How does Responsible Leadership influence OCB? The Mediating role of Employee Engagement

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To achieve sustainable success, Responsible Leadership has evolved as an important topic of interest impacting employees' related outcomes in recent years. Drawing on social exchange theory, this research aimed to examine the intermediatory role of employee engagement in the relationship between responsible leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. For this, a quantitative approach for data collection through self-administered questionnaire has been used from 180 private schools' teachers of Lahore. The findings revealed not only the positive significant impact of responsible leadership on organizational citizenship behaviors but also confirms the mediating effect of employees' engagement. This research presents valuable theoretical as well as practical implications for school administrators to realize the importance of responsible leadership and employee engagement in fostering OCB.

1. Introduction

Responsible leadership (RL) offers a distinctive perspective on the array of opportunities available to organizations for nurturing socially ethical behaviors and environmental stewardship (Wang et al., 2023; Miska & Mendehall, 2018). It is defined as "the art and ability to involve in establishing, nurturing and sustaining credulous relationships to various stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization, and incorporating responsible action to accomplish a meaningful, commonly shared business version" (Luu, 2023; Maak, 2007). Considered as a first-choice, responsible leaders encourage, interact, empower, and persuade stakeholders to act morally with optimistic exchange (Liu & Lin, 2018; Yafi et al., 2021). Particularly the relational approaches have the promise of realizing responsible leadership by centering organizational behavior on " Moral concerns in terms of others relation" (Meliou et al., 2021; Grandy & Sliwa, 2017, p. 423).

The social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964) is the most appropriate framework for regulating this partnership. A responsible leader, beyond looking out for shareholders' interests, also considers the economic requirements of others, including employees (Zhao & Zhou, 2019). Staff morale is boosted when executives show they have their backs, and they develop a sense of obligation and belonging at the company. As a result of this personal investment, workers become more interested in the success of the company as a whole and are more willing to go above and beyond for the sake of all employees. One such beyond the role's behaviour is termed as organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Coined by Batman and Organ (1983) and later refined by several reserachers (Chahal & Mehta, 2010; Jain & Jain, 2012; Podsakoff, et al., 2000), OCB is conceptualized as employees' discretionary "extra role" behaviors beneficial for organizations and are not directly linked with any formal organizational compensation system. According to Jones's research (2010), workers are more likely to demonstrate OCB if they believe their employer engages in socially responsible actions. This explains why workers are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty if they see socially responsible actions being taken by their leader (Hamdani, 2024; Hansen et al., 2013). Therefore, the first objective of the research is to investigate the impact of responsible leadership on employees OCB.

Despite of previous work investigating the direct impact of responsible leadership on organizational citizenship behaviors (H. Zhao & Zhou, 2019), literature suggests examining its interlinking mechanisms (Thakur, 2019). To help workers feel more connected to their company, responsible leadership is often cited as an important strategy (Sharma et al., 2024). However, the level of dedication an employee shows to their organization is influenced by how they feel and are included in social interchange with their leadership (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). The term "employee engagement" describes a worker's emotional investment in the organization's success (Choi et al., 2020). In order to boost employee engagement, subsequently organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Morton et al., 2018), responsible leaders must act in ways that reflect honesty, fairness, respect, and democracy in their interactions with subordinates and superiors (Demirtas et al.,2017; Han, 2024). More study is required to fully appreciate the complexities of this connection and to pinpoint the ways in which organizations can most effectively promote

responsible leadership and employee engagement to create an OCB culture. Thus, the second objective of the study is to examine the mediating role of employee engagement in responsible leadership and OCB of schools' teachers of Lahore.

Educational institutions in Pakistan are hampered by several challenges in terms of resources, infrastructure, retention, pressures to increase quality education, teaching etc. (Akhtar et al., 2024). To cope up with these challenges, educational institutes are in dire need for responsible leaders (Miska & Mendengall, 2018). Along with it, the efficiency and success of educational institutions rely heavily on their teaching staff behaviors. Whereby, majority of the previous literature focused on the objectives success outcomes of educational institutions, recent researches highlights the importance of other social relational mechanisms related malleable metrics such as OCB (Taamneh et al., 2024). Teachers' willingness and efforts to invest in organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) are crucial for school effectiveness (Nisar et al., 2014). Moreover, where the impact of RL on employees' outcome has been studied in other sectors (Seray Özkan, O.,et al., 2024; Freire, C., & Gonçalves, J. 2021), less evidence is available for education sector (Li et al., 2022). Therefore, this study opted for school teachers to investigate RL-OCB relationship.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Responsible Leadership (RL) & Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB)

Emerged from the concepts of social relations and ethical theories, responsible leadership style occurs in social interaction processes (Maak & Pless, 2006). Earlier literature emphasizes that responsible leaders are not only anxious to attain organizational financial success but also taking care of the social, environmental, moral and economic concerns of other stakeholders (Miska et al.,2014; Han et al., 2019). The accountable leader confronts challenges from various stakeholders, plausible pressures, and intricate relational networks (Maak & Pless, 2006). Utilizing dominant powers of connections, understanding and protection, RL establish and endure relations among all stakeholders through rational and justified decisions, beneficial for all (Zhao & Zhou, 2019; Afsar et al., 2020). One such very important stakeholder involves subordinates whose ethical behaviors choices and moral decision making are greatly impacted by way leaders act (Pless, 2023). Built on pure moral grounds, Pless & Maak (2004) states that responsible leaders establish inclusion culture in which employees perceives that their organization have pro-active ethical perspective approach towards all stakeholders, including themselves. According to Groves (2011), responsible leaders influence employees' willingness to devote themselves for ethical behavior choices such as OCB. Particularly relevant to this analysis is the notion of social exchange (Blau, 1964). According to Jones's research (Jones, 2010), workers are more likely to demonstrate OCB if they believe their employer engages in socially responsible actions. Based on norms of reciprocity, members of an organisation may feel that social responsibility is in their best interests (Glavas & Godwin, 2013). Moreover, subordinates' behaviours are greatly impacted due to leader-subordinate interaction process. When leaders behave ethically in employees' best interest, it establishes a positive view of leaders (Sikand & Saxena, 2022). As OCB connotate high risks and demanding behaviors that require substantive cognitive resources, leadership support and attentions encourages employees

to act discretion. A study on Guilan Red Cresent society employees found a significant positive relationship of RL on OCB (Akbari, M et al., 2020). Similarly, a recent study found a significant impact of RL on OCB in Malaysia (Hamdani et al., 2024). Following the dominant lead, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1. Responsible leadership has a positive impact on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

2.2 Responsible Leadership and Employee Engagement (EE)

Leadership has a great influence on organizational outcomes through effectively engaging its followers. Coined by Kahn (1990), employee engagement refers to individuals' application of cognitive, personal and emotional resources at work (Saks,2006). It is considered as a motivational concept that drive individuals to actively involve themselves deeply in the workplace (Christian et al., 2011). According to Han et al., (2019), responsible leaders' increase employee's psychological ownership sense by involving them in decision making, thus upholding their intrinsic needs, which in turn leads to increase engagement. As a motivation driver, literature has examined the impact of RL on other employees related outcomes such as OCB (Han et al., 2019), employee retention (Doh et al., 2011), organizational commitment (Sobhani et al., 2021), scant attention has been devoted towards examining the influence of RL on EE. Drawing from the SET, we hypothesize that when employees perceive that their leaders are responsible for taking rational decisions that are beneficial for all, they will tend to reciprocate it by engaging their personal, cognitive and emotional resources at workplace, thus leads to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Responsible leadership impacts positively on employee engagement.

2.3 Employee Engagement (EE) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

A more holistic model of Employee engagement, conceptualized by Tower Watson (2010), view EE consisting of three components i.e. motivational, emotional and cognitive. According to his model, the motivational component involves employees' willingness to exert their efforts beyond their defined roles, thus taping the mechanisms of OCB. Thus, employee's motivational component of engagement will drive them to demonstrate OCB. Being quite obvious, majority of the earlier studies have found significant positive impact of EE on OCB (Owor, 2015; Qayyum, M. et al., 2022; Rurkkhum,2010; Saks, 2006). Following the dominant lead, our hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. There is a positive impact of Employee Engagement on Organizational Citizenship behavior.

2.4 The Mediating Impact of Employees engagement (EE) in the relationship between Responsible Leadership & Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Extant researchers have found a positive impact of responsible leadership on OCB, yet its underlying mechanisms need further examination (Thakur, 2019). In this regard, scholars agree on the importance of employee engagement in understanding employee behavior on the job, but they disagree on how to define the term. Employee engagement, as defined by Kahn (1990), is the

process by which individuals bring their whole selves to their work, including their intellect, emotions, and bodies and feel more connected. To help workers feel more connected to their company, responsible leadership is often cited as an important strategy (Sharma et al., 2019). However, the level of dedication an employee has with his organization is influenced by how they feel they are included in social interchange with their leadership (Brown et al., 2015). In order to boost employee engagement (Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers, 2016), responsible leaders must act in ways that reflect honesty, fairness, respect, and democracy in their interactions with subordinates and superiors (Demirtas et al., 2017; Yang & Wei, 2018). On the other hand, People who score highly in employee engagement are more likely to take initiative and do quality work (i.e OCB). Employee engagement may result in OCB because it places an emphasis on involvement and commitment from workers that are not specified in any contract. Research by Ariani, D.W. (2014) found that enthusiastic participation by workers is a leading indicator of organisational citizenship behavior as it places an emphasis on aspects of employee participation that are not explicitly included in the job descriptions of any employees.

Hypothesis 4. Employees Engagement mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.

The conceptual framework of the study is as follows:

Figure No. 1. The Conceptual Framework
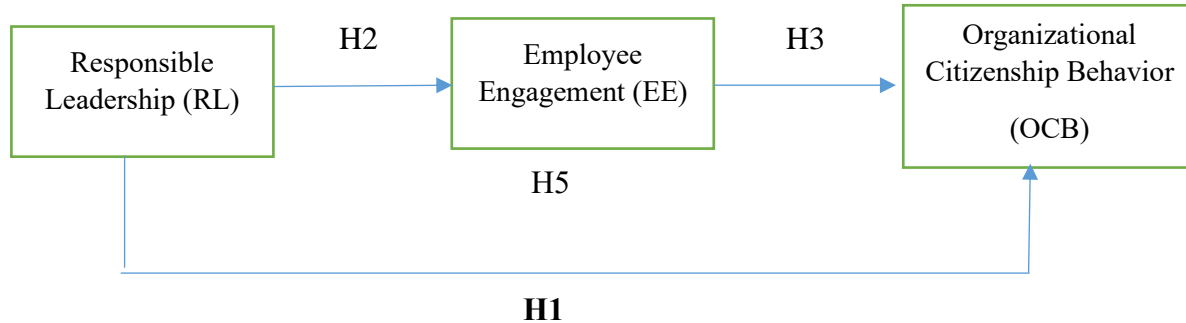
3. Research Methodology

The current study aims to examine the impact of responsible leadership on OCB and the mediating role of employee engagement in schools' teachers of Lahore. Following positivism paradigm with a deductive approach, data was gathered through self-administered questionnaire from 18 private schools' teachers of Lahore using convenience sampling. The questionnaire consists of two sections i.e. first section asks respondents about their demographics. Second section contained questions regarding study variables. All items are asked to respond on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Responsible leadership (RL) is measured through six-items adapted from the work of Lin et al.,(2020). Sample item includes "My supervisor often enables communication by exemplifying positive talks". The scale used to measure OCB consists of seven-items adapted from Lee & Allen (2002b). Sample items are; "I help others who have been absent from work." Employee engagement is measured through nine-items

adapted from Cooper et al., (2018). Sample item includes "I am willing to really push myself to reach challenging work goals". SPSS version 21.0 is used for statistical analysis.

4. Results

Table 1 represents the respondents' demographics. Demographic results show that majority of the respondents are females (62%) whereby males represent only 34% of the sample. The highest age group belongs to teachers' ages from 31-40 years with 45%. The next age group is of 20-30 years with 35% and the least ones are teachers above 50, representing just 2.7%. Similarly, 75 % of teachers have master degrees followed by 35% who possess Bachelors, 5.5 % are PhDs and 2.7% teachers have other professional certifications. As far as the salaries are concerned, the maximum salary range falls in 20k to 30 k (i.e. 33.3%), followed by 31-40k (32.2 %) and only 3.8 % teachers have salaries under 20k.

Table No1: Demograhics Statistics (N=180)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	62	34.4	18.8
	Female	118	62.0	100.0
Age	20-30 Year	63	35.0	35.5
	31-40 years	82	45.5	80.5
	41-50 Years	30	16.6	97.1
	Above 50	5	2.7	100.0
Educational Level	Bachelors	30	16.6	16.6
	Masters	135	75.0	91.6
	PhD	10	5.5	97.1
	Others	5	2.7	100.0
Salary	Below 20k	7	3.8	3.8
	20k-30k	60	33.3	37.1
	31k -40k	58	32.2	69.3
	Above 40	55	30.5	100.0

In order to examine the reflective indicators loadings, confirmatory factor analysis is performed Table II. All loadings are above the acceptable level of 0.5 (Samuels, 2017). The Cronbach alpha of all three variables is also above 0.5, confirming the constructs' reliability.

Table I2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Cronbach Alpha, AVE

	Factor Loadings			Cronbach Alpha	Average Variance Extracted
Items	**RL**	**EE**	**OCB**		
RL1	0.821				
RL2	0.820			0.876	
RL3	0.816				
RL4	0.823				0.622
RL5	0.814				
RL6	0.811				
EE1		0.77			
EE2		0.766			
EE3		0.819			
EE4		0.807		0.768	
EE5		0.783			0.572
EE6		0.814			
EE7		0.784			
EE8		0.810			
EE9		0.870			
OCB1			0.737		
OCB2			0.806		
OCB3			0.791	0.870	0.592
OCB4			0.784		
OCB5			0.803		
OCB6			0.768		
OCB7			0.835		

Table No 3:Variables Correlations and Discriminat Validity

Variables	RL	OCB	EE	
RL	**(0.789)**		-	
OCB	0.529**	**(0.650)**		
EE	0.460**	0.573**	**(0.701)**	

**Significant at 0.05 Level

- ➢ Square root of AVE is represented by bold diagonal values,
- ➢ Discriminant Validity is confirmed when diagonal value against each variable is greater than it corresponding off-diagonal correlations.

Discriminant validity is determined by applying Fornell-Larcker criterion (Pair wise correlation). It suggests that the square root of the average variance extracted should be greater than the variable off-diagonal correlations (Table 3).

Study hypotheses are tested through regression analysis. Table IV shows the beta Std. coefficients of direct and indirect relationship. The table IV shows that the direct effect of RL on OCB is 0.353, RL on EE is 0.465, EE on OCB is 0.425 and indirect effect of RL on OCB through EE is 0.198, having p-value less than 0.001, thus supported our all 4 hypotheses.

Table No 4: Direct and Indirect Effect of hypothesized Relationship

Research Hypotheses	Std.coefficient	p-Value	Results
Direct Effects			
Hypothesis 1. RL → OCB	0.353***	0.000	SUPPORTED
Hypothesis 2. RL → EE	0.465***	0.000	SUPPORTED
Hypothesis 3. EE → OCB	0.425***	0.000	SUPPORTED
Indirect Effects			
Hypothesis 4. RL → EE → OCB	0.198***	0.000	SUPPORTED

*** p-value < 0.001

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The study aims to investigate the direct impact of RL on OCB and also the mediating impact of EE. The result of the first hypothesis i.e., H1, showed a significant positive impact of RL on OCB, thus substantiated H1. Earlier studies confirmed the relationship as well where RL has been shown to improve "organizational citizenship behavior," or employees' willingness to go above and beyond in their work for the good of the company (Hamdani et al., 2024; Thakur & Sharma, 2019). In other words, employees' willingness' to engage themselves in moral and beyond their role behaviors increases, when they perceive that their leaders show moral concerns and take responsibility of their rational decisions for all the stakeholder on equal basis. Moreover, several researches have also emphasized the positive impact of RL on OCB towards environment as well

(Abbas et al., 2022; Alwheshi et al., 2024). Drawing from social exchange theory, based on norms of reciprocity, when employees perceive that their leaders show responsible moral behaviors, they tend to reciprocate it positive behaviors such as OCB. The result of H2 showed the positive impact of RL on EE. Based on Job demand-resource and employee voice theory, Besieux (2018) suggests that ethical based leadership enables employees not only to voice their concerns in decision making, but also provides them with resources to better deal with job demands, thus engaging their emotional, cognitive and motivational drives (Besieux, 2018). Hypothesis 3 confirmed the positive significant impact of EE on OCB as supported by earlier researchers (Owor, 2015; Qayyum, et al., 2022). Tower Watson (2010) three component model of employee engagement asserts the role of emotional component of EE in fostering OCB. The last hypothesis, H4 hypothesized the mediating impact of EE on RL-OCB relationship. Our results are also in line with the existing literature that pinpoints the ways through which organizational responsible leaders can promote OCB through effectively managing employees' engagement (Asif et al., 2019). This study shed light on the significance of responsible leadership & OCB in managing ethical crises situation and CSR drives in educational sector. The administrators can ensure application of responsible leadership style to increase teachers' engagement to go beyond their defined roles and exhibit beneficial discretionary behaviors beneficial for institutes and society as a whole.

5.1 Limitations and Future Direction

It is imperative to acknowledge and address the limitations inherent in this study. Firstly, the reliance on convenience sampling for data collection, predominantly sourced from teachers in the Lahore region, inherently limits the extent to which causal relationships can be inferred from the gathered data. Future researcher can opt for more geographically dispersed samples. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits its causality, so future researchers may choose longitudinal design in studies. Lastly, examining other moderating and mediating factors may help to clarify the intricate processes of RL impacting OCB linkage.

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