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The Influencing Factors of Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification and the Moderating Role of Voluntariness

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ABSTRACT: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to discretionary employee actions that extend beyond formal job requirements and support organizational effectiveness. Although Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Organizational Justice (OJ), and Organizational Commitment (OC) are established antecedents of OCB, less attention has been given to an integrated explanation of how these factors become translated into voluntary behavior. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT), this conceptual article proposes Organizational Identification (OI) as the central psychological mechanism linking POS, OJ, and OC with OCB. Favorable support and fair treatment strengthen the employee-organization exchange relationship, while commitment reflects psychological attachment; together these conditions can encourage employees to incorporate organizational membership into their self-concept. Stronger OI should then promote citizenship behavior because organizational welfare becomes personally meaningful. The framework also positions voluntariness as a moderator of the OI-OCB relationship. When employees perceive greater behavioral choice, identification is expected to translate more strongly into genuinely discretionary citizenship behavior; when voluntariness is low, external expectations may weaken this identity-based pathway. Eleven hypotheses specify direct effects, antecedents of OI, mediation, and moderation. The model contributes by integrating exchange- and identity-based explanations, distinguishing commitment from identification, and reconnecting OCB research with its defining element of discretion. Implications for management, empirical testing, and future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Citizenship Behavior; Perceived Organizational Support; Organizational Justice; Organizational Commitment; Organizational Identification; Voluntariness; Social Exchange Theory; Social Identity Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations depend on more than employees' formal task performance. Effective functioning also requires employees to assist colleagues, share knowledge, protect resources, cooperate across functional boundaries, respond constructively to change, and contribute effort when unexpected demands arise. These extra-role contributions are commonly described as Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Organ [1] emphasized its discretionary character and its contribution to organizational effectiveness, while Williams and Anderson [2] distinguished citizenship directed toward individuals (OCB-I) from citizenship directed toward the organization (OCB-O).

The relevance of OCB has grown as work becomes more knowledge-intensive, interdependent, and exposed to rapid technological and organizational change. Formal job descriptions cannot anticipate every situation in which initiative or cooperation is needed. Consequently, a central research problem is not merely whether employees can perform their assigned duties, but why they voluntarily choose to contribute beyond them.

Three employee-organization relationship constructs provide a strong starting point. POS captures the belief that the organization values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being [3]. OJ concerns perceived fairness in outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and information [4]. OC reflects employees' psychological attachment to the organization [5]. Each has been associated with positive workplace outcomes, yet direct-effect models do not fully explain the psychological process through which these conditions become discretionary behavior.

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This article proposes Organizational Identification (OI) as that process. Based on Social Identity Theory, OI occurs when organizational membership becomes part of an employee's self-definition [6]. Support, fairness, and commitment can make membership more valued and psychologically meaningful. When employees see the organization as part of who they are, actions that protect or advance the organization become self-relevant rather than merely responses to external rewards.

The framework further recognizes that identification may not always be expressed as OCB. Because citizenship behavior is defined by discretion, the employee's perception of voluntariness should matter. If extra-role contributions are experienced as freely chosen, identification can be expressed through authentic helping, conscientiousness, participation, and organizational support. If such behavior is heavily monitored or implicitly compulsory, the link between identity and citizenship may be weaker. Accordingly, the model integrates POS, OJ, and OC as antecedents, OI as mediator, OCB as outcome, and voluntariness as a boundary condition.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains employment relationships as ongoing exchanges of tangible and socio-emotional resources [7]. Beyond pay, employees receive recognition, respect, support, development opportunities, fair treatment, information, and trust. Favorable exchanges create reciprocal obligations that encourage employees to respond in ways that benefit the organization.

OCB is especially compatible with SET because employees retain discretion over extra-role contributions. Supportive treatment and fair processes can therefore be reciprocated through cooperation, helping, resource protection, and voluntary effort. Sustained positive exchanges may also strengthen commitment. Nevertheless, reciprocity alone does not explain why organizational interests may become part of employees' own psychological interests; this requires an identity perspective.

2.2 SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposes that individuals derive part of their self-concept from social-group membership [8]. In organizations, employees may come to define themselves as organizational members rather than simply individuals who work under a contract. Ashforth and Mael (1989) describe this as a sense of oneness with the organization.

OI is related to, but distinct from, organizational commitment. Commitment concerns attachment to and maintenance of the employee-organization relationship, whereas identification concerns self-definition [9]. An employee can value continued membership without making the organization central to identity. In the proposed framework, commitment therefore precedes identification: attachment can facilitate the deeper incorporation of organizational membership into the self-concept.

SET and SIT are complementary. SET explains how organizational treatment establishes favorable relationships and reciprocal motivation; SIT explains how repeated experiences of value, fairness, and attachment can transform organizational membership into identity. This combination provides a process through which external organizational conditions become internally meaningful and subsequently influence discretionary behavior.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

OCB represents contextual performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which formal work occurs. Organ's (1988) classic dimensions include altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. These behaviors range from assisting coworkers and preventing interpersonal problems to exceeding minimum standards, tolerating unavoidable inconvenience, and participating responsibly in organizational affairs.

Williams and Anderson's (1991) distinction between OCB-I and OCB-O clarifies the target of citizenship behavior. OCB-I benefits particular individuals, whereas OCB-O benefits the organization more directly. Both forms matter because effective organizations depend simultaneously on interpersonal cooperation and organization-oriented initiative.

The defining issue for the present framework is discretion. When an activity is formally required or enforced, it becomes difficult to interpret it as citizenship behavior. This makes perceived voluntariness theoretically important: the same outward action may represent authentic citizenship under conditions of choice but resemble compulsory role performance when employees believe they have little freedom not to perform it.

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IV. ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

4.1 PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND OCB

Employees form POS by interpreting organizational policies, managerial actions, recognition, resources, working conditions, and concern for well-being. Organizational Support Theory suggests that employees personify the organization and infer its intentions from such treatment. High POS therefore signals that employees are valued members rather than merely productive resources. Under SET, this support creates a reciprocal motivation to contribute beyond minimum requirements. Reviews and meta-analytic evidence show that POS is associated with favorable attitudes and behavioral outcomes [10], [11].

H1: Perceived Organizational Support has a positive effect on Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND OCB

OJ encompasses distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice [4]. Fair rewards and workloads, consistent procedures, respectful treatment, and adequate explanations communicate that employees have legitimate standing in the organization. Justice therefore strengthens trust and the quality of social exchange. Employees who experience fairness are more willing to reciprocate through citizenship, whereas perceived injustice can encourage them to restrict effort to formal obligations [12].

H2: Organizational Justice has a positive effect on Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

4.3 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND OCB

OC reflects employees' psychological relationship with the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguish affective, continuance, and normative commitment, with affective commitment especially relevant to discretionary contribution because employees who want to remain with an organization are more likely to regard its success as personally meaningful. Committed employees may therefore help colleagues, support initiatives, and protect organizational interests beyond immediate economic requirements [13], [14].

H3: Organizational Commitment has a positive effect on Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

V. ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

5.1 PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Support communicates inclusion, esteem, and organizational value. Employees who believe their contributions are recognized are more likely to view organizational membership positively and to reduce psychological distance from the organization. Because association with a supportive organization can enhance self-esteem, POS should encourage employees to see themselves as valued insiders and incorporate membership into their self-definition.

H4: Perceived Organizational Support has a positive effect on Organizational Identification.

5.2 ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Justice also conveys identity-relevant information. Fair procedures and respectful interpersonal treatment signal inclusion, status, and legitimate membership. Tyler and Lind's [15] relational perspective suggests that people use procedural treatment to infer their standing within groups. Repeated fairness should therefore strengthen OI, whereas injustice may lead employees to distance themselves psychologically from the organization even if they remain formally employed.

H5: Organizational Justice has a positive effect on Organizational Identification.

5.3 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Commitment and identification overlap in positive orientation but remain conceptually distinct. Commitment reflects attachment; identification reflects self-definition. Sustained affective attachment can increase the personal meaning of organizational values, objectives, symbols, and membership. Over time, employees who value continued membership may increasingly answer the question 'Who am I?' partly in organizational terms.

H6: Organizational Commitment has a positive effect on Organizational Identification.

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VI. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

OI is the central psychological mechanism of the framework. When organizational membership becomes part of the self-concept, organizational outcomes acquire personal significance. Helping coworkers supports the collective with which employees identify; protecting resources safeguards an entity incorporated into the self; and responsible participation affirms valued membership.

This identity-based mechanism differs from simple exchange. Employees may initially reciprocate favorable treatment because they feel an obligation to do so, but strong identification can make organization-supporting behavior self-expressive. Evidence summarized by Riketta [16] indicates meaningful relationships between OI and work attitudes and behaviors, supporting the expectation that stronger identification promotes discretionary contribution.

H7: Organizational Identification has a positive effect on Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

VII. THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

The framework proposes that OI partially mediates the effects of POS, OJ, and OC on OCB. Partial mediation is appropriate because exchange processes can produce direct citizenship responses, while identity formation provides an additional pathway through which organizational experiences become behavior.

7.1 OI AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN POS AND OCB

POS can generate OCB directly through reciprocity, but support also communicates recognition and inclusion. These experiences make organizational membership more attractive and self-relevant. The resulting sequence is support → valued membership → identification → citizenship. OI therefore explains how being supported can develop into seeing oneself as part of the organization and, subsequently, acting voluntarily for it.

H8: Organizational Identification mediates the positive relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

7.2 OI AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND OCB

Fair treatment does more than allocate desirable outcomes; it communicates respect and standing within the organizational community. Employees who infer valued membership from fair procedures and interactions should identify more strongly with the organization. Once organizational identity is strengthened, discretionary contribution becomes consistent with protecting a valued social identity.

H9: Organizational Identification mediates the positive relationship between Organizational Justice and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

7.3 OI AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND OCB

Commitment creates psychological attachment, while identification represents deeper integration of membership into the self. Employees who value their organizational relationship are more likely to internalize organizational values and membership. OI then supplies an identity-based reason for citizenship, transforming attachment into self-consistent discretionary behavior.

H10: Organizational Identification mediates the positive relationship between Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

VIII. VOLUNTARINESS AS A MODERATOR

Voluntariness refers to the perceived degree of free choice in performing an activity. Although the construct has been developed extensively in technology-adoption research [17], [18], its underlying logic is highly relevant to OCB because discretion is central to the citizenship concept.

OI provides internal motivation to act for organizational welfare, but voluntariness determines whether employees perceive sufficient behavioral freedom to express that motivation. Under high voluntariness, strongly identified employees can choose to help, cooperate, participate, and exceed minimum standards in ways that are consistent with their organizational identity. Under low voluntariness, similar activities may be experienced as expected, monitored, or compulsory, weakening the extent to which OI explains them.

The moderation argument therefore distinguishes motivation from opportunity for expression. It does not suggest that low-

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voluntariness settings eliminate OCB; rather, external pressures should account for a larger share of behavior, making the identity-to-citizenship relationship comparatively weaker.

H11: Voluntariness moderates the positive relationship between Organizational Identification and Organizational Citizenship Behavior, such that the relationship is stronger when voluntariness is high than when voluntariness is low.

IX. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The model integrates eleven hypotheses. POS, OJ, and OC have direct paths to OCB (H1-H3) and to OI (H4-H6). OI predicts OCB (H7) and mediates the three antecedent-OCB relationships (H8-H10). Voluntariness moderates the OI-OCB path (H11). The framework is therefore a partial-mediation model with second-stage moderation: organizational experiences and attachment shape organizational identity, identity promotes discretionary behavior, and voluntariness determines how strongly identity is expressed as behavior.

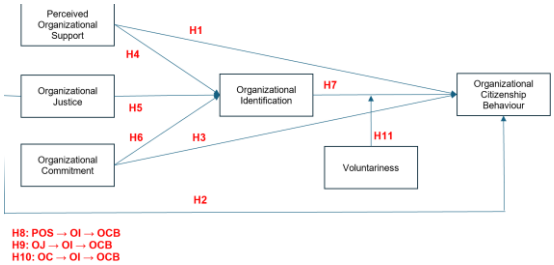

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

X. DISCUSSION

10.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The framework makes several contributions. First, it integrates support, justice, and commitment as distinct but complementary aspects of the employee-organization relationship. Considering them simultaneously allows future research to compare their relative effects rather than examining isolated antecedents.

Second, the model identifies OI as a coherent psychological mechanism linking organizational conditions with citizenship. SET explains reciprocal responses to favorable treatment, while SIT explains the internalization of organizational membership. Their integration suggests a progression from favorable exchange to identity formation and then to self-consistent discretionary behavior.

Third, the model clarifies the difference between commitment and identification. Commitment concerns attachment to the organization; identification concerns self-definition. Treating OC as an antecedent and OI as a mediator permits empirical testing of whether attachment promotes OCB partly because organizational membership becomes incorporated into the self.

Fourth, voluntariness restores attention to the discretionary element in the original OCB concept. The model proposes that identity-driven motivation is most likely to appear as citizenship when employees perceive genuine choice. This distinction may help explain why highly identified employees display different levels of OCB across organizational environments.

10.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Managers seeking sustainable OCB should focus on conditions that make voluntary contribution psychologically attractive rather than attempting to command extra-role behavior. POS can be strengthened through credible recognition, development opportunities, adequate resources, supportive supervision, and concern for employee well-being. Justice requires transparent procedures, equitable outcomes, respectful treatment, and sufficient explanations for decisions.

Commitment and identification should be developed through meaningful relationships rather than slogans or purely economic retention mechanisms. Career development, participation, trust, value alignment, inclusive practices, and a credible organizational purpose can help employees understand how their contributions connect with collective achievements.

The moderation proposition also warns against institutionalizing OCB too aggressively. When helping, mentoring, participation, or 'going the extra mile' becomes monitored or implicitly necessary for appraisal and promotion, employees may experience supposedly voluntary behavior as compulsory. Organizations should create opportunities and recognition for citizenship while preserving meaningful discretion.

10.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPIRICAL TESTING

The framework is suitable for quantitative validation using established measures. POS may be measured with instruments derived from Eisenberger et al. [3], OJ with Colquitt's [4] multidimensional scale, OC with Meyer and Allen's [5] framework, OI with instruments such as Mael

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and Ashforth [19], and OCB with Williams and Anderson [2].

Voluntariness requires careful contextualization because widely used measures originated in technology-adoption research. Items should capture perceived discretion over extra-role organizational behavior rather than technology use. Content validation, expert review, and pilot testing are therefore advisable before full data collection.

Structural Equation Modeling can evaluate the model. With PLS-SEM, the measurement model should first establish reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. H1-H7 can then be tested through structural paths; H8-H10 through bootstrapped specific indirect effects; and H11 through an OI × voluntariness interaction followed by simple-slope interpretation. A later extension could test conditional indirect effects, but moderated mediation should remain separate from the present eleven-hypothesis model unless formally incorporated.

XI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The framework is conceptual and therefore requires empirical validation. Cross-sectional surveys can provide an initial test, but longitudinal or time-lagged designs would offer stronger evidence regarding temporal ordering. Multiple-source measurement, including supervisor- or coworker-rated OCB, could also reduce common-method concerns.

The model deliberately emphasizes POS, OJ, and OC for parsimony. Leadership, psychological safety, job autonomy, organizational culture, HR practices, supervisor support, and person–organization fit may provide additional explanations. Likewise, OI is treated as the central mediator even though engagement, trust, psychological ownership, perceived insider status, and job satisfaction may operate alongside it.

Voluntariness requires further conceptual and measurement development in the OCB context. Future research should determine whether technology-derived measures adequately capture discretion in citizenship behavior and whether voluntariness operates differently for OCB-I and OCB-O. Conditional indirect effects should also be examined because the proposed moderation logically implies that the mediated effects of POS, OJ, and OC may vary with voluntariness.

Future work should also consider the potential costs of citizenship. Excessive expectations may produce role overload, work–family conflict, impression-management pressure, or citizenship fatigue. High observed OCB combined with low voluntariness may therefore signal compulsory citizenship rather than healthy discretionary contribution. Finally, cross-cultural and cross-industry studies are needed because hierarchy, collectivism, regulation, and job autonomy may shape how employees interpret both identification and voluntariness.

XII. CONCLUSION

OCB remains essential because no formal role system can prescribe every behavior required for organizational effectiveness. A fuller explanation of citizenship must therefore address not only its organizational antecedents but also the psychological mechanism and contextual conditions through which those antecedents become voluntary action.

This article proposes that POS, OJ, and OC influence OCB directly and indirectly through OI. SET explains why supportive and fair treatment can generate reciprocal responses, while SIT explains how organizational membership can become incorporated into employees' self-concepts. Once employees identify strongly with the organization, supporting organizational welfare becomes personally meaningful and citizenship behavior can become an expression of identity.

Voluntariness defines the boundary of this identity mechanism. Identification may create willingness to contribute, but perceived freedom determines how strongly that willingness becomes genuinely discretionary behavior. The resulting framework therefore links organizational experience and attachment to organizational identity, organizational identity to citizenship, and voluntariness to the strength of the identity–behavior relationship. Empirical testing of H1-H11 can establish the explanatory value of this integrated exchange-identity model and clarify when organizational identification is most likely to produce authentic citizenship behavior.

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