

# Effects of Career Commitment on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Organizational Retaliatory Behavior : Moderating Effect of Job Interdependence<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study examined whether career commitment impacts organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational retaliatory behavior (ORB). We hypothesized that individuals with high career commitment perform more OCB and less ORB when they work in a context where they strongly interact with coworkers to attain group or organizational objectives. Using data collected from 416 workers in Japan, our empirical study revealed that career commitment had a positive impact on OCB and a negative impact on ORB, which was moderated by job interdependence such that the impact was more substantial when job interdependence was high than when it was low. Implications for future studies are presented.

**Keywords:** career commitment, job interdependence, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational retaliatory behavior

## Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been the focus of much research on organizational behavior (OB) for approximately 40 years. Previous studies have revealed the positive impact of various attitudinal factors, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, on OCB (Organ, 1988; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Some researchers have also focused on organizational retaliatory behavior (ORB), which is in contrast to OCB, and have found that this kind of behavior is affected by attitudinal factors such as organizational justice and job satisfaction (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Ueda, 2021a).

Individuals working in an organization have some commitment not only to the organization and their job but also to their career or vocation; this is called “career commitment.” Although the concept of career commitment is not new, it has not been sufficiently explored as an antecedent of OCB or ORB.

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Individuals' careers are individual matters. Contrary to commitment to the organization or satisfaction with the current job and work conditions that the organization provides, career commitment is not always related to the organization. Although many individuals want to attain the organization's objectives to develop their careers, some might try to be promoted without considering their coworkers or the organization. In addition, others might retire from the organization to improve their careers.

Therefore, when considering the relationship between career commitment and behaviors such as OCB and ORB, it is not enough just to focus on this attitude-behavior relationship. Other factors affecting this relationship should also be considered. We consider that this relationship depends on the organizational situation determining how an individual's behaviors interact with others' behaviors for the performance of the group to which they belong and the whole organization. Individuals with high career commitment tend to perform more OCB and less ORB if they consider that their behaviors toward their coworkers and the organization could affect their career development because the performance of the group or the whole organization is affected and determined by the behavior of each of them in a situation where they strongly interact with one another. However, they do not change their behavior if they consider that their job can be performed independently from other jobs.

## **Career commitment and its effect on OCB/ORB**

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two representative factors that have been considered antecedents of individuals' OCB in an organization (Organ et al., 2006). Why individuals who have a highly affective commitment to the organization are willing to exert more contributive and less inhibiting behaviors toward the effective functioning of the organization needs no explanation. Further, when considering why individuals with high satisfaction want to perform extra-role behaviors for the organization, OCB researchers have explained that such individuals recognize that they have received extra benefits from the organization that causes their satisfaction (Organ, 1988). They want to contribute to the organization in return for these benefits in their social exchange relationship with the organization; therefore, a complicated explanation of the effects of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on OCB and ORB is not necessary.

Compared with these attitudinal factors, OB researchers have not paid sufficient attention to career commitment. For example, Somers and Birnbaum (1998) said, "Although it is an important element of work-related commitment, career commitment

remains under-researched relative to commitment to the job and the organization” (p. 622).

What is career commitment? Several definitions have been proposed. For example, Blau (1985) defines career commitment as “one’s attitude toward one’s profession or vocation” (p. 278). Srikanth and Israel (2012) note that it “is characterized by a strong sense of identification, persuasion, development and active involvement in individual career goal” (p. 139). Katz, Rudolph and Zacher (2019) mention that career commitment is “(i)ndividuals’ dedication to their career, profession, or occupation” (p. 397).

One of the critical points of these definitions is that the concept of career commitment is separate from the organization in which individuals work. This commitment is entirely associated with individuals’ objectives or goals regarding their careers or career development. On this point, Zhang, Wu, Miao, Yan and Peng (2014) argue that “(i)t describes the willingness or desire of employees to keep their jobs and embodies the development of personal career goals as well as identification with and involvement in those goals.” (p. 811)

Therefore, career commitment has an indirect relationship with the organization. Most individuals belong to and work in the organization to promote their careers, and in most cases, career commitment has some relationship with this organization. However, in terms of career commitment, individuals with high career commitment might regard their work as merely a means of promoting their careers, and they continue working at their current organization just because they consider it the most effective way to develop their career. They might quit their job if they no longer consider this is the case. Mohamed, Taylor and Hassan (2006) also note that “(c)onsequently, it is possible that compared with coworkers having lower job commitment, individuals with high job commitment will react both more favorably when their expectations are met, and more negatively when these expectations go unfulfilled” (p. 517).

Although some researchers have focused on the relationship between career commitment and other attitudinal factors, their opinions or findings have sometimes been different. First, Cohen (1999) empirically examined the relationship between the five forms of commitment and showed that career commitment impacts organizational commitment. Regarding its relationship with job satisfaction, while Zhang et al. (2014) revealed the positive effect of career commitment on job satisfaction, Kim, Egan, Kim and Kim (2013) found that job satisfaction positively affects career commitment. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that different antecedents affect career satisfaction and commitment.

Given these researchers' considerations and findings, it is meaningful to consider the effect of career commitment on OCB and ORB as one of the factors that differ from other attitudinal factors. OCB is an individual's extra-role behavior that contributes to the organization (Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006), and a typical OCB is to voluntarily help a newcomer in need. The organization (or its supervisor) has no formal authority to order individuals to perform such behaviors because these extra-role behaviors are not defined and required in job descriptions. Even so, most people with at least some motive to behave for the organization voluntarily perform some type of OCB.

Furthermore, ORB is positioned in opposition to OCB (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), and a typical ORB is to take cheap office supplies home without permission. The behaviors classified as ORB are subtle but have some harmful effects on the organization if they accumulate over a long time. Some researchers have also examined the effects of attitudinal factors on ORB; for example, Ueda (2021a) revealed that job satisfaction has a negative impact on ORB.

It seems easy to explain that individuals with high organizational commitment are motivated to perform more OCB and less ORB, and it is natural to expect that these individuals want to adopt their behaviors in the organization. It is also understandable that individuals behave for the organization if they recognize that it provides a work environment that satisfies them.

Conversely, as already described, it might be more challenging to explain the direct linkage between career commitment and OCB or ORB because the former is associated with individuals' desire or hope for career advancement or development, and the latter is related to their attitude toward the workplace or organization. If individuals with high career commitment consider that more OCB or less ORB facilitates their career development, they will increase their OCB or decrease their ORB. However, if they do not consider this, they will not be motivated to change the frequency of their OCB or ORB. One factor that affects their consideration of the relationship between OCB or ORB and their career success is the interdependence between their and their coworkers' jobs or tasks in the organization.

## **Job interdependence and our hypotheses**

In an organization, no jobs or tasks are performed independently. However, the degree to which each job or task is interdependent with others differs depending on the organizational policies or characteristics of the department and its work.

According to Liden, Erdogan, Wayne and Sparrowe (2006), job or task

interdependence refers to “the degree to which group members need to work closely with others, share material, information, and expertise in order to complete their tasks” (p. 727). Liden et al. (2006) also state that “(w)hen job interdependence is high, greater communication, cooperation, and coordinated action among group members are necessary for goal accomplishment” (p. 728). Kiggundu (1981) differentiates between initiated and received task interdependence and notes that “initiated task interdependence leads to experienced responsibility for others’ work outcomes” (p. 504).

According to these researchers, in high job interaction, individuals’ performance is not determined only by their behaviors; they must cooperate with and help each other to produce collective outcomes for which they are responsible.

Individuals with a high career commitment aim to enhance their career development and performance. However, in situations where everyone closely interacts with coworkers, their behavior does not always determine their performance. Close cooperation with coworkers is necessary to enhance the performance of the entire group or organization. Unless the performance of the entire entity is improved, their careers are not developed. If individuals with high career commitment recognize that their OCB could contribute to others’ tasks and the performance of the group or organization, through which their own performance and career can be improved, they tend to exhibit more OCB, not with the pure motive to do something for the organization but with a sort of selfish motive to do it for their career. In contrast, under a low interactive work situation, they recognize that coworkers’ tasks and performance do not affect their performance and career, and their motivation to perform more OCB is expected to become low.

Similarly, ORB could negatively affect coworkers’ and one’s own task performance in a work situation where individuals must work together closely. Therefore, those with high career commitment tend to hold back their ORB not to enhance coworkers’ or the organization’s performance but to improve their careers. In a low interaction situation, they do not have to decrease their ORB.

Although the moderating effect of job interdependence is expected to exist, career commitment also has a positive main effect on OCB and a negative impact on ORB because any job in the organization has at least some interactive relationship with other jobs. Based on this inference, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Career commitment has a positive effect on OCB.

H2: Career commitment has a negative effect on ORB.

H3: Job interdependence moderates the effect of career commitment on OCB such

that the positive effect of career commitment on OCB is more substantial when job interdependence is high than when it is low.

H4: Job interdependence moderates the effect of career commitment on ORB such that the adverse effect of career commitment on ORB is more substantial when job interdependence is high than when it is low.

## Method

### *Data and sample*

This study utilized a part of the data on working persons that the author asked Macromill Corp. to collect through the Internet. This corporation includes registered people who can be survey respondents at the company's request. For this study, working persons who worked with others were asked to answer the questionnaire. Although this requirement might be somewhat unique, it is crucial for OCB research because some OCB items, as exemplified by "helping," assume that a focal worker works with others, such as a supervisor and coworkers. Data were collected in February 2021, and 416 workers participated in the study. Because the author also asked the company to collect data equally from men and women workers, the respondents were equally divided into 213 men and 213 women; their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years, averaging 39.98. About 46% were unmarried, and about 54% percent were married. The author and company did not specify the respondents' nationality, although all question items were presented to them in Japanese.

### *Variables*

*Job interdependence.* Pearce and Gregersen (1991) developed a scale of job interdependence in two dimensions: the first dimension is associated with reciprocal interdependence with other jobs (five items), and the second is related to the independence of other work to complete one's own task (three items). The subscales can also be combined into a single-job interdependence scale. This study used the mean response to these eight-item scales, ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*), to represent job interdependence. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.738 in this study.

*Career commitment.* The mean of the responses on the seven-item scale developed by Blau (1999), ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*), was utilized. This scale has been widely utilized to assess an individual's commitment to their occupation and career. Cronbach's alpha for the scale in this study was 0.877.

*Comprehensive OCB.* Farh, Earley and Lin (1997) developed an OCB scale for individuals working in the Chinese culture. Other researchers have used this scale

to collect data not only from Chinese workers but also from other Asian workers. In this study, the mean of the responses on a 20-item scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree) was used to measure comprehensive OCB. Although the original scale was divided into five subscales representing five different dimensions of OCB, a comprehensive OCB measure was used because, through exploratory factor analysis, definitive sub-dimensions were not determined in this study (Ueda, 2021b). Cronbach's alpha for the scale in this study was 0.802.

*ORB.* The 17-item ORB scale was developed by Skarlicki and Folger (1997). However, only eight were utilized to measure ORB in this study. Some items, such as “on purpose, damaged equipment or work process” or “disobeyed a supervisor’s instructions”, are not appropriate for measuring Japanese workers’ ORB because expressions of these items might be punishable as a crime or subject to disciplinary action in Japanese work environment. The Cronbach's alpha for the remaining eight items was 0.786.

*Gender and Ages.* The respondents' gender (1 = men, 2 = women) and age (real) were also collected and utilized as control variables.

## Results

### Results of Correlation Analysis

Table 1. Basic statistics and inter-correlations regarding the variables

variables	mean	std. dev.	gender	age	CC	JI	OCB
gender	1.500	0.501					
age	39.976	10.886	-0.028				
career commitment (CC)	2.988	0.918	0.071	0.085			
job interdependence (JI)	3.480	0.642	0.059	0.045	0.246**		
OCB	3.491	0.498	0.096	0.152**	0.301**	0.451**	
ORB	2.211	0.666	-0.162**	-0.080	-0.211**	-0.348**	-0.681**

N = 416, \*\* : p < 0.01, \* : p < 0.05

Table 1 shows the basic statistics and intercorrelations of the variables.

Focusing on the relationship of demographic variables with career commitment or job interdependence, neither gender nor age are significantly correlated with career commitment and job interdependence. Given the current Japanese labor environment, although it is often said that the prospect of a career differs depending on these demographic factors, this result might run counter to our intuition. From this result, it is not appropriate to argue that only older or male individuals tend to have meaningful jobs that require formidable adjustments compared to other jobs.

Career commitment has a significantly positive correlation with OCB and a significantly negative correlation with ORB at a 0.01 significance level, as expected

in our hypotheses. Although we did not propose a hypothesis regarding the main effect of job interdependence on OCB and ORB, this effect is similar to that on career commitment. Finally, as expected, the correlation between OCB and ORB is significantly negative.

### *Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis*

Table 2. Results of hierarchical regression analysis (OCB as the dependent variable)

Model	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Adj R <sup>2</sup>
1 Gender	0.100	2.072	0.039	7.069**	0.028
	0.155	3.195	0.002		
2 Gender	0.063	1.471	0.142	36.043**	0.252
	0.120	2.810	0.005		
3 Age	0.189	4.299	<0.001		
	0.396	9.027	<0.001		
	0.058	1.380	0.168	30.671**	0.263
Career Commitment (CC)	0.117	2.760	0.006		
	0.170	3.846	<0.001		
	0.412	9.379	<0.001		
Job Interdependence (JI)	0.114	2.657	0.008		
CC×JI					

Dependent Variable: Comprehensive OCB

Table 2 displays the results of hierarchical regression analysis with OCB as the dependent variable. In this analysis, gender and age were entered into the equation in the first step, and career commitment and job interdependence were entered in the second step. Finally, the products of career commitment and job interdependence were also entered.

In the second step of the regression analysis, career commitment has a significantly positive impact on OCB, which supports H1. The product of career commitment and job interdependence is also significantly positive in the last step. While this result implies that job interdependence moderates career commitment and OCB, in line with our hypothesis, we need a simple slope analysis to confirm this moderating effect.

Table 3. Results of hierarchical regression analysis (OCB as the dependent variable)

Model	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Adj R <sup>2</sup>
1 Gender	-0.164	-3.394	0.001	7.119**	0.029
	-0.084	-1.743	0.082		
2 Gender	-0.137	-3.016	0.003	7.119**	0.029
	-0.060	-1.311	0.191		
3 Age	-0.121	-2.582	0.010	18.742**	0.176
	-0.307	-6.577	<0.001		
	-0.131	-2.922	0.004		
Career Commitment (CC)	-0.055	-1.234	0.218		
	-0.093	-1.995	0.047		
	-0.332	-7.130	<0.001		
Job Interdependence (JI)	-0.167	-3.669	<0.001		

Dependent Variable: ORB

Table 3 also exhibits a result similar to that in Table 2. Career commitment has a significantly negative impact on ORB, supporting H2. In addition, the product of career commitment and job interdependence is significantly negative, supporting H4.

One of the most observable points in these two tables is that both analyses show a significant effect of job interdependence on OCB and ORB. The result implies that high job interdependence encourages individuals to consider the effect of their behaviors more seriously.

### *Results of Simple Slope Analysis*

Figures 1 and 2 show the results of a simple slope analysis that confirms the moderating effect of job interdependence on the effect of career commitment on OCB and ORB. In line with the conventional approach, the mean plus or minus one standard deviation was adopted as the criterion for the high or low values of these variables in these figures.

The straight line in Figure 1 shows the effect of career commitment on OCB when job interdependence is low, while the dotted line displays the effect when job interdependence is high. The gradient of the slope for the former is 0.037 ( $t = 0.995$ , n.s.), and that for the latter is 0.147 ( $t = 3.901$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which means that the positive effect of career commitment on OCB is significant only when job interdependence is high. This result supports H3.

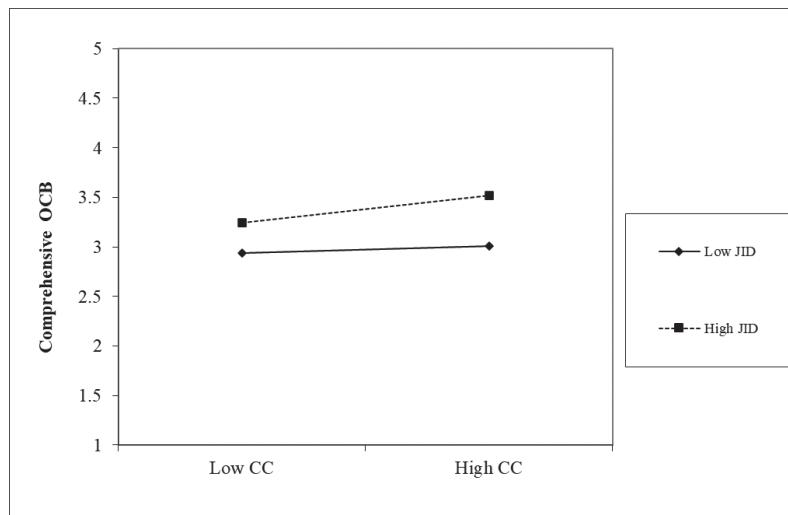


Figure 1. Results of simple slope analysis for comprehensive OCB

Figure 2 depicts the results of a simple slope analysis of the ORB as a dependent variable. This result is similar to that of the OCB. When job interdependence is low, the slope representing the effect of career commitment on ORB is  $0.039$  ( $t = 0.919$ , n.s.). In contrast, when job interdependence is high, the value of the slope becomes  $-0.175$  ( $t = -4.103$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result indicates that the negative effect of career commitment on ORB is significant only when job interdependence is high, which supports H4.

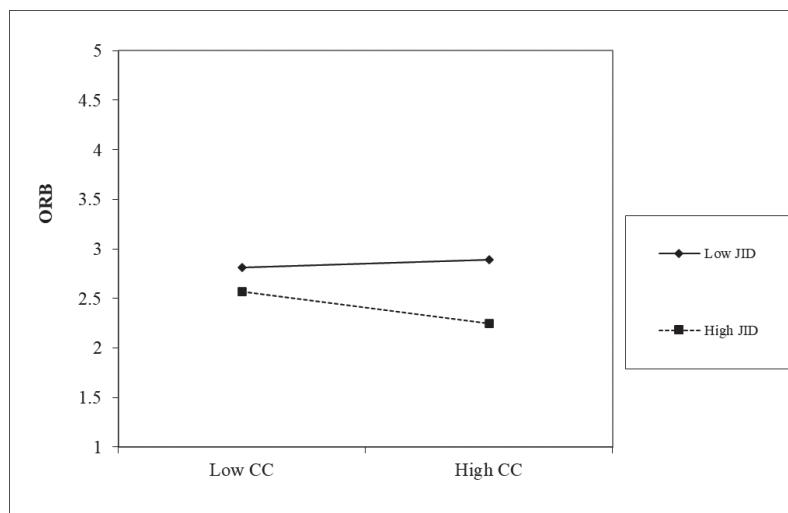


Figure 2. Results of simple slope analysis for comprehensive OCB

## Discussion and conclusion

This study examined the effect of career commitment on OCB and ORB by considering the moderating effect of job interdependence on it. Our empirical study revealed that the effect of career commitment on OCB and ORB was significant only in high job interdependence situations. Compared to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are attitudinal factors regarding the organization or its work situation, career commitment is an attitude toward individuals' vocational life, and it has only an indirect relationship with organizational behaviors. Therefore, career commitment is not directly linked to the motive to perform more OCB or less ORB under the low job interdependence condition. The academic contribution of this study is the empirical determination of this relationship.

However, this study had some limitations. First, while we focused on the effect of career commitment on behavioral factors, further consideration of the relationship between career commitment and other attitudinal factors is necessary. As Zhang et al. (2014) note, if career commitment affects job satisfaction, we can propose a model in which job satisfaction mediates the relationship between career commitment and OCB or ORB. Future studies are expected to investigate how multiple factors that have been found to have a significant effect on OCB or ORB interactively affect these behaviors.

Furthermore, although this is not a limitation of this study, the concept of career commitment is abstract, as seen from the varied definitions. To measure career commitment, several scales that lack coherence have been proposed; more sophistication in the concept and scale of career commitment are also necessary.

OCB research has had more than 40 years of history since Dennis Organ, the guru of OCB, introduced the concept to his graduate students (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ & Near, 1983; Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006). Many factors are considered to be related to OCB. Future researchers are required to deal not only with new antecedents or consequent factors of OCB or ORB but also with the problem of integrating the findings of past studies.

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