Organizational citizenship behaviour and employee retention: how important are turnover cognitions?

Pascal Paillé

Departement Management, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Version of record first published: 17 Jul 2012

To cite this article: Pascal Paillé (2012): Organizational citizenship behaviour and employee retention: how important are turnover cognitions?, The International Journal of Human Resource Management, DOI:10.1080/09585192.2012.697477

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.697477
Organizational citizenship behaviour and employee retention: how important are turnover cognitions?

Pascal Paillé*

Departement Management, Université Laval, Québec, Canada

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between perceived job alternatives, intention to search, intention to leave and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), with a view to determining the extent to which these variables are related. Two surveys using separate samples (Study 1, \( n = 651 \), and Study 2, \( n = 226 \)) were used. First, in both studies, perceived job alternatives provided a better account of OCB towards the organization (sportsmanship and civic virtue) than OCB towards individuals (helping and altruism). Second, the results of Studies 1 and 2 indicate that the relationships between OCB and intention to search and between OCB and intention to quit are different. The findings suggest that one part of the research model appears to be generalizable, while the other part appears to be explained by the context of employment. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: intention to leave; intention to search a job; organizational citizenship behaviors; perceived job alternatives

Introduction

Although there is evidence demonstrating the influence of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) on employee retention (Chen, Hui and Sego 1998; MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne 1998; Chen 2005; Harrison, Newman and Roth 2006; Coyne and Ong 2007; Lam, Chen and Takeuchi 2009; Paillé and Grima 2011), some studies have argued that further research is needed to improve our understanding of the relationships between OCBs and variables involved in the decision of employees to resign from their organizations (Organ, Podsakoff and MacKenzie 2006, p. 239). The aim of this paper is to extend the chain of relationships between OCB and employee retention by examining the influence of variables typically involved in turnover cognitions, such as perceived job alternatives (i.e. favourability of the external job environment), intention to search (i.e. looking for a job outside the organization) and intention to leave (i.e. leaving the organization at some unspecified point in the future). In so doing, the paper addresses two specific issues. First, with the exception of a small number of studies (Coyne and Ong 2007; Paillé and Grima 2011), the majority of studies linking OCB and employee retention (intention to leave and actual turnover) use a global measure (Chen et al. 1998; Koys 2001; Chen 2005; Mossholder, Settoon and Hanagan 2005; Krishnan and Singh 2010). The specific impact of forms of OCB on the propensity to leave therefore remains largely under-researched. Second, with the exception of a small number of studies (Hui, Law and Chen 1999; Thau, Bennett, Stahlberg and Werner 2004), the relationships between OCB and dimensions of turnover cognitions other than intention to leave the organization have been largely overlooked. The distinctions

*Email: pascal.paille@fsa.ulaval.ca
between situations in which employees perceive job alternatives reflecting their potential value in the labour market and situations in which employees actively search for a job in order to leave their current employer are therefore difficult to establish.

The paper examines the relationships between OCB, perceived job alternatives, intention to search and intention to leave the organization in order to determine the relationship between OCB and turnover cognitions. The paper is organized as follows. It begins by providing a literature review before presenting two field studies. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the results for future research on the relationships between OCB and turnover cognitions.

Literature review

Organizational citizenship behaviour and employee retention

According to Organ (1988), OCB refers to:

individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization. By discretionary, we mean that the behaviour is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person’s employment contract with the organization; the behaviour is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable. (p. 4)

The use of OCB for studying employee retention is a relatively recent research interest, even though a substantial amount of empirical research has already been published on the topic. According to Chen (2005), this research interest is connected at least in part to the findings outlined in two meta-analyses (Hom and Griffeth 1995; Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner 2000), indicating that the variables commonly involved in the study of the withdrawal process (organizational commitment and job satisfaction) only account for a very small percentage of variance (approximately 5%). Chen argued that a concept commonly overlooked in research (OCB) enters into the retention equation. In addition to the arguments given by Chen, a conceptual explanation may also account for this interest. OCBs are common and widespread forms of behaviour in the work environment. Providing support to a colleague, helping a recently recruited employee to settle into the organization, demonstrating a degree of flexibility by tolerating requests deemed to be excessive or unreasonable, or defending the image of the organization in a discussion are not neutral forms of behaviour, given the frame of mind they suggest and their positive impact on the work environment. Social exchange theory describes the foundations of this frame of mind. Employees demonstrate civic behaviour when they feel that they are supported and treated fairly by their employer. Though agreeing with the conceptual framework of social exchange theory, Lavelle (2010) argued that demonstrating OCB entails personal motivations that go beyond the need to offer something in return for being treated fairly. Whatever the underlying reason or motivation, voluntary cooperation through OCB reflects a propensity to go beyond the expectations of the employer and the employee’s colleagues. Voluntary efforts, particularly those made freely and that involve going beyond the tasks explicitly required as part of the job description, appear to be incompatible with the intention to leave.

Furthermore, the literature on social exchange theory provides findings, which indicate that employees exchange desirable outcomes in return for fair treatment, support or care. Since OCB enhances organizational effectiveness, top management values OCBs as desirable outcomes. Morrison (1994) theorized the link between OCB and employee retention, arguing that if ‘an organization’s human resource philosophy is one that places high value on retaining employees in a long-term relationship, employees will engage in...
more organizational citizenship behaviour’ (p. 503). The norm of reciprocity is the underlying process providing a better account of the kind of exchange described by Morrison. Reciprocity between two entities (e.g. an employee and an employer) requires two basic premises: (1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them (Gouldner 1960). On the basis of the norm of reciprocity, Schaninger and Turnipseed (2005) argued that an employee gives something to the donor (employer, supervisor or colleague) who provides something that the employee finds valuable. Employees value supportive decision-making and fair treatment, whereas employers value loyalty, in-role performance and OCB.

Organizational citizenship behaviour and the withdrawal process

Following Harrison et al. (2006), OCBs can be viewed as one of the early stages of the withdrawal process. Before explaining the findings reported by Harrison et al. it is important to define the nature of the withdrawal process. Following Gupta and Jenkins (1983), ‘only those employee responses specifically designed by an individual to increase distance from the organization can be labeled “withdrawal”’ (p. 63). On the basis of this definition, they introduced a distinction between voluntary and involuntary behaviours to explain the kind of individual responses linked to withdrawal. The examples given by the authors (mandatory retirement, jury duty, an automobile accident on the way to work, tardiness to accommodate children’s schedules or personal illness) reflect specific situations that are not related to the employee’s willingness to increase the distance with the employer.

The withdrawal process encompasses a variety of behaviours, each reflecting a form of voluntary response used by an employee to cope with an unpleasant work environment. Lateness, absenteeism and turnover are typical behaviours related to the withdrawal process (Rosse 1988; Johns 2002; Berry, Lelchook and Clark 2011). However, as suggested by Lee, Mitchell, Sablynski, Burton and Holtom (2004), the withdrawal process also includes behaviours such as poor citizenship and poor job performance. Chen (2005) suggested recently that the lack of willingness to exhibit OCB (i.e. poor citizenship) may be an indication of employee withdrawal from the organization. OCBs are discretionary in nature and, as such, cannot be formally required by the employer or the superior (Organ et al. 2006). Typically, if an employee demonstrates low OCB, s/he cannot be sanctioned. Therefore, when employees experience lasting dissatisfaction with their job or become less committed to their organization but are unable to leave because of the lack of external job opportunities (low job alternatives), it is less risky for employees to reduce OCB than to express discontent by reducing, for example, their efforts at work. Unlike employees who reduce their OCB without fear of blame, employees may face sanctions if they perform their work poorly (Tolich 1993), procrastinate (Ferrari 1992), are frequently late (Sagie, Koslowsky and Amichai Hamburger 2002), or increase their absenteeism (Dalton and Mesch 1991). Low OCB can be viewed as a signal that employees are beginning to disengage from the workplace (Chen et al. 1998; Chen 2005). Harrison et al. (2006) provided empirical support for Chen’s contention. They tested five models in order to determine which model offers the best fit between overall job attitude and five behavioural criteria: job performance, OCB examined as contextual performance, lateness, absence and turnover (see their paper for further details, pp. 309–312). Although a slight improvement was found in the data when OCB was taken into account in the withdrawal sequence, Harrison et al. concluded that OCB can reflect ‘the first element in the progression sequence among disturbance terms (i.e. contextual performance to lateness, lateness to absence, and absence to turnover)’ (p. 318).
Forms of OCB and turnover cognitions

When OCBs are widespread, valued and sustained within an organization, the best employees tend to be retained (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach 2000). However, as noted above, most studies calculate a mean score for OCB, thus making it impossible to identify which form of OCB is related to turnover (actual or intended). An analysis of the relationships between OCB and employee retention based on a distinction between OCB towards individuals and OCB towards the organization significantly improves our understanding of this issue. OCB towards individuals implies face-to-face actions, whereas OCB towards the organization appears to be more diffuse since its boundaries are often difficult to perceive for individuals.

OCB towards individuals involves helping others (sometimes referred to as altruism). Helping encompasses a set of behaviours such as courtesy, cheerleading and peacemaking. Researchers have often conceptualized and operationalized helping as a second-order latent factor. Helping others refers to cooperative and spontaneous behaviours that involve providing assistance to others or preventing the occurrence of work-related problems and contributing to interpersonal harmony (Cirka 2005). The OCB literature indicates that employees can provide help to others in various ways, such as replacing an absent colleague and helping another colleague to carry out a difficult task. Cheerleading can also be viewed as a helping behaviour when an employee encourages a co-worker who is discouraged about his accomplishment or professional development. Helping others or receiving help from others fosters cohesiveness among employees and satisfactory relationships with co-workers. Theoretical arguments have been developed (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997; Podsakoff et al. 2000; Organ et al. 2006) to explain why and how helping could be related to employee retention. Chen et al. (1998) point out that ‘groups (or organizations) that have higher levels of OCB will have lower levels of turnover because interactions among employees who exhibit high levels of OCB are likely to foster group attractiveness and cohesiveness and subsequently to decrease voluntary turnover’ (p. 928). As argued by Organ et al. (2006), helping behaviours may enhance morale, group cohesiveness and the sense of belonging to a team, all of which may help the organization to retain better employees. While in theory it seems reasonable to assume that experiencing help enhances employee retention, there is little evidence of this in the empirical literature. Chen et al. (1998) reported findings showing first that the level of altruism was higher in the no turnover than in the turnover condition and second that altruism was negatively related to turnover intention (correlation matrix, $r = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$). Using regression, Coyne and Ong (2007) found no significant relationship, while Paillé and Grima (2011) found that helping explains the intention to leave the current job better than the intention to leave the employer.

OCB towards the organization typically reflects civic virtue and sportsmanship. Civic virtue refers to a sustained interest in the organization, expressed in a variety of ways, including assiduous and voluntary involvement in representation activities (e.g. conferences, trade fairs and workshops) and in the defence of the interests, property or image of the organization. As such, civic virtue depends on active and voluntary participation and requires individuals who want to be involved, for example, in decision-making by formulating new ideas, suggesting improvements in seminars or meetings, or protecting the organization (Organ et al. 2006). In so doing, employees demonstrate a deep interest in the political life of the organization. To date, with the exception of Coyne and Ong (2007) and Paillé and Grima (2011), very little research has been conducted on the effect of civic virtue on turnover intentions. While Coyne and Ong (2007) found no
significant relationship between civic virtue and turnover intentions, they recognized that features of the sample (size and participants) may minimize the statistical power of their data. Paillé and Grima (2011) found a negative relationship suggesting that civic virtue affects intention to leave the organization.

Sportsmanship is typically defined as a form of citizenship directed towards the organization. As reported by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997), several studies have found that sportsmanship is positively related to a number of organizational performance criteria. Sportsmanship occurs when an employee is willing to avoid voicing complaints about trivial matters and to set about being an example for others (Organ et al. 2006). In addition, some studies have argued that sportsmanship reflects the willingness to ‘[stay] with the organization despite hardships or difficult conditions’ (Coleman and Borman 2000, p. 34). In so doing, an employee shows a sense of forbearance, enduring individual costs or frustrations related to his or her work (Organ 1990). Sportsmanship can be used by employers as an indicator of the degree of individual tolerance requirements to which an employee is subjected in their work. Chen et al. (1998) reported two interesting findings. First, the level of sportsmanship was found to be higher among non-quitters than among quitters, and second sportsmanship was negatively associated with turnover intention (correlation matrix, \( r = -0.19, p < 0.01 \)). However, in their subsequent calculations (i.e. regression), Chen et al. (1998) opted to use a global measure of OCB rather than distinct forms of OCB. To date, only Coyne and Ong (2007) and Paillé and Grima (2011) have used regression to examine the extent to which sportsmanship contributes to the variance of intention to leave the organization. Both studies reported similar findings and demonstrated that sportsmanship was the best predictor. These results are consistent with Chen et al. (1998) and suggest that sportsmanship reflects a desire to remain in the organization.

As noted above, a significant amount of empirical research has been conducted on the relationship between OCB and employee retention (actual turnover and turnover intention). Studies in the area have shown the utility of OCB as a predictor of the decision to quit. However, intention to leave the organization is only one dimension among others of turnover cognitions. While researchers have sought to determine how OCB and intention to leave the organization are related, other aspects of turnover cognitions, such as intention to search and perceived job alternatives, have been largely overlooked. However, two studies (Hui et al. 1999; Thau et al. 2004) have provided useful results on the relationship between perceived job alternatives and OCB. Hui et al. (1999) were the first to provide a direct assessment of the relationship between perceived job alternatives and OCB. They suggested that the willingness to perform OCB is a function of perceived job alternatives (referred to as ‘job mobility’). Employees continue to exhibit OCB when they perceive that job mobility is reduced. Hui et al. (1999) reported a significant negative relationship in a Chinese context, suggesting that ‘employees who perceived a vast variety of outside job opportunities have a lower tendency to exhibit extra-role behaviors’ (p. 14).

More recently, Thau et al. (2004) noted that Hui et al. (1999) made no distinction between ‘situations in which employees are restricted in their context (e.g. when perceived ease of finding a new job is low) from situations in which employees face very few restrictions (e.g. when perceived ease of alternative employment is high)’ (p. 609). To go one step further, Thau et al. (2004) used attractiveness and social networking to explain the decision of employees to engage (or not) in OCB. Attractiveness refers to the degree of dependence of an employee on his or her organization associated with the existence (or not) of alternative job opportunities outside the organization. Social networking refers to aspects of the employee’s personal life or professional factors that reduce the desire of the employee to move to another organization. The decision to engage in OCB is a function of
both attractiveness and social networking. In a German context, Thau et al. (2004) found that when employees perceive that alternative employment opportunities are easy to find (high attractiveness and low social networking), they are less likely to engage in OCB than employees who perceive that opportunities cannot be easily found (low attractiveness and high social networking).

The findings by Thau et al. (2004) are consistent with research on job embeddedness (Lee et al. 2004). Following Yao, Lee, Mitchell, Burton and Sablynski (2004), job embeddedness refers to ‘the forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job’ (p. 157). Job embeddedness is a composite construct of on- and off-the-job embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez 2001). While on-the-job embeddedness refers to a situation in which an employee remains in his or her organization because of forces related to the job (i.e. company culture, professional growth and development, etc.), off-the-job embeddedness refers to a situation in which an employee remains in the organization because of forces related to the community (i.e. family roots, safe neighbourhood, etc.). Lee et al. (2004) found that on-the-job embeddedness was significantly predictive of OCB, whereas off-the-job embeddedness was not.

Research purposes
Although the findings outlined by Hui et al. (1999) and Thau et al. (2004) indicate a significant shift by showing how perceived job alternatives affect OCB, progress can be made by taking account of intention to search and intention to leave the organization. However, as Thau et al. (2004) suggest, perceived stimulating job conditions outside the organization may be inhibited by personal limitations. In others words, perceived stimulating and interesting opportunities in the labour market do not mean that individuals will actively seek for a job. Typically, perceived job alternatives, intention to search and intention to leave are encompassed in turnover cognitions. According to Sager, Griffeth and Hom (1998), turnover cognitions reflect ‘a mental decision intervening between an individual’s attitudes regarding a job and the stay or leave decision’ (p. 255). Previous research on turnover cognitions indicates that perceived job alternatives affect intention to leave through intention to search (Mobley 1977). In a replication of the study by Mobley, Horner and Hollingsworth (1978), Miller, Katerberg and Hulin (1979) found similar patterns and established the generalizability of the model. However, further research on different samples was recommended. Although Mobley’s model is an accepted reference in the turnover literature, research has shown that both the type of employment and the type of industry may affect relationships between perceived job alternatives, job search and intention to leave (Mowday, Koberg and MacArthur 1984; Sager et al. 1998). Jaros, Jermier, Koehler and Sincich (1993) argued that research ‘might theorize that individuals typically exhibit vague, general orientations and tendencies toward a particular behavior rather than distinct, sequentially ordered, focused cognitions’ (p. 986). This implies that employees may decide to withdraw from their current organization without having developed specific plans. In other words, while it has been shown that perceived job alternatives increase the probability that an employee will search for a better job and in turn leave their employer, this sequence needs to be viewed with caution in some settings. For example, shortage within a particular industry may breach the sequence. Consistent with Sager et al. (1998), job search may be superfluous in some cases (i.e. nurses, truck drivers, IT workers, salespeople, social workers, etc.). Employees in these employment settings may assume that it is easy to find a new job. Since previous research has been conducted to explain how perceived job alternatives affect OCB and how it is linked to
intention to leave the organization through intention to search, this study focuses primarily on effort, following Hui et al. (1999) and Thau et al. (2004), by examining whether forms of OCB increase or decrease intention to search and in turn affect intention to leave the organization. The above discussion can be summarized by the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1**: Perceived job alternatives are negatively related to (a) helping, (b) altruism, (c) sportsmanship, and (d) civic virtue.

**Hypothesis 2**: (a) Helping, (b) altruism, (c) sportsmanship, and (d) civic virtue are negatively related to intention to search.

**Hypothesis 3**: (a) Helping, (b) altruism, (c) sportsmanship, and (d) civic virtue are negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

**Hypothesis 4**: Perceived job alternatives are positively related to intention to search.

**Hypothesis 5**: Intention to search is positively related to intention to leave the organization.

The research model is consistent with previous findings showing first that perceived job alternatives affect forms of OCB (Hui et al. 1999; Thau et al. 2004) and second that forms of OCB affect intention to leave the organization (Coyne and Ong 2007; Paillé and Grima 2011). Intention to search was added to take account of research on turnover cognitions showing that perceived job alternatives affect intention to leave through intention to search (Miller et al. 1979; Bozeman and Perrewé 2001). In short, the research model examined (1) the paths connecting perceived job alternatives and forms of OCB; (2) the path connecting perceived job alternatives and intention to search; (3) the paths connecting forms of OCB and intention to search; (4) the path connecting intention to search and intention to leave the organization; and (5) the paths connecting forms of OCB and intention to leave the organization.

**Alternative models**

Coyne and Ong (2007) suggested that ‘future research would need to employ more longitudinal designs to examine in more detail whether OCB does predict turnover intention or whether turnover intention actually predicts OCB behaviour’ (p. 1094). In both studies, the design was cross-sectional (see below). Therefore, to provide findings indicating that OCB predicts turnover cognitions rather than findings showing correlations, it was important to assess the direction of causation. Consistent with Coyne and Ong (2007), the research model (Model 1) was compared to four alternative models (see Figure 1, Models 2–5).

**Model 2**

Model 2 is a variant of the research model (Model 1) and takes account of the results of the study by Jaros et al. (1993) by dropping the path from intention to search and intention to leave the organization. Therefore, Model 2 examined (1) the paths connecting perceived job alternatives and forms of OCB, (2) the paths connecting forms of OCB and intention to search, and (3) the paths connecting forms of OCB and intention to leave the organization.

**Model 3**

Model 3 considers forms of OCB as determinants of turnover cognitions. The main difference with the research model is the causal relationship between perceived job
alternatives and intention to leave the organization. Previous research found a negative relationship between forms of OCB and intention to leave the organization (Paille and Grima 2011) and reported that perceived job alternatives affect the change of employer via job search (Bozeman and Perrewe 2001). On the basis of these data, it seems plausible to conceptualize forms of OCB as determinants of turnover cognitions. Therefore, Model 3

Figure 1. Competing models representing the relationships between turnover cognitions and OCBs.
examined (1) the paths connecting forms of OCB and perceived job alternatives, (2) the path connecting perceived job alternatives and intention to search, and (3) the path connecting intention to search and intention to leave the organization.

**Model 4**

On the basis of previous research (Hui et al. 1999; Thau et al. 2004), the research model (Model 1) proposes to consider forms of OCB as intermediate variables between perceived job alternatives and intention to search. On the basis of assumption that perceived job alternatives affect intention to leave the organization via intention to search (Bozeman and Perrewé 2001), as a possible competing model, Model 4 examines forms of OCB as intermediate variables between intention to search and intention to leave the organization.

The rationale is suggested by the following assumptions. Boswell, Zimmerman and Swider (2012) argued that job search ‘can affect outcomes for the employer’ (p. 147). Given that as important outcomes OCBs enhance organizational performance (Organ et al. 2006), that low OCBs reflect a propensity to withdraw from the organization (Chen 2005) and that OCBs are related to intention to leave (Paillé and Grima 2011), it seems reasonable to examine (1) the path connecting perceived job alternatives and intention to search, (2) the paths connecting intention to search and forms of OCB, and (3) the paths connecting forms of OCB and intention to leave the organization.

Finally, Model 5 considers forms of OCB as outcomes of turnover cognitions. Griffeth et al. (2000) showed that the withdrawal process (i.e. perceived job alternatives → intention to search → intention to leave) is the best predictor of turnover (not examined in this paper). Chen et al. (1998) showed that turnover is better predicted by OCB than turnover intention. These findings suggest that OCB can be a realistic output of the withdrawal process. Thus, Model 5 examined (1) the path connecting perceived job alternatives and intention to search, (2) the path connecting intention to search and intention to leave the organization, and (3) the paths connecting intention to leave the organization and forms of OCB.

**Method**

Though convenience samples were used in both Study 1 and Study 2, the samples were different. Unlike Study 1, Study 2 was based on a sample in a specific industry affected by shortage (social work).

**Participants**

**Sample 1**

For Study 1, a questionnaire was sent via e-mail to 2441 alumni of a Canadian university. Of the 2441 individuals contacted as part of the survey, 731 responded, yielding a 29.9% response rate. After reading the request for participation outlining the aims and objectives of the research and reading the consent form outlining the ethical guidelines, 16 respondents withdrew from the study and opted not to take part in the online survey. Of the 715 completed questionnaires, 64 questionnaires were discarded because of too much missing data. In total, 651 questionnaires were completed. 69.7% were women and 41.5% were aged under 40. Of the respondents, 68% had over 15 years of professional experience and 68% worked in an organization with more than 500 employees. Of the participants,
92.5% stated that they had good career development prospects in their current organization.

Sample 2
Study 2 was carried out in collaboration with the professional association of Quebecer social workers. The decision to collect data using a sample of social workers was based on the assumption that the retention of social workers is an issue of particular concern not only for employers but also in view of the significant number of workers leaving the profession (Wermeling 2009). In total, 230 individuals employed in social work responded to the survey. After reading the request for participation outlining the aims and objectives of the research and reading the consent form outlining the ethical guidelines, four respondents withdrew from the study and opted not to take part in the online survey. The sample included 226 participants. Of the participants, 88% were women and 53% were aged under 40. Of the respondents, 37.6% had over 15 years of professional experience and 65.6% worked in an organization with more than 500 employees. Of the participants, 93% stated that they had good career development prospects in their organization.

Measurement
The same measurements were used in both studies.

OCBs
Using self-report measures, three subscales developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994), measuring helping behaviours (six items), civic virtue (three items) and sportsmanship (four items), were used. The source of OCB measurement is a controversial topic in the literature. The issue of common variance is the main argument given by the advocates of other types of report (supervisor or peer). However, many researchers (Conway and Lance 2010) have tended to minimize the effects of self-report results related to the use of scales of OCB. Others (e.g. Turnipseed 2002) see the use of methods based on self-reporting as justified when the investigation is focused on an examination of the links between psychological variables. As Meierhans, Rietmann and Jonas (2008) argue, ‘the assumption underlying the use of self-reports is that OCB is generally not carried out in front of the supervisor and is therefore better known to the actor himself’ (p. 139). The purpose is to examine how OCB and turnover cognitions (psychological variables) are related. Although the risks that may cause common variance are known, using self-report is justified in the present study. Because previous empirical research conducted in the francophone context (Paille 2009) found evidence of a four-factor model (altruism, helping, sportsmanship and civic virtue), and because this study was also conducted in the francophone context, similar patterns were logically predicted.

For Study 1, a confirmatory factor analysis found that a four-factor model provides a better fit, $\chi^2(61, n = 651) = 222.45, p < 0.000$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.93, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = 0.92 and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.06, than a three-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(1) = 480.17, p < 0.001$, and a one-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 932.21, p < 0.001$. It was concluded that the participants were able to distinguish the four OCB dimensions of altruism ($\alpha = 0.87$), helping ($\alpha = 0.79$), civic virtue ($\alpha = 0.70$) and sportsmanship ($\alpha = 0.72$). Table 1 shows the items of the four scales.
Table 1. Measurement model for Study 1 and Study 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Altruism</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loadings</td>
<td>Loadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give my time to help colleagues who have work-related problems</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I willing to take time out of my own busy schedule to help new colleagues</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loadings</td>
<td>Loadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take steps to try to prevent problems with other personnel in the company</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act as a ‘peacemaker’ when others in the company have disagreements</td>
<td>0.857</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a stabilizing influence in the company when dissention occurs</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ‘touch base’ with others before initiating actions that might affect them (removed in Study 1 and Study 2)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic virtue</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loadings</td>
<td>Loadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend functions that are not required but help the company image</td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend information sessions that employee are encouraged but not required to attend</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actively participates in company meetings</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sportsmanship (all scores reversed)</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loadings</td>
<td>Loadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ρ</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to make ‘mountains out the molehills’</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always focus on what is wrong with my situation rather than the positive side of it</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always find fault with what the company is doing (removed in Study 1 and Study 2)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Table 1 – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loadings  ρ CR AVE</td>
<td>Loadings  ρ CR AVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent to leave the organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a good chance that I will leave this organization in the next year</td>
<td>0.916 0.97 0.96 0.93</td>
<td>0.911 0.96 0.91 0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently think of leaving this organization</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.95 0.93 0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will probably look for a new organization in the next year</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>0.93 0.94 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent to search</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often seek information about other job possibilities</td>
<td>0.908 0.95 0.93 0.88</td>
<td>0.981 0.93 0.94 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often look at newspaper ads for new jobs</td>
<td>0.833 0.89 0.89 0.88</td>
<td>0.821 0.93 0.89 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes follow up on job leads I’ve heard about</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td>0.83 0.89 0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived job alternatives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible for me to find a better job than the one I have now</td>
<td>0.685 0.95 0.89 0.88</td>
<td>0.625 0.93 0.89 0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable jobs can always be found</td>
<td>0.870</td>
<td>0.625 0.89 0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No doubt in my mind that I can find a job that is at least as good as the one I now have</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>0.816 0.89 0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ρ, Jöreskog’s ρ; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.
For Study 2, the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the four-factor model provides a better fit, $\chi^2(61, n = 226) = 120.63, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.92 and RMSEA = 0.06, than the three-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(1) = 76.51, p < 0.001$, and the one-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 303.87, p < 0.001$. It was concluded that social workers were able to distinguish the four OCB dimensions of altruism ($\alpha = 0.72$), helping ($\alpha = 0.81$), civic virtue ($\alpha = 0.70$) and sportsmanship ($\alpha = 0.69$).

**Turnover cognitions**

The three-item scale developed by Lichtenstein, Alexander, McCarthy and Wells (2004) was used to measure intention to quit (Study 1, $\alpha = 0.93$; Study 2, $\alpha = 0.91$). The three-item scale drawn from Peters, Jackofsky and Salter (1981) was used to measure perceived job alternatives (Study 1, $\alpha = 0.82$; Study 2, $\alpha = 0.82$). The three-item scale developed by Peters et al. (1981) was used to measure intention to search (Study 1, $\alpha = 0.89$; Study 2, $\alpha = 0.90$). Table 1 shows the items of the three scales. Bozeman and Perrewé (2001) indicate that ‘a number of studies have shown that turnover intention measures are not well differentiated from measures of other closely associated precursors to actual turnover, specifically, from thoughts of quitting and intentions to search for another job with a different organization’ (p. 162). To avoid spurious findings, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the items of each measure load on their appropriate factor.

For Study 1, the confirmatory factor analysis results indicate that the three-factor model fits the data better, $\chi^2(24, n = 651) = 97.65, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.97 and RMSEA = 0.06, than (1) a model that combines two factors into one factor, intention to search and intention to leave, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 663.37, p < 0.001$, (2) a model that combines two factors, intention to search and perceived job alternatives, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 712.08, p < 0.001$, (3) a model that combines two factors, intention to quit and perceived job alternatives, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 656.95, p < 0.001$, and (4) a model that combines in one factor intention to search, perceived job alternatives and intention to leave, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 1802.53, p < 0.001$.

For Study 2, the confirmatory factor analysis results indicate that the three factors provided an excellent fit, $\chi^2(22, n = 226) = 47.29, p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.97 and RMSEA = 0.07. The three-factor model fitted the data better than (1) a model that combined two factors into one factor, intention to search and intention to leave, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 342.46, p < 0.001$, (2) a model that combined two factors into one factor, intention to search and perceived job alternatives, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 456.81, p < 0.001$, (3) a model that combined two factors into one factor, intention to quit and perceived job alternatives, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 378.97, p < 0.001$, and (4) a model that combined in one factor intention to search, perceived job alternatives and intention to quit $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(7) = 675.21, p < 0.001$.

It was concluded that the discriminant validity of perceived job alternatives, intention to search and intention to leave was supported in both studies.

For both studies, all items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (disagree) to 7 (agree).

**Results**

For both studies, the recommendations outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) were followed. A two-stage process was followed to analyse the data. First, the measurement model was examined to evaluate the independence of the constructs. Second, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data.
**Measurement model (Study 1 and Study 2)**

A measurement model consisting of seven factors (helping, altruism, civic virtue, sportsmanship, intention to search, perceived job alternatives and intention to quit) fitted the data well [Study 1, $\chi^2(193, n = 651) = 494.67, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.95 and RMSEA = 0.05; Study 2, $\chi^2(190, n = 226) = 284.42, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.95 and RMSEA = 0.04].

For both studies, Table 1 shows the composite reliability (CR), estimating the extent to which a set of latent construct indicators shares in their measurement of a construct; average variance extracted (AVE), representing the ratio of the total variance due to the latent variable; and Jöreskog’s $\rho$ for all constructs of the sample. Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) recommend a CR above the 0.70 threshold and an AVE above the 0.50 threshold. Since the values respected the recommended cut-off in both studies, the measurement model may be said to provide evidence of the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measures.

**SEM results (Study 1 and Study 2)**

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement model was used at this stage. For both studies, Model 1 (the research model) fitted the data well [Study 1, $\chi^2(198, n = 651) = 633.16, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.06; Study 2, $\chi^2(195, n = 226) = 373.69, p < 0.000$, CFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.91 and RMSEA = 0.06].

Table 2 summarizes the results of the comparison of competing models. The $\chi^2$ difference test suggested that the research model (Model 1) improves the fit compared to Model 2 in both studies [Study 1, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(5) = 271.84, p < 0.001$; Study 2, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(0) = 20.40, p < 0.001$], Model 3 [Study 1, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 70.97, p < 0.001$; Study 2, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 28.61, p < 0.001$], Model 4 [Study 1, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(3) = 390.02, p < 0.001$; Study 2, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(1) = 50.43, p < 0.001$], and Model 5 [Study 1, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 127.54, p < 0.001$; Study 2, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(4) = 41.61, p < 0.001$]. Therefore, the more parsimonious research model (Model 1) was used to test the hypotheses.

**Research hypotheses (Study 1 and Study 2)**

Table 3 provides an overview of the results of both studies.

Hypotheses 1(a)–(d) predicted negative relationships between perceived job alternatives and forms of OCB. The factor perceived job alternatives was negatively related to helping (Study 1, $\beta = -0.281$, $t$-value = $-5.944$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.162$, $t$-value = $-2.155$, $p = 0.031$), altruism (Study 1, $\beta = -0.294$, $t$-value = $-6.183$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.220$, $t$-value = $-2.992$, $p = 0.003$), sportsmanship (Study 1, $\beta = -0.490$, $t$-value = $-7.419$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.493$, $t$-value = $-4.540$, $p = 0.000$) and civic virtue (Study 1, $\beta = -0.350$, $t$-value = $-6.482$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.347$, $t$-value = $-4.018$, $p = 0.000$). Thus, for both studies, the results support Hypotheses 1(a)–(d).

Hypotheses 2(a)–(d) predicted negative relationships between forms of OCB and intention to search. In both studies, helping was not related to intention to search (Study 1, $\beta = 0.043$, n.s.; Study 2, $\beta = 0.048$, n.s.). Altruism was related to intention to search in Study 1 but not in the predicted direction ($\beta = 0.112$, $t$-value = $2.403$, $p = 0.026$), but was not related to intention to search in Study 2 ($\beta = -0.079$, n.s.). In both studies, sportsmanship (Study 1, $\beta = -0.210$, $t$-value = $-3.607$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.383$, $t$-value = $-3.779$, $p = 0.000$) was negatively related to intention to search.
Table 2. Comparison of competing models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competing models</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 226)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>CFI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1 – Research model</td>
<td>633.16***</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2 – Dropping the path from intent to search to intent to leave the organization</td>
<td>905.00**</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3 – OCBs as determinants to turnover cognitions</td>
<td>704.13**</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4 – OCBs as intermediate variables between perceived job alternatives and intent to search</td>
<td>1023.18**</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5 – OCBs as outcomes to turnover cognitions</td>
<td>760.70**</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***p < 0.000; **p < 0.001.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research hypotheses</th>
<th>Study 1 (n = 651)</th>
<th>Study 2 (n = 226)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardize path coefficient (β)</td>
<td>t-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1(a) PJA --- Helping</td>
<td>-0.281</td>
<td>-5.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1(b) PJA --- Altruism</td>
<td>-0.294</td>
<td>-6.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1(c) PJA --- Sportsmanship</td>
<td>-0.490</td>
<td>-7.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1(d) PJA --- Civic virtue</td>
<td>-0.350</td>
<td>-6.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2(a) Helping --- Intent to search</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2(b) Altruism --- Intent to search</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>2.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2(c) Sportsmanship --- Intent to search</td>
<td>-0.210</td>
<td>-3.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2(d) Civic virtue --- Intent to search</td>
<td>-0.233</td>
<td>-3.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3(a) Helping --- Intent to leave</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>2.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3(b) Altruism --- Intent to leave</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
<td>-2.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3(c) Sportsmanship --- Intent to leave</td>
<td>-0.194</td>
<td>-4.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3(d) Civic virtue --- Intent to leave</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4(5) PJA --- Intent to search</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>2.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5(6) Intent to search --- Intent to leave</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>16.842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PJA, perceived job alternatives; n.s., non-significant.
Finally, civic virtue was related to intention to search in Study 1 ($\beta = -0.233$, $t$-value $= -3.763$, $p = 0.000$), but not in Study 2 ($\beta = -0.010$, n.s.). Therefore, while Hypotheses 2(a) and (b) were not supported in Studies 1 and 2, Hypothesis 2(c) was supported in both studies; finally, Hypothesis 2(d) was supported in Study 1 but not in Study 2.

Hypotheses 3(a)–(d) predicted negative relationships between OCBs and intention to leave the organization. Helping was found to be related to intention to leave in Study 1 but not in the predicted direction ($\beta = 0.075$, $t$-value $= 2.089$, $p = 0.037$), but was not related to intention to leave in Study 2 ($\beta = 0.050$, n.s.). Altruism was related to intention to leave in Study 1 ($\beta = -0.079$, $t$-value $= -2.044$, $p = 0.047$), but not in Study 2 ($\beta = -0.060$, n.s.). In both studies, sportsmanship was negatively related to intention to leave (Study 1, $\beta = -0.194$, $t$-value $= -4.636$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = -0.255$, $t$-value $= -3.021$, $p = 0.003$). Finally, civic virtue was not related to intention to leave in Study 1 ($\beta = 0.018$, n.s.), but was related to intention to leave in Study 2 ($\beta = -0.201$, $t$-value $= -2.932$, $p = 0.003$). Therefore, while Hypothesis 3(a) was not supported in Studies 1 and 2, Hypothesis 2(b) was supported in Study 1 but not in Study 2; Hypothesis 3(c) was supported in both studies; and Hypothesis 3(d) was not supported in Study 1, but was supported in Study 2.

Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive relationship between perceived job alternatives and intention to search. While perceived job alternatives was found to be positively related to intention to search in Study 1 ($\beta = 0.146$, $t$-value $= 2.464$, $p = 0.014$), no relationship was found in Study 2 ($\beta = 0.105$, n.s.). Therefore, the results only support Hypothesis 4 in Study 1.

Hypothesis 5 predicted a positive relationship between intention to search and intention to leave. In both studies, intention to search and intention to leave were found to be positively related (Study 1, $\beta = 0.644$, $t$-value $= 16.842$, $p = 0.000$; Study 2, $\beta = 0.316$, $t$-value $= 4.502$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, the results of both studies support Hypothesis 5.

Discussion

Findings

Consistent with previous research (Hui et al. 1999; Thau et al. 2004), both Study 1 and Study 2 found negative relationships between perceived job alternatives and OCB. However, the distinctions drawn between different forms of OCB extended the findings of previous studies by providing additional data. Hui et al. (1999) and Thau et al. (2004) computed a mean score for OCB. As a result, it was difficult to determine, for instance, whether perceived job alternatives had a greater effect on OCB towards individuals than on OCB towards the organization. The findings of both studies suggest the same pattern. Perceived job alternatives explained OCB towards the organization (sportsmanship and civic virtue) better than OCB towards individuals (helping and altruism). Hui et al. (1999) indicate that ‘employees who perceive low job mobility may continue their OCB so as to protect their investment in the organization’ (p. 16). Given that the variance explained for sportsmanship (Study 1: 23.1%; Study 2: 24.4%) was higher than civic virtue (Study 1: 11.6%; Study 2: 11.4%), the results suggest that a favourable job market (high job alternatives) increases the likelihood, first, that employees will be unwilling to tolerate excessive demands in their workplace and, second, that employees will be unwilling to protect the interests of their employer. In other words, the lack of sportsmanship or/and the lack of interest in the political dimensions of the organization (relating to governance) may
be perceived as an indication that employees are engaged in a withdrawal process. In addition, the perception of job alternatives has a lesser impact on OCB towards individuals. The variance explained for helping (Study 1: 7.9%; Study 2: 2.6%) and altruism (Study 1: 8.6%; Study 2: 5.4%) was low. The data suggest that job alternatives do not have a significant effect on investment between individuals.

The positive relationships between helping and intention to leave and between altruism and intention to search are unexpected. While no relationships were found in Study 2, in Study 1 helping was found to be positively related to intention to leave the organization, while altruism was positively related to intention to search. The findings suggest that the greater the level of help and altruism among employees, the more likely they are to leave their employer. Because this study focused solely on the relationship between OCB and turnover cognitions and no other variable was used, these findings are difficult to interpret. However, two conflicting explanations seem plausible. First, for reasons unknown, it is possible that reciprocity is not a common standard for participants in Study 1. In this case, the perception of a low degree of cohesiveness among employees can feed the propensity to quit. Second, the evidence suggesting that helping and altruism were positively related to, respectively, intention to quit and intention to search is consistent with Mossholder et al. (2005), who argued that ‘individuals view their interpersonal citizenship behaviour as an investment that increases their value to an organization and profession’ (p. 610). Helping encourages knowledge sharing, sharing the tricks of the trade between employees, and the improvement of technical skills (Organ et al. 2006). Therefore, it is conceivable that the improvement of work practices or the acquisition of new skills will encourage an employee to gauge his or her value on the labour market. The identification by the employees of their own value on the labour market does not necessarily mean that they will leave their employer. Employees may use this information to negotiate with their employer in order to improve their work conditions.

Following Coyne and Ong (2007) and Paillé and Grima (2011), the results of this study (Studies 1 and 2) indicate that sportsmanship was the most important form of OCB for explaining intention to leave the organization. Therefore, the study extends the findings of previous studies. While the data in Study 1 indicated that sportsmanship only explains intention to leave, in Study 2 the results showed that sportsmanship explains intention to search better than intention to leave. Since a high level of sportsmanship indicates that the employee is engaged in his or her work and accepts inconveniences linked to demands such as occasional extra work, the findings of this study suggest that employees do not plan to leave their organization in order to find a job with less hardship. The data suggest that in cases of low levels of sportsmanship, and in the event of good employment prospects outside their current organization (high job alternatives), employees plan to quit before seeking a new job (Study 1) or seek a new job before planning to quit (Study 2). Participants in both studies indicated that they had opportunities for further career development in their current organization. Unfortunately, the items measuring intention to search are not sufficiently precise to determine whether employees were seeking employment in their current organization.

In previous research, the relationships between civic virtue and intention to quit were controversial. Paillé and Grima (2011) found negative relationships between civic virtue and intention to quit, unlike Coyne and Ong (2007). Unfortunately, since the findings of Study 1 were consistent with that of Coyne and Ong (2007) and the findings of Study 2 were consistent with that of Paillé and Grima (2011), the issue surrounding the conflicting empirical findings of previous studies will not be resolved by this study. However, the use of perceived job alternatives and intention to search provide additional data that improve
the interpretation of the findings. In Study 1, although civic virtue did not affect intention to leave, it provided a better explanation of intention to search than perceived job alternatives. This may depend on the extent to which an employee is involved in the governance process. High levels of civic virtue mean that employees are involved or interested in the political dimension of their organization, such as participating in organizational governance and protecting the image and reputation of the organization. Employees exhibiting high levels of civic virtue demonstrate a willingness to remain in the organization. Furthermore, as suggested by Study 1, an employee displaying low levels of civic virtue may consider employment alternatives without planning to leave his or her current organization. Study 2 produced different results. Although civic virtue does not affect intention to search, it explains perceived job alternatives better than intention to leave. The findings suggest that high levels of civic virtue create a sense of responsibility towards the organization that appears to be incompatible with the desire to leave the employer in the near future.

Finally, perceived job alternatives negatively affect OCB among German (Thau et al. 2004), Chinese (Hui et al. 1999) and French–Canadian employees (the present study). The results of Studies 1 and 2 highlight different relationships between OCB and intention to search and OCB and intention to leave the organization. The findings suggest that one part of the research model appears to be generalizable, while the other part appears to be explained by the context of employment.

**Practical implications**

The results of this study have useful implications for organizations. Sportsmanship refers to the willingness to remain in the organization despite hardships (Coleman and Borman 2000) and provides useful information about the propensity to leave the organization. The findings of this study suggest that managers receiving growing complaints related to difficult work conditions (low sportsmanship) may need to conclude that an individual threshold has been reached. Therefore, to retain the best employees, managers need to take appropriate measures to reduce difficult work conditions. The literature on support provides useful findings. Overall, employees may receive support from many people both outside (e.g. spouse and friends) and inside the organization (e.g. top management, immediate superior and co-workers). Although employees may receive support from a range of sources in the workplace, previous studies have highlighted the critical role of the immediate superior. The feeling of being supported by the superior enhances employee retention more than the feeling of being supported by the organization (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski and Rhoades 2002) or by co-workers (Ng and Sorensen 2008). Thus, managers demonstrate their concern for the health of their employees, which, in turn, improves employee retention.

**Limitations of the study and future research**

Despite its contribution to the literature, this study has a number of limitations. First, the results are based on a single sample and a cross-sectional research design. Therefore, the data should be interpreted with caution. The results were obtained by collecting data from two independent samples, following the recommendations given by Murphy (1983). However, in the design chosen for this study, a specific limitation relating to the difficulty of inferring causality needs to be acknowledged (Bobko and Stone-Roméro 1998). A duplication of the study using a longitudinal design should mitigate this limitation.
Second, because Chen (2005) reported that OCB explains more variance of actual turnover than turnover intentions, it might be objected that the findings should be viewed with caution. However, research using objective measures of turnover provides guidance for people who were no longer members of the organization at the time of the investigation. In other words, this amounts to highlighting the measures that should have been taken by managers to retain employees before employees definitively left the job. As suggested by Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Eberly (2008), preference was therefore given to an analysis of the variables that incite individuals to remain in their current job or that reduce their intention to leave. Therefore, a measure of intent appears to be more appropriate. Finally, although the rating source of OCB remains an object of controversy (Vandenberg, Lance, and Taylor 2005) and appears to be a methodological issue that is difficult to resolve, some readers may feel that the use of self-reporting measures of OCB entails a significant limitation. Because the data were collected using self-reported measures, common method variance bias could lead to an overestimation of the results, particularly as a result of the phenomenon of social desirability bias (Spector 1987). However, as indicated by Schnake (1991), ‘supervisor ratings may be biased as a result of halo, or deficient because citizenship is so difficult to observe’ (p. 741). Van Dyne and Cummings (1990) noted that both self-report and supervisor ratings of OCB have significant weaknesses (cited by Schnake 1991). Finally, the measurement of OCB (self-reports vs. supervisor- or colleague-ratings) entails a number of unresolved issues.

Future research will need to take account of the limitations outlined above. In addition, future research might usefully focus specifically on sportsmanship. First, based on the results of this study, it was impossible to determine under what circumstances or conditions sportsmanship might represent the variable providing the best prediction of the indicators used to study turnover cognitions (Study 2). Future research could test several variables known for generating greater pressure at work in order to identify the impact on sportsmanship. Second, the literature has tended to overlook the extent to which sportsmanship impacts on the decision to leave. As noted above, many industries are affected by shortages. In industries where organizations are affected by manpower shortages, an understanding of variables affecting sportsmanship and in turn the decision to quit would, in all likelihood, help to improve management practices.

To conclude, the primary objective of this study was to improve our knowledge of the relationships between OCB and turnover cognitions. The findings indicate that sportsmanship is the form of citizenship with the greatest predictive power. However, despite the contributions of this study, further research is needed to broaden the investigation of the relationship between OCB and retention in the workplace.

References


