

CAREER STAGE, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Changing workforce demographics and an increasingly competitive environment for employee retention has resulted in increased interest in careers and organisational behaviour. The current study explores the affects of both age and tenure upon organisational commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB). Using a sample of 220 Monash University Alumni it was found that age does not significantly affect organisational commitment. However, age does influence the amount an employee will engage in OCB. No significant relationship was found between tenure and organisational commitment or OCB. It is proposed that new career theories (i.e. boundaryless and protean) may explain these results.

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INTRODUCTION

Changing workforce demographics and the increasingly competitive environment for employee retention have led to increasing research and practical interest in careers, career management and vocational psychology (Goulet & Singh, 2002, King, 2003, McDougall & Vaughan, 1996). Several researchers have identified and analysed a series of career stages (Cohen, 1991, Smart, 1998, Super & Bohn, 1970, Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Wagner and Rush (2000) have suggested that older employees are more likely to engage in OCB than are younger employees. Several researchers have investigated the affect age has upon an individual's behaviour, and there is a developing literature that highlights the importance of organisational commitment and OCB to this relationship (Finegold, Mohrman & Spreitzer, 2002, Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002, Wagner & Rush, 2000). Hence, this study explores the relationships between career stages, organizational commitment and OCB.

CAREER/LIFE STAGES

Career stage research is based on the assumption that individuals move through occupational stages in their organisational career, each stage is characterised by differences in work attitudes and behaviours, types of relationships and the aspects of work that are valued (Aryee, Chay & Chew, 1994, Slocum Jr. & Cron, 1985). Career stage theory was developed by Super (1957), identifying four life stages: *exploration*, *establishment*, *maintenance* and *disengagement* (Super & Bohn, 1970). Although the theory has been revised (Super et al., 1996), originally each stage of Super's theory fitted rigidly to chronological age, that is, *exploration* was undertaken between the ages of 15 and 24, *establishment* between 25 and 44, *maintenance* between 45 and 64 and *disengagement* occurring from 65 onwards (Super, 1957). Thus Super linked career stage with an individual's life stage.

Each life stage is not only linked to age but also to specific behaviours. *Exploration* is a period of self-examination where different roles are tried and occupations are explored via school, leisure and part-time work (Super & Bohn, 1970). *Establishment* presumes that the appropriate field has been found and an effort is made to secure a permanent place in the chosen career. The *maintenance* stage is one of constancy; here, the individual has 'made their place in the world' (Super & Bohn, 1970: 137) and focus is turned to keeping that place. Within this stage stability and continuity seem to be the norm and is a time for self fulfilment and satisfaction. The means of attaining satisfaction may differ between individuals, however Super (1957) emphasises that satisfaction may be found via helping people, finding that one is needed, being respected by others and serving the community. The final stage is *disengagement* (or *decline*), where one disengages from formal employment to find new roles with a view to retirement.

Similarly, Erikson's theory of psychological development tends to follow a chronological timeframe where the 'adulthood' phase is characterised by stability and 'generativity' (Liebert & Spiegler, 1990: 77). Generativity refers to the need to assist younger members of society, to guide the next generation. More specifically within the adulthood phase the individual 'needs to be needed' or may feel stagnant and personally impoverished.

It is interesting to note that each theory purports that there is a period in the later stages of an individual's career in which there is some steadiness and stability. Concomitant with this stage is the feeling of being needed and of giving back to the community or next generation. The other theme that tends to be associated with each of the above theories is age, each stage being loosely affiliated with a chronological period. Research has confirmed that career stage can affect an individual's behaviour and attitudes, relationships and value of work within their organisation. For

example, Super's proposition that during the maintenance stage individuals are likely to be more stable and less likely 'to break new ground' (1957: 147) was supported by Aryee et al. (1994), who found organisational commitment to increase within the maintenance stage. When using tenure as a measure of career stage, Lynn, Cao and Horn (1996) concluded that male employees in the maintenance stage of their career demonstrated higher job involvement than those in the advancement stage. At the same time, males in the maintenance stage had significantly higher ratings for organisational commitment than did those in either the establishment or advancement stages. Smart (1998) did not find that organisational commitment increased with career stage; however, this result may be attributed to the sample's commitment to their profession rather than the employing organisation. Smart's (1998) study did support Super's proposition that individuals in the maintenance stage have found a place for themselves and are more likely to progress in familiar ways. It was confirmed that motivation for advancement and promotion decreased in the maintenance stage and found that these employees were less willing to relocate or leave their current employer than their younger colleagues.

Super's model is an example of a traditional career framework however the changing construction of careers has renewed interest in organisational commitment and OCB (Arthur, 1994).

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment has been defined as an attitude involving employee loyalty to the organisation with those individuals who are committed being willing to contribute something of themselves to their organisations (Smith & Hoy, 1992). Organisational commitment generally involves the internalisation of organisational goals and values and employee willingness to become involved in the achievement of these goal and values, remain with the organisation in context of these goals and values and to exert effort beyond that normally required in the interest of these goals and values (Jans, 1989).

Several researchers have found organisational commitment to be affected by age and/or career stage. In a study of military personnel, Jans (1989) found that there was a 'monotonic' increase in organisational commitment as an officer's age but not tenure increased. This study concluded that organisational commitment does vary across career stages but this change may be due to the determinant variations across the career/life stages. Smith and Hoy (1992) found that age was significantly related to total job satisfaction and organisational commitment within a small business context. It was established that older workers were more likely to be committed to their organisation as opposed to their younger colleagues.

Allen and Meyer (1993), using a three component model of commitment (affective, continuance and normative) to explore the changes in attitudes across career stages, found that commitment was related to increases in organisational tenure. They also found that both the desire and obligation to stay with an organisation increased significantly with age. This could be related to Super's model, suggesting that employees in the maintenance stage look for stability rather than seeking to leave their employer. More recently, Finegold et al. (2002) suggested that age affects on commitment are small. Their study of over 3000 scientists and engineers found satisfaction with job security to be more strongly related to commitment and a desire to remain with their organisation for senior employees than for their junior colleagues.

Therefore, we propose the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: That older employees will score significantly higher in terms of their levels of organisational commitment than younger employees.

Hypothesis 2: That long term tenured employees will score significantly higher in terms of their levels of organisational commitment than short term tenured employees.

ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Organisational commitment has been found to be an important predictor or antecedent of OCB (LePine, Erez & Johnson, 2002, Organ & Ryan, 1995, Schappe, 1998). OCB has been defined as 'individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization' (Organ, 1988 as cited in Schappe, 1998: 277). It is important within the organisation as it promotes organisational effectiveness and competitive advantage (Bolino, Turnley & Bloodgood, 2002, Koys, 2001, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000).

Citizenship behaviours encapsulate a wide range of behaviours, not all required as part of a specific job, they are generally not rewarded when undertaken nor is there any reprimand if they are not undertaken. Podsakoff et al. (2000) synthesised the behaviours into seven common themes: helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue and self development. The theme of commitment is a common one, the others being satisfaction, fairness, leader support and conscientiousness (LePine et al., 2002).

In recent literature, age has been found to be significantly related to OCB (Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002). Older adults tend to conduct themselves on the basis of meeting mutual and moral obligations or internal standards whilst younger adults have a more transactional focus. Wagner and Rush (2000) found that altruistic OCB differs between younger and older adults. Fair treatment is a priority for younger employees where older colleagues had a more inherent value for helping others and may render assistance out of a norm of benevolence. In contrast, there has been little research relating tenure to OCB.

Therefore, we propose a further two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: That older employees will score significantly higher in terms of their levels of OCB than younger employees.

Hypothesis 4: That long term tenured employees will score significantly higher in terms of their levels of OCB than short term tenured employees.

METHOD

Sample

Two-hundred and twenty Monash University Alumni members who had graduated from the Faculty of Business and Economics between 1995 and 2000 returned a self-administered survey (response rate = 11.3%). Of the participants, 44% were male and 37% were female (19% item non-response). Thirty-seven per cent of participants were between 20 and 29 years of age, 33% were between 30 and 39 and 29% were 40 and over. The majority of participants (92%) held full-time employment. With regard to the total period of employment (mean = 3.23 years, s.d. = 3.34), there was more heterogeneity, with 43% having an employment history of up to 2 years, 29% employed for between 2 and 5 years, and 27% having employment for more than 5 years.

Measures

Age and tenure have both been used as a measure for career stage in previous studies. This has led to confusing and often contradictory results (Smart, 1998). Therefore both age and tenure were measured concurrently to provide a direct comparison between the two variables and avoid this previously identified limitation.

The survey implemented included several parts however, only certain scales were relevant to the proposed hypotheses presented in this paper. The scales utilized to measure organisational commitment and OCB were adapted from Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler's (2000) scale. Coyle-

Shapiro and Kessler used Cook and Wall's (1980) scale to measure of organisational commitment also including two items from Meyer and Allen's (1984) scale. Four items relating to OCB were adapted from Podsakoff et al. (1990) and Van Dyne et al. (1994). A minor amendment was made to include the generic word 'organisation' rather than a blank space. The five-point Likert scale was also modified to range from (1) 'very poorly fulfilled' to (5) 'very well fulfilled' [with a further response option of 'not obligated to provide' included, following the Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) approach].

RESULTS

A range of preliminary data screening procedures were conducted to check for potential outliers and ensure that the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were met. While some of the variables were moderately skewed, it was decided not to transform these variables as the method of analysis (ANOVA) is quite robust to violations of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Both the OCB and organisational commitment scale were found to be quite internally consistent (alpha coefficients of 0.82 and 0.86 respectively).

In order to determine whether older workers differed from younger workers in terms of their levels of organisational commitment, one-way ANOVA was undertaken. In this analysis age categories were entered as the independent variable and level of organisational commitment served as the dependent variable. The results of this analysis were non-significant; hypothesis 1 was not supported.

To examine hypothesis 2, which stated that long term tenured employees would score significantly higher levels of organisational commitment than short term tenured employees, one-way ANOVA was also employed. In this procedure, tenure categories were entered as the grouping variable and organisational commitment was the dependent variable. Examination of the results of this analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in organisational commitment in terms of employment tenure. Hypothesis 2 was also not supported within the current study.

Hypothesis 3 stated that older employees would score significantly higher in terms of their levels of OCB than younger employees. In order to test this proposition, a one-way ANOVA test was undertaken. The results of this analysis (see Table 1), with age categories as the independent variable and OCB as the dependent variable, were found to be significant ($F(5, 209) = 3.315, p < .01$).

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for OCB across Age Categories and F Values for ANOVA

Age	OCB		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
20-24	19	12.52	3.37
25-29	62	12.85	3.03
30-34	27	14.41	3.20
35-39	46	13.93	3.32
40-44	33	13.28	3.54
45 >	31	15.37	3.19

$F = 3.32; p < .007$

However, as there were five age categories, Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference test was undertaken as a post-hoc test to determine the precise nature of the differentiation. Pair-wise comparisons (presented in Table 2) indicated that employees aged 45 and over (mean = 15.37), were significantly more likely to undertake OCB than employees aged between 20-24 years (mean = 12.52, $p < .04$) and those aged 25-29 years (mean = 12.85, $p < .01$). A one-way ANCOVA was also undertaken to determine whether gender or level of education were significantly predictive of

OCB. The results of the ANCOVA indicated that gender and level of education were not predictive of OCB and therefore were not controlled for statistically.

The final hypothesis stated that long term tenured employees will score significantly higher in terms of their levels of OCB than short term tenured employees. Again, one-way ANOVA was conducted to address this hypothesis, with tenure categories entered as the independent variable and OCB as the dependent variable. The results of this analysis were non-significant and therefore failed to provide support for hypothesis 4.

DISCUSSION

One of the important contributions of the present study is that it further explores the relative affects of age and tenure upon organisational commitment and OCB. However, the results of this study are mixed. One of the limitations within studies of career or life stage theory has been the different methods of operationalising and defining each stage. Age and tenure have both been used as a measurement resulting in often inconsistent and contradictory findings (Smart, 1998). This study has provided a means of comparing the affects of these two measurements upon the organisational behaviours of organisational commitment and OCB.

Table 2: Pairwise Comparisons of OCB across Age Categories

Age		Mean Difference	Significance Level
20-24	25-29	-.32	.99
	30-34	-1.88	.38
	35-39	-1.41	.61
	40-44	-.75	.98
	45 >	-2.84	.03
25-29	20-24	.32	.99
	30-34	-1.55	.30
	35-39	-1.07	.53
	40-44	-.42	.99
	45 >	-2.51	.00
30-34	20-24	1.88	.38
	25-29	1.55	.30
	35-39	.47	.99
	40-44	1.12	.77
	45 >	-.95	.38
35-39	20-24	1.40	.61
	25-29	1.07	.54
	30-34	-.47	.99
	40-44	.65	.95
	45 >	-1.43	.42
40-44	20-24	.75	.97
	25-29	.42	.99
	30-34	-1.12	.77
	34-39	-.65	.95
	45 >	-2.08	.12
45 >	20-24	2.84	.03
	25-29	2.51	.00
	30-34	.96	.87
	34-39	1.43	.42
	40-44	2.09	.12

Age has been the subject of some scrutiny within the literature with results consistently finding that older employees are more likely to be more committed to the organisation in which they work than their younger colleagues. Age has also been found to be a contributing factor to OCB, with older members of an organisation more likely to be involved in altruistic or unrewarded activities and attitudes within the organisation. However, the current study has found conflicting evidence of the influence of age over organisational commitment and OCB. Whilst it was found that older employees did not score significantly higher in terms of their levels of organisational commitment than younger employees they did on their levels of OCB. Thus the study supports previous research into OCB and age (Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002, Wagner & Rush, 2000) but offers a new perspective that age does not significantly affect organisational commitment. Some support for Super's career stages was found when looking at the age and OCB result. The fact that older employees in the maintenance stage of their careers are more likely to contribute by way of OCB seems to indicate that they are looking to serve the community more than their younger colleagues still engaged in an exploratory stage.

The study also considered the affect of tenure upon both organisational commitment and OCB. The results suggest that differing tenures has no influence on the levels of these organisational behaviours between employees. As mentioned previously, little empirical research has been undertaken considering tenure and OCB, so this study provides an interesting insight and a foundation for further research into this relationship.

The first possible explanation of the divergence of results might be attributed to emerging career theories. The protean (Hall & Moss, 1998) and boundaryless career theories (Arthur, 1994) both pertain to employees' constant changing of careers and organisations. As employees move between organisations it may take time to develop a sense of commitment to the new employer. However, the attitudes and rewards associated with OCB that develop with maturity or age may be strong enough to influence the employee regardless of tenure. Secondly, these results may be attributed to the increasing prevalence of the notion that one's career is one's own responsibility. The boundaryless career entails networking with a focus on extra-organisational contacts, rather than commitment to the employer (Arthur, 1994). Forrest and Sullivan (2002) indicate that there is a shift from a reliance upon the firm to a self-reliance regarding career management and development. This shift in career theory and the individual's focus could explain the lack of influence both age and tenure have upon organisational commitment in this study. Overall, we hope that this study will spur future studies into this important area of research and employment.

CONCLUSION

This study endeavoured to explore the affects of both age and tenure upon organisational commitment and OCB. It found that age does influence the level an employee will engage in OCB. However, the study did not support relationships between age and organisational commitment nor between tenure and organisational commitment or OCB. The current researchers suggest that these results might be attributed to emerging career theories such as the protean and boundaryless careers which tend to focus upon the individual rather than a commitment to the employer or organisation.

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