

# The Mediating Effect of Organizational Citizenship Behavior on the Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise of China

Guo Wan Ran<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, Nan Chang University, China

Correspondence: Guo Wan Ran, Nan Chang University, Jiangxi Province, China. Tel: 86-182-7083-1790. E-mail: 1920115041@qq.com

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## Abstract

This study examined the mediating effect of organizational citizenship behavior on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in China and investigates the factors that affect the performance of small and medium-sized enterprise. The factors investigated include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The results show that intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration had positive effects on organizational performance. Inspirational motivation, individualized consideration positive effects on organizational citizenship behavior. At the same time, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration can influence organizational performance through the mediating effect of organizational citizenship behavior.

**Keywords:** organizational performance, organizational citizenship behavior, transformational leadership

## 1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the world economic system, SMEs improve the economic structure, stabilize employment situation and provide social services (Julian, 2019). China's SMEs are developing rapidly since the rapid development of China's economy, but compared with some developed countries, China's SMEs also have many problems. Some SMEs lack of innovative consciousness and have no effective management mechanism, these problems seriously hinder the growth of organizational performance of SMEs, which leads to decrease of organizational goal and organizational productivity and employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Yu, 2018).

From the above scenario it can be seen that it is very important to improve the performance of SMEs. The success of SMEs also depends on a synergy through effective and efficient teamwork, collaboration and cooperation amongst employees (Garg & Dhar, 2017). In other words, this study investigated SMEs' performance from the individual perspective and not from the institutional or organizational perspective. Relevant employees' values and behaviors can potentially influence organizational citizenship behavior, and in turn SMEs' performance

It can be seen that the staff of SMEs need have a strong leader in the organization. Transformational leadership has been regarded as a powerful theoretical weapon in the organization. It can effectively motivate employees for leaders and correctly lead all employees in the organization towards organizational goals. Advance provides an effective way to enable enterprises to establish and maintain a lasting competitive advantage in the fierce competition, so as to achieve the goal of improving organizational performance (Arif & Akram, 2018)

Therefore, in order to achieve above goal, a new framework model was designed. The framework model includes transformational leadership and its four factors. The mediating variable is organizational citizenship behavior, dependent variable is organizational performance. The research aims to find the transformational leadership whether can develop OCB of employees and in turn improve performance of SMEs.

## 2. Theoretical Overview

### 2.1 Organizational Performance

With the development of organizational performance theory, there are many different definitions of

organizational performance. Murphy (1990) pointed out that performance is a group of behaviors related to the goals of an individual in the organization. Bernadin (1995) believes that performance should be defined as work results, because these work results are related to organizational strategic objectives and customer satisfaction. Campbell (1997) compiled a list of organizational performance including criteria, productivity, profit, growth rate, turnover, stability and cohesion. Faez (2021) thought that organizational performance refers to the economic aspects of an organization's functions. These include productivity, efficiency, quality, sustainability, competitive advantage, and the ability to perform the organization's task to stay successful. Heydari (2021) thought that the organization focuses on key performance ratios within the scope of the goals. Regarding the measurement of organizational performance, many scholars use interviews, questionnaires, observation methods to measure organizational performance, questionnaires method is used more often.

In many practical researches, organizational performance is always regarded as the dependent variables. There are many factors affecting organizational performance. First, the employees themselves, such as job satisfaction, emotional labor, the fair perception of organizational distribution and employee loyalty will have a certain impact on organizational performance. Second, the influencing factors on organizational performance have been expanded from the perspective of corporate social responsibility (Loosemore & Lim, 2017). Third, market supply and demand, the surrounding economic environment, consumption and other incidental factors and a variety of macroeconomic factors can also affect organizational performance (Severo, 2015).

## 2.2 Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Organ (1983) proposed OCB is conducive to the organization and improve employee performance and promote the realization of organizational performance. It represents an important mechanism for adapting behaviour towards attaining the performance goals of the individual and organization (Greve & Gaba, 2017). Peng & Zhao (2012) studied employee citizenship behaviour in the Chinese context, organizational citizenship behaviour of employees in Chinese enterprises has three characteristics: role generalization, influence by complex interpersonal relationships and emphasis on individual beneficial behaviour. Mridula (2017) thought that OCB has been studied largely as a multidimensional construct, and most studies on OCB have attempted to identify its antecedents or its consequences. Many scholars use interviews, questionnaires, observation methods to measure OCB.

In the research on the citizenship behaviour of employees. Taylor (2003) found that if individuals have a high level of perception of organizational fairness, it will directly affect employees to produce more conducive to organizational work behaviour. Farh J. L. (2008) found that the organization members with stronger core cultural values show more OCB, and the OCB of men is higher than that of women in China. Wherry (2012) studies that leaders can attract and guide employees to produce more positive organizational citizenship behaviour in return for the organization by applying their leader charm and behaviour model to leadership work. Sugiharjo (2020) also found that OCB variable have a positive and significant effect on the Employee Performance.

## 2.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership emphasizes that leaders use personal charm to arouse employees' trust and compliance with leaders. This research put forward four intrinsic factors. The description for each factor is showed in the following sections.

### 2.3.1 Idealized Influence

Idealized influence refers to the actions of leaders as role models (Avalio & Bass, 2013), then in return, employees also change their behaviour in work. As a positive result, organizational performance was improved (Samad, 2012). Idealized influence of leader is very important for employees to develop their behaviour to improve organizational performance (Balhara, 2021). Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1a: Idealized influence has a positive relationship with employees' organizational citizenship behaviour

H1b: idealized influence has a positive relationship with organizational performance.

### 2.3.2 Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational Motivation refers to leaders having high expectations for their employees and motivate them to devote themselves to organization (Lowe, 1996). Khan (2020) stated that organizational leaders must have transformational attributes by getting informed of their employees well because transformational leader can inspire employees to achieve anticipated or significant outcomes. Therefore, inspirational motivation of transformational leader can encourage employees to work hard for the organization. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H2a: Inspirational motivation has a positive relationship with employees' organizational citizenship behaviour

H2b: Inspirational motivation has a positive relationship with organizational performance.

### 2.3.3 Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation refers to leaders inspiring their followers to create and innovate new consciousness (Bass, 2013). Datche (2015) found that intellectual stimulation had a positive relation with organizational performance. Balhara (2021) found that intellectual Stimulation dimension of transformational leadership was the most significant factor in influencing the Organizational Performance. Therefore, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H3a: Intellectual Stimulation has a positive relationship with employees' organizational citizenship behaviour

H3b: Intellectual Stimulation has a positive relationship with organizational performance.

### 2.3.4 Individualized Consideration

Individualized Consideration refers to leaders creating a supportive atmosphere and helping their subordinates realize their own needs and development (Bass, 2013). The employees get the corresponding suggestions, support, guidance and consideration from the leaders they will work hard for improving the organization (Howell, 2011). Nayef Alateibi (2019) conducted a study about transformational leadership characteristics to identify its effect on the performance of organizations in the government sector in the United Arab Emirates. Results indicated that all four independent variables significantly predicted performance with a various percentage. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H4a: Individualized Consideration has a positive relationship with employees' organizational citizenship behaviour

H4b: Intellectual Consideration has a positive relationship with organizational performance.

### 2.3.5 Mediating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The study of organizational citizenship behaviour can also be divided into two aspects: antecedent variable and consequence variable. OCB is undertaken voluntarily and typically have positive effects on organizational outcomes (Mridula, 2017). At present, researches on consequence variables mainly focus on the influence of employees' OCB on organizational performance. Therefore, with the increasing competition and the flattening of the organizational structure, the organization must rely on employees to actively perform some altruistic behaviors outside their duties, so that the whole enterprise organization can play its infinite potential. Thus, the four hypotheses are put forward:

H1c: Idealized influence and organizational performance is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviour.

H2c: Inspirational motivation and organizational performance is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviour.

H3c: Intellectual stimulation and organizational performance is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviour.

H4c: Individualized Consideration and organizational performance is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviour.

### 2.3.6 Organizational Citizenship Behaviour and Organizational Performance

Park (2016) believe that OCB can improve organizational performance through theoretical analysis. OCB can actively promote the promotion and career development of employees (Lo, Manuti, & Briscoe, 2019), and can also bring about higher employee satisfaction and team development (Basirudin, 2016). Therefore, the following assumptions are proposed:

H5: Organizational citizenship behaviour and organizational performance has positive relationship.

## 2.4 Research Framework

Therefore, the hypothesized mechanism model is shown in Figure1 so that exam the above hypotheses.

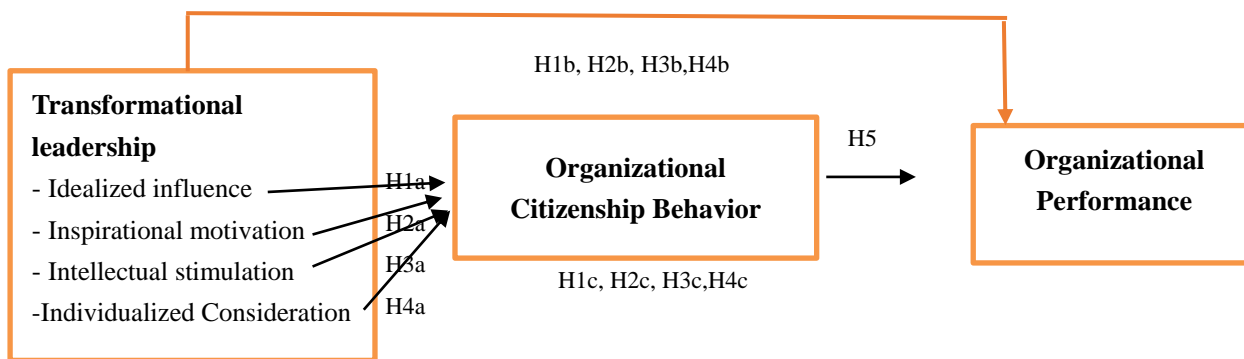


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for improving organizational performance of SMEs

**3. Research Methodology**

The study used random sampling to collect data (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The research unit of this study is employees of SMEs from different kinds of industries in China. These industries include healthcare industry, trade industry, agriculture industry, restaurant and catering industry, transportation industry, education industry, building industry and manufacturing industry. The research randomly selected 400 employees from China’ SMEs. In this study, online and manual questionnaires collection were used. The researchers took three months to collect data from September 2019 to November 2018. The researchers distributed 400 questionnaires and 251 were returned. This resulted in a recovery rate of 62.7%. According to Sekaran (2003), a response rate of 30% is considered sufficient for investigation. Therefore, the recovery rate of this study is available.

This research adopted organizational performance scale, transformational leadership scale, organizational citizenship behaviour scale, the organizational performance scale was used in research from Wang, F. J. (2010). The scale has 7 items. The transformational leadership scale was adopted from Avolio and Bass (2014), the scale had 16 items, the organizational citizenship behaviour scale was adopted from Farh (1997), the scale had 20 items. All scales were shown in Appendix.

**4. Research Findings**

*4.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents*

The demographic profile of respondents participating in this study is presented in Table 1. In the 251 respondents, 47.8 % were male and 52.2% were female. The respondents were under 25 (15.5%), 26 to 36 (39.2%), 36 to 45 (25.8%) and over 45 (19.5%). Among them, respondents from including industry (14.0%), trade (16.3%), education intuition (15.5%), healthcare (16.7%), hotel and restaurants (15.9%), agriculture (13.5%) and other industries (8.1%).

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of respondents (N=251)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	140	55.7
Female	109	44.3
Age		
25years and below	42	16.7
26 to 36 years	109	43.4
36 to 45 years	55	21.9
45 years and above	45	18.0
Type of Industry		
Industry	40	15.9
Trade	36	12.7
Education Intuition	45	17.9
Healthcare	44	17.5
Hotel and restaurant	36	14.3
Agriculture	33	13.1
Others	17	8.6

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

In order to exam the reliability of research instruments, the internal consistency method was adopted and Cronbach's alpha was used for measurement in this study (Sekaran, 2003). Depending on the suggestions of Nunnall and Berntein (1994), Cronbach coefficient alpha greater than 0.65 is reliable. Table 2 shows the alpha value of organizational performance was 0.913 and the alpha value of OCB was 0.961, the alpha value of independent variable was higher than 0.80, ranging from 0.837 to 0.896. Therefore, this is a reliable scale.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis for Variables

Variable	N of Original Item	N of Deleted Item	N of New Items	Cronbach Alpha
Performance	7	-	7	0.913
OCB	20	-	20	0.961
II	4	-	4	0.883
IM	4	-	4	0.896
IS	4	-	4	0.837
IC	4	-	4	0.869

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

The result of correlation analysis was provided in Table 3. The result shows that organizational Performance showed the highest correlation with intellectual stimulation ( $r=0.607$ ), followed by intellectual stimulation ( $r=0.554$ ), inspirational motivation ( $r=0.532$ ) and idealized influence ( $r=0.459$ ); OCB also showed the high positive correlation with individualized consideration ( $r=0.705$ ), followed by intellectual stimulation ( $r=0.692$ ), inspirational motivation ( $r=0.650$ ) and idealized influence ( $r=0.545$ ). And OCB showed the positive correlation with organizational performance ( $r=0.731$ ).

Table 3. Relationship among transformational leadership and OCB and Organizational Performance

	Performance	OCB	TL	II	IM	IS	IC
Performance	1						
OCB	.731**	1					
TL	.595**	.717**	1				
II	.459**	.545**	.863**	1			
IM	.532**	.650**	.924**	.782**	1		
IS	.554**	.692**	.925**	.692**	.793**	1	
IC	.607**	.705**	.911**	.670**	.765**	.858**	1

P<0.01 \*\*, P<0.05\*

### 4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

#### 4.4.1 Effect of Predictors on Organizational Performance

According to the overall parameter table of the model, we can see that 77.6% of the total variance in organizational performance was accounted by the three factors ( $F=27.513$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) as shown in Table 4. It indicates that the regression equation is effective. Based on the Pallant (2010), inspirational motivation had a significant effect on the organizational performance ( $B=0.148$ ,  $p=0.045$ ), inspirational motivation also had a significant on the organizational performance ( $B=0.151$ ,  $p=0.027$ ). Individualized consideration had a significant effect on the organizational performance ( $B=0.162$ ,  $p=0.017$ ).

Table 4. Effect of Predictors on Organizational Performance

	B	T	Sig.
II	-.071	-1.375	.170
IM	.148	2.020	.045
IS	.151	2.231	.027
IC	.162	2.397	.017
R <sup>2</sup>	0.776		
F	27.153		
Sig.	0.000		

4.4.2 Effect of Predictors on OCB

Table 5 illustrates the information about the 87.2% of the total variance in organizational performance was accounted by the two factors (F=58.115, p<0.01). Two predictors were inspirational motivation (p<0.05), individualized consideration (p<0.05).

Table 5. Effect of Predictors on OCB

	B	T	Sig.
II	.033	.0875	.383
IM	.113	2.110	.037
IS	.004	.083	.934
IC	.118	2.390	.018
R <sup>2</sup>	0.872		
F	58.115		
Sig.	0.000		

4.4.3 Effect of OCB on Organizational Performance

The study shows that 73.2 % of the total variance in organizational performance was accounted by OCB (F=173.652 , p<0.01) as shown in Table 4. The regression analysis result indicated the OCB had positive effect on the organizational performance.

Table 6. OCB and Organizational Performance

	B	T	Sig.
OCB	0.721	13.809	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.732		
F	173.652		
Sig.	0.000		

4.4.4 Mediating Effect of OCB

In analyzing the mediation effect, Hayes (2013) proposed a 4-step hierarchical regression of process macros as shown in Figure 1. The first step (equation a) is to test the influence predictor of MV. The second step (equation b) is the influence of MV on DV, and the third step (equation c) is the influence of the predictors on DV. The final step (equation c') is the effect of the predictors on DV in the presence of MV.

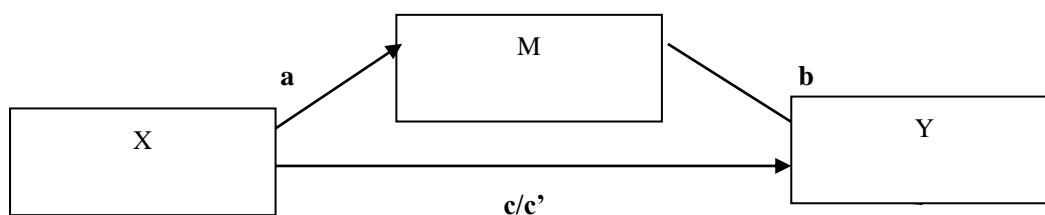


Figure 2. Method of Analyzing Mediating Effect

Table 7 shows that the information about result of examining the mediating effect of OCB, four predictors. Two predictors (inspirational motivation, individualized consideration) meet the path a, OCB meet the path b, three predictors (inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, individualized consideration) meet the path c'.

Table 7. Mediating Effect of OCB

	B	T	Sig.
<i>Equation a (IV to MV)</i>			
II	.033	.875	.383
IM	.113	2.100	.037
IS	.004	.083	.934
IC	.118	2.390	.018

<i>Equation b (MV to DV)</i>			
OCB	0.627	12.709	0.000
<i>Equation b (MV to DV)</i>			
II	-.071	-1.375	.170
IM	.148	2.020	.045
IS	.151	2.231	.027
IC	.162	2.397	.017
<i>Equation c' (IV &amp; MV to DV)</i>			
II	-.078	-1.519	.130
IM	.125	1.704	.090
IS	.150	2.240	.026
IC	.137	2.043	.042
OCB	.205	2.341	.020

According to the Table 10, as shown in Figure 2, based on the Baron & Kenny (1986), the effect of inspirational motivation on organizational performance decrease from 0.148 to 0.125, inspirational motivation predicts organizational performance (P=0.045), inspirational motivation predicts organizational citizenship behavior (P=0.037). When the inspirational motivation and organizational citizenship behavior both predict organizational performance, inspirational motivation no longer predicts organizational performance (P=0.090), but organizational citizenship behavior can predict organizational performance (P=0.020). This result showed that organizational citizenship behavior has completely mediated the relationship between inspirational motivation and organizational performance.

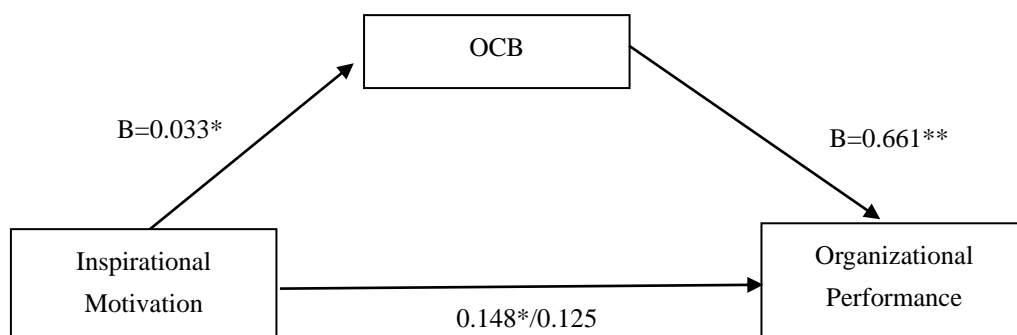


Figure 2. Inspirational Motivation and Performance is Mediated by OCB

According to the Table 10, as shown in Figure 3, based on the Baron and Kenny (1986), individualized consideration predicts organizational performance (P=0.017), individualized consideration predicts organizational citizenship behavior (P=0.018). When the individualized consideration and organizational citizenship behavior both predict organizational performance, individualized consideration can predict organizational performance (P=0.042), organizational citizenship behavior can predict organizational performance (P=0.020). And the effect of individualized consideration on organizational performance decrease from 0.162 to 0.137. This result showed that the relationship between individualized consideration and organizational performance is partially mediated by OCB.

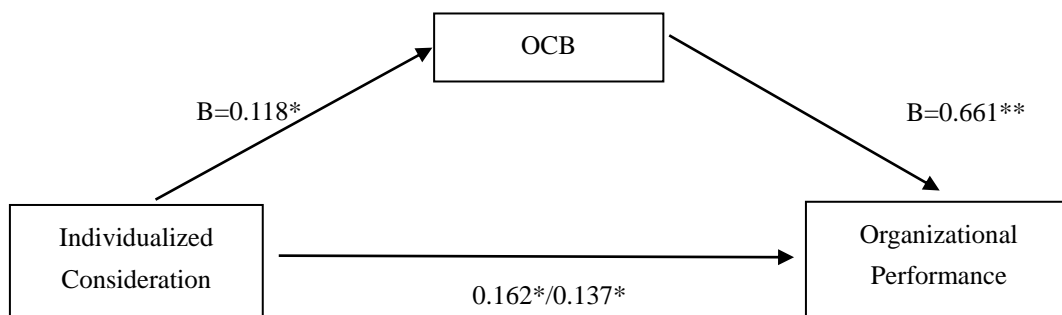


Figure 3. Individualized Consideration and Performance is Mediated by OCB

## 5. Discussion

This research adopts a new framework and data result to find the effects of transformational leadership and OCB on organizational performance. Through the research result and data analysis, this study can timely help SMEs to improve their performance.

### 5.1 *The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Performance*

Through the correlation analyses, there were significant correlations among transformational leadership and organizational performance. Individualized considerations obtained the highest correlation coefficients. From the perspective of regression analysis, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration had positive significantly effects on organizational performance.

Therefore, leaders should have high moral behavior, unique leadership charm, and intellectual promotion and vision incentive to subordinates, care about subordinates' work life, family and so on. The leader is more likely to be recognized, respected and imitated by subordinates, and hopes to become a superior like that person, and will continue to learn and innovate in the work, promote the development of their own capabilities, which will enhance the performance of SMEs.

### 5.2 *The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior*

Through the correlation analysis, there were significant correlations between transformational leadership and OCB in the SMEs in China. Individualized consideration obtained the highest coefficient. From the regression analysis, it was found that inspirational motivation and individualized consideration had significant effect on OCB.

Therefore, implicit in the above findings is that leaders should set up a good organizational vision, mobilize subjective initiative, make themselves fully feel the significance of work and self-worth, and organically combine personal ideals with corporate goals. Leaders should also be diligent, understand the specific situations and needs of different employees. Leaders should also care about the work and personal development of subordinates, understand the confusion encountered in the work, and give sincere corresponding suggestions, support and guidance. In this way, when employees perceive these caring behaviors of leaders, they will have a sense of identity with the organization and show more reciprocal behaviors, and they will work harder resulting in more job performance.

### 5.3 *The Mediating Effect of Organizational Citizenship Behavior*

This study found that OCB had a mediating effect between inspirational motivation and organizational performance, individualized consideration and organizational performance. However, OCB has no mediation between idealized influence and organizational performance, intellectual stimulation and organizational performance. That is, H2c and H4c was supported, and H1c and H3c are rejected.

Therefore, managers should learn more about transformational leadership skills offer more personalized care to their subordinates. In career development planning guidance, every leaders fully tap the potential of employees, managers should also be good at listening to the voice of the employees, tolerant of their different opinions, make employees feel the importance of the leader, so that they are willing to take action to strengthen the relationship with the leader, resulting in efficient output. Leaders should realize that effective communication and trust are important factors in the success of change leadership strategies. It is necessary to give subordinates enough authorization and trust, establish a good communication relationship with more subordinates. In this way, leaders will have a positive impact on their civic behavior and promote the improvement of organizational performance.

### 5.4 *The effect of OCB on the organizational performance*

This research found the positive relationship between OCB and organizational performance. H5 was accepted. In this case, the increase of individual initiative behavior can effectively increase organizational performance. This result is similar to the Organ' finding that organizational citizenship positively affected organizational performance. Organ (1997) showed that OCB affects organizational success in several ways: improving the productivity of colleagues and organizations; liberating resources to make them more in line with production purposes; reducing the demand for limited resources purely based on maintenance functions.

Thus, organizational citizenship behavior needs to be developed in the SMEs. The most fundamental characteristic of human capital is that it can be encouraged, but not forced. If enterprises want employees to effectively play organizational citizenship behavior, they need to motivate existing employees through guidance, training, development and other means, and timely understand the emotional representation of employees at



work, and let employees feel the fairness of the organization, which can not only save the search cost of enterprises, but also these employees are familiar with the management system of enterprises, and can quickly apply new technologies to create more and better value in practical work. Therefore, OCB is conducive to improving employees' own work performance and promoting organizational performance (Li & Eldon, 2014). So, enterprise managers should pay enough attention to the OCB of employees, and take relevant measures to effectively guide the OCB of employees.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated the antecedent variables of organizational performance from the leader levels, enriches the theory of organizational performance, provides a reference basis for enterprises to find ways to improve employee performance and enterprise performance level, and helps enterprises to maintain continuous development in the fierce competition. The economic globalization force enterprises to face various transformational pressures. Transformational leaders can motivate followers to achieve self-challenge and guide organizational change, and promote the organization to seize opportunities and respond to various challenges during organizational change. Therefore, this study explored the relationship among transformational leadership, organizational citizenship behavior and organizational performance and studied the relationship among the sub-dimensions, which help enterprises to understand how transformational leadership promotes the matching between employees and organizations, and then improve the specific impact mechanism of employees' job performance, so as to improve the organizational performance of SMEs. The selection and cultivation of transformational leadership and the improvement of the similarity between employees and organizations provide ideas and basis for enterprises to improve the level of human resources management.

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## Appendix A

### Items Constituting Transformational Leadership

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- My leaders display a sense of power and confidence.
- My leaders go beyond self-interest for the benefit for the company.
- My leaders specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose.
- My leaders emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission.
- My leaders talk optimistically about the future work task.
- My leaders talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.
- My leaders articulate a compelling vision of the future.
- My leader's express confidence that goals will be achieved
- My leaders re-examine critical assumption to question whether they are appropriate.
- My leaders seek differing perspectives when solving problems.
- My leaders get employees to look at problems from many different angles.
- My leaders suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments.
- My leaders spend time teaching and coaching me.
- My leaders treat employees as individuals rather than just as a member of the group.
- My leaders consider each individual as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from employees.
- My leaders help employees to develop their strengths.
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**Appendix B**Items Constituting Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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- I am willing to stand up to protect the reputation of the company.
- I eager to tell outsiders good news about the company and clarify their misunderstandings.
- I make constructive suggestions that can improve the operation of the company.
- I actively attend company meetings.
- I am willing to assist new colleagues to adjust to the work environment.
- I am willing to help colleague solve work-related problems.
- I am willing to cover work assignments for colleague when needed.
- I am willing to coordinate and communicate with colleagues.
- I think interpersonal harmony is more important than personal influence and gains in the organization.
- I do not use position power to pursue personal gain.
- I do not ignore my colleagues' accusations and suggestions for my own benefit.
- I do not speak weakness of the supervisor or colleagues behind their backs.
- I do not use work time to do private something (trading stocks, shopping etc.).
- I do not use company resources to do personal thing (company phones, copy machines, computers and cars).
- I do not take sick leave and make excuse for some private thing.
- I comply with company rules and procedures even when nobody watches and no evidence can be traced.
- I take my job seriously and rarely make mistake.
- I am willing to take on new or challenging assignments.
- I try hard to self-study to increase the quality of work outputs.
- I often arrive early and start to work immediately.
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**Appendix C**Items Constituting Organizational Performance

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- My organization has made good use of knowledge and skills in looking for ways to become more efficient.
- My company's employee productivity has improved.
- The quality of work performed by my current coworkers in work group is high.
- The occurrence of goal attainment is very high in my organization.
- The company's after-tax net income growth rate has been increased.
- The company's image is better than that of the competitors.
- The customer satisfaction toward my organization is very high.
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