

**HANDBOOK OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR:  
A REVIEW OF 'GOOD SOLDIER'  
ACTIVITY IN ORGANIZATIONS**

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*Chapter 12*

**MOTIVATIONAL TRAITS AND  
SELF-DEVELOPMENT OCB:  
A DIMENSIONAL AND  
CONFIGURATIONAL ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we extend the personality-OCB relationship by exploring a new disposition factor – an employee's motivational traits. Anchored on the tradition of a dispositional view of OCB, we specifically examine the motivational traits of competitive excellence and anxiety of employees in relation to their self-development, a critical form of OCB that involves the proactive enhancement of skills, knowledge and abilities. In our theorizing, we supplement the traditional dimensional approach of competitive excellence and anxiety to OCB with a novel configurational approach of creating motivational trait profiles based on various combinations of high and low levels of competitive excellence and anxiety. Accordingly, a highlight of our study is the advancement of a typology of motivational trait profiles ("apathy," "worry," "positively challenged," and "kiasu") and their impact on OCB.

Our results, based on a sample of Singaporean executives, yield several interesting insights. Under the dimensional approach, results demonstrate that self-development OCB was positively associated with competitive excellence, but negatively related to anxiety. Under the configurational approach, our results support the tenability of the motivational typology, and offer particular insights to the "kiasu" profile by its close match to the Singaporean psyche of "kiasu-ism." (Ang, Tan & Ng, 2000). Our results further demonstrate that employees with the "positively challenged" profile were most likely to display self-development OCB. A comparison of the pattern of results from both approaches suggests that the configurational approach offers promising potential for future OCB research. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications arising from our study.

## INTRODUCTION

In management research, much has been extolled of the importance of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and perhaps even more has been said of what factors cause such voluntary acts. Of particular interest to scholars since the early days of OCB research is whether certain individuals are more likely to perform OCBs than others? Restated in Organ's (1988) terms, who are likely to be the "good soldiers?"

Research pursuing this line of inquiry has, to-date, focused primarily on individuals' Big Five personality traits and general affectivity as predictors of extra-role behaviors based on various OCB frameworks (e.g., Organ, 1994; Organ & Ryan, 1995). In particular, Smith, Organ and Near's (1983) measures of altruism (behaviors that provide aid to a specific person) and compliance (behaviors that involve impersonal contributions to the organization) constituted the majority of extra-role behaviors examined in early studies. More recent studies have advanced to investigate additional OCBs described in Organ's (1988) framework. These include courtesy (behaviors to prevent problems of work associates), sportsmanship (behaviors that demonstrate willingness to forbear personal inconveniences and impositions), and civic virtue (behaviors that demonstrate constructive involvement in the issues of the organization) (Organ & Ryan, 1995).

Findings on the personality-OCB relationship have unfortunately, been discouraging. Results of Organ and Ryan's (1995) meta-analysis demonstrated that personality traits (i.e., conscientiousness, agreeableness, positive and negative affectivity) do not predict OCB as well as attitudinal variables (i.e., job satisfaction, perceived fairness, organizational commitment). Notwithstanding this somewhat disappointing result (Organ, 1994), there remains an optimistic view of the role personality plays in influencing employees' display of OCB. Scholars have advanced at least two important reasons to expect personality to relate meaningfully to OCB (e.g., Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Organ, 1994; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997).

The first is based on Mischel's (2004) classic argument that effects of personality are more salient in "weak" situations where ambiguity precludes uniform encoding by persons, and there is an absence of strong incentives for performance of particular behaviors. OCB, which by definition is extra-role and not contractually rewarded, should therefore lend itself to the study of personality effects (Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Organ, 1994).

The second reason stems from research evidence that job attitudes may be substantially dispositional in origin (e.g., Arvey, Bouchard, Segal & Abraham, 1989; Staw & Ross, 1985). Based on this school of thought, several scholars (e.g., Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Organ, 1994) have argued that there is a possibility that personality may account for the consistent relationship between attitudes and OCB, rendering personality an important variable to consider for prediction of OCB.

The purpose of this article is not to debate the utility of personality as a determinant of OCB. We believe that the theoretical bases described above provide important rationale for scholars to continue their inquiry of personality effects on OCB. Rather, this article aims to build upon, and to advance existing research on personality and OCB in three specific ways. First, we examine an often over-looked form of OCB that has important practical significance in today's dynamic work environment – developing oneself (George & Brief, 1992). Involving voluntary acts of enhancing one's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed to

perform better in one's current jobs, or to prepare one for more responsible positions within the organization, this form of OCB is conceptually distinct from other more commonly researched extra-role behaviors, and has received very little attention to-date (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

Second, we examine two individual traits that have not been fully considered in the extant OCB literature – competitive excellence and anxiety. Based on Kanfer and Heggstad's (1997) motivational framework, these two personal traits are derived from the superordinate trait clusters of achievement- and anxiety-related traits respectively, and have been found to have important implications on individuals' achievement-relevant affect, cognition, behaviors, as well as performance.

Third, and more interestingly, we adopt an alternative novel approach to investigate the effects of competitive excellence and anxiety on self-development OCB. Traditionally, empirical studies that have examined multiple personality traits with relation to OCB have employed a "dimensional" approach, which treats the various personality traits as independent predictors of the targeted behavior (i.e., focusing on the unique variance accounted by each of the traits in OCB) (e.g., Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Neuman & Kickul, 1998).

By contrast, our current study also adopts a configurational approach (in addition to the dimensional approach) to analyze the effects of competitive excellence and anxiety on self-development. Founded on a more holistic mode of inquiry (Delery & Doty, 1996; Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993), the configurational approach views competitive excellence and anxiety jointly as an individual's profile of motivational traits, and uses this profile to predict the criterion variable. Interestingly, despite the intuitive logic and appeal to think of a person in terms of his/her profile of traits, (e.g., Jung's personality typology, 1923), little personality research in general has been conducted using this holistic approach, and none, to our best of knowledge, has been reported in the OCB literature.

Following our research objectives, this chapter is structured in four major sections. In the first section, we review the major constructs examined in our theoretical model, namely self-development OCB, competitive excellence and anxiety. In addition to these focal constructs, we also introduce one other variable – "in-role performance," as a form of outcome behavior that is in contrast to the voluntary, extra-role behavior of self-development. By having a "comparison" criterion that is distinctly different from our focal outcome of self-development, we hope to better assess the validity of our theory and results through comparing the patterns of findings arising from the two criteria.

In the second section, we propose six hypotheses that relate motivational traits to the two behavioral criteria using the dimensional and configurational perspectives. In the third section, we describe our field survey methodology, sample and measures used to validate our hypotheses, and present results of our analyses. Finally, we discuss our findings in relation to the broader fields of OCB and motivational traits, and suggest directions for future OCB research.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Self-Development as a Form of OCB

"Continuous learning is an increasingly important element of performance in light of today's environmental and organizational trends" (London & Mone, 1999:119). Trends such as the use of new technology, expectations of higher standards by multiple constituencies, fast-changing nature of jobs, and the adoption of team-based structures, require employees to possess multiple skill-sets in order to be adaptive.

To do so, employees need to actively and continuously acquire KSAs in reaction to, or in anticipation of, changing performance requirements. These acts of developing and enhancing one's skills, when exhibited voluntarily and proactively by employees, are what George and Brief (1992) termed as self-development behaviors. Specific acts of self-development may include participating in advanced training courses, keeping abreast of the latest developments in one's field, or learning a new set of skills that help expand the range of one's contributions to the organization (George & Jones, 1997).

Despite the timeliness and importance of such proactive behaviors, the focus of OCB research has traditionally been, and continues to be, on Smith et al.'s (1983) and Organ's (1988) taxonomies of OCB, both of which lack a dimension that specifically targets acts of skills enhancement for the sake of the organization. Organ's (1988) conceptualization of civic virtue perhaps comes closest in that it has some elements of proactively keeping up with issues and changes that affect the organization (e.g., Morrison, 1994). However, we believe that self-development, with its specific focus on training and development to enhance one's KSAs, involves activities that require a much more extensive commitment of employees' time and resources, and hence, is a conceptually distinct construct from Organ's (1988) civic virtue behavior.

### In-Role Performance

In stark contrast to the sacrifice of time and effort required by employees who exhibit self-development OCB, in-role performance entails minimal commitment to the firm beyond the specified job scope. The concept of a transactional contract (MacNeil, 1985; Rousseau, 1989) aptly captures the elements of such strict adherence to in-role duties, and may be best exemplified by the phrase "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" (Rousseau, 1995). Hence, in-role performance refers to the execution of duties that are strictly within the purview of one's organizational role, and using one's existing skills. As such, the focus is on fulfilling duties that are contractually specified and rewarded, and no additional involvement nor flexibility on the part of the employee is required.

If self-development OCB requires the sacrifice of employees' time and effort, why are some employees driven to exhibit such behaviors for the benefit of the organization? What factors are likely to predispose employees to proactively and voluntarily seek out activities to hone in their KSAs, so as to contribute to the effectiveness of the organization?



George and Brief (1992) advanced three major categories of antecedents at different levels of analyses: contextual, group and individual. Our focus, as stated at the onset, is on the individual's motivational traits – the achievement (and in particular, the competitive excellence component) and anxiety orientation (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). We describe them below.

## Motivational Traits

Derived from the domain of personality research, motivational traits are relatively stable and enduring tendencies and preferences that individuals possess for a broad range of life situations (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). In their extensive review of the literature, Kanfer and Heggstad identified two superordinate trait clusters – achievement- and anxiety-related traits, which is consistent with the classic achievement theories that view achievement as the combination of two motives: hope of success and fear of failure (e.g., Atkinson & Feather, 1966). These two superordinate trait clusters also mirror the hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation advanced by Elliot and colleagues (Elliot, 1997; Elliot & Church, 1997).

### *Achievement – Competitive Excellence*

The first cluster, achievement-oriented traits, represents the most extensively studied motivational trait construct to-date (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). Although a multitude of definitions and measures exist for the achievement construct, a consistent theme is that it is an appetitive or approach-oriented trait that reflects one's drive to approach, pursue, and attain rewards or incentives (Elliot, 1997; Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). A classic definition of achievement-orientation (Murray, 1938:164) describes it to be "the desire or tendency to do things as well as possible To overcome obstacles and attain a high standard. To excel in one's self. To rival and surpass others." This definition therefore highlights two distinct aspects of the construct – achievement tendencies with respect to personal excellence and task mastery, and achievement tendencies as reflected in competitive excellence and comparative performance.

Our focus here is on the latter aspect of competitive excellence. We do not however in any way discount the significance of personal excellence and personal mastery. Indeed, the social psychology and management literature is replete with evidence of their positive impact on a myriad outcomes, including performance (e.g., Colquitt & Simmering, 1998; Phillips & Gully, 1997), learning effectiveness (Dweck, 1986), and intrinsic motivation (e.g., Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996).

Comparatively, little has been done on the competitive aspect of achievement motivation (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). Given that the workplace is inherently competitive in nature (e.g., reward and promotion systems are often merit-based; employees are often evaluated comparatively), competitive excellence is likely to play an important role in employees' motivational processes and therefore, should merit more research attention in the management discipline (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997).

How does competitive excellence influence or contribute to one's performance? A number of studies have documented mixed effects. In educational psychology, some studies have found that competitive excellence, through its emphasis on performance rather than

mastery goals, has deleterious effects on students' learning outcomes, such as the use of superficial and effort-minimizing learning strategies (e.g., Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991). Other studies have documented positive effects for competitive excellence, such as better grades due to the adoption of performance-oriented goals (Harackiewicz, Barron, Carter, Lehto, & Elliot, 1997), higher cognitive engagement (Archer, 1994; Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988) and more superior learning strategies (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991). Yet others have reported interactive relationships, where competitive excellence is found to enhance performance only when there is an absence of mastery goals (e.g., see Spence & Helmreich, 1983).

Positive findings have also been documented in other disciplines. In sport psychology, Martin and Gill (1995) concluded that athletes with a competitive orientation are more likely to perform better because of their greater focus on placement goals and greater self-efficacy. Likewise in the discipline of marketing, Brown, Cron and Slocum (1998) found that salespersons with a competitive orientation tend to have better sales performance because they are likely to set higher goals. In a study of entrepreneurship, Carsrud and Olm (1986) reported a positive association between entrepreneurs with a competitive orientation and their firm performance.

To summarize, competitive excellence can have both positive as well as negative outcomes. The divergent findings reported in the field suggest that there is no straightforward prediction, and consideration must be given to the context of the study, the nature of the criterion, and the presence of other facilitating or debilitating conditions.

### *Anxiety*

The second cluster, anxiety-related traits, comprises two distinct constructs that reflect individuals' aversive reactions to a competitive or evaluative situation (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997): test anxiety and fear of failure. Although early research in the field has traditionally viewed the two terms interchangeably [e.g., Atkinson & Litwin (1960) operationalized fear of failure in terms of test anxiety], more recent research has argued for a delineation between the two (e.g., Heckhausen, 1991; McClelland, 1985). Some even argued that fear of failure is a personality trait that predisposes feelings of test anxiety, manifested in the forms of worry and emotionality (e.g., Herman, 1990). An in-depth discussion of the similarities and differences between test anxiety and fear of failure is beyond the scope of this chapter [interested readers are referred to Heckhausen (1991) and McClelland (1985)]. Here, we adopt Kanfer and Heggstad's (1997) operationalization of anxiety as a general avoidance-related motivational tendency that subsumes both elements of fear of failure and test anxiety (see also Kanfer & Ackerman, 2000).

Research in the anxiety literature has generally agreed on the deleterious effects of anxiety on performance. The classic attentional theory advanced by Mandler and Sarason (1952) asserts that evaluative situations evoke a learned anxiety drive, which elicits either task completion or task interference responses. Task interference responses are those that involve "feelings of inadequacy, helplessness, heightened somatic reactions, anticipations of punishment or loss of status and esteem, and implicit attempts at leaving the task situation," (p. 166), and represent responses that are more self- rather than task-centered. Likewise, Wine's (1971) cognitive interference theory proposes that high levels of anxiety are debilitating because individuals with high anxiety tend to engage in more ruminative cognitions and greater self-evaluative worry (e.g., thoughts of possible failure,



embarrassment, social rejection), thereby directing resources away from the task. Kanfer and Ackerman's (1989) resource allocation theory similarly suggests that anxiety reduces one's cognitive resources available to execute the task at hand.

Empirical research is replete with evidence of the negative impact of one's motive to avoid failure on outcomes pertaining to evaluative settings. In academic settings, individuals with high anxiety have been found to have lower grades (Sarason, 1980), and perform poorly particularly in complex tasks (Sarason, 1975). Because of their aversion to evaluation, individuals with high anxiety tend to actively escape the evaluative situation, or when forced to remain, passively avoid failure by adopting conservative responses (Geen, 1987).

In summary, individuals with a high avoidance motivation try their best not to fail, even if this means not succeeding (Bierney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969). This philosophy of the high anxiety individual is aptly illustrated in Covington and Omelich's (1979) observation that students with avoidance motives reduce their effort to study for fear that their efforts may not lead to better performance, so as to prevent internal feelings of incompetency or perceptions of external rejection from occurring.

Based on our literature review here, we proceed to discuss how these motivational traits of competitive excellence and anxiety will relate to self-development OCB and in-role performance.

## HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

We adopt two perspectives in theorizing the role of competitive excellence and anxiety in affecting self-development OCB and in-role performance. The first is the conventional approach of using dimensions of traits as predictors, while the second is a novel approach using configurations of traits, which we will elaborate later.

### Dimensional Approach

Based on our foregoing literature review, we posit that individuals with a competitive excellence orientation are more likely to exhibit self-development behaviors, compared to their less competitive counterparts. Driven by the focus to be better than others, these individuals are likely to set higher and more difficult performance goals for themselves (e.g., Brown et al., 1998; Harackiewicz et al., 1997; Martin & Gill, 1995). In the course of pursuing these goals, highly competitive individuals are likely to be motivated to seek out developmental activities in order to improve their KSAs, thus providing them with the extra edge over their co-workers and enhancing their value to the organization.

**H1:** Competitive excellence is positively related to self-development OCB.

For in-role performance however, we posit a negative relationship with competitive excellence. This is because highly competitive employees are unlikely to derive sufficient satisfaction from merely fulfilling their expected job duties. Their desire to stand out in the crowd compels them to go beyond the in-role requirements, so that they may demonstrate

greater capacity for performance than their counterparts at work (Neuman & Kickul, 1998). By contrast, those with low competitive excellence, by virtue of their low achievement needs, are less likely to view the necessity to excel above others and hence, are likely to be satisfied with performing their in-role duties. Hence, we propose that

**H2:** Competitive excellence is negatively related to in-role performance.

Individuals characterized by a high anxiety motivational tendency, on the other hand, should exhibit the opposite pattern of behaviors. Based on the theories and empirical evidence reviewed earlier, we argue that high anxiety individuals are less likely to exhibit self-development OCB than low anxiety individuals. Due to their aversion to evaluation and possible failure, high anxiety individuals will not voluntarily seek out challenging activities to further develop their KSAs, for two possible reasons: for fear that they may not successfully master the KSAs, or for fear that if they do, they may be given job positions of greater responsibilities that commensurate their expertise (Covington & Omelich, 1979; Geen, 1987). This argument is consistent with Bierney et al.'s (1969) observation that individuals with high avoidance tendency strive to minimize failure possibilities, even if it is at the expense of achieving success.

**H3:** Anxiety is negatively related to self-development OCB.

On the contrary, high anxiety individuals should be more concerned with the fulfilment of their in-role duties than low anxiety individuals. This is because performing in-role duties, unlike the voluntary nature of self-development OCB, is a necessary and inescapable requirement of one's role in the organization. When there is no choice of avoiding, individuals with high anxiety will try their best not to fail (Bierney et al., 1969). As such, they are more likely than their low anxiety counterparts to adhere strictly to the performance of their in-role duties.

**H4:** Anxiety is positively related to in-role performance.

### **Configurational Approach**

While the foregoing hypotheses have explicated the independent role of competitive excellence and anxiety in affecting self-development OCB and in-role performance, an alternative mode of theorizing is to consider the two motivational traits as a profile of characteristics that commonly occur together to distinguish between individuals (cf. Meyer et al., 1993). In other words, "configurational theories are concerned with how the pattern of multiple independent variables is related to a dependent variable rather than with how individual independent variables are related to the dependent variable" (Delery & Doty, 1996: 804). Hence, one major difference between the dimensional and the configurational approach is the focus on reductionistic analysis versus holistic synthesis (Meyer et al., 1993).

Applying the configurational lens, we propose a typology of motivational trait profiles based on the two dimensions of competitive excellence and anxiety. This is similar to the motivational typology proposed by Kanfer and Heggstad (1997), wherein four types of work

motivation were advanced based on the underlying dimensions of achievement and anxiety. The main difference, however, lies with our focus on competitive excellence, versus their focus on general achievement. We illustrate our typology in Figure 1.

Anxiety	High	Worry	"Kiasu"
	Low	Apathy	Positively Challenged
		Low	High
		Competitive Excellence	

Figure 1. A Typology of Motivational Trait Profiles.

Specifically, we argue that individuals, based on their orientation toward competitive achievement and avoidance of failure, may be classified as having one of the four profiles: "apathy," "worry," "positively challenged," and "kiasu."

As illustrated in Figure 1, the "worry" and the "apathy" profiles both share the similar characteristic of a low competitive excellence orientation. However, while the "worry" profile exhibits a high anxiety orientation, the "apathy" profile is characterized by a low anxiety orientation. Described as potentially "high maintenance" in nature, Kanfer and Heggestad (1997) suggest that these two profiles of work motivation may be less desirable to organizations. Individuals with the "apathy" profile for instance, are likely to be apathetic toward their jobs since they lack both the positive and negative motivational drive to perform. Given such inertia, individuals characterized by this profile are unlikely to take personal initiative in their work, relying instead on managers to build and sustain job effort and persistence whenever obstacles to goal accomplishment arise.

Individuals with the "worry" profile on the other hand, are likely to experience frequent emotional distress in and out of the workplace, which can be taxing on organizational resources because of the need to provide emotional and technical support to aid employees' completion of routine tasks.

The "positively challenged" motivational profile describes individuals with a competitive excellence orientation, coupled with low anxiety. Individuals with this profile are poised to take up challenges and opportunities that will allow them to express their superiority over others, and yet remain relatively free of internal distress related to possible failure (Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997).

A "kiasu" motivational profile, on the other hand, is characterized by high competitive excellence as well as high anxiety (Ang, Tan & Ng, 2000). Individuals with this profile are energized by both the positive as well as negative drives of achievement, thereby resulting in a tense and "high-strung" state (Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). Because of the presence of oppositional forces, the desirability of this profile is mixed. Kanfer and Heggestad (1997)

remarked that although the strong achievement tendency represents a positive characteristic for organizations, the strong trait anxiety may preclude goal accomplishment, and at times, give rise to motivational paralysis or demand additional managerial or co-worker support.

In hypothesizing the configurational effects of motivational traits on the outcome behaviors, we focus on the “kiasu” profile, for two primary reasons. First, as Kanfer and Heggstad (1997) observed and as we discussed earlier, the desirability of this motivational pattern is perhaps the most ambivalent, compared to the other three profiles.

Second and more importantly, our study, conducted in Singapore, provides an opportune context to examine the “kiasu” profile because it closely mirrors the “kiasu” psyche typical of the Singaporean worker (Ang et al., 2000; Bian & Ang, 1997). The “kiasu” syndrome, which literally means the fear of losing out to others (in dialect), is a prevalent mentality in Singapore that comprises the drive to be better than others (i.e., competitive excellence) and the fear of failing or losing out (Ang et al., 2000; Li & Fang, 2002). As such, it echoes the motivational tendencies of the “kiasu” profile, and has been similarly noted for its ambivalent impact in the workplace. One positive outcome is that the “kiasu” psyche drives employees in Singapore to go beyond their in-role job specifications (Ang et al., 2000). On the flip side however, the fear of failing and losing out gives rise to a great aversion to failures and mistakes, thus contributing to less risk-taking behavior and more conformity (Li & Fang, 2002).

In spite of the prevalence of this motivational profile in Singapore, and the rising concern over its implications for the Singaporean worker, the “kiasu” syndrome has not received much systematic empirical research. Our study therefore represents an initial test of the nation’s widely acknowledged psyche, anchored on the motivational trait theory.

Specifically, we hypothesize that individuals possessing the “kiasu” motivational profile will exhibit more self-development OCB compared to those with the “worry” or the “apathy” profile. This is because individuals with the “worry” and “apathy” profiles lack the competitive drive to out-perform others, and are therefore unlikely to strive to enhance their value to the organization through self-developmental activities.

However, compared to individuals with the “positively challenged” profile, those with the “kiasu” profile are likely to exhibit less self-development OCB as a result of their inhibition arising from fear of failing, either in the learning process, or in applying their newly acquired expertise to their work. Moreover, their preoccupation with the fear of losing out to others in their in-role duties is likely to cause them to channel some resources away from voluntary, extra-role activities, unlike the more adventurous spirit of the “positively challenged” profile. Accordingly, we propose that

- H5:** Individuals with the “kiasu” profile will exhibit more self-development OCB than those with the “apathy” profile and the “worry” profile, but less than those with the “positively challenged” profile.

For in-role performance, we expect individuals with the “kiasu” profile to emphasize more on in-role performance than their “apathy” counterparts who are largely unconcerned with their jobs. Likewise, we predict that the “kiasu” profile will place greater emphasis on in-role performance than the “positively challenged” profile, since the fear of failing in one’s mandated job duties is more salient to individuals with the “kiasu” profile, causing them to conform strictly to the explicit requirements of their jobs.

By a similar logic, individuals with the “worry” profile are expected to exhibit greater in-role performance compared to those with the “kiasu” profile, given their intense preoccupation with avoiding failures in their routine course of work, and their relatively lower focus on outperforming others. Although the “kiasu” profile shares the same concern of failure in routine, in-role performance, its concurrent emphasis on achievement is likely to cause one to channel some resources from emphasizing strictly on in-role requirements to focusing on other extra-role behaviors. Accordingly, we propose that

- H6:** Individuals with the “kiasu” profile will exhibit more in-role performance than those with the “apathy” profile and the “positively challenged” profile, but less than those with the “worry” profile.

## METHOD

### Sample and Procedure

Participants were 464 professionals working in Singapore, with an average age of 32 years (*s.d.* = 7.34) and full-time work experience of 9 years (*s.d.* = 7.32). Forty-five percent (*n*=209) were male and 62% (*n*=287) held at least a Bachelor's degree. Professional backgrounds of participants included engineering (18%), accounting, banking and finance (16%), medical and healthcare (12%), information technology (10%), management (9%), and education and research (9%). The average tenure with the organization was 5 years (*s.d.* = 5.02).

Data was collected with the help of a group of Masters of Business Administration students in the Nanyang Business School, Singapore. These volunteers served as our distribution contacts, and were asked to distribute the surveys to their colleagues and friends. Respondents to the surveys were given the choice of either returning their surveys directly to us in self-addressed envelopes, or through our MBA distribution contacts.

### Measures

#### *Self-development OCB*

Three items, based on George and Brief's (1992) definition, were used to assess self-development OCB behaviors. A sample item was “Seek out assignments that enhance my value to this employer.” Items were answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=Not at all, to 5=To a great extent. Cronbach's alpha was .80.

#### *In-role Performance*

Three items, adapted from items in Rousseau's (2000) psychological contracts inventory that tapped at a very narrow view of the employment contract (emphasizing performing in-role duties), were used to assess in-role performance. A sample item was “I only perform

specific duties I have agreed to when hired." Items were answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=Not at all, to 5=To a great extent. Cronbach's alpha was .76.

### *Competitive Excellence and Anxiety*

These motivational traits were measured with the short form of the Motivational Trait Questionnaire (MTQ) developed by Heggstad and Kanfer (Heggstad & Kanfer, 1999; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2000). All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

An exploratory factor analysis of the original 32 motivational trait items with the 6 outcome behavioral items suggested some motivational trait items be dropped because of poor primary loadings (factor loading of less than .60), or high cross-loadings (difference in loadings of less than .20).

After eliminating these items, 10 items were retained for competitive excellence and 11 items for anxiety. Sample items assessing competitive excellence were "It is important for me to outperform my co-workers," "I like to turn things into a competition," and "I strive to do my job better than the people I work with." Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Sample items assessing anxiety were "I lose sleep because I am troubled by thoughts of failure," "I worry about how others will view my work performance," and "When working on important projects, I am constantly fearful that I will make a mistake." Cronbach's alpha was .89.

### *Configurations of Competitive Excellence and Anxiety*

Tests of the configurational hypotheses required the construction of the four different profiles of motivational traits as illustrated in Figure 1. To do so, we conducted the K-means Cluster Analyses (SPSS version 11.5) on the two dimensions of competitive excellence and anxiety, specifying a 4-cluster solution.

Results of the cluster analyses supported our typology, with cluster means conforming to the expected profiles of competitive excellence and anxiety. Table 1 presents the mean scores for the two dimensions for each of the four profiles. Specifically, cluster 1 (n=76) represented the "apathy" profile (competitive = 2.67, anxiety = 2.50), cluster 2 (n=131) the "worry" profile (competitive = 3.58, anxiety = 4.24), cluster 3 (n=117) the "positively challenged" profile (competitive = 4.81, anxiety = 3.04), and cluster 4 (n=140) the "kiasu" profile (competitive = 5.11, anxiety = 4.91).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Motivational Trait Profiles \***

	Motivational Trait Profiles			
	"Apathy" (Low Comp – Low Anx) n=76	"Worry" (Low Comp – High Anx) n=131	"Positively Challenged" (High Comp – Low Anx) n=117	"Kiasu" (High Comp – High Anx) n=140
Competitive Excellence	2.67 (.71)	3.58 (.60)	4.81 (.65)	5.11 (.63)
Anxiety	2.50 (.65)	4.24 (.63)	3.04 (.67)	4.91 (.63)
Age	33.68 (8.02)	32.92 (7.70)	31.28 (5.92)	30.42 (7.39)
Gender (% male)	43%	37%	62%	40%

\* Figures in cells are mean scores. Standard deviations in parentheses.



### **Control Variables**

To rule out the influence of demographic factors on the outcome variables of self-development OCB and in-role performance, we included age and gender as control variables in all our regression analyses. We did not include professional background as a control since we had no reason to believe that it would affect the outcome variables. Results of ANOVA analyses conducted with professional background as the independent variable confirmed that it did not account for significant variance in both self-development OCB [ $F(12, 447) = .96, p = ns$ ] and in-role performance [ $F(12, 449) = 1.39, p = ns$ ].

### **Analytic Strategy**

Hierarchical regressions were used to test for all hypotheses. For dimensional hypotheses (H1 – H4), we regressed the control and independent variables separately onto the outcome variables of self-development OCB and in-role performance. Specifically, we entered the control variables in the first step, followed by competitive excellence and anxiety in the second step. This allows for the assessment of the unique variance in the outcome explained by each of the two motivational traits, over and above the variance explained by the demographic variables.

For the configurational hypotheses (H5-H6), we adopted the dummy-variable coding strategy advocated by Cohen and Cohen (1983). Essentially, this strategy requires the coding of three dichotomous dummy variables to represent the four types of profile, the fourth type being implicitly recognized as the “reference group.” Given our current focus on the “kiasu” psyche of the typical Singaporean, we designated the third cluster (the “kiasu” profile) to be the reference group in our analyses. The coding system for the other three types of motivational trait profiles was as follows: the first dummy variable was coded “1” for individuals with the “apathy” profile, and “0” for the other profiles; the second variable was coded “1” for the “worry” profile, and “0” for the rest; the third variable was coded “1” for the “positively challenged” profile, and “0” for the rest. Thus, individuals belonging to the “kiasu” profile received a “0” score for all the three dummy variables. This system of coding implicitly allows a comparison of the profile-outcome relationship for each of the three profiles with that of the “kiasu” profile. Hence, the regression coefficient of a dummy variable expresses the difference in the correlation with the outcome variable, between the profile represented by that dummy variable versus the “kiasu” profile.

## **RESULTS**

Descriptive statistics and inter-item correlations are presented in Table 2. As we expected, self-development OCB and in-role performance are significantly negatively correlated with each other, albeit at a small magnitude ( $r = -.12, p < .01$ ). Interestingly, the motivational traits of competitive excellence and anxiety in our Singapore sample are found to be positively correlated ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), an opposite finding from the negative trend generally reported in studies conducted in the United States (e.g., see Kanfer and Heggstad, 1997).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Item Correlations

	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-development OCB	3.56	0.86	(.80)				
2. In-role Performance	2.22	0.96	-.12**	(.76)			
3. Competitive Excellence	4.20	1.12	.20**	.13**	(.88)		
4. Anxiety	3.85	1.12	-.12*	.16**	.31**	(.89)	
5. Age	31.88	7.34	-.01	-.09*	-.17**	-.11*	--
6. Gender	1.55	0.50	-.10*	-.03	-.12**	.18**	.12*

†  $p < .10$ .\*  $p < .05$ .\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Note: Sample size ranges from 460 to 464. Figures in parentheses are Cronbach's Alphas.

Hypotheses 1-4, based on the dimensional approach, predict that competitive excellence will be positively related to self-development OCB but negatively related to in-role performance, while anxiety will exhibit the opposite pattern of relationships with the two outcomes. OLS regression results presented in Table 3 support three out of the four predictions.

Table 3. Results of Regressions for Dimensional Hypotheses (H1-H4)

Predictor Var	Dependent Variable			
	Self-Development OCB		In-Role Performance	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	-.02	.01	-.09*	-.07
Gender	-.10*	-.04	-.04	-.06
Competitive Excellence		.26**		.07
Anxiety		-.19**		.14**
F	2.35*	9.45**	2.24	4.74**
$\Delta F$		16.39**		7.19**
$R^2$	.01	.08	0.10	.04
$\Delta R^2$		.07		.03

†  $p < .10$ .\*  $p < .05$ .\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Specifically, controlling for the effects of age and gender, competitive excellence was positively related to self-development OCB ( $\beta = .26, p < .01$ ), but not significantly related to in-role performance ( $\beta = .07, p = ns$ ). Hence, H1 was supported but not H2.

Anxiety, on the other hand, was found to be negatively related to self-development OCB ( $\beta = -.19, p < .01$ ) and positively related to in-role performance ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ), thus supporting H3 and H4.

Turning to the configurational approach, H5 predicts that the “kiasu” profile will exhibit more self-development OCB than those the “apathy” profile and the “worry” profile, but less than those with the “positively challenged” profile.

OLS regression results, presented in Table 4, partially support this hypothesis. Only the “positively challenged” profile was shown to exhibit significantly more self-development OCB compared to the reference group of the “kiasu” profile ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ). Although the negative beta coefficients for the “apathy” and the “worry” profile are consistent with our prediction that individuals with these profile display less self-development OCB than those with the “kiasu” profile, they are not statistically significant.

**Table 4. Results of Regressions for Configurational Hypotheses (H5-H6)**

Predictor Var	Dependent Variable			
	Self-Development OCB		In-Role Performance	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	-.02	.00	-.09*	-.07
Gender	-.10*	-.06	-.04	-.04
Apathy		-.06		-.15**
Worry		-.07		-.08
Positively Challenged		.16**		-.06
F	2.35*	5.03**	2.24	2.44*
$\Delta F$		6.75**		2.55*
R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.05	0.10	.03
$\Delta R^2$		.04		.02

\* $p < .10$ .

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

H6 predicts that individuals with the “kiasu” profile will exhibit greater in-role performance than those with the “apathy” profile and the “positively challenged” profile, but less than those with the “worry” profile. As with H5, results in Table 4 demonstrate only partial support.

Individuals with the “apathy” profile were found to exhibit significantly lower in-role performance than their counterparts with the “kiasu” profile ( $\beta = -.15, p < .01$ ). The negative beta coefficient for the “positively challenged” profile ( $\beta = -.06, p = ns$ ), while non-significant, was also consistent with our hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION

This chapter purports to apply an established personality perspective of OCB to a new model of constructs, and in so doing, seeks to make two contributions to the extant literature. First, we aim to expand the nomological network of OCB by examining constructs that are pertinent to the field of study, but have not received much attention. Specifically, while the tradition of research has focused on the Big Five and general affectivity as antecedents to a few mainstream OCBs (e.g., altruism, compliance, courtesy, etc.), our research examines the

role of individuals' motivational traits in determining their self-development OCB – a form of OCB that merits serious attention in today's complex and dynamic environment.

Second, we advance an alternative approach to the study of personality traits in the field of OCB by applying configurational theory, which proposes a more holistic view of the individual. Accordingly, we offer a typology of motivational trait profiles ("worry," "apathy," "positively challenged" and "kiasu") that has demonstrated some impact on our criterion variables, and holds promise for other organization-relevant outcomes.

Below, we elaborate on our findings from both the dimensional and configurational approaches, and discuss their implications for research and practice.

### **Dimensions of Competitive Excellence and Anxiety**

Results for the dimensional hypotheses are largely consistent with our predictions that competitive excellence orientation fosters self-development OCB, while anxiety inhibits such proactive behaviors. With respect to the larger body of research on these motivational traits, our findings on anxiety conform to the general trend of evidence that points to the debilitating effects of the avoidance orientation. For competitive excellence, our results add to the debate on whether a competitive orientation is desirable for learning (e.g., Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991; Harackiewicz et al., 1997). It should be noted that while our results suggest that competitive individuals are more likely to proactively engage in developmental activities, they do not suggest that these individuals actually learn and acquire the KSAs effectively. Thus, it is plausible that when actual learning outcomes are assessed, competitive individuals may not score as well as their less competitive counterparts. Nevertheless, the choice of engaging in developmental activities itself is an important criterion for organizations that require employees to constantly update their skills and knowledge.

For in-role performance, an opposite trend was illustrated, with individuals high in anxiety more likely to exhibit strict adherence to their specified duties compared to their less anxious counterparts. Contrary to our expectation that those with high competitive excellence will have lower in-role performance because they are likely to go beyond their specified job scope, and hence, do not adhere to performing in-role duties only, our results demonstrated that there was no relation between competitive excellence and in-role performance. This may suggest that the trait of competitive excellence is pertinent only to discretionary behaviors that serve to elevate an individual's standing above the rest, and not as relevant for behaviors that merely comply to the minimal standards of performance.

### **Configurations of Competitive Excellence and Anxiety**

One highlight of this study is to provide an alternative and novel perspective in viewing personality traits. Based on the underlying dimensions of competitive excellence and anxiety, we propose that individuals may be classified as having one of the four motivational trait profiles, namely "apathy," "worry," "positively challenged," and "kiasu."

Our empirical results, collected in Singapore, demonstrate promising potential for the configurational approach. Results of our cluster analyses surfaced four groups of individuals with motivational traits that corroborate with our proposed profiles. More interestingly, the "kiasu" profile which is the largest group represented in the sample, maps to the Singaporean

psyche of "kiasu-ism" that has recently received a lot of high-level media attention in Singapore, as well as increasing research interest (e.g., Ang et al., 2000; Bian & Ang, 1997; Hwang, et al., 2002; Li & Fang, 2002). Thus, our results underscore the practical relevance of the configurational approach.

In addition, interesting and important insights can be obtained by comparing results from the dimensional and configurational approaches. For instance, results obtained from the dimensional hypotheses suggest that individuals with high competitive excellence, and individuals with low anxiety, are more likely to display self-development OCB. This pattern of findings is reinforced by results under the configurational approach, which shows that individuals with the "positively challenged" profile (high competitive excellence and low anxiety) exhibit the most self-development OCB.

Beyond this affirmation however, the configurational approach provides an additional insight not offered by the dimensional approach. That is, the configurational approach demonstrates that the trait of competitive excellence or anxiety, by itself, may not sufficiently predict which individuals will proactively engage in developmental activities and which will not. This is suggested by the result that individuals with the "kiasu" profile (high competitive excellence, high anxiety) did not differ significantly from those with the "apathy" and "worry" profile in terms of their self-development OCB, probably because the positive energy of the competitive excellence element is nullified by the negative energy stemming from the anxiety component.

With regards to in-role performance, results from the dimensional hypotheses suggest that high anxiety individuals are more likely to adhere strictly to their in-role duties than their low anxiety counterparts. Again, results from the configurational approach partially affirm as well as diverge from the dimensional perspective. Configurational results demonstrate that while individuals with the "kiasu" profile exhibited greater in-role performance than those with the "apathy" profile, they did not differ from those with the "positively challenged" profile who supposedly possessed a less anxious disposition. This again implies that anxiety per se, may not distinguish individuals who adhere strictly to their in-role duties from those who adopt a broader view of their organizational role.

What do the results of our configurational analyses speak of the "kiasu" Singaporean? In general, our findings suggest more debilitating effects than positive ones, hence undergirding the rising national concern over the "kiasu" syndrome. Specifically, our results imply that from an organizational perspective, the "kiasu" individual may be less desirable than their "positively challenged" counterpart, who is just as competitive but more relaxed, insofar as self-development is concerned. However, we should note that while the "kiasu" profile may not prove to be positively challenged for proactive seeking of developmental activities, it may incline individuals to other forms of OCB such as conscientiousness or helping (Ang et al., 2000; Ang, Van Dyne & Begley, 2003; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998). As such, more research is needed to better understand the consequences of the "kiasu" profile, which are likely to comprise both beneficial as well as detrimental outcomes.

## Implications

This study offers several implications for research and practice. From a research standpoint, our study highlights the need for future studies to advance beyond the traditional framework of OCBs as espoused by Smith et al. (1983) and Organ (1988). We propose that

George and Brief's (1992) concept of self-development is a timely and critical form of OCB that merits more research attention in today's dynamic environment. While we acknowledge the importance of other new forms of OCB such as recent formulations of silence as OCB (Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003), we believe that employees' voluntary actions to enhance their KSAs may be one of the more immediate and effective ways of contributing to organizational effectiveness.

Another important implication for OCB research is our adoption of a more sophisticated mode of theorizing for the effects of personality traits. By juxtaposing results from the dimensional and configurational approaches, we have illustrated that the holistic mode of inquiry offers some additional insights that are not evident from the conventional reductionistic perspective.

From a practical standpoint, our study has important implications on organizational selection, and suggests that recruiting employees with the suitable motivational profile can have beneficial outcomes for organizational effectiveness. An organization that is dominated by employees with an "apathy" profile, for instance, is unlikely to survive very long in a fast-changing and aggressive environment.

Besides careful selection, organizations should also seek other management practices to improve the "motivational fit" of their job incumbents (Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). To overcome the debilitating impact of anxiety on performance, for instance, self-management or stress-management training programs can be offered to employees who possess extreme avoidance motivation. Or, fostering a more adventurous organizational climate that tolerates failure and encourages creativity may help alleviate the fear that high anxiety individuals have for making mistakes and losing out.

With reference to the behavior of self-development, organizations that are constantly undergoing technological changes should perhaps take a more proactive stance toward employees' skills development and enhancement. Rather than leaving entirely to employees' discretion to improve their skills, organizational initiatives such as fostering an "updating" climate (Kozlowski & Hults, 1987), may be imperative for the organization's survival.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Our study, being one of the first to use a configurational approach to examine the effects of motivational traits on self-development OCB, offers many suggestions and ideas for future research in the area. We describe several specific directions here.

First, future research should expound on the concept of self-development, both in terms of its nomological network, as well as its operationalization. A better conceptual understanding of the construct requires a detailed specification of the nature of the construct (such as its similarities and differences from other OCBs), a systematic theorizing of what factors (at different levels of analyses) are likely to cause the behavior, and what outcomes are likely to arise from the behavior.

Second, a more refined measure of self-development OCB is also needed. Our current three-item measure yields a reasonable alpha coefficient of .80. Future research may consider incorporating more items to ensure a more adequate sampling of items, as well as to achieve a higher internal consistency. Other studies should also replicate our hypotheses using data



from at least two sources. For example, one could use self-reported measures of motivational traits and other-reported measures of self-development OCB, such as those collected from peers and superiors.

Third, we urge future research investigating an individual difference model of OCB to supplement the traditional dimensional approach with the configurational approach. This additional perspective is likely to provide interesting insights that can guide and facilitate more precise theorizing of personality effects on OCBs. Take the two commonly researched personality traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness for instance. Future research should explore whether individuals exhibit systematic profiles of conscientiousness and agreeableness, and whether these profiles are associated with particular types of OCBs.

Future research could also explore the interests in new individual difference concepts such as core self evaluation (Judge & Bono 2001) or cultural intelligence (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, & Ng, 2004; Earley & Ang, 2003) and their associations with types of OCBs displayed in homogenous or culturally diverse works settings. Such investigations will enrich our current knowledge of the role of personality in OCB, and is certainly more aligned with the complex nature of human beings and workplace contexts (Ng & Ang, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Our study, using a sample of Singaporean professionals, affirms the role disposition plays in the domain of OCB. Specifically, our results demonstrate that individuals' orientation toward competition and anxiety have meaningful relationships with two distinct criteria: the extra-role behavior of self-development versus the strict adherence to in-role duties.

Far from reaching the end of its history, we believe that the dispositional view of OCB contains many exciting possibilities, particularly if scholars accept the challenge of the configurational approach, and venture into the rich theorizing that the perspective offers.

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