). Generation Y has been characterized as those who look for a balance between work and life, flexibility in job assignments and want to define the exact role in their job. It is a challenge to managers to train, guide and inspire Generation Y employees to ensure that their capabilities, knowledge and strengths become an advantage to the employer. Generation Y have different attitude with Generation X that loyal to the company and stick with their job. If properly manage, young employees will make a significant contribution such as creating new businesses, organizational culture and spirits (Fernando et al., 2012). Hurst and Good (2009) state that managers must understand the Generation Y's career expectations and aspirations. Solnet et al., (2012) states that generation Y have the power to transform the labor force and employers struggle to retain Generation Y employees. Additionally, Generation Y reported to have high level of turnover intention as compared to Generation X.

Adequate evidence shows that employee withdrawal behavior such as turnover influences organizational operations. Employee turnover raises costs of separation, substitution, training and hidden costs such as service quality (Koys, 2003). Despite over 1500 studies reported in the turnover literature (Shaw et al., 1998), previous research on this dysfunctional behavior has focused on such antecedents as job affect (satisfaction and commitment), cognitive process and demographic factors, but has not paid attention to the role of behavioral antecedents such as OCB, which is a relatively new concept in turnover research stream. This study is significant for at least two reasons. First, this study is among the limited number of studies examining the consequences of OCB. Second, the criterion variable, that is, turnover intention is examined involving a significant sample, that is, Generation Y employees. As such, the outcome of this study may benefits functional managers as well human resource practitioners in designing strategy to retain Generation Y employees.

The aims of the present study are to examine the relationship between dimensions of OCB and employee turnover intention among Generation Y employees.

## **Literature Review**

### **Organizational citizenship behavior**

OCB is a new idea in the analysis of organizational, group and individual effectiveness and performance. According to Organ (1988), OCB refers to a universal behaviors displayed by

employees such as being caring, supportive, helpful, discretionary and it is considered as beyond the formal task obligations. Specifically, OCB has been defined 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). Moreover, the term “discretionary”, suggests that the citizenship behavior is not prescribed in the formal job description. Possessing a high level of citizenship behavior such as being a caring or helpful is an individual option. Generally, having low level of OCB or reluctance to exhibit OCB may not be resulted in punishment.

Many determinants of OCB have been studied by researchers in order to provide clarification and explanation for individual’s engagement in OCB. Review of literature such as by Alizadeh et al., 2012 and Podsakoff et al., (2000) indicated that research examining antecedents to OCB has concentrated on four primary categories including individual traits (e.g. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust in leader, fairness perception, individual dispositions), task attributes (e.g. task feedback, task routinization, intrinsically satisfying task), organizational factors (e.g. perceived organizational support, cohesive group, reward structure) and leadership behaviors (e.g. transformational leadership, leader-member exchange).

### **Organizational citizenship behavior and employee turnover**

Authors have emphasized the need for researchers to explore the consequences of OCB (e.g., Werner, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000). As mentioned earlier, to date, only a few studies have explored the relationship between OCB and withdrawal behavior (Chen et al., 1998; Khalid et al., 2009). The study conducted by Chen et al., (1998) involved 205 supervisor-subordinate dyads across 11 organizations in the People’s Republic of China revealed that OCB was negatively related with turnover intention. Subordinates who were rated as exhibiting low levels of OCB were found to be more likely to leave an organisation than those who were rated as exhibiting high levels of OCB. Their study revealed that the level of altruism, sportsmanship and conscientiousness were higher among employees with no turnover. Similarly, study by Khalid et al., (2009) found that helping behavior, sportsmanship, patience and civic virtue were related to turnover intention among hotel employees.

The underlying mechanisms justifying the relationship between individuals’ level of OCB and turnover can be based on the Cognitive Consistency Theory. The Cognitive Consistency Theory (Festinger, 1957) suggests that peoples try to maintain agreement between their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. There is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions. The positive behavior as reflected through a high level of OCB should consistently shape other attitudes and behavior, for instance, by reporting lower intentions to leave the present job.

### **Hypotheses Statement**

Based on the literature review discussed above, we proposed the following hypotheses to be tested in this study:

- H1 - There is a negative relationship between altruism and turnover intention.
- H2 - There is a negative relationship courtesy and turnover intention.
- H3 - There is a negative relationship between sportsmanship and turnover intention.

- H4 - There is a negative relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intention.
- H5 - There is a negative relationship between civic virtue and turnover intention.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

The respondent for this research were Generation Y employees in a large division of a Malaysian Multinational Corporation. Permission was not granted to disclose the name and background of the company. In total, there are 380 employees working in this division. As suggested by Meier et al., (2010), Generation Y is those born between the years 1980 to 2000. Cooperation from the human resource executive of the organization was obtained to identify a list of employees in this category. There were 190 employees born between 1980 to 2000 and they were selected to participate in this study.

### **Measures**

OCB was gauged using a 20-item scale developed by Podsakoff and Mackenzie (as cited in Niehoff and Moorman, 1993). The dependent variable of turnover intention was measured using 3 items adapted from Camman et al., (as cited in Chen et al., 1998). Respondents rated their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point scale which ranges from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Upon the approval given by several head of departments within the division, survey questionnaires were distributed to a total of 159 Generation Y employees. For some unknown reasons, a total of 31 employees were not willing to take part in this study.

### **Data Analyses and Findings**

A total of 123 respondents have cooperated by returning the questionnaires resulting in 77% rates of return. Table 1 summarized the demographic information such as gender, ethnicity and marital status. The sample was diverse in several aspects. Approximately 47% of the sample (59) was male and 53% (64) was female. There was representation from several ethnicity including Malay (93), Chinese (19), Indian (3) and others (8). One-hundred and two (83%) subjects in this sample have bachelor degree and 16% (20) have master degree. In term of length of service, 58 subjects (47%) have serve for less than 2 years, 51 subjects (41%) serve between 2 to 4 years, 11 subjects (8%) serve between 5 to 6 years and 3 subjects (4%) have serve for more than 6 years. In term of previous working experience, almost half of the subjects, that is, 60 subjects (49%) have worked with at least one organization before joining the present organization.

Table 1

*Demographic Factors*

Demographic factors	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	59	47
	Female	64	53
	Total	123	100
Year born	1980 – 1982	16	13
	1983 - 1985	61	50
	1986 - 1989	46	37
	Total	123	100
Ethnicity	Malay	93	76
	Chinese	19	15
	Indian	3	3
	Others	8	6
	Total	123	100
Marital Status	Single	77	63
	Married	42	34
	Others	4	3
	Total	123	100
Education	Bachelor degree	102	83
	Master	20	16
	HSC (Higher School Certificate)	1	1
	Total	123	100
Length of Service	Less than 2 years	58	47
	2 to 4 years	51	41
	5 – 6 years	11	8
	More than 6 years	3	4
	Total	123	100
Monthly salary	Less than RM2,000	7	6
	RM2,000 to RM3,900	30	24
	RM4,000 to RM5,999	73	59
	More than RM6,000	13	11
	Total	123	100
Previous attachment	Never work before	63	51
	Previously work with 1 to 3 organization	54	44
	Previously work with 4 or more organization	6	5
	Total	123	100

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2. The mean on all variables are observed as somewhat enriched. The values of minimum and maximum indicate that there are some with low level of citizenship behavior and some of the respondents have high level of OCB. The minimum of 1 for turnover intention indicates some Generation Y employees intend to stay with their present job. On the other hand, the maximum of 5 shows that some of the Generation Y employees are contemplating leaving the present job. Overall, the mean on

turnover intention is rather low (2.54). As indicated by the values of standard deviation for all study variables, the majority of employees were close to the mean.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistic*

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Altruism	123	1.75	5.00	3.13	.77
Courtesy	123	2.00	5.00	3.28	.65
Sportsmanship	123	1.00	4.75	4.21	.79
Conscientiousness	123	2.00	5.00	3.25	.64
Civic virtue	123	2.00	5.00	3.94	.62
Turnover intention	123	1.00	5.00	2.54	.91

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

The intercorrelations among the study variables are shown in Table 3. As can be seen, all the OCB facets were significantly and negatively correlated with turnover intention. The negative relationship indicates both variables are adversely associated. High levels of OCBs were likely to result in low turnover intention. The Cronbach Alphas are stated in parentheses. The intercorrelations were also inspected for multicollinearity. All correlation coefficients were below .70. Therefore, variable redundancy did not appear to be of concern (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3  
*Correlational Analysis*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Altruism	(.90)					
Courtesy	.59**	(.87)				
Sportsmanship	.28**	.45**	(.84)			
Conscientiousness	.55**	.44**	.24**	(.86)		
Civic virtue	.32**	.20*	.14	.48**	(.81)	
Turnover intention	-.26**	-.22*	-.30**	-.25**	-.31**	(.79)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

To test the study hypotheses, a multiple regression was run and the result is presented in Table 4. As can be seen, of the five OCB dimensions, sportsmanship ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and civic virtue ( $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p = .02$ ) are significantly and negatively related with turnover intention. Hence,

hypothesis 3 and 5 were supported. However, altruism ( $\beta=-.11$ , n.s.), courtesy ( $\beta=-.01$ , n.s.) and conscientiousness ( $\beta=-.03$ , n.s.) were not significantly related with turnover intention.

Table 4  
*Multiple Regression Analysis*

Variable	B	Sig.
Altruism	-.11	.32
Courtesy	-.01	.94
Sportsmanship	-.24	.02*
Conscientiousness	-.03	.79
Civic Virtue	-.23	.02*
R square	.176	
Adjusted R Square	.140	

\* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$

### Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between OCB dimensions and a form of withdrawal behaviors, that is, turnover intention. Measures of OCB were hypothesized to be related with turnover intention. Overall, the results showed partial support for the study hypothesis. Sportsmanship and civic virtue were found to have a significant and negative relationship with turnover intention. This finding is generally consistent with previous studies by Chen et al., (1998) and Khalid et al., (2009). Sportsmanship and civic virtue are the OCB dimensions that benefits the organization (e.g. avoid complaining or willing to face difficulty, keep abreast of changes in the organization) rather than specific co-workers. An employee who exhibits good sportsmanship and civic virtue by looking at the positive side of what the organization actions, successfully coordinating work with others, "keep up" with development in the organization, provide constructive ideas for the benefits of the organization and attend functions that are not required is more likely to have lower turnover intention than those employees who do not exhibit sportsmanship and civic virtue. Sportsmanship and civic virtue are viewed as mainly benefiting the organization as a whole, as compared to courtesy and altruism that are directed at specific persons such as co-workers or supervisors (Williams and Anderson, 1991).

An individual's propensity to engage in OCB dimensions that benefit the organization as a whole may strongly determine the individual's propensity to stay with the organization, as compared to citizenship behaviors such as altruism and courtesy that are directed toward an individual. The present study involve a group of respondents who are known to be confident, independent, goal-oriented, want a work-life balance and reported to display displayed higher turnover intentions (David et al., 2012). The findings of this study may help managers to develop approach in retaining Generation Y employees. Perhaps, it is practical to include games or tests to measure the level of OCB among potential job candidates of Generation Y. Selection process that include such activities as team building, games that involve problem solving and decision making can be integrated and simulated with existing selection process



to measure candidates citizenship behavior. Based on the findings of this study as well as previous study by Chen et al., (1998) and Khalid et al., (2009), if these selection activities can be designed carried out, the tendency of Generation Y job candidates to stay with their job can be tested. Hence, their abilities, creativities and strengths can be utilized by their employers. Workload and stress normally lead to high turnover rate (Mehrjerdi, 2010). This may be partly overcome if citizenship behavior has become a culture among employees. If this happen, not only employee turnover can be deal with but it will also help organizations enhancing their performance.

Based on the sample characteristics, almost half of the subjects, that is, 60 subjects (49%) have worked with at least one organization before joining the present employer. This would clearly reflect the attributes of Generation Y employees as being ambitious, entrepreneurial spirit, sense of responsibility, change receptiveness, have high expectations of their employers, optimism about the future and may not hold a job for long (Raman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the Generation Y subjects in this study seem to be contented with the present job. This is reflected based on the mean on turnover intention, which is rather low (2.54). We were unable to elaborate further on this issue since information or data on job characteristics, satisfaction, leadership and the like were beyond the scope of this study.

The reason why altruism, courtesy and conscientiousness were not significantly related to turnover intention is not obvious. Nevertheless, it is possible to speculate on several potential explanations. The bivariate analysis showed a moderate negative correlation between these variables and turnover intention. However, this relationship was not strong enough to hold up in the multivariate analysis. Another plausible explanation is that the means of these variables were not sufficiently high for the effect to be apparent, as compared to sportsmanship and civic virtue. Previous research has provided some evidence that OCB is negatively related with age. Kuehn and Al-Busaidi (2002) for example, reported that younger employees have lower level of OCB than older workers. Wagner and Rush (2000) state that younger workers have less need for affiliation. Consistently, this can be seen from the mean analysis in Table 3 where the mean values for altruism and courtesy were lower than sportsmanship and civic virtue. Altruism and courtesy are OCB facets directed at specific co-workers. It is possible to speculate that Generation Y employees have less need for affiliation due to norm of reciprocity. They exhibit relatively higher level of OCB that are directed toward the entire organization (sportsmanship and civic virtue) due to the need for their career advancement, high expectations and because of their volunteering nature.

Probably, another possible explanation is based on the possibility of same-source bias in which self-ratings of OCB produce better overall results (Organ and Ryan, 1995). The use of data collected at a single point in time, from a single source, introduces the possibility of common method variance. Although common method variance bias is an unlikely explanation for the results (given the significant relationship between sportsmanship and civic virtue and turnover intention) such bias cannot be completely ruled out.

We have to admit that our study has several limitations. First, data collected was self-reported and cross-sectional in nature. Thus, same-source bias may be present. Second, the sample size was small and selected from a single organization. This affects the generalization of our findings. Future research project should also study the relationship between OCBs and other form of withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism, social loafing and day dreaming in other work context.



### **Acknowledgement**

Many thanks to all students and colleague for their participation and contribution especially during the collection of data.

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