



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Universities' Organizational Environment and Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Hebei Province, China

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Keywords

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The study aims to explore not only the impact of the organizational environment on the organizational citizenship behavior of 568 university teachers in Hebei Province, China, through a questionnaire survey, but also to examine differences in the organizational environment based on years of teaching experience, and variations in organizational citizenship behavior according to different job positions. The research results indicate significant differences in the organizational environment related to years of teaching experience, as well as differences in organizational citizenship behavior based on job positions. The findings demonstrate that the university's organizational environment positively influences teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. In essence, a better organizational environment leads to improved organizational citizenship behavior among teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the continuous advancement of educational reform, the higher education system has placed increasing demands on university teachers, requiring them to dedicate significant time and effort to teaching, research, and management (Akosile, 2022). In this complex and rapidly evolving environment, traditional human resource management methods are gradually losing their effectiveness (Malik et al., 2023). Hebei Province, an important region in North China, has historically lagged behind other areas in the development of higher education. Higher education institutions in Hebei face certain competitive disadvantages compared to regions with more developed higher education sectors, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Hubei (Liang et al., 2021). As Hebei gradually emerges as a key player in Chinese higher education, it also encounters various problems and challenges, including a limited ability to cultivate top innovative talent, a disconnect between the skills offered by universities and the needs of industrial development, unstable and insufficient conditions for the sustainable development of higher education, and employment pressures on university graduates (Borsi et al., 2022; Zhao, 2022). With ongoing higher education reforms, competition among universities is intensifying, placing substantial work demands and unprecedented pressure on university teachers (Peng, 2023; Xu, 2023).

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are defined as discretionary individual actions that are not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system but collectively enhance the effective functioning of the organization. These behaviors are assessed in terms of interpersonal altruism and organized public welfare activities (Organ, 1988). Owens (2004) argued that the behaviors of organizational members are not only shaped by immediate events but are also influenced by the intangible forces within the organizational environment itself. As key agents of

professional development, teachers' behaviors are not determined solely by their subjective intentions, personal experiences, or professional competencies. As individuals operating within a specific environment, teachers' development is also constrained by their living conditions (Barni, 2019). Teachers' OCB not only contributes positively to their own career advancement and development but also has a beneficial impact on their teaching performance, research output, and social service contributions (Organ, 2018; Sidorenkov et al., 2023).

OCB is an important indicator used to explain the relationship between employees and their organization. This interaction can influence employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors (Van Dyne et al., 1998). Primarily, OCB research focuses on the influence of leaders on subordinates (Wulandari & Mila, 2023), while studies on organizational support and trust (Din et al., 2023; Kavgacı, 2023; Ricardo et al., 2024) often overlook the impact of the organizational environment in higher education institutions in relation to OCB. Universities may present an imperfect organizational environment, and as a result, OCB might lead to psychological stress for teachers facing excessive workloads, negatively affecting their well-being and contributing to work-family conflicts (Hossain et al., 2021).

In the university environment, individuals may choose or adapt to the organizational environment based on their interests, skills, values, and other characteristics (Arieli, 2020). The organizational environment in universities also incorporates aspects such as culture, policies, and leadership style. However, from the perspective of a person-environment fit, if the organizational environment of the university aligns with the teachers' values and needs, teachers are more likely to adapt and integrate into the organization. Just as dominant individuals seek leadership positions, individuals tend to seek or create distinct environments where they can showcase their characteristics (Young et al., 2007).

Unsurprisingly, individuals tend to be more active and content in environments that align with their skills, interests, values, and other personal traits (Muchinsky, 1987; Kandler, 2022). A better person-environment fit leads to higher satisfaction, performance, and productivity, while also reducing stress levels and turnover intentions. The degree to which an individual's background, skills, and interests match their role, and whether the organizational structure supports these roles, directly impacts their performance and satisfaction within the university environment (Abdulmuhsin, 2021). Essentially, the extent to which teachers identify with the organization's values, and whether their roles align with their personal values and skills, may influence their engagement in OCB (Gee, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of the organizational environment of universities on teachers' OCB.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the theory of person-environment fit to explore the process of teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). A key aspect of this theory is determining what constitutes a suitable environment (Judge et al., 1992). Person-environment fit refers to the compatibility or congruence between individuals and their environment (Dawis, 1992; Edwards et al., 1998; Muchinsky et al., 1987). It includes various forms, such as matching individuals' needs with environmental rewards (Dawis et al., 1984), aligning individuals' abilities with environmental demands (Shirom, 1982), and similarity between individuals and their social environment (Chatman, 1989; Holland, 1997; Meglino et al., 1989; Schneider, 1987).

The theory is grounded in interactional psychology, which emphasizes the role of the interaction between personal and environmental factors in shaping behavior (Deschênes, 2023). In an organizational context, person-environment fit refers to the alignment between an individual's needs, values, goals, abilities, and personality with the demands and culture of the organization (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Vleugels, 2023). This fit is an evolving process that influences cognition

and behavior (Bandura, 1989), making it a widely used framework across various disciplines (Vleugels, 2023).

Organizational Environment

The organizational environment includes both the internal and external factors that influence organizational members' behavior and outcomes. Farooqi (2014) defines it as a combination of internal factors like the organizational climate and external aspects such as professional development, teamwork, rewards, and coordination. When the environment meets employees' needs, it enhances motivation and engagement, which can lead to higher levels of innovation and OCB (Rauvola, 2020).

In higher education institutions, external factors include national policies, development opportunities, and societal recognition, while internal factors involve organizational relationships, cohesion, and the physical, psychological, and cultural aspects of the institution (Aktaş & Kiyak, 2011). This study defines the organizational environment as a combination of internal factors like organizational climate, professional development, teamwork, guidance, and rewards (Farooqi, 2014).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The concept of OCB was first introduced by Katz (1964) and distinguishes between internal-role behaviors, which are job-required, and external-role behaviors, which are voluntary actions that go beyond formal job duties (Organ, 1988). OCB, being voluntary, enhances organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Diefendorff et al., 2003; Smith et al., 1983).

External-role behaviors are further categorized into OCB directed at individuals (OCB-I), which includes altruism and courtesy, and OCB directed at the organization (OCB-O), which includes civic virtue, conscientiousness, and sportsmanship. OCB, though discretionary, plays a vital role in increasing productivity, morale, and cooperation (Abbasi & Wan, 2023). In this study, OCB is defined as voluntary behaviors that contribute to the effective functioning of the organization, evaluated through interpersonal altruistic and organizational civic behavior (Organ, 1988).

Differences in Organizational Environment and OCB Based on Demographics

Teaching experience affects how teachers perceive and adapt to the organizational environment. Wong et al. (2022) suggest that experienced teachers are better at navigating the authority, status, and social networks of their institution, indicating that experience influences adaptation. Studies have shown that veteran teachers score higher on distributed leadership and academic optimism compared to newer teachers (Thien et al., 2020), and older teachers perceive higher organizational commitment and justice (Mailool et al., 2020; Lin & Shin, 2021). Based on these findings, this study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 1: There are significant differences in the organizational environment among university teachers with varying years of experience in Hebei.

Job position also influences OCB. Hsieh et al. (2024) found that subject teachers exhibit different levels of OCB compared to head teachers. Similarly, Samancioglu et al. (2020) and Topchyan & Woehler (2021) found that full-time teachers show higher OCB than part-time teachers. Zhao et al. (2020) also noted differences in OCB based on job positions in higher education. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences in OCB among university teachers in different job positions.

Relationship Between Organizational Environment and Teachers' OCB

University teachers' OCB is shaped by their organizational environment, including factors like academic culture, commitment, and socialization (Ayşe & Oya, 2016; Stan, 2014). Research has shown that a supportive academic environment positively influences OCB (Mark & Zaiton, 2016; Stan, 2014). Additionally, Eckar et al. (2021) found that work environment characteristics, job stress, emotional commitment, and organizational factors impact OCB among university counselors. Based on these findings, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 3: The organizational environment has a significant positive impact on teachers' OCB in universities.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in the study are employed as university teachers in Hebei Province, China. The snowball sampling method was applied for selecting participants. Electronic questionnaires were distributed to those who were willing to participate in this study. A total of 680 formal questionnaires were distributed and 631 questionnaires were recovered. After excluding invalid questionnaires, a total of 568 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 83.53%. Data regarding the teaching years and job positions was collected using the questionnaire, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Demographic Characteristics of The Study Participants (N=568)

Variable	Level	Number (Person)	Percent (%)
Years of Teaching Experience	5 years and below	272	47.90
	5-10 years	249	43.80
	10-15 years	24	4.20
	More than 15 years	23	4.00
Job Position	Administrative staff	314	55.30
	Full-time teacher	254	44.70

Note: The table was based on the data collected.

Research instruments

This study utilized two scales to collect data: a) the Organizational Environment Scale (Farooqi, 2014) and b) the Teacher Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Both scales were adapted to align with Chinese school culture. Initially, experts proficient in both English and Chinese translated the scales into Chinese. The translated versions were then reviewed by five scholars specializing in Chinese education. Finally, bilingual experts re-translated the scales into English and compared the two versions to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Organizational environment scale

The organizational environment scale for universities (Farooqi, 2014) consists of 36 items distributed across seven dimensions: internal environment, professional development, team work, guidance and support, facilitation, participation and coordination, and rewards and benefits. Examples of items include "the working environment in our department is very favorable" and "in my university, rewards are related to higher performance." All items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability analysis of the scale for the university organizational environment showed the following Cronbach's Alpha values for each dimension: internal environment=.817, professional development=.780, team work=.816, guidance and support=.837, facilitation=.836, participation and coordination=.810, rewards and

benefits=.752. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value for the organizational environment scale was .956, indicating high reliability for the scale and its dimensions.

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to validate the organizational environment scale for universities. The standardized factor loadings for the seven dimensions ranged from .706 to .872, all of which are above the threshold value of .400, indicating good measurement of relationships (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The composite reliability (CR) values ranged from .843 to .903, all above the threshold value of .600 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from .555 to .624, all above the threshold value of .400, thus indicating good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The CFA results for the organizational environment scale for universities were as follows: $\chi^2/df=1.164$, SRMR=.030, RMSEA=.017, GFI=.940, AGFI=.930, NFI=.933, NNFI=.989, CFI=.990, RFI=.926, IFI=.990, PNFI=.849, PGFI=.900. All fit indices met the standard threshold values, indicating a good fit for the model of the organizational environment scale for universities.

Organizational citizenship behavior scale

This study utilized the OCB scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991), which includes two factors: interpersonal altruistic behavior and organizational civic virtue behavior, comprising a total of 12 items. Examples of items include: "I willingly help colleagues who have been absent" and "I adhere to informal rules devised to maintain order at school." All items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The interpersonal altruistic behavior dimension consists of 7 items with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .880, while the organizational civic virtue behavior dimension consists of 5 items with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .770. These values indicate good internal consistency for the scale.

The results of the CFA for the OCB scale showed standardized factor loadings ranging from .660 to .774, all above the threshold value of .400, indicating good measurement relationships (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The CR values ranged from .845 to .890, all above the threshold value of .600, while AVE values ranged from .521 to .538, all above the threshold value of .400, indicating good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The CFA results for the OCB scale in this study were as follows: $\chi^2/df=.773$, below the threshold value of 5 (Hair et al., 2009), SRMR=.018, below the threshold value of .080, RMSEA=.021, below the threshold value of .080, GFI=.988, AGFI=.983, NFI=.984, NNFI=.976, CFI=.952, RFI=.980, IFI=.952, PNFI=.790, PGFI=.671. All fit indices met the standard threshold values (McDonald & Ho, 2002), indicating a good fit for the model of OCB.

In summary, the scales used in this study are well-established and capable of objectively and effectively measuring the current organizational environment and the state of teacher OCB in universities in Hebei Province, China. This lays a solid foundation for subsequent data analysis.

RESULTS

1) The current status of university organization environments and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors in Hebei Province, China

The descriptive statistical analysis using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) revealed the following results for the university organizational environment and teacher organizational citizenship behavior in Hebei Province, China. The results showed that university organizational environment ($M=2.766$, $SD=0.644$), internal environment ($M=2.817$, $SD=0.898$), professional development ($M=2.768$, $SD=0.799$), team work ($M=2.739$, $SD=0.737$), guidance and support ($M=2.770$, $SD=0.766$), facilitation ($M=2.761$, $SD=0.764$), coordination and participation ($M=2.762$, $SD=0.704$), reward and benefit ($M=2.074$, $SD=0.597$), organizational citizenship behavior ($M=2.530$, $SD=0.644$), interpersonal altruistic behavior ($M=2.760$, $SD=0.733$), and organizational civic virtue behavior ($M=2.761$, $SD=0.754$). These results indicate that the scores for the university organizational environment and teacher organizational citizenship behavior, along with their

respective dimensions, mostly exceed the midpoint of 2.5. This suggests that the university organizational environment and teacher organizational citizenship behavior in universities in Hebei Province, China, are at a moderate level.

2) Differences in different teaching years in the organizational environment and different job positions in teachers' organizational citizenship behavior

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc multiple comparison methods were used to compare the differences in the university organizational environment based on the number of years of teaching experience. The results showed significant differences in the university organizational environment across different levels of teaching experience ($F=3.323, p=.020$). Teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience had significantly higher levels of university organizational environment compared to those with 5 years or less and those with 5-10 years of teaching experience. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported, with the results presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Differences in years of teaching experience in the university organizational environment

Variable	Year of teaching experience	M	SD	F	p	Post-hoc comparison
University organizational environment	1	2.801	0.643	3.323	0.020	4>1
	2	2.692	0.631			4>2
	3	2.841	0.7			-
	4	3.079	0.633			-

Note 1: 1=5 years and below ; 2=5-10 years ; 3=10-15 years ; 4=More than 15 years.

Note 2: The table is based on the research.

There are significant differences in the organizational citizenship behavior of university teachers in different job positions. Full-time teachers ($M=2.601, SD=.640$) demonstrate higher organizational citizenship behavior than administrative staff ($M=2.474, SD=.643$). Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported with the results shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Differences in organizational citizenship behavior in different job positions

Variable	Job positions	M	SD	t	P
Organizational citizenship behavior	Administrative staff	2.474	0.643	-2.35	0.019
	Full-time teacher	2.601	0.64		

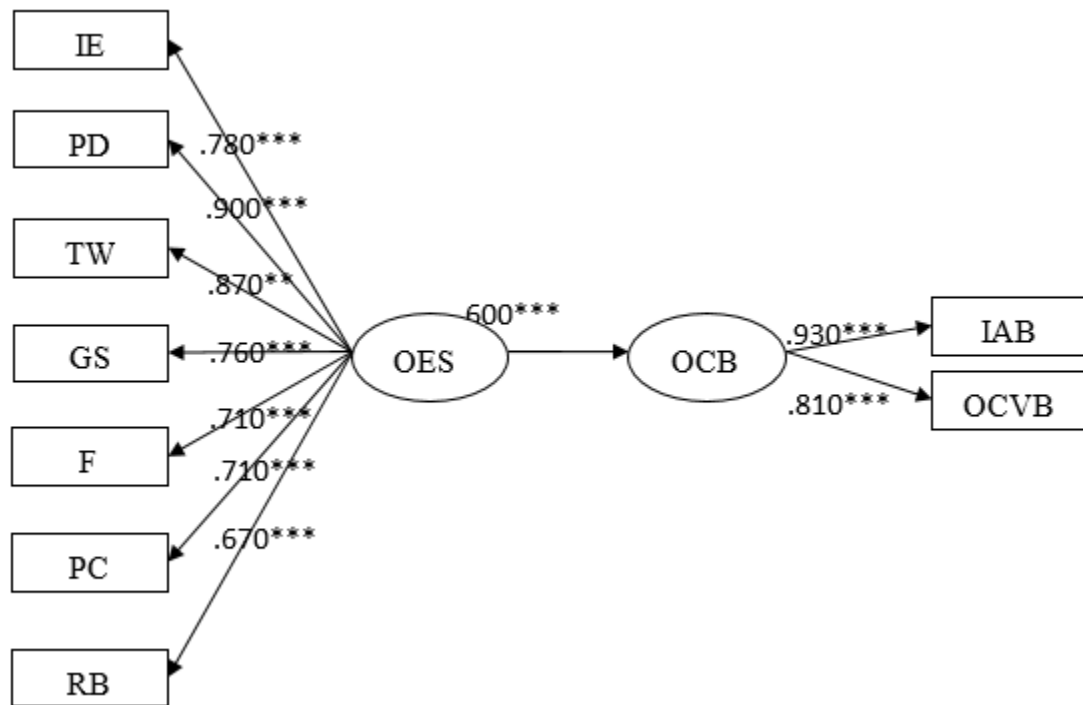
Note: The table is based on the research.

3) Path analysis of Structural Model

This study employed AMOS software to construct a structural equation model (SEM) to examine the influence of an organizational environment on OCB among university teachers in Hebei Province, China. The SEM tested the overall effect of the organizational environment on OCB. The model fit indices were $\chi^2/df=4.866$, GFI=.960, AGFI=.910, RFI=.956, IFI=.980, NFI=.976, CFI=.980, TLI=.965,

SRMR=.042, PGFI=.527, RMSEA=.076. All these fit indices met the standard values, indicating that the model fit was good.

In the model, the path coefficient from the organizational environment to OCB was .600, with $p < .001$, indicating that the path coefficient was significant. The results of the model analysis suggest that the organizational environment positively influences OCB. In other words, the higher the level of the organizational environment, the higher the level of OCB among university teachers in Hebei Province, China. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported. This is specifically illustrated in Figure 1.



Note: OES=organizational environment scale, IE=internal environment, PD=professional development, TW=teamwork, GS=guidance and support, F=facilitation, PC=participation and coordination, RB=reward and benefit, OCB=organizational citizenship behavior, IAB=interpersonal altruistic behavior, OCVB=organizational civic virtue behavior. *** $p < .001$.

According to the research results, the variable of teaching experience among university teachers in Hebei Province shows significant differences in the organizational environment, thus supporting hypothesis 1. This is consistent with the findings of Mohammad and Borkoski (2024), Wong et al. (2023), and Thien et al. (2020). Empirical data analysis reveals that teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience ($M=3.079$) scored higher in the organizational environment than those with 5 years or less ($M=2.801$) and those with 5-10 years of teaching experience ($M=2.692$). Teachers with longer teaching experience possess more extensive educational experience and management skills, allowing them to adapt to different situations in the university organizational environment. Whether facing teaching or management pressures, teachers have higher adaptability. Conversely, teachers with 5 years or less of teaching experience, who have recently entered the university setting, which differs from their previous work and living environments, face greater challenges in adaptation. Furthermore, teachers with 5-10 years of experience may develop a sense of dissatisfaction or maladaptation to the university organizational environment after a longer period of work. Combined with the critical career development stage they are in, personal expectations may influence their perception of the organizational environment, resulting in lower scores (Evans et al., 2017).

The results of this study also show significant differences in OCB based on the different job positions of university teachers in Hebei Province, China, supporting hypothesis 2. This is consistent with the findings of Chen and Guo (2020), Hsieh et al. (2024), and Kasa and Hassan (2015). The reason for these results may be that university administrative staff ($M=2.474$) have significantly lower OCB than full-time teachers ($M=2.601$). University administrative staff mainly engage in administrative management tasks, providing services to teachers and students. However, compared to full-time teachers, the work of administrative staff is more fixed and singular, while full-time teachers, whose primary responsibility is teaching, have a stronger sense of mission and responsibility. In addition to conducting professional courses, full-time teachers guide students' healthy growth, enhance their professional development, and cultivate positive psychological qualities, which results in higher levels of OCB (Chen & Guo, 2020).

The empirical analysis results clearly demonstrate that the organizational environment in universities in Hebei Province, China, has a significant and positive impact on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, thus confirming research hypothesis 3. This result is consistent with the findings of Eckar et al. (2021) and Idris et al. (2021), indicating that the higher the level of the organizational environment in universities in Hebei Province, the higher the level of teachers' OCB. According to person-environment fit theory, when an individual's internal characteristics align with the organizational environment, the organization provides a higher level of support, stimulating individual motivation and increasing work engagement (Alwi et al., 2021). In the organizational environment of universities in Hebei Province, the extent to which the organization meets teachers' needs and individual characteristics plays a pivotal role in influencing their behavior (Eckar et al., 2021). As important institutions of higher education in China, universities differ significantly from enterprises. In universities, teachers are more likely to gain a sense of achievement and pride, while universities provide the necessary conditions and environment to help teachers better complete their teaching and research tasks (Idris et al., 2021). In this context, teachers would be more dedicated to their work, ensuring the quality and quantity of their teaching, and would adhere to the fundamental mission of education and talent cultivation, thereby enhancing their sense of personal achievement and pride through the development of outstanding talents.

CONCLUSION

This study primarily examines the impact of the relationship between the organizational environment of universities in Hebei Province and teachers' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Based on the research findings, the study analyzes and summarizes conclusions while providing practical recommendations for improving university teacher management. The relationship between teachers and universities is undeniably interdependent. Appropriate work facilities and resources provide essential support for educators, making teaching and administrative work more comfortable and efficient (Yang, 2020). To enhance teachers' OCB, universities should continuously refine their management systems, actively foster a positive cultural atmosphere, and work toward improving the available support infrastructure for teachers.

Simultaneously, teachers should focus on adapting to the university environment through continuous self-reflection, addressing areas of deficiency in both work and personal life, and correcting any misconceptions or unproductive behaviors. Developing effective time management strategies is essential. Additionally, teachers should leverage family support and employ various stress-relief techniques to manage work-life balance, which in turn could improve their organizational citizenship behavior (Tamunomiebi, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS

This study, based on person-environment fit theory, examines the university organizational environment as the independent variable and organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable, expanding the research on organizational citizenship behavior. It develops a comprehensive framework showing how the university environment impacts teachers' citizenship behavior, contributing to a more robust theoretical understanding. Additionally, the interdisciplinary nature of the study fosters collaboration across psychology, sociology, and management, offering new approaches for addressing complex social issues and enhancing the development of university teachers and higher education in China.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary focus of this study was university teachers in Hebei Province, China, with the aim of revealing the overall situation of university teachers in that area and involving teachers of different levels and types. However, only convenience sampling was used to target some universities in Hebei Province, and as such, a comprehensive sampling of all universities within the entire province was not achieved. Secondly, there are limitations in the research method. This study primarily employed a questionnaire survey by distributing questionnaires to university teachers in Hebei Province and using empirical analysis to verify the impact of the university organizational environment on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior. However, due to the objectivity and partiality of the questionnaire, the research results may be affected, explaining only the relationship between variables without revealing the formation and internal mechanisms of the influence relationship between those variables. In addition, for future research, exploring additional variables such as emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and teacher motivation might offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms influencing OCB in academic settings.

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