

Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Justice as Predictors of Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

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Abstract: In response to growing interest in the role of organizational factors in employee behavior within China's new energy vehicle (NEV) industry, this study investigates how Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Organizational Justice (OJ) influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among employees in private NEV companies in Guangzhou. It also examines the mediating role of Employee Engagement (EE) and the moderating effect of gender in these relationships. A quantitative approach was employed, using purposive sampling to collect 217 valid questionnaires from industry-experienced employees. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, applying descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis, and regression-based mediation analyses. The results reveal that both POS and OJ significantly and positively affect OCB. EE partially mediates these effects, underscoring its role in strengthening the link between organizational factors and employee behavior. These findings provide theoretical insights into the mechanisms driving citizenship behavior in the NEV sector and offer practical guidance for managers to enhance employee engagement and foster a supportive, fair organizational climate.

Keywords: Perceived organizational support; Organizational justice; Organizational citizenship behavior; Employee engagement

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1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive and dynamic business environment, organizations increasingly rely on employees who voluntarily go beyond their formal job descriptions to support organizational effectiveness. These discretionary behaviors, referred to as Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), play a vital role in promoting

innovation, collaboration, and overall productivity ^[1]. Understanding the antecedents of OCB has thus become a central focus of organizational behavior research.

Among the various factors influencing OCB, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Organizational Justice (OJ) have gained significant attention. POS reflects the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, while OJ refers to the perceived fairness of decision-making processes, interpersonal treatment, and distribution of outcomes ^[2–3]. Empirical evidence suggests that when employees feel supported and treated fairly, they are more likely to reciprocate with behaviors that benefit the organization beyond their formal roles.

Although perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational justice (OJ) have been recognized as important antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), the underlying mechanisms through which they influence OCB remain insufficiently examined. In particular, limited attention has been given to the mediating role of employee engagement in this relationship. Employee engagement (EE) refers to a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption ^[4]. When employees are highly engaged, they are more emotionally and cognitively invested in their work, which may facilitate the translation of organizational support and justice into proactive, citizenship-oriented behaviors ^[5].

Given the growing importance of the new energy vehicle (NEV) industry in China and the increasing emphasis on employee-centered management practices, this study seeks to examine the direct effects of POS and OJ on OCB and explore the mediating role of EE in this relationship. By focusing on employees in private NEV companies in Guangzhou, this research aims to contribute to the theoretical understanding of OCB and provide practical implications for fostering engagement and enhancing organizational effectiveness through supportive and fair workplace environments.

2. Literature review

2.1. The relationship between POS & OCB

POS has been extensively acknowledged as a significant antecedent of OCB. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that POS positively influences employees' willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond formal job responsibilities ^[6–9]. High levels of POS foster a sense of obligation, emotional attachment, and trust among employees, encouraging them to reciprocate organizational care by exhibiting higher levels of OCB ^[10]. When employees perceive that their contributions are valued and supported by the organization, they are more inclined to engage in altruistic, conscientious, and prosocial behaviors that benefit both colleagues and the organization as a whole ^[11].

However, the relationship between POS and OCB is not universally positive. For example, Linda et al. found that POS exerted a negative effect on OCB among employees of the BPAD in West Pasaman Regency ^[12]. Similarly, some scholars have argued that excessive or poorly managed organizational support may lead to unintended consequences, such as employee complacency or a sense of entitlement ^[13]. In such situations, employees may interpret supportive practices as entitlements rather than motivators for voluntary behavior, which could reduce the consistency or authenticity of their OCB ^[14].

Given these divergent findings, it is important to further examine the nature of the POS–OCB relationship, especially within specific organizational and cultural contexts. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Perceived organizational support has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

2.2. The relationship between OJ & OCB

OJ has been extensively recognized as a crucial antecedent of OCB. A substantial body of research has demonstrated that when employees perceive fairness in procedures, interpersonal treatment, and the distribution of outcomes, they are more inclined to engage in discretionary behaviors that contribute positively to the organization^[15–17]. Perceptions of fair treatment foster a sense of trust and reciprocity, motivating employees to exceed their formal job responsibilities by assisting colleagues, demonstrating loyalty, and promoting a constructive organizational climate^[18].

Nevertheless, the relationship between OJ and OCB is not universally consistent. Some studies have reported that OJ does not exert a significant direct influence on OCB, especially in contexts where employee motivation or organizational commitment is lacking^[19]. Additionally, cultural differences and individual values may shape how justice perceptions influence employee behavior. For instance, even when fairness is perceived to be high, external factors such as excessive workloads, psychological stress, or lack of recognition may inhibit employees from engaging in extra-role behaviors^[20].

These divergent findings underscore the necessity for continued research on the dynamics between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior, particularly within specific cultural or organizational contexts. Drawing upon equity theory and social exchange theory, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Organizational justice has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

2.3. The mediating role of EE

EE has been increasingly recognized as a potential mediating variable in the relationship between POS and OCB. Shams et al. identified EE as a key mechanism through which POS influences OCB^[21]. Similarly, Hsieh et al. found that job engagement not only had a direct and positive effect on OCB but also partially mediated the indirect relationship between POS and OCB^[22]. This finding is further supported by Priskila et al., who emphasized the pivotal role of employee engagement in facilitating extra-role behaviors^[23]. In the healthcare context, Srimulyani and Hermanto investigated 225 nurses in Madison City and revealed that POS significantly enhanced OCB, with EE acting as a significant mediator in this relationship^[24].

However, not all findings are consistent. Kumar and Punitha reported that employee engagement did not mediate the relationship between POS and OCB, nor between perceived supervisor support and OCB^[25]. These conflicting results indicate that the mediating role of EE may be context-dependent and influenced by organizational or cultural variables.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior.

In parallel, OJ has also been examined as a predictor of OCB, and several studies have explored its indirect effects through various mediators. For example, Kerdpitak and Jermisittiparsert found that the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and OCB was mediated by organizational justice^[26]. Farid et al. demonstrated that employees' perceptions of corporate social responsibility influenced OCB through perceived fairness^[27]. Khairy et al. reported that internal brand equity positively affected OCB, with OJ playing a mediating role^[28]. Additionally, Shrotryia et al. found that the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB was fully mediated by employee engagement^[29].

Despite these findings, limited research has investigated whether employee engagement mediates the

relationship between organizational justice and OCB, particularly in the context of China's new energy vehicle industry. Given the importance of fairness perceptions in influencing discretionary behavior and the growing relevance of employee engagement, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior.

3. Research methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between perceived organizational support, organizational justice, and organizational citizenship behavior. Quantitative methods were deemed appropriate due to their ability to test hypotheses and establish relationships among variables through statistical analysis.

The target population comprised employees working in the new energy vehicle (NEV) industry in Guangzhou, China. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select participants who met specific inclusion criteria, namely full-time employees with at least six months of work experience in NEV companies. This approach ensured that respondents possessed sufficient organizational experience to provide informed and meaningful responses related to organizational support, justice, and engagement.

A total of 217 valid responses were collected and analyzed. The data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed both online and offline. The questionnaire items were adapted from previously validated scales and measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The collected data were then analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine both direct and mediating effects among the study variables.

4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study is designed to explore the direct and indirect relationships among POS, OJ, EE, and OCB. This framework posits that when employees perceive fairness and receive support from their organization, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, which in turn fosters voluntary, extra-role behaviors that benefit the organization.

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, four hypotheses are proposed. First, both POS and OJ are expected to have direct positive effects on OCB (H1 and H2). Second, employee engagement plays a mediating role between POS, OJ, and OCB (H3 and H4). Through this mediating mechanism, employee engagement is expected to translate perceptions of support and justice into enhanced citizenship behavior. This model aims to capture both the direct pathways from organizational factors to behavioral outcomes and the indirect effects via employee engagement.

This framework provides a comprehensive view of how organizational practices can cultivate proactive employee behavior, particularly in the context of China's new energy vehicle (NEV) industry, where motivation, fairness, and support are key to sustainable organizational success.

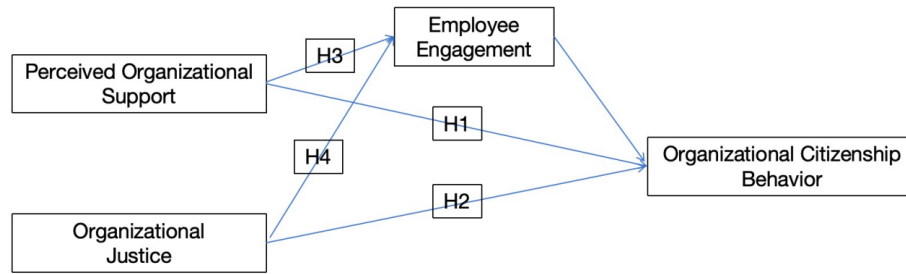


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

5. Data analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis (**Table 1**) reveals that all study variables are significantly and positively correlated at the 0.01 level. Specifically, organizational citizenship behavior is strongly correlated with employee engagement ($r = 0.847, P < 0.01$), organizational justice ($r = 0.847, P < 0.01$), and perceived organizational support (POS) ($r = 0.766, P < 0.01$). Furthermore, POS is positively correlated with OJ ($r = 0.818, P < 0.01$) and EE ($r = 0.784, P < 0.01$), while a strong positive correlation is also observed between OJ and EE ($r = 0.834, P < 0.01$). These findings indicate strong and consistent associations among all key variables, providing preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships.

Table 1. Pearson correlation analysis

Variables	POS	OJ	EE	OCB
POS	1			
OJ	0.818**	1		
EE	0.784**	0.834**	1	
OCB	0.766**	0.847**	0.847**	1

Note: $N = 217$. $P < 0.01$ (2-tailed). POS – Perceived Organizational Support, OJ – Organizational Justice, EE – Employee Engagement, OCB – Organizational Citizenship Behavior, ** $P < 0.01$

As shown in **Table 2**, the regression analysis demonstrates that perceived organizational support has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.766, P < .001$) indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.74, t = 17.465, P < .001$) further confirms the statistical significance of POS in predicting OCB. The model explains approximately 58.7% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = 0.587$), and the overall model is significant ($F = 305.038, P < .001$). These findings support the hypothesis that higher levels of perceived organizational support are associated with greater employee engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Table 2. Regression analysis of POS & COB

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	R^2	F	ANOVA Sig.
Constant	0.722	0.133	-	5.448	<0.001			
POS	0.74	0.042	0.766	17.465	<0.001	0.587	305.038	<0.001

Note: independent variable=POS, dependent variable=OCB

Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the effect of organizational justice on organizational citizenship behavior. The results indicate a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between OJ and OCB, with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.847$ ($P < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient is $B = 0.807$ ($t = 23.396$, $P < .001$), suggesting that increases in perceived justice are strongly associated with increases in OCB. The model explains approximately 71.8% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = 0.718$), and the overall regression model is highly significant ($F = 547.391$, $P < .001$). These findings provide strong empirical support for the hypothesis that higher perceptions of organizational justice significantly enhance employees' citizenship behaviors in the workplace.

Table 3. Regression analysis of OJ & COB

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	F	ANOVA Sig.
Constant	0.611	0.105		5.818	<0.001	0.718	547.391	<0.001
OJ	0.807	0.035	0.847	23.396	<0.001			

Note: independent variable=OJ, dependent variable=OCB

Based on the output from Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4), the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior was confirmed. The results presented in **Table 4** demonstrate that POS has a strong positive effect on EE ($B = 0.803$, $SE = 0.043$, $\beta = 0.784$, $t = 18.501$, $P < .001$), accounting for 61.4% of the variance in EE. When both POS and EE are included as predictors of OCB, both show significant positive effects: POS ($B = 0.257$, $SE = 0.054$, $\beta = 0.277$, $t = 4.767$, $P < .001$) and EE ($B = 0.603$, $SE = 0.053$, $\beta = 0.607$, $t = 11.460$, $P < .001$), with the model explaining 74.4% of the variance in OCB. These results indicate that EE partially mediates the relationship between POS and OCB, suggesting that higher levels of perceived organizational support enhance employee engagement, which in turn fosters greater organizational citizenship behavior.

Table 4. Mediating effect of EE on POS & OCB

Outcome variable	Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	F	95% CI (LLCI, ULCI)
EE Mediator	Constant	0.561	0.136	—	4.139	0.0001	0.614	342.3	[0.2939, 0.8284]
	POS	0.803	0.043	0.784	18.501	<.001			[0.7170, 0.8879]
	Constant	0.384	0.109	—	3.532	0.0005			[0.1696, 0.5979]
OCB Outcome	POS (direct)	0.257	0.054	0.277	4.767	<.001	0.744	310.63	[0.1506, 0.3629]
	EE (indirect)	0.603	0.053	0.607	11.460	<.001			[0.4991, 0.7064]

The results in **Table 5** demonstrate that OJ significantly predicts EE ($B = 0.8420$, $SE = 0.0379$, $t = 22.2006$, $P < .001$), accounting for 69.63% of the variance in EE. When both OJ and EE were included as predictors of OCB, both remained statistically significant—OJ ($B = 0.4422$, $SE = 0.0552$, $t = 8.0160$, $P < .001$) and EE ($B = 0.4335$, $SE = 0.0547$, $t = 7.9292$, $P < .001$)—with the full model explaining 78.2% of the variance in OCB. The direct effect of OJ on OCB was significant ($B = 0.4422$, 95% CI [0.3335, 0.5510]), and the indirect effect through EE was also significant ($B = 0.3650$, BootSE = 0.0761, 95% CI [0.2134, 0.5110]). As the confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero, the results support the conclusion that EE partially mediates the relationship

between OJ and OCB. This suggests that organizational justice not only directly fosters citizenship behaviors but also does so indirectly by enhancing employees' engagement.

Table 5. Mediating effect of EE on OJ & OCB

Outcome variable	Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	R ²	F	95% CI (LLCI, ULCI)
EE mediator	Constant	0.532	0.116	–	4.605	<.001	0.696	492.865	[0.3041, 0.7592]
	OJ	0.842	0.038	0.834	22.200	<.001			[0.7672, 0.9167]
OCB outcome	Constant	0.381	0.097	–	3.923	0.0001	0.782	383.895	[0.1894, 0.5719]
	OJ (direct)	0.442	0.055	0.53	8.016	<.001			[0.3335, 0.5510]
	EE (indirect)	0.434	0.055	0.511	7.929	<.001			[0.3258, 0.5413]

6. Discussion

The findings of this study offer robust empirical support for the hypothesized relationships among POS, OJ, EE, and OCB. First, the significant positive effects of POS and OJ on OCB are consistent with the principles of Social Exchange Theory, which posits that when employees perceive organizational support and fairness, they are more likely to reciprocate through discretionary, prosocial behaviors that benefit the organization^[30–33]. This suggests that both emotional support and procedural fairness are critical drivers of OCB, reinforcing the reciprocal nature of the employee-organization relationship.

Furthermore, the mediating role of EE in the relationships between both POS and OCB, and OJ and OCB underscores the importance of psychological engagement as a transmission mechanism. These results align with prior studies, which suggest that when employees feel supported and treated fairly, they are more likely to exhibit high levels of engagement, which subsequently translates into positive extra-role behaviors^[21, 24]. The partial mediation observed in this study highlights a dual-pathway effect, in which POS and OJ influence OCB both directly and indirectly through enhanced engagement, thus affirming EE as a central construct in organizational behavior research.

Notably, OJ exerted a stronger influence on both EE and OCB compared to POS, suggesting that perceptions of fairness may be more influential than perceived support in certain organizational contexts. This finding is in line with Rahman and Karim, who argue that organizational justice shapes employees' sense of value, responsibility, and commitment more deeply than generalized support^[31]. Within the context of Chinese new energy vehicle companies, a high-pressure, innovation-driven sector, employees may prioritize fair treatment, transparent procedures, and equitable resource distribution over effective support. Hence, enhancing justice perceptions may be a more effective lever for promoting engagement and citizenship behaviors in such settings^[34].

However, some prior studies have failed to confirm the mediating role of EE between POS and OCB, indicating that contextual factors such as organizational culture, industry type, or individual differences may moderate these relationships^[35]. This variation points to the need for further cross-contextual research to delineate when and how these mechanisms operate most effectively.

In summary, the present findings advance our understanding of the complex interplay among support, justice, engagement, and citizenship behaviors in organizational settings. Practically, this study suggests that fostering a work environment characterized by both fairness and support can enhance employee engagement and, in turn, promote OCB.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationships among perceived organizational support, organizational justice, employee engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior among employees in the new energy vehicle industry in Guangzhou, China. The results revealed that both POS and OJ significantly and positively influence OCB, and that EE plays a partial mediating role in these relationships. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of psychological and contextual factors in promoting positive organizational behaviors.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study extends the application of Social Exchange Theory by empirically validating the dual-pathway influence of POS and OJ on OCB through the mediating mechanism of EE. The findings underscore the critical role of employee engagement as a psychological state that facilitates the translation of perceived organizational attributes into voluntary and beneficial employee actions. Practically, organizations, particularly those in fast-growing and high-pressure industries like new energy vehicles, can benefit from fostering environments that emphasize both support and justice. By improving transparent communication, equitable treatment, and fair procedures, organizations can enhance employee engagement, which in turn promotes citizenship behaviors that contribute to innovation, collaboration, and overall organizational performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality among the variables. Longitudinal or experimental research is recommended to confirm the directionality of these relationships. Second, the data were collected from a specific regional and industrial context (Guangzhou's new energy vehicle sector), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider expanding the sample to include diverse industries and geographic areas. Third, all variables were measured through self-report surveys, which may be subject to common method bias, despite methodological safeguards.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the positive effects of perceived organizational support and justice on organizational citizenship behavior, with employee engagement serving as a key psychological conduit. Organizations aiming to enhance performance through employee-driven behaviors should invest in creating fair, supportive, and engaging work environments. Future studies are encouraged to examine additional psychological and contextual factors that may influence or moderate these relationships, offering a more comprehensive understanding of employee behavior in dynamic organizational settings.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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