

## HUMBLE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: INSIGHTS FROM CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

*Leadership is pivotal in today's dynamic business environment, where organizations navigate complexity and strive for sustained success. This study explores the relationship between humble leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) within organizational settings. Humble leadership, characterized by leaders who exhibit self-awareness, openness to feedback, and appreciation for their team members' contributions, has garnered increasing attention for its positive impact on employee outcomes. Extensive literature supports the notion that humble leadership enhances employee job satisfaction, commitment, and overall organizational performance. This study synthesizes existing research to highlight how humble leadership influences various dimensions of OCB, including altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Despite empirical evidence demonstrating the positive association between humble leadership and OCB, gaps remain in understanding the nuanced mechanisms and specific dimensions of OCB influenced by humble leadership behaviors. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to contribute to the literature on leadership effectiveness and organizational behavior, providing insights that can inform leadership practices and enhance organizational performance.*

**Keywords:** *Humble Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership, a subject of enduring interest both in everyday life and academic inquiry, encompasses various dimensions such as position, characteristics, behaviors, and outcomes (Larwood, 1984). Effective leadership is widely recognized as pivotal to the success of the groups or organizations they lead. Leaders play a crucial role in guiding their followers towards achieving shared goals (Daft, 2016). Their influence extends beyond mere direction; leaders motivate individuals within the organization, contributing significantly to its vitality and operational efficacy.

In recent academic discourse, humble leadership has emerged as a distinctive focus, particularly notable in Eastern cultures (Oc, et al., 2015). Humble leadership is characterized by leaders who exhibit humility,

acknowledging their strengths and limitations without arrogance, and valuing the ideas and contributions of their employees (Nielsen, et al., 2010). Such leaders foster an environment conducive to mutual growth and development, promoting transparency and employee engagement (Ali, et al., 2020; Owens, et al., 2013).

The psychological security and freedom provided by humble leaders nurture positive employee attitudes and behaviors, enhancing organizational outcomes (Senge, 1990; Li, et al., 2016; Morris & Brotheridge, 2005). Despite the growing recognition of humble leadership's importance (Owens & Hekman, 2012), empirical studies on its impact on employee attitudes and behaviors remain relatively scarce (Wang, et al., 2018a).

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) represents an essential aspect of employee

behavior beyond formal job requirements, encompassing voluntary actions that contribute to a positive work environment (Organ, 1997; Wang, et al., 2005). OCB enhances task performance and fosters a supportive organizational culture, reflecting proactive efforts to benefit others within the organization (Penner, et al., 1997).

Leadership behaviors, including humble leadership, are crucial antecedents influencing OCB (Organ, et al., 2006). It is hypothesized that humble leadership positively influences employees' perceptions of the organization, thereby enhancing their levels of OCB. This study aims to fill the gap in existing literature by exploring the relationship between humble leadership and OCB, contributing new insights to both leadership theory and organizational behavior research.

## 2. HUMBLE LEADERSHIP

In contemporary leadership literature, there is a growing recognition of the limitations of traditional hierarchical models that emphasize authority over collaboration and mutual respect among team members. The concept of humble leadership has emerged as a compelling alternative, reflecting a leader's ability to acknowledge personal limitations, appreciate the contributions of others, and foster an environment conducive to continuous learning and growth (Owens, et al., 2013; Liu, 2016).

Humble leaders exhibit a high degree of self-awareness, which involves objectively assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. They are willing to admit mistakes and acknowledge their limitations in specific areas of expertise (Owens & Hekman, 2012). This self-awareness is crucial as it allows leaders to make informed decisions and seek input from others when necessary (Özer, et al., 2021). According to Özer, et al. (2021), humble leadership is characterized by an accurate self-concept, recognition of one's own weaknesses and shortcomings, and a willingness to accept suggestions from others. Moreover, humble leaders demonstrate a proactive approach to

personal development by engaging in continuous self-improvement efforts. They view setbacks and challenges as opportunities for growth rather than personal failures, thereby promoting a culture of resilience within their teams (Zhu, et al., 2019).

A distinguishing feature of humble leadership is the genuine appreciation and recognition of employees' strengths and contributions. Instead of seeking personal acclaim, humble leaders emphasize the collective achievements of the team (Walters & Diab, 2016). By highlighting the positive qualities and efforts of their team members, these leaders foster a supportive work environment where individuals feel valued and motivated to excel (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2018). Research indicates that such positive reinforcement not only enhances employee morale but also promotes organizational cohesion and teamwork (Morris & Brotheridge, 2005). Walters & Diab (2016) emphasize that humble leaders inspire loyalty and commitment among employees by creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation.

Humble leaders are characterized by their openness to learning from others and their willingness to consider new ideas and perspectives (Jiang, et al., 2019). This openness fosters a culture of trust and collaboration within the organization, where team members feel empowered to contribute their insights and innovations (Rego, et al., 2019). By encouraging a bottom-up approach to decision-making, humble leaders create opportunities for creative problem-solving and innovation (Zhou & Wu, 2018). They actively seek feedback from employees and stakeholders, recognizing that diverse viewpoints contribute to more informed and effective decision-making processes (Yang, et al., 2019).

Empirical studies have underscored the positive impact of humble leadership on various organizational outcomes. For instance, humble leaders are found to enhance employee job satisfaction, commitment, and performance by fostering a supportive and psychologically safe work

environment (Argandona, 2015; Nielsen, et al., 2010; Owens, et al., 2013; Zhang & Song, 2020). This leadership style promotes employee engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors, such as willingness to go above and beyond formal job requirements (Jeung & Yoon, 2018; Zhang & Liu, 2019; Ding, et al., 2020). Furthermore, humble leadership is associated with higher levels of organizational trust and perceived support from leadership, which are critical factors in enhancing employee morale and organizational resilience (Yuan, et al., 2018). Rego, et al. (2017) argue that humble leadership contributes to the development of psychological capital within teams, thereby improving overall team performance and effectiveness.

In conclusion, humble leadership represents a paradigm shift from traditional hierarchical models to more inclusive and empowering leadership styles. By cultivating self-awareness, appreciating others' contributions, and promoting collaboration and learning, humble leaders create organizational cultures that are resilient, innovative, and supportive of employee growth and development. As organizations navigate increasingly complex and dynamic environments, the role of humble leadership in promoting organizational success and sustainability becomes increasingly pivotal.

### 3. ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) was first conceptualized by Dennis Organ and his colleagues in 1983, drawing on Barnard's (1938) concept of 'willingness to cooperate' and Katz and Kahn's (1964, 1966) distinction between reliable role performance and 'innovative and spontaneous behaviors'. According to Organ (1988), OCB encompasses voluntary actions by individuals that benefit both the organization and its members, contributing to the effective functioning of the organization. These behaviors are not formally mandated by job descriptions or incentive systems (Bies, 1989).

The significance of OCB lies in its role in facilitating organizational flexibility and resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges. Unlike behaviors dictated by formal roles, OCB involves personal sacrifices made voluntarily, contributing to the overall performance of other employees (Smith, et al., 1983).

Organ (1988) delineates several dimensions of OCB that have become central in organizational research. Altruism, for instance, refers to the motivation to enhance the welfare of others by engaging in pro-social behaviors when someone within the organization is in need (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Rioux & Penner, 2001; Batson & Powell, 2003). Courtesy entails voluntary actions aimed at preventing work-related problems with colleagues, fostering positive interpersonal relationships (Podsakoff, et al., 1990). Sportsmanship involves tolerating inconveniences and impositions of work without complaint, contributing to a harmonious work environment (Podsakoff, et al., 2000). Conscientiousness reflects an employee's willingness to exceed role expectations, such as punctuality and adherence to organizational rules (Podsakoff, et al., 1990). Civic virtue, on the other hand, refers to active participation in organizational affairs and initiatives that contribute to the organization's well-being and success (Graham & Dyne, 2006).

Research indicates that job satisfaction is a significant predictor of OCB (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, et al., 2000). Additionally, organizational commitment positively influences OCB, as committed employees are more likely to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization beyond their formal duties (Pitaloka & Sofia, 2014; Podsakoff, et al., 2000). Emotional intelligence, which enables individuals to manage their own emotions and perceive and utilize others' emotions effectively, also enhances OCB (Turnipseed, 2018). Furthermore, organizational justice, effective leadership, and clear role definitions

are among the antecedents that influence OCB (Chahal & Mehta, 2010).

Leadership styles significantly impact OCB through various mechanisms. Supportive leadership behaviors, for instance, foster an environment where employees feel valued and supported, thus encouraging OCB (Organ, et al., 2006). Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating followers, also promotes OCB by aligning individual goals with organizational objectives. Servant leadership emphasizes empathy, stewardship, and empowerment, encouraging employees to engage in behaviors that benefit others (Organ, et al., 2006). Additionally, fair and consistent reward systems reinforce OCB by recognizing and rewarding employees' voluntary contributions to the organization (MacKenzie, et al., 2001).

Empirical evidence suggests that OCB positively impacts organizational outcomes. Employees exhibiting OCB contribute to the functionality and performance of organizational units by addressing existing problems and fostering a positive work environment (Organ, 1997). OCB enhances organizational loyalty and commitment among employees, thereby reducing turnover and absenteeism (Tepper, et al., 2004; Podsakoff, et al., 2009). Moreover, OCB is associated with higher employee well-being, positive mood, and increased productivity (Glomb, et al., 2011; Sonnentag & Grant, 2012; Ramadhani, et al., 2017).

Engaging in OCB enhances an employee's social capital and reputation within the organization (Klotz, et al., 2017). However, employees with low levels of OCB may experience social exclusion or ostracism from their peers (Ferris, et al., 2008). OCB also plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture by fostering cooperation, trust, and mutual respect among employees (Bolino, et al., 2002). This behavior contributes to a positive psychological climate within the workplace, enhancing overall organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1997).

In sum, OCB represents a vital aspect of organizational behavior that goes beyond formal job requirements, contributing significantly to organizational success and employee well-being. Future research could explore additional antecedents and outcomes of OCB, further elucidating its role in contemporary organizational contexts and its potential for enhancing organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

#### **4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMBLE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR**

Previous research underscores the profound impact of humble leadership on organizational dynamics, highlighting its role in fostering positive outcomes across various organizational domains. Owens and Hekman (2012) provided empirical evidence showing that humble leadership enhances subordinates' personal growth, job satisfaction, commitment, and reduces turnover rates (Owens, et al., 2013). This leadership style cultivates loyalty among employees, promotes a supportive organizational climate conducive to innovation (Ou, et al., 2017), and positively influences team performance through the development of psychological capital (Wang, et al., 2018b). Rego, et al. (2017) further corroborated these findings, demonstrating a robust positive correlation between humble leadership and team effectiveness, mediated by psychological capital. Additionally, Chen, et al. (2018) identified a mediating pathway wherein humble leadership enhances leader identification, psychological empowerment, and subsequently encourages proactive behaviors among employees, thereby enhancing organizational agility and responsiveness.

The link between humble leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is particularly evident in the congruence between the leadership behaviors associated with humility and the antecedents of OCB. Wang, et al. (2018b) noted that humble leaders' recognition of their subordinates'

strengths (Owens & Hekman, 2012) enhances subordinates' self-efficacy and perceived value within the organization. Given that self-efficacy is a known predictor of OCB (Dussault, 2006; Kao, 2017), it follows that humble leadership positively influences OCB by validating and amplifying subordinates' sense of meaningful contribution to organizational goals (Chen, et al., 2018). Maharaj & Schlechter, 2007) also underscored the importance of meaningful work in fostering OCB, suggesting a synergistic relationship with humble leadership practices.

Humble leaders actively engage in developing their subordinates' capabilities through mentorship and knowledge-sharing initiatives (Owens, et al., 2013; Chiu, et al., 2016). By valuing input and feedback from their teams, humble leaders promote an inclusive environment that encourages employee voice (Ma, et al., 2020; Qian et al., 2020) and facilitates knowledge dissemination (Anand, et al., 2019). Social information processing theory posits that individuals interpret their work environment through social interactions, influencing their organizational attitudes and behaviors (Rego, et al., 2017). Leaders play a pivotal role in shaping this social knowledge environment, affecting how subordinates perceive their organizational standing and fostering a culture of trust and gratitude through transparent and supportive leadership practices (Owens, et al., 2013). This, in turn, enhances subordinates' willingness to engage in OCB as a form of reciprocal behavior (Mao, et al., 2017).

Moreover, leadership styles that emphasize proactive behaviors have consistently shown positive associations with OCB, including transformational leadership (Jiao, et al., 2011), charismatic leadership (Deluga, 1995), shared leadership (Khasawneh, 2011), and developmental leadership (Yan & Chen, 2013). Humble leadership, characterized by its emphasis on humility, empathy, and openness to learning from others, aligns closely with these positive leadership attributes that foster organizational citizenship (Crant, 2000).

Empirical studies across diverse organizational contexts provide compelling evidence of the beneficial effects of humble leadership on OCB. For instance, Ding, et al. (2020) observed significant improvements in OCB among healthcare workers in China under humble leaders, while Qian, et al. (2020) reported enhanced OCB among employees due to leader humility. Similarly, research by Suryani, et al. (2023) in Islamic Banks in Indonesia and Mian, Malik, and Hussain (2023) in other organizational settings consistently support the positive impact of humble leadership on promoting OCB.

Hence, humble leadership emerges as a pivotal factor in predicting and enhancing OCB through its role in creating supportive and empowering organizational climates. Future research endeavors could explore specific mechanisms through which humble leadership influences OCB dynamics, further advancing our understanding of leadership behaviors and their impact on organizational effectiveness and employee engagement.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study delved into the relationship between humble leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), aiming to illuminate their interconnectedness and implications for organizational effectiveness. Humble leadership, characterized by leaders who exhibit humility, empathy, and openness to learning from others, has been shown in the literature to significantly benefit organizational outcomes. Specifically, humble leadership enhances employees' job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and fosters a positive work environment (Owens & Hekman, 2012; Basford, et al., 2014; Ou, et al., 2017; Owens & Hekman, 2016). By encouraging open communication and valuing subordinates' input, humble leaders create a supportive climate that promotes employee well-being and performance (Owens, et al., 2013; Ma, et al., 2020).

In contrast, OCB is defined as voluntary behaviors that go beyond formal job

requirements and contribute to organizational effectiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Factors such as employee self-efficacy play a crucial role in predicting OCB, with higher self-efficacy levels linked to increased engagement in extra-role behaviors (Dussault, 2006). Owens and Hekman (2012) posit that humble leadership enhances subordinates' self-efficacy by acknowledging their strengths and contributions, thereby fostering an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to go beyond their basic duties.

The relationship between humble leadership and OCB can be further understood through social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that when leaders demonstrate care and support towards their followers, employees reciprocate with positive behaviors. Humble leaders who prioritize their followers' development and well-being cultivate a sense of responsibility and commitment among employees, encouraging them to engage in OCB as a form of mutual benefit (Ehrhart, et al., 2004).

Empirical studies by Ding, et al. (2020), Qian, et al. (2020), Suryani, et al. (2023), and Mian, et al. (2023) consistently support the positive impact of humble leadership on OCB across various organizational contexts. However, the literature remains sparse in exploring the specific dimensions of OCB proposed by Organ (1988) in relation to humble leadership. Future research endeavors should focus on examining how humble leadership influences each dimension of OCB such as altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue individually. Moreover, exploring mediating factors like self-efficacy, trust, and organizational justice could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which humble leadership influences OCB.

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of humble leadership in fostering organizational citizenship behaviors that contribute to enhanced organizational performance and employee well-being. By fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment, humble leaders empower their employees to go beyond their formal roles,

contributing voluntarily to organizational goals. The empirical evidence reviewed consistently supports the positive impact of humble leadership on various facets of organizational effectiveness, from job satisfaction and commitment to team performance and organizational climate. However, while existing research provides compelling insights, there remains a need for deeper exploration into the specific dimensions of OCB affected by humble leadership.

Future studies could explore how each dimension of OCB such as altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue is influenced by different aspects of humble leadership behaviors. Additionally, investigating mediating factors such as self-efficacy, trust, and organizational justice could elucidate the underlying mechanisms through which humble leadership exerts its influence. By addressing these gaps, researchers can further refine our understanding of how leadership behaviors shape organizational dynamics and effectiveness across diverse contexts, thereby informing leadership practices and contributing to organizational success.

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