

Discrimination at Workplace and Behavior of employees as citizens: The mediating role of job dissatisfaction.

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ABSTRACT

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Objective: This study examines how employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is impacted by workplace discrimination and investigates the role that job dissatisfaction plays as a mediator in the relationship between OCB and workplace discrimination. According to the study, which is based on Organizational Justice Theory, discriminatory practices lower employees' desire to engage in discretionary and extra-role actions by increasing job unhappiness.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Employees in the manufacturing, healthcare, and educational sectors were surveyed using a standardized questionnaire as part of a quantitative study design. The proposed conceptual model was examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to look into the direct and indirect relationships between workplace discrimination, organizational citizenship behavior, and job dissatisfaction.

Findings: The results show that discrimination in the workplace has a negative impact on corporate citizenship. Additionally, this link is partially mediated by job dissatisfaction, suggesting that discriminatory interactions decrease employees' voluntary workplace actions by raising job dissatisfaction. The findings show that perceptions of unjust treatment have a negative impact on employee attitudes and behaviors, which empirically supports the Organizational Justice Theory.

Practical Implications: The study highlights the importance of promoting justice, equity, and inclusive corporate policies in order to reduce discriminatory circumstances and increase employee satisfaction. Effective diversity management techniques, anti-discrimination policies, and employee support initiatives should be used by managers and lawmakers in order to foster positive workplace behaviors, improve organizational performance, and increase employee engagement.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the body of prior research by integrating workplace discrimination, job dissatisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior into a unified theoretical framework. It broadens the application of Organizational Justice Theory by acknowledging job dissatisfaction as a critical psychological mechanism via which workplace discrimination affects employees' discretionary behaviors across numerous organizational sectors.

Keywords: Workplace discrimination, Organizational citizenship behavior, Job dissatisfaction, and Organizational justice.

1| INTRODUCTION

Companies are now counting on the discretionary contributions of employees beyond the paid job specifications to increase the effectiveness of an organization and its sustainability over the long run. These discretionary activities that are often known as Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), encompass voluntary activities like assistance to colleagues, exhibiting cooperation, and organizational loyalty which are put together in enhancing coordination, efficiency and overall performance (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Since OCB is not prescribed or rewarded under contract, it is especially vulnerable to the perception of fairness, justice and treatment by the employees in the workplace. Inequalities in treatment of employees based on gender, age, race, religion or any other personal feature are the forms of discrimination that emerge in the workplace yet become a challenge in modern organizations. According to extensive research, discriminatory practices indicate the breach of organizational justice expectations, which causes employees to experience that the working environment is unfair and hostile (Colquitt et al., 2013; Hebl et al., 2020). Employees are prone to develop negative emotional conditions in the presence of discrimination or due to the perception of discrimination such as frustration, resentment and psychological withdrawal. Instead of open opposition, employees tend to act more indirectly by making reduced discretionary contributions and acting solely at minimum job requirements thus removing themselves off positive organizational behaviors like OCB (Bolino and Turnley, 2003; Williams and Anderson, 1991). Though in previous research a direct negative correlation has been established between workplace discrimination and OCB, less attention has been put on the psychological processes in which the same takes place. It will be extremely important to address this gap since discovering what is going under the hood can give a more sophisticated picture of how discriminatory experiences lead to behavioral outcomes. Job dissatisfaction is one of these mechanisms that can be discussed as an attitudinal reaction when employees feel that there is an inconsistency between the expectations of fair treatment and working conditions at the workplace (Locke, 1976). Discriminatory treatment leads to dissatisfaction because it removes the feeling of value, respect, and belonging among employees in the organization (Jiang and Probst, 2023). Employees who are not satisfied with their jobs are likely to lose engagement both emotionally and behaviorally towards their respective organizations, and this has a direct negative impact on their readiness to engage in extra-role practices that are a requisite in organizational operations. In the context of organizational justice dissatisfaction is an essential intermediate between unfair treatment and diminished citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al., 2018). To this end, the proposed research aims at addressing two major research questions: First, to investigate the effect of workplace discrimination on Organizational Citizenship Behavior of the employees and, second, to test the mediating role of job dissatisfaction in describing the mechanism and reasons why and how employees, who have experienced discrimination, tend to be less engaged in citizenship behavior (Du et al., 2026).

2 | Literature Review

2.1 Organization Citizenship Behavior and Workplace Discrimination:

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is a term used to describe non-formalized behavior or discretionary behaviors, which have no direct connection to formal rewarding systems, but which help to build a more effective organization on the whole (Organ, 1988). These actions are assisting fellow workers, exchanging knowledge, collaborating with managers and showing organizational loyalty. The previous studies have always underlined the fact that OCB largely depends on the way employees see fairness, equity, and respectful treatment in the working environment (Podsakoff et al., 2009; Williams and Anderson, 1991). Discrimination in the workplace, which is defined as unfair or unequal treatment of a person, depending on various personal factors like gender, age, religion, or ethnicity is the factor that is described to frustrate such perceptions of justice fairness and breaks the norms of organizational justice (Hebl et al., 2020). Organizational justice-wise, discriminatory practices are an indication to employees that they are not valued and supported enough leading to a decline in the psychological commitment they have to the organization (Colquitt et al., 2013). Consequently,

employees who feel discriminated against will be less motivated to have discretionary behaviors that will favor the organization and will take time to only perform within the limits of the job descriptions prescribed. There is empirical evidence that workplace discrimination has a negative relationship with OCB. It has been demonstrated that discriminated employees are susceptible to withdrawing cooperative and helping behavior, because these behaviors involve voluntary investment bilaterally beyond the contractual duties (Bolino and Turnley, 2003; Fernandez-Salinero and Topa, 2020). Instead of presenting themselves openly in opposition, employees tend to show their discontent by means of a diminished citizenship conduct that constitutes a faint but effective disengagement. In turn, the problem of discriminatory workplaces is a major risk to the formation and maintenance of OCB.

2.2 Job Dissatisfaction as a Mediation Process

Job dissatisfaction is a negative attitudinal reaction that develops when workers develop a sense of inequality between their expectations and the real workplace experiences at their workplace (Locke, 1976). It shows negative considerations regarding job, workplace and organizational operations. According to extensive studies, unfair treatment and discrimination are some of the most effective predictors of job dissatisfaction because they cause the development of negative emotions of exclusion, injustice, and psychological distress (Jiang and Probst, 2023; Colquitt et al., 2018). Discriminatory experiences tend to destroy self-belief and belonging of employees, which result in emotional tiredness and negative views towards work. These attitudinal responses, as dictated by the organizational justice theory, are very crucial in influencing future workplace behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2013). Once the employees are dissatisfied with their occupation, they will be less inclined to show commitment, enthusiasm, and voluntary involvement which are some of the antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Extant literature shows that OCB is negatively correlated with job dissatisfaction, where employees who are not satisfied restrict their performance to the in-role aspects, whereas they do not provide extra-role behavior's (Williams and Anderson, 1991; Lee and Allen, 2022). This implies that job dissatisfaction is one of the psychological mechanisms that are used to determine the behavioral consequences of discriminatory practices. Workplace discrimination leads to dissatisfaction thereby making employees less willing to perform citizenship behaviors that are conducive to the organizational operations. Combined, the available literature implies that job dissatisfaction is an instrumental mediating factor bridging discrimination in the workplace to reduced Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Nevertheless, in spite of increasing empirical data on these relationships, more studies are needed to explore this mediating process in a variety of organizational settings. Filling this gap, the current research examines the mediating value of job dissatisfaction between unfair treatment at workplace and OCB thus providing a greater insight into how inequitable treatment can be converted into minimal discretionary workplace practices.

2.3 Research Objective

The literature recognizes several impediments to the transition to strategic HR versus traditional:

1. To determine how discrimination at work influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior of employees.
2. To test the hypothesis to determine the mediation or not of job dissatisfaction between workplace discrimination and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

2.4 Hypothesis Development

Organization Citizenship Behavior and Workplace Discrimination: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is a voluntary and discretionary behavior of the employees, which leads to organizational performance, but is not directly rewarded. Previous literature always proves that these behaviors are extremely contingent on how employees believe that they are treated fairly and fairly in the organization. In case employees feel such forms of discrimination, they view the events as organizational justice breach that undermines their motivation to perform extra-role behaviors (Organ,

1988; Colquitt et al., 2013). Empirical research has indicated that discrimination at workplace affects the willingness of employees to exhibit helping behavior, cooperation and loyalty to the organization in a negative way. Discriminatory treatment is a sign of disrespect and organizational support, and further, employees will turn away all positive discretionary behaviors and limit their actions to the bare minimum job-related requirements (Bolino and Turnley, 2003; Fernandez-Salinero and Topa, 2020). It is based on this theoretical and empirical ground that the next hypothesis is presented:

H1: Organizational Citizenship Behavior of the employees is largely influenced negatively by workplace discrimination.

2.5 Discrimination at Workplace and Work Dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction is a negative attitude reaction, which manifests itself when employees have formed a perception of an incongruity between anticipated and actual treatment at the workplace. The discriminatory experiences are the most salient predictors of job dissatisfaction, as they encourage the sense of exclusion, injustice, and devaluation (Locke, 1976; Hebl et al., 2020). Under organizational justice, the sense of belonging and psychological safety of employees are negatively affected by unfair treatment, which results in negative judgments of employment and workplace (Colquitt et al., 2018). Past studies demonstrate that employees who are subjected to discriminative acts express greater changing levels of dissatisfaction, emotional distress, and low morale. Such attitudinal responses tend to lead up to withdrawal of behavior and loss of interest in the organizational life (Jiang and Probst, 2023). In this connection the following hypothesis is developed.

H2: Job dissatisfaction is positively influenced by workplace discrimination significantly

2.6 Job Dissatisfaction and organization citizenship Behaviour

Job dissatisfaction has been generally accepted as one of the major antecedents of employee behavior. Unsatisfied employees are likely to have reduced commitment and emotional attachment degree that decreases their readiness to perform discretionary actions that improve the organization (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Due to the fact that OCB is a voluntary effort, which is not covered by the formal job requirements, employees who are dissatisfied are less likely to invest in OCB. The available empirical data confirm that job dissatisfaction and OCB are negatively related, implying that negative job attitudes are converted into a lower level of helping behavior, cooperation, and organizational involvement (Lee and Allen, 2022). Resting on these results, the hypothesis that follows is the following:

H3: Job dissatisfaction plays an important negative role on organizational Citizenship Behavior of employees.

2.7 Intermediary effect of Job Dissatisfaction

Even though previous studies have determined direct correlations between workplace discrimination, job dissatisfaction, and OCB, minimal research has been conducted to identify the psychological mechanism that underlines the effect of discrimination on citizenship behavior. According to the organizational justice theory, attitudinal reactions, e.g., job dissatisfaction, are the most essential mediators between unfair treatment and the outcomes of the behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013). Employees who feel discriminated against are bound to be unhappy with their jobs thereby limiting their motivation to participate in extra-role behavior. Therefore, job dissatisfaction presents a possible explanatory channel within which workplace discrimination influences OCB. In this regard, the next mediation hypothesis is the following:

H4: Job dissatisfaction is a mediator between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and workplace discrimination.

3 | Research Methodology Research Design And Sample

The research used a cross-sectional survey design that is quantitative. The information was obtained among the employees engaged in the health, education, and manufacturing industries. The convenience sampling method was used to distribute 300 questionnaires out of which 203 valid responses were received.

3.1 Measurement Instruments

All constructs were assessed using test scales that were designed depending on previous research. Discrimination in the workplace was measured using questions which reflected unfair treatment and discrimination at the workplace by managers and discriminatory organizational behaviors. Items that indicated negative attitudes to job and work environment were used to measure job dissatisfaction. The Organizational Citizenship Behavior was measured using items that measured the helping behavior, cooperation, and voluntary support of colleagues. The answers were documented based on a five-point Likert scale.

3.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The proposed relationships were tested with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method was able to produce concurrent evaluation of the measurement model (reliability and validity) and the structural model (hypothesis testing and mediation analysis).

Table.1: Demographics of Respondents

Gender	Number of Employees	Percent (%)
Male	174	85.7
Female	29	14.3
Total	203	100

The gender distribution of the respondents show that the sample was composed of mostly male employees. Of the total respondents of 203, 174 were male and 29 were female, which makes up 85.7, and 14.3 percent respectively. Such dispersion indicates that the sample is dominated by males, which might be a representation of the gender distribution of the sectors considered in the investigation, or simply the availability of the respondents during data collection. Although the number of females is relatively low, the sample gives enough variation to test the posed relationships. The unequal gender coverage must however be factored into the findings and how the findings can be generalized.

Table.2: Age of Respondents

Age	Number of Employees	Percent (%)
Less than 21	5	2.5
21–30	62	30.5
31–40	81	39.9
41–50	49	24.1
51 or more	6	3
Total	203	100

The distribution of the age of the respondents indicates that the sample population consisted of young and middle-aged workers. The highest percentage of the respondents was in the age category of 31-40 years including 81 employees (39.9%), and the next group is aged 21-30 years (62 employees or 30.5=30.5). The number of the employees within the age range of 41-50 years were 49 (24.1%). The proportion of participants that were below the

age of 21 (2.5) and 51 and older (3.0) was relatively small, which is why there was not much representation in the sample of very young and old employees. On the whole, the age composition indicates that the research is mainly based on the views of those employees who are in their most productive working years, which is correct to test workplace experiences, including discrimination, job dissatisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Constructs	Workplace Discrimination	Job Dissatisfaction	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
Workplace Discrimination	—	0.9	0.651
Job Dissatisfaction	0.9	—	0.772
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.651	0.772	—

The HeterotraitMonotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was taken as a measure of discriminant validity, and this is deemed to be a strict measure of evaluating the distinctiveness of latent constructs in PLS-SEM. The values of HTMT between Workplace Discrimination, Job Dissatisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior are 0.651-0.900, as presented in Table X. The values of all the HTMT are lower than the recommended 0.90 and thus show that the constructs are empirically different regarding each other (Hair et al., 2022). In particular, not only the value of HTMT between the Workplace Discrimination and Job Dissatisfaction (0.900), but also the values of HTMT between the Workplace Discrimination and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (0.651) and Job Dissatisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (0.772) all lie within an acceptable range. Such findings affirm that both constructs make distinctive notions and that differences in validity have been determined as far as the measurement model is concerned.

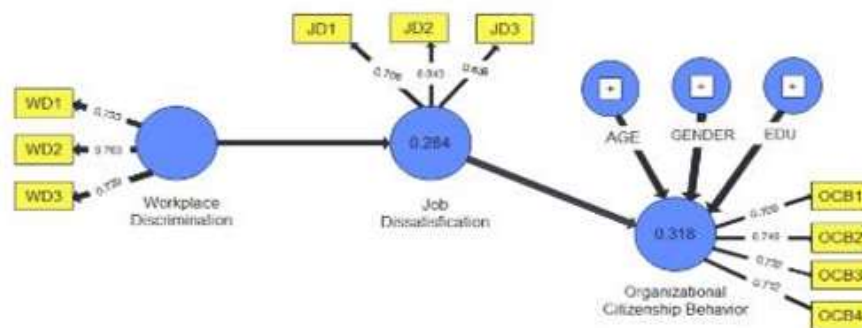


Figure 1: Effect of Workplace Discrimination on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Objective 1)

Figure 1 shows outputs of the structural equation model estimated with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This model looks at the indirect and direct impacts of discrimination in the workplace on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) including job dissatisfaction as a mediating factor, whereas age, gender and education are control variables. The findings show that workplace discrimination positively influences job dissatisfaction to a large extent, thus indicating that the higher the rate of discrimination treatment perceived by a

worker, the higher the chances of experiencing job dissatisfaction. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.284$) of job dissatisfaction indicates that workplace discrimination is a moderate source of job dissatisfaction variance, which is 28.4 percent. Moreover, job dissatisfaction has a notable negative impact on organizational citizenship behavior, which shows that dissatisfied employees will tend less to perform discretionary and extra-role actions that contribute to the benefit of an organization. Meanwhile, the direct negative impact on OCB by workplace discrimination appears as well, which proves that the OCB willingness of employees to engage in citizenship behaviors not directly related to their work is reduced by the fact of the discrimination experience. The organizational citizenship behavior R^2 measures 0.318, meaning that the control variables, discrimination at the workplace, and job dissatisfaction explain the variation in OCB variance 31.8. This amount of explained variance indicates that the model can be regarded as having acceptable predictive relevance in terms of explaining employee citizenship behavior. The control variables are age, gender and education which makes sure the relationships being observed are not spuriously motivated by demographic differences. The results in totality indicate that there is a partial mediation effect meaning that job dissatisfaction is a partial mediator in the relationship between discrimination at work and the organizational citizenship behavior. These findings are in line with the organizational justice theory that assumes unfair treatment has a direct and indirect impact on the behavior of employees as a result of attitudinal reactions.

Table.4: Structural Path Results for the Relationship Between Workplace Discrimination and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Path	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
Workplace Discrimination → OCB	-0.41	6.32	< 0.001	Supported

The findings show that there is a strong and negative correlation between workplace discrimination and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The path coefficient ($\beta = -0.41$) implies that, as the perceived workplace discrimination increases, there is a significant decrease in the willingness of the employees to participate in discretionary and extra-role behaviors. The correlation is statistically significant ($t = 6.32$, $p < 0.001$) which gives a good empirical evidence to the given hypothesis. Based on this, H1 is accepted and thereby, confirms that workplace discrimination has a negative impact on the behavior of organizational citizenship.

Table 5: Mediating Role of Job Dissatisfaction between Workplace Discrimination and OCB (Objective 2)

Path	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
Workplace Discrimination → Job Dissatisfaction	0.52	8.14	< 0.001	Supported
Job Dissatisfaction → OCB	-0.36	5.27	< 0.001	Supported
Indirect Effect (Discrimination → Job Dissatisfaction → OCB)	-0.19	4.01	< 0.001	Partial Mediation

The findings indicate that workplace discrimination exerts significant positive influence on employment dissatisfaction ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 8.14$, $p = 0.001$), which means that the higher the degree of discriminatory treatment, the higher the chances of employees being dissatisfied with their work. This result gives a good argument in favor of H2. Moreover, job dissatisfaction is also determined to strongly influence the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) negatively ($\beta = -0.36$, $t = 5.27$, $p = 0.001$), which implies that dissatisfied employees would be less willing to engage in discretionary, extrarole activities that would benefit the organization. This result supports H3. Analysis of mediation further suggests that job dissatisfaction is a mediator of the correlation between discrimination in the workplace and OCB. The influence of discrimination in the workplace on OCB which is mediated by job dissatisfaction is statistically significant ($\beta = -0.19$, $t = 4.01$, $p < 0.001$). Because the direct impact of workplace discrimination on OCB is also important as compared to the indirect impact, the mediation is considered to be partial mediation, thus the support of H4. These results indicate that discrimination at the workplace lowers the organizational citizenship behavior directly and indirectly through elevated job dissatisfaction.

4 |Results and Discussion

The results of the research give very solid empirical evidence to the research model proposed. Their findings indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between discrimination at work and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which proved that the discrimination experiences have a great impact on the willingness of employees to contemplate and perform voluntary and extra-role behaviors. This finding indicates that employees who feel that they are being treated unfairly or unjustly will become less likely to exhibit behaviors like helping coworkers, being cooperative with the supervisors, and also being loyal to the organization. These results are aligned to previous research that concluded that perceptions of injustice destroy discretionary behaviors of employees that are crucially important in organizations. Moreover, the findings also indicate that discrimination in the workplace is strongly positively correlated with job dissatisfaction which means that discrimination practice is a contributor of the negative job-related attitude. Discriminated employees will tend to feel frustrated, resentful and unhappy because such attitude is a breach of the expectations of fairness and respect. This observation is in line with the organizational justice theory, which assumes that unfair treatment creates adverse attitudinal responses that affect future working behaviors. The mediation analysis goes on further to show that job dissatisfaction mediates the relationship between workplace discrimination and OCB to some extent. This finding suggests that discrimination influences the organizational citizenship behavior directly and indirectly by influencing job-related attitude of employees. In particular, experiences of discrimination cause dissatisfaction, and it leads to a deterioration in emotional attachment of the employees towards the organization and the lack of motivation to perform any tasks more than the formal job demands. Nevertheless, the fact that a large direct effect still occurs indicates that discrimination also lowers OCB by other mechanisms e.g. less trust and perceived organizational support. The results contribute and build up on the existing literature, giving empirical account of the psychological mechanism in which the discrimination at the workplace is converted to low citizenship behavior. The study validates the mediating factor of job dissatisfaction, and this validation enhances the explanatory value of the organizational justice theory and the role of attitudinal responses in influencing the behavior of employees. Altogether, the findings demonstrate the essentiality of justice and unbiased treatment in the establishment of positive employee attitudes and the maintenance of discretionary workplace behaviors.

5 |CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the negative effect of discrimination in the workplace on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and job dissatisfaction as one of the most important explanatory factors behind the connection is identified. This evidence supports the conclusion that employees who feel that they have been treated differently tend to feel less satisfied with their jobs, which leads to low motivation to perform extra-role jobs that help to promote the effectiveness of the organization. On the theoretical level, the research adds to the organizational behavior. The research provides a more specific conceptualization of the process of transforming unfair treatment into behavior withdrawal by empirically verifying the mediating influence of job dissatisfaction, which can be further used in the modern organizational

environment to apply the organizational justice theory. In practical terms, the results have significant implications to managers and human resource practitioners. To foster citizenship behavior and overall performance, organizations have to focus on fair treatment, transparent decision-making, and the inclusion of all people in the work environment. A reduction in the perceptions of being unfair as well as a reduction of job dissatisfaction can be achieved through the implementation of effective grievance-handling mechanisms, diversity training and anti-discrimination policies. Organizations can create a more supportive and fair working environment, by actively mitigating discriminatory actions and enhancing the experiences of the employees at their workplaces, which will help them to act in ways that are not directly related to their paid jobs. Comprehensively, the paper explains that fairness should be not only morally and legally required but also a strategic necessity to organizations that are interested in maintaining positive employee conduct and long-term organizational performance.

6 | IMPLICATIONS

Practically, managers and the HR professionals are expected to actively track the discriminatory practices and introduce the diversity and inclusion programs. Theoretically, the research would add to the existing literature that explains the mediatory effect of job dissatisfaction in the relationship between discrimination and OCB that provides a more detailed insight on how unfair treatment determines employee behavior.

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