The Effects of Work Design Characteristics on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: An Empirical Investigation

Ramesh Krishnan*, Mohd Adnan Alias**, Shafinar Ismail*** and Kasturi Kanchymalay****

This study was aimed to examine the effect of work design characteristics on employee engagement in Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). Drawing upon the Expanded Work Design Model (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007) and the Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham 1975), this study specifically examined the direct effect of seven dimensions of work design characteristics on OCB. A total of 646 nursing and clinical employees holding non supervisory jobs in 3 public hospitals in Malaysia participated in this study. Hierarchical multiple regression results indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between work design characteristics (feedback, task significance, psychological demand, autonomy and social support) and OCB. Managerial implications, theoretical implications, limitations of the study and the directions for future research were discussed.

Keywords: job characteristics, skill variety, task significance, social support organizational citizenship behaviour

1. Introduction

Employees who are committed, engaged, and loyal in doing work way beyond their prescribed job description are important assets for survival of organizations. Extra role behaviour of employees such as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) is deemed important in sustaining competitive advantage, keeping abreast with changes, and promoting innovation (Organ 1997). Managers of work organizations value OCB as it creates work environment that is conducive to cooperation and helps to reduce the amount of time a manager spends on an issue; thus, enabling them to focus on other opportunities for improving organizational performances (Turnipseed & Rassuli 2005). Review of literature shows that OCB has been studied in-depth both to determine its antecedents as well as its consequences (Chahal 2010). Studies have identified a number of predictors of OCB, including: job attitudes (Shore & Wayne 1993; Paille 2010), interpersonal trust/loyalty to the leader, (Podsakoff et al. 1990), organizational culture (Teh et al. 2012; Che’Su et al. 2007) and task characteristics (Todd & Kent 2006; Krishnan et al. 2013).

Although many studies have examined the direct relationship between task characteristics and OCB, studies examining the influencing role of work design characteristics as propounded by Humphrey et al. (2007) are scarce. This study was
intended to investigate the direct effect of the motivational, social and job context characteristics on employee engagement in OCB. Examining the influencing role of work design on OCB is expected to validate Humprey et al.’s (2007) Expanded Work Design Model as well as contribute to the existing body of knowledge in OCB antecedents.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and discusses the hypothesis development, and Section 3 describes the research methodology including data collection, measures and the analytical procedures. Section 4 presents the empirical results, and section 5 provides discussion, practical implications, study limitations and finally concludes the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Employees’ involvement in activities beyond role prescriptions over the years have evolved and conceptualized under different headings, such as “prosocial organizational behaviour” (Brief & Motowidlo 1986), “organizational citizenship behaviour” (Organ 1988), “organizational spontaneity” (George & Brief 1992), and “contextual performance” (Borman & Motowidlo 1993). Smith et al., (1983) introduced the notion of OCB as discretionary behaviour that goes beyond one’s official role and is intended to help other people in the organization or to show conscientiousness and support toward the organization. Organ (1988) later defined this concept as: “an individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.” From the above definitions, OCB can be construed as a positive behaviour that is neither stated in job description nor enforced by employment contract. In the seminal conceptualization of OCB, (Smith et al. 1983) the concept was distinguished into general compliance and altruism. General compliance basically pertains to behaviours that do not aid any one particular person, but rather represent compliance to general rules, norms, and expectations (e.g., being punctual, offering suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness) whereas altruism focuses on employees’ willingness in helping others in face-to-face situations (e.g., assisting a co-worker with a heavy workload).

Since the introduction of the concept of OCB, Organ (1988) has expanded the conceptualization of OCB into five distinct dimensions namely, altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. The current study examines OCB from Williams and Anderson’s (1991) two dimensional view, focusing on helping behaviours directed toward individuals (OCBI) and helping behaviours directed toward the organization (OCBO). Factor analytic evidence from their study demonstrated that the items used to measure OCB loaded best onto their two-dimensional view of OCB. However, it is important to mention that these two dimensions, OCBI and OCBO, were largely based on Organ’s (1988) five-dimensions. Moreover, Williams and Anderson (1991) suggested that Organ’s (1988) five dimensions should be reduced to the two dimensions they proposed, such that OCBI is comprised of altruism and courtesy, and OCBO includes conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. Podsakoff et al. (2000), explained OCBI dimension as helping behaviour and defined it as voluntarily helping others with work related problems. On the other hand OCBO includes behaviours that benefit the organization in general such as given prior notice when being absent from work or informally adhering to rules designed to maintain order.
2.2 Relationship between Work Design Characteristics and OCB

A job with motivating characteristics may lead to positive behaviour such as OCB and empirical research has supported this relationship. One of the earliest and important studies on the direct relationship between task variables and OCB was by Farh et al. (1990) who postulated a direct relationship between task variables and OCB, given the concomitant effects they have on psychological states such as "meaningfulness of the work" and "sense of responsibility." Thus, an employee with job tasks that intrinsically motivates and produces a firm sense of enhanced meaning would be expected to operate in the best interest of the company and be considerate of fellow workers who also share in the welfare of the organization. As predicted, the researchers found task variables, measured as task scope, to directly impact OCB in the form of altruism and compliance.

Accordingly, several studies have reported positive and significant correlations between task variables and OCB. For instance, the meta analysis by Podsakoff et al. (1996) reported that three task characteristics had strong relationships with OCB dimensions of altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, and civic virtue. The study has reported a positive correlations between task feedback and intrinsically satisfying tasks with both OCB dimensions of altruism and conscientiousness, and negative correlations between task routinization and both altruism and conscientiousness. Additionally, Drago and Garvey (1998) verified that skill variety was positively related to helping efforts (a form of OCB). Furthermore, Anderson and Williams (1996) found that task autonomy and task interdependence increased the incidence of employees’ seeking help from others and that this search for help, in turn, fostered the employees’ own efforts to help others.

In addition to that, researchers have also shown that job characteristics have a stronger link with OCB than they do with in-role performance (Parker & Wall 1998; Podsakoff et al. 1996). Parker and Wall's (1998) study shows that the correlations between two job characteristics dimension (i.e., skill variety and feedback) and OCB to be relatively strong (corrected Mr=.10-.30) suggesting that the influence of job characteristics is stronger on OCB than on in role performance. The findings of the above studies are consistent with the social exchange theory which stipulate that employees who are provided with enriched, motivating and challenging jobs will feel obliged to respond with positive work behaviour outcome such as OCB.

Recent studies (Su & Hsiao 2005; Todd & Kent 2006; Chien & Su 2009; Krishnan et al. 2010; Krishnan et al. 2013) have also examined the direct relationship between job characteristics and OCB. For example, Todd and Kent (2006) found that task significance is positively related to OCB among 337 employees in a sporting goods manufacturing company. On the other hand, Chien and Su (2009) found that task identity, task significance and autonomy to be positively related to employees’ OCB in their study involving 323 employees and their supervisors from seven companies in Taiwan. Krishnan et al. (2010) revealed that OCB was positively correlated with job autonomy, job variety, and job significance (r = .55, .64, and .61 respectively, all p<.01) among 125 administrative support employees working in a public higher learning institution in Malaysia.

Although a majority of studies showed a positive relationship between motivational job characteristics and OCB, there were also studies which showed insignificant relationship between the two. For example, Kuehn and Al-Busaidi (2002) who examined the OCB among 153 respondents employed in public and private organizations in Oman, found that job satisfaction and normative commitment were significant predictors of OCB while job
characteristics were not. Apart from the five motivational job characteristics and their link to OCB, very few studies have examined the influencing role of social job characteristics and contextual job characteristics on OCB as propounded by Humphrey et al. (2007) in his expanded work design characteristics model. For example, Lourel et al. (2008) found that psychological job demand has increased employee burnout.

In contrast to these earlier studies, this study will examine all five core motivational job characteristics dimensions (autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance and task identity) as found in the Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model together with a social job characteristic variable namely the social support and two contextual job characteristics variables namely the physical demand and psychological demand, in order to explore their relationships with OCB. With this, it is expected that the treatment of work design characteristics is more comprehensive and better able to statistically clarify the unique effect of each work design characteristics on OCB.

This study hypothesizes those organizational interventions in the form of creating a job with social job characteristics such as the social support at work will increase employee’s engagement in OCB. In the health care service, social support plays an important role both to healthcare providers and healthcare receivers. Chevarie (2002) found that social supports have implications for nurses' physical and emotional well-being. It is reported that, if nurses are supported, they will experience less stress, less frustration and have high morale and involvement in positive work behaviours. On the other hand, contextual job characteristics such as physical job demand and psychological job demand will decrease employee engagement in OCB.

Based on the literature review, a conceptual model was developed for this study as shown in Figure 1. On the basis of the above discussion on the theoretical and empirical researches related to this study, the researchers postulate:

**Hypothesis 1:** Work design characteristics (autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance, task identity, social support, physical demand and psychological demand) are significantly related to OCB

**Sub Hypotheses:**

- **H1a:** There is a positive relationship between autonomy and OCB
- **H1b:** There is a positive relationship between skill variety and OCB
- **H1c:** There is a positive relationship between feedback and OCB
- **H1d:** There is a positive relationship between task significance and OCB
- **H1e:** There is a positive relationship between task identity and OCB
- **H1f:** There is a positive relationship between social support and OCB
- **H1g:** There is a negative relationship between physical demand and OCB
- **H1h:** There is a negative relationship between psychological demand and OCB
3. The Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study has employed the convenience sampling method in selecting respondents who consists of nursing and clinical employees holding non supervisory jobs employed in three public hospitals in Malaysia. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Hospital Directors and the Directors of Nursing Services of these respective hospitals. Employees in the healthcare sector were chosen as the main respondents because nurses are often required to demonstrate helping behaviour in their task of taking care of patients. A survey research design was chosen for this study whereby data on employees’ perceived job characteristics and their involvement in OCB were collected cross sectionally, using a structured research questionnaire.

A dyadic response design (Alferes & Kenny 2009) was employed where both the employee and his/her supervisor participated in this study in order to overcome the same source bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). In a dyadic response design, respondents were asked to rate the independent variables (work design characteristics) whereas their supervisors were asked to rate the dependent variable (OCB). Prior to distributing the study questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted to assess i) whether the items were easy to be understood, and ii) the appropriateness of the questionnaire design. It was agreed that most of the items were clear and understood by both the target groups. 1200 questionnaires were distributed and 710 were returned. Out of the 710 survey forms that were returned, 64 cases with several missing values were removed, leaving a final research sample of 646 cases that were used in the final analysis. The response rate across the organization ranged from 51% to 61% with an overall response rate of 60% and overall non response rate of 40%. Of the 646 respondents, 97.4% were female and 2.6% were male. A fair balance in respondents’ gender could not be obtained as female are the dominant workforce holding clinical jobs in hospitals. In terms of ethnic composition of the
respondents, 93.3% comprised of Malays, 3.9% Chinese, 2.3% Indians and the rest were from other ethnic groups. About 80% of the respondents were married while 18% were not and 98% held higher school certificates and diplomas. The age range of the sample of participants was 21 to 61 years, with an average age of 33 years old (sd = 8.9). The mean organizational tenure was 8 years (sd = 7.7).

3.2 Measures

All constructs of the study were measured with scales adopted from existing scales.

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).** OCB was measured using the Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Scale developed by Lee and Allen (2002). This 15-item scale measures helping behaviours that benefit specific individual (OCB-I) and the organization as a whole (OCB-O). It uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate). Lee and Allen (2002) reported the reliabilities of .83 (OCB-I) and .88 (OCB-O). In this study, the overall measure of OCB was used. This study has reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .87 for the composite score for OCB. Chien and Su (2009) reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .94 for their composite score for OCB.

**Motivational job characteristics.** The job autonomy dimension of motivational job characteristics was measured with the corresponding subscales of the Job Diagnostic Survey by Hackman and Oldham (1980). This subscale consisting of four items that was evaluated by the respondents was based upon a 5-point Likert-type scale indicating the extent or amount of each characteristic ranging from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much). An example of autonomy measure is “my job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own”. The respective coefficient alpha for job autonomy in this study was .80. An example of skill variety measure is “my job is quite simple and repetitive”. An example of feedback measure is “I often receive feedback from my supervisor and peers”. An example of task significance measure is “I am holding a very important job in this organization”. An example of task identity measure is “My job provides me the chance to completely finish the piece of work I begin”. The respective coefficient alphas for autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance and task identity in this study were .79, .59, .85, .70 and .63 respectively. These reported reliabilities are similar to the published reliabilities of the JDI norms and other empirical research (Hackman & Oldham 1975; Saavedra & Kwun 2000; Su and Hsiao 2005). Chien and Su (2009) reported coefficient alpha reliabilities of .63, .72, .79, .68, and .56 for autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance and task identity respectively.

**Social Support.** This study has adopted Karasek’s (1979) JCQ scales comprising six items measuring social support. An example is “my co-workers are very helpful”. Participants indicated their response on a five point Likert type scale from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree. This study has reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .78 for social support job characteristics.

**Physical Demand.** This study has adopted Van der Doef and Maes’s (1999) Physical Demand scale with four items scale. A sample item is “I have to work in an uncomfortable position”. Participants indicated their response on a five point Likert-type scale from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree. This study has reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .67 for physical demand job characteristics.
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Psychological Demand. This study has adopted Karasek’s (1979) JCQ scales comprising five items measuring psychological demand. An example is “I am required to work very fast”. Participants indicated their response on a five point Likert-type scale from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree. This study has reported a coefficient alpha reliability of .82 for psychological demand job characteristics.

4. The Findings

The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 19.0. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the work design characteristics and OCB. Prior to conducting the hierarchical multiple regression, data was screened for violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homocedasticity and multicollinearity (Tabachnic & Fidell, 2007). The bivariate relationship between all the variables was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 1 shows the value of means, standard deviations, internal reliabilities and correlations among the variables. The mean value for most of the study variables were above 3.5. The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis shows that most of the variables are strongly and positively correlated with one another with a majority correlation coefficient value of more than 0.3.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Reliabilities of Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Autonomy</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>(.79)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Skill variety</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>(.59)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feedback</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Task Significance</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>(.70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Task Identity</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>(.63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Support</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>(.78)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Physical Demand</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>(.67)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Psychological Demand</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-.43**(.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. OCB</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.39** (.87)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Bold figures are reliabilities at *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

4.1 Effects of Perception of Work Design Characteristics on OCB

Hypothesis 1 proposed that work design characteristics influence OCB. Specifically, work design characteristics variables namely autonomy (Hypothesis 1a), skill variety (Hypothesis 1b), feedback (Hypothesis 1c) task significance (Hypothesis 1d), task identity (Hypothesis 1e) and social support (Hypothesis 1f) are hypothesized to be positively related to OCB whereas physical demand (Hypothesis 1g) and psychological demand (Hypothesis 1h) were hypothesized to be negatively related to OCB. A two step hierarchical multiple regressions was used to test Hypothesis 1. To test these hypotheses, OCB was entered as the dependent variable and two control variables (age and tenure) were entered in Step 1 of the regression. Respondent’s age and tenure were controlled in this study in accordance to past findings (Jihad et al. 2010). In Step 2, the predictors (autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance, task identity, social support, physical job demand and psychological job demand) were added. Any significant increase in variance explained, as shown by $R^2$ in Step 2, and the corresponding significance value for
Table 2 shows the result of the hierarchical multiple regression that tested the direct effect of the eight dimensions of work design characteristics perceptions on employee engagement in OCB. Results of Step 1 of the regression showed that demographic control variables, respondent age and tenure had a significant effect on OCB. However, in total these demographic factors could only explain a very small variance (1.9%) in OCB. When the eight work design characteristics were entered in Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 29.1%, $F(10, 635) = 26.12$, $p<0.001$. The eight control measures explained an additional 27.2% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.272$, $p<0.001$) of the variance in OCB, after controlling for age and tenure. Among the eight dimensions of work design characteristics, only five dimensions (autonomy, feedback, task significance, social support and psychological job demand) significantly predicted OCB whereas three of the work design characteristics variables (skill variety, task identity and physical job demand) did not significantly affect OCB. Among these five significant predictors of work design characteristics, feedback and task significance found to be the strongest predictors of OCB ($b=0.183$, $p<0.001$, $b=0.197$, $p<0.001$), followed by psychological demand ($b=-0.049$, $p<0.05$), autonomy ($b=0.065$, $p<0.05$) and finally social support at work ($b=0.093$, $p<0.05$).

In terms of the hypothesized direction of the relationships, autonomy, skill variety, feedback, task significance, task identity and social support show a positive relationship with OCB. Psychological job demand shows a negative relationship with OCB as hypothesized but only physical job demand shows a positive relationship with OCB which is not in the predicted direction. Based on the above findings, only sub Hypothesis 1a, 1c, 1d, 1f, and 1h are fully supported. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 of this study was partially supported.
Table 2: Hierarchical Regression results for the effects of Perception of Work Design Characteristics on OCB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>OCB</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.014***</td>
<td>0.010*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.011*</td>
<td>-0.01*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>0.065*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill variety</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>0.183***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task significance</td>
<td>0.197***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task identity</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>0.093*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Demand</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Demand</td>
<td>-0.049**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.291</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.247**</td>
<td>26.122***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.272***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N=646; unstandardized coefficients are reported; *p<0.05; two tailed; **p<0.01; two tailed; ***p<0.001; two tailed †p<.05, one tailed

5. Discussion & Implications

This study was aimed to examine the relationship between perceived work design characteristics and OCB. As hypothesized, the results showed support for the direct effect of work design characteristics (feedback, task significance, psychological demand, autonomy and social support) on OCB. The study shows that when the organization provides job with motivational, social and work context characteristics for employees, this increases employee satisfaction and as an exchange, employees reciprocated by engaging in positive work behaviours such as OCB. According to job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham 1975), when employers provide employees the freedom and the choice in carrying out their job, employees will be more motivated in their jobs and will be more willing to invest their effort in non task performance such as helping behaviour at work. The findings of the significant positive effect of motivational job characteristics variables on OCB are consistent with the findings of several researches in the past (Farh & Podsakoff 1990; Cappelli & Rogovsky 1998; Drago & Garvey 1998; Chien & Su 2009; Krishnan et al. 2013). The findings of this study also corroborates with (a) Ng and Tay’s (2010) empirical study that found a direct relationship between job resources (i.e., job control and social support) and in role performance and extra role performance of and (b) Salanova and Scaufeli (2008) who found a direct relationship between job resources (i.e., job control, feedback, and variety) and proactive work behaviours. The result of this study however, is inconsistent with Su and Hsiao (2005) who found a non significant relationship between job autonomy and OCB.
In this study a dyadic response design was used, in which respondents rated the independent variables, whereas their supervisors rated the dependent variable (OCB). This method of data collection was used to reduce the same source bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003) which could possibly exist when using the same targets to answer all independent and dependent variable questions. As the supervisor could assess and observe his/her subordinate in this study, the use of a dyadic response design was deemed more appropriate compared to self-report method because the former provides a realistic response about the employees’ involvement in OCB.

An important implication of this study is that the employees’ perception about motivational job characteristics, social job characteristics and work context characteristics are important in the workplace, particularly with regards to promoting helping behaviour among employees. This study has demonstrated that employees’ positive perception on work design characteristics found to affect their job attitude, especially their engagement towards their work which could impact their work outcome especially their extra role behaviour. Therefore, employers who wish to promote extra role behaviour among their employees need to provide these work characteristics in the organization. As such, the management needs to pay more attention to designing jobs and creating work environment which will help to increase the employees extra role performance in the organizations.

5.1 Conclusion

This study has provided an empirical evidence for linking employees’ perception of their job to OCB; thus providing support for a key theoretical proposition of job characteristics theory. One important contribution of this study is the inclusion of one social job characteristic variable (social support) and two contextual work characteristic variables (physical demand and psychological demand) in the research model in the prediction of OCB which is less emphasized by past researchers. This study found a strong support for the direct effect of motivational, social and work context characteristics on OCB. This study also found five work design characteristics which significantly predicted employee engagement in OCB. Among these five significant predictors of work design characteristics, feedback and task significance were found to be the strongest predictors, followed by psychological demand, autonomy and finally social support at work. This suggests that employers who provide employees with these three different aspects of job characteristics may help to increase employees' motivation at work and as an exchange, these employees may display positive behaviours such as OCB which is deemed as important in enhancing the effectiveness of organizations.

Although this study has provided some important insights into the relationships between the work design characteristics and OCB, the researchers acknowledge some of the limitations of the study. First, the sample used in this study consists of an almost homogenous group of mostly female respondents (over 95%). Furthermore, the respondents in this study are mainly registered staff nurses employed in the public hospitals in Malaysia. This has implications on the generalization element of research findings to employees in other sectors of the economy. Thus, future researchers could replicate this study using samples drawn from different occupations and types of work with an even gender distribution. Second, the current study has employed a cross-sectional design in which data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. One of the weaknesses in this method is that it does not allow the researchers to draw firm conclusion regarding the causal direction of the relationships between the predictor and outcome.
variables. Given this limitation, future research should study the relationships among the variables using a longitudinal design to examine the continuity of the responses. Finally, this study has focused on only selected work design characteristics variables in Humprey et al.’s (2007) Expanded Work Design Model. Future research could examine other potential work design characteristics such as job complexity, interdependence or ergonomics work design variables to determine the relationship between work design characteristics and OCB.

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