

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Among Generations In The Context Of University Autonomy In Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) across Generations X, Y, and Z within the context of autonomous universities in Vietnam. The study surveyed 459 faculty and staff members from Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, one of the largest public universities in Vietnam, using a multi-stage cluster sampling method. Employing exploratory factor analysis (EFA), T-tests, and linear regression, the study identifies significant differences in Loyalty-Based OCB across generations, with Gen X exhibiting the highest loyalty, followed by Gen Y and Gen Z. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that factors such as policy updates, foundational knowledge, and participation in decision-making have varying impacts on loyalty across generations. Based on these findings, the study proposes human resource management strategies to enhance employee engagement and effectiveness in autonomous higher education institutions.

Keywords: Organizational citizenship behavior; Generation X Y Z; higher education; human resource management.

1. Introduction

In the context of higher education in Vietnam, the significant shift toward an autonomous governance model presents new challenges and requirements for educational institutions, particularly in implementing university autonomy. This model offers opportunities to enhance operational efficiency and requires public universities to optimise internal organisation to build a cohesive, innovative, and effective working environment. Without suitable management solutions to foster commitment and engagement among high-quality human resources, "brain drain" will pose a critical challenge to the process of transition and development ^[1]. The need to promote organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) among faculty and staff becomes increasingly evident within autonomous university settings. Autonomy demands that universities prioritise recruitment, training, and retention of their human resources ^[2], a measure that optimises performance and ensures that faculty and staff feel respected and valued.

This study was conducted at Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM), one of

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Vietnam's two largest public universities. By 2024, six out of eight member universities within VNU-HCM have recently initiated autonomous mechanisms by strategic timelines. The critical issue is how to foster employee commitment, retain talent, and encourage positive contributions to the institution. The research suggests that motivational factors for young staff include job stability, job prestige, and opportunities for advanced learning [3]. However, are these motivational factors strong enough to retain the workforce? Additionally, in an institution with nearly two decades of establishment and development, encompassing around 6,000 faculty and staff members, generational diversity in the workforce may create differences in the methods and extent of OCB exhibited.

With data collected from 459 faculty members and administrative staff at VNU-HCM at the end of 2022, this study aims to identify generational differences in OCB among Generations X, Y, and Z within higher education in Vietnam and to determine factors influencing OCB within each generation, thereby providing recommendations on workplace environment and human resource management strategies based on these generational distinctions.

2. Literature review

A prominent theme in recent research on employee motivation within public educational environments is organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Studies indicate that OCB is a crucial factor contributing to the sustainable development of organisations, especially in competitive work settings [4][1]. OCB includes behaviours beyond an employee's formal job duties, consisting of actions that benefit the organisation without direct compensation, such as assisting colleagues, showing commitment to the organisation, and engaging in informal activities to improve the work environment [5]. Additionally, promoting OCB improves work performance and enhances employee satisfaction and organisational commitment [6].

Current employees are generally classified into three generational groups: Generation X (1965–1980), Generation Y (1981–1996), and Generation Z (1997–2005). Research indicates that each generation exhibits different motivations and organisational expectations, which significantly impact job satisfaction, organisational support, and career development potential [7-10]. The study found that Generation X values job stability and is generally more satisfied with their current work, showing lower susceptibility to demotivation than Generation Y and Z when facing job insecurity or burnout [8]. In contrast, Generation Y emphasises career advancement, job significance, and personal growth, seeking stability and long-term commitment to their workplace [11]. Unlike Generations X and Y, the younger Generation Z values flexibility and career development, viewing work as a platform for learning and experience; retention strategies for this generation typically rely on opportunities for professional growth, a supportive work environment, and alignment with organisational values [12].

Recent studies have also examined whether gender, faculty rank, or academic discipline influence OCB in higher education. Meta-analyses and empirical research indicate that while gender stereotypes may shape expectations about OCB (e.g., women being associated with helping behaviors, men with civic virtue), actual differences in OCB by gender are generally negligible or statistically insignificant. For example, a meta-analysis of nearly 19,000 teachers found only a trivial effect size for gender, and more recent studies in higher education confirm no significant difference in OCB scores between male and female academics. Similarly, faculty rank and discipline may influence the type and frequency of OCBs performed, but findings are mixed and context-dependent; some studies suggest that senior faculty may engage more in organizational-level OCBs, while discipline effects are often mediated by departmental culture and expectations.

The literature on OCB in higher education has expanded significantly in recent years. Various studies highlight the importance of organizational support, participative leadership, and quality of work life as key factors influencing OCB among university staff. For example, research conducted in Indonesia and the Philippines using structural equation modeling (SEM) shows that both organizational support and quality of work life are significant predictors of OCB. This underscores the need for a supportive and inclusive environment to encourage citizenship behaviors ^[13].

The studies showed that social exchange theory suggests that relationships between individuals or between individuals and organisations can be viewed as a process of exchange where parties expect reciprocity ^{[14][15]}. Exchange partners offer behaviors that benefit the others, expecting comparable benefits. Based on this theory, it is hypothesized that different generations may perceive fairness or reciprocity within an organisation differently, influencing their levels of OCB. Previous studies have found that employees tend to reciprocate with increased motivation that surpasses organisational expectations in empowering work environments. From an employee's perspective, perceived empowerment is assessed based on their experience of empowerment in the workplace ^{[15][16]}. For higher education institutions, empowering faculty members is perceived to enhance human capital for society, as empowered faculty members are more likely to take responsibility for educational activities and contribute to student success ^[17]. Career development for faculty members correlates with their perception that their work provides continuous opportunities for professional growth and skill enhancement. Faculty who perceive career development opportunities positively impact both the school and their teaching career ^[18].

Furthermore, career development improves faculty knowledge, skills, and attitudes, fostering a more substantial commitment to organisational effectiveness ^[19]. Additionally, a sense of status within an organisation is closely linked to the perception that one's work is important, respected, and admired. Faculty who feel empowered recognise their value within the organisation and align their goals with the institution's objectives, thus increasing commitment to the organisation and their careers ^[20].

Based on social exchange theory ^[14], it is hypothesized that generational cohorts will differ in their OCB due to varying expectations of reciprocity and fairness within the organization. Specifically, Generation X, having experienced more traditional and stable employment contexts, is expected to exhibit higher loyalty-based OCB, as they value long-term commitment and organizational stability. Generation Y, characterized by a focus on career development and self-actualization, is hypothesized to show higher levels of self-development and initiative-based OCB. Generation Z, entering the workforce during a period of rapid technological and organizational change, may prioritize flexibility and innovation, potentially leading to lower loyalty-based OCB but higher engagement in creative and change-oriented behaviors. These hypotheses are grounded in recent empirical studies that demonstrate generational differences in work values, motivation, and OCB in higher education settings.

3. Methodology

This study's primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire that gathered information on the OCB behaviours of faculty and staff working in social sciences at two universities within Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM), in 2023. A multi-stage cluster probability sampling method was applied ^[21], involving sequential selection at the levels of member universities, departments/faculties, and groups of academic and non-academic staff. Ultimately, the survey reached 459 faculty members and employees. The structured questionnaire was based on the social exchange theory ^[14] and the OCB measurement framework ^[22], incorporating 28 observed variables of OCB behaviours: conscientiousness, compliance, courtesy, loyalty, and self-development. Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to assess the reliability

of the organizational citizenship behaviour scale, evaluating mean values, standard deviations, sample fit, and internal consistency [23]. The data indicated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.952, exceeding 0.7, and all corrected item-total correlations were above 0.3, confirming that the scale met reliability standards with no observed variables excluded (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability of the Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) Scale

OCB's variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-Total Correlation
[TAT1] I actively participate, exceeding expectations, in faculty and school activities	3.84	0.780	0.570
[TAT2] I am willing to support new colleagues in adapting to the work environment	4.25	0.667	0.644
[TAT3] I am ready to assist colleagues in resolving emerging work-related issues	4.24	0.655	0.661
[TAT4] I am willing to take on colleagues' workloads when needed	3.97	0.777	0.625
[TAT5] I collaborate and communicate with colleagues to enhance work efficiency	4.31	0.648	0.676
[TUT1] I ensure effective working hours daily	4.29	0.688	0.646
[TUT2] I volunteer for tasks beyond formal job requirements	3.74	0.865	0.579
[TUT3] I am willing to work on days off	3.66	1.003	0.509
[TUT4] I stay after working hours to complete tasks	3.90	0.927	0.579
[TUT5] I adhere to school rules even without supervision	4.26	0.693	0.681
[TUT6] I perform my work diligently, striving to avoid mistakes	4.37	0.626	0.634
[TUT7] I strive to self-study to improve the quality of work outcomes	4.32	0.677	0.691
[TUT8] I am willing to take on new tasks as assigned.	4.10	0.755	0.644
[LT1] I try to avoid creating issues or difficulties for my colleagues	4.24	0.856	0.509
[LT2] I carefully consider the impact of my actions on my colleagues	4.26	0.622	0.621
[LT3] I always seek input from those who may be affected before making decisions	4.16	0.661	0.617
[LT4] I always inform colleagues and supervisors in advance before implementing my important decisions	4.18	0.682	0.625
[TT1] I perceive the development of the university as parallel to my own career development.	4.25	0.675	0.683
[TT2] I am concerned about the university's progress and challenges	4.13	0.706	0.642
[TT3] I feel a strong connection to this university	4.15	0.705	0.675
[TT4] I am willing to participate in activities that benefit the university's overall image, even if these activities are not directly assigned to me by the university or my department.	3.84	0.844	0.577
[TT5] I am willing to stand up to protect the university's reputation	4.04	0.758	0.663
[TT6] I am willing to provide information about the university to others and clarify any misunderstandings	4.02	0.794	0.625
[PT1] I am responsible in my work and dedicated to the university	4.29	0.624	0.745
[PT2] I do not shift responsibility onto others	4.34	0.678	0.612
[PT3] I listen to the university's feedback to improve my own competencies	4.27	0.646	0.747
[PT4] I proactively seek to enhance my knowledge, skills, and qualifications for personal development.	4.35	0.630	0.687

OCB's variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-Total Correlation
[PT5] I aspire to improve my knowledge and skills to contribute more to the university.	4.31	0.674	0.748
Cronbach's Alpha = 0.952 > 0.7 The item-total correlation coefficients are all greater than 0.3			

Table 1. (Continued)

Source: Survey Results of the 2023 Study

After applying Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to extract factors from the initial 28 observed variables, the author proceeded with ANOVA analysis to identify individual and contextual factors uniquely influencing OCB-Loyalty within each generational group. All variables with significant relationships were subsequently included in the regression analysis. Based on the regression coefficients, it was found that 5 out of 11 variables included in the equation represent significant relationships between the independent variable (generational group) and the dependent variable (OCB behaviour, with significant differences across generations).

4. Result and discussions

4.1. OCB Behavior by Generation

The factor rotation results extracted five groups of factors from the initial 28 observed variables. All grouped variables displayed relatively high loading coefficients (minimum = 0.506 > 0.3), indicating that the observed variables are correlated with their respective factors and are statistically significant. The five factors account for 65.584% of the variance in the data for the 28 observed variables included in the EFA (Table 2). The five extracted factor groups align closely with theoretical constructs and are categorized as follows:

- **OCB-Conscientiousness:** Behaviours that are characterized by dedicated support for colleagues.
- **OCB-Compliance:** Behaviours that adhere to organizational rules and regulations.
- **OCB-Courtesy:** Behaviours demonstrate politeness and respect towards colleagues and the workplace environment.
- **OCB-Loyalty:** Behaviours reflect commitment and attachment to the organization.
- **OCB-Self-Development:** Behaviours focus on enhancing personal skills and contributing to organizational growth.

Table 2. Five factors of organizational citizenship behaviours

Factors	Old variables	Fators' name	New variables
F1	TAT1, TAT2, TAT3, TAT4, TAT5	Conscientiousness (TAT)	TAT1, TAT2, TAT3, TAT4, TAT5
F2	TUT1, TUT2, TUT3, TUT4, TUT5, TUT6, TUT7, TUT8	Compliance (TUT)	TUT2, TUT3, TUT4, TUT8
F3	LT1, LT2, LT3, LT4	Courtesy (LT)	LT1, LT2, LT3, LT4
F4	TT1, TT2, TT3, TT4, TT5, TT6	Loyalty (TT)	TT1, TT2, TT3, TT4, TT5, TT6
F5	PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5	Self-Development (PT)	PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, PT6 (TUT1), PT7 (TUT5), PT8 (TUT6), PT9 (TUT7)

Source: Survey Results of the 2023 Study

The results of the ANOVA analysis on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) by generation are presented in Table 3. Examining the average scores for the frequency of performing OCB behaviours reveals

that Gen X generally exhibits higher average scores across most OCB behaviours, particularly in OCB-Conscientiousness, OCB-Compliance, and OCB-Loyalty. In contrast, Gen Y scores the highest in OCB-Courtesy, while Gen Z scores the lowest in most behaviours, especially in OCB-Compliance and OCB-Loyalty. This result suggests generational differences in how OCB behaviours are practised in the workplace. The ANOVA analysis results indicate statistically significant differences among the three generations, specifically in OCB-Loyalty, implying that organizational commitment is higher among Gen X than in Gen Y and Z.

Table 3. Anova analysis results of OCB behavior by generation

	Gen X (Mean)	Gen Y (Mean)	Gen Z (Mean)	F-Statistic	p-value (Sig.)
Conscientiousness (TAT)	4.25	4.10	4.04	2.919	0.055
Compliance (TUT)	4.00	3.84	3.73	2.797	0.062
Courtesy (LT)	4.19	4.22	4.19	0.189	0.828
Loyalty (TT)	4.20	4.06	3.99	3.003	0.050
Self-Development (PT)	4.35	4.31	4.31	0.256	0.775

Source: Survey Results of the 2023 Study

These findings align with studies conducted in other ASEAN countries and international contexts, revealing that older individuals typically demonstrate stronger organizational attachment and a greater willingness to exceed formal job requirements. For instance, in Malaysia and Indonesia, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is closely associated with perceptions of organizational support and cultural norms regarding reciprocity. Additionally, the impact of digital transformation and globalization is more significant among younger faculty, who often prioritize flexibility and innovation over traditional loyalty.

In terms of gender, faculty rank, and discipline, this study found no statistically significant differences in OCB scores across these variables. This is consistent with recent meta-analyses and cross-sectional studies in higher education. It suggests that while demographic and professional characteristics may influence the context of OCB, the main drivers are organizational support, perceived fairness, and opportunities for professional development.

4.2. Factors Affecting Generational Loyalty-Based OCB

The results of linear regression analysis identified factors influencing the level of Loyalty-Based OCB across generations X, Y, and Z (Table 4).

For Generation X, the regression model is highly statistically significant, with a regression sum of squares of 14.764, an F-value of 8.640, and a significance (Sig.) of 0.000, indicating that the model is appropriate for explaining variations in "Loyalty-Based OCB." The R-squared coefficient reaches 0.568, meaning that the independent variables explain 56.8% of the variance in the dependent variable. The factor "The institution always provides updates on relevant policies" notably positively impacts loyalty level ($B = 0.292$, $Sig. = 0.001$). Some factors, such as "Job title" ($Sig. = 0.087$), "Highest qualification" ($Sig. = 0.077$), and "Strong foundational knowledge in the field" ($Sig. = 0.078$) tend to have an influence but do not reach the 0.05 statistical significance level. In contrast, factors like "Living status" and "Right to participate in decision-making" show no statistical significance ($Sig. > 0.05$).

For Generation Y, the regression model achieves $R^2 = 0.468$, indicating that approximately 46.8% of the variation in "Loyalty-Based OCB" can be explained by the independent variables. The adjusted $R^2 = 0.449$ further supports the model's goodness of fit when multiple independent variables are involved with an F-

value of 24.145 and Sig. = 0.000, the model's significance is confirmed. Statistically significant factors in the model include "Strong foundational knowledge in the field" (B = 0.269, Sig. = 0.000), "Consistency in policy enforcement by leadership" (B = 0.136, Sig. = 0.013), and "Sense of inappropriateness if leaving the job" (B = 0.138, Sig. = 0.000). Variables such as "Job title," "Highest qualification," and "Living status" are not statistically significant in the model.

For Generation Z, the regression model has $R^2 = 0.481$, indicating that 48.1% of the variation in "Loyalty-Based OCB" is explained by independent factors. The model is statistically significant with a regression sum of squares of 8.339 and an F-value of 4.123 (Sig. = 0.000). The factor "Sense of inappropriateness if leaving the job" has a regression coefficient of B = 0.215 with Sig. = 0.002, they make it the most substantial positive factor impacting Loyalty-Based OCB. Additionally, the variable "The institution has clear goals and development strategies" has a regression coefficient of B = 0.156 (Sig. = 0.055), showing significance close to the 0.05 level. Factors such as "Job title," "Highest qualification," and "Living status" are not statistically significant.

Across all three models, the VIF values of the independent variables are less than 4, indicating no severe multicollinearity issues, which strengthens the reliability of the analytical results.

Table 4. Summary Table of Regression Analysis Results for Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z

Variable	Gen X - Regression Coefficient (B)	Gen X - Sig.	Gen Y - Regression Coefficient (B)	Gen Y - Sig.	Gen Z - Regression Coefficient (B)	Gen Z - Sig.
Job Title	0.241	0.087	0.241	0.181	0.053	0.835
Highest Qualification	0.159	0.077	0.159	0.771	0.013	0.949
Living Status	0.101	0.258	0.101	0.268	0.086	0.167
Detailed Job Responsibilities	0.009	0.918	0.009	0.199	-0.104	0.267
Timely Policy Updates	0.292	0.001	0.292	0.717	0.129	0.173
Solid Knowledge Base in Field	0.169	0.078	0.169	0.000	0.135	0.211
Participation in Faculty/Department Decisions	0.018	0.752	0.018	0.314	-0.012	0.861
Clear Development Goals & Strategies	0.043	0.654	0.043	0.360	0.156	0.055
Encouragement of Teamwork	0.139	0.102	0.139	0.760	0.063	0.585
Consistency in Policy Implementation	0.086	0.335	0.086	0.013	-0.014	0.899
Feeling Inappropriate to Leave Organization	0.034	0.662	0.034	0.000	0.215	0.002
F	8.640		24.145		4.123	
R ²	0.569		0.468		0.481	
Model Sig.	0.000		0.000		0.000	

Source: Survey Results of the 2023 Study

5. Conclusions

This study provides empirical evidence of generational differences in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) within the context of university autonomy in Vietnam. The findings reveal that Generation

X exhibits the highest levels of loyalty-based OCB, followed by Generation Y and Generation Z. This generational pattern aligns with research from other ASEAN countries, where older cohorts tend to demonstrate stronger organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors, likely due to their formative experiences in more stable and hierarchical work environments. In contrast, younger generations, particularly Generation Z, show lower levels of loyalty-based OCB, which may reflect their preferences for flexibility, innovation, and alignment with organizational values rather than a traditional long-term attachment.

Importantly, the analysis found no statistically significant differences in OCB based on gender, faculty rank, or academic discipline. This result is consistent with recent meta-analyses and cross-national studies in higher education, which suggest that demographic variables play a limited role in predicting OCB compared to organizational and cultural factors. These findings highlight the need for universities to focus on creating supportive, transparent, and empowering environments rather than targeting OCB interventions based solely on demographic characteristics.

The regression analyses further clarify the distinct antecedents of loyalty-based OCB for each generational cohort. For Generation X, regular updates on institutional policies and transparent communication significantly enhance loyalty, emphasizing the importance of organizational stability and clear information flow for this group. Generation Y's loyalty is most strongly influenced by professional competence and consistency in policy enforcement, reflecting their desire for personal growth and fair management practices. For Generation Z, a sense of ethical responsibility and clarity in institutional vision are the most significant predictors, suggesting that this cohort is motivated by alignment with organizational purpose and opportunities for meaningful contribution. These generational differences have practical implications for human resource management in autonomous universities. For Generation X, institutions should leverage their experience and commitment by assigning them to leadership and mentoring roles while maintaining a stable and transparent work environment. For Generation Y, it is essential to invest in continuous professional development and implement fair, consistent policies. For Generation Z, universities should prioritize transparent communication, digital engagement, and opportunities for creative and innovative participation.

Comparative analysis with other ASEAN university systems further contextualizes these results. In Malaysia and Indonesia, studies employing structural equation modeling (SEM) have demonstrated that organizational support, participative leadership, and quality of work life are significant predictors of OCB. These findings reinforce the importance of a supportive and inclusive organizational climate across diverse cultural settings. Additionally, the increasing demands of digital transformation and institutional autonomy in the ASEAN region have introduced both universal and context-specific drivers of OCB, including cultural norms and the evolving expectations of younger academic staff.

Methodologically, while this study utilized regression analysis to identify generational differences and their antecedents, future research should consider employing SEM to model the complex relationships among organizational factors, individual characteristics, and OCB outcomes. SEM would allow for the simultaneous examination of direct and indirect effects, as well as the testing of mediation and moderation hypotheses, thereby enhancing the rigor and explanatory power of OCB research in higher education.

In summary, this study advances the understanding of generational dynamics in OCB within Vietnamese autonomous universities and offers actionable recommendations for university leaders and policymakers. By tailoring management strategies to the unique values and motivations of each generational cohort, institutions can foster a more engaged, innovative, and committed academic workforce.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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