

Leal, S., Rego, A. & Coelho, A. (2012). Perceived companies' ethical responsibilities predicting organizational citizenship behaviors: The mediating role of psychological capital and affective commitment. In E. Simões & J. Neves (Eds.), *Research on Ethics and Social Responsibility* (pp. 65-79). Lisboa: Business Research Unit, ISCTE-IUL. ISBN: 978-989-732-030-9

PERCEIVED COMPANIES' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES PREDICTING ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT ¹

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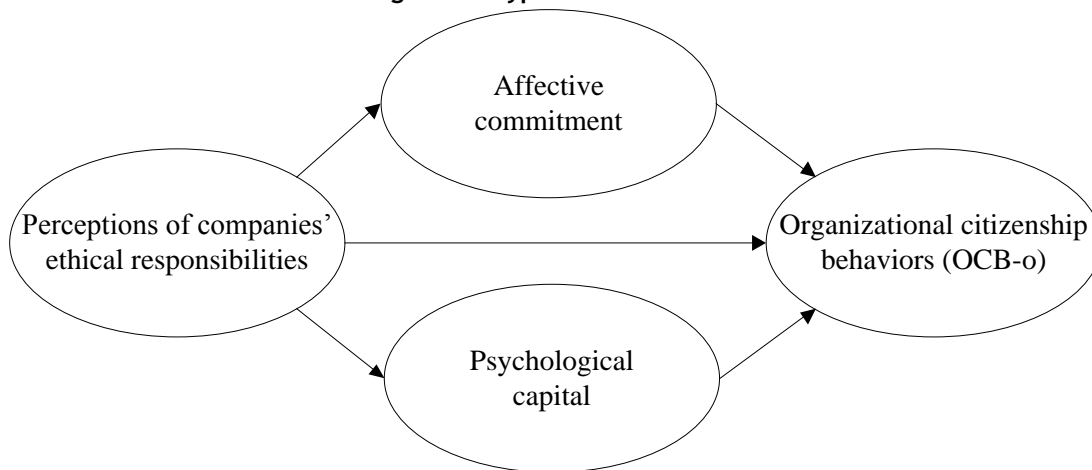
This study shows how the employees' perceptions of the ethical responsibilities of their companies predict their organizational citizenship behaviors, both directly and through the mediating role of psychological capital and affective organizational commitment. One hundred and forty eight employees working in ten organizations operating in Portugal reported their perceptions of ethical responsibilities, their psychological capital, and their affective organizational commitment. Their organizational citizenship behaviors were reported by their supervisors. The results show full mediation effects, suggesting that the employees' perceptions about the companies' ethical responsibilities predict organizational citizenship behaviors through the mediating role of psychological capital and affective commitment. In short: (a) employees develop higher psychological capital and affective commitment when they perceive that their companies behave ethically; (b) as a consequence, employees adopt more organizational citizenship behaviors.

Keywords: Affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors; perceived ethical responsibilities of companies; psychological capital.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) “has gained unprecedented momentum in Europe” (Matten & Moon, 2005, p. 335) during the last decade. One of the most widely accepted definitions of CSR (Matten & Moon, 2005) was suggested by Carroll (1979, p. 500): “The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time”. From this perspective, an organization with a good social performance is expected to (a) be profitable, (b) be law obeying, (c) engage in ethical behavior and (c) give back through philanthropy (Carroll, 1998). This topic has mostly been studied at the organizational level, few studies having taken into account employees as the unit of analysis (Aguilera et al., 2007). With this paper, we contribute to fill this gap. The paper is part of a work-in-progress aiming to show how employees’ perceptions of CSR interact with other variables in predicting several employees’ attitudes and behaviors. We show how the employees’ perceptions about the ethical responsibilities of their companies predict their citizenship behaviors towards the organization (OCB-o), both directly and through the mediating role of psychological capital (PsyCap) and affective commitment (AC). Peterson (2004) suggested that, in comparison with other dimensions, the ethical dimension of CSR is a stronger predictor of organizational commitment. Our hypothesized model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Hypothesized model



Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is the “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ et al., 2006, p. 3). Literature suggests that OCBs contribute to organizational performance (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). One major conceptualization of OCB dimensions (Williams & Anderson, 1991) considers two categories: (a) behaviors directed toward the benefit of other individuals (OCB-i; e.g., helping colleagues), and (b) behaviors directed toward the benefit of the organization (OCB-o; e.g., protecting the organization against possible problems). In this paper, we focus on OCB-o. Taking into account the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Settoon et al., 1996), we hypothesize that employees adopt more OCB benefiting the organization when they perceive that the organization ‘behaves’

ethically. We also hypothesize that employees' PsyCap and affective commitment mediate such relationship.

PsyCap is an individual's positive psychological state of development characterized by: "(1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed in challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007, p. 3). Previous research suggests that commonalities among the four dimensions allow the consideration of PsyCap as a core construct (Luthans et al., 2008; Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2012). Empirical findings show that PsyCap predicts variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, creativity and work performance (Larson & Luthans, 2006; Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2012).

Affective commitment (AC) may be defined as "the identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 253). AC leads to fewer intentions to leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Vandenberghe & Tremblay, 2008), lower turnover (Meyer et al., 2002), reduced absenteeism (Eby et al., 1999; Meyer et al., 2002), more customer-oriented behaviors (Chang & Lin, 2008), and improved in-role and extra-role performance (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer et al., 2002).

Although previous studies have investigated the relationships between some of these variables (e.g., Avey et al., 2010; Brammer et al., 2007; Peterson, 2004), from our knowledge, no previous empirical study has included the four variables in the same study. By including AC and PsyCap as mediators, we help to understand not only how the perceptions of companies' ethical responsibilities (CER) predict OCB-o, but also the mechanisms that explain such relationship. AC and PsyCap were included because literature shows that they predict both in-role and extra-role performance (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1996; Avey et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2002). Next, we present arguments supporting our hypothesized model.

2. HYPOTHESES

2.1. Perceptions of CER predicting OCB-o

Positive perceptions about CER may increase employees' organizational identification (Dutton et al., 1994; Lin et al., 2010). As Lin et al. (2010, p. 361) pointed out, "when employees perceive that their firm conducts business over and above the legal requirements on a layer of moral and ethics, they are likely to feel esteemed and highly identify with their firm by performing positive behaviors in the firm, leading to a positive relationship between perceived ethical citizenship and OCBs". Furthermore, employees may feel proud to work for an organization with good ethical conduct, thus reciprocating with behaviors (including OCB-o) that benefit the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Gouldner, 1960; Lin et al., 2010). Hence:

H1: The perceptions of CER predict employees' OCB-o.

2.2. PsyCap as mediator

One possible mediator of the relationship between the perceptions of CER and OCB-o is PsyCap: individuals with better perceptions of CER develop higher PsyCap, which in

turn lead them to adopt more OCB-o. Youssef and Luthans (2010) suggested that CSR may influence employees' PsyCap. For example, when employees perceive that their company behaves ethically, they develop higher levels of optimism (e.g., employees believe that the company will act reasonably and try to preserve the staff even under economic crisis) and hope (e.g., employees develop higher waypower and willpower to reach work and organizational goals; Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). Ethical practices also create a supportive work environment that lead individuals to consider that the organization is trustful, thus feeling safer to allocate their energy in pursuit of work goals, the consequence being higher employees' hope. Individuals with positive perceptions about CER also feel psychologically safer (Edmondson, 1999) to mobilize their motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action necessary to reach goals (self-efficacy; Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

The link between PsyCap and OCB-o has been theoretically and empirically supported (Avey et al., 2010; Gooty et al., 2009). As Avey et al. (2010) argued, "employees who are more positive would seem to exhibit more OCBs than employees who tend to be negative" (p.441).

Therefore, there are reasons to believe that employees' perceptions about the ethical responsibilities of their companies influence OCB-o, and that one possible mediator (among others, including employees' organizational identification and self-esteem; Lin et al., 2010) of this relationship is PsyCap. We consider that PsyCap is a partial mediator because other mediating mechanisms (e.g. identification with the organization; AC) may explain the relationship. Thus:

H2: The relationship between perceptions of CER and OCB-o is partially mediated by employees' PsyCap.

2.3. Affective commitment as mediator

Other possible mediator of the relationship between perceptions of CER and OCB-o is AC. Peterson (2004) argued that the ethical standards of an organization greatly influence the attitudes of employees at workplaces, including AC. Employees may derive a positive sense of identity from association with a company that is viewed as possessing ethical responsibilities, thus developing higher affective bonds with the organization. Literature also suggests that AC predicts OCB-o (e.g., Meyer et al., 2002). Because "employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they *want* to do so" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67), it is likely that they are further motivated to adopt more OCB-o (Meyer et al., 2002). The link between perceptions of CSR (namely the ethical dimension) and AC is well established in the literature (e.g., Peterson, 2004). The relationship between AC and OCB is also supported in theoretical and empirical evidence (e.g., Allen e Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002). Thus, it is possible that employees with better perceptions of CER develop higher AC, which in turn leads them to adopt more OCB-o. Therefore:

H3: The relationship between perceptions of CER and OCB-o is partially mediated by the employees' AC.

3. METHOD

A sample of 148 individuals (60% male; 41.4% graduated) working in ten medium-sized and large organizations operating in Portugal (eight from the pulp and paper sector,

n=103; two from the information technologies sector, n=45) was collected. Individuals reported their perceptions of CER, their PsyCap and affective commitment, their OCB-o having been described by supervisors. In each organization, we personally spoke to a member of the top management team, asking for cooperation. Answers were anonymous and individuals were assured that there was no right or wrong option, and asked to answer as truthfully as possible. In order to guarantee anonymity, answers were delivered directly to the researchers in sealed envelopes. Mean age is 39.3 years (SD=9.4) and mean organizational tenure is 12.9 years (SD=10.7).

Employees' perceptions about CER were measured by three items from Rego et al. (2011, Leal & Rego, 2010a, 2010b). A sample item is: "Our company always does what is ethically correct". Cronbach Alpha is 0.77.

PsyCap was measured by the questionnaire proposed by Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007). Sample items are: (1) "I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management" (self-efficacy); (2) "I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals" (hope); (3) "I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job" (optimism) and (4) "I usually take stressful things at work in stride" (resilience). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that, after removing several items, the four-factor model fits the data well (Table 1). A second-order factor model also fits the data well.

TABLE 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of PsyCap (completely standardized solution)

	First-order factor model	Second-order factor model
Self-efficacy		
Item # 2	0.86	0.86
Item # 3	0.83	0.83
Item # 4	0.69	0.69
Item # 5	0.59	0.59
Hope		
Item # 8	0.56	0.57
Item # 9	0.62	0.62
Item # 10	0.54	0.53
Item # 11	0.75	0.75
Resilience		
Item # 14	0.52	0.51
Item # 16	0.59	0.59
Item # 18	0.54	0.55
Optimism		
Item # 19	0.46	0.46
Item # 21	0.68	0.69
Item # 24	0.60	0.60
PsyCap		
Self-efficacy		0.70
Hope		0.87
Resilience		0.96
Optimism		0.81

Fit Indices		
Chi-square	92.90	94.86
Degrees of freedom	71	73
Chi-square /d.f.	1.31	1.30
RMSEA	0.046	0.045
<i>p</i> -value(RMSEA<0.05)	0.59	0.60
SRMSR	0.056	0.058
NNFI	0.98	0.98
CFI	0.98	0.98
GFI	0.92	0.92

Note: Item numbers are those of Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007, pp. 237-238).

Comparison of the first- and second-order models shows no significant change in χ^2 relative to the difference in degrees of freedom ($\chi^2(2)=1.96$, $p=0.375$). A single-factor model (all items loading the same factor) was also tested, the fit indices being unsatisfactory (e.g., RMSEA=0.12; GFI= 0.82; NFI=0.86). Taking these results and the literature into account (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Sweetman et al., 2011), we consider PsyCap as a core construct comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. Cronbach Alpha is 0.75.

For testing the impact of removing items on the self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism dimensions, the study correlates scores as computed with the final versus the original set of items. Correlations are, respectively, 0.97, 0.93, 0.86 and 0.75. For overall PsyCap, the correlation between scores as computed with the initial versus the final set of items is 0.94. Thus, removing items seems not to be problematic.

AC was measured with three items from Meyer and Allen (1997). A sample item is: "I do not feel like part of the family at my organization" (reverse coded). Cronbach Alpha is 0.73. OCB-o was assessed with four items from Lee and Allen (2002). A sample item is: "Defend the organization when other employees criticize it". Cronbach Alpha is 0.88.

4. RESULTS

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used for testing the hypothesized model (LISREL; maximum likelihood method). This technique has "long been advocated as preferable to regression techniques for testing mediational relationships" (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006, p. 1045). Following the two step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we first tested the measurement model and then the structural model.

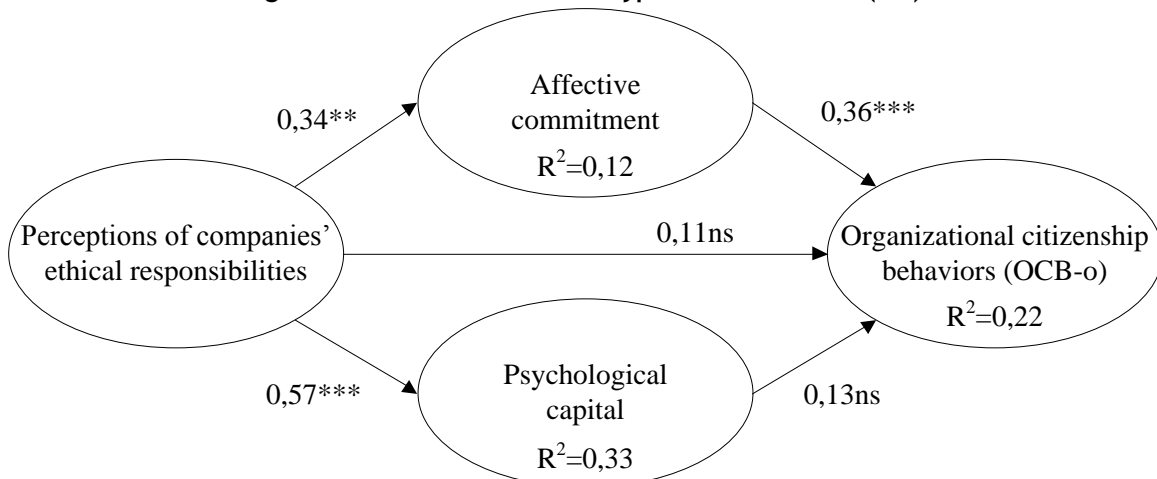
4.1. Measurement model testing

CFA was performed upon all items loading the respective constructs. Although the chi-square test is significant ($\chi^2(231)=313.64$, $p=0.000$) and GFI is lower than 0.90, other fit indices are satisfactory: (a) the normed chi-square ($\chi^2/d.f.=1.36$) is lower than 2.0; (b) RMSEA (0.049) is lower than 0.05; (c) the close-fit hypothesis was not rejected (p -value(RMSEA<0.05)=0.52; (d) CFI is 0.97; (e) SRMSR (0.065) is lower than 0.08; (f) NNFI is 0.96. Lambdas are equal or greater than 0.50 (except for one item related to optimism: 0.48) and statistically significant ($p<0.000$). All individual item reliabilities are equal or higher than 0.25 (except for one item of optimism: 0.23).

4.2. Structural model testing

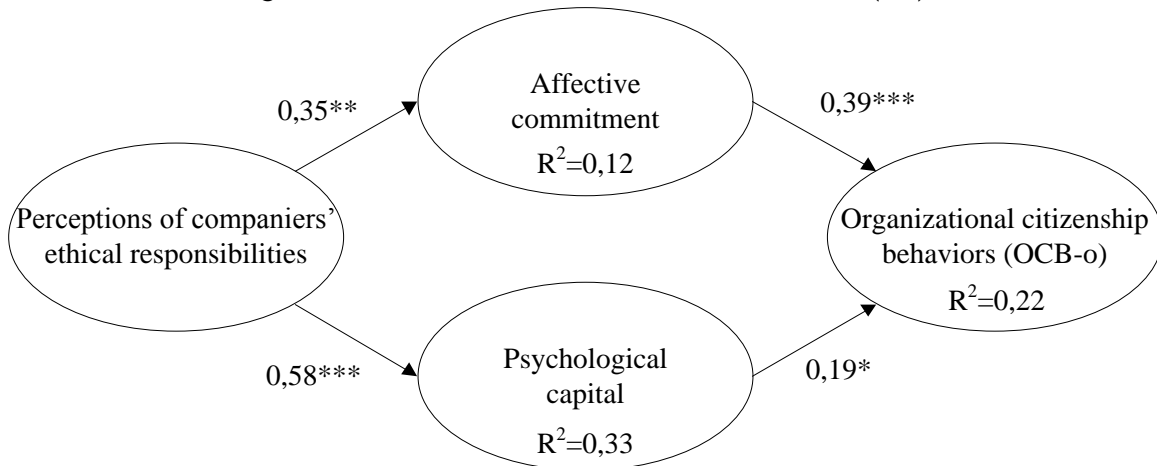
Structural equation modeling was used to test the model (Figure 2). The hypothesized model (M1) fits the data well (Table 2), although two paths (PsyCap → OCB-o; CER → OCB-o) are not significant. A full mediation model (M2), without the direct relationship between perceptions of CER and OCB-o, was also tested, all paths being positive and significant (Table 2; Figure 3). We also tested a direct effect model (M3), which estimates the direct relationship between perceptions of CER and OCB-o, without mediators (although PsyCap and commitment remain as latent variables in the model; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006), the path being significant ($\beta=0.34$, $p\text{-value}<0,001$). Because the direct path between perceptions of CER and OCB-o was significant in M3 and became insignificant when the mediators were added to the model (M1), the results support M2 (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). Moreover, M2 is more parsimonious (Byrne, 1998). Thus, the full mediation model was selected. Estimation of this model resulted in an overall $\chi^2_{(244)}$ value of 321.85, with a RMSEA of 0.047.

Figure 2: SEM results for the hypothesized model (M1)



Note: completely standardized estimates; * p-value <0,05, ** p-value < 0,01; *** p-value < 0,001

Figure 3: SEM results for the full mediation model (M2)



Note: completely standardized estimates; * p-value <0,05, ** p-value < 0,01; *** p-value < 0,001

Total, direct, and indirect effects of the full mediation model were computed. Perceptions of CER have an indirect effect on OCB-o of 0.25 ($p < 0.001$). Figure 3 suggests that the relationship between the perceptions of CER and employees' OCB-o is fully mediated by PsyCap and AC. The results do not support Hypothesis 1. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are partially supported.

TABLE 2. Summary of SEM analysis

Models	DF	χ^2	RMSEA	P (RMSEA < 0.05)	SRMSR	CFI	NNFI	GFI
M0: CFA Model	231	313.64 $p < 0.001$	0.049	0.52	0.065	0.97	0.96	0.85
M1: Hypothesized model	243	320.13 $p < 0.001$	0.046	0.65	0.069	0.97	0.96	0.85
M2: Full mediation model	244	321.85 $p < 0.001$	0.047	0.65	0.069	0.97	0.96	0.85
M3: Only direct	244	330.70 $p < 0.001$	0.049	0.53	0.077	0.96	0.96	0.84

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that the employees' perceptions of CER have positive effects on their PsyCap, which in turn leads them to adopt more OCB-o. Several reasons may explain why perceptions of CER predict PsyCap. Managers who adopt ethical behaviors are role models and provide mastery experiences for employees (Youssef & Luthans, 2005), thus building employees' self-efficacy. Organizations with ethical visions, missions, values, and strategies are more likely to encourage the employees' sense of meaning at work, thus enhancing employees' optimism (Youssef & Luthans, 2005). Through engaging in ethical activities toward employees (e.g., behaving respectfully with them and doing what is ethically correct), organizations foster employees' hope (Shorey et al., 2005). An organization that follows ethical and professional standards mitigates employees' fear and insecurity, thus fostering their resiliency (Youssef & Luthans, 2005). All these positive psychological processes promote employees' PsyCap, which in turn encourages them to adopt more OCB-o (Avey et al., 2010).

The employees' perceptions about CER also have positive effects on employees' AC, which in turn promote their OCB-o. A plausible explanation is that (a) employees increase their organizational identification, thus developing higher self-esteem and forming affective bonds with the organization, (b) affective bonds with the organization lead employees to reciprocate in ways that benefit the organization, including OCB-o.

In short, the findings suggest that employees react with higher AC, PsyCap and OCB-o when they feel their organizations have an ethical stance to their behavior. Considering the positive impact of OCB, PsyCap and AC for individual and organizational functioning and performance, the paper suggests that organizations may achieve better performance if they correctly develop employees' perceptions about the organizational ethical conduct. Our findings corroborate Herrbach et al. (2004), who argued that human resource

objectives (e.g., developing the employees' AC, PsyCap and OCB) may be attained by practices that are not, at first sight, destined for employees.

Our study is not exempt of limitations. Just one dimension of CSR was studied. Future studies must include other CSR dimensions. Only one dependent variable was considered. Future studies must include other in-role and extra-role performance dimensions. For example, do employees who perceive their organizations as more ethical adopt more OCB-i? Future studies must also include other mediators (e.g., perceived organizational support; organizational identification; organizational trust; intrinsic motivation; sense of meaningful work). The study does not express the causal links between dependent/mediating and independent variables, and other causal links are also possible. For example, more affectively committed individuals may describe their organizations better, regardless of the 'real' organizational characteristics. Future studies may adopt a longitudinal method for dealing with such issues. Future studies may also include moderators, including organizational size and the sector in which organizations operate. For example: (a) do individuals from different organizations/sectors react differently to the same perceptions of ethical responsibilities; (b) are individuals working in smaller organizations more/less sensitive to CER than employees of larger ones?

In spite of these limitations, the study suggests that CSR must continue to be studied at the individual level, and that employees are not passive observers of how ethically their companies behave. Rather, they experience attitudes and develop behaviors which impact on individual and organizational performance.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. We are grateful to Fred Luthans, Carolyn Youssef and Bruce Avolio for their permission to use the PsyCap questionnaire.

7. NOTES

1. This study was carried out with the support of FCT (Program: POPH – QREN SFRH/PROTEC/49930/2009).

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