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Understanding Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Impression Management and the Moderating Role of Power Distance

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Abstract

This study examines the association between impression management and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), along with the extent to which reciprocity, honesty–humility, and job insecurity shape this relationship. Using data collected from 710 contractual faculty members employed in public and private universities across Southern Punjab, Pakistan, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate respondents' behavioral inclinations. The findings indicate that impression management mediates the relationships between OCB and its antecedents, while power distance (PD) moderates the link between impression management and OCB. As anticipated, reciprocity, honesty–humility, and job insecurity exhibited significant positive effects on OCB through the mediating mechanism. However, job insecurity demonstrated a negative direct association with both the mediator and OCB. Moreover, no significant mean differences were observed between faculty members from public and private institutions. The study outlines key implications for policymakers and offers directions for future research.

Keywords: Power Distance, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Reciprocity, Job Insecurity, Impression Management, Honesty–Humility

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Introduction

As we enter a new decade marked by rapid changes in the business environment, organizational success depends not only on financial outcomes but also on the strength of human resources. At the same time, factors such as innovation, knowledge assets, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and evolving structures represent major challenges for firms. OCB is widely regarded as a key element of employee attitudes that influences organizational growth and employees' wellbeing. It enables firms to adapt to changing conditions and attract and retain talented employees by fostering a supportive organizational atmosphere [1].

Researchers have identified numerous antecedents of OCB, including interactional justice [2], job satisfaction [3], transformational leadership [4], task characteristics [5], organizational justice [6], cultural influences [7], civic citizenship and covenantal relationships [8], dispositional traits [6, 8], and contextual factors [9].

Despite progress, business literature indicates a lack of empirical evidence connecting job insecurity, honesty–humility, reciprocity, impression management, and OCB. This study aims to fill this gap by examining these predictors, with impression management as a mediator and power distance as a moderator. Katz [10] argued that organizations cannot predict all changes or fully regulate human variability, which further underscores the relevance of OCB.

Empirical studies show that OCB benefits organizations in several ways—improving customer loyalty, accountability mechanisms, performance quality, transaction efficiency, complaint handling, and even salary outcomes [11, 12]. OCB enhances both employee relations and organizational effectiveness by reducing the need for excess resources and facilitating



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coordination across workgroups. Impression management may enhance these behaviors, ultimately improving performance. This raises the question of how employees create a professional environment that improves their own and others' work experience. Prior research also shows a strong link between HEXACO personality traits and OCB [13].

Behavioral researchers argue that the HEXACO model's six dimensions offer greater conceptual diversity than the Big Five. Notably, Honesty–Humility—the sixth factor—plays a significant role in predicting OCB [14]. Thus, it is important to understand factors that shape citizenship behavior. Consequently, the study aims to: (1) identify the factors influencing OCB among contractual teaching staff in public and private universities in southern Punjab, Pakistan; (2) examine whether impression management mediates the relationship between OCB and its predictors; and (3) assess whether power distance moderates the link between impression management and OCB. This research additionally contributes to the literature on impression management and OCB by establishing career level as a significant antecedent and by expanding understanding of impression management as a moderating factor.

Literature Review

Impression management (IM) refers to the deliberate effort to shape others' perceptions of a person, object, or event by controlling information during social interactions. Although extensive research has explored links between IM and OCB, conclusive evidence remains limited. Several studies indicate a relationship between the two (e.g., Breevaart & de Vries [15]). Leaders, in particular, influence employees' citizenship behaviors; employees often respond to leaders' positive self-presentations with loyalty and organizational commitment. Favorable impressions created by leaders can enhance subordinates' OCB and retention, while distant or indifferent leadership may lead to higher turnover.

Homans [16] emphasized the role of individual behavior and interpersonal dynamics—including power, conformity, status, leadership, and justice. In this context, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that people's beliefs and attitudes shape their intentions, which in turn influence behavior [17]. Positive attitudes tend to translate into desirable behaviors when sufficient behavioral control exists [18]. TPB also explains the attitude–behavior gap by introducing behavioral control as a key determinant.

Honesty–Humility (HH) and OCB

The Honesty–Humility trait supports effective organizational communication, enabling leaders to interact collaboratively with employees without resorting to coercion [19]. HH is increasingly viewed as a positive leadership attribute that fosters commitment and reduces workplace bullying [20, 21]. It also encourages gender-inclusive interactions and strengthens employees' sense of organizational citizenship [22]. Humility helps employees accept others' viewpoints, while honesty promotes ethical conduct and reduces negative behaviors [23]. Therefore:

H1: Honesty–Humility (HH) positively influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Honesty–Humility (HH) and impression management (IM)

Pfathheicher *et al.* [24] explain that the HH trait reflects generosity, sincerity, and trustworthiness. Individuals who behave inconsistently with expected levels of generosity or integrity may create a negative impression, whereas those who align with high HH traits cultivate a positive one. Thus, employees with high HH may engage in impression management to maintain or enhance others' perceptions of them.

Shannonhouse *et al.* [25] further argue that leaders often shape employees' impressions through humility-based behaviors. The degree of humility displayed by leaders influences how subordinates perceive and respond to them. Therefore:

H2: Honesty–Humility (HH) has a positive impact on Impression Management (IM).

Impression management (IM) as a mediator between HH and OCB

Pfathheicher *et al.* [24] highlighted that the way leaders and employees present themselves plays a critical role in shaping OCB. Their work contrasts dishonest behavior with the Honesty–Humility (HH) trait, suggesting that individuals high in HH tend to create more favorable impressions, which then support higher levels of citizenship behavior. Personality-based impressions also help organizations evaluate and select employees and leaders [15]. These insights support the following hypothesis:

H3: Impression Management (IM) mediates the relationship between Honesty–Humility (HH) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Job insecurity (JI) and OCB

Van Wyk and Piennar [26] argued that job insecurity stems from both personal characteristics and workplace conditions. Subsequent studies emphasize its numerous consequences: it affects employees' wellbeing, attitudes, and behaviors [27, 28]. Job insecurity can have immediate and long-term effects, contributing to stress, burnout, reduced health, absenteeism,

turnover, and lower work quality [29, 30]. Although some workers respond by increasing effort [31], overall evidence suggests a harmful effect on citizenship behavior. Thus:

H4: Job Insecurity (JI) negatively influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Job insecurity (JI), IM, and OCB

A competitive workplace demands consistent performance and a favorable professional image. Probst *et al.* [32] found that personality and impression-building play a key role in career stability. Employees who successfully project a positive image are more likely to be viewed as valuable and secure within the organization. IM therefore becomes a behavioral mechanism through which job insecurity shapes citizenship actions [33]. When employees fear job loss, they may intentionally engage in impression-enhancing behaviors to demonstrate loyalty and commitment, which can translate into OCB. Hence:

H5: Job Insecurity (JI) negatively affects Impression Management (IM).

H6: Impression Management (IM) mediates the relationship between Job Insecurity (JI) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Reciprocity (Rec), OCB, and IM

Employees' perceptions that their organization fulfills its obligations often lead to favorable attitudes and constructive behaviors. For instance, Turnley *et al.* [34] showed that such perceptions can enhance task performance. When workers believe their employer has upheld the psychological contract, they are more inclined to contribute beyond formal job roles [23, 35]. OCB increases when employees feel the organization reciprocates their effort fairly [36]. Thus:

H7: Reciprocity (Rec) positively affects Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Reciprocity also aligns with impression-building. Organizations tend to reward employees who sustain a professional and positive image [37], which suggests that employees may engage in IM to maintain mutually beneficial exchanges.

H8: Reciprocity (Rec) positively influences Impression Management (IM).

Reciprocity and OCB mediated by IM

Employees often base their work contributions on the treatment they receive from supervisors [38]. When leaders demonstrate respect and professionalism, employees tend to emulate these behaviors. Reciprocation creates a cycle in which employees adopt behaviors that help sustain a positive image and professional exchange [37]. To maintain these exchanges, individuals may express personality traits or behaviors valued by the organization [39]. This supports the following hypothesis:

H9: Impression Management (IM) mediates the relationship between Reciprocity (Rec) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Power distance (PD) as a moderator

Hofstede's [40] work suggests that although cultural values may guide people's expectations, individuals can adapt and respond creatively to contextual demands. Jones [41] further argued that people are not confined by cultural norms but can modify or resist them. Considering these views:

H10: Power Distance (PD) moderates the relationship between Impression Management (IM) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Supportive and encouraging leadership plays a central role in employee retention [15]. When leaders fail to provide motivation or guidance, employees often struggle to remain engaged within the organization. The extent to which leaders display these supportive behaviors shapes employees' impressions of them, and these impressions, in turn, influence the development of OCB. Zhou's work further suggests that reduced turnover, stronger feelings of obligation, and higher levels of OCB stem from leaders who demonstrate modesty and moral integrity. Such positive leader traits elicit reciprocal, constructive behaviors from employees. Through this interaction process, leaders' favorable impressions help strengthen the relational bond with subordinates. Based on this rationale:

H11: Impression Management (IM) positively influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).

Figure 1 presents all hypothesized relationships in the study's conceptual research framework.

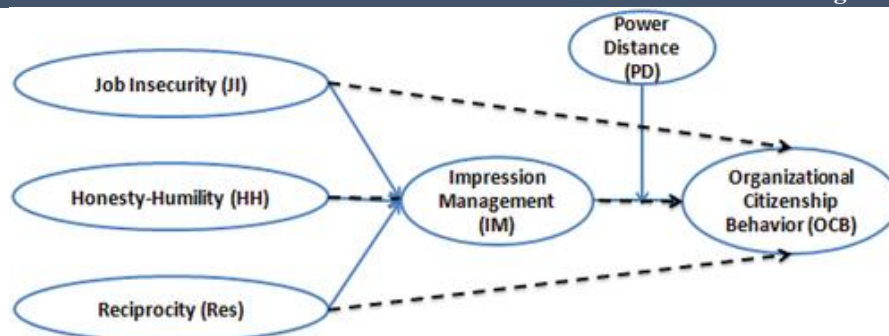


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Methodology

This study focuses on contractual (non-tenured) university faculty as the unit of analysis. Prior research on antecedents of OCB has largely concentrated on tenured academics, leaving limited insight into how vulnerable and potentially insecure non-tenured faculty develop intentions to engage in OCB. Moreover, the set of relationships examined in this study has not yet been investigated within a developing-country context. To address this gap, the study draws on Mehren's [42] definition of contractual employees as individuals employed through a written or verbal agreement that is legally enforceable.

The research was conducted in the Southern Punjab region of Pakistan. The education sector was intentionally selected due to widespread evidence of stress, dissatisfaction, and reduced OCB among teaching faculty in this region [43]. Data were gathered from academic staff working in both public and private universities using a self-administered questionnaire, which was adapted from established instruments in prior studies [44, 45]. Respondents' demographic characteristics are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographics analysis

Measure	Data	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	502	71
	Female	208	30
Age	25–35	415	58
	35–45	250	35
	>45	45	6.3
Marital Status	Single	299	42
	Married	411	58
Education	Masters	570	80
	PhD.	29	4
	Others	111	16
Income	20k–40k	221	31
	41k–60k	309	44
	>60k	180	25
Type of University	Public	480	68
	Private	230	32

An online questionnaire was distributed through a web link to 826 faculty members, and 710 completed surveys were returned. Using Bentler and Chou's [46] sampling guideline—which recommends multiplying the number of scale items by a factor between 5 and 10—the minimum required sample size for this study was 690 (69 items × 10). The achieved response rate was 86%, representing university faculty across Southern Punjab.

Validated measurement scales were employed for all constructs. Impression Management was assessed using the 22-item scale developed by Bolino and Turnley [47], originally grounded in the work of Jones and Pittman [48]. Reciprocity was measured with four items from Kim *et al.* [39]. Organizational Citizenship Behavior was evaluated with the 24-item scale created by Podsakoff *et al.* [3]. The Honesty–Humility dimension was captured using the 10-item HEXACO scale by Ashton and Lee (2009). Job Insecurity was measured using four items from Vander Elst *et al.* [49]. Power Distance was assessed with the five-item scale adapted from Chelariu *et al.* [50].

Data Analysis and Results

The dataset exhibited acceptable normality for subsequent analyses. According to Ghasemi and Zahediasl [51], large samples (exceeding 200–300 cases) reduce concerns over deviations from normality, allowing the use of parametric techniques even

when strict distributional assumptions are not fully met. Given that the current study's sample size exceeds 200, normality violations were not considered problematic. Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation of variables

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev	HH	JIs	Rc	IM	PD	OCB
Honesty-Humility	2.137	0.758	1					
Job Insecurity	2.05	0.768	0.385	1				
Reciprocity	2.58	0.975	0.209	0.094	1			
Impression Management	2.541	0.946	0.318	0.428	0.209	1		
Power Distance	2.237	0.858	0.401	0.082	0.064	0.148	1	
OCB	2.04	0.865	0.384	0.261	0.37	0.182	0.189	1

Data analysis began with SPSS (Version 23), which was used to examine demographic information and conduct preliminary diagnostics. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values, with the results presented in **Table 3**. All VIF scores were below the threshold of 10, and tolerance values were below 1.0, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern for this study.

Table 3. Collinearity statistics

Name of the Construct	Tolerance	VIF
Honesty-Humility	0.595	2.534
Job Insecurity	0.612	1.231
Reciprocity	0.844	0.543
Impression Management	0.445	4.173

Outcome of exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

EFA is conducted for factor identification and data reduction. EFA's results are provided below in **Table 4**.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's test

	HH	JIs	Rc	IM	PD	OCB
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.807	0.811	0.955	0.717	0.927	0.932
Approx. Chi-Square	386.16	451.37	404.75	560.87	316.14	531.51
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity df	19	28	8	23	26	6
Sig.	0	0	0	0	0	0

To confirm that the scale items accurately captured the theoretical constructs, construct validity was assessed as a fundamental step in the analysis, following the recommendations of Hair *et al.* [52]. The results of this assessment are presented in **Table 5**. As noted earlier, the questionnaire's content validity had already been established. Measures of convergent and discriminant validity are reported in **Table 6**.

Table 5. Overall measurement model fit

Measure	Value
CMIN/DF	1.431
TLI	.911
GFI	.917
CFI	.942
IFI	.901
RMSEA	.06
HOELTER	655

Table 6. Validity, composite reliability and AVE values (Table view)

Name of Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Honesty-Humility	0.869	0.602	0.576	0.234
Job Insecurity	0.739	0.469	0.229	0.415
Reciprocity	0.808	0.437	0.240	0.162
Impression Management	0.875	0.735	0.529	0.330
Power Distance	0.769	0.639	0.229	0.415
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.739	0.529	0.329	0.415

Direct and indirect effects

Tables 7 and 8 present the structural paths estimated with and without the mediator, indicating evidence of partial mediation. Several predictors—namely Honesty–Humility (HH), Job Insecurity (JIs), and Reciprocity (Rc)—exert significant effects on OCB when Impression Management (IM) is included as a mediating variable. The mediating variable (IM) itself also shows a positive and significant relationship with OCB. All reported paths were significant at $p < .05$, as shown in **Tables 7 and 8**. Specifically, HH demonstrated a significant direct effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < .05$). Both JIs and Rc also showed significant direct relationships with OCB ($\beta = -0.037$ and 0.121 , respectively; $p < .05$). When IM was introduced as a mediator, Rc, HH, and JIs all remained significant predictors of OCB via IM ($\beta = 0.112$, 0.024 , and 0.073 ; $p < .05$). Additionally, IM exerted a significant and positive effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < .05$). All independent variables were also significantly associated with IM ($p < .05$; $\beta = 0.210$, 0.043 , -0.181).

Table 7. Direct effect

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta	P Value	Status
Honesty-Humility	Impression Management	0.210	.039	Supported
Reciprocity	Impression Management	0.043	.001	Supported
Job Insecurity	Impression Management	−0.181	.002	Supported
Impression Management	OCB	0.346	.002	Supported
Honesty-Humility	OCB	0.357	.001	Supported
Reciprocity	OCB	0.071	.033	Supported
Job Insecurity	OCB	−0.141	.022	Supported

Table 8. Indirect effect

Indep.Variable	Mediator	Dep. Variable	Beta	P Value	Status
Honesty-Humility	Impression Management	OCB	0.024	.033	Supported
Reciprocity	Impression Management	OCB	0.112	.001	Supported
Job Insecurity	Impression Management	OCB	0.073	.000	Supported

Conditional effect

The conditional effect of IM on OCB was examined using Power Distance (PD) as a moderating variable. To compute the interaction term, both IM and PD were first standardized by converting them into mean-centered values. These standardized scores were then multiplied to generate the interaction variable representing the conditional effect. Regression analysis was subsequently conducted to test the moderating role of PD. The results, presented in **Table 9**, indicate that IM has a significant positive effect on OCB both independently and when considered in interaction with PD.

Table 9. Indirect effects (Dependent variable: OCB)

Model	Coefficients	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Constant	0.935	0	1.888	1.983
	−0.024			
IM_St	0.086	0.033	0.007	0.164
	−0.04			
PD_St	0.014	0.001	0.081	0.053
	−0.034			
PD_x_IM	0.045	0.016	0.074	0.165
	−0.061			

Comparison between two set of samples (public & private)

A t-test is widely regarded as an appropriate statistical procedure for comparative analyses [53]. Accordingly, an independent samples t-test was conducted in the present study, and the results are summarized in **Table 10**. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated that the F-value exceeded the .05 threshold, allowing interpretation based on the equal variances assumed results (upper row). Using this approach, the study examined whether a significant difference exists between public and private universities with respect to the OCB behavior of teaching faculty. The corresponding hypothesis is presented in **Table 10**.

Table 10. T-test statistics (public & private universities)

Group Statistics				
University Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OCB	Public	480	18.5028	5.62153
	Private	230	17.1003	5.76691
Independent Samples Test				
t-test for Equality of Means				

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Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of Difference		
										Lower	Upper
OCB	Equal variances assumed	0.6	0.6	0.8	1031	0.45	0.286	0.38	−0.46	1.032	
	Equal variances not assumed			0.7	608	0.46	0.286	0.384	−0.47	1.04	

Discussion

The present study sought to address an important gap by examining key determinants of OCB within the context of a developing country. After conducting all required statistical tests—including reliability, validity, normality, and multicollinearity assessments—the results confirm that OCB is a critical behavioral factor contributing to organizational success. The findings highlight the need for HR managers to foster satisfaction and commitment among employees to strengthen OCB. By examining contractual faculty—an underexplored population in OCB research—this study contributes novel evidence regarding the behavioral influences shaping OCB in academic institutions.

Because the study involved faculty from both public and private universities, the results further affirm the relevance of job-related attributes in predicting OCB. Impression Management (IM) was found to partially mediate the relationship between Reciprocity (Rec) and OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .112$). This aligns with prior research demonstrating similar positive mediation effects. Reciprocity also showed a significant direct effect on OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .071$), consistent with earlier findings such as those reported by Shaaban (2018). In addition, Reciprocity significantly predicted IM in a positive direction ($p < .05$, $\beta = .043$), which supports the outcomes reported by Krieg (2018).

Similarly, the mediation analysis revealed that IM partially mediated the relationship between Job Insecurity (JIs) and OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .073$). Interestingly, although JIs showed negative direct relationships with both IM ($p < .05$, $\beta = -0.181$) and OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = -0.141$), the mediated pathway was positive. This pattern is consistent with previous studies, where direct effects of JIs were negative but mediated effects through IM produced positive outcomes [31, 54].

Honesty–Humility (HH) emerged as a strong predictor of IM ($p < .05$, $\beta = .210$). This aligns with the argument of Pfattheicher *et al.* [24], who noted that individuals aiming to maintain a positive impression in the workplace must demonstrate high levels of HH. Moreover, HH also significantly improved OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .357$). This finding reinforces previous literature showing that HH fosters prosocial behaviors, reduces negative workplace conduct, and encourages positive engagement with the organization [21, 23].

Consistent with prior studies, IM had a strong positive impact on OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .346$). Podsakoff *et al.* [3] similarly argued that employees with favorable perceptions of organizational policies and management are more likely to demonstrate OCB. The moderation analysis further revealed that Power Distance (PD) significantly influenced OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .014$). As noted earlier, both IM and PD were standardized and used to compute an interaction term. The product of IM and PD also demonstrated a positive and significant moderating effect on OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .045$). This supports Hofstede's [55] view that PD can meaningfully moderate relationships among workplace constructs. In addition, IM significantly mediated the relationship between HH and OCB ($p < .05$, $\beta = .024$), further supporting the theoretical model proposed in the study.

A comparative analysis was also conducted to examine differences between faculty in public and private universities. Although responses from public university faculty were higher—likely due to the larger number of contractual faculty in the public sector—the results of the independent samples t-test showed no significant difference in OCB intentions between the two groups. This outcome may be attributed to the similar work environments, comparable remuneration structures, and equivalent job responsibilities in public and private universities in Pakistan. While past studies present mixed findings regarding OCB differences between these sectors, the present results support the view that both groups exhibit comparable OCB behaviors.

Overall, the study extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within the domain of HR development by demonstrating how constructs such as HH, JIs, and Reciprocity, along with IM and PD, shape OCB among contractual university employees. The findings offer several implications for higher education institutions seeking to enhance OCB: promoting fairness and reciprocity, reducing job insecurity, fostering a culture of humility and ethical behavior, cultivating a positive organizational image, and reducing excessive power distance can meaningfully strengthen the citizenship behaviors of faculty members.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that OCB can be effectively fostered among contractual faculty in both public and private universities. As a crucial component of employee behavior, OCB contributes significantly to institutional effectiveness, and the absence of clear policies promoting such behaviors can hinder organizational progress. Prior research has emphasized the

vital role of OCB in enhancing overall performance, with employees willingly extending beyond formal job requirements to support the organization [56]. Similarly, Katz [10] argued that employees are motivated by organizational policies that encourage participation, consistent role performance, and the demonstration of citizenship behaviors. Accordingly, a key implication for managers is the need to establish strategic interventions aimed at cultivating OCB, as it is fundamental to an institution's long-term success.

The study shed light on the importance of several determinants of OCB. Reciprocity (Rc), in particular, emerged as a meaningful predictor of OCB. Rc showed a positive and significant relationship with both IM and OCB, confirming all related hypotheses. This suggests that organizations must cultivate a culture of reciprocity, both internally and externally, as higher levels of fair and mutual exchange encourage stronger OCB among faculty. University administrators should therefore incorporate reciprocity into institutional values and strategic objectives, recognizing its central role in nurturing citizenship behaviors.

Findings further recommend that administrators focus on both dispositional and situational factors to promote OCB among employees. Enhancing human resource management practices—such as recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation systems, performance evaluation, opportunities for advancement, transparent communication, participation in decision-making, and work–life balance policies—can help shape positive job attitudes and supportive citizenship behaviors. Managers should also adopt more transformational leadership practices, as this leadership style has consistently been associated with stronger employee commitment and enhanced OCB.

From a managerial standpoint, the current study reinforces that the benefits of OCB extend beyond individual performance outcomes. While past research has highlighted OCB's contribution to organizational effectiveness, the present findings underscore its day-to-day value, particularly for contractual employees who operate within more vulnerable employment arrangements. It is recommended that institutions closely examine the practical implications of OCB to leverage its full potential.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. Most notably, it was conducted without a pilot study, which presents an opportunity for improvement in future research designs. Furthermore, the study contributes to the advancement of behavioral sciences by offering new insights into the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in understanding OCB, thereby opening avenues for further exploration.

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