

# THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND MEMBERS' CHARACTERISTICS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP IN GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED ORGANIZATIONS

**Halil Demirer**

**Necdet Bilgin**

**Selami Özcan**

**Mustafa Kemal University, HATAY**

**Aykut İşleyen**

**Kocaeli University, KOCAELI**

## **Abstract**

This study aimed to illustrate the association between members' organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Secondly, the association between some of the general characteristics of members and organizational citizenship were examined. The associations were tested in a sample of 155 members of a cooperative having an approximate population of 11000 whose members were dispersed in a wide geographical region. T-test was used to reveal group differences regarding organizational commitment and organizational citizenship. Results of analyses displayed that members organizationally committed have more positive organizational citizenship attitudes than non-committed members. Moreover, age, educational level, member's business size were closely associated with organizational citizenship attitudes. But there was no association between groups of members regarding their age and loyalty in the cooperative.

**Keywords** – Organizational citizenship, organizational commitment, geographically dispersed organizations, agricultural marketing cooperatives

The literature on geographically dispersed organizations is relatively recent. Most research in this field gives specific attention to structural issues in the organizations. Organizations' structure was believed to affect other organizational characteristics and environmental parameters like uncertainties affect the structure of an organization reciprocally (Aiken and Hage, 1968; Daft and Lengel, 1986). Previous research also asserted that in geographically dispersed organizations members' reflective and interpretive skills gains importance (Boland and Tenkasi, 2001:63).

Organizational citizenship attitudes of individuals in the organizations having dispersed structures were supposed to be different than other organizations. This study primarily aimed to reveal the association between the members' commitment to the organization and their organizational citizenship attitudes. Secondly, the association between some membership characteristics and organizational citizenship attitudes were examined. It was assumed that members highly committed to cooperative organization have good citizen roles and involved highly with the agricultural marketing cooperatives. Agricultural

marketing cooperatives are foundations that gather many producers for marketing purposes by providing them with some advantages. Industrialization of agriculture forced small businesses in this field to cooperate and became the members of a cooperative (Fulton, 1999: 418). Today cooperatives may possibly were perceived as the gateway to the prosperity in the rural societies (Karantininis and Zago, 2001: 1266).

## 1. Organizational Commitment And Citizenship

Organizational commitment in the organizations has been extensively researched. It was defined as the strength of involvement one has with the organization (Hall and Schneider, 1972; Mowday et al., 1979). Definitions had three main aspects; (a) a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert effort towards organizational goal accomplishment, (c) a strong desire to maintain organizational membership (Mowday et al., 1979; Morrow, 1983). It was also accepted that commitment is a process of identification with the goals of an organization's multiple constituencies. These constituencies may include top management, customers, unions, and/or the public at large (Reichers, 1985).

According to the researchers, positive consequences of organizational commitment is a long list that includes higher rate of attendance, reduced burnout, employee retention, improved job performance, work quantity, work quality, limited tardiness, low labour turnover and personal sacrifice on behalf of the organization. (Tan and Akhtar, 1998; Somers and Birnbaum, 1998). The evidence on the prediction of these numerous antecedents were tested in different settings. But tests in wide spread organizations are scarce.

Organizational commitment had three distinct domains (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Dunham, Grube and Castaneda, 1994): affective, continuance and normative. These three domains make up a construct and a member may have varying degrees of all three components as a result of his or her relationship with the organization. *Affective commitment* is defined as member's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization and its goals. *Continuance commitment* is defined as willingness to remain in an organization because of personal investment in the form of nontransferable investments such as close working relationships with coworkers, retirement investments and career investments, acquired job skills which are unique to a particular organization. *Normative commitment* is induced by a feeling of obligation to remain with an organization. Such a feeling of obligation often results from what Wiener (1982) characterized as "generalized value of loyalty and duty".

Commitment in cooperatives resemble to the organizational commitment. Highly committed members are always ready for meeting the needs of cooperatives (Fulton, 1999: 419- 420). So, sustaining the participation of members in cooperatives becomes crucial for the effectiveness of cooperative organizations (Lasley and Baumel, 1996:5). When committed members tend to satisfy their social needs with other committed

members the relationship between members and management improves (Hansen et al., 2002: 44).

Organizational citizenship is defined as members should take the initiative not only to do their duty but also to help their colleagues for the interest of organization, and protecting organizational resources and do more than the minimum amount of work that is required. Such behaviors are indifferent to rewards or punishments (Farh, Early and Lin, 1997). The most common elements of organizational citizenship incorporated in Organ's definition (1988) as collegiality, conscientiousness, respect for the law, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue. Commonly used scale developed to measure organizational citizenship by Farh, Early and Lin (1997) includes statements grouped under five sub dimensions of organizational citizenship; identification with the company, altruism toward colleagues, conscientiousness, interpersonal harmony and, protecting company resources.

Organizational commitment is responsible for behaviors such as sacrificing personal interest for the sake of the organization, indifference to reinforcement or punishment and personal preoccupation with the organization. So, there seems to be an integrity between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship.

Since, members' commitment and their citizenship to the cooperative can be perceived as a parameter in structural well being of cooperatives. The antecedents and consequences of cooperative organizations' structural issues could certainly contribute to the effectiveness of the cooperatives. So, examining the association between organizational commitment of the members and the members' citizenship attitudes deserves to be researched.

## **2. Research Design**

A quantitative method was chosen for the study because it facilitates researching the attitudes of a large, geographically dispersed population (n=11000). The survey method was preferred that enables studying large populations where direct observation is impossible (Babbie, 1998). Research design was built on comparisons of groups measured in one time measurement in the field. Thus, two main research questions were determined as given below:

- Does *commitment to the organization* effect organizational citizenship attitudes in a geographically dispersed organization?
- Does *member's characteristics* effect organizational citizenship attitudes in a geographically dispersed organization?

Seven hypotheses denoting that *commitment to the organization and member's characteristics have effects on organizational citizenship attitudes of the members in a geographically dispersed organization* were composed for testing purpose.

1H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *organizational commitment* and organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

2H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *age* and organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

3H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *education level* and organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

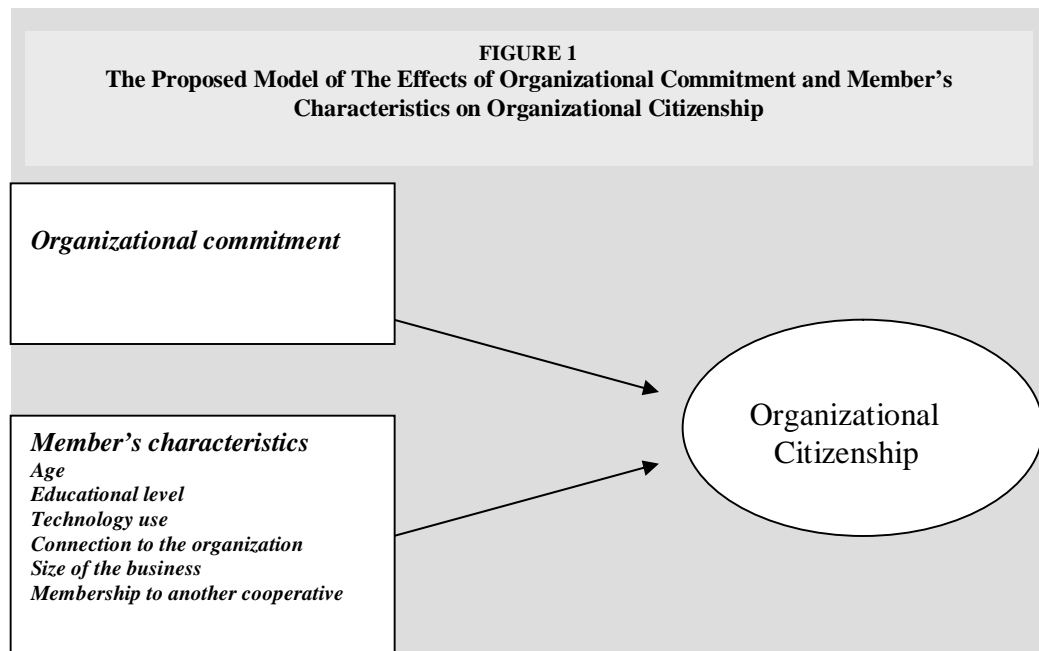
4H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *technology use* and organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

5H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *connection to the organization* and organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

6H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *size of the business* regarding organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

7H<sub>1</sub>= There is a significant association between *membership to another cooperative* regarding organizational citizenship in geographically dispersed organization.

Research model envisioned organizational citizenship as the dependent variable. Organizational commitment and members' characteristics were determined as independent variables of the study. The research model proposed in the study was illustrated in Figure 1.



### **3. Method**

#### **Sample**

The hypotheses were tested in a sample driven from the members of a Turkish agricultural marketing cooperative called Çukobirlik with an approximate population of 11000 members. Cooperative members as respondents were spread out in a wide region called Çukurova including provinces Hatay, Mersin, Adana and Osmaniye. Respondents were personally visited by the researchers in their counties and villages in day times for the interview. Interviewing requests were generally accepted by members. They were chosen randomly and in a proportionate manner regarding numbers of active members in sub-regions. Total number of 170 questionnaires obtained were then reanalyzed for missing values. The cases having over 5% of missing values were omitted and 155 cases remained for the final analyses.

#### **Measures**

##### **Organizational Citizenship as Dependent Variable (DV)**

Organizational citizenship was measured by 20-item, 7-point Likert type scale developed by Organ (1988) and validated by Farh, Early and Lin (1997). The scale statements were grouped under five sub dimensions of organizational citizenship (identification with the company, altruism toward colleagues, conscientiousness, interpersonal harmony, protecting company resources). All of the statements were scaled as (1= strongly disagree) and (7= strongly agree) and proved to be internally highly consistent ( $\alpha= 0,93$ ) (Nunnally, 1978).

##### **Organizational Commitment as Independent Variable (IV)**

Dispositional antecedent for testing was organizational commitment in this study. The respondents' commitment to their cooperative were measured by using 18-item, 7-point Likert type scale that was adopted from Meyer et al. (1993). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the whole scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha= 0,97$ ). All of the statements were scaled as (1= strongly disagree) and (7= strongly agree).

##### **Membership Characteristics as Independent Variables (IV)**

Member characteristics as situational and environmental factors that are thought to be important as far as their citizenship attitude is concerned was coded as follows: Age (0-40 years=young, 41years and more=old), educational level (elementary=low level, high school and more= high level), technology usage (low frequency of computer and internet use, high frequency of computer and internet use), connection of the member composed of three items (if member's father was formerly a member in the cooperative, if any relatives are member in the cooperative, length of membership duration in the

cooperative) business size (0-50 decares= small business ,51 decares and more= large business), membership to another cooperative (yes, no).

### Procedure

Data collecting method used in the study was self-report questionnaires filled out by the respondent members with the assisting instructions of researchers. Survey was executed in suburbs where members of the cooperative were dispersed in a wide geography during day times in village cafes, mosques and marketplaces in towns. Wording problems faced in the region were overcome by translating scholar phrases into daily living language. Thus, missing values were reduced and bias in data was avoided.

T-test for independent samples were used to examine the differences among comparison groups that were categorized by *organizational commitment (committed and non-committed)* and some chosen member characteristics such as *age, educational level, technology usage, connection to the organization, size of the members' business, membership to another cooperative.*

## IV. RESULTS OF ANALYSES

### Organizational commitment on organizational citizenship

**Table-1: Organizational commitment on organizational citizenship**

	Organizational commitment					
			non-committed		committed	
	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.
<i>Identification with the organization</i>	-5,61	0,00	3,34	1,50	5,23	1,41
<i>Altruism toward other members</i>	-3,91	0,00	3,83	1,54	5,07	1,32
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-4,40	0,00	3,99	1,58	5,39	1,30
<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>	-2,29	0,02	4,64	1,23	5,34	1,30
<i>Protecting resources of the organization</i>	-2,44	0,01	4,46	0,98	5,05	1,04
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP</b>	-4,41	0,00	4,03	1,17	5,23	1,16

Table-1 exhibited that there was a significant difference between member groups committed and non-committed to the organization regarding *organizational citizenship and its all sub dimensions* ( $p < 0,05$ ). By examining the means of the groups, it was found that, members committed to their organization are better citizens than non-committed members.

### Age on organizational citizenship

There was no significant difference between young (0-39years old) and old (40years old and more) member groups of the cooperative regarding *organizational citizenship and its all sub dimensions* ( $p \geq 0,05$ ).

### Member's educational level on organizational citizenship

**Table-2: Member's educational level on organizational citizenship**

	Educational level					
			Elemantary		High school and more	
	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean
<i>Identification with the organization</i>	-3.23	0.00	4.67	1.48	5.52	1.57
<i>Altruism toward other members</i>	-3.05	0.00	4.65	1.38	5.38	1.37
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-3.25	0.00	4.93	1.40	5.70	1.30
<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>	-1.81	0.07	5.09	1.27	5.50	1.33
<i>Protecting resources of the organization</i>	-1.47	0.14	4.89	1.05	5.16	1.05
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP</b>	-3.04	0.00	4.85	1.18	5.48	1.22

Table-2 displayed that there was a significant difference between committed and non-committed member groups regarding *organizational citizenship and its' subdimensions except protecting resources of the organization and interpersonal harmony dimension* ( $p < 0,05$ ). The means of the groups showed that educated group give more importance to *organizational citizenship and its' subdimensions except protecting resources of the organization and interpersonal harmony dimension* than low level education group.

### Member's technology usage on organizational citizenship

**Table-3: Member's technology usage on organizational citizenship**

	Technology Use					
			Some computer and internet		No computer and internet	
	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.
<i>Identification with the organization</i>	1.18	0.23	5.33	1.57	4.89	1.56
<i>Altruism toward other members</i>	2.47	0.01	5.61	1.24	4.78	1.41
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	1.94	0.05	5.75	1.26	5.09	1.42
<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>	1.55	0.12	5.65	1.33	5.16	1.30
<i>Protecting resources of the organization</i>	0.14	0.88	5.00	0.89	4.96	1.08
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP</b>	1.77	0.07	5.50	1.33	4.98	1.23

Table-3 stated that there was a significant difference between less and more technology using member groups only regarding *altruism toward other members* ( $p < 0,05$ ).

When we examined the means of the groups, it was evident that, members using more technology have treat other members more altruisticly than others in the cooperative.

#### Member's connection on organizational citizenship

There was no significant difference between loyal and non-loyal members of the cooperative regarding *organizational citizenship* ( $p \geq 0,05$ ).

#### Member's business size on organizational citizenship

**Table-4: Member's business size on organizational citizenship**

	member's business size					
			Small size		Large size	
	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.
<i>Identification with the organization</i>	-2.55	0.01	4.37	1.79	5.12	1.44
<i>Altruism toward other members</i>	-1.32	0.18	4.61	1.66	4.97	1.33
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-2.54	0.01	4.65	1.64	5.33	1.30
<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>	-1.64	0.10	4.90	1.28	5.31	1.30
<i>Protecting resources of the organization</i>	-1.03	0.30	4.80	1.08	5.01	1.04
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP</b>	-2.17	0.03	4.66	1.33	5.17	1.17

Table-4 indicated that there was a significant difference between member groups having small and large business sizes regarding *identification with the organization and conscientiousness and organizational citizenship in general* ( $p < 0,05$ ). But there was no significant difference between member groups regarding *altruism toward other members, interpersonal harmony and protecting resources of the organization* ( $p \geq 0,05$ ).

When we examined the means of the groups, it was evident that, members having large business size are better citizens in terms of *identification with the organization and conscientiousness and organizational citizenship in general* than others having small business size in the cooperative.



## Membership to another cooperative on organizational citizenship

**Table-5: Membership to another cooperative on organizational citizenship**

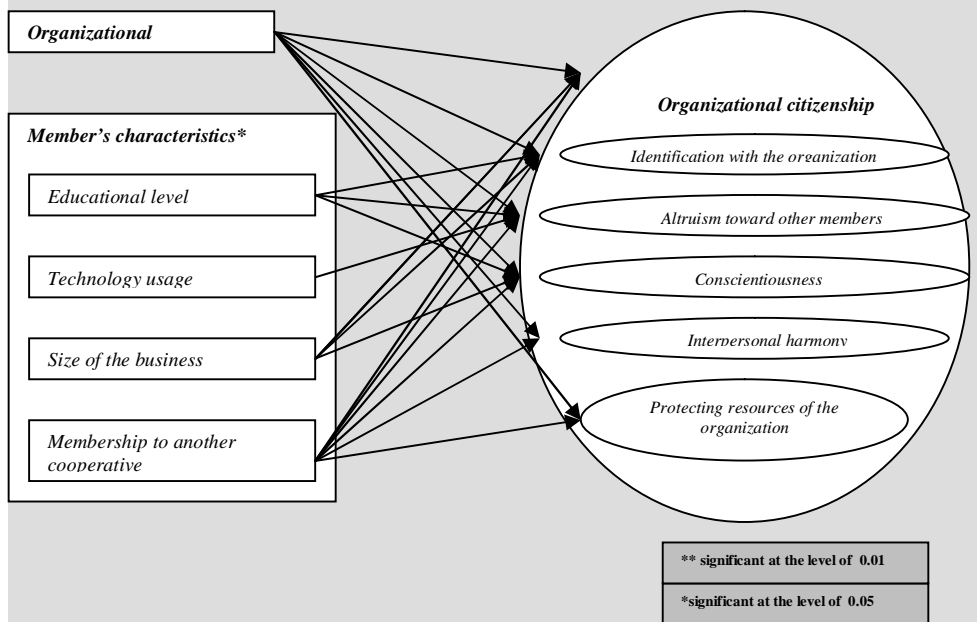
	Membership to another cooperative					
			yes		no	
	t	sig. (2-t.)	mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.
<i>Identification with the organization</i>	-3,12	0,00	4,45	1,71	5,25	1,39
<i>Altruism toward other members</i>	-4,59	0,00	4,25	1,46	5,27	1,25
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-3,41	0,00	4,68	1,59	5,47	1,22
<i>Interpersonal harmony</i>	-2,46	0,01	4,89	1,39	5,42	1,22
<i>Protecting resources of the organization</i>	-2,19	0,03	4,71	1,20	5,12	0,93
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP</b>	-3,67	0,00	4,60	1,35	5,32	1,07

Table-5 illustrated that there was a significant difference between members who have only one cooperative membership and members who have another cooperative membership regarding *organizational citizenship and with all its sub dimensions* ( $p < 0,05$ ).

When we examined the means of the groups, it was evident that, members having no other cooperative membership gives more importance to *organizational citizenship* than members having another cooperative membership.

Results of analyses modified the proposed model and framed out a final model illustrated in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**  
**The Final Model of The Effects of Organizational Commitment and Member's Characteristics on Organizational Citizenship**



## 5. Discussion

This research confirms social exchange theory (Bolon, 1997) by stating that members committed to their organization in an organization are better citizens than non-committed members. In detail, previous studies asserted that predictive power of organizational commitment on citizenship behavior depends on the target of commitment (Lavelle et al., 2008). In our study commitment targeting the organization was investigated. So, cooperative members' citizenship attitudes were associated with only their commitment to the cooperative organization as a whole and this should be taken care in further contemplation on this finding.

Previous research on the antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior agenda includes personality, procedural justice, leadership characteristic and motivational theories (Barbuto et al., 2001). The findings of this study including educational level of members, technology usage of members, size of membership and the existence of membership to another organization as antecedents of organizational citizenship were not yet ready for comparisons and future researches in large organizations were expected to make this possible.

Wagner and Rush (2000) stated that age could only be a moderator of antecedents of altruistic domain of organizational citizenship. The findings of this study reported no association between age and domains of organizational citizenship confirming Wagner and Rush. It was argued that old and tenured members having many behavioral alternatives tend not behave altruistically than young members. But connection domain measured in this study which included items implying tenure of the members in the cooperative was found to have no association with organizational citizenship.

Then it can be said that cooperative members are indifferent about organizational citizenship regarding their degree of connection with the cooperative. Unfortunately educational level, technology usage and membership to another cooperative that render altruistic domain of organizational citizenship were not previously examined as antecedents.

Finally, we found contrasting findings to the literature arguing that situational or environmental factors are easier to be associated with organizational citizenship than dispositional factors both theoretically and practically (Organ and Ryan, 1995). But, the situational factors tested for association with organizational citizenship in this study was believed to be never before tested in the literature. So, comparison with previous studies were not able.

As a general conclusion of this study, it was confirmed that organizationally committed members in a cooperative were good citizens of the cooperative. So, it can be said that any new policy applications by cooperative managements that foster organizational commitment would at the same time yield good citizenship behaviors in their members. The most expected behaviors of cooperative members such as cooperating with no personal interest, voluntarily communicating and high level of involvement in cooperative affairs could be attained via good citizenship attitudes. Voluntary participation to cooperative affairs as one of the fundamental principals of cooperatives is closely related to organizational citizenship behavior as well. Securement of organizational resources, collaborating with others for a common objective and positively directing other members as peculiars of ideal cooperatives took place in operationalized organizational citizenship definitions and scales prepared for measurement purposes. Cooperatives that were supposed to be the rescuers of rural population avoiding them to immigrate from their hometowns to urban centers perceived as a solution to social issues by Turkish governments for decades and had top priority in their agendas. Çukobirlik having thousands of members and spread out to a wide region encompassing four provinces is a foundation that may easily serve for these solutions of governments. So, the dynamics of their member relationships deserves to be examined.

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