Job Security Regulations as Moderators of Flexible Working Arrangements and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Comparative Study in Europe

Antje Schwarz, Bielefeld University, antje.schwarz@uni-bielefeld.de

Individuals' voluntary contribution to organizations besides regular work tasks was theoretically captured as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983) in the 1980s. The concept contains the assumption that organizational functioning is based on behaviors that lubricate the social machinery of the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966). While OCB encompasses a range of multifaceted activities, such as aiding colleagues in addressing work-related issues, maintaining a clean and organized workspace, and fostering an effective work environment, it can be delineated along two principal dimensions: altruism, characterized by voluntary assistance to others, and generalized organizational compliance (Smith et al., 1983). In this research-in-progress study, OCB is broadly understood as the willingness to take on extra responsibilities in the workplace without being paid. In line with studies arguing that work is becoming more flexible in time and location (Barley et al., 2017; Messenger & Gschwind, 2016), flexible working arrangements, such as flexitime or telework, have additionally increased its salience in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic (Abendroth et al., 2022). With this development, the question becomes vital whether it affects employees' willingness to perform OCB. Two opposing theoretical perspectives are considered: Following the exchange theory (Blau, 1964), self-directed working times and locations could enhance employees' contribution to OCB in exchange for flexibility. On the contrary, the social presence theory (Short et al., 1976) assumes limited social presence in communication due to less face-to-face interaction and less rich communication, resulting in a lower willingness to perform OCB. Both perspectives are, therefore, considered in the following.

Furthermore, it is taken into account how different institutional settings of job security regulation differently prepare the implications of telework and schedule control. The varieties of capitalism (VoC) approach (Hall & Soskice, 2001) suggests that higher employment protection (e.g. the strictness of regulation of dismissals of workers, Emmenegger, 2014) in coordinated market economies contributes to longer and more sustainable employer-employee relationships, while liberal market economies with lower employment protection build on higher flexibility and market-driven relationships. Granted rights of job security are potentially taken into account when employees consider their investment in an organization and contribution to OCB in flexible working arrangements. At the same time, low job security regulations could discourage employees from performing OCB because of limited employment security through a higher risk of dismissal and lower long-term stability.

The study contributes to the existing research with a country-comparative perspective on OCB. Moreover, varying economic contexts of regulation are tested as moderators. The study aims to understand the association between flexible working and the willingness to perform OCB in 17 European countries with varying job security regulations (Figure 1).
Hierarchical multilevel regression models are applied to the data from the 10th Round of the European Social Survey (2022) enriched by OECD (2023) macro data.

![Diagram](https://example.com/diagram.png)

**Figure 1.** Structure of the analysis.

**Data and Method**

The study examines data from the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 10, which was collected in 31 European countries from September 2020 to September 2022 via random probability sampling. The sample is restricted to employees aged 18 to 69 years of age. It contains information on N= 10,452 respondents from 17 countries (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom).

The willingness to perform organizational citizenship behavior is examined with the item: “If needed, how willing would you be to take on extra responsibilities at work without being paid more?” Respondents were asked to describe their willingness from 0 “Not at all willing” to 10 “Completely willing.” Flexitime is measured as the possibility to determine the starting and the finishing time of the work day 0 “Not at all” or 1 “To some extent/Completely”. Additionally, respondents described how often they perform telework from home or from another place of choice during regular working hours from 1 “Never”, 2 “Several times a week/Several times a month/Once a month/Less often” to 3 “Every day”.

Country-specific macro data on the strictness of dismissal regulation for workers on regular and collective contracts from 2019 (OECD, 2023) was merged with the ESS dataset. The final indicator can vary between 0 (weak regulation) and 6 (strict regulation).

The large cross-country sample requires the application of hierarchical multilevel regression models to examine systematic variation within and between the participating countries. Not applying a multilevel analysis would result in biased standard errors due to clustering individuals in countries. Controls are implemented at the individual and the

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1 Due to the sample restrictions and missing variables in the ESS dataset, 12,092 cases were excluded from the analysis. This includes juveniles, retirees, or unemployed persons. Additional 4,553 cases were not considered in the analyses because of a lack of information on macro-indicators for the countries (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, and Slovenia).

2 The indicator was developed by legal experts and covers regulation in four dimensions: 1) procedural requirements before notice is given on a dismissal, 2) the notice period and severance pay, 3) the regulatory framework for unfair dismissals, and 4) the enforcement of unfair dismissal regulation. All four categories are weighted equally (25%).
national level. Furthermore, analytical weights (anweight) have been applied to account for varying selection probabilities and non-response within each country. Moreover, the weight corrects the models for countries’ population size differences.

**Results**

Initial analysis of the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC=4.48%) in the empty model indicates that the variance of OCB at the country level exists but is rather small in magnitude. Flexitime is associated with a greater willingness to perform OCB (b=0.863***, p<0.001) (Figure 2). Respondents who can control their schedule to some extent or completely, report 0.863 points higher OCB on average compared to respondents without flexitime. Likewise, respondents in countries with a higher strictness of dismissal regulation show an overall higher willingness to perform OCB (b=0.829***). However, considering national regulations as a moderator, higher job security decreases the differences in OCB between employees with and without flexitime (b=-0.253*, p<0.05).

In line with previous results, teleworkers report a higher willingness to perform OCB than non-teleworkers (Figure 3). Surprisingly, respondents who conduct telework occasionally (b=0.688***) report an even higher willingness than everyday teleworkers (b=0.462***). Therefore, positive but not linear associations can be assumed. In line with the findings from the previous analysis, a higher willingness to perform OCB is estimated for respondents in countries with a stronger regulation of dismissals (b=0.736***). However, the interaction describes a more decisive influence of job security regulations for non-teleworkers than teleworkers (b=−0.317*). The interaction between everyday telework and the strictness of regulation (b=−0.269, p>0.10).

**Discussion**

The study's primary aim has been to examine the association between flexible working and OCB, considering the approaches of the social exchange (Blau, 1964) and the social

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3 The analysis controls for the following variables: Female, Age, Highest level of education, Partner in household, Children in household, Net household income, Contracted weekly working hours, Overtime, Supervision of others, Expectations of responsiveness, Government/Public sector organization, Establishment size, Trade union density, Gross domestic product.
presence theory (Short et al., 1976). Following the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the findings point towards a higher willingness to perform OCB when flexible working arrangements are used. This holds true for respondents who have some or complete schedule control compared to respondents without the ability to control their working day's starting and ending times and for respondents who perform telework occasionally, speaking against the social presence theory (Short et al., 1976). Even though respondents perceive higher stakes in performing OCB with only limited face-to-face contact, actions of discretionary behavior pursuing the goals of altruism or organizational compliance are feasible through ICT-based collaboration (Williamson Smith et al., 2020). Negative side effects could be prevented through adjusted management and leadership strategies, such as fostered team-centered interaction, support of planned synchronized meetings complemented by individual-focused work hours, and proactive availability of workers and superiors in flexible arrangements (Van Dyne et al., 2007). Further research on OCB and telework should take the underlying assumption of leadership as a moderator (Kelly & Moen, 2021) and social relationships (Haythornthwaite, 2002) into account.

The study's country-comparative focus further elaborates on whether the implications of flexitime and telework on OCB differ in varying national contexts of job security regulation. As suggested in the VoC approach, a higher strictness of regulation of dismissals might go along with a stronger employer-employee relationship because of mutual investment in a long-term exchange. The results from the analyses follow up on the theoretical thoughts (Emmenegger, 2014; Hall & Soskice, 2001) and support them by showing a significantly positive effect of the national strictness of regulation on the willingness to perform OCB. A weaker regulation of job security for regular contracts is, thus, associated with a lower willingness to perform OCB. The cross-level effects of the strictness of the regulation of dismissals describe a higher willingness for respondents who use flexitime and respondants who telework occasionally. Both groups are positively influenced by strict national regulations of dismissals. The results support the notion of the exchange theory, a higher willingness under relatively high employment protection legislation as assumed by the VoC, and that the effects add up when considering absolute values. However, the conditional effects reveal a relatively stronger increase in the willingness to perform OCB with higher job security regulation for employees who are not working flexibly. Higher job security regulations, therefore, seem to support employees’ willingness for OCB, especially when they cannot work time- or location-independent.

Nevertheless, the dataset only offers a cross-sectional perspective on the relationships, which does not enable a longitudinal examination with clear causal relations. In addition, differences in the observation period limit the comparative perspective of the study. In the period from 2020 to 2022, the pandemic influenced the social settings in private and occupational lives, which could have influenced the association between flexible working and OCB. However, the presented analyses enable a country-comparative glance at the relationship of OCB and flexible working arrangements. In the examination of employees’ perception of social exclusion, research on the sustainable use of flexible working arrangements and motivation is crucial. Enabled flexibility could be used as a resource to support the willingness to perform OCB. This finding aligns with research on the higher
affective commitment (Lott & Abendroth, 2022) and the lower probability of voluntary employee exits (Marx et al., 2021) of employees in flexible working arrangements. Further, the investigation of job security regulations shows an appreciation of higher regulations of dismissals by supporting a higher willingness to perform OCB. Hence, the offer of flexible working arrangements can serve employers’ need for a strong involvement in the organizational context through employees’ higher OCB, especially when employees and employers can rely on a stable relationship through legislative regulation of dismissals.

References


