Examining the Virtues of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) at an SME

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Absztrakt. Napjainkban, különösen Magyarország keleti régiójában a kisvállalkozásoknak egyre nagyobb kihívást jelent a jól képzett munkaerő bevonása és megtartása, amely képes elfogadni és elkötelezni magát a kkv-k céljai mellett. Ennek oka, hogy az ide települő külföldi tulajdonú nagyvállalatok ígéretes karrierlehetőségeket kínálnak számukra. Ha azonban a kkv-k alkalmazottai rendelkeznek a szervezeti polgár magatartás (OCB) erényeivel, akkor erősebb elköteleződés alakul ki bennük a szerveztük iránt. Kutatásunk célja az volt, hogy felfedjük, milyen mértékben vannak jelen az öt OCB erény; a sportszerűség, lelkiismeretesség, altruizmus, udvariasság és a polgári erény egy Hajdú-Bihar vármegyei építőipari kisvállalkozás esetében. Felmérésünket kérdőíves módszerrel végeztük, melyet a munkahelyen eltöltött munkaviszony, az iskolai végzettség és az életkor függvényében elemeztünk. Főbb eredményként megállapítható, hogy szoros összefüggés van az OCB tulajdonságok jelenléte és az életkor valamint az adott cégnek eltöltött idő között.

Abstract. Nowadays, especially in the Eastern region of Hungary, small businesses face an increasing challenge in attracting and retaining a well-qualified workforce that is able to accept and commit to the goals of SMEs. This is due to the promising career prospects offered by foreign-owned large companies locating here. However, if SME employees possess the virtues of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), they will develop a stronger commitment to the organisation. The aim of our research was to explore the extent to which the five OCB virtues; sportsmanship, conscientiousness, altruism, politeness and civic virtue are present in a small construction company in Hajdú-Bihar county. Our survey was carried out using a questionnaire method, which was analysed as a function of length of service, education and age. The main findings are that there is a strong correlation between the presence of OCB characteristics and age and length of time spent with the firm.

Kulcsszavak: szervezeti elköteleződés, szervezeti polgári magatartás, kkv, generációs elmélet

Keywords: Organisational Commitment, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), SME, Generation Theory, Group Development

Introduction:

Every employer would like their employees to be fully committed, conscientious and perfect in their work, forming a perfect team with their colleagues and communicating to the outside world that they feel comfortable there, it is the best place to work. In other words, they become good soldiers, they develop organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). How can this be achieved? If it can be achieved, how long does it take to develop. Having OCB at a company can provide it competitive advantage in the market. As OCB means an 'extra role' behaviour of an employee as Zeb Jan and Asia Gul described it in

their study in 2016 that they start exhibiting when they develop a close association with their organization of work. If this exists, the organization will be stable. The over enhancement in performance contributes to the gaining competitive edge in the market. (Zeb et al, 2016) There seems to be only few investigations about this phenomenon among small and medium size enterprises in Hungary. Being an ex-socialist country still most of the entrepreneurs who were forced to set of businesses after the change of the regime have no professional knowledge on entrepreneurial culture and management. The success of them means not only gaining high profits but to retain their employees to which developed OCB in workers should be a requirement. (Almási, 2018)

Therefore, this research takes into consideration to study how much OCB virtues are present at a small enterprise in Eastern Hungary where the employees are engaged in mechanical engineering, which is mainly sedentary work with computers.

The theoretical framework of this study discusses the five OCB factors: altruism, scrupulosity, sportsmanship, politeness and civic virtue. Furthermore, it includes the significance of OCB at an SME. It deals with the connection of different generations and the OCB. It highlights the specifications of generation Y as the persons surveyed were members of this group. Our survey was implemented by a questionnaire at an SME and the results that confirms several previous surveys prepared has been presented using descriptive statistical methods.

1. The concept of organisational citizenship behaviour

The importance of human resources has increased in recent years. (Dajnoki, 2014) Therefore, it is in the interest of operating organisations to employ a workforce that is committed to the long-term interests of the company and can contribute to its success by working effectively.

Most of the literature assumes that people's personal characteristics in the workplace and their reactions to the workplace influence the extent to which they do more than the duty requires. (Shokouyar et al., 2018)

There are several definitions in the literature. Most define the manifestation of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in five dimensions. These are scrupulosity, sportsmanship, altruism, courtesy and civic virtue. Scrupulosity means that a worker does his or her job conscientiously, even without supervision.

Altruism is a helping attitude, where the worker voluntarily helps others and prevents work-related problems from arising. Sportsmanship means accepting other colleagues or work-related inconveniences and problems without complaining, but it also implies fairness and honesty. Civic virtue also implies loyalty, the support and protection of organisational goals and putting the interests of the organisation before one's own organisational interests. It also refers to individual initiative extra enthusiasm and effort in carrying out tasks. A loyal person remains committed even in bad or difficult circumstances. (Szabó et al., 2018) Scrupulousness means following the rules and processes of the organisation, even when there is no one to check. A worker with civic virtue is involved in the management of the organisation even if this is not part of his or her job description, and monitors

potential threats and opportunities to the organisation. They are looking after the interests of the organisation and volunteer to carry out tasks. Politeness indicates good relations with colleagues.

2. Why is organisational citizenship behaviour important for an SME?

The importance of human resources has increased in recent years. Small businesses face an increasing challenge in attracting and retaining a well-qualified workforce that is able to accept and commit to the goals of the SME. This is particularly true in the eastern region of Hungary, where there is a growing labour shortage, especially in the technical and engineering sector, due to the permanent arrival of internationally owned companies. Since the success of a small business in this sector depends to a large extent on the performance and the efficiency and loyalty of its employees, the skills of the workforce are of great importance. The emergence and existence of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is associated with loyalty, producing loyal employees who are committed to the company in the long term.

Organizational citizenship behaviour can be a company's exclusive property, its own human capital, which can even provide it with a competitive advantage. It can help to achieve lasting success in business. (George J. M. et al., 2010) Overall, the presence of organisational citizenship behaviour in a company creates success, human capital and loyal employees.

Successful organisations need employees who will do more than their usual job duties, who will provide performance beyond expectations. Employees who engage in "good citizenship" behaviours help others on their team, volunteer for extra work, avoid unnecessary conflicts, respect the spirit as well as the letter of rules and regulations and gracefully tolerate occasional extra work (Cho & Johanson, 2008). Organisations need employees who will do things that are not in any job description. Evidence indicates that organisations that do have such employees with high organisational citizenship behaviours outperform those that do not (Jain & Cooper, 2012).

According to Serim, Demirbag and Yozgat (2014) this behaviour is important for firms given the necessity for survival in today's demanding and competitive environment. While employee empowerment has been found to influence organisational citizenship behaviour (Chinomona, 2016) maintain that when there's such employee organisational citizenship behaviours, firms are likely to improve in terms of overall performance. (Magdalena, 2014)

Managers need to reduce absenteeism, turnover and deviant workplace behaviour and increase organisational citizenship behaviours and job satisfaction. Employees who feel wanted and recognised as part of an organisation show a greater propensity to stay in the organisation. More so, servant leadership has been found to bring out organisational citizenship behaviour in that it creates a work environment where there is assistance, praise and upliftment amongst employees (Maccun & Gifford, 2014).

Another study direction was composed by the analysis of the relationship between Management quality and employees OCB level by Mesu and associates (Mesu et al, 2009) which pointed out that there seem to be major differences between managerial models of SMEs and that of big corporations.

According to an investigation carried out by Popescua and his associates among SMEs resulted that a high level of OCB entails for organization's performances. Manager's OCB may have a direct influence on this behaviour, both at individual and group level, at the level of the organization. OCB is a domain that cannot be ignored by any manager. OCB can make a manager, a real leader for his/her organization. (Popescua et al, 2014)

Chamdan (2013) declared in their survey that the performance of an organization - in this case small and medium enterprises (SMEs) - is highly influenced by the organizational culture, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and OCB. This latter one is an extra-role behaviour of members of an organization that can improve organizational performance. Moreover, according to the study implemented by Dajnoki and Kozák (2021) in the competitive sector in Hungary four perceived culture types are associated with OCB. And the strongest relationship was perceived with clannish culture.

Organizational culture and job satisfaction also affects the organizational commitment and OCB. Organizational commitment and OCB are shown by the employees of small and medium enterprises shoes have good effect on the performance of the organization and this should be improved in order to further improve business performance. As behaviour outside of a role to play, in fact OCB cannot be separated from the work habits required in the job or in accordance with the role it plays. OCB has a significant impact on organizational performance and success of the organization to achieve its objectives. So that organizations should pay more attention on OCB members to better support the organization to achieve its objectives. (Chamdan et al, 2013)

3. Link between generations and OCB

Karl Mannheim's essay 'The Problem of Generations' has often been described as the seminal theoretical treatment of generations and as a sociological phenomenon. It provides a way of understanding differences between age groups. According to 'The theory of Generations posed by this sociologist, the period of time when you were born and when you grow up determines some of your characteristics your attitude to life, work and society. Due to the developing technology, as far as the changing life style and political events your values become different. (Pilcher, 1994)

Mannheim (1969) found that the differences between generations are not age-related, but in socialisation experience. This may imply that if the socialization effects over time and persist through the key life stages of socialisation (childhood and adolescence), they can determine the character of a generation. (Székely, 2020)

This generational approach has also achieved considerable success outside the academic world and in everyday public discourse. It is now part of the subject area of human resource management and marketing, (Székely, 2020)

Later it was developed and currently six generations have been devided since 1925. They are Veterans, Baby-boom, X, Y, Z and Alfa generations in chronological order. One of the main basis of these categories is in which period of their life the learn or meet Internet or digitalization as it determines their attitude to development, flexibility, changes and values. They can be seen in Table 1.

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| Generation | Veterans | Baby-booms | X generation | Y generation | Z generation | Alfa generation | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|--|
| (birth years) | (1925-45) | (1946-64) | (1965-79) | (1980-95) | (1996-2009) | (2010- | |
| meeting | met | met internet | met internet | first wave of | they were | they were born | |
| digitalization | internet at | in their | in their | digital | born in the | in the digital | |
| or internet | an older | middle ages, | young ages, | generation, | digital world | world too | |
| | ages, it is a | internet can | use of it can | internet is | | | |
| | challenge | be built into | be acquired | part of teir | | | |
| | for them | their life, | | everday life | | | |
| | | work | | | | | |

Table 1. Generations and their attitude towards digitalization and internet

Each generation differently perceive the influences of justice and trust on organizational citizenship behavior. They are different by age and work experience, even by their life experience as well. (Leelamanthum et al, 2018)

3.1. Generation Y and OCB

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 employees are ambitious with entrepreneurial spirit, sense of responsibility, change receptiveness. They have high expectations of their employers. Nevertheless, the Generation Y members seem to be easily contented with their present job. This is reflected based on the mean on turnover intention, which is rather low. But workload and stress normally lead to high turnover rate.

A study carried out by Shaiful et al. pointed out 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. (Shaiful, 2013)

4. Survey conditions and methodology

We examined a limited liability company established in Debrecen in 2020. The main activities of the company are planning and project management. They are mainly engaged in engineering activities in the fields of mechanical engineering, architecture, electrical systems. They also carry out custom machinery design and process optimisation. Moreover, studies, expert opinions, interior, landscape and garden design are also part of the company's profile.

We applied the questionnaire developed by Podsakoff et al. (2013) to measure OCB. It contained twenty-four statements which could be paired with 4 OCB domains. These were scrupulosity, sportsmanship, altruism and civic virtue. The individual fulfilment or non-fulfilment of each statement was to be rated

on a 5-point Likert scale. This was completed with an interview with the managers to find out about the employees' working conditions and demographic factors.

The survey participants were the 9 employees of the engineering office. Their personal characteristics are shown in Table 1 below. Among them 1 person has a secondary education, 2 persons have a bachelor's degree, 3 persons have a master's degree and 1 person has a PhD degree. They are present in the organisation as technicians, technical draughtsmen, project managers and managers. I would like to stress that none of them has changed their job title during their employment here and all of them work in the industrial field. They are all men aged between 25 and 40. The length of time they have worked for the engineering office is not very long, at least a year and maximum three and a half years. The questionnaires were completed in February 2023.

| Qualification | | Position | | Professional field | | Length of employment | |
|------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| Secondary school | 1 | Draughtsman | 3 | Industry | 9 | 1 year | 4 |
| BSc degree | 2 | Technician | 3 | Services | 0 | 2 years | 3 |
| MSc degree | 5 | Project manager | 1 | | | 3 or more years | 2 |
| PhD | 1 | Manager | 2 | | | | |

Table 2. Participants of the survey according to numbers and qualifications

5. Results of the survey

5.1. Information gained from the managers

As Table 2 indicates we learnt how many workers, how long, in which professional field and in which position they had been working for the company. Moreover, it was claimed that they must work independently, especially on their own. They are engaged in quite monotonous work, which means sitting at desks and computers for long hours.

According to information from the company managers, all of the employees are male, their ages are between 28 and 38. They are well paid and each of them can organise their own work as they like. Either they go to the office according to their own schedule (flexible working hours, regular hours are expected) or work from home. Furthermore, they have autonomy to decide on a range of professional issues.

Regarding the employees performance the managers stated that in the first year they were enthusiastic and ambitious then it reduced, there were some conflicts between them, Yet, in the latest period they could work quite effectively and this was indicated in the company's profit too as it had been growing continuously. All in all, the efficiency and success of the company has been increasing continuously in the market.

5.2. Overall performance for the four dimensions examined

We looked at the overall scores of employees on the four dimensions, expressed as percentages in the figure below (Figure 1). The chart below shows the average scores achieved. In consulting with managers, a threshold of 80% was set, above which the result was considered good. The chart illustrates that the score for Conscientiousness can be considered as good, as its average is above 80%. Altruism represents the second highest score, approaching the good result at the bottom. Good sportsmanship and civic virtue are the least evident in the organisation. It is noteworthy that conscientiousness is present mostly in the SME. This is a clear indication of the organisation's activities, that are engineering, technical drawing and design which require a high degree of precision and responsibility. It can therefore be concluded that all the employees of this organisation possess the OCB characteristic that is essential for engineering work; conscientiousness. After all, a job carried out inaccurately and without attention can cause serious damage to people and materials.

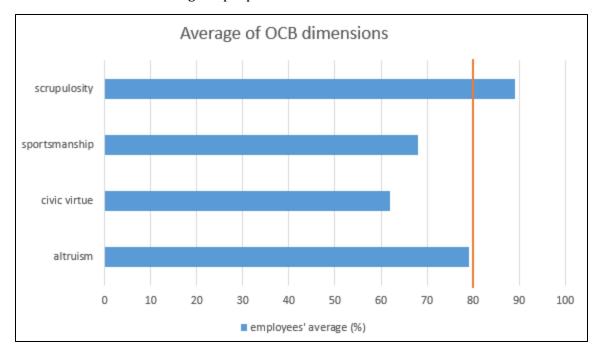


Figure 1. Summarised results for the four characteristics tested

5.3. Evolution of OCB dimensions as a function of length of service

The results were analysed as a function of the time spent working for the organisation in Figure 2. Accordingly, employees were divided into three groups: those with 1 year, 2 years and 3 or more years of service. The percentages on the vertical axis show that in the first year, three of the OCB factors tested: altruism, sportsmanship and scrupulosity exceed the good score, while civic virtue is close to it. Then a decline is observed in the second year, with all the OCB factors tested dropping significantly. After the third year, there is an increase again for all four characteristics. Scrupulosity and altruism increase the most.

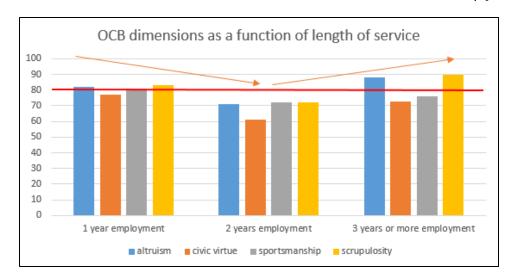


Figure 2. OCB dimensions of the 3 groups related to years of service

Overall, the trend for all four traits is that after an initial high value, there is a sharp decline and then an increase.

5.4. Individual results

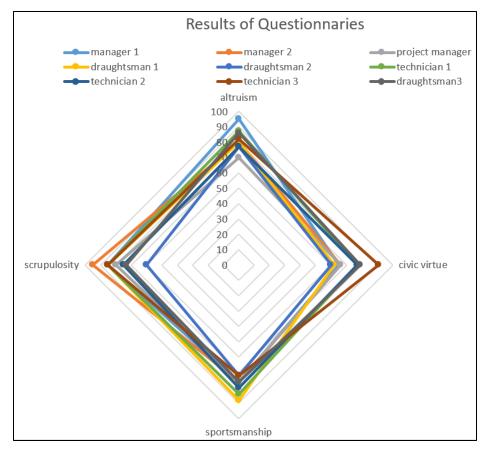


Figure 3. Employees' individual scores

A radar chart (Figure 3) summarised the results of the engineering office staff. It can be observed that the largest variance is for scrupulosity: 60-95%, followed by civic virtue: 60-91%, then altruism: 77-

95%. The smallest variance is for sportsmanship: 76-84%, so it can be concluded that all employees' scores are close to good. Furthermore, it can be seen that civic virtue exceeded the 80% threshold in case of only one employee, a new technician. In general, the lowest results are found for employees in their second year of employment.

6. Conclusions

Our research results supported the experience of earlier studies of this topic. As in our samples generational specifications are proved to be in relation to OCB dimensions. Moreover, interrelation can be stated between the time spent in employment at a company and the level of OCB virtues.

6.1. The process of group development

The background of the results is the process of group development. The engineering firm is a young company, so group formation strongly occurs.

When a new group is formed, group members initially try to make a good impression of themselves, to meet expectations and to fit in. This is the reason why, in the first year after starting a new job, the desire to conform dominates in employees, so that all the characteristics in the new environment approach the threshold of 80%, the good value. As everyone has a positive attitude towards people with these virtues. If the individual values for both "new employees" are taken as a basis, altruism scores the highest alongside scrupulosity, which also supports this. And the civic virtue of putting the interests of the organisation first takes a back seat in the initial period of employment. This leads to the conclusion that in this period the employee's main concern is to meet the expectations of management, which is why scrupulosity is the highest value, and the interests of the organisation are not yet important to him. For workers with two years of service, the percentage of all characteristics has dropped significantly, which may be an indication of group struggles, where workers are fighting to challenge roles and assert their individual will and interests. In addition, two new colleagues joined the group at the same time, and this fact gave rise to a lot of further discussion. During this period, employees are not able to concentrate on their tasks, which is why the measured values are low.

From the third year onwards, the significant increase in the values indicates normalisation and the period that follows. When the operating rules have been agreed and the group can now function well. It logically follows that they can focus on performing now. Again, scrupulosity and altruism rise significantly towards 80%. Managers also confirmed the fact that there were more conflicts between employees in the second year. The fact that sportsmanship remains below 80% may be due to the nature of the work of the employees. They mostly do their design and drawing tasks on their own, so they "socialise" less, even if they work in the same office.

6.2. Generational specificities

Another explanation for the results of the engineering office study lies in the theory of generation. All members of the organisation are Generation Y, i.e. born between 1980 and 1995. As the name 'y', or

'why', suggests, they question everything, they like to know the reason for everything. They grew up in comfort and economic prosperity. But they started working after the economic crisis. At that time, the labour market was uncertain, so planning their careers was not easy. They have high expectations of their work and value meaningful work. They were born into the world of the internet and cannot imagine their lives without it. They are individualists and have a strong need for autonomy. A money-oriented generation, they like goods that money can buy, so they seek financial success.

So they enjoy work if they can be individualistic and even have full autonomy. Thus, an organisation motivates them according to their individual values. It logically follows why civic virtue scored poorly in the measurement of the OCB dimensions; putting the interests of the firm ahead of individual interests is very difficult for them.

The dimension of civic virtue is higher for employees who have been at their job for more than 3 years; the other dimensions of OCB, but even for the two managers, have not yet developed a commitment to the company. However, this is normal, as previous studies (Kozák, 2020) on the development of civic virtue have shown that this virtue starts to emerge after at least three years of employment and long time spent in an organization amplifies this virtue. (Kegans et al, 2012)

6.3. Comparison to other researches in the field

According to our own research results it is partly confirmed that there is correlation between OCB dimensions and the clannish organizational culture and the generational specifications. Yet, in Shaiful's study sportsmanship achieved the highest score among members of Generation Y in our study it is scrupulosity.

Popescua and his associates findings that the high level of OCB entails for organization's performances has been confirmed in our study too. As our interview made with company managers support this. Moreover, the fact managers may have a direct influence on employees' behaviour and their OCB development seems to be confirmed in our minor survey, too.

Special characteristics of Generation Y described by Mannheim appear at the examined company, therefore, it is confirmed.

6.4. Limitations and future directions of the research

Precision and conscientiousness are the hallmarks of engineering. Failure to do so can result in serious damage, both financial and human - even costing lives. Although each design is an individual, new challenge, in the long term it is in fact monotonous work. Furthermore, it is sedentary work tied to a desk and a computer.

Therefore, maintaining motivation will be a major challenge for management in the future. After all, according to flow theory established by Csíkszentmihályi, if the level of challenge is lower than the ability of the employee, boredom and lassitude can easily set in. (Csíkszentmihályi, 2001) Therefore, it is recommended that the company fosters a supportive clan culture, where human resources, their development, the knowledge and performance of the individual are important. In this way, the engineering firm has a good chance of retaining a good workforce in the long term.

In case of this engineering SME, this research provided a very good opportunity to explore the social processes in the organisation. It has shown that over time, conscientiousness develops in employees, which will also contribute to engagement in long term. At the same time, the development of civic virtue is still lagging behind because of the short duration of employment.

However, this survey does not provide a representative sample due to low participation, so no general conclusion can be drawn. Therefore, this study will need to be extended to other SMEs and a back-testing of this organisation will be necessary at a later stage.

As Kozák pointed out in her study (2020) international research findings on organisational citizenship behaviour are not transferable to Hungarian practice, so it would be necessary to implement more comprehensive analysis of OCB in the domestic context, which goes far beyond the scope of this study.

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