

# Individualism/collectivism and organizational citizenship behavior

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Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are workplace activities that exceed an employee's formal job requirements and contribute to the effective functioning of the organization. We explored the roles of the dispositional traits of individualism and collectivism in the prediction of OCB. The relationship was examined in the context of other constructs known to influence OCB, specifically, motives and identity as an organizational citizen. A total of 367 employees in 24 organizations completed surveys measuring individualism/collectivism, OCB motives, strength of organizational citizen role identity, and amount of OCB. The results showed collectivism to be a significant predictor of Organizational Concern and Prosocial Values motives, role identity, and OCB. Individualism predicted Impression Management motives and was a significant negative predictor of a role identity as one who helps others. The findings are discussed with regard to previous research in OCB.

*Individualismo/colectivismo y comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional.* El comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional (CCO) alude a las actividades que hacen los empleados y que exceden de los requerimientos formales del puesto, contribuyendo al efectivo funcionamiento de la organización. Nuestro propósito era estudiar el papel que juegan los rasgos disposicionales de individualismo y colectivismo en la predicción de CCO. La relación era analizada en el contexto de otros constructos conocidos por su influencia sobre CCO, concretamente los motivos y la identidad como un ciudadano organizacional. Un total de 367 empleados procedentes de 24 organizaciones cumplimentaron un cuestionario que evaluaba individualismo/colectivismo, motivos para desarrollar CCO, fuerza de la identidad de rol como ciudadano organizacional y frecuencia de CCO. Los resultados mostraron que el colectivismo era un predictor significativo de los motivos de interés hacia la organización y valores prosociales, identidad de rol y CCO. El individualismo predijo el motivo de mejora de la impresión y era un predictor negativo y significativo de la identidad de rol como un ciudadano organizacional que ayuda a los demás. Los hallazgos son discutidos con relación a la investigación previa en torno a CCO.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to employee activities that exceed the formal job requirements and contribute to effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). Frequently, two types of OCB are recognized, distinguished by the intended target of the behavior (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004):

1. OCB aimed at individuals (OCBI). Prosocial behaviors that are directed at specific people and/or groups within the organization. The help can be work-related, for example assisting a colleague with a specific task. Alternatively, it may be unrelated to the job, for example helping a co-worker with a personal problem.
2. OCB aimed at the organization (OCBO). These are behaviors that target the organization per se (e.g., offering ideas to improve its functioning).

Most studies of OCB have focused on its antecedents, which can be grouped into four categories (Dewett & Denisi, 2007; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000): task characteristics (feedback, routinization, etc.), organizational characteristics (formalization, perceived organizational support, etc.), leadership behaviors (transformational leadership, high performance expectations, etc.) and individual characteristics (commitment, job satisfaction, consciousness, etc.).

Smith, Organ, & Near (1983) suggested that OCB might be a manifestation of «a broader disposition toward prosocial behavior» (p.656). Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997) proposed a theory of individual differences in task and citizenship performance, the latter showing a substantially conceptual overlap with OCB. They proposed cognitive ability as the main antecedent of task performance and personality as the main antecedent of citizenship behavior.

One area of omission with regard to individual characteristics in the prediction of OCB is the role of dispositional variables. Admittedly, some studies failed to demonstrate a significant relationship between personality traits and OCB. Organ and Ryan (1995) found that if personality was related to OCB, the association was weak and likely mediated by job satisfaction. However, it would be premature to discount the role of dispositional variables. Not only

has previous work examined a very limited set of such constructs, but also their effects might be attenuated in workplaces where demand characteristics or external incentives limit variability in behavior (Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham, & Cummings, 2000; Smith et al., 1983). Recent studies of the relationship between dispositional variables and OCB have shown the relevance of dispositional variables (e.g., Elanain, 2010; Turnipseed & Bacon, 2010).

One consequence of the current global economic crisis is downsizing at many organizations. The problem is particularly acute in Spain, where unemployment hovers above 20% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2010). The reduced workforce means that employers rely on remaining employees to assume extra duties. The employees themselves also may benefit from the performance of OCB, as citizenship activities can improve work environment (Dovidio et al., 2006).

Collectivism is one dispositional characteristic that has been associated with OCB. Initially individualism and collectivism were proposed as a way of characterizing cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Collectivist societies are marked by strong, cohesive in-groups whose members define themselves in terms of their group membership. Because one's self-concept derives from identification with the group, the well-being of the whole takes precedence over individual desires and pursuits. In contrast, individualist cultures draw sharper boundaries between the self and others. Personal autonomy and responsibility, rather than group identification, are emphasized. At the cultural level, individualism and collectivism typically are portrayed as mutually exclusive, opposite ends of a bipolar scale.

More recently, these constructs have been adapted to the individual and conceptualized as dispositional characteristic. For example, Taras, Kirkman, and Steel (2010) refer to them as «values» and Triandis (2001) prefer consider them as an element of the personality. Fundamental to the individualist's perspective is a focus on independence and self-fulfillment (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002), on personal goals over group goals (Wagner, 1995) and personal attitudes over group norms (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis, 2001). In contrast, collectivists are more likely to submerge personal goals for the good of the whole and maintain relationships with the group even when the personal cost exceeds the rewards.

Some studies have showed that those with collectivistic values or norms were more likely to perform OCB and engage in cooperative behaviors (Moorman & Blakey, 1995; Wagner, 1995). Dyne et al., (2000) reported that collectivism was related to OCB measured six months later, and Allen (1999; see Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001) showed that collectivism was related to a specific form of citizenship, serving as a mentor to others. OCB typically require a subordination of self-interest, benefiting the collective more than the individual (Dyne et al.). The present study explored in greater depth the influence on OCB of individualism/collectivism, examining the relationship between this construct and other dispositional variables known to predict OCB.

In previous work, we demonstrated the applicability to OCB of a conceptual model proposed by Penner (2002; see also Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Finkelstein, 2006; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Briefly, the model holds that OCB is initiated in order to satisfy specific needs or motives. Rioux and Penner identified three motives: *Organizational Concern* (OC, pride in and positive affect toward the organization), *Prosocial Values* (PV, desire to help others and to be accepted by them) and

*Impression Management* (IM, desire to maintain a positive image and avoid creating a negative one in order to obtain or retain special benefits). Rioux and Penner and Finkelstein and colleagues found that OCBI was most strongly associated with PV motives and OCBO with OC motives. Collectivists have personal goals that overlap with the goals of their in-groups. When discrepancies arise, collectivists give priority to group goals (Singelis et al., 1995). Consequently, collectivism should correlate best with the other-oriented PV and OC motives. In contrast, individualists give priority to personal, rather than group goals (Singelis et al.).

Penner's (2002) conceptual framework further holds that the act of engaging in OCB causes one to develop an organizational citizen role identity, and it is this identity that sustains the behavior (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Finkelstein, 2006). The organizational citizen identity, like OCB itself, comprises two dimensions: role identity with relation to OCBO (RIO) and role identity with relation to OCBI (RII). Role identity theory (e.g., Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Piliavin, Grube, & Callero, 2002) further postulates normative expectations as a precursor to OCB and to the formation of an organizational citizen self-concept. The social behavior of collectivists is best predicted by norms and perceived duties and obligation; among individualists, social behavior is best predicted from attitudes and other internal processes (Singelis et al., 1995). The difference suggests that collectivism will show a stronger correlation with role identity. Support for this assumption comes from the literature on volunteerism (Finkelstein, 2010).

Finkelstein (2010) also found that collectivism was most closely associated with altruistic motives for volunteering, while individualism was predicted best by career-related objectives.

The aims of the present study were (a) to analyze the relationship between individualism/collectivism and OCB; (b) to examine the relationship between individualism/collectivism and motives and role identity, respectively; and (c) to investigate the relative contribution of each construct in the prediction of OCB.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 367 Spanish employees from 24 organizations. Mean age was 39.35 (SD= 11.53), and 61.1% were women. They were employed in their organizations between 1 month and 43 years ( $M= 140.13$  months;  $SD= 130.88$  months), and the majority worked full-time (85.6%). With regard to educational level, 5.4% had primary school education, 37% secondary education, and 57.3% had college degree.

### Instruments

Participants completed a questionnaire containing the following measures:

*Organizational citizenship behavior.* We used the Lee and Allen (2002) instrument adapted to a Spanish population (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010). The scale comprises 16 items with a 5-point Likert type response format, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The instrument assesses OCBO and OCBI. Coefficient alphas for each factor were 0.90 (OCBO) and 0.84 (OCBI).

*OCB Motives.* Motives were measured with the scale used by Finkelstein and Penner (2004) adapted to a Spanish population

(Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010). The 30-item instrument assesses the three OCB motives, PV, OC, and IM, with a 5-point Likert type response format that ranges from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). Coefficient alphas were 0.91 (OC), 0.88 (PV) and 0.91 (IM). In prior studies the instrument accounted for 52-69% of the variance in OCBO and 32-59% in OCBI (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004).

*Citizen role identity.* This construct was measured with an adaptation to a Spanish population (see Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010) of the scale initially developed by Finkelstein and Penner (2004). The scale comprises 10 items, 5 measuring RIO, and 5 RII. The coefficient alphas were 0.72 (RIO) and 0.65 (RII). In Dávila & Finkelstein (2010), this instrument accounted for 44% of the variance in OCBO and 38% in OCBI.

*Individualism/collectivism.* This construct was measured with an adaptation to a Spanish population of the instrument previously used by Finkelstein (2010). The scale contained 27 items and was based on the work of Singelis et al. (1995). We selected this instrument because of its prior use in studies of prosocial behaviour, its sound psychometric properties, and the limited number of items. For the adaptation, we followed the most guidelines prescribed by Balluerka, Gorostiaga, Alonso-Arbiol, & Haranburu (2007). We do not have data regarding convergent and differential validity of the adaptation. We eliminated one item that had a negative connotation in Spanish. The final instrument included 26 items with a 5-point Likert type response format, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Coefficient alphas were 0.76 (individualism) and 0.82 (collectivism), similar to those obtained by Finkelstein (2010): .77 for individualism and .86 for collectivism.

### Procedure

The questionnaires were administered by students studying for a degree in Sciences of Work. They were taught about the concepts underlying the study and instructed to administer the surveys so as to interfere as little as possible with the normal functioning of the organization. Each student selected the organization in which to solicit participation and the procedure followed to select the employees was not random.

Respondents were told they were participating in a study of organizational behavior. They would be presented a questionnaire comprising multiple sections. For each question, they should mark the answer most appropriate for them according to the instructions for that section. All responses were anonymous.

### Data analysis

First, descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated for all variables in the study. We analyzed the significance of the difference between correlation coefficients with Hotelling's *t* test. Second, regression analyses were conducted in order to study in greater depth the relationships among individualism/collectivism, motives and role identity. Finally, regression analyses examined the relative contribution of each variable to OCB. All analyses were performed using the SPSS version 17.0 for Windows software package.

### Results

Table 1 presents the correlations among variables, their means and standard deviations.

Collectivism was significantly correlated with both OCBO ( $r = .43, p < .01$ ) and OCBI ( $r = .60, p < .01$ ); individualism showed no significant association with either type of OCB. The association with collectivism was significantly stronger in both cases [OCBO:  $t(364) = 5.89, p < .001$ ; OCBI:  $t(364) = 13.27, p < .001$ ].

Collectivism showed a significant and positive relationship with PV ( $r = .60, p < .01$ ) and OC motives ( $r = .43, p < .01$ ) while individualism was associated only with IM motive ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ). PV and OC motives correlated more strongly with collectivism than with individualism [PV:  $t(364) = 9.10, p < .001$ ; OC:  $t(364) = 5.31, p < .001$ ]. Individualism showed a stronger relationship with IM motives than did collectivism [ $t(364) = -5.69, p < .001$ ].

Collectivism was significantly and positively correlated with RIO ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ) and RII ( $r = .54, p < .01$ ). Individualism was inversely correlated with RII ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ) and showed no relationship with RIO. The relationships between collectivism and both RII and RIO were stronger than those between individualism

Table 1  
Means, standard deviations, and correlations for OCB, motives, role identity and collectivism/individualism

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. OCBO	–								
2. OCBI	.56**	–							
3. PV	.34**	.67**	–						
4. OC	.80**	.49**	.46**	–					
5. IM	.02	-.06	.24**	.21**	–				
6. RIO	.64**	.28**	.18**	.66**	.07	–			
7. RII	.34**	.53**	.56**	.37**	-.05	.36**	–		
8. Collectivism	.43**	.60**	.60**	.43**	-.03	.32**	.54**	–	
9. Individualism	.03	-.09	.04	.05	.38**	.02	-.19**	.00	–
Mean	3.58	3.92	3.81	3.44	2.72	3.24	3.66	3.86	2.74
Standard deviation	.78	.62	.59	.77	.92	.78	.68	.52	.58

Note:  $n = 367$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

and either form of role identity [RII:  $t(364)= 11.30, p<.001$ ; RIO:  $t(364)= 4.24, p<.001$ ].

To study in greater depth the relationship between individualism/collectivism and motives and role identity, regression analyses were carried out. Individualism and collectivism were entered simultaneously as predictors of motives and identity. The results (Table 2) showed that collectivism was the only significant predictor of PV and OC motives for engaging in OCB [PV:  $\beta= .60, p<.001$ ; OC:  $\beta= .43, p<.001$ ]. Collectivism accounted for 36% of the variance in PV motives and 18% in OC motives. Individualism was the only significant predictor of IM motives ( $\beta= .38, p<.001$ ), explaining 14% of the variance.

With relation to role identity, the sole significant predictor of RIO was collectivism ( $\beta= .34, p<.001$ ), which accounted for 11% of the variance. Collectivism also was the main predictor of RII ( $\beta= .54, p<.001$ ), with individualism as a significant negative predictor ( $\beta= -.19, p<.001$ ). The two variables accounted for 32% of the variance in RII.

We also used regression analysis to examine the relative contribution of each variable to OCB. Motives, role identity, collectivism, and individualism were entered simultaneously as predictors of OCBO and OCBI, respectively. Table 2 shows that all motives played a significant role in the prediction of OCBO, although PV ( $\beta= -.11, p<.05$ ) and IM motives ( $\beta= -.12, p<.01$ ) showed an inverse association. OC motives were the strongest predictor ( $\beta= .72, p<.01$ ). RIO ( $\beta= .16, p<.01$ ) and collectivism ( $\beta= .11, p<.01$ ) also had significant positive beta weights. Together, the variables accounted for 73% of the variance in OCBO.

Turning to OCBI, PV and OC motives had significant positive weights, with PV motives the main predictor ( $\beta= .42, p<.01$  for PV,  $\beta= .24, p<.01$  for OC). IM motive were negatively related ( $\beta= -.15, p<.01$ ). Collectivism also contributed to OCBI ( $\beta= .21, p<.01$ ). Together, the variables accounted for 56% of the variance in OCBI. Individualism did not show a significant role in the prediction of either form of OCB.

We found some differences between the correlation and regression analyses. For example, PV motives had a positive correlation with OCB, whereas the regression analysis showed a negative relationship between the two variables. The regression's coefficients are not independent of each other. The specific value of each regression's coefficient is corrected according to the other coefficients of the regression model. They have to be interpreted with caution (see Pardo & Ruiz, 2002 for a greatest explanation). Collinearity between the independent variables was suggested as the most likely cause these differences, but subsequent regression analyses do not support this conclusion. We recalculated the regression equation, this time introducing each independent variable consecutively. The relationship between PV motive and OCB changed to negative with the introduction of OC motives although the collinearity between these variables was reduced ( $VIF= 1.27$ ).

Similarly, while the correlations between IM motives and OCB were not significant, the relationships were significant in the regression analysis. A subsequent regression analysis in which each independent variable was added consecutively showed that

Table 2  
Summary of regression analysis for predicting motives, role identities, OCBO and OCBI

Variables	PV			OC			IM		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Individualism	.06	.04	.06	.03	.06	.02	.58	.07	.38***
Collectivism	.69	.05	.60***	.63	.07	.43***	-.07	.08	-.04
F	89.78***			35.05***			28.28***		
R <sup>2</sup>	.36			.18			.14		
Variables	RIO			RII					
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$			
Individualism	.00	.07	.00	-.23	.05	-.19***			
Collectivism	.51	.08	.34***	.71	.06	.54***			
F	20.25***			79.39***					
R <sup>2</sup>	.11			.32					
Variables	OCBO			OCBI					
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$			
PV	-.15	.06	-.11*	.44	.06	.42**			
OC	.72	.04	.72**	.19	.04	.24**			
IM	-.11	.03	-.12**	-.11	.03	-.15**			
RIO	.15	.04	.16**	-.01	.04	-.01			
RII	.05	.04	.04	.07	.04	.08			
Collectivism	.17	.06	.11**	.26	.06	.21**			
Individualism	.06	.04	.04	-.05	.04	-.05			
F	111.44***			51.49***					
R <sup>2</sup>	.73			.56					

Note.  $n= 367$ . \*  $p<.05$ , \*\*  $p<.01$ , \*\*\*  $p<.001$

the relationship between IM motive and OCBO became significant with the introduction of OC motives. The relationship with OCBI changed with the introduction of OC or PV motives. Nonetheless, the collinearity between IM-OC motives ( $VIF=1.04$ ) and IM-PV motives ( $VIF=1.05$ ) was reduced.

To rule out collinearity between the variables, we calculated the  $VIF$  for all the independent variables in latter regression model. In the prediction of OCBO, none of values of  $VIF$  was greater than 2.33. In the prediction of OCBI, none of values was greater than 2.35. In short, collinearity between variables was low.

### Discussion

The present results revealed collectivism as an important antecedent to other-oriented motives for engaging in OCB and to the development of a citizen role identity, as well as to OCB itself. That collectivism predicted OCB, while individualism showed no relationship with citizenship behavior, may be attributable to a collectivistic belief that helping is part of the job, not an extra-role activity (Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

Group membership is a central aspect of the collectivist identity, and personal traits that are valued include sacrificing for the common good and maintaining harmonious relationships. Collectivism implies that life satisfaction derives from successfully carrying out social roles and obligations (Oyserman et al., 2002). This perspective helps explain the positive relationship between collectivism and role identity.

It was no surprise to find that personal gain was the priority for more individualistic employees who, as a rule, value personal success (Oyserman et al., 2002). Assisting others or the organization should be attractive to individualists to the extent that the activity results in benefits that otherwise would be difficult to obtain (Warner, 1995). Individuals need relationships and group membership to attain self-relevant goals (Oyserman et al.). This finding likely accounts for the lack of correlation, or inverse correlation, with an organizational citizen role identity.

The current findings are consistent with prior studies of OCB (Dyne et al., 2000; Moorman & Blakely, 1995) as well as with examinations of cooperation (Wagner, 1995) and volunteerism (Finkelstein, 2010). In the case of volunteerism, collectivism was associated with «value-expressive» motives for volunteering and with the development of a volunteer role identity, while individualism was best predicted by self-focused objectives.

The major theoretical implication of the present study is that disposition is an important predictor of OCB. Additionally, we have found that collectivism and individualism are related with other predictors (motives and role identity) of OCB. We have to consider the possibility of other constructs playing as mediators of dispositional variables effects on behavior and dispositional variables can moderate the relationship between those constructs and behavior (Taras et al., 2010). It is necessary continue studying in depth the relationship of collectivism/individualism with other predictors of OCB. Future plans include examining if collectivistic orientation's effect on OCB is mediated by motivational or role identity variables, and examining the relationship between individualism/collectivism and more situational antecedents of OCB. We are preparing a longitudinal study to investigate the role of individualism/collectivism in the development of perceived

procedural justice. Fair procedures engender sensitivity toward the welfare of the group, and this sensitivity also should arise from a collectivist orientation (Moorman & Blakely, 1995). Collectivism likely would mediate or modulate the relationship between organizational justice and OCB.

Our data have practical implications as well. Borman et al., (2001) maintained that behaviors such as OCB contribute to organizational effectiveness because they help create the psychological, social and organizational context that helps employees to perform their jobs. Citizenship behavior lubricates the social machinery of the organization, increasing efficiency and reducing friction among employees (Dovidio et al., 2006; Smith et al., 1983). Thus employers should benefit from attending to dispositional variables in the selection process, hiring collectivist-oriented workers. Training and mentoring programs could encourage socialization and reward cooperation and mutual help rather than competition (Dyne et al., 2000).

One limitation of this study was the reliance on self-report data. Often measures of OCB are supplemented with ratings by peers and supervisors. However, our interest was less in obtaining a precise measure of OCB than in discerning individuals' perceptions of how much they help and why.

Also potentially affecting our conclusions was our use of a typology of OCB based on the target of the behavior. Other instruments distinguish additional categories of OCB including altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue (Organ, 1988) or interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry and loyal boosterism (Graham, 1989; see in Moorman & Blakely, 1995), for example. Perhaps a different scale would have revealed a relationship between individualism and OCB. Moorman and Blakely suggested that individualists as well as collectivists are likely to perform OCB that resemble in-role activities.

Another limitation may have been imposed by procedural variability resulting from the use of multiple organizations. For example, in some cases, employees completed the surveys at work, while in others, participation occurred during respondents' free time. For employees who completed the surveys at work, time constraints could have affected their understanding of the items. The presence of workmates could have compelled them to give more socially desirable responses than did employees who completed the surveys in their free time. The diversity of participant organizations and their management practices may have further influenced the results.

Different studies have showed that some demographic variables, characteristics of the work group, and other contextual factors (e.g., age, gender, educational level, tenure and professional group) could have a moderating effect in the predictive power of cultural values (e.g., individualism/collectivism) and in the prediction of OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Taras et al., 2010). An additional limitation is that we have not considered the potential moderator role of these variables in our study.

The findings provide new support for the idea of dispositional variables as predictive of OCB. The strong relationship between collectivism and citizenship behavior is consistent with that between collectivism and other prosocial activities, particularly volunteerism (Finkelstein, 2010). The results also provide additional support for the utility of a conceptual model that includes motive and role identity in the prediction of OCB.

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