

Why Do Employees Go the Extra Mile? The Role of Authentic Leadership, Organisational Justice, and Employee Resilience in High-Demand Work Environments

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Abstract

This study examines why employees engage in organisational citizenship behaviour in high-demand work environments by integrating leadership, organisational justice, and individual-level adaptive capacity within a multilevel framework. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources theory, the study investigates the distinct pathways through which organisational and individual factors influence discretionary behaviour. Data were collected from 523 employees across 53 organisations in Malaysia's energy and power sector and analysed using hierarchical linear modelling. The findings indicate that authentic leadership is positively associated with employee resilience, which in turn contributes to organisational citizenship behaviour, supporting a capacity-based pathway. Organisational justice demonstrates a weaker relationship with resilience but maintains a direct association with discretionary behaviour, indicating a normative pathway. Emotional intelligence shows a strong positive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour but does not moderate the relationship between resilience and behaviour. Overall, the results show that employees go the extra mile not only due to motivational and relational factors, but also because of their ability to sustain performance under continuous demands. This study contributes to the literature by introducing a dual-pathway perspective that distinguishes between capacity-building and normative mechanisms in explaining organisational citizenship behaviour. The findings offer practical insights for organisations seeking to strengthen employee capability and sustain performance in demanding work environments.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Organisational Justice, Employee Resilience, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Emotional Intelligence, Multilevel Analysis, High Work Demand

Introduction

Why employees go beyond formal job requirements in high-demand work environments remains a critical question for organisations seeking to sustain performance, coordination, and operational reliability. These discretionary efforts, commonly referred to as organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), play a central role in ensuring that work processes remain adaptive and effective under conditions of continuous demand.

Within high-reliability sectors such as energy and power, these demands are particularly pronounced. Organisations face sustained operational pressures, stringent regulatory oversight, and safety-critical responsibilities that require continuous coordination and consistency (International Energy Agency, 2024, 2025; Energy Commission Malaysia, 2022). In such contexts, organisational effectiveness depends not only on formal compliance and prescribed performance standards, but also on employees' discretionary contributions that support system stability and performance continuity.

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) extends beyond formal job requirements and contributes to organisational effectiveness by facilitating cooperation, flexibility, and performance continuity (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). While OCB has been widely examined within organisational research, it has largely been conceptualised as an episodic discretionary outcome, implicitly assuming that employees are able to enact such behaviour when motivated by favourable organisational conditions.

This assumption becomes increasingly problematic in high-demand work environments characterised by continuous operational pressure and limited recovery opportunities. Emerging research suggests that discretionary behaviour under prolonged demand is constrained not only by motivational factors, but also by the availability of psychological resources and employees' capacity to sustain performance over time (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Koopman et al., 2021). In such contexts, discretionary behaviour must be maintained rather than intermittently enacted, raising important questions regarding the sustainability of organisational citizenship behaviour under ongoing demand.

Despite extensive research on OCB, several gaps remain. First, prior studies have focused predominantly on motivational drivers, with limited attention to whether discretionary behaviour can be sustained under prolonged operational demands. Second, OCB continues to be treated as an episodic outcome rather than a behaviour requiring continuity over time. Third, limited attention has been given to adaptive mechanisms that translate favourable organisational conditions into sustained behavioural contribution. Fourth, the literature remains dominated by single-level research designs, constraining understanding of how organisational context shapes individual behavioural responses.

More broadly, this study responds to a growing debate within organisational and social science research concerning whether positive work behaviours can be adequately explained through motivational and relational frameworks alone, or whether their continuity under prolonged strain depends equally on employees' access to adaptive psychological resources.

As work environments become more intense, interdependent, and disruption-prone, the question is no longer only whether employees choose to contribute beyond formal requirements, but how such contributions can be sustained without deterioration over time.

Prevailing explanations of OCB have relied predominantly on Social Exchange Theory, which emphasises reciprocity and perceived organisational support as drivers of discretionary behaviour (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). While this perspective provides a robust explanation of behavioural willingness, it offers limited insight into whether such behaviour can be sustained under prolonged demand. Conservation of Resources theory provides a complementary lens by emphasising that sustained functioning depends on the availability, preservation, and mobilisation of psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014). This introduces a critical distinction between willingness and capacity, suggesting that discretionary behaviour depends not only on reciprocal intent, but also on employees' adaptive capability to maintain performance over time.

Addressing these limitations, the present study advances a multilevel framework to examine how organisational conditions influence discretionary behaviour through individual-level adaptive capacity. Specifically, authentic leadership and organisational justice are conceptualised as organisational-level signals that shape organisational citizenship behaviour through employee resilience as a key adaptive mechanism. Authentic leadership is expected to operate through a capacity-building pathway by strengthening employees' adaptive resources, whereas organisational justice is expected to operate through a normative pathway by shaping behavioural expectations and reciprocal obligations.

This study is situated within Malaysia's energy and power sector, a high-reliability operational context characterised by sustained demand, interdependent work processes, and limited tolerance for performance failure. Drawing on data from 523 employees nested within 53 organisations, the study employs hierarchical linear modelling to examine cross-level relationships among authentic leadership, organisational justice, employee resilience, emotional intelligence, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

This study makes three contributions. First, it reconceptualises organisational citizenship behaviour as a sustained behavioural outcome rather than an episodic discretionary act. Second, it identifies employee resilience as a central mechanism linking organisational conditions to sustained behavioural contribution. Third, it distinguishes between capacity-based and normative pathways, demonstrating that organisational conditions influence behaviour through different underlying mechanisms.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Authentic Leadership and Employee Resilience

Authentic leadership refers to a pattern of leader behaviour characterised by self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalised moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Such leaders create a stable and trustworthy relational environment by acting consistently and transparently. In demanding work settings, this is particularly important as employees facing ongoing strain benefit from leadership that reduces uncertainty and reinforces psychological safety.

While authentic leadership has been widely associated with positive employee attitudes and behaviours, existing research has primarily focused on motivational and relational outcomes, with limited attention to how leadership supports employees' ability to sustain functioning under continuous demand. In high-demand environments, employees must regulate effort, recover from setbacks, and maintain effectiveness over time, suggesting that leadership may play a critical role in strengthening adaptive capacity rather than simply motivating behaviour.

From a resource-based perspective, supportive and credible leadership can enhance employees' psychological resources, enabling them to remain confident, focused, and effective during workplace challenges (Hobfoll, 1989; Luthans et al., 2007). Employees who perceive their leaders as authentic are therefore more likely to develop resilience and sustain functioning under pressure. Accordingly, authentic leadership is expected to be positively related to employee resilience.

H1: Authentic leadership is positively related to employee resilience.

Organisational Justice and Employee Resilience

Organisational justice reflects employees' perceptions of fairness in organisational procedures, decisions, and interpersonal treatment (Colquitt, 2001). Fairness provides predictability and reduces ambiguity, both of which are important in demanding environments where uncertainty can exacerbate strain.

Prior research has consistently linked organisational justice to positive employee attitudes and behaviours through mechanisms of reciprocity and perceived obligation (Colquitt et al., 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, much of this work emphasises motivational responses rather than adaptive capacity. While fairness may create a stable and predictable environment, it does not necessarily provide the same direct psychological reinforcement required to sustain functioning under continuous demand.

In high-demand contexts, organisational justice may contribute to resilience by reducing uncertainty and supporting a sense of stability, but its influence on adaptive capacity is likely to be more indirect compared to leadership. This suggests that while organisational justice should be positively associated with employee resilience, the strength of this relationship may be comparatively weaker.

H2: Organisational justice is positively related to employee resilience.

Employee Resilience and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour refers to discretionary actions that contribute to organisational effectiveness but are not formally required by job descriptions (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). While existing literature has largely explained OCB through motivational and relational mechanisms, such explanations often assume that employees are able to sustain discretionary behaviour once motivated.

This assumption is increasingly challenged in high-demand work environments, where sustained behavioural contribution depends not only on willingness, but also on employees' ability to maintain functioning under continuous pressure (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Koopman

et al., 2021). In such contexts, discretionary behaviour must be maintained rather than intermittently enacted, highlighting the importance of adaptive capacity.

Employee resilience provides this capacity by enabling individuals to regulate effort, recover from setbacks, and maintain behavioural consistency despite ongoing strain (Näswall et al., 2015; Britt et al., 2016). Although resilience has been linked to performance and well-being, its role in sustaining discretionary behaviour over time remains underexplored. Accordingly, employee resilience is expected to be positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviour.

H3: Employee resilience is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour.

Mediating Role of Employee Resilience

Leadership and fairness are important organisational conditions, but their influence on sustained behaviour is unlikely to be fully direct. While favourable organisational signals may generate willingness to contribute, employees must also possess sufficient adaptive capacity to translate such willingness into continued behavioural enactment under prolonged demand.

Employee resilience offers a plausible explanatory mechanism linking organisational conditions to sustained discretionary behaviour. Authentic leadership, by strengthening psychological resources, is likely to enhance resilience, which in turn supports continued behavioural contribution. This suggests that the effect of leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour operates at least partially through adaptive capacity.

In contrast, organisational justice may influence behaviour through both adaptive and normative mechanisms. While fairness may contribute to resilience, it is also likely to shape behavioural expectations directly through norms of reciprocity and appropriate conduct. As such, the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour may be weaker or less consistent.

H4: Employee resilience mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour.

H5: Employee resilience mediates the relationship between organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Emotional Intelligence and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively (Wong & Law, 2002). Employees with higher emotional intelligence are better able to manage interpersonal demands, regulate emotional responses, and maintain constructive behaviour in challenging situations (Mayer et al., 2008; Carmeli, 2003).

In high-demand environments, these capabilities are particularly important for sustaining discretionary behaviour, as employees must navigate social interactions while managing stress and workload pressures. Emotional intelligence therefore represents an individual capability that supports behavioural regulation and effective contribution.

Although emotional intelligence may enhance behavioural enactment, it is less clear whether it alters the underlying relationship between adaptive capacity and behaviour. Instead, it is

expected to function as a complementary capability that directly supports organisational citizenship behaviour.

H6: Emotional intelligence is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour.

Theoretical Integration

Together, Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources theory provide a more comprehensive explanation of organisational citizenship behaviour by addressing both motivational and capacity dimensions (Blau, 1964; Hobfoll, 1989). While favourable organisational conditions may generate willingness to reciprocate, employees must also possess sufficient adaptive resources to sustain behavioural contribution over time.

This integrated perspective highlights that discretionary behaviour in high-demand environments depends not only on why employees choose to contribute, but also on whether they are able to maintain such contributions under prolonged demand.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected from 523 employees across 53 organisations operating within Malaysia's energy and power sector. Respondents represented multiple hierarchical levels, including non-executive, junior management, middle management, senior management, and top management roles.

To ensure adequate exposure to organisational practices and leadership behaviours, only employees with a minimum tenure of six months were included. Cluster sizes ranged from 5 to 19 employees per organisation, with an average of 10.49, reflecting a nested data structure appropriate for multilevel analysis.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Measures

All constructs were measured using established scales.

- Authentic leadership was measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008).
- Organisational justice was measured using Colquitt's (2001) scale.
- Employee resilience was measured using the Employee Resilience Scale (Näswall et al., 2015).
- Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002).
- Organisational citizenship behaviour was measured using items adapted from Podsakoff et al. (2000).

All items were assessed using Likert-type scales consistent with original instruments.

Reliability analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency:

- Authentic leadership ($\alpha = .939$)
- Organisational justice ($\alpha = .942$)
- Employee resilience ($\alpha = .915$)
- Emotional intelligence ($\alpha = .951$)

- Organisational citizenship behaviour ($\alpha = .880$)

Given the established use of these instruments in prior research, construct validity is well supported in the literature.

Analytical Approach

Hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) was employed to account for the nested structure of the data (Bliese, 2000; Gelman & Hill, 2007). Preliminary null models indicated modest but non-zero between-organisation variance, supporting the use of multilevel modelling alongside the study's theoretically specified cross-level relationships.

Models were estimated using restricted maximum likelihood (REML). Predictors were centred to distinguish within- and between-cluster effects. Authentic leadership, organisational justice, and emotional intelligence were grand-mean centred, while employee resilience was cluster-mean centred.

Control variables included gender, age, education, position level, tenure, and work experience.

Mediation was assessed by examining whether the inclusion of employee resilience reduced the direct relationship between predictors and organisational citizenship behaviour while maintaining a significant indirect pathway. The pattern of coefficients was used to determine partial mediation.

Common Method Bias

To assess the potential impact of common method bias, a marker variable approach was employed using cognitive rigidity, measured through three items adapted from Oreg (2003), consistent with recommended procedures for addressing common method variance in self-reported survey data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The marker variable was selected based on its theoretical independence from the focal constructs. Reliability analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .848$). The inclusion of the marker variable did not substantively alter the magnitude or significance of the observed relationships, suggesting that common method bias is unlikely to pose a significant concern in this study.

Results

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic and contextual profile of respondents.

The sample comprised 523 employees from Malaysia's energy and power sector. The majority were male (57.2%), with females representing 42.8%. Respondents were relatively mature, with the largest proportions in the 41–45 age group (18.0%), followed by 36–40 (17.4%) and 51–55 (15.9%).

In terms of educational attainment, most respondents held an undergraduate degree (45.9%), followed by a master's degree (24.5%), indicating a well-qualified workforce. Representation across hierarchical levels was well distributed, with the largest group in junior management (26.8%), followed by non-executive and middle management roles (both

24.5%). This distribution supports the relevance of the data in capturing organisational perceptions across levels.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 523)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	299	57.2
	Female	224	42.8
Age Group	18–25	8	1.5
	26–30	58	11.1
	31–35	65	12.4
	36–40	91	17.4
	41–45	94	18.0
	46–50	78	14.9
	51–55	83	15.9
	Above 55	46	8.8
Education	Secondary	51	9.8
	Diploma	84	16.1
	Undergraduate	240	45.9
	Postgraduate Diploma	10	1.9
	Master's	128	24.5
	Doctoral	10	1.9
Position Level	Non-executive	128	24.5
	Junior Management	140	26.8
	Middle Management	128	24.5
	Senior Management	89	17.0
	Top Management	38	7.3

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations among the study variables.

All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Authentic leadership ($\alpha = .939$), employee resilience ($\alpha = .915$), emotional intelligence ($\alpha = .951$), and organisational citizenship behaviour ($\alpha = .880$) indicate high reliability.

The mean values indicate moderately high perceptions across variables, including authentic leadership ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.76$), employee resilience ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 0.86$), emotional intelligence ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 0.76$), and organisational citizenship behaviour ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.55$).

Correlation analysis shows that all focal variables are positively and statistically significant. Authentic leadership is moderately associated with employee resilience ($r = .403$, $p < .001$) and organisational citizenship behaviour ($r = .346$, $p < .001$). Employee resilience demonstrates a strong positive relationship with emotional intelligence ($r = .679$, $p < .001$) and organisational citizenship behaviour ($r = .552$, $p < .001$). Emotional intelligence is also strongly associated with organisational citizenship behaviour ($r = .540$, $p < .001$).

These findings provide initial support for the hypothesised relationships and indicate that the constructs are meaningfully related while remaining empirically distinct.

Additional analyses incorporating a theoretically unrelated marker variable (cognitive rigidity) did not substantively alter the magnitude or significance of the observed relationships, suggesting that common method bias is unlikely to pose a significant concern.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authentic Leadership	3.40	0.76	.939	—				
2. Organisational Justice	3.60	0.76	.934	.421***	—			
3. Employee Resilience	5.79	0.86	.915	.403***	.365***	—		
4. Emotional Intelligence	5.76	0.76	.951	.247***	.290***	.679***	—	
5. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	4.14	0.55	.880	.346***	.310***	.552***	.540***	—

Notes. SD = standard deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha.

*** $p < .001$.

Multilevel Results Predicting Employee Resilience

Table 3 presents the multilevel results predicting employee resilience.

Authentic leadership demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with employee resilience ($B = 0.366$, $SE = 0.070$, $p < .001$), supporting H1.

Organisational justice shows a weaker and marginally significant relationship with employee resilience ($B = 0.126$, $SE = 0.071$, $p = .077$), providing weak support for H2.

These findings indicate that employee resilience is more strongly shaped by leadership-based signals than by fairness perceptions.

Table 3

Multilevel Results Predicting Employee Resilience

Predictor	B	SE	p
Intercept	5.403	0.302	< .001***
Authentic Leadership	0.366	0.070	< .001***
Organisational Justice	0.126	0.071	.077†
Controls	Included		

Notes. Dependent variable: Employee Resilience. Model estimated using restricted maximum likelihood (REML). † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Multilevel Results Predicting Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Table 4 presents the multilevel results predicting organisational citizenship behaviour across three models.

In Model 1, authentic leadership demonstrates a significant positive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour ($B = 0.276$, $p < .001$).

In Model 2, emotional intelligence is positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviour ($B = 0.342, p < .001$), while the effect of authentic leadership is reduced ($B = 0.186, p < .001$).

In Model 3, employee resilience demonstrates a significant positive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour ($B = 0.184, p < .001$), supporting H3. Emotional intelligence remains a strong predictor ($B = 0.333, p < .001$). Authentic leadership remains significant but reduced ($B = 0.126, p < .01$), while organisational justice shows a marginal effect ($B = 0.085, p < .10$).

These results suggest that organisational conditions influence discretionary behaviour through multiple pathways, with leadership operating more strongly through adaptive capacity.

Table 4

Multilevel Results Predicting Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Predictor	Model 1 (AL)	Model 2 (AL + EI)	Model 3 (Full Model)
Authentic Leadership	0.276***	0.186***	0.126**
Organisational Justice	—	—	0.085†
Employee Resilience	—	—	0.184***
Emotional Intelligence	—	0.342***	0.333***
Controls	Included	Included	Included

Notes. Dependent variable: Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. Unstandardised coefficients (B) are reported. Control variables include gender, age, education level, position, tenure, and work experience. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Mediation Effects

The inclusion of employee resilience reduces the magnitude of the relationship between authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour while the relationship remains statistically significant, indicating partial mediation and supporting H4.

In contrast, organisational justice does not demonstrate a meaningful indirect effect through employee resilience, and H5 is not supported.

These findings indicate that employee resilience functions as a key mechanism through which leadership influences discretionary behaviour, while the effect of organisational justice appears to operate more directly.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The results of hypothesis testing are summarised in Table 5.

The findings indicate support for H1, H3, H4, and H6. H2 received weak support, whereas H5 was not supported.

Table 5

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Authentic leadership → Employee resilience	Supported
H2	Organisational justice → Employee resilience	Weak support
H3	Employee resilience → Organisational citizenship behaviour	Supported
H4	Employee resilience mediates AL → OCB	Supported (partial mediation)
H5	Employee resilience mediates OJ → OCB	Not supported
H6	Emotional intelligence → OCB	Supported

Summary of Findings

Figure 1 presents the final multilevel model.

Overall, the results indicate that organisational citizenship behaviour is shaped by both individual-level capability and organisational-level conditions. Authentic leadership operates primarily through a capacity-building pathway by strengthening employee resilience, which supports sustained discretionary behaviour. In contrast, organisational justice demonstrates a weaker and more direct influence, suggesting a distinct normative pathway through which fairness shapes behavioural expectations.

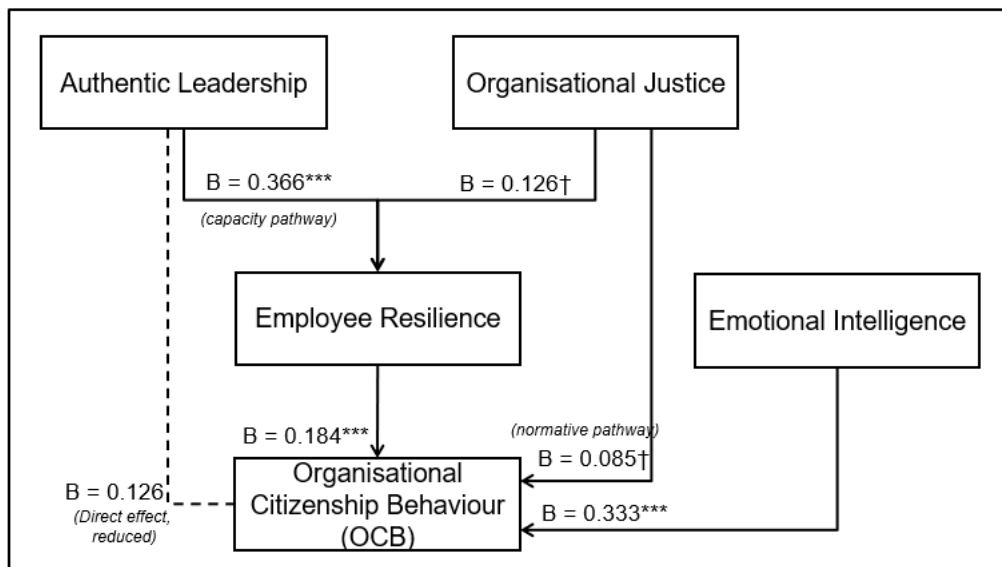


Figure 1. Final Multilevel Model of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Notes. Unstandardised coefficients (B) are reported. Solid lines indicate statistically significant relationships, while dashed lines indicate weaker or reduced relationships. †p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Discussion

This study examined how authentic leadership and organisational justice influence organisational citizenship behaviour through employee resilience within a high-demand operational context. By integrating Social Exchange Theory with Conservation of Resources theory, the findings provide a more comprehensive explanation of how discretionary

behaviour is sustained over time rather than merely initiated (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Theoretical Implications

The findings extend existing research on organisational citizenship behaviour by challenging the prevailing assumption that discretionary behaviour can be readily enacted when employees are motivated by favourable organisational conditions (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Instead, the results indicate that discretionary behaviour is contingent not only on reciprocal willingness but also on employees' capacity to sustain performance under ongoing demand. This contributes to a broader shift in organisational research that questions whether positive work behaviours can be fully explained through motivational frameworks alone, particularly in environments characterised by sustained pressure and resource constraints (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Building on this, the study advances a capacity-contingent perspective of organisational citizenship behaviour. The positive relationship between employee resilience and organisational citizenship behaviour supports the view that adaptive capacity functions as a proximal enabling mechanism for sustained discretionary contribution (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Britt et al., 2016). This reframes organisational citizenship behaviour from an episodic discretionary act to a sustained behavioural response, particularly relevant in high-demand work environments (Koopman et al., 2021).

The findings further demonstrate that organisational conditions influence behaviour through distinct pathways. Authentic leadership shows a strong positive relationship with employee resilience, indicating that leadership operates as a capacity-building signal that strengthens employees' adaptive resources. In contrast, organisational justice exhibits a weaker relationship with resilience but retains a direct association with organisational citizenship behaviour, indicating a normative pathway through which fairness shapes behavioural expectations and reciprocal obligations, rather than strengthening adaptive capacity (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). This distinction highlights that organisational signals do not operate through a uniform mechanism but instead influence behaviour through both capacity-based and normative pathways.

The mediation findings provide additional clarity. Employee resilience partially mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour, indicating that leadership influences behaviour both directly and indirectly through adaptive capacity. In contrast, the absence of a significant mediating effect for organisational justice suggests that fairness operates through alternative mechanisms, reinforcing behavioural norms rather than strengthening adaptive resources (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Colquitt et al., 2013).

Finally, emotional intelligence demonstrates a strong direct relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour but does not moderate the relationship between resilience and behaviour (Wong & Law, 2002; Carmeli, 2003). This suggests that emotional intelligence functions as an additive capability that supports behavioural regulation and consistency rather than altering the underlying relationship between adaptive capacity and behavioural outcomes.

Practical Implications

The findings highlight that sustaining discretionary behaviour requires more than fostering employee motivation. While engagement initiatives and favourable organisational conditions remain important, they are insufficient if employees lack the adaptive capacity to maintain performance over time. This aligns with Conservation of Resources theory, which emphasises the role of resource availability in sustaining performance under continuous demand (Hobfoll, 1989; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Leadership development emerges as a key organisational lever. Authentic leadership behaviours, including transparency, consistency, and ethical conduct, contribute to a stable relational environment that enables employees to remain effective under sustained operational demands (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Organisations should therefore prioritise leadership development approaches that build relational credibility and psychological stability.

While organisational justice remains important, its role appears to be more normative than capacity-enhancing. Fair processes and equitable treatment reinforce expectations of appropriate behaviour and reciprocal obligations (Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) but may not be sufficient to sustain performance under prolonged demand. This reinforces a normative pathway through which fairness shapes behavioural expectations and reciprocal obligations.

Developing employee resilience should be treated as a core capability. Programmes that enhance adaptability, coping strategies, and recovery can support sustained performance in demanding environments (Britt et al., 2016; King et al., 2016). In addition, the strong direct effect of emotional intelligence suggests that developing employees' emotional regulation and interpersonal capabilities can further support consistent discretionary behaviour (Wong & Law, 2002; Carmeli, 2003).

Conclusion

This study addresses a key limitation in organisational citizenship behaviour research by explaining why employees go beyond formal job requirements under high-demand conditions and how such behaviour can be sustained over time. While prior research has focused primarily on motivational drivers, the present findings demonstrate that sustained discretionary behaviour depends equally on employees' adaptive capacity.

By integrating Social Exchange Theory with Conservation of Resources theory, the study shows that favourable organisational conditions alone are insufficient to sustain organisational citizenship behaviour under prolonged demand. Employee resilience emerges as a central mechanism linking organisational conditions to sustained behavioural outcomes.

The findings further demonstrate that organisational conditions influence behaviour through distinct pathways. Authentic leadership functions as a capacity-building signal that strengthens employees' adaptive resources, whereas organisational justice operates through a normative pathway that shapes behavioural expectations and reciprocal obligations. Emotional intelligence contributes as an independent capability that supports consistent behavioural enactment.

Overall, the study advances a more comprehensive understanding of organisational citizenship behaviour by reconceptualising it as a sustained rather than episodic phenomenon and by highlighting the interplay between organisational context and individual adaptive capacity. These insights are particularly relevant for organisations operating in high-demand environments where sustained performance is critical.

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