

How Organizational Justice Influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction among University Teachers in Shandong Province, China

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships among organizational justice (OJ), job satisfaction (JS), and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among university teachers in Shandong Province, China, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of JS. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected from 200 university teachers ($n = 200$) using a structured questionnaire. Regression and bootstrap mediation analyses were conducted to test the proposed relationships. The results show that OJ has a significant positive effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.320$), while JS also significantly predicts OCB ($\beta = 0.574$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.329$). The mediation analysis indicates that the direct effect of OJ on OCB remains significant after including JS ($B = 0.358$, 95% CI [0.230, 0.485], $p < 0.001$), and the effect of JS on OCB is also significant ($B = 0.357$, 95% CI [0.233, 0.472],

$p < 0.001$), confirming the partial mediating role of JS. These findings demonstrate that organizational justice promotes teachers' organizational citizenship behavior both directly and indirectly by enhancing job satisfaction. The study contributes to the literature on organizational behavior in higher education and provides practical implications for promoting fairness, job satisfaction, and positive discretionary behaviors among university teachers.

Keywords: organizational justice, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior

1. Introduction

In modern educational institutions, fostering a positive work environment is essential for enhancing university teachers' performance and overall school effectiveness. Among various organizational factors, organizational justice (OJ) and job satisfaction (JS) have been widely recognized as critical determinants of employees' extra-role behaviors (Jufrizen & Sari, 2023), commonly conceptualized as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). In the university context, OCB refers to voluntary and discretionary behaviors performed by teachers that go beyond formal job requirements, such as helping colleagues, supporting institutional initiatives, and contributing to a collaborative academic environment (Shwetha & Ashraf, 2025).

The rapid expansion of China's higher education sector has intensified the demands placed on university faculty, requiring them to balance teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities within increasingly stringent evaluation systems that often privilege research productivity over teaching quality (Mei & Symaco, 2022). This complex set of expectations has been shown to elevate stress levels, reduce job satisfaction, and heighten concerns about organizational justice among faculty members (Zhang et al., 2024). In Shandong Province, where higher education institutions are densely concentrated, these pressures appear particularly acute, as university teachers frequently encounter limited opportunities for professional advancement, excessive workloads, and resource constraints that undermine their sense of fairness and overall job satisfaction (Changlong, 2024). Such unfavorable conditions may also diminish faculty members' willingness to engage in OCBs, which are voluntary activities that extend beyond formal job requirements and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the institution.

Despite these recent findings, several gaps remain. Existing studies have often examined OJ, JS, or OCB separately, or have focused on general employees rather than university teachers. Moreover, although evidence from Asian contexts, including Malaysia and Indonesia, supports the relationships among these variables, relatively limited research has simultaneously examined OJ, JS, and OCB among university teachers in Shandong Province, China (Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2022; Mustafa et al., 2023). In addition, recent Chinese research has increasingly examined the relationship between organizational justice and teachers' OCB through alternative mechanisms, such as burnout (Ji et al., 2025), while comparatively less attention has been given to job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism. Therefore, the specific mechanism through which organizational justice influences university

teachers' OCB through job satisfaction remains insufficiently understood. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the direct effects of OJ and JS on OCB and the mediating role of JS among university teachers in Shandong Province, China.

This study aims to address the identified research gap by examining the relationships among OJ, JS) and OCB) among university teachers in Shandong Province. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) Does OJ significantly influence OCB? (2) Does JS significantly influence OCB? and (3) Does JS mediate the relationship between OJ and OCB? These research questions are directly aligned with the proposed hypotheses and are examined consistently throughout the analysis, discussion, and conclusion. By addressing these questions, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which organizational justice and job satisfaction influence teachers' organizational citizenship behavior and provides practical implications for university administrators seeking to enhance teachers' satisfaction, engagement, and positive discretionary behaviors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Justice (OJ) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Organizational justice (OJ) refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in the workplace, encompassing distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Distributive justice concerns the perceived fairness of outcome distributions, procedural justice pertains to the fairness of decision-making processes, and interactional justice emphasizes the quality of interpersonal treatment and communication. Prior research has consistently indicated that higher levels of perceived organizational justice are associated with positive employee attitudes, including increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation to engage in discretionary behaviors (Caminos & Tan, 2025; Ennida & Allouani, 2023). In educational contexts, university teachers' perceptions of fairness in policies, resource allocation, and administrative interactions are critical in shaping their professional behavior and commitment to the school.

A growing body of research suggests that organizational justice positively influences OCB. For example, Jia et al. (2025) found that university instructors who perceived higher levels of organizational justice displayed more OCB, thereby enhancing their work performance. Similarly, research in Malaysia indicated that organizational fairness among administrative staff positively impacts teachers' OCB, improving the quality of their work (Mustafa et al., 2023). This relationship is further supported by findings from Lestari et al. (2025) and Choong et al. (2024). However, some studies report inconsistent results; for instance, Khawaja et al. (2020) found no significant correlation between OCB and organizational justice, suggesting that the effect of OJ on OCB may depend on contextual factors. Given these mixed findings, the relationship between OJ and OCB in the Shandong educational context warrants further examination.

H1: Organizational justice has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

2.2 Job Satisfaction and OCB

Job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which employees feel positively about their work, including both intrinsic factors (e.g., recognition, achievement, professional growth) and extrinsic factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) (Ennida & Allouani, 2023). Numerous studies have highlighted that job satisfaction not only contributes to university teachers' well-being but also enhances their willingness to perform beyond formal duties. Satisfied university teachers tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and proactive support for school initiatives, which are key elements of OCB (Li, 2024). Moreover, job satisfaction is often influenced by perceived organizational justice, suggesting an interlinked relationship between these constructs.

Several studies have demonstrated a positive influence of job satisfaction on OCB. The research findings of Ennida and Allouani (2023) indicate a correlation between university teachers' job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. A digital age study shows that, increasing job satisfaction is important for organizations to increase commitment and university teacher's OCB (Hidayat & Patras, 2022; Kartiko et al., 2023). However, some studies have found inconsistent findings. In 2020, the researcher of Sunaris et al. (2022) showed that job satisfaction has no positive impact on OCB. This suggests that the influence of job satisfaction on OCB is still controversial in different research backgrounds. Thus, it is imperative to investigate the connection between OCB and job satisfaction.

H2: Job satisfaction has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

2.3 The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Prior research has demonstrated that JS can serve as a mediating variable in the relationships between OJ and intention to leave (Knezović & Neimarlija, 2023). Specifically, JS has been identified as a mediator between OJ and OCB in various contexts, such as state-owned enterprise employees (Jufrizen & Sari, 2023), and non-academic staff in Ethiopian higher education institutions (Moltot & Walia, 2024).

In addition, Devi and Kamraj (2022) reported that JS mediates both OCB and organizational commitment. Collectively, these findings suggest that JS can function as a mediator across different organizational variables. However, limited research has examined the mediating role of JS in the relationship between OJ and OCB, indicating the need for further investigation in this specific context. Based on this gap in the literature, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior.

2.4 Research Gap

Although previous studies have established positive relationships between organizational justice (OJ), job satisfaction (JS), and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), several

gaps remain. First, findings on the relationship between OJ and OCB are inconsistent. While several studies reported a positive relationship (Choong et al., 2024; Jia et al., 2025; Lestari et al., 2025; Mustafa et al., 2023), Khawaja et al. (2020) found no significant relationship, suggesting that contextual factors may influence this relationship. Second, evidence regarding the effect of JS on OCB is also mixed. Although several studies found that satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate OCB (Ennida & Allouani, 2023; Hidayat & Patras, 2022; Li, 2024), Sunaris et al. (2022) reported an insignificant relationship. This inconsistency highlights the need for further investigation, particularly among university teachers. Third, limited research has examined JS as a mediator between OJ and OCB. Although previous studies have identified JS as a mediator in various organizational relationships (Jufrizen & Sari, 2023; Knezović & Neimarlija, 2023; Moltot & Walia, 2024), this mediating mechanism remains relatively underexplored among university teachers.

2.5 Research Framework

The research framework proposes that OJ directly influences OCB, while job satisfaction (JS) serves as both a direct predictor of OCB and a mediating mechanism linking OJ to OCB. Specifically, the framework assumes that employees who perceive greater fairness in organizational procedures, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, which subsequently encourages them to engage in discretionary behaviors that contribute to the effectiveness of their university. Accordingly, the framework examines three relationships: the direct effect of OJ on OCB, the direct effect of JS on OCB, and the mediating effect of JS on the relationship between OJ and OCB among university teachers in Shandong Province, China.

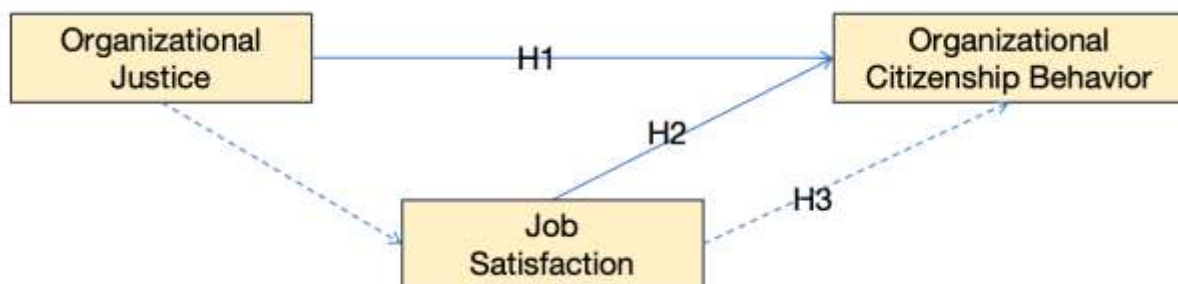


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationships among OJ, JS, and OCB among university teachers in Shandong Province, China. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 200 university teachers, selected through purposive sampling from higher education institutions in Shandong Province. Participants were required to be currently employed as university teachers and to have sufficient work experience to evaluate their organizational environment, job satisfaction, and citizenship behavior. Participants who did not meet these criteria or provided incomplete responses were excluded from the analysis. Purposive sampling was chosen because the study required

participants with direct experience in teaching and familiarity with organizational processes in higher education institutions. The questionnaire was developed based on previously validated measurement instruments, with items adapted to the university teaching context while maintaining the original meaning of the constructs. The questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance before data collection.

The questionnaire included validated scales for OJ, JS, and OCB, measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. OCB was measured with the OCB scale by Organ (1988), which assesses altruism, conscientiousness, and civic virtue through items such as helping colleagues and maintaining good attendance. OJ was measured using Flint et al.'s (2012) scale, covering distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. JS was measured with the scale of Özpehlivan and Acar (2016), focusing on working conditions, salary fairness, and managerial responsiveness. All questionnaire items were presented in a consistent format, and respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential.

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Before the main analyses, the dataset was screened for missing values, incomplete responses, and potential outliers. The assumptions for regression analysis, including linearity, normality, independence of errors, and multicollinearity, were assessed before hypothesis testing. Reliability and validity of the measurement instruments were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and validity tests to ensure consistency and appropriateness in the educational context. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine preliminary relationships among OJ, JS, and OCB. Regression analyses were then performed to test the hypothesized direct effects of OJ and JS on OCB. Mediation analysis was conducted because the conceptual framework proposes that OJ may influence OCB not only directly but also indirectly by improving teachers' JS. Furthermore, the mediating role of JS in the relationship between OJ and OCB was examined using regression-based Bootstrap mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate the indirect effect and its 95% confidence interval. Mediation was considered significant when the confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the study and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority before data collection. In addition, the sample size exceeds the minimum requirement for regression and mediation analysis, providing sufficient observations for the proposed statistical analyses.

4. Data Analysis

Table 1 reports the reliability coefficients of the study variables. The Cronbach's alpha values for Organizational Citizenship Behavior (0.956), Organizational Justice (0.941), and Job Satisfaction (0.951) all exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency of the measurement scales. These results suggest that the items used to assess each construct are highly reliable and consistently capture the intended dimensions. Such high reliability further confirms the appropriateness of the adopted scales for examining

the relationships among the variables in this study. The KMO value was 0.778, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating adequate sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 192.208$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlations among the variables were sufficient for factor analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.956
Organizational Justice	0.941
Job Satisfaction	0.951

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.778
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	192.208
	df	3
	Sig.	<0.001

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. The results reveal significant positive correlations at the 0.01 level. Specifically, organizational justice (OJ) is positively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) ($r = 0.566$, $p < 0.01$), and job satisfaction (JS) is positively correlated with OCB ($r = 0.574$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, OJ is positively associated with JS ($r = 0.374$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that university teachers' perceptions of fairness are closely related to their job satisfaction and their willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that support the school.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient

Variables	OCB	OJ	JS
OCB	1	0.566**	0.574**
OJ	0.566**	1	0.374**
JS	0.574**	0.374**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The regression analysis results in Table 4 show that OJ has a significant positive effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 32% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = 0.32$), and the F-statistic is significant ($F = 93.261$, $p < 0.001$). The VIF value was 1.000, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in the regression model. These results suggest that university teachers who perceive higher levels of organizational justice are more likely to engage in behaviors that go beyond formal job responsibilities, such as helping colleagues and supporting school initiatives.

Table 4. Regression analysis of OJ on OCB

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R²	F	VIF
(Constant)	1.629	0.169	-	9.643	0	0.32	93.261	1.000
OJ	0.497	0.051	0.566	9.657	0			

a. Dependent Variable: OCB

As shown in Table 5, JS also has a significant positive effect on OCB ($\beta = 0.574$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 32.9% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = 0.329$), with the F-statistic indicating a good model fit ($F = 97.297$, $p < 0.001$). The VIF value of 1.000 indicates that the regression model was free from multicollinearity concerns. These findings demonstrate that university teachers with higher job satisfaction are more likely to contribute positively to their school environment by performing voluntary and supportive behaviors.

Table 5. Regression analysis of JS on OCB

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R²	F	VIF
(Constant)	1.627	0.166	-	9.797	0	0.329	97.297	1.000
JS	0.486	0.049	0.574	9.863	0			

The mediation analysis in Table 6 showed that the total effect of OJ on OCB was 0.4965. After including JS as a mediator, the direct effect remained significant ($B = 0.3583$, 95% CI [0.2618, 0.4549], $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect through JS was also significant ($B = 0.1382$, BootSE = 0.0341, 95% CI [0.0778, 0.2122]), as the bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero. Approximately 27.83% of the total effect of OJ on OCB was mediated through JS, indicating partial mediation.

Table 6. Bootstrap mediation results

Effect	B	BootSE/SE	95% CI	p
Total: OJ → OCB	0.4965	—	—	< 0.001*
Direct: OJ → OCB	0.3583	0.0489	[0.2618, 0.4549]	< 0.001*
Indirect: OJ → JS → OCB	0.1382	0.0341	[0.0778, 0.2122]	—

Note. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 5000 bootstrap samples

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that OJ has a significant positive effect on OCB among university teachers in Shandong Province. This finding is consistent with previous empirical evidence showing that employees who perceive greater fairness are more likely to demonstrate discretionary behaviors that benefit their organizations (Caminos & Tan, 2025; Changlong, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be explained by social exchange theory, which suggests that employees tend to reciprocate fair treatment with positive attitudes and behaviors. When university teachers perceive fair procedures, equitable resource allocation, and respectful treatment, they are more likely to develop trust and a sense of obligation toward their institutions. This may encourage them to assist colleagues, participate in institutional activities, and contribute beyond their formal responsibilities. Therefore, OJ can strengthen trust and reciprocity, encouraging teachers to engage in OCB and contribute to institutional effectiveness. The consistency of this finding with previous studies further confirms that fairness is an important antecedent of teachers' discretionary behavior.

The results also reveal that JS has a significant positive effect on OCB, supporting previous findings reported by Hermawan et al. (2024) and Kartiko et al. (2023). From the perspective of SET, satisfied teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their institutions and reciprocate favorable work experiences through positive behaviors. When teachers are satisfied with recognition, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and managerial support, they may be more willing to assist colleagues and contribute beyond their formal responsibilities. This finding is particularly relevant in the university context, where teachers face multiple demands involving teaching, research, and administration. Thus, job satisfaction can strengthen teachers' willingness to reciprocate positive organizational experiences through OCB.

The mediation analysis demonstrates that JS partially mediates the relationship between OJ and OCB, indicating that organizational justice influences teachers' citizenship behavior both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Dubey et al.

(2024) and can be explained by SET, as fair treatment may encourage teachers to reciprocate through cooperative behaviors while also increasing their job satisfaction and willingness to contribute beyond formal responsibilities. This mechanism is particularly relevant in the higher education context of Shandong Province, where teaching, research, promotion, workload allocation, and resource distribution can strongly shape teachers' perceptions of fairness and satisfaction. When teachers perceive institutional decisions as fair and their contributions as valued, they are more likely to respond with positive discretionary behaviors; therefore, the findings suggest that OJ and JS jointly shape teachers' OCB through both direct reciprocity and improved work attitudes.

The findings also extend Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating its applicability to the higher education context in Shandong Province. While SET has traditionally been used to explain reciprocal relationships between organizational treatment and employee behavior, the present study further shows that this exchange process operates through both a direct behavioral pathway and an indirect attitudinal pathway. Specifically, organizational justice not only directly encourages university teachers to reciprocate through OCB but also indirectly promotes such behavior by enhancing job satisfaction. This finding extends SET by showing that job satisfaction is a key mechanism linking fair treatment to university teachers' discretionary behavior.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Main Theoretical and Practical Achievements

This study examined the relationships among OJ, JS, and OCB among university teachers in Shandong Province, China, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of JS. The findings demonstrate that both OJ and JS have significant positive effects on OCB, while JS partially mediates the relationship between OJ and OCB. These findings indicate that organizational fairness can promote teachers' discretionary behaviors both directly and indirectly by enhancing their job satisfaction. Theoretically, this study extends the existing literature on OJ, JS, and OCB by providing empirical evidence from the higher education context in Shandong Province, where relatively limited research has examined these relationships simultaneously. In particular, confirming the mediating role of JS provides a clearer explanation of how perceptions of organizational fairness are translated into teachers' extra-role behaviors.

Practically, the findings provide several concrete recommendations for university administrators. Universities should establish transparent decision-making and promotion procedures, communicate evaluation criteria clearly, and ensure equitable workload and resource allocation to strengthen teachers' perceptions of fairness. Administrators should also regularly collect faculty feedback, recognize teachers' contributions, improve working conditions, and provide opportunities for professional development to enhance job satisfaction. By implementing these practices, universities can create a more supportive and fair working environment that encourages teachers to voluntarily assist colleagues, participate in institutional activities, and contribute beyond their formal responsibilities, thereby strengthening OCB and overall institutional effectiveness.

6.2 Recommendations and Implications

Based on the findings, university administrators should establish transparent and consistent decision-making procedures, ensure fair distribution of resources and rewards, and provide respectful and supportive interpersonal treatment. These practices can strengthen teachers' perceptions of organizational justice and, consequently, improve their job satisfaction and willingness to engage in OCB. Universities should also pay greater attention to teachers' working conditions, recognition, professional development opportunities, and communication with management. In addition, administrators can strengthen organizational citizenship by creating a supportive institutional climate in which teachers feel valued and fairly treated. These measures may contribute not only to improved teacher satisfaction but also to greater collaboration, voluntary support, and overall institutional effectiveness.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among OJ, JS, and OCB. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to examine how these relationships develop over time. Second, the study focused on university teachers in Shandong Province, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions, educational institutions, or cultural contexts. Future research could conduct comparative studies across different provinces, types of higher education institutions, or countries. Third, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may introduce common method and response biases. Future research could combine teacher self-reports with supervisor evaluations or objective organizational data. Finally, future studies could examine additional mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, leadership style, or organizational culture, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and boundary conditions underlying the relationship between organizational justice and OCB. Overall, this study provides evidence that strengthening organizational justice and job satisfaction can play an important role in fostering university teachers' organizational citizenship behavior and improving institutional effectiveness.

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Author contributions

Associate Professor Dr Helen and Mr Zhou Delu were responsible for study design and revising. Mr Zhou Delu was responsible for data collection. Mr Zhou Delu drafted the manuscript and Associate Professor Dr Helen revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. In this paragraph, also explain any special agreements concerning authorship, such as if authors contributed equally to the study.

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Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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