

Prosocial Organizational Behavior: Is it a Personal Trait or an Organizational One?

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between types of Prosocial Organizational Behavior (POB) and organizational factors, which are exchange-based and the personal factor that is self-enhancement is a personality trait that promotes the subsequent psychological well-being. 527 employees from one of the top 100 companies in Turkey have participated in this study. After applying a confirmatory factor analysis to the scales used in the research, the relationship between research variables has been analyzed by structural equation model (SEM). Research results suggest the POB toward coworkers ($\beta = .85$) and role ($\beta = .45$) are strongly affected by self-enhancement that is a personal factor and there is no relationship between self enhancement and POB towards the organization. The POB towards the organization ($\beta = .70$) is strongly affected by perceived organizational support that is one of the organizational factors and is exchange based.

Keywords: organizational prosocial behavior, organizational support, supervisor support, interpersonal helping behavior, self enhancement, psychological well-being

1. Literature Review

POB is performed by a member of an organization who expects to provide benefits for the co-workers, customers, teams, or the organization itself with which the member interacts while carrying out his/her role. However, POB goes beyond specific role requirements. It is entirely on a voluntary basis, and not an enforceable requirement of the role itself (Clary, et al., 1998). The member of the organization, who is an actor of POB, does not expect a reward for his/her prosocial behavior; and hence his/her performance is not usually rewarded (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004). Management desires POB to be a common behavior within the organization.

There are two approaches in explaining POB in an organization. The first approach rests on the psychological findings the member of the organization is ready to undergo as prosocial behavior, due to a positive mood which is instantaneous (George, 1991). The positive mood approach suggests the POB may be somewhat spontaneous in gesture resulting from the individual's psychological well being which is instantaneous and temporary (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). However Watson and Pennebaker indicate the positive mood and psychological well being refer to a longitudinal and stable a personality trait (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989) and it is nourished by self-enhancement (Taylor & Brown, 1988). In addition, longitudinal studies confirm that self enhancement promotes the subsequent psychological well-being, and it is a longitudinal mood just as a personal trait, not a temporary mood. Individuals who have high self-enhancement tend to behave with more positive effects towards situations than do individuals with low self enhancement (O'Mara, Gaertner, Sedikides, Zhou, & Liu, 2012). The second approach lies in Blau's social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

According to the social exchange theory, the member of the organization reciprocates those who benefit from him/her. Members of an organization, who feel they have been treated or rewarded properly by the organization, leaders, and coworkers behave in their interests, act in order to return favors by exhibiting POB towards coworkers, teams and the organization itself. (Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990; McNeely & Meglino, 1994).

Studies show there is a relationship between organizational factors, such as organizational and leadership fairness (McNeely & Meglino, 1994; Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990; Ehrhart, 2004), equality in resource allocation (Liu, 2009), rewards, job attitudes (Baruch, O'Creavy, Hind, & Gadot, 2004), job satisfaction, work context, (George, 1991; Chiu & Chen, 2005; Jaja & Okpu, 2013) and POB (Shahabuddin, Azam, & Chowdhury, 2013; Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Finkelstein, 2012; Organ & Konovsky, 1989; Hornung, 2010; Rishipal, 2013). The studies stated above show the relationships between a member of an organization and the other members, as well as with the organization are an exchange based.

2. Theoretical Model

In this study, rather than organizational factors, the POB based on the organization member's exchange, and the member who is not based on exchange, the main research will be on the relationship between the POB of the member himself and self-enhancement as a main personal trait.

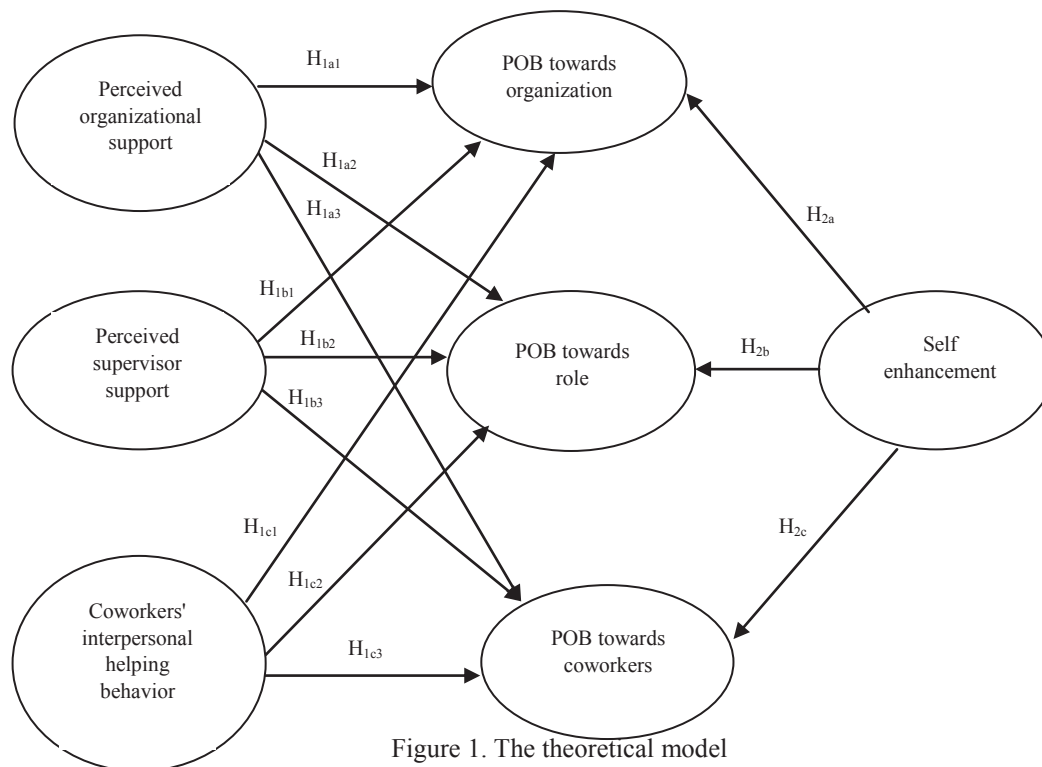


Figure 1. The theoretical model

2.1. Hypotheses

H₁: Organizational factors will significantly and positively correlate with POB.

H_{1a}: Perceived organizational support will significantly and positively correlate with (1_{a1}) POB towards the organization, (1_{a2}) POB towards role, and (1_{a3}) POB towards coworkers.

H_{1b}: Perceived supervisor support will significantly and positively correlate with (1_{b1}) POB towards the organization, (1_{b2}) POB towards role, and (1_{b3}) POB towards coworkers.

H_{1c}: Coworkers' interpersonal helping behavior will significantly and positively correlate with (1_{c1}) POB towards the organization, (1_{c2}) POB towards role, and (1_{c3}) POB towards coworkers.

H₂: Self-enhancement will significantly and positively correlate with (2_a) POB towards the organization, (2_b) POB towards role, and (2_c) POB towards coworkers.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Data for this study came from the workers of a large food manufacturer, which is at the top of the fortune 100 in Turkey. Participants attended informational meetings during work hours on a voluntary basis. During these meetings an overview about the purpose of the research was provided to the participants. Over one thousand questionnaires were distributed, and 557 completed questionnaires were received in return. Thirty of the responses were unusable. The response rate was 55%. The average age was 36 (SD 9). Participants' average tenure was 12 years (SD 9.2), and the average tenure in the organization was 8 years (SD 4.4).

3.2. Measures

Perceived organizational support as a feeling is measured with the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) scale (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1984). The short version of the SPOS is

compromised of 8 items. Sample items are "The organization really cares about my well-being" and "The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work".

Perceived supervisor support was measured with a slightly modified version of SPOS of Eisenberger et al. The scale consists of 8 items, and the sample items are "My Supervisor really cares about my well-being" and "My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values".

The coworkers' interpersonal helping behavior was measured with the Interpersonal Helping (IH) scale which is part of Moorman and Blakely's (Moorman & Bakely, 2005) validated and often used Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) instrument. The scale consists of 6 items and the sample item is "My coworkers voluntarily help new employees settle into the job".

Self-enhancement as a trait was measured with the enhancement scale from the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary, et al., 1998). 4 items of VFI refer to ways an individual can describe him or herself. Sample items are "Volunteering makes me feel better about myself" and "Helping makes me feel needed".

Prosocial organizational behaviors were measured via three scales. The first scale, which is POB towards the organization, was a modified version of the Altruism scale of Smith et al (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). The scale consists of 6 items, and the sample item is "I am quite proud to be able to tell people who it is I work for".

Prosocial organizational behavior towards role was Buchanan's job involvement scale (Buchanan, 1974), however, is now defined as the willingness to invest in work effectiveness as a personal effort of the organization member. The scale compromises 4 items and the sample item is "I am always looking for opportunities to improve my work, and I encourage my colleagues too".

Prosocial organizational behavior towards coworkers was measured with the Interpersonal Helping scale, which is part of Moorman and Blakely's IS (Moorman & Bakely, 2005) The scale compromises 6 items and the sample item is "I voluntarily help new employees settle into the job".

The scale has a total of 42 items. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from 5-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree.

4. Results

4.1. Scale Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was first conducted by using the AMOS 18 package to ensure that separate and reliable scales were used for assessing the variables. Absolute fit indices which are chi-square (X^2) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), non-normed fit index (NNFI), Tucker&Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) were checked.

The results were satisfactory, and confirmed that the main set of variables compromised separate factors: $X^2(304) = 562,23$, $p < .05$; $X^2/df = 1.84$; RMSEA= 0.052; CFI= .95; GFI= .89; CFI= .96; TLI= .95; NNFI= .94.

Next, a correlation matrix was produced in order to analyze the elementary relationship among the research variables. In table 1. The Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Intercorrelations represent the correlations among the variables along with the means, standard deviations, and coefficient alphas. The results are supportive of the hypothesized model.

Table 15. Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Intercorrelations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Perceived Organizational Support	(.91)						
2 Perceived Supervisor Support	.68**	(.81)					
3 Coworkers' Interpersonal Helping Behavior	.36*	.34*	(.85)				
4 Self-Enhancement	.12	.19*	.25*	(.81)			
5 POB Towards Organization	.55**	.34*	.20*	.41*	(.85)		
6 POB Towards Role	.42*	.31*	.27*	.49**	.60**	(.80)	
7 POB Towards Coworkers	.25*	.14*	.53**	.61**	.46*	.50**	(.85)
Mean	3.59	3.34	3.88	3.51	3.27	3.95	4.20
Standard Deviation	.92	.97	.88	1.10	1.21	.74	.58

N=527; **p < .01; *p < .05;. Entries in the diagonal represent the coefficient alphas.

4.2. Structural Model

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized model. Several fit indices were checked

to determine whether the hypothesized model demonstrated an acceptable fit according to the data. The hypothesized model showed an acceptable fit to the data. $\chi^2(715) = 1208.56$, $p < .05$; $\chi^2/df = 1.69$; RMSEA= 0.046; CFI= .95; GFI= .88; CFI= .95; TLI= .93; NNFI= .96.

In accordance with hypothesis 1_{a1}, and 1_{a2}; the perceived organizational support was strongly related to POB towards the organization ($\beta = .70$, $p < 0.001$) and POB towards role ($\beta = .45$, $p < 0.01$). In terms of hypothesis 1_{a3}, the perceived organizational support was related with POB towards coworkers ($\beta = .19$, $p < 0.05$).

From the perspective of hypothesis 1_{b1}, 1_{b2}, and 1_{b3} the perceived supervisor support was related with POB towards the organization ($\beta = .44$, $p < 0.01$), POB towards role ($\beta = .33$, $p < 0.05$), and POB towards coworkers ($\beta = .38$, $p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis 1_{c1}, on coworkers' interpersonal helping behavior, was not related to POB towards the organization ($\beta = .11$, $p > 0.05$). If we look from the viewpoint of 1_{c2}, and 1_{c3}, coworkers' interpersonal helping behavior was related with POB towards role ($\beta = .28$, $p < 0.05$), and POB towards coworkers ($\beta = .48$, $p < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 2_a, on self-enhancement, was not related to POB towards the organization ($\beta = .08$, $p > 0.05$). Hypotheses 2_b, and 2_c, regarding self-enhancement, was strongly related to POB towards role ($\beta = .45$, $p < 0.01$), and POB towards coworkers ($\beta = .85$, $p < 0.001$).

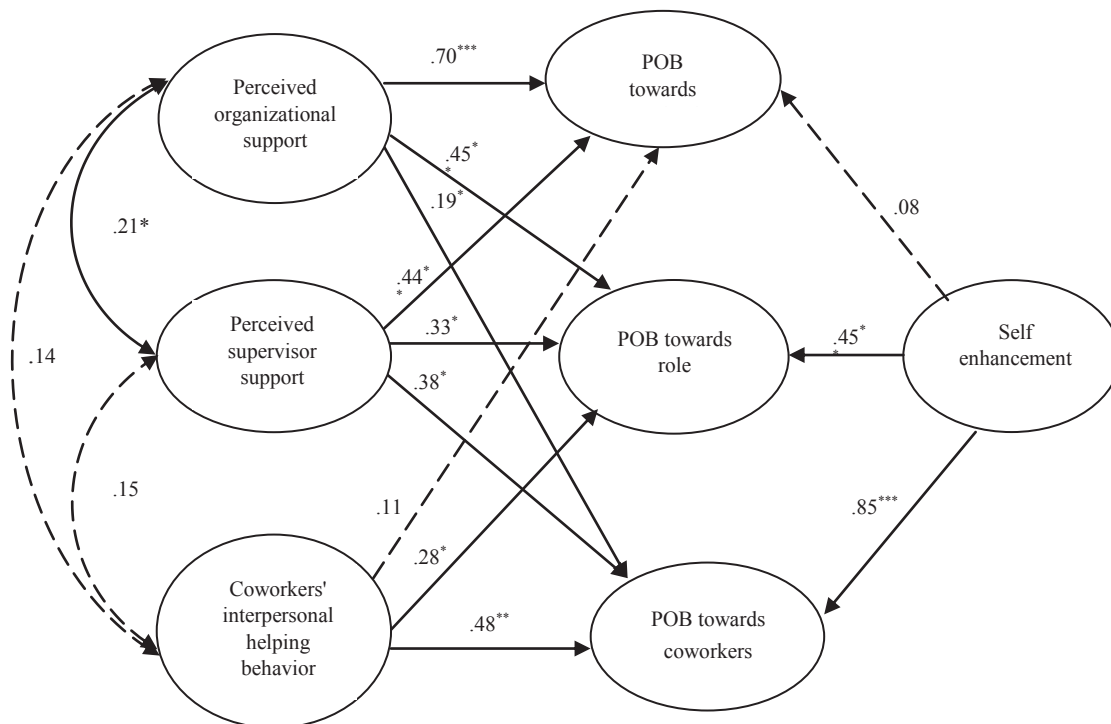


Figure 2. Antecedents and outcomes of prosocial organizational behavior (POB) types-structural model; N=527; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

5. Conclusion

The results of the study coincide with those of previous research. When the member of organization perceives the support of coworkers (McNeely & Meglino, 1994; Hornung, 2010; Ordun & Demirbaş, 2012) and the support given by the supervisor (Bolter & Weiss, 2013; Liu, 2009), acts in favor of the organization and others, in accordance with Blau's Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Bolter & Weiss, 2013) just as it is stated in the literature.

It can be said organizational support and the behaviors of the administrator and coworkers are differentiating factors in strengthening and weakening the POB of the organization member in countenance with the organization (Clary, et al., 1998; Baruch, O'Creevy, Hind, & Gadot, 2004). The support provided will become an external factor directing the organization member to act prosocially (Borman, White, & Dorsey, 1995; Ehrhart, 2004; Liu, 2009).

In addition, it has been found that there is a strong relationship between self-enhancement as a longitudinal personal trait and POB towards coworkers, and POB towards role. In the emergence of POB, personal factors, which occur free from organizational factors, are as important as organizational factors themselves. Self-enhancement as an internal factor and not as a temporary mood directs the organization member to act prosocially in the workplace.

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