



# Research Paper: Effectiveness of Group Counseling Based on Motivational Interviewing on Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior



Mahdi Alimohammadi<sup>1</sup>, Kianoush Zahrakar<sup>1</sup>, Farshad Mohsenzadeh<sup>1</sup>, Abdurrahim Kasaei<sup>1</sup>

1. Department of Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.



**Citation** Alimohammadi M, Zahrakar K, Mohsenzadeh F, Kasaei A. Effectiveness of Group Counseling Based on Motivational Interviewing on Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Avicenna J of Neuropsychophysiology*. 2018; 5(4):179-188. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/ajnpp.4.3.285>

**doi** <http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/ajnpp.4.3.285>



## Article info:

**Received:** 10 Mar 2018

**Accepted:** 11 Aug 2018

**Available Online:** 01 Nov 2018

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** In today's highly competitive world, organizations are constantly searching for new methods to improve the performance of their staff.

**Objectives:** The primary purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of group counseling based on motivational interviewing on employees' organizational citizenship behavior.

**Materials and Methods:** The research method was a pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design with a control group. The study population comprised all employees of Hadid Sazeh Pishro industrial group, who were working in 2018. To complete the questionnaire, all staff completed the organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire. Then, among those who obtained a lower score than others, 24 subjects were selected and randomly divided into experimental and control groups. Next, group counseling based on motivational interviews was held for the experimental group in 18 sessions, two hours a week, for two sessions. During this period, the control group did not receive any intervention. After completing the counseling, both groups were taken the post-test to measure the effect of the intervention. Two months after the post-test, the groups were reevaluated to assess the impact of intervention during follow-up. The obtained data were analyzed with 1-way multivariate and covariance analysis in SPSS V. 22.

**Results:** Findings of the present study indicated that group counseling based on motivational interviewing had a positive impact on employees' organizational citizenship behavior ( $P < 0.01$ ) so that the mean scores of the staff in the experimental group in the post-test and follow-up were significantly higher compared with the control group.

**Conclusion:** In this research, the effect of group-based motivational interviewing counseling on the promotion of employee's organizational citizenship behavior was confirmed, and this fact can help managers of different organizations to prepare and plan appropriately to improve the organizational citizenship behavior of their staff.

## Keywords:

Motivational interviewing,  
Organizations, Behavior,  
Employee

## \* Corresponding Author:

**Kianoush Zahrakar, PhD.**

**Address:** Department of Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.

**Tel:** +98 (912) 8467732

**E-mail:** mahdialimohammadi777@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

**T**o compete on the global stage, provide customers with their expectations, and adapt to the changing nature of their jobs, managers tend to choose employees who work beyond their assigned task and role [1]. Over the past two decades, the concept of organizational citizenship behavior has attracted psychologists [2]. Organizational citizenship behavior is an optional and transactional behavior that is effective in increasing the organization's optimal performance. This behavior is not explicitly recognized by the official reward system of the organization [3].

Two main approaches define the concept of organizational citizenship behavior. Organ and other pioneering researchers on this subject have considered this kind of behavior as a "transcendental behavior", so that the assistance of individuals in the workplace is beyond the requirements of the role assigned to them and is not transparently appreciated by the official reward system of the organization. Another group of researchers, such as Graham, considers organizational citizenship as distinct from work performance so that they do not distinguish between their role and ultra-function. In this view, organizational citizenship behavior has a general concept that includes all the positive behaviors of individuals within an organization [4].

Organizational citizenship behavior structure seeks after the identification, management, and evaluation of employees' transcendental behaviors, which improve their organizational effectiveness through their behavior. From the viewpoints of Colakoglu et al. (2015), the key defining elements of organizational citizenship behavior are behavior beyond the tasks specified by the organization; optional behavior based on the will of the individual; behavior that is not directly rewarded, or not appreciated through the formal organizational structure; and behavior that is critical to the efficiency of the organization's performance and success [4]. Organ considers organizational citizenship behavior as a desirable situation because such behavior increases the resources available to the organization, and reduces the need for costly formal control mechanisms in the organization.

As a human being and an organizational citizen, it is anticipated that staff behavior in an organization exceeds the requirements of the role and goals of the organization [5]. Bolino et al. (2002) defined organizational citizenship behavior as the employee's incentive to go beyond the formal job requirements to help each

other, align their individual interests with organizational interests, and have a real interest in the organization's activities. They believe that citizenship behaviors generally have two general characteristics: they cannot be directly promoted, and they are the result of unique and extraordinary efforts that the organization expects from its employees to achieve success [6].

Considering the issues mentioned above, one of the factors that may affect the employee's organizational citizenship behavior is to promote motivation. Motivational interviewing is one of the new therapies in psychology [7, 8]. A motivational interview is a referential-based approach used to increase the motivation of individuals to change their behavior [9]. This approach is flexible, and some of its intervening dimensions are group-based, such as hoping to overcome the problem, gaining information from trusted sources, reducing social isolation and self-sufficiency, and causing a change in person [10].

One of the essential principles of motivational interviewing is to create conflict or disagreement in the status of references. In this principle, the incentive for change is created for individuals to see a significant difference between their current behavior and their goals. Motivational interview therapist plays an active role in creating these conflicts through listening skills. In this regard, the therapist can help in identifying the differences between the present situation and the ideal situation to facilitate change, in terms of organizational citizenship behavior such as sacrifice, duty, participation, loyalty, and courtesy in the organizational environment. Therefore, the consultant encourages clients to identify the potential benefits of changing behavior.

People usually are influenced by their arguments for change, rather than the arguments of others [11]. The motivational interviewing approach is one of the educational methods that can be effective in increasing the organizational citizenship behavior of employees and consequently improving organizational productivity. Since motivational interviewing facilitates the process of changing the behavior of the references by relying on their internal motivation, they can be effectively used in job counseling.

The three key elements of motivational interviewing are independence, cooperation, and stimulation. The motivational interview has not been developed as a preventive intervention in which the counselor is the expert, and the referendum will passively follow his instructions. In the motivational interview, the im-

portance of developing the independence of the authorities is essential in the process of change. In other words, a participatory process is taking place, in which both parties listen and make their views equally [12]. To achieve this goal and based on the four main stages, the consultant in all sessions of the treatment process engages in creating an empathic relationship with the authorities, focusing on a targeted change, stimulating and motivating the self in favor of change and objective planning to change when the authorities are ready [13].

In this regard, Klonek et al. (2016) achieved the following results: the current behaviors of job counselors differ from those of the motivational interviewing standard, job counseling consistent with motivational interviewing reduces customer uncertainties to change during the counseling sessions, and consultant's behaviors consistent with the motivational interviewing standards are directly related to the client's positive job interview. They suggest that job counseling in the motivational interview facilitates professional and occupational interventions [12].

According to what was as discussed, organizational citizenship behavior encourages teamwork; reduces errors; affects employees' participation and involvement in the organization; and increases the productivity, communication, collaboration, and staffing of employees. Organizational citizenship behavior through excellence in the quality of staff performance affects the internal organizational factors such as organizational climate, morale, commitment, job satisfaction, and absenteeism reduction. It also affects the improvement of outsourcing factors such as job satisfaction, quality of services, and customer loyalty [2]. Therefore, considering the positive outcomes of organizational citizenship behavior, intervention in this regard is useful both for employees and the organization.

Based on what was mentioned and the results of studies conducted in the field of organizational productivity, the motivational interviewing method, with its unique characteristics, can be applied to organizational variables such as organizational citizenship behavior. Since few studies have directly investigated the impact of this intervention on organizational citizenship behavior [12, 14, 15], we aimed to determine the effectiveness of group-based motivational interviewing counseling on organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research method was pre-test, post-test quasi-experimental with control group design. The statistical

population was all employees of the Hadid Sazeh Pishro industrial group, who were working in 2018. This company is one of the largest manufacturers of domestic and industrial gas meters and regulators that was established in 2000 to be the center of Hadid Sazeh industrial group activities. Currently, the company has 220 full-time staff of over 5 years of working background. First, all staff completed the organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire. Then, out of those with a score lower than others, 24 subjects were selected and randomly divided into experimental and control groups.

The study inclusion criteria were working in the Hadid Sazeh industrial group during 2018, obtaining a low score in organizational citizenship behavior questionnaire, having physical and mental ability to participate in the study, and giving their informed consent. The exclusion criteria included reluctance to complete questionnaires or withdrawing from the study for any reason. Before the group counseling sessions, a pre-test was conducted on both groups with the Podsakoff organizational citizenship behavior scale. Then, group counseling based on motivational interviews was held for the experimental group in 18 sessions, two hours a week, for two sessions. During this period, the control group did not receive any intervention. After the sessions, both groups were taken the post-test. To evaluate the impact of intervention during follow-up, two months after the post-test, the study groups were re-evaluated.

To observe ethical considerations, enough information about the topic was given to all employees and informed consent was received from all of them. All participants were also assured that their information would be confidential. The present study was reviewed and approved by the local Ethics Committee of Kharazmi University (IR.KHU.REC1397/7). The obtained data were analyzed with 1-way multivariate and covariance analysis in SPSS V.22.

### Podsakoff Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale

Podsakoff et al. designed this 24-item tool with five dimensions [16]. The dimension of altruism has 5 questions [5, 10, 15], conscientiousness 5 questions [1, 6, 11, 16, 21], chivalry 5 questions [2, 7, 12, 17], civility questions [4, 9, 14] and social customs 4 questions [3, 8, 13, 18]. This questionnaire is scored based on a 7-point Likert-type scale from very low = 1 to very much = 7. The questions 2, 6, 7, 12, 17, 22 are reversed scored [16]. The calculated Cronbach alpha coefficients for the dimensions of altruism were 0.85, conscientiousness 0.86, chivalry 0.85, civility 0.85 and social customs 0.70.

**Table 1.** Group motivational interview

Sessions	Title	Goals
1 & 2	Acquaintance	The purpose of the first session is to prepare the clients for the motivational interview group. To do this, the members were informed of the norms of the group. During the second session, the levels of motivation and self-confidence of the clients were measured. The philosophy of motivational interviewing was also explained to members.
3-6	Feelings	In these sessions, the clients were helped to rely on internal motivation and make changes instead of relying on external resources. They needed to cast their feelings on the barrier. With the participation of each member of the group, another layer was added to the awareness of the change and led to the start of the dialogue for change. The identification and listing of emotions and the impact of different behaviors on them were analyzed in the third and fourth sessions. At sessions 5 and 6, the focus was on conducting reflective exercises.
7-11	Advantages and disadvantages	These sessions focus on customer's doubts, "good things" and "not so good" focused on behavior and went on to increase awareness of the risks of the lifestyle and the disadvantages of individuals. It also focused on the ability of clients to assess self-confidence for change. During these sessions, the emphasis was placed on three distinct experiences to achieve good feelings: muscle relaxation, excitement, arousal, and imagination. In sessions 10 and 11, the focus was on the categorization of alternative modes and exercises, experiences to have good feelings: relaxation, being excited and imagination.
12-15	Values	Group facilitator helped members identify and validate values, intrinsic desire for change, and increased awareness of differences between behavior and values. The focus of the members was on increasing the diagnosis of the problem and the willingness to change and increase their reasoning for change. At the 15th session, members identified and ranked their 6 top values and evaluated and analyzed appropriate behaviors with their value priorities in the workplace.
16-18	Attitude/Final appraisal and final sessions	Prospects help members regain their potential. Having a vision will motivate the members of the group to become interested in a different path and retrieve parts of their own that they think they have lost. In the 16th session, a deliberate dialogue was conducted by the members. The purpose of the evaluation of the commitments, the level of confidence, and motivation for the change in members after the closure of the sessions, was held at the 17 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> sessions.

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Besides, the validity of the questionnaire was evaluated according to the views of the well-known reviewers [17]. In Iran, the reliability of the questionnaire has been reported as acceptable [18].

The structure of the motivational interviewing sessions has been extracted from three books: Motivational interview in the treatment of addiction by William Miller [19], motivational interviewing skills by David Rosengren [20], and motivational group training (Group Motivational Interview) by Ann Fields [21]. Table 1 presents a summary of the content of group motivational interviews.

### 3. Results

In Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of organizational citizenship behavior scores and their components are presented separately for the counseling group based on motivation and control interviews in three time points (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up). As seen, in the experimental group, there is an increase in the scores in the post-test and follow-up stages compared with the pre-test, but in the control group, the mean

scores in the pre-test are not significantly different from the post-test and follow-up scores.

Multivariate covariance analysis was used to determine the effectiveness of group-based motivational interviewing on organizational citizenship behavior. The results of this test are presented below. To perform this test, first, the assumption of data normalization was examined. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed no significant difference between groups, so the study data were normally distributed ( $P < 0.05$ ). Also, the assumption of the covariance matrix and homogeneity of variances were investigated and confirmed.

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant difference between the organizational citizenship behavior scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-test stage. To investigate the difference between the two groups in each component of organizational citizenship behavior, the test of the effects between the subjects was used. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4 presents the results of the test of the inter-subject effects to compare the components of organi-

**Table 2.** The Mean±SD of organizational citizenship behavior scores at three measurement stages by each group

Group	Variables	Mean±SD		
		Pre-test	Pos-ttest	Follow-up
Experimental	Altruism	14.08±3.288	16.75±3.223	16.17±3.099
	Conciseness	16.17±2.657	19.08±2.843	18.25±2.527
	Chivalry	12.58±3.029	15.42±2.875	14.67±2.741
	Civility	14.83±2.329	18.17±2.552	17.42±2.314
	Social customs	10.75±2.598	13.67±2.674	13.17±2.480
	Organizational citizenship behavior	68.42±5.632	83.08±6.112	79.67±5.990
Control	Altruism	14.25±3.223	15.08±2.906	14.42±2.875
	Conciseness	15.92±2.712	16.92±2.466	16.08±2.875
	Chivalry	13.42±2.778	14.17±2.209	13.50±2.780
	Civility	14.50±2.747	15.33±2.462	15.00±3.593
	Social costumes	10.42±2.275	11.67±2.270	10.75±2.301
	Organizational citizenship behavior	68.50±5.792	73.17±5.859	69.75±7.967

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**Table 3.** Multivariate covariance analysis for comparing organizational citizenship behavior between two groups in the post-test phase

Test	Value	F	df Hypothesis	df Error	Statistical Power	P
Pillai's Trace	0.901	23.547	5	13	0.901	0.001
Wilks's lambda	0.099	23.547	5	13	0.901	0.001
Hotelling Trace	9.056	23.547	5	13	0.901	0.001
Roy's Largest Root	9.056	23.547	5	13	0.901	0.001

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zational citizenship behavior between the experimental and control groups in the post-test. According to the results, the F value obtained for all components was significant between the two groups ( $P<0.01$ ). Therefore, motivational interviewing group counseling has a significant effect on promoting the organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

According to the results in Table 5, there is a significant difference between the organizational citizenship behavior scores of the two experimental and control groups at the follow-up stage. To investigate the difference between the two groups of control and motivational interview in each of the components of organizational citizenship behavior in the follow-up phase, the test of the inter-subject effects was used. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6 presents the results of the test of the inter-subject effects for comparing the components of organizational citizenship behavior in the experimental and control groups at the follow-up stage. According to the results, the F value obtained for all components was significantly different between the two groups ( $P<0.01$ ). Therefore, the group-based motivational interviewing counseling has a significant effect on the promotion of organizational citizenship behavior of employees, which indicates the stability of the effects of the intervention.

#### 4. Discussion

The results showed that group counseling based on motivational interviewing influences the organizational citizenship behavior of employees. So that the mean scores of the staff in the experimental group in the post-

**Table 4.** Interpersonal impact test for comparing the components of organizational citizenship behavior between two groups in the post-test phase

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	P	Effect Value
Altruism	Between group	19.393	1	19.393	29.701	0.001	0.636
	Within group	11.100	17	0.653			
Conciseness	Between group	24.161	1	24.161	27.202	0.001	0.615
	Within group	15.100	17	0.888			
Charily	Between group	22.339	1	22.339	34.047	0.001	0.667
	Within group	11.154	17	0.656			
Civility	Between group	35.079	1	35.079	23.719	0.001	0.583
	Within group	25.142	17	1.479			
Social costumes	Between group	17.254	1	17.254	64.847	0.001	0.792
	Within group	4.523	17	0.266			

**AJNPP****Table 5.** Multivariate covariance analysis for comparing organizational citizenship behavior between two groups in the post-test phase

Test	Value	F	df Hypothesis	df Error	Statistical Power	P
Pillai's Trace	0.793	9.955	5	13	0.793	0.001
Wilks's lambda	0.207	9.955	5	13	0.793	0.001
Hotelling Trace	3.829	9.955	5	13	0.793	0.001
Roy's Largest Root	3.829	9.955	5	13	0.793	0.001

**AJNPP****Table 6.** Inter-subject effects test to compare organizational citizenship behavior components between two groups in the post-test at the follow-up stage

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	P	Effect Value
Altruism	Between group	19.492	1	19.492	24.804	0.001	0.593
	Within group	13.359	17	0.786			
Conciseness	Between group	23.141	1	23.141	29.059	0.001	0.631
	Within group	13.538	17	0.796			
Charily	Between group	21.063	1	21.063	18.409	0.001	0.520
	Within group	19.451	17	1.144			
Civility	Between group	26.301	1	26.301	16.800	0.001	0.497
	Within group	26.614	17	1.566			
Social costumes	Between group	26.150	1	26.150	43.331	0.001	0.718
	Within group	10.259	17	0.603			

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test and follow-up stage significantly increased compared with the control group. This finding is consistent with the results of studies by Sayegh et al. [22], Simper et al. [23], Levine [24], Dehghanan et al. [14], and Rajabbaigy et al. [15].

Different research results have shown that organizations should consider three different patterns of behavior: organizations should attract and retain members; ensure that members have a reliable level of performance; the organization should encourage members to innovate and behave spontaneously beyond the role requirements to achieve the functions of the organization. The third behavioral pattern is the same as organizational citizenship behavior and is not directly related to the job description [25]. Accordingly, one of the ways to motivate organizational citizenship behavior is motivational interviewing.

Motivational interviewing group counseling can facilitate the change of behavior, including organizational citizenship behavior, through the process of focusing during counseling sessions. In this context, Rochat in research on the integrity of motivational interviewing in job counseling concluded that motivational interviewing interventions could help professional counseling interventions and resolve job problems [13]. Sayegh et al. in a study on the effectiveness of motivational interviewing to prevent the exit from the occupational and educational program in young adults, concluded that the motivational interviewing approach would be a useful tool for the participants' work and education [22]. Simper et al. also concluded that in their research on the effectiveness of motivational interviewing training for nutritionists, they were more effective in confronting their clients in terms of empathy, orientation, support, independence, and persuasion [23].

With an in-depth look at the components of motivational interviewing such as empathy, collaboration and the principle of motivating the central core to encourage and protect individual freedom for planning, one can explain the impact of motivational interviewing on promoting organizational citizenship behavior. In this regard, the results of the study of Dehghanan et al. as factors affecting the organizational citizenship behavior of the police showed that the factors affecting the citizenship of the organization include individual factors (motivation, personality traits, ability, job satisfaction and organizational commitment), management factors (style management and management control system) and organizational factors (organizational support, organizational culture and police justice).

Therefore, based on the results of this study, one of the factors influencing the organizational citizenship behavior of employees is the promotion of internal motivation [14]. Besides, the results of the study by Rajabbaigy et al. show a direct and significant relationship between the four components of motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive and behavioral factors, cultural intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Based on the results of this study, one of the factors affecting organizational citizenship behavior is a motivational component [15]. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the basis of motivational interviewing comprises three principles of participation, calling, and respect for individual autonomy. Based on the principle of participation, motivational interviewing is a collaborative method, but ultimately it is the person who has to decide to change and make it works. According to the call principle, the motivational interview seeks to evoke those things that the individual has within himself or herself to motivate and activate internal resources for change, and ultimately, based on the principle of respect for autonomy, experts may give information to an individual, but finally, it is the person who decides what to do.

Accordingly, in the motivational interview, the change occurs during a process. What is certain is that employees of the organization can decide about their role in the organization, which is an essential factor in increasing their motivation and ultimately promoting their corporate citizenship behavior. Also, in an expert motivational interview, an expert supports individual self-efficacy and believes that an employee can do the necessary work and succeed. People often have the knowledge and resources to make a favorite change, once they decide to do it, and in this case, the specialist will only act as a counselor and propose possible ways that employees can choose. Therefore, a person's belief in the possibility of change is an important motivational factor [26].

The limitations of this research can be mentioned here. Considering that this study was conducted on the industrial group of Hadid Sazeh Pishro, it is necessary to take caution in generalizing its results to other employees. The self-report of the tool used was another limitation to this study, which should be taken into consideration.

## 5. Conclusion

In this research, the effect of group-based motivational interviewing counseling on the promotion of employ-



ee's organizational citizenship behavior was confirmed. Therefore, based on the issues mentioned, the use of motivational interviewing-based group counseling programs because of the emphasis on individual efficiency can be useful in enhancing employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Moreover, these findings can help managers of different organizations to prepare and plan appropriately to improve the organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

## Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

The present study was reviewed and approved by the local Ethics Committee of Kharazmi University (IR.KHU.REC1397/7).

### Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Authors' contributions

All authors contributed in preparing this article.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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