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Investigating The Role Of Responsible Leadership Over Organizational Citizenship Behavior In Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Considering the importance of responsible leadership practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in fostering academic integrity, excellence, and sustainability, this study examines the role of responsible leadership in HEIs in developing an organizational ethical culture based on transparency and accountability within these [1]institutions. Specifically, the current research investigates the role of responsible leadership over organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) of the employees. Moreover, it investigates the mediation of organizational ethical culture between responsible leadership and OCB. The data was collected from HEIs' employees of Pakistan and was analysed in PLS-SEM software. The results revealed that responsible leadership plays a crucial role in encouraging employees to engage in OCB via developing an ethical culture based on trust, fairness, and collaboration. The study has important implications for HEIs in terms of educational and societal goals, contributing to the broader global community.

Keywords: *Responsible leadership, Organizational ethical culture, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Higher Education Institutions.*

1. Introduction

Today's leaders want their employees to perform beyond the extra mile in the face of tough competition. The managers apply various tactics so that the human feature of going beyond what is formally assigned to them could be encouraged (Organ, 1988). This draws our attention to one of the valuable behaviors termed as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB refers to the behavior performed by the organizational member who performs beyond the pre-assigned duties and tasks for better organizational performance (Organ, 1988). In doing these extra-role behaviors, these organizational citizens do not expect anything in return. Moreover, OCBs are not a formal part of the job description, but employees do them in goodwill. Today's demanding work environment requires employees to perform duties beyond what is formally assigned to them to be considered effective employees.

There is abundant literature available on OCB in business settings. OCB is required for organizations' success and productivity. However, it is equally important in the higher education sector too (Arifin & Puteri, 2019). The valuable contribution and involvement of academic staff beyond their formal duties contribute to the success of the educational system. OCB is an important survival factor for educational institutions. Universities are

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non-profit organizations. To ensure sustainability, administrative and non-administrative staff are required to perform extra-role behavior (Arifin & Puteri, 2019). Although there are clear specifications about their job activities that are part of their jobs. Performing OCB has no formal reward, but it does contribute to a sustainable institute (Arifin & Puteri, 2019).

Leaders' conduct greatly influences the attitudes and behaviour of the subordinates (Haque et al., 2019). The modern challenges and opportunities being faced by managers/administrators increase the necessity of executing responsible leadership. Responsible leadership is defined as the leaders' ability to achieve a sustainable shared vision with the coordination and trustful relationships of different outside and inside stakeholders (Maak, 2007). The responsibility of a leader is not just limited to developing good relationships with subordinates but also to acting ethically in the best interests of external stakeholders. Hence, responsible leadership can provide great value because of its ethical and relational concerns (Pless, 2007). Hence, it is extremely important to develop such leadership qualities in individuals, specifically in collectivist societies where their decisions are group-oriented and need to be consistent with the collective good of stakeholders. Academic leaders shape a culture in HEIs that upholds faculty well-being (Heleta & Bagus, 2021).

Responsible leadership is critical for the quality creation of knowledge in HEIs through collaboration among different local HEIs of developing countries (Heleta & Bagus, 2021). Responsible leaders with their values of inclusivity and morality reduce negative attitudes in employees (Haque & Islam, 2022). Responsible leadership brings positive impact in HEIs such as collaboration, satisfaction, knowledge creation, and academic engagement (Haque & Islam, 2022; Mousa, 2020). Hence, responsible leadership is an important antecedent of OCB as evidenced by previous research (Han et al., 2019; Ozkan et al., 2024; Hamdani et al., 2024). Responsible leaders create an ethical culture by developing shared ethical norms and values that ultimately cause employees to engage in OCB. The current research aims at addressing the following research questions:

1. Does responsible leadership affect employees' OCB?

2. Does organizational ethical culture mediate the relationship between responsible leadership and employees' OCB?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Responsible leadership and OCB

OCBs are described as extra-role behaviors, not included in the job description, and are discretionary (Organ, 1988). These behaviors are not formally rewarded or acknowledged, but they are considered essential elements of one's job. Though they are not part of the employees' job description but people perform them as a goodwill gesture. Previous research has linked OCB with positive as well as negative outcomes. Past research has primarily focused on positive outcomes associated with performing OCBs, such as improved performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Responsible leaders are perceived as ethical and reliable who care for employees' concerns as well as societal and environmental concerns that motivate employees to display similar behavior, i.e., OCB at the workplace. The employees working under a responsible leader develop a greater realization of citizenship and helping behaviors. Hence, in case of any assistance or help needed by the coworkers or subordinates, or superiors, they are the ones who actively offer their assistance, perform duties beyond the formal requirements of the job to sustain their title as good citizens (Han et al., 2019)

Ozkan et al. (2023) found that responsible leadership positively predicted customer-oriented OCB. Moreover, Friere and Goncalvas (2021) asserted that responsible leadership enhanced OCB in employees via increasing their organizational identification. Responsible

leadership has been positively associated with OCB directly as well as indirectly via CSR (Hamdani et al., 2024). The influence of responsible leadership over OCB has been studied in previous studies through different mediating mechanisms such as organizational identification (Friere and Gonvalves, 2021), corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Hamdani et al., 2024), and relational identification (Ozkan et al., 2023). Responsible leaders' greater concern for the employees acts as a strong motivation for the employees to exhibit similar altruistic behaviour and engage in OCB. This has been supported by social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Responsible leaders exemplify certain actions for the followers to follow. The inherent nature of humans, that they learn from their surroundings and the people around them, makes them follow the same footsteps as their leaders.

Hence, it can be argued that,

H1: Responsible leadership positively influences employees' OCB.

2.2 The mediation of organizational ethical culture between responsible leadership and OCB

Leaders have been found to mould an organization's ethical culture, as evidenced in previous research (Kia, Halvorsen, and Bartram, 2019). Their way of dealing, supervising, and management sets certain norms and cultural values that foster a positive culture where employees are nurtured and nourished. Employees in an ethical culture that respects inclusivity, transparency, and mutual support feel encouraged and inspired to exhibit helping behaviors. Responsible leaders are ethical, honest, reliable, and high on integrity, which not only takes care of employee needs but also works for society and the environment, too. Employees feel pleasure while working with a socially and environmentally responsible organization. When employees are being governed by a responsible leader, their commitment, dedication to work are enhanced. Moreover, they experience, proud and sense of acknowledgement while working under a responsible leader (Haque & Islam, 2022).

Various past studies indicated individual, societal, and organizational outcomes of responsible leadership via psychological mechanisms (e.g., trust, commitment) and knowledge-based paths (e.g., knowledge sharing, creativity) (Doh & Quigley, 2014)(Inthavong et al., 2023). Responsible leadership working for the long-term relationship building among different stakeholders develops trust in them for better organizational outcomes (Rehman et al., 2021). They create more committed subordinates who serve for the greater cause of societal concerns. Research shows that responsible leaders can enhance a sense of citizenship behaviors in employees (Han et al., 2019). Responsible leaders' engagement with various stakeholders and participation in CSR can inspire them to care for colleagues through citizenship behaviors (Voegtlin et al., 2012). Due to the other-centric approach of responsible leadership, it is considered an important antecedent of followers' citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Podsakoff et al., 2000). It happens because leaders who are considered role models strive for the development of the followers, and the followers also feel obliged to work for the benefit of organizational members and the organization itself. This is supported by social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977). The perception that leaders show concern for the growth of followers makes them act in ways consistent with organizational benefit.

Responsible leaders who are high on integrity and morality develop an ethical culture that facilitates OCB at the workplace. Research shows that culture plays a significant role in encouraging OCB (Iqbal and Parray, 2024). Iqbal and Parray (2024) found the organizational culture's positive role in encouraging OCB via corporate social responsibility (CSR). Past research reveals that responsible leaders develop an ethical culture at the workplace (Yasin, 2021). Moreover, Hamdani et al. (2024) found the positive effect of responsible leadership on OCB via CSR. Iqbal and Parray (2024) researched that

different cultural values positively predicted OCB. The organizational culture that believes in mutual trust and care serves as a strong base for OCB to be exhibited (Baety and Rojuaniah, 2022). Past research reveals that such culture results in more altruistic helping behaviour (Krajcsak and Kozak, 2022)(Shahzad et al., 2016).

Hence, it is likely to hypothesize that,

H2: Organizational ethical culture mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and employees' OCB.

3. Methodology

The current study employs a quantitative approach to address the research questions. The sample of the study was the faculty teaching in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Pakistan. The employees within HEIs are expected to perform their duties beyond formal job responsibilities, such as coaching, mentoring of the students, and attending long meetings that are essential for the sustainability of the institutions. Hence, it is extremely important to have responsible leadership practices that may encourage discretionary behaviour at the workplace and result in sustainability in the institutions.

3.1 Measurements

The conceptual framework consists of three constructs. Well-developed and validated scales were used to measure them. The Scale by Voegtlin (2011) was used to measure responsible leadership, which consists of five items. The scale by Abror et al. (2020) was used to measure OCB, which consists of thirteen items. Whereas, the item scale by Key (1999) was used to measure organizational ethical culture.

4. Findings

4.1 Reliability and validity test

The data was initially analysed in SPSS. After data cleaning in SPSS, it was analysed in PLS-SEM in two steps. At first, discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker criterion, 1981), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) that should be greater than 0.5 (Chin, 1988), and factor loadings were tested. Three items from OCB were deleted as they had lower loadings (<0.5). In the second step, path coefficients for direct and indirect effects were calculated and tested.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
RL1	0.716	0.764	0.841	0.514
RL2	0.71			
RL3	0.694			
RL4	0.71			
RL5	0.754			
EC1	0.717	0.884	0.906	0.519

EC2	0.777			
EC3	0.69			
EC4	0.679			
EC5	0.76			
EC6	0.708			
EC7	0.662			
EC8	0.711			
EC9	0.769			
OCB1	0.729	0.889	0.841	0.509
OCB2	0.717			
OCB3	0.643			
OCB4	0.754			
OCB5	0.601			
OCB6	0.732			
OCB7	0.746			
OCB8	0.717			
OCB9	0.725			
OCB10	0.646			

Table 2 Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

Latent variables	EC	OCB	RL
EC	0.725		
OCB	0.275	0.703	
RL	0.612	0.419	0.717

4.2 Path coefficient assessment (Direct and Indirect paths)

The data went through a bootstrapping procedure to assess direct and indirect path coefficients. As a result, HI (H1: Responsible leadership positively influences employees' OCB) was supported (β =0.405, t=5.11, p<0.000). Similarly, the mediation hypothesis (H2: Organizational ethical culture mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and employees' OCB) was empirically supported too (β =0.019, t=3.27, p<0.000).

Table 3 Path coefficients (Direct and Mediation analysis)

Relationship	B	SD	t-values	p values	Decision
H1: RL -> OCB	0.405	0.059	5.11	0.000	Supported
H2: RL -> EC->OCB	0.019	0.061	3.27	0.000	Supported

4.3 R-Square

Finally, R Square values were calculated. Results showed the following R Square value for OC and OCB.

Table 4 R R-Square values

Constructs	R Square values
Organizational Ethical Culture (EC)	0.374
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	0.176

5. Discussion

The results revealed that responsible leadership significantly predicted OCB in employees. Additionally, it was found that organizational ethical culture is a significant pathway through which responsible leadership affects OCB. The results seem to be consistent with past research (Han et al., 2019; Ozkan et al., 2023; Hamdani et al., 2024). Previously, responsible leadership has been studied with OCB through different mediating mechanisms (CSR, relational identification, organizational identification). Han et al. (2019) asserted that responsible leaders encourage OCB in employees through CSR. Whereas, Ozkan et al. (2023) found that a responsible leader positively predicted customer-oriented OCB via relational identification. Additionally, Hamdani et al. (2024) got similar findings too; they found that responsible leadership had a great influence in causing OCB via CSR.

Moreover, it was found that responsible leadership causes OCB in employees via developing an ethical culture. Previous research has witnessed that responsible leadership with stakeholder stakeholder-centric approach and integrity develops an organizational ethical culture that becomes a base for OCB to occur. This has got support from Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977). As responsible leaders are perceived to be the role models that set exemplary behaviors for others to be followed through the modeling process. Their actions set a benchmark for others. Responsible leaders exhibit responsible actions and develop an ethical culture based on ethics and altruism that consequently causes OCB in employees. Previous research also proves that culture is a significant antecedent of OCB at the workplace. (Iqbal and Parray, 2024).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current research has some limitations. First, the current research has been conducted in higher education institutions (HEIs). Future researchers are encouraged to consider other sectors too to see if similar results are found or not. Second, the theoretical framework of the current study does not incorporate any individual or organizational-related moderating variable that may alter the strength of the relationships among variables. Hence, future research may incorporate any boundary conditions as a moderator, such as organizational identity, that may influence the relationship of the study. Lastly, the current research is cross-sectional. Future research may be conducted with a longitudinal research design in a way that responsible leadership and the outcome variables may be measured at different points in time. This may enable a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, as leadership influence on the outcome variable may be developed slowly with the passage of time.

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