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## FACTORS RELATED TO EMPLOYEE ADHERENCE TO RULES IN KUWAIT BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he purpose of this study is to develop and test a theoretical framework which demonstrates the effect of four personal factors on employees Adherence to rules in Kuwaiti business organizations. The model suggested in this study includes organizational citizenship behavior, affective organizational commitment, organizational trust, and procedural justice as possible predictors of adherence to rules. The study also attempts to compare the effects of the suggested factors on employee's adherence to rules. The new model will, hopefully, extend previous research by adding new variables to the models used to explain employee's adherence to rules. Structural equation modelling was used to analysis the data, the results showed significant direct effects of affective organizational commitment, organizational justice, and organizational trust on adherence to rules. A discussion of issues related to adherence to rules is presented, as well as recommendations for future research.

*Keywords— adherence to rules, organizational trust, procedural justice, affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employee compliance with organizational rules and policies is essential for the effective functioning in the organization. Previous studies showed the importance of employee adherence to rules for effective operating of the organization (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002; Laufer & Robertson, 1997; Vardi & Weitz, 2004); it also showed the negative effect of rule breaking behavior on organizations' efficiency (Healy & Iles, 2002; Mintz, 2001; Soltani, 2014). Identifying the factors that influence employees' adherence to rules is vital for assisting practitioners in their efforts to develop tools and mechanisms necessary to motivate employees to adhere to organizational rules and policies. This paper examines the effect of organizational trust, organizational justice, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior on employees' adherence to rules in Kuwaiti business organizations.

## II. Organizational Citizenship Behavior and adherence to rules

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) encompasses all behaviors that are not considered to be part of employee's formal duties in the organization and that contributes to the enhancement of organizational performance (Organ, 1988). Examples of organizational citizenship behavior include fruitful activities such as assisting co-workers in performing work-related tasks, working extra hours without pay, going an extra mile in making a newly appointed employee feel welcomed, and abiding by informal codes of conduct established to preserve harmony.

Williams and Anderson (1991) conducted a literature review of studies of organizational citizenship behavior in which they revealed the existence of two kinds of OCBs : (a) OCBO- behaviors that profit the organization as a whole (e.g., preserves and safeguards company's resources, engage in activities that enhance organization's image) and (b) OCBI- actions and activities that serve particular employees and thereby enhance the functional corporate culture of the organization (e.g., going an extra mile in making a newly hired fellow employee feel welcomed, sharing ideas with co-workers on how to increase their effectiveness and efficiency at work). After reviewing the existing literature regarding OCB and other related constructs, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine, and Bacharach (2000) found seven common dimensions of citizenship behaviors. These were as follows: first, assisting behavior refers to voluntarily assisting behaviors toward others. Second, sportsmanship refers to individuals who do not protest when they are disturbed by others and who can keep their positive attitudes even in the difficult situations. Third, organizational loyalty refers to employees endorsing organizations to others and staying in the organizations even under disadvantageous circumstances. Fourth, organizational compliance refers to obedience toward the organization's policies and procedures (Van Dyne, Christ, Stellmacher, Wagner, Ahlswede, Grubba, Hauptmeier, Hohfeld, Moltzen, & Tissington, 1994). Fifth, individual initiative refers to employee's performance of responsibilities beyond the expected levels (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Sixth, civic virtue involves responsible and constructive participation (Organ, 1990). Finally, self-development refers to employee's voluntary behavior to improve his knowledge, skills, and abilities for better performance in job (George & Brief, 1992). The above discussion demonstrates that the fourth OCB dimension – organizational compliance - is closely related to adherence to rules, and since organizational compliance is a behaviour that profits the organization, a positive relationship between OCBO and adherence to rules can be predicted

Hypothesis 1: Organizational citizenship behavior will be positively related to adherence to rules.

### **III. Affective Organizational Commitment and Adherence to rules**

Organizational commitment refers to an employee's belief in and acceptance of an organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and a desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979). Individuals form positive attitudes and psychological attachments with an organization, which postulates in an active relationship between employees and their organization (Mowday et al., 1979).

Meyer (2009) defined commitment as "the internal force that binds an individual to a target (social or nonsocial) and/or to a course of action of relevance to that target". Gong and Chang (2008) explained that high organizational commitment of employees means that they identify with the company and work to achieve its goals. Klein, Molloy, and Brinsfield (2012) reconceptualized commitment by presenting a continuum of psychological bonds, highlighting the distinctiveness of organizational commitment and improving its applicability across several workplace targets. Employees exhibit multiple forms of bonds and psychological attachments in the workplace. Wide range of these bonds has been defined as commitment in the literature that differentiates them in terms of target and type. Bond target refers to "the specific foci to which a bond is formed" such as supervisors, organization, goals, professional associations, work teams etc. (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Becker, 1992). Bond type refers to "how the bond is experienced", such as calculative, alienative, and moral bonds (Etzioni, 1961).

Many scholars have differentiated between continuance, affective, and normative organizational commitments (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is led by feelings of self-determination and intrinsic motivation, continuance and normative behavior involve feelings of pressure and obligation to be attached (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004). Compared with continuance and normative commitment, affective commitment is most associated with positive organizational outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, job performance, and attendance, and employee's outcomes such as less stress, absenteeism, turnover, and work-family conflict (Meyer et al, 2002; Hausknecht, Hiller, and Vance, 2008). Affective commitment reflects the attachment of the individual to the organization and his adherence to the organization as an employee. Meyer and Allen (1991) indicate that affective commitment normally inspires employees to behave properly in the organization. Therefore, it is expected that affective commitment be positively related to adherence to rules.

Hypothesis 2: Affective commitment will be positively related to adherence to rules.

### **IV. Organizational Trust and adherence to rules**

Luhman (1979) was the first to demonstrate that a meaningful differences exist between interpersonal trust (as measured by trust in co-worker and trust in supervisor), and organizational trust (as measured by overall trust in the organization). Interpersonal trust is defined as one party's willingness to depend on the other party with a feeling of relative security even though negative consequences are possible (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Interpersonal trust was found to be significantly related to a number of work related variables, such as the quality of communication, performance, citizenship behavior, problem solving, and cooperation (Korsgaard et al., 2002).

Organizational trust is mostly related to individuals' positive expectations about the intent and behaviors of multiple organizational members based on organizational roles, relationships, experiences, and interdependencies (Shockley- Zalabak, Ellis, & Winogrand, 2000). Organizational trust is conceptualized as

comprising the following four dimensions: (a) competence (ability, expertness), (b) integrity (character, credibility, honesty, openness, truthfulness), (c) benevolence (care, concern, altruism accessibility, availability, cooperativeness), and (d) consistency (reliability, dependability, predictability) (Kaneshiro, 2008).

According to the social information processing approach (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), the social environment provides cues which individuals use to construct and interpret events, it also provides information about what a person's attitudes and opinions should be. Employees' trust in an organization is likely to influence their perception of the quality of their exchange relationship with the organization i.e. perceived organizational trust (Abd Ghani & Hussin, 2009). To the extent that employees' willingness to assume a risk and relinquish control in the hope of receiving a desired benefit from their organizations contribute to their adherence to rules, organizational trust may be considered as an antecedent to employees' adherence to rules.

Hypothesis 3: Organizational trust will be positively related to adherence to rules.

## **V. Procedural justice and adherence to rules**

Procedural justice refers to justice of the processes that lead to decision outcome (Leventhal, 1980; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Focusing on dispute reactions to legal procedures, Thibaut and Walker (1975) advanced two criteria for procedural justice: (1) the ability voice one's views and arguments during a procedure (process control), and (2) the ability to influence the actual outcome itself (decision control). These control based procedural justice criteria have received robust support in the existing literature (Lind & Tyler, 1988).

Early studies within the practice of performance appraisals have demonstrated that giving employees the opportunity to express their views and feelings (process control) was strongly related to perceived fairness of their performance appraisal procedures (for a review; see Greenberg 1990). Organizational justice research has consistently shown that voice effect (process control) enhances individual's evaluations of procedural fairness (Greenberg, 1990; Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990; Organ & Moorman, 1993; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). More recently, the study by Dulebohn & Ferris (1999) found a positive association between the use of supervisor-focused tactics (voice effect) and procedural justice evaluations. In line with these findings, Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, and Vera Park (1993) found the opportunity to present information to the authority to be one of the most influential factors generating procedural justice. Lind and Earley (1991) suggested that independent relationship between procedural justice and OCB can be explained using group value model of procedural justice (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The group value model suggests that an employee sees procedures as fair to the extent that they communicate that the employee is respected and valued member of a work group. Allowing employees greater input (voice) into procedures increases perceptions of the fairness of those procedures not only because employees having voice may influence the fairness of the distribution of rewards, but also because their having the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings demonstrates that the group considers their output is of value. Lind and Early (1991) suggested that OCB occurs in organizations when there is a strong emphasis on group concerns and cognitions. Such an emphasis often motivates employees to maximize group rather than individual rewards. Employees may therefore use OCB to support and maintain the group and seek ways to improve its health and welfare.

The social exchange theory (Organ, 1988) provides an explanation of why procedural justice may be

positively related to adherence to rules. Social exchange refers to the relationships that entail unspecified future obligations (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Social exchange relationships are based on employees' trusting that the other parties of the exchange will fairly discharge their obligations in the long run (Holmes, 1981).

Procedural justice may be related to adherence to rules because employees' perception of fairness of organizational rules and procedures leads to the development of social exchange relationships between employees and their organization (Organ, 1988). Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), when employees perceive that their organization is treating them fairly, social exchange relationship dictate that employees reciprocate, and adherence to organizational rules and policies is one likely avenue for employee reciprocation. Thus

Hypothesis 4: Perceptions of procedural justice will be positively related to adherence to rules.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Participants and Procedures*

This study was conducted in nine business organizations in the State of Kuwait. The data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. A total of 267 employees, working in supervisory and non-supervisory positions, were surveyed. This survey methodology yielded a response rate (N= 212). Out of total participants, 54.2 % were male, 84 % were 40 years or younger, 76 % had worked for the organization 10 years or less, and the entire sample consisted of Arab employees. (See Table 1 for details).

**Table 1**  
**Characteristics of the Sample (N=212)**

		Frequency	Percent
Gender:	male	115	54.2
	female	97	45.8
Nationality:	Kuwaiti	152	71.7
	non-Kuwaiti	60	28.3
Tenure (yrs.)	less than 5	95	44.8
	5 to 10	67	31.6
	11 to 15	32	15.1
	more than 15	18	8.5
Age (yrs.)	less than 30	108	50.9
	30 to 40	70	33.0
	41 to 50	28	13.2
	more than 50	6	2.8

To ensure respondents' objectivity, the surveys were anonymous. Subjects were promised to keep their personal information confidential. A random code was assigned to each survey questionnaire for follow-up purposes. Subjects were promised that the survey list and numbers would be destroyed after completion of the study.

Since most of the respondents did not have a good command of English, the questionnaire was administered in English and in Arabic. In order to check consistency between the English and Arabic versions of the questionnaire, the process of back-translation was used.

### *Measures*

Since most of the respondents did not have a good command of English, the questionnaire was administered in Arabic. In order to check consistency between the English and Arabic versions of the questionnaire, the process of back-translation was used.

#### Adherence to rules

Adherence to rules was measured using a four-item scale developed by Tyler and Blader (2005). The scale measures compliance with organizational policy (e.g. how often do you follow the policies established by your supervisor). Participants were asked to respond using a six point scale (1) never to (6) very often. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.89

#### Organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization (OCBO) was measured by four-item scale from Lee and Allen (2002). Participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) never to (5) always. A sample item from the OCBO scale is, "Take action to protect the organization from potential problems" and "offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization". The Cronbach for OCBO was 0.85.

#### Affective Organizational commitment

Affective organizational commitment was measured with a four-item scale derived from Allen and Meyer's (1990) study. The items were: (1) I feel personally attached to my organization; (2) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization; (3) I am proud to tell others I work at my organization; (4) Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me. Ratings were made on a five-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for this four-item scale was 0.88.

#### Organizational trust (OT)

Organizational trust was measured using five-items from the organizational trust scale developed by Tan and Lim (2009) and Gillespie (2003). Illustrative items are: "I would be comfortable allowing the organization to make decisions that directly impact me, even in my absence"; "I am willing to rely on the organization to represent my work accurately to others". Ratings were made on a five-point Likert type scale that ranged from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for this three-item scale was 0.75.

#### Procedural justice (PJ)

Procedural justice was measured with a four-item scale derived from a scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993) and later used by Zayed (1995). Illustrative items are "job decisions are made by the manager in an unbiased manner", and "employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions made by the manager". Respondents rated their level of agreement with items using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach coefficient alpha for this six-item scale was 0.76.

## Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics, reliability tests, rotated factor analysis, multiple response test, non-parametric tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used to analyze the data in this study. The range of possible values, means, and standard deviations of the variables analyzed in this paper are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics (N=212)**

Variable	Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adherence to rules	4	20	14.75	4.97
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	4	20	16.13	3.79
Affective commitment	6	20	15.10	3.84
Organizational Trust	7	25	16.25	4.05
Procedural Justice	5	20	14.12	3.34

All variables have been screened using factor analysis to assess the amount of variations explained by each factor. Hence, factor scores were computed and stored to be used in subsequent analysis. Factor loadings and percentage of total variance explained by each rotated factor are reported in Table 3. Based on the results of this analysis, one factor was accepted for each variable. It should be noted here that factor with eigenvalue less than one was deleted.

**Table 3**  
**Factor Analysis of the Variables Items**

	Loa- ding	Eigen- values	% of Variance
<b>Factor name: Organizational Citizenship Behavior OCBO (4 items )</b>		<b>2.77</b>	<b>69.42</b>
Take action to protect the organization from potential problems	.82		
offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization	.79		
Say good things about my organization in front of others	.86		
Volunteer to attend activities which contribute to the enhancement of organizational image.	.83		
<b>Factor name: adherence to rules (4 items )</b>		<b>3.06</b>	<b>76.54</b>
Comply with work-related rules and regulations	.87		
Carefully carry out supervisor instructions	.88		
Follow policies established by my supervisor	.87		
Use company rules to guide what you do on the job	.86		
<b>Factor name: Affective commitment (4 items )</b>		<b>3.00</b>	<b>75.21</b>
I feel personally attached to my organization	.89		
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization	.86		
I am proud to tell others I work at my organization	.83		
Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me	.87		
<b>Factor name: Organizational Trust (4 items )</b>		<b>2.54</b>	<b>50.94</b>
I would be comfortable allowing the organization to make decisions that directly impact me, even in my absence	.59		
I am willing to rely on the organization to represent my work accurately to others	.72		
would be willing to let the organization have complete control over my future in the organization.	.77		
I am willing to depend on the organization to back me up in difficult situations.	.80		
If I had my way, I wouldn't let the organization have any influence over the issues that are important to me.	.64		
<b>Factor name: Procedural Justice (4 items )</b>		<b>2.35</b>	<b>58.75</b>
job decisions are made by the manager in an unbiased manner	.73		
employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions made by the manager	.86		
All jobs decisions are applied consistently to all affected employees.	.65		
Employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions made by their managers	.79		

To ensure the insensitivity of the response to changes in demographical characteristics, non-parametric tests were conducted to test of significant differences in responses within these characteristics. Specifically, given their general potential to inflate or suppress the particular outcome variables used in this study (Staines, Pottick, and Fudge 1986), four demographical characteristics: gender, nation, tenure, and age were tested for. Results in Table 5 show that there is a significant difference between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis in terms of affective commitment. Affective commitment among Kuwaitis (mean = 112) is higher than non-Kuwaitis (mean = 92). The results, reported in Tables 5, reveal that there are no significant differences between different categories of gender, tenure, and age in adherence to rules, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior OCBO, organizational trust, and procedural justice.



**Table 5**  
**Results of Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests**

	Mann-Whitney P-values		Kruskal-Wallis test P-values	
	Gender	nation	Tenure	Age
Adherence to rules	.26	.13	.50	.40
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.92	.48	.43	.32
Affective commitment	.47	.03	.91	.47
Organizational Trust	.88	.40	.31	.09
Procedural Justice	.16	.61	.59	.59

To study the degree of association between different research variables, measure of correlations was computed and tested for significance. Table 6 presents correlations and reliability coefficients, where applicable, for all research variables. The results indicate that organizational citizenship behavior (OCBO), affective commitment, and procedural justice, and organizational trust are significantly associated with adherence to rules.

Table 6  
 1. Spearman's Correlations Coefficients and Reliabilities

	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Adherence to rules</b>	<b>.34*</b>	<b>.54*</b>	<b>.39*</b>	<b>.51*</b>
<b>2. OCBO</b>		<b>.43*</b>	<b>.26*</b>	<b>.09</b>
<b>3. Commitment</b>			<b>.24*</b>	<b>.22*</b>
<b>4. Org. Trust</b>				<b>.25*</b>
<b>5. Procedural Justice</b>				

\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

**Figure 1**  
**The casual relationships between independent variables and adherence to rules**

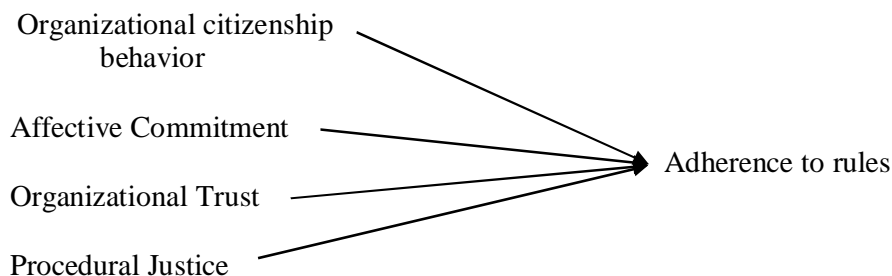


Figure 1 shows the direct relationships between organizational citizenship behavior, affective commitment, organizational trust, procedural justice, and adherence to rules. Hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and path analysis. LISREL computer software was used to perform the structural equation analysis. Data was fitted against several competitor models. The most reasonable model provided GFI (goodness of fit index) = 86% and RMR (root mean square residual) = 0.05. Figure 1 illustrates the direct relationships between perceived organizational support and work outcomes. Results of path analysis presented in Table 8 show a significant direct positive effect of each independent variable on Adherence to rules as follows: commitment ( $t = 6.57$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), Organizational Trust ( $t = 3.65$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), and Procedural Justice ( $t = 6.40$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). These results provide support for hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. The results also indicate that OCBO is not significantly related to adherence to rules ( $t = -0.22$ ,  $P = 0.58$ ).

**Table 7. Structural Equation modeling**

Adherence to rules	=	-0.01	*	OCBO
Adherence to rules	=	0.46	*	Commitment
Adherence to rules	=	0.23	*	Org. Trust
Adherence to rules	=	0.40	*	Procedural Justice

**Table 8. Path coefficients and their significance**

Research Hypothesis		Path Coefficients	t-value	P-value	
OCBO	→	Adherence to rules	-0.01	-0.22	0.58
Commitment	→	Adherence to rules	0.46	6.57	0.00
Org. Trust	→	Adherence to rules	0.23	3.65	0.00
Procedural Justice	→	Adherence to rules	0.40	6.40	0.00

## VI. Discussion

The present study establishes a specific model for rule following behavior which includes new variables to explain why employees adhere to organizational rules and policies. Drawing upon the literature of organizational trust, we suggest that employees' ethical values will be turned on in decision making when employees perceive their organization as being trustworthy. Furthermore, we argue that employees' perception that they work in fair and just organization triggers rule following behavior and motivates employees to bear the responsibility of abiding with organizational rules and policies. The current paper also suggests that employees' belief in and acceptance of an organization's goals and values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and a desire to maintain membership in the organization, are positively related to rule following behavior. The model suggested in our study also includes organizational citizenship behavior as a determinate of rule behavior. We argue that rule following behavior is activated when employees feel that they are compelled to comply with organizational rules and policies as part of their citizenship behavior to the organization. Future research should empirically examine the model suggested in this paper to determine its validity.

Using a sample of employees working in Kuwaiti business organizations, the present study provides evidence for the direct effect of affective organizational commitment, organizational trust, and procedural justice on employee adherence to rules. However, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCBO) was not found to be significantly related to adherence to rules. The results reported in this paper show that affective organizational commitment, organizational trust, and procedural justice are determinates of adherence to rules. The model tested suggests that perceived organizational trust affective organizational commitment, and procedural justice prompt employees to adhere to organizational rules and policies.

The findings outlined above confirm the findings of Tyler and Blader (2005) that using fair procedures within an organization enhances rule following behaviour. Other antecedents of adherence to rules include ethical values (Tyler, 2005), social value judgments and command-and-control mechanisms (Tyler & Blader, 2005).

#### *Managerial Implications:*

There are a number of important theoretical and practical implications of our research findings. The findings reveal new factors that determine employee adherence to company rules. Our research results support the role of affective organizational commitment, procedural justice and organizational trust as antecedents to adherence to rules.

Our research results also show that employees' attitudes and behaviors can have significant effect on their adherence to organizational rules and policies... As part of the practical implications of the present study, organizations interested in fostering adherence to rules must ensure that their policies and practices reinforce employees' perceptions of organizational trust, and procedural justice. Furthermore, levels organizational commitment need to be monitored regularly within the organization to make sure that they are within the accepted ranges.

#### *Limitations and future research:*

The current study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design of the study prevents any interpretation of causality among the variables. In spite of the fact that there is theoretical and empirical support for the model presented in this paper, one cannot rule out alternative explanations for the findings. My suggestions for future research efforts examining determinate of adherence to rules is to use longitudinal research designs. In a longitudinal study it may be possible to observe over time the effect of independent variables on adherence to rules. This type of research design will make it possible to unambiguously determine the causal effect of independent variables on adherence to rules.

Second, the use of self-reported data, in testing the model, suggests that the reported results could possibly be influenced by method variance, necessitating the deployment of controls for various potential biasing effects.

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