

## **Dark Side of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB): Testing a Model between OCB, Social Loafing, and Organizational Commitment**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to contribute to the organizational citizenship behaviour literature by testing a model that combines organizational citizenship, social loafing and organizational commitment. We used structural equation modelling and tested the model by collecting questionnaires from high school teachers and their supervisors. Our findings indicate that, as hypothesized, teachers' organizational citizenship behaviour towards individuals causes more social loafing by their colleagues, and that the social loafing behaviour of these co-workers results in more social loafing by the teachers themselves. Also, social loafing by co-workers has a negative impact on teachers' commitment to the school, and their commitment has a negative effect on their own social loafing.*

**Keywords:** Organizational citizenship, social loafing, organizational commitment.

### **Introduction**

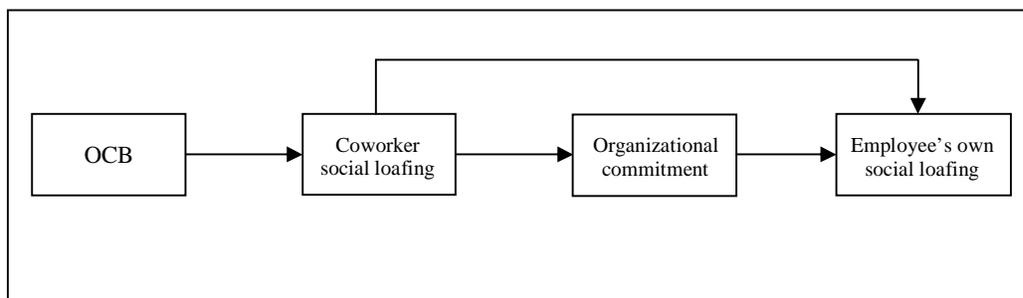
Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is employee behaviour that is not compulsory in job descriptions, and is neither rewarded nor punished by organizational management (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Tang and Ibrahim, 1998). OCB was conceptualized by Organ and his colleagues (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983) and described as "individual behaviour 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" (Organ, 1988). OCB has been a popular organizational factor in organizational literature over recent years (Podsakoff et al., 2000) and, perhaps because of that popularity, it has generally been presumed to be desirable employee behaviour in working life; it's possible negative consequences have received very little attention.

The previous research on OCB has proved that the construct is a contributory factor for organizational well-being, and many scholars have mentioned its value in organizational success and performance. Cohen and Vigoda-Gadot (2000), Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1994) and Podsakoff et al. (1997) have stated many positive outcomes of OCB: increasing the productivity of co-workers, helping managers to direct the organization, making it possible for managers to use their resources effectively, facilitating coordination between team members, etc. Rego and Cunha (2008) found that the branches of two insurance companies in which employees displayed more OCB were also the most effective branches. Thus, based on the previous studies, a link between OCB and positive outcomes can easily be established, but this favourable attitude towards OCB raises many interesting questions and leaves the possible "dark side" of OCB unexplored (Bolino et al., 2004).

Although the dominant approach to the OCB construct is positive, some researchers have drawn attention to its negative aspects.

First, some scholars have put forward the idea that employees' OCB may stem from self-monitoring or self-serving motives (Bolino et al., 2004). Bolino (1999), Leary (1996), Leary and Kowalsky (1990) and Schutz (1998) have suggested a concept of impression management, and have asserted that people always try to make an impression on others and that they categorize others according to those impressions. Thus, it is controversial whether the main reason for facilitating or helping behaviour by employees is OCB or impression management tactics (Bolino, 1999). Secondly, some authors have argued that individual performance appraisal processes might be damaged because of the OCB of others. Podsakoff et al. (1993) argued that the evaluation of OCB by managers could make employees dissatisfied with their performance appraisals. Similarly, Bergeron (2005) has focused on the negative relationship between OCB and career outcomes, and has stated that spending time on OCB may lower productivity and that this decrease might worsen the performance appraisal by the manager. Finally, previous research alluded to the possibility that OCB might have negative consequences for employees. For instance, Bacharach et al. (1991) indicated that employees may face a work-family conflict because OCB could consume their personal resources and burn them out. Likewise, Vigoda-Gadot (2006) implied that OCB might turn into "compulsory citizenship behaviour" (CCB) because of the managers' limitless expectations, and that CCB was related to job stress, strong intentions to leave, and burnout.

Briefly, although previous research has noted that OCB might stem from self-monitoring motives, damage an individual's performance appraisal, and have a negative impact on employees' job attitudes, very little attention was given to field studies on the possible dark sides of OCB. As part of this literature, the main purpose of the current study is to examine the possible negative aspects of OCB in a structural equation model. In the model, when OCB is the independent variable, social loafing of co-workers will be treated as a negative outcome of OCB. In addition, when co-workers' social loafing behaviour is the independent variable, the employees' organizational commitment and their own social loafing will be the dependent variables. Whetten (1989) suggested that exploring the psychological process between a predictor and the outcome variables in a relational construct is important in order to extend the theory, and thus the current study hypothesizes that when an employee exhibits OCB, his/her co-workers tend to show more social loafing behaviour and that this social loafing behaviour results not only in a decrease in the employee's organizational commitment, but also an increase in the employee's own social loafing. Proposed model is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Research Model

### **1. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour**

Discretionary behaviour that promotes the effectiveness of an organization differs from formal role behaviour. This informal behaviour has been termed pro-social organizational behaviour (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), extra-role behaviour (Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998), good soldier syndrome (Turnipseed & Murkison, 2000), and organizational citizenship behaviour (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988; Smith et al., 1983). OCB includes some social behaviour, such as being sensitive concerning the mistakes of others, discussing problems if necessary, finishing work on time, being innovative, helping others, and acting voluntarily (Kidwell et al., 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000).

When the relevant literature is examined, it appears that scholars cannot agree on the particular dimensions of OCB; for example, Podsakoff et al. (2000) defined thirty different types of citizenship behaviour in their review study, whereas Smith et al. (1983), the first scholars to focus on OCB dimensions, identified two factors: altruism and generalized compliance. Following on from these efforts, Organ (1988) proposed five OCB dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. In another study, Williams and Anderson (1991) defined a two-factor OCB construct as OCB-I (OCB towards individuals) and OCB-O (OCB towards the organization), by combining Organ (1988)'s dimensions.

Besides those studies based on dimensions, some authors have focused on relational aspects. Previous research indicated that OCB was related to employee job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983), motivation (Rioux & Penner, 2001), organizational justice (Folger, 1993; Martin & Bies, 1991; Moorman, 1991; Moorman et al., 1993; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993), and organizational performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000) within the life of the organization. The predominant findings in the literature are that organizational achievement increases when OCB is increased (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000); moreover, OCB can enhance co-worker and managerial productivity, free up resources for further productive purposes, serve as an effective means of coordinating activities, and enhance the organization's ability to attract and retain the best people (Podsakoff et al., 1997). As can be clearly seen, in the previous studies there is a lack of focus on the possible negative effects of OCB. However in the current study it is thought that OCB might have a negative impact on co-workers' social loafing behaviour, as an adverse antecedent.

## **2. Social Loafing and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour**

In the literature, social loafing is defined as the tendency to decrease individual effort when working in groups from the effort made when working alone (Williams & Karau, 1991). Several antecedents have been identified that contribute to the development of social loafing among group members. Task visibility (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993), cohesiveness (Kerr, 1983; Liden et al., 2004), group size (Shaw, 1981; Steiner, 1972), task interdependence (Karau & Williams, 1993; Liden et al., 2004), distributive justice (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993), dominance (Palloff & Pratt, 2003) and procedural justice (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993) could be given as examples of these antecedents. In addition, there are also social factors such as shirking and aggression that may contribute to social loafing.

The use of work groups in organizations has gained popularity. As a result, researchers have tended to focus on group productivity and group productivity loss (Ilgen, 1999). As part of this, a considerable amount of research attention has been given to the study of social loafing behaviour and OCB and their manifestations within an organization. Social loafing behaviour can be seen as one form of group productivity loss (George, 1992), whereas OCB is believed to contribute to increased productivity and effectiveness. Thus, OCB has generally been seen as beneficial to organizations, whereas social loafing has been understood as undesirable behaviour.

The relationship between OCB and social loafing lies in two different theories: (1) the unidentifiability of individual effort in a group context (Latane et al., 1979), and (2) the dispensability of an individual's effort (Kerr & Brunn, 1983). According to Latane et al. (1979), if rewards are distributed equally without distinguishing the individual efforts, individuals can hide or be lost in the crowd and can benefit from the group success with less effort. Thus, individuals with higher OCB can decrease their voluntary performances in order to balance the effort-reward exchange. Additionally, Kerr and Brunn (1983) hypothesized that group members exert less effort when working collectively because they feel that their individual inputs are not necessary for a high-quality group project. They termed this motivation loss as "free-rider" behaviour. A free rider is someone who benefits from a good group product without contributing to its achievement (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). A free rider might be found in any real work group. Although there is no research that focuses on the relationship between OCB and social loafing, one may anticipate that if one of the group members exhibits a high level of OCB then any of the other members of the group might loaf as a free rider. Thus, we can develop the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be a positive relationship between an employee's OCB and the extent of his/her co-workers' social loafing as free riders.

Besides the hiding-in-the-crowd behaviour and the free-rider behaviour of social loafing, the "sucker effect" was found to be another possible factor for social loafing. An individual who believes that his/her co-workers are loafing is inclined to withhold his/her effort in a group setting (Kerr, 1983). Kerr hypothesized that individuals who perceive their co-workers as loafers exert less effort in collective conditions, to re-establish the equilibrium of effort. In his study, Kerr (1983) found that an individual decreases his/her efforts if he/she has a partner who could have contributed to the group but instead took part in social loafing. An important point in his study is that group members would not reduce their efforts if they perceived that the low performance of the individual was due to a lack of ability rather than to free-riding.

There are some studies that have investigated the relationship between the social loafing of co-workers and an individual's own social loafing. Schnake (1991), for example, hypothesized that expectations of co-workers' social loafing would have a negative effect on quantitative task performance, internal work motivation and job satisfaction in groups.

The findings supported the proposed model. In other studies, Comer (1995) and Mulvey and Klein (1998) found that perceived social loafing by co-workers was positively related to an expectation of a lower effect and the sucker effect. Similarly, Hart (2000) investigated the impact of achievement motivation and expected co-worker effort on collective task performance. His findings indicated that only the participants with a low achievement motivation who worked with a high effort co-worker engaged in social loafing. In a more recent study, Liden et al. (2004) also found a positive relationship between perceived co-worker performance and social loafing. Thus, building on the previous literature the following hypothesis is developed:

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be a positive relationship between the social loafing of co-workers and an employee's own social loafing, because of the sucker effect.

### ***3. Organizational Commitment and Social Loafing***

The concept of organizational commitment has become a hot topic in the literature of industrial/organizational psychology and organizational behaviour. Organizational commitment means the attachment which is formed by individuals towards their employing organizations (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001). An organization benefits from its employees' commitment in terms of lower rates of job movement, or higher productivity or work quality, or both (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

The most commonly investigated type of organizational commitment is attitudinal, and describes a state in which an individual identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals (Mowday et al., 1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) insist on three distinct components of organizational commitment in order to maintain membership in an organization: a desire (affective commitment), a need (continuance commitment), and an obligation (normative commitment). They note that all three forms of organizational commitment depend on the opportunity the organization provides for the employees to feel motivated towards growth and achieve some self-actualization.

Many studies have searched for the possible antecedents of organizational commitment. According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990)'s meta-analysis, for example, the antecedents of organizational commitment are personal characteristics, job characteristics, group leader relationships, organizational characteristics, and role states. In another study, Meyer and Allen (1991) found different antecedents for each component of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative). In more recent research, Ketch and Strawser (2001) suggested personal and situational factors as the two main categories of the antecedents of organizational commitment. While an employee enters an organization with his or her personal characteristics, the situational factors are composed of job quality, degree of participative leadership, and co-worker commitment. Situational factors have a greater impact on organizational commitment than personal factors.

As a situational factor, co-workers' social loafing behaviour is a possible antecedent of organizational commitment. The theory behind the co-worker social loafing and organizational commitment relationship is the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory analyses interactions between two parties by examining the costs and benefits to each (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The key point of the theory is that it assumes that the two parties are both giving and receiving items of value to and from each other. Under this theory, interactions are only likely to continue if both parties feel they are coming out of the exchange with more than they are giving up – that is, if there is a positive amount of profit for both parties. In this interaction, rewards are exchanged resources that bring pleasure and satisfaction, while costs are exchanged resources that are perceived as a loss or punishment. If one side perceives that the social exchange is damaged then he/she will decide to step back from the interaction (Blakely et al., 2005). This stepping back might be seen in low performance (Cowherd & Levine, 1992), high levels of lateness for work or absenteeism (Hulin, 1991), abnormal behaviour (Skarlicki et al., 1999) or a decrease in organizational commitment (Barling & Philips, 1993). High levels of social loafing by co-workers could result in damage to the social exchange and might decrease an employee's commitment to the organization. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a negative relationship between social loafing by co-workers and an employee's organizational commitment.

The consequences of organizational commitment are numerous and are of great importance to organizations. Lower rates of job movement and higher company-wide productivity or work quality are important consequences of high organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Organizational commitment is used to predict employees' absenteeism, performance, turnover, and other behaviour.

Turnover intentions and rates, absenteeism and low performance result from a deficiency in organizational commitment. Intentions to leave yield the highest negative correlation with organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In sum, strong commitment by employees to the organization has many advantageous results for the well-being of the organization. Furthermore, a lack of organizational commitment has many negative impacts on employees' attitudes and behaviour within the organization, and this may include the employee's own social loafing.

Again, social exchange theory plays an important role in clarifying the relationship between organizational commitment and an employee's own social loafing behaviour. As stated before, if one side perceives that the social exchange is damaged then he/she will decide to step back from the interaction. Low organizational commitment would make an employee think that the social exchange was damaged. So, when the organizational commitment of an employee decreases, he/she will probably be inclined to loaf more, to balance the costs–benefit relationship. Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 4:** There will be a negative relationship between an employee's organizational commitment and his/her own social loafing.

#### **4. Method**

##### **4.1. Participants**

The participants in the present study consisted of high school teachers and their supervisors from a technical high school in Turkey. In the school there were forty different technical lessons, and every lesson was grouped under a supervisor teacher. So, in every lesson group, there were between four and seven teachers, and one of the teachers was the supervisor of the group. Because of the requirements of the educational system in the school, lesson groups had to study as a team and had to share the duties (preparing the lesson materials, preparing the exams, coordinating the laboratory studies, finding industry firms for practical training, etc.) with the group members. Thus, teamwork was an inevitable phenomenon for the teachers in the school.

Data were obtained using two different questionnaires, of which one was filled in by the supervisor teachers and the other by the subject group teachers. The OCB of the teachers was obtained from the supervisor teachers, and social loafing and organizational commitment data were collected from the teachers. The questionnaires were given by the researchers to every participant in different sessions. 180 teachers and their supervisors completed the questionnaires. When the returned questionnaires were examined, 5 were invalid. As a result, a total of 175 valid responses were used in this research. The sample included 129 (73.7%) female and 46 (26.3%) male teachers; 124 (71%) of the participants were married, 47 (27%) were single, and 4 (2%) were divorced. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 63 years of age, with the average age being 41.02 (SD=7.75) years. The participants had been working in the school for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 35 years, with the average period being 10.53 (SD=7.60) years.

##### **4.2. Measures**

**OCB.** OCB was measured by adapting a scale taken from Williams and Anderson (1991)'s study. In the translation and adaptation process for the measure, a method based on a model described by Bristlin et al. (1973) was used, which consisted of five steps: forward translation, assessment of the forward translation, backward translation, assessment of the backward translation, and a discussion with experts.

The scale was designed to measure the two OCB dimensions, OCB-I and OCB-O. It consisted of 12 items (7 items for OCB-I and 5 items for OCB-O). Sample items were "Does the work of his/her friend who is absent", "Shares all information with colleagues" and "Does not spend time on personal matters during school time". Each item was answered via a five-point Likert scale: 1=almost never, through to 5=almost always. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each dimension were .84 for OCB-I, .71 for OCB-O and .85 for the entire scale.

**Social Loafing.** To assess social loafing behaviour, two different scales were used. The first social loafing scale was developed to assess the perception of co-workers' social loafing free-riding behaviour. It consisted of four items adapted from Mulvey and Klein (1998) and George (1992). Sample items were "Members of my subject group are free-riders" and "Members of my subject group contribute less than I anticipated". Each item referred to a 5-point rating scale (1=almost never; 5=almost always). The reliability coefficient of the scale was .75. Teachers' own social loafing behaviour was measured with a five-item scale adapted from Mulvey and Klein (1998) and Jassawalla et al. (2009).

Sample items were “Because other subject group members are not contributing as much as they could, I’m not trying my best” and “Because other subject group members are putting in less effort than they are able, I do not plan to continue to work hard”. The reliability coefficient of the scale was .74.

Organizational Commitment. A 7-item scale adapted from Jaworski and Kohli (1993) was used to assess the organizational commitment of the teachers. The scale evaluates the organizational commitment as a one-dimensional construct. Sample items were “If it is necessary for the well-being of the school, I can sacrifice my own wishes” and “The bonds between me and the school are very strong”. Each item referred to a 5-point rating scale (1=almost never; 5=almost always). Scores differ between 7 and 35, and high scores mean a high commitment to the school. The reliability coefficient of the scale was .78.

#### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To ensure the construct validity of the study variables, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. Due to the findings of Hoffman et al. (2007) on whether the OCB dimensions fit the five-factor, two-factor, or one-factor model, we used two different models. The first model was a five-factor model in which co-worker social loafing, employee social loafing, organizational commitment, and the two OCB dimensions (OCB-I and OCB-O) were each loaded as separate latent factors, and the second model was a four-factor one in which co-worker social loafing, employee social loafing, organizational commitment and OCB (one factor that was produced from the corresponding two latent variables) were included. As expected, the five-factor model yielded a very good fit [ $\chi^2 = 15.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $df = 5$ , GFI (goodness of fit) = .92, CFI (comparative fit index) = .92, RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) = .05, IFI (incremental fit index) = .91] but the second model resulted in a poor fit [ $\chi^2 = 27.88$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $df = 4$ , GFI = .79, CFI = .82, RMSEA = .08, IFI = .79]. Thus we suggested that co-worker social loafing, employee social loafing, organizational commitment, OCB-I and OCB-O were distinct constructs.

#### 5. Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of all measures, and the correlation coefficients between the variables. These results show statistically significant positive relationships between OCB-I and co-worker social loafing ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and organizational commitment ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and between OCB-O and co-worker social loafing ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and organizational commitment ( $r = .56$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The relationship between organizational commitment and co-worker social loafing was significantly negative and moderate ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the relationship between organizational commitment and employee social loafing was insignificant ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The relationship between co-worker social loafing and employee social loafing was significantly high and positive ( $r = .79$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics, reliability scores and inter-correlations between dimensions

Factor	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. OCB-I	4,10	0,55	(.84)				
2. OCB-O	3,96	0,53	.71**	(.71)			
3. Coworker Social Loafing	3,64	1,05	.31**	.27**	(.75)		
4. Employee Social Loafing	3,36	0,96	.29**	.20	.79**	(.74)	
5. Organizational Commitment	3,94	0,64	.41**	.56**	-.28**	-.18	(.78)

Note: Cronbach alpha coefficients were given on the diagonal in parentheses.

\*\*  $p < .01$  (Two-tailed); (N=175)

The hypothesized model was tested in a path analytic model using AMOS 16.0 (Byrne, 2010; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006). The model is outlined in Figure 2. The model test was based on a covariance matrix and used maximum likelihood estimation. The significant paths are shown with bold lines, and the insignificant paths with a thin line. The fit indices for the overall model were in the acceptable range [ $\chi^2 = 11.657$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $df = 3$ ; GFI = .91, CFI = .94, IFI = .93, RMSEA = .05]. According to the path model, all but one of the hypotheses were supported by the data.

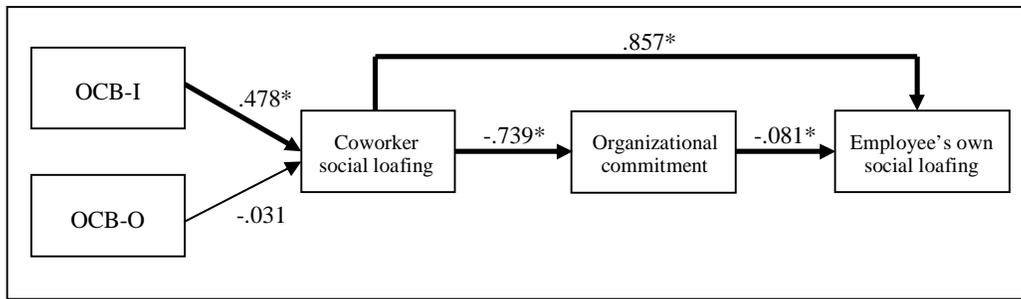


Figure 2: SEM Results

It was postulated that there would be more co-worker social loafing if the employees exhibited more OCB, because if the employees helped their colleagues more, their colleagues might tend to loaf more. This was partially supported. There was a positive and significant impact of OCB-I on the incidence of co-worker social loafing (standardized  $b = .478$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but the impact of OCB-O on the incidence of co-worker social loafing was insignificant (standardized  $b = -.031$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Standardized  $b$ s, standard errors and  $p$  values of the paths are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Path Estimates

Path	Standardized $b$	Standard Error	$p$
OCB-I → Coworker social loafing	0.478	0.204	.01
OCB-O → Coworker social loafing	-0.031	0.241	ns
Coworker social loafing → Employee social loafing	0.857	0.050	.001
Coworker social loafing → Organizational commitment	-0.739	0.473	.05
Organizational commitment → Employee social loafing	-0.081	0.025	.001

ns = not significant.

We hypothesized that more co-worker social loafing would result in more social loafing by employees because of the sucker effect. This hypothesis was supported by the data. We found a positive and statistically significant relationship between co-worker social loafing and employees’ own social loafing (standardized  $b = .857$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We had postulated that high levels of co-worker social loafing would damage the social exchange between the co-worker and the employee and might decrease the employee’s commitment to the organization. This hypothesis was also supported by the findings. We found a negative and significant impact of co-worker social loafing on organizational commitment (standardized  $b = -.739$ ,  $p < .05$ ). More co-worker social loafing results in lower commitment of the employee to the organization.

Finally, organizational commitment was expected to have a negative relationship with employees’ own social loafing. To the extent that an employee’s commitment to the organization suffered, that employee would tend to loaf more. Our data indicated that there was a negative and statistically significant impact of organizational commitment on employee’s own social loafing (standardized  $b = -.081$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

6. Discussion

To date, many researchers have shown that OCB has a positive influence on organizational performance and well-being (e.g., Motowidlo et al., 1994; Podsakoff and Mackenzie, 1994; Podsakoff et al., 1997). In addition, studies at the individual level have indicated a positive relationship between OCB and employee job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983), motivation (Rioux and Penner, 2001) and justice perception (Folger, 1993). There has been little focus on the negative aspects of OCB; therefore, its possible adverse effects have been left unexplored. In this regard, this recent study contributes to the literature by integrating OCB with the social loafing behaviour of both co-workers and employees themselves in a path analytic model. The results indicate that OCB has a significant impact on co-worker social loafing, and that co-worker social loafing has a positive impact on an employee’s own social loafing and a negative impact on organizational commitment. Moreover, organizational commitment has a negative impact on an employee’s own social loafing.

One of our objectives in this study was to extend the literature, via an examination of the correlations between OCB, social loafing and organizational commitment. The results of the correlation analysis show that, while OCB-I had positive relationships with co-worker social loafing, employee social loafing and organizational commitment, OCB-O had positive relations with all these except employee social loafing. Besides that, we found a positive relationship between co-worker social loafing and employee social loafing, which supports the results of Mulvey and Klein (1998), and a negative relationship between co-worker social loafing and organizational commitment.

The results of the structural equation modelling analysis provide general support for the hypothesized model. As predicted, OCB of employees was related to co-workers' social loafing. Specifically, the findings indicated that OCB-I had a positive and significant impact on co-worker social loafing, but that OCB-O had a negative and insignificant effect on co-worker social loafing. Kerr and Brunn (1983), naming the phenomenon as "free riding", hypothesized that individuals exert less effort when working collectively because of the feeling that their individual inputs are not necessary for the performance. Since a free rider benefits from a good group product without contributing to it (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005), more OCB by an employee towards his/her colleagues results in more social loafing by his/her co-workers. Interestingly, one of the reasons for free riding is OCB-I, but not OCB-O. These findings show that co-workers tend to perceive helpful behaviour by their colleagues towards them as a reason for social loafing but that they do not take the same view of OCB towards the organization. One explanation for this might lie in the characteristics of OCB-O. Since OCB-O involves actions such as voluntary contributions towards organizational activities and a decision not to complain about common problems in the organization, co-workers do not consider that behaviour to be a reason for loafing, because the action is not directed towards them.

As expected, we found a strong and positive impact of co-worker social loafing on an employee's own social loafing. As Kerr (1983) stated, an individual who believes that his/her co-workers are loafing is inclined to withhold his/her effort in the group. This loss of motivation is another way of loafing as a response to free-riding behaviour. Our findings show that a greater perception of co-worker social loafing increases an employee's social loafing behaviour. If employees perceive that their partners, who are able to contribute to the group, engage in social loafing instead, they decrease their efforts by loafing to balance the social exchange. This finding is very close to those of Comer (1995), Liden et al. (2004) and Mulvey and Klein (1998). Moreover, we had postulated that there would be a negative relationship between co-worker social loafing and employees' organizational commitment. In accordance with the social exchange theory, co-workers' social loafing behaviour is a possible antecedent of organizational commitment of the employees. Our findings indicate that high levels of co-worker social loafing result in damage to the social exchange between the parties, and, in response, employees' organizational commitment decreases.

It is hypothesized that organizational commitment has a negative and significant effect on an employee's own social loafing. As stated before, if an employee perceives that the social exchange is damaged then he/she will abstain from the interaction and his/her commitment to the organization will decrease. As a result of low organizational commitment, the employee inclines to loaf more to balance the relationship. Our findings countenance this hypothesis and indicate that low organizational commitment leads the employees to more loafing.

In sum, besides having many positive outcomes on organizational performance, OCB has important adverse impacts on organizational well-being too. The results of the study point out that OCB by employees could trigger a harmful process by causing more co-worker social loafing. As employees perceive more co-worker social loafing they may tend to decrease their performances and to loaf more, and their commitment to the organization could be eroded. Therefore, the usefulness of OCB in the organizational context is controversial.

## **7. Practical Implications**

Beyond the theoretical implications, this study also has some useful consequences for managers. In today's working life, managers of firms encourage their employees to engage in OCB in order to ensure the success of the organization. At first glance, voluntary contributions from all employees, made without any expectation of managerial rewards, could be evaluated as useful and desirable. However, this assumption is questionable. Our findings indicate that managers should consider the possible detrimental impact of OCB. In the long term, attaching importance to more OCB could result in "escalating citizenship behaviour" (Bolino et al., 2004) by employees and this behaviour may trigger a cycle of more social loafing behaviour. Thus, managers must be careful about OCB and have to define the in-role behaviour of each employee. Otherwise, voluntary helping behaviour could easily lead to social loafing behaviour.

Another issue for managers is the danger of escalating the cycle of social loafing. If there is a perception that co-workers are engaging in social loafing, employees will reduce their commitment to the organization and tend to loaf more. If managers do not evaluate every employee's individual effort, more and more employees could loaf as a result. Hence, managers must establish fair, measurable and observable performance evaluation systems which should be based on in-role behaviour.

### **8. Suggestions for Future Studies and Limitations**

Some issues regarding the results require additional attention in future research. One issue that requires investigation is the possible mediating or moderating effect of a perception of justice. For instance, Murphy et al. (2003) found that justice perception is an important factor in social loafing and that leader-member exchange (LMX) is a mediating factor between interactional justice and social loafing. Moreover, Lin and Huang (2009) found that procedural and interactional justice perceptions had a significantly negative impact on knowledge contribution loafing. In this context, the justice perception of the employees should be considered as a moderating or mediating factor in the relationship between social loafing and OCB.

Another useful area for future research is the differentiation of the real work group. In this recent study, the participants were teachers who worked in small subject groups. Social loafing behaviour and the reactions to this might come into existence in different ways in other real work groups. Similarly, the impact of OCB on co-worker social loafing could progress differently in other groups such as high performance teams. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) have noted that high performance teams are characterized by a deep commitment between the members, implying that working relationships among members of a group will influence outcomes as well. Moreover, Laszlo et al. (2009) listed affective commitment and high OCB as important characteristics of high performance teams. Thus, similar studies should be conducted on other real work groups, especially on high performance teams.

Last, but not least, the other possible dark sides of OCB in real work groups should be explored in future studies. Some research has considered compulsory citizenship behaviour (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), work-family conflict (Bolino and Turnley, 2005), job stress (Bolino and Turnley, 2005), incorrect performance evaluation (Bergeron, 2005) and more accidents at work as possible adverse effects of OCB. Thus, more studies must be conducted to consider the adverse impact of OCB in these areas.

Although the present study gives some important findings about the possible dark sides of OCB, two possible limitations to these findings should be noted. First, there exists the issue of generalization with regard to the results. As mentioned above, the participants were teachers in a public school. Hence, other occupations may not yield the same relationships as those documented in the present study; therefore, in addition to this preliminary study, progressive and comparative investigations into other business sectors may produce greater reliability with regard to the possible adverse impacts of OCB. Second, this recent study is not a longitudinal study but a cross-sectional one. The results might be different in a longitudinal study. In future studies, researchers should consider the adverse effects of OCB in longitudinal models.

### **9. Conclusion**

Through testing a model, finding support for it, and describing an adverse impact of OCB, we have revealed a possible dark side to OCB in a real work group. Our study has confirmed that managers should pay attention to the negative aspects of voluntary extra-role behaviour.

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