

## Organisational Context and Citizenship Behaviour: Exploring the Moderating Effects of Role Ambiguity

*(Konteks Organisasi dan Kelakuan Kewargaaan Organisasi: Kajiselidik Kesan Moderasi Kekaburan Peranan)*

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of organisational context on the organisational citizenship behaviour. The study also aimed at finding out the moderating effect of the role ambiguity on the relationship between organisational context (i.e. structure) and the organisational citizenship behaviour. Data from 280 respondents were used in the statistical analysis. Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that structure has a significant positive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour. The interaction of organisational structure and role ambiguity has a significant positive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour. Statistical analysis confirmed that role ambiguity is a significant moderator of the relationship between organisational structure and organisational citizenship behaviour.*

*Keyword: Organisational context; role ambiguity; organisational citizenship behaviour*

### ABSTRAK

*Tujuan kajian ini dilaksanakan adalah untuk menyelidik kesan konteks organisasi ke atas kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi. Kajian ini juga menyelidik kesan moderasi kekaburan peranan (role ambiguity) ke atas hubungan di antara konteks organisasi (contohnya struktur) dan kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi. Data dari 280 orang responden telah digunakan dalam analisa statistik. Kaedah Structural Equation Modelling berasaskan kovarian telah digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis kajian. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahawa struktur organisasi mempunyai kesan positif ke atas kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi. Perkaitan di antara struktur organisasi dan kekaburan peranan mempunyai kesan positif ke atas kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi. Keputusan analisis statistik juga menunjukkan bahawa kekaburan peranan merupakan moderasi dalam hubungan di antara struktur organisasi dan kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi.*

*Kata kunci: Kontek organisasi; kekaburan peranan; kelakuan kewargaaan organisasi*

### INTRODUCTION

Studies found that organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) produces various tangible benefits for employees, co-workers, supervisors and organisations in a variety of industries (MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Fetter 1991; Nelson & Quick 1999; Podsakoff et al. 2000; Barksdale & Werner 2001; Koys 2001; Bolino, Turnley & Bloodgood 2002; Ackfeldt & Leonard 2005). It is a behaviour that the organisation would want to promote and encourage. Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997: 135) argue that in general, OCB enhances organisational performance by "lubricating the social machinery of the organisation, reducing friction, and or increasing efficiency". OCB may also contribute to organisational success by enhancing co-worker and managerial productivity, promoting better use of scarce resources, improving co-ordination, strengthening the organisation's ability to attract and retain better employees, and reducing variability

of performance. In turn, organisational citizenship behaviour could also be affected by the organisational context, the presence of role ambiguity, organisational support etc. (Chiang & Hsieh 2012). The understanding of how these variables affect OCB will help manager provide conducive condition for OCB.

The structure of an organisation is typically defined as "the total sum of the ways in which it divides its labour into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them" (Mintzberg 1979: 2). Structure is also termed as 'anatomy of the organisation' within which it lays the foundation and framework for the organisation to function. The structure of an organisation can vary and affect both the behaviour and attitudes of the organisational members as highlighted by Hall (1977: 109) in his statement that "organisational structure served to minimise or at least regulate the influence of individual variations in the organisation. Structure is imposed to ensure that individuals conform to the

requirements of the organisation and not vice versa". Organisational structure is a form of contextual factor that symbolises the type of expected behaviour and leadership in an organisation (Dust, Resick & Mawritz 2014). Central to this definition is the division of labour, which creates task positions and the inter-relationships or interdependencies among positions. Hence, job differentiation, the formulation of rules, and formal relationships among employees of the organisation are the essence of organisational structure.

Role ambiguity happens when employees are unclear of their role parameters (Sayers, Salomonson, DiGiacomo & Davidson 2015). According to role theory, role ambiguity results in employees adopting coping behaviour in an attempt to solve the problems and thus avoid stress, or to use defence mechanisms for changing the real situation. Therefore, causing employee to be dissatisfied with his or her role in the organisation (Rizzo et al. 1970; Cicero, Pierro & Van Knippenberg 2010). It can be seen that the consequences of role ambiguity thus have potential cost implications to organisations. The costs of turnover and poor performance are obvious, however the true cost of attitudinal variables is also now understood (Cascio 1982; Mirvis & Lawler 1977).

This view has been reinforced by empirical findings where research has been centred on examining the effects of role ambiguity, and findings have started to reveal the consequences of role ambiguity. Kahn et al. (1964) and other theorists (Miles 1976; Rizzo et al. 1970) have proposed that high levels of role ambiguity result in several unfavourable psychological effects. Such effects are likely to adversely influence the effectiveness of any organisation as role ambiguity occurs when employees are not certain of how to perform given roles or tasks. Among these effects are tension, stress, hostility, dissatisfaction, low productivity, performance and turnover (Seeman 1953; Merton 1957; Cohen 1959; Kahn et al. 1964; Katz & Kahn 1978; Rizzo et al. 1970). However, it is possible that role ambiguity can cause employee to give more if the organisational structure is organic since organic structure gives flexibility for employees to explore and experience the uncertainty about what is unexpected of a task performed.

Exploration of issues regarding structure and OCB is important. Most research on OCB up to the early 1990s focused on individual phenomena (Folger 1993; Moorman et al. 1993), but seems not to fully capture the OCB construct. Individuals performing OCB do not do so in vacuum and organisational context may serve to encourage or discourage individuals to engage in OCB (George & Jones 1997). According to Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1995), organisational structure which is less formalised can create a working environment that encourage employees to engage in OCB. Conversely, Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2004) revealed an interesting insight that formalisation (mechanistic structure) can affect the organisational members' OCB. Additionally, another area in which research has been lacking concerns

the understanding of how the organisation structure affects role ambiguity. The characteristics of organisational structure can contribute to inconsistent expectations and uncertainty.

Thus, this study seeks to identify the direct and indirect influence of organisational context, the perception of role ambiguity on the organisational citizenship behaviour. It also seeks to clarify the condition under which OCB can be further enhanced within certain organisational context. The delineation of the research question is to examine the relationship of organisational context, role ambiguity and organisational citizenship behaviour in Malaysian companies. This study seeks to answer the two specific questions, namely: 1) What is the effect of organisational structure and role ambiguity on organisational citizenship behaviour? 2) To what extent does role ambiguity moderate the relationship between the organisational context and employee citizenship behaviour?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the relevant constructs and variables as well as their interactions involving: (1) Organisational Context; (2) Role Ambiguity; and (3) the key dependent variable i.e. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

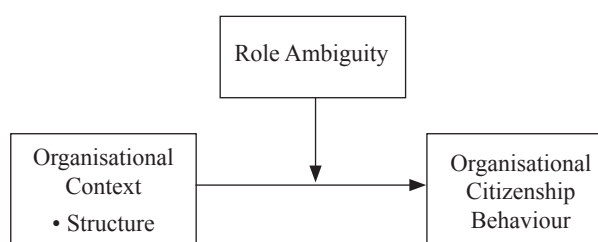


FIGURE 1. Proposed model of the moderating influence of role ambiguity and its interactions

## ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXTUAL VARIABLE

Organisational context is an important determinant of attitudes and behaviour. Rousseau (1978: 522) noted that "recognition is growing that both individual differences and characteristics of organisational settings are germane to all phases of organisation research". Rousseau (1978: 522) further defined organisational context as "characteristics of the organisational setting, the individual, individual role in the organisation and other environment factors that may shape the responses". In the past, researchers have used many different contextual variables including tasks characteristics such as task identity, task significant, autonomy (Rousseau 1978), structure and technology (Sutton & Rousseau 1979), structure and size (Ashforth, Saks & Lee 1998). In this study, the researcher has specifically explored structure as organisational context in the proposed model in Figure 1.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

In this study, structure is conceptualised on a mechanistic-organic continuum based on the theory of Burns and Stalker (1961) of mechanistic and organic structure which has proven its reliability in terms of measuring organisational properties. Although this mechanistic-organic view of organisational structure differs from the traditional view that emphasises such variables as centralisation and formalisation, it is consistent with the Burns and Stalker (1961) suggestion that some successful organisations tend to favour vertical specialisation (control) or horizontal specialisation (co-ordination). When an organisation clearly spells out rules, policies, regulations and procedures, rigidity and inflexibility result, and when organisations centralise their decision-making and develop elaborate control systems backed by a centralised staff, the term 'mechanistic' or 'bureaucratic' is used to describe them (Burns & Stalker 1966). This type of organisation tends to have a vertical emphasis as the staff units will always be placed at the top of the system. In mechanistic organisations, departmentalisation serves as a specialised functional and hierarchical division of labour. The mechanistic structure can be seen in the stable and predictable environments where organisations tend to be strictly controlled and highly formalised, standardised and mechanised.

Intuitively, the opposite of mechanistic structure is labelled 'organic' (Burns & Stalker 1961). This structure tends to emphasise horizontal specialisation and co-ordination and there are comparatively few rules enforced in the organisation. Although there may be numerous policies and procedures and an extensive information system in place, staff units are usually placed toward the middle of a whole in this type of organisation. Typical forms of departmentalisation are the divisional and the matrix. This type of structure is most likely to be seen when the organisation is in its early stages of existence and in late maturity facing uncertain and turbulent environments (Burns & Stalker 1966). Such organisations are more loosely structured, more flexible and innovative and less specialised. They have open, lateral communication, decentralised decision-making processes, less formalisation and standardisation, fewer hierarchical distinctions and a less strict division of labour.

## ROLE AMBIGUITY

Role ambiguity has been in the spotlight of human performance researches. Kalbers and Cenker (2008) defined roles ambiguity as the lack of confidence of an employee's perception of responsibility. Jones (2007) defined as lack of clear direction in the roles an employee is expected to perform. The study of role ambiguity is still crucial for organisations, especially in light of issues such as diversity, globalisation and competitive pressure. It is vital for an individual to understand one's role from a personal perspective as such understanding can have an influence on the individual's motivation, satisfaction

and performance (Beris, Sethela & Mahmood 2011). Ultimately, managers and employees need role clarity to ensure that they are working on the things that will make the firm successful. Role incumbents who are experiencing role ambiguity may be working on the wrong things (based on the organisation's mission and objectives) and are probably unaware that they are doing so (Onyemah 2008). Singh and Bhandarker (1983: 50) once stated that "managerial role clarity is viewed as one of the basic requirements for organisational effectiveness". They further stated that "managers suffering from role ambiguity are invariably observed to be pre-occupied with trivial organisational chores" (p. 35). Thus, based on the underlying role theory, high levels of ambiguity are unlikely to reduce the role incumbent satisfaction levels. In a worse scenario, it increases work anxiety, distorts reality and produces less effective work outcomes (Rizzo et al. 1970). Employees are often associated with higher tension levels and less job satisfaction when they are not clear with their required roles (Dasgupta 2012).

From a different standpoint, uncertainty regarding one's job responsibilities creates an environment that fosters influence attempts because of the unclear connections among effort, performance and desired outcomes (Cicero, Pierro & Van Knippenberg 2010; Luthans 2006; Jones 2007; Onyemah 2008; Slattery, Selvarajan & Anderson 2008; Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick & Mayes 1980; Parker, Dipboye & Jackson 1995). When role ambiguity is high, there is a greater dependence on information and feedback which can clarify the appropriateness of one's action (Dobbins, Cardy & Platz-Vieno 1990). Therefore, as role ambiguity increases, the leader becomes more instrumental because the role clarifying information and feedback available from the leader becomes more relevant (Abdullah & Kassim 2011; Howell, Dorfman & Kerr 1986). Conversely, as role ambiguity decreases, role clarifying information from the leader becomes less instrumental. Thus, one could argue that the link between leadership and OCB would be stronger when role ambiguity is high and weaker when role ambiguity is low. This is one of the premises of the current study.

The researcher's study is specifically exploring role ambiguity rather than role conflict to establish the relationship between the variables and its antecedents and consequences. There are several reasons that dictate the choice of role ambiguity over role conflict in this instance, these being: (i) role ambiguity is an important concept in role theory as well as in path-goal theory of leadership; (ii) of all role concepts, role ambiguity has received the most attention; (iii) in comparison with role conflict, role ambiguity is more amenable to managerial intervention and thus the implementation of programmes aimed at diminishing role ambiguity is relatively less difficult, and (iv) studies involving role ambiguity have yielded inconsistent results, prompting greater research incentive.

## ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

The construct of OCB was introduced by Bateman and Organ (1983) by drawing upon the concept of super role behaviours as presented by Katz and Kahn (1966). Examples of employees OCB include: accepting extra duties and responsibilities at work, working overtime when needed, and helping subordinates with their work (Organ 1988; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor 1996). Organisations need their employees to participate beyond formal job requirements, such as participating and cooperating with helpful behaviours (Dierdorff, Rubin & Bachrach 2012). The behaviour of cooperating among colleagues, helping each other, job dedication, while consciously complying with organisational objectives is known as "citizenship" Borman and Penner (2001). Researches have generally shown that OCB can be linked with a wide variety of desirable employees and employers' outcomes, for example, better employee performance, as well as better quality and increased quantity of unit-level production (Organ, Podsakoff & MacKenzie 2006).

For this study, the researcher has chosen the OCB construct developed by Smith et al. (1983). The authors have identified two dimensions of OCB: altruism and compliance. Altruism refers to behaviours aimed at helping another person such as assisting the supervisor with his or her work, orienting new people and helping others who have been absent, accepting extra duties and responsibilities at work, and working overtime when needed (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor 2000). Smith et al. (1983) contrasted altruism with generalised compliance, which they identified as behaviours that were not directed at specific individuals but rather at the system itself. Compliance refers to impersonal behaviours such as not taking undeserved breaks or time off, being punctual and giving advance notice if unable to come to work. In fact, compliance behaviours are typified by an impersonal conscientiousness on the part of employee whereby he or she seeks to do what is 'right and proper' for the benefit of the organisation rather than specific individuals. Not only have these two categories of OCB been identified as the primary examples of OCB-I and OCB-O respectively (Organ 1997), but they are also two of the most commonly studied dimensions of OCB, dating back to the early findings of Smith et al. (1983) on altruism and compliance.

Determining why individuals engage in OCB has occupied a substantial amount of research attention in both organisational behaviour and social psychology (Brief & Motowidlo 1986; McNeely & Meglino 1994). Most research on OCB has focused on the effects of OCB on individuals, leadership behaviour and organisational performance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Pain & Bachrach 2000; Bolino et al. 2002). A number of predictors of OCBs have been identified including job attitudes (Organ 1988; Shore & Wayne 1993), interpersonal trust or loyalty to the leader (Podsakoff et al. 1990; Johnson, Lanaj, Tan & Chang 2012), transformational leadership behaviour (Greenberg

1988), task characteristics (Farh, Podsakoff & Organ 1990), organisational justice (Moorman 1991), cultural influences (Farh, Earley & Lin 1997), civic citizenship and covenantal relationship (Van Dyne, Graham & Dienesch 1994), dispositional influences (Van Dyne et al. 1994; Moorman & Blakely 1995) and contextual influences (Netemeyer, Boles, McKee & McMurrian 1997). The outcomes of OCB studied are satisfaction (Bateman & Organ 1983), commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman 1986), perceptions of fairness (Martin & Bies 1991; Moorman, Niehoff & Organ 1993; Tepper & Taylor 2003) and perceptions of pay equity (Organ 1988).

It would seem that an employee who engages in OCB would be contributing to the department's efficiency and effectiveness and thus helping the supervisor. Moreover, empirical and conceptual work in OCB suggests these to be indicative of an employee's performance in the work place and significantly related to supervisory performance ratings (MacKenzie et al. 1991; Werner 1994). Thus, OCB may be used as a way of reciprocating support from the supervisor.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## STRUCTURE AND OCB

Based on the assumption by Eisenberg and Fabes (1988), OCB can be influenced by organisational patterns. George and Bettenhausen (1990) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1995) seem to agree with this assumption, finding that less highly formalised organisations created an atmosphere of group cohesiveness that encouraged employees to engage in OCB, whereas bureaucratically structured organisations created an environment of employees alienation that inhibited OCBs. For example, when an organisational culture is less formalized and is being supportive, employees are more likely to exhibit greater commitment as compared to bureaucratic and less supportive organisations (Organ et al. 2006). Hence, individuals who perform or fail to perform OCB do not do so in a vacuum; the organisational context in which these behaviours are performed serves to encourage or discourage them.

DeGroot and Brownlee (2006) explored the variable of organisational structure on OCB and organisational effectiveness at the departmental level of 101 organisations; they found that the relationship between structure (organic-mechanistic) and organisational effectiveness is partly influenced by OCB. Similarly, a study conducted by Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) on the organisational decentralised and flexible structure found such a structure to provide opportunities for organisational members to actively participate and enhance involvement and commitment (Durham, Knight & Locke 1997). This in turn might lead individuals to engage in behaviours that will help the organisation to achieve its goals, whether or not these are part of the employee's role (OCB). Similarly,

interdependence in tasks and processes will lead to a reduction in formalised rules and procedures and a rise in group cohesion (Senge 1993). In turn, this situation will influence task and organisational characteristics which may be the key to promoting OCB (Organ 1990; Podsakoff et al. 1996b) by encouraging individuals to co-operate, share and help co-workers in order to attain the organisational goals (Erez & Somech 1996; Knutson & Miranda 2000; Mitchel & Silver 1991). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H<sub>1</sub> Organic structure has a significant positive effect on subordinates' organisational citizenship behaviour.

#### ROLE AMBIGUITY AND OCB

Theoretically, a high level of role ambiguity impedes the opportunity of a person to perform effectively and efficiently (Kahn et al. 1964). When role ambiguity is low, employees have higher organisational commitment and will perform better at work; employees are willing to commit more, thus leading to better OCB (Chun, Shin, Choi & Kim 2011). Unfortunately, researches are polarized and the relationship between role ambiguity and job performance is unclear. Although some studies have demonstrated a negative relationship between role ambiguity and job performance (Bagozzi 1978; Behrman et al. 1981; Behrman & Perreault 1984; Fried et al. 1998; Lysonski 1985; Schuler 1975; Szilagyi, Sim & Keller 1976; Walker, Churchull & Ford 1977), other studies indicate weak or no relationship (Brief & Aldag 1976; Jackson & Schuler 1985; Schriesheim & Murphy 1976; Schuler 1977; Schuler, Aldag & Brief 1977). Although no definite conclusions can be drawn, the inconsistencies in previous results indicate that the "literature clearly lacks theoretical and empirical integration" (Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman & Chmielewski 1986: 153), and perhaps due to the underspecified model studied in the past.

In addition, role ambiguity has been found to negatively influence in-role performance in a number of studies (Brown & Peterson 1993; Jaworski & Kohli 1991). In fact, Churchill et al. (1985) reported that role perceptions were more strongly associated with salesperson performance. The reasoning is simply that salespeople can better focus on appropriate objectives and thus achieve higher performance when they are clear about what are expected to accomplish. Higher performance can be inferred to perform extra-role behaviour. Majority of literatures still support that unclear expectations due to role ambiguity may cause lower performance. Lower performance may not lead to extra-role behaviour. Thus, the next hypothesis is formulated as:

H<sub>2</sub> Subordinates' organisational citizenship behaviour will be reduced as role ambiguity increases.

#### MODERATING EFFECT OF ROLE AMBIGUITY

As studies so far (Behrman et al. 1981; Behrman & Perreault 1984; Jackson & Schuler 1985; Fry et al. 1986;

Fried et al. 1998; Jaworski & Kohli 1991; Onyemah 2008) implicates that the effect of role ambiguity on performance is not conclusive, it is necessary to investigate the role ambiguity as the moderating variable. Role ambiguity is often observed in the organic structure where the organisational environment promotes flexibility, innovation and freedom of action. As this structure is expectedly more favourable in turbulent environment or early stage of organisational development, thus it is not expected that role ambiguity will have direct impact on the organisational performance or organisational citizenship behaviour. The effect is expected to be indirect, in the sense that it moderates the relationship between the organisational context and OCB. In a way, certain organisational context may affect the OCB but the presence of the role ambiguity will exacerbate or diffuse its effect. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forward as:

H<sub>3</sub> Role ambiguity will moderate the relationship between organic structure and organisational citizenship behaviour. Specifically the role ambiguity will increase the positive effect of organic structure on the organisational citizenship behaviour.

#### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The sample selection for this study comprises executives, managers and professional people in services, manufacturing, mining and construction companies located mainly in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. This sample was selected for two reasons. Firstly, major industries were selected in order to represent the major sphere of activities in Malaysia. These industries are among the more dominant industries in Malaysia that contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment. It is also believed that the power of the theoretical framework would be increased substantially if the predicted relationships between leadership styles, downward influence tactics, and OCB were observed in a more diverse industrial setting. Secondly, samples were drawn only from companies who employed more than 35 employees, in order to include only organisations where a more formalised structure and system of supervision and interactions were more likely to exist and function (Hall 1977).

The companies that met the above criteria were selected from the list of companies compiled from the Federation of Manufacturers, Malaysia, Service Directory, Construction Industry Development Board Directory, and Malaysian Trade and Commerce Directory published in 2015. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting the samples from the large databases, for example, setting certain selection criteria such as the size of the company, number of respondents per company and numbers of samples that is based on the proportion of industry size. Effort was made to sample respondent from the three (3) major industries that are service, manufacturing and

mining and construction which play a significant role in providing employment in Malaysian economy. The number of sample to be surveyed is stratified based on the objective to secure adequate or proportionate representation of these industries. The proportion of industry size was based on the data published in the Malaysia Economic Report (2014/2015). Data from respondents were obtained through a survey questionnaire. The cover letter also requested that the questionnaires be distributed to the executive, managerial or professional staff within the company. This indicates that the unit of analysis is individual and not organisation.

In terms of construct and measurement scales for organisational structure, the seven-item scale was developed by Khandwalla (1977) and later used by Covin and Slevin (1989) and Low (2005). Covin and Slevin (1989) demonstrated that the scale has an inter-item reliability coefficient of 0.80, while Low (2005) reported a coefficient of 0.79.

For role ambiguity, this study employed a six-item scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) to measure role ambiguity. This is one of most frequently used scale in organisational studies. In fact, 85% of previous studies have applied the role ambiguity tool developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) according to Jackson and Schuler (1985) and Tubre and Collins (2000). The reported Cronbach coefficient alpha levels of the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (RHL) scale range from 0.65 to 0.82.

With respect to organisational citizenship behaviour, the study has decided to adopt the OCB instrument developed by Smith et al. (1983) and measure it as a global construct. This instrument consisted of seven items on the altruism and compliance dimension. The two-dimensional view of OCB was chosen over the broad categories of OCB due to its popularity in earlier studies conducted by Smith et al. (1983). Jones and Schaubroeck (2004) reported the reliabilities of the two measures as being 0.79 (altruism) and 0.80 (compliance) for the employee-rated measures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the total of 1,500 questionnaires sent, a total of 293 responses were received, with data from 280 of those completed questionnaire being usable. The response rate was 18.7%.

### RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

The detail of respondents' characteristics is shown in Table 1. By ethnic group, 44% of the respondents were Chinese, 33% were Malay, and 18% were Indian, while other races made up the rest. By gender, 46% were male and 54% were female. In terms of age, the highest proportion of respondents fell into the 30-39 years age group. They accounted for 45% of the total number of respondents. This was followed by the 20-29 years age

group (38%), while those above 40 years old accounted for the remaining respondents.

On the whole, the education level of the respondents was high. Nearly 71% of the respondents had education up to tertiary level. Only 3% of the respondents had no tertiary education. The high educational level was reflected in the position or the type of occupation held by the majority of the respondents: 8 Presidents/Chief Executive Officers/Managing Directors/General Managers, 25 Senior Managers, 87 Departmental Managers/Assistant Managers and 157 Executives, and others made up of only three people.

The survey data showed that 8% earned more than RM8,001 per month, 11% of the respondents earned more than RM6,001 per month, 32% earned between RM4,001 to RM6,000 per month, 41% earned between RM2,001 to RM4,000 per month and 8% earned less than RM2,000 per month. The average salary of the respondents was higher than the population's average. The population's average salary was RM2,215.50/month (Source: Malaysian Economic Report 2014/2015).

On average, the respondents had worked in the present company for three years with a standard deviation of 4.3 years. In detail, 54% of the total respondents had worked for 1 to 3 years in the present company, 11% had worked between 4 to 6 years, 7% had worked between 7 to 9 years and 5% had worked between 10 and 13 years, while only 1% of the respondents had worked longer than 20 years in the present company. The degree of job mobility among respondents was reflected in the average number of previous jobs held by respondents, that being two jobs. For the present sample, 17% respondents reported they had had no previous job, 24% had one, 26% had two, 20% had three and the rest reported that they had had more than four previous jobs.

In terms of the organisational size, the sample was of medium to large size Malaysian companies. It was found that 26% of the companies had less than 100 employees, 12% had 101 to 200 employees, 15% had 201 to 400 employees, 22% had 401 to 1,000 employees and 25% had more than 1,000 employees. Classifying the business according to the type of industry revealed that a greater portion of the companies are in services industries (65%), while 19% were in manufacturing industries and 16% were in mining and construction, and others.

The survey revealed the following information about the respondent's superior. It was reported in the survey that 62% of the superiors were males and 38% were female. The racial composition of the superiors was: 34% Chinese, 48% Malay, 10% Indian and 8% from other races. On average, the superiors had worked in the organisation for 8 years with a standard deviation of 7.2 years - longer than the subordinates' average. 41% had worked between 1 and 5 years, 26% had worked between 6 and 10 years, 19% had worked between 11 to 15 years, 9% had worked between 16 to 20 years and 5% had worked more than 20 years in the present company. The superiors held various positions in the company with 23% of them in the first

hierarchical level, 34% in the second level, and 29% in the third level, while only a fraction of them were in the lower management positions. Their educational level was also predictably high, with 97% of them having had tertiary education. Only 2% had up to either primary or secondary education. By designation, 82 of the superiors were the Presidents/Chief Executive Officers/Managing Directors/General Managers of the companies, 61 were the Senior Managers, 81 were the Departmental Managers/Assistant Managers and 2 were Executives.

TABLE 1. Respondents' sample characteristics

Respondents' Characteristics	Classification	Percent (%)	
Ethnic Group	Chinese	44	
	Malay	33	
	India	18	
	Others	5	
Gender	Male	46	
	Female	54	
Age	50 and above	3	
	40 – 49	14	
	30 – 39	45	
	20 – 29	38	
Education	Primary/Secondary	3	
	Diploma/Bachelor Degree	71	
	Master Degree	19	
	Doctoral Degree	1	
	Professional Qualification	5	
	Others	1	
Occupation	President/Chief Executive Officer/ Managing Director/General Manager	3	
	Senior Manager	9	
	Departmental Manager/ Assistant Manager	31	
	Executive	56	
	Others	1	
	Income per month	RM8,001 and above	8
	RM6,001 – RM8,000	11	
RM4,001 – RM6,000	32		
RM2,001 – RM4,000	41		
Less than RM2,000	8		
Length of service	More than 14 years	5	
	10 - 13 years	9	
	7 - 9 years	12	
	4 - 6 years	20	
Job Mobility	More than 4 previous jobs	13	
	Three previous jobs	20	
	Two previous jobs	26	
	One previous job	24	
	No previous job	17	
Organisational Size	More than 1,000 employees	25	
	401 – 1,000 employees	22	
	201 - 400 employees	15	
	101 - 200 employees	12	
	35 - 100 employees	26	
Types of Industry	Services	65	
	Manufacturing	19	
	Mining and construction	8	
	Others	8	

Respondents' Superior		
Ethnic Group	Chinese	34
	Malay	48
	India	10
	Others	8
Gender	Male	62
	Female	38
Age	50 and above	18
	40 – 49	34
	30 – 39	44
	20 – 29	4
Education	Primary/Secondary	2
	Diploma/Bachelor Degree	51
	Master Degree	32
	Doctoral Degree	5
	Professional Qualification	9
	Others	1
Occupation	President/Chief Executive Officer/ Managing Director/General Manager	36
	Senior Manager	27
	Departmental Manager/ Assistant Manager	36
	Executive	1
Length of service	More than 21 years	5
	16 – 20 years	9
	11 – 15 years	19
	6 – 10 years	26
Hierarchy level	1 – 5 years	41
	First Level	23
	Second Level	34
	Third Level	29
	Fourth Level	9
Fifth Level	5	

#### ANALYSIS APPROACH, SCALES VALIDATION AND TESTING RESULTS

This research uses Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) two-stage approach and AMOS 21.0 software to test the research hypotheses. Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to confirm how well the observed variables represent the latent constructs. Model fit, reliability and construct validity of the constructs were assessed. Secondly, the structural model was developed to test the research hypotheses. The internal consistency reliability coefficients for all the scales were satisfactory (Nunnally 1978). All the scales had coefficient Cronbach Alpha greater than .87.

Table 2 shows the CFA results. Factor loadings of all items were greater than 0.5 and significant at 95% confidence level (varies from 0.660 to 0.882). Moreover, the model fit indices ( $\chi^2$  (df) = 294.228 (147),  $\chi^2/df$  = 2.002, GFI = 0.905, CFI = .952, IFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.944, NFI = 0.909, RMSEA (90% C.I.) = .060 (.050-.070)) indicated a good fit. The significant  $\chi^2$  is owing to a relatively large sample size being used (Hair et al. 2009; Pahlevan Sharif, Mahdavian 2015).

TABLE 2. Measurement model assessment

Construct / Measure	Factor Loading
Organisation Structure (CR = 0.858, AVE = 0.503, MSV = 0.006, ASV = 0.004)	
Organisational Structure 1	0.675
Organisational Structure 2	0.660
Organisational Structure 3	0.676
Organisational Structure 4	0.734
Organisational Structure 5	0.759
Organisational Structure 6	0.745
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (CR = 0.909, AVE = 0.589, MSV = 0.434, ASV = 0.218)	
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 1	0.744
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 2	0.780
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 3	0.732
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 4	0.800
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 5	0.786
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 6	0.814
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour 7	0.710
Role Ambiguity (CR = 0.910, AVE = 0.629, MSV = 0.434, ASV = 0.220)	
Role Ambiguity 1	0.702
Role Ambiguity 2	0.801
Role Ambiguity 3	0.686
Role Ambiguity 4	0.882
Role Ambiguity 5	0.858
Role Ambiguity 6	0.809

Model Fit:  $\chi^2$  (df) = 294.228 (147),  $\chi^2/df$  = 2.002, GFI = 0.905, CFI = .952, IFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.944, NFI = 0.909, RMSEA (90% C.I.) = .060 (.050-.070). All factor loadings are greater than 0.5 and they are significant at 95% confidence level. Construct Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV), Average Shared Square Variance (ASV))

Figure 2 shows the final model after reviewing model modification indices for sources of model misfit. Measurement errors between observed items of organisational citizenship behaviour were allowed to freely covary to improve the model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2$  ( $\Delta df$ ) = 35.193 (2)).

Construct reliability of role ambiguity (0.910), organisational structure (0.858), and organisational citizenship behaviour (0.909) was greater than 0.7, which indicated good reliability of constructs. In addition, while average variance extracted (AVE) of role ambiguity (0.629), organisational structure (0.503), and organisational citizenship behaviour (0.589) was greater than 0.5, they were less than their respective construct reliability. Hence, all constructs had convergent validity (Hair et al. 2010). Moreover, maximum shared squared variance (MSV) and average shared square variance (ASV) of role ambiguity (0.434, 0.220), organisational structure (0.006, 0.004), and organisational citizenship behaviour (0.434, 0.218) were less than their respective AVE. This demonstrated that discriminant validity of all constructs was established (Pahlevan Sharif, Mahdavian 2015; Hair et al. 2010).

In order to test the moderation effect of role ambiguity, this study followed the approach discussed in Field's (2013) step by step. The first step is grand mean centring to make the results interpretable. To do so, the independent variable (organisation structure) and the moderator (role ambiguity) were standardized. In the second step, the independent variable, moderator, and their interaction were included in the model. Finally, the structural model analysis was run and path coefficients were interpreted. The results of the structural model assessment and hypotheses testing are reported in Table 3.

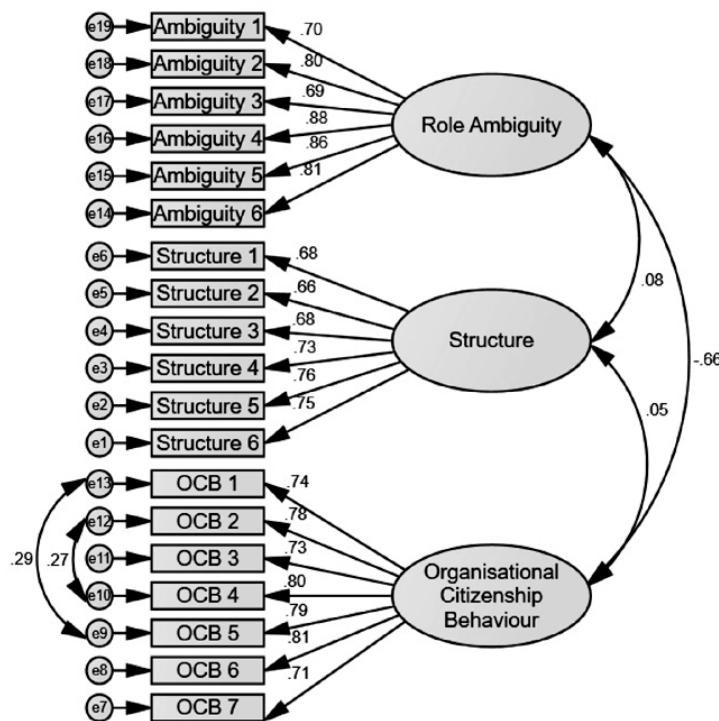


FIGURE 2. Measurement model assessment



TABLE 3. Structural model assessment for predicting organisational citizenship behaviour

Exogenous Variables	Path Coefficient	P-value
Organisation Structure	0.117**	.007
Role Ambiguity	-0.724***	.000
Organisation Structure * Role Ambiguity	0.074*	.049
(R <sup>2</sup> = 52.27%)		

Note: \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

## RESULTS DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1 predicts that organic structure has a significant positive effect on subordinates' organisational citizenship behaviour. As it is shown in Table 3, organic structure has a significant positive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour ( $\beta=0.117$ ,  $p$ -value  $< .01$ ), thus providing support for hypothesis 1. This suggests that the organic structure plays a role in influencing subordinates' responses. It must also be realised that subordinates tend to favour an organic structure and there may be some who can adapt to or actually prefer an organic structure. It is important to note the assertion of the natural system theorists who stress the advantage of informal structure particularly to achieve certain task under specific situation. The present result seems to be in line with the work of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) which highlighted the contracting advantage of structural characteristics that is a more flexible structure is necessary for the initiation of innovative or extraordinary behaviour.

Hypothesis 2 posits that subordinates' organisational citizenship behaviour will be reduced as role ambiguity increases. The result in Table 3 ( $\beta=-0.724$ ,  $p$ -value  $< .001$ ) lend support for hypothesis 2. Thus, the result seems to agree with the conventional reasoning that role ambiguity impedes the opportunity of a person to perform effectively and efficiently (Kahn et al. 1964). Other research findings (Walker, Churchill & Ford 1975; Bagozzi 1978; Behrman et al. 1981; Behrman & Perreault 1984; Lysonski 1985; Onyemah 2008; Bryman 2013) have also demonstrated a negative relationship between role ambiguity and performance. Although the conclusion here is not entirely equivocal (as in the contradicting result of Brief and Aldag (1976), and Jackson and Schuler (1985), there is clearly more empirical evidence to suggest the simple conclusion that the reduction of role ambiguity ensures better performance (including extra-role) as one is more certain about what is expected to be accomplished. Hopefully, the decrease in role ambiguity will lead to an increase in organisational commitment and task performance and ultimately, increase the employees' OCB level (MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Ahearne 1998; Tubre & Collins 2000; MacKenzie et al. 2001).

Hypothesis 3 states that role ambiguity will moderate the relationship between organic structure and

organisational citizenship behaviour. The interaction of organic structure and role ambiguity has a significant positive effect on organisational citizenship behaviour at 95% confidence level ( $\beta = 0.074$ ,  $p$ -value  $< .05$ ) to lend support for hypothesis 3. The findings indicate that the positive effect of organic structure on organisational citizenship behaviour is made stronger when there is high role ambiguity in the organisation (Figure 3). Squared multiple correlations indicates 52.27% of variance of organisational citizenship behaviour is explained by this model. This result is in line with research done by Morrison (1994) that concluded employees' perceptions of their role can affect the amount of OCB that they displayed. When role ambiguity is high, it creates situational freedom of employees roles and thus, allowing a high degree of flexibility or discretion on how they should do or perform the task. In such situation, it can be implied that the presence of role ambiguity can affect the flexibility of the organisational structure which affect employees OCB. Implicitly OCB is created when employee acts beyond of what is expected; and what is expected can be made hazy or unbounded with a right dosage of role ambiguity.

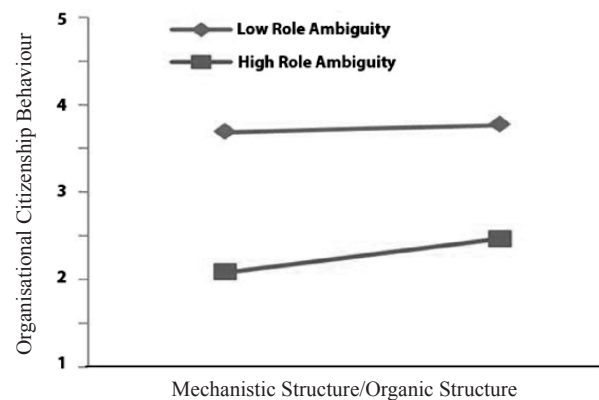


FIGURE 3. The influence organisation structure on organisational citizenship behaviour at two different levels of role ambiguity

The findings of the present study revealed several specific implications. First, the findings suggest that organic structure has a positive influence on role ambiguity and organisational citizenship behaviour. The moderation of role ambiguity was investigated and shed light on how the variable has direct and indirect effects on structure and organisational citizenship behaviour. In an attempt to solicit subordinate super-ordinate effort in the organisation, organisational citizenship behaviour was included as the outcome variable of the study. The relationships exist to highlight the way role ambiguity influence by its own or jointly on such behaviours in the organisation; and this will have great practical significance. The advantage of having high OCB is well researched and its positive relationship with employee's performance is well studied (Nielsen, Hrivnak & Shaw 2009; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume 2009). It has been shown that OCB is positively linked to

multiple unit performance measures, for example sales performance, quantity and quality of output, as well as attaining higher customer satisfaction (Chun et al. 2011). The collaboration efforts and sense of loyalty towards the organisation will help enhance organisational productivity. Furthermore, while OCB improves, the supportive behaviour among employees is more likely to be linked with the reputation of the organisation, thereby attracting and retaining talented individuals (Gong, Chang & Cheung 2010; Chun et al. 2011). It is crucial for organisations to remain flexible and dynamic to thrive in the ever-changing business landscape. Higher OCB may mean that employees have higher readiness to help the organisation in adapting smoothly to the environmental changes (Chun et al. 2011).

From a managerial standpoint, the research findings suggest that when the superior has a choice in the leadership styles, he/she should place greater emphasis on the use of appropriate structure and organisational features to achieve greater OCB. While organic structure promotes OCB, the degree of OCB can be heightened if there is certain level of role ambiguity while implementing organic structure. Although seems counterintuitive, the result suggest that situational freedom of action can promote extra-role results.

#### CONCLUSION

This study highlights the need for the manager to consider an appropriate structural form to encourage OCB. In this case, organic structure is found to be better suited than mechanistic structure to encourage extra-role behaviour. The study also supports the contention that subordinates' role ambiguity has a direct and indirect effect on the outcome, serving to increase the strength of OCB when organic structure is present. This result seems to support a widely held assertion that the effectiveness of organisation depends very much on the situation (Fiedler 1967; House & Dessler 1974; Weed et al. 1976).

This study contributes to the domain of organisational study and OCB research that structural forms and administrative features influence behavioural outcome. The present scope is nevertheless not exhaustive. Future studies should also attempt to incorporate additional endogenous variables such as motivation, compliance and performance of subordinates that are more indicative of organisational outcomes. Besides, studies can focus on identifying more antecedents of organisational contexts and more importantly, on understanding the processes by which such variables impact subordinates' performance.

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