

## HOW ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR SHAPES EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN MODERN WORKPLACES

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**Purpose:** The aim is to examine the relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and employee Psychological Well-Being in modern workplace. The study investigates the conditions under which OCB enhances or diminishes well-being and addresses a research gap by combining theoretical framework with empirical data. The analysis focuses on how voluntariness, recognition, managerial support and workload shape employees' experience of OCB.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A qualitative, multi-sources research design was applied. The study includes a systematic literature review, document analysis of annual reports and disclosures from companies listed in the Forbes' Best Employers 2024 ranking and semi-structured interviews with employees from a selected large corporation in Poland. The triangulation of these methods provides a comprehensive perspective on OCB and PWB, integrating employee narratives, organizational policies and theoretical framework.

**Findings:** Impact of OCB on well-being is conditional as when OCB is recognized and correctly resourced, employees report benefits such as satisfaction, learning and motivation for further development. Imposed or unrecognized OCB, especially under time constraints, led to stress, demotivation and overall fatigue. Employees during the interviews emphasized lack of recognition and difficulty in setting boundaries as key stressors. Organizational reports reinforced these observations, showing that companies with structured recognition systems and well-being initiatives create more favorable conditions.

**Research limitations/implications:** The qualitative nature and small interview sample limit the ability to generalize the findings. Document analysis focuses on high-ranking employers, potentially excluding less supportive environments. Future research should include more diverse organizations, larger samples and longitude approaches.

**Practical implications:** The paper shows that organizations should protect voluntariness of OCB, ensure recognition of extra-role efforts and manage workload to reduce hidden labour and stress-related risks, such as burnout. Well-being programs, feedback mechanisms and clear role expectations support healthier OCB engagement and improve the team's performance.

**Social implications:** The study highlights the importance of psychologically safe and supportive workplaces. Promoting responsible management practices can improve employees' well-being and contribute to broader societal expectations for human-centered leadership and sustainable work environments.

**Originality/value:** The paper offers a unique multi-source analysis that links employee perspectives, organizational reports and theoretical framework. Together it demonstrates that OCB's effects on well-being are not uniform but depend on managerial support, recognition

and resource availability. The findings provide value for both scholar and practitioners seeking to design sustainable workplaces.

**Keywords:** Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, Employee Well Being, Psychological Wellbeing, Employee Engagement, Workplace Sustainability.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Understanding the factors that can contribute to an employee well-being and organizational success has become a priority for both researchers and professionals in recent times (Prasad et al., 2024; Peña et al., 2024). Among these notions, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, further referred to as OCB, and its impact on employee well-being stands out as particularly important. OCB, as defined by Organ in 1988 involves discretionary behaviors that are not formally rewarded but they collectively enhance organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). These behaviors often expand beyond employees' formal job descriptions - they are fostering collaboration, trust, and a supportive workplace environment which is crucial for the development of a healthy organization (Organ, 1988).

The importance of employee well-being, in particular psychological well-being (PWB) cannot be overlooked in modern business arrangements as it involves concepts of six dimensions: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, and positive relationships (Ryff, Keyes, 1995). This multidimensional framework highlights the broader significance of well-being as a state that gives a chance for to employees to thrive both personally and professionally. Research is highlighting this connection, demonstrating that employees with higher levels of PWB are more productive and demonstrate stronger organizational commitment (Robertson, Cooper, 2010). These findings point out the key role of well-being in sustaining a high-performing and engaged workforce (Wright, Cropanzano, 2004).

Discretionary efforts, such as those included by OCB, are linked to improved teamwork, innovation, and resilience, which are important for businesses facing complex and quickly changing environments (Podsakoff et al., 2009). By cultivating and nurturing a culture that encourages OCB and prioritizes employee well-being, organizations not only enhance individual employee outcomes but also create a foundation for long-term success (Dávila de León, Finkelstein, 2013).

This article aims to explore how OCB influences employee well-being, emphasizing their combined impact on organizational performance and sustainability; as it is important to add to existing body of research, theory and evidence (Peña et al., 2024). With the newest research available it is as present as ever that the importance of OCB and PWB are emerging, and their relationship understanding is critical for further development of the subject (Prasad et al., 2024).

By connecting theoretical perspectives and practical applications, this article seeks to provide actionable insights for managers and leaders who are striving to create thriving workplace environments.

## 2. Conceptual foundations of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Psychological Well-Being

This section reviews key theoretical and empirical perspectives on Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Psychological Well-Being, with particular attention to stress, work engagement, leadership, and motivational mechanisms shaping this relationship.

To identify appropriate literature on the topic of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and employees' Psychological Well-Being, the review of existing studies related to the subject was conducted. Determination of suitable keywords was based on extensive review of available research papers and current problems that are being discussed. Determined keywords included: OCB, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Employee Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, and PWB - they were utilized in searches through SCOPUS and ScienceDirect databases. The author took into consideration research articles written in English, covering publications from the earliest available studies up to 2024. Due to the large number of papers available on ScienceDirect (over 13,000 articles) and specificity of filtering criteria, the author applied inclusion and exclusion criteria in SCOPUS database to refine the selection and gain a clearer overview of the available research. After identifying relevant articles that met the subject criteria, the author used the snowballing technique to further explore and expand knowledge on the topic in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Literature search strategy summary*

Criterion	Number of papers
Search terms: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, language: English	5343
Search terms: Organizational Citizenship Behavior AND employee well-being, language: English	42
Search terms: Organizational Citizenship Behavior AND employee well-being and PWB, language: English	1
duplicates	1
Total of chosen articles	42

Source: own elaboration.

After conducting a review of the chosen articles, 27 papers have been selected. Selection was based on systematic review and synthesis of the most accurate and needed information on the subject needed for this article. One of the major criterion was for the articles that were to be used in the literature review to be as representative as possible for the research that is to be conducted throughout this work by the culture in which the research has been done as well as

by the type of organization in which they took place, for example by excluding research done in hospital setting due to its high complexity and specificity that is beyond author's knowledge nor capacity to discuss.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior refers to discretionary actions by employees that go beyond their formal job requirements to enhance organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). These are actions not mandated by job roles but contribute significantly to organizational success, such as helping colleagues or volunteering for extra tasks (Organ, 1988). Such actions may vary from watering the plants in the office to helping the fellow team members during high demand periods. These behaviours are not directly recognized by organizational reward systems, as they are also not included in the job description but are essential for fostering a collaborative and positive work environment (Podsakoff et al., 2000). OCB includes dimensions such as altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and civic virtue, each contributing uniquely to workplace dynamics (Farh, Podsakoff, and Organ, 1990). As a good example one might think about altruism – it can be as such as assisting colleagues with work related tasks, while conscientiousness reflects a dedication to go beyond basic job expectations. Together these dimensions illustrate the complex nature of OCB and its potential to improve organizational and individual outcomes.

Close to OCB is Psychological Well-Being which reflects an individual's emotional and cognitive evaluation of their life, including factors like life satisfaction, positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotions (Ryff, Keyes, 1995). PWB is vital to employee well-being, influencing motivation, performance, and engagement at work. Employees with higher PWB are more likely to engage in OCB, as their positive mental state fosters a willingness to support organizational objectives (Wright, Cropanzano, 2004). Furthermore, PWB enhances resilience against occupational stress, enabling employees to navigate workplace challenges effectively (Ryff et al., 2006). Expanding on the broader concept of employee well-being, this construct encompasses physical, psychological, and social health within the workplace (Grant et al., 2007). It reflects an employee's overall quality of work life and ability to thrive professionally. Efficient Human Resource Management (HRM) practices offer flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and supportive leadership, which are vital for promotion of well-being (Guest, 2017). Research consistently demonstrates that higher levels of employee well-being are linked to greater job satisfaction, improved productivity, and reduced turnover (Robertson, Cooper, 2010). These findings highlight the strategic importance of prioritizing employee well-being within organizations.

The behaviors shown in the workplace, whether they are task-related or discretionary, profoundly influence organizational dynamic. Workplace behavior includes actions such as OCB and is often shaped by factors such as job satisfaction and employee engagement (Borman, Motowidlo, 1993). Positive behaviors enhance organizational performance and promote a culture of collaboration (Christian et al., 2011). In opposition negative behaviors, such as absenteeism or workplace deviance, can undermine effectiveness. Identifying and

understanding these determinants is crucial for designing interventions that foster a supportive and productive work environment (Robinson, Bennett, 1995). Within this spectrum, discretionary workplace behavior plays a pivotal role (Organ, 1988) as it aligns closely with OCB and reflects employees' intrinsic motivation to support organizational goals (Bolino, Turnley, 2003). Key factors influencing these behaviors include employee engagement, organizational commitment, and workplace culture (Macey, Schneider, 2008). Encouraging such behaviors requires supportive leadership and recognition of employees' contributions beyond formal duties. Employee engagement, a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind, is another foundation of workplace success. Defined by dedication and interest (Schaufeli et al., 2002), engaged employees are more likely to exhibit OCB and contribute to productivity by committing to organizational goals (Harter et al., 2002). Factors such as job resources, supportive leadership, and opportunities for personal growth significantly influence engagement. The tie between engagement and well-being underscores the benefits of fostering a positive workplace culture (Bakker, Demerouti, 2008).

Furthermore, job satisfaction is equally critical, as it represents an individual's emotional response to their job and its various aspects, including tasks, colleagues, and organizational policies. Higher job satisfaction is associated with increased OCB, greater organizational commitment, and reduced turnover (Judge et al., 2001). In opposition, job dissatisfaction can lead to negative outcomes, such as lower productivity and higher employee turnover rates. Addressing factors that enhance satisfaction, such as fair compensation and meaningful work tasks, is essential for maintaining organizational performance.

Moreover, workplace productivity is a central indicator of organizational success, determined by the efficiency and effectiveness of employees' goal attainment (Campbell, 1990). OCB significantly enhances productivity by fostering cooperation and minimizing workplace conflicts (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Additionally, cultivating a culture of recognition and support can motivate employees to exceed expectations and achieve higher performance levels. Key to fostering such culture is organizational commitment, which reflects an employee's psychological attachment to their organization and their willingness to contribute to its success. Commitment is a strong predictor of OCB, as dedicated employees are more inclined to engage in behaviors that support organizational goals (Mathieu, Zajac, 1990). Leadership style, workplace culture, and HRM practices are critical in strengthening this sense of commitment and reducing turnover rates.

However, it is important to highlight that occupational stress poses a significant challenge to employee well-being and organizational success which will be a part discussed in this research paper. High stress levels can diminish PWB and reduce employees' capacity to engage in positive workplace behaviors (Sonnetag, Frese, 2003). Stress management interventions, such as mindfulness programs and flexible work arrangements, can mitigate these effects and promote well-being (Quick et al., 1997) and as can be seen across multiple organizations is

incorporated into day to day work activities. Many organizations employ trainers, psychologists or masseurs to enhance the well-being of their employees.

However, external counselling and motivators are not the sole drivers of OCB; leadership plays a transformative role by shaping workplace culture and motivating employees (Bass, 1990). There are many kinds of leadership that the managers, supervisors and other kinds of leaders can choose from. They vary from one personal style to another but transformational leadership has proven to be one of the most motivating leadership styles to exist. Transformational leadership, which inspires and empowers employees, is particularly effective in promoting discretionary behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1996). Ethical leadership practices further enhance organizational commitment and reduce conflicts, creating an environment conducive to employee success. A positive workplace culture, which is defined by shared values, norms, and practices, is very important for employees' well-being and OCB (Schein, 2010). Inclusive and respectful cultures nurture a sense of belonging and motivation of such employees, at the same time it is enhancing performance and reducing turnover (Cameron, Quinn, 2011). On the contrary, toxic cultures can have detrimental effects, leading to disengagement and turnover. HRM practices are also important in nurturing OCB by shaping employees' experiences of support from the given organization (Delery, Doty, 1996). Initiatives such as training, performance reviews, appraisals and recognition programs highlight the value of discretionary behavior and enhance overall satisfaction and performance. Thus, organizational performance is linked to employee behavior, with positive actions driving efficiency and innovation (Katz, Kahn, 1978). Investing in supportive work environment and recognition of employee contributions is key to having a sustainable success (Fondas, Denison 1991) As there is a variety of contributors to OCB in an organization, motivation - both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation - plays a crucial role in OCB. Intrinsic motivation, fueled by longing for personal growth and meaningful work, is particularly effective in fostering such behaviors. Understanding the relationship between motivation and workplace behavior is essential for designing strategies to enhance engagement and organizational outcomes (Gagné, Deci, 2005).

The relationship between OCB and employee PWB, work engagement and occupational stress can be understood as dynamic and conditional. When OCB is driven by intrinsic motivation and supported by recognition and managerial support, it is more likely to enhance work engagement and reinforce psychological well-being. In such contexts, discretionary behaviors are experienced as meaningful and self-endorsed, strengthening employees' sense of purpose and positive affect. Conversely, when OCB is implicitly expected, insufficiently recognized or combined with high workload demands, it may contribute to role overload and increased occupational stress, undermining psychological well-being. The same behaviors that foster engagement under supportive conditions may become sources of strain when perceived as obligatory rather than voluntary. This highlights the central role of motivation, stress, and engagement as key mechanisms shaping whether OCB functions as a resource or a risk for employee well-being.

Research on OCB and well-being utilizes different methodologies, including cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, to explore these dynamics over time (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Insights from management research further highlight the importance of leadership in creating supportive environments (Kelloway et al., 2012). The dimensions of OCB, such as altruism and courtesy, remain pivotal to the understanding of its impact on organizational success (Farh, Podsakoff, Organ, 1990).

Given the literature review, the identified research gaps and author's personal interest in the subject, the following **research questions** were stated:

1. What is the relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and employee psychological well-being (PWB) in modern workplaces?
2. Are there business risks associated with promoting excessive OCB, such as employee burnout or reduced job satisfaction, and how can these risks be mitigated?
3. What are the implications of OCB for employee well-being in organizations with varying levels of managerial support and recognition systems?

Overall, prior research underscores the complex nature of the relationship between OCB and employee's PWB. By addressing the identified research gap this study aims to contribute to the literature by deepening understanding of the mechanisms and contextual factors shaping this relationship. Accordingly, the research questions are designed to extend existing theoretical perspectives and empirical insights.

### **3. Research methodology**

The study employed a qualitative, multi-source research design, integrating semi-structured interviews with document analysis of annual reports and an in-depth literature review. This approach was chosen to enable data triangulation by combining employee narratives, organizational self-reporting, and theoretical frameworks, thereby providing a broader understanding of the relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Psychological Well-Being in modern organizations.

The literature review, discussed in the previous section, was followed by a documentation analysis focusing on large organizations that are either of Polish origin or have an international background but conduct part of their business operations in Poland. To further refine the selection criteria only organizations listed in the Najlepsi Pracodawcy 2024 (Best Employers 2024) ranking published by the Polish edition of Forbes magazine were included. Forbes and the analytics and research company Statista have published the ranking of Poland's Best Employers 2024. This list features 300 companies operating in Poland whose achievements in the field of human resources have earned them the title of best employer. The evaluation was based on anonymous surveys completed by employees. A representative group of 20,000

people employed in large companies was invited to participate, providing data for the analysis. This direct input from employees ensured the independence of the results. In 2024, the assessment covered approximately 2000 organizations that employ at least 250 people in Poland and operate in one or more of the 25 sectors included in the ranking. Two main evaluation criteria were applied:

- Direct recommendation – the willingness to recommend one’s own employer, measured by asking employees to rate, on a scale from 0 (least likely) to 10 (most likely), how likely they would be to recommend their employer to a friend or family member. Direct recommendation carried the greatest weight in the overall score.
- Indirect recommendation – the willingness to recommend other employers in the same sector, assessed on a scale from “definitely yes” to “definitely no”, with the option of “no answer”.

Both recommendations were complemented by an evaluation of employers across more than 40 individual aspects grouped into seven areas: company image and economic growth, relationships between employees and management, development and career prospects, workload, sustainability, pay, and working conditions including equipment. The results of Poland's Best Employers 2023 were also taken into account as an additional factor reflecting stable reputation, although they carried less weight than the current recommendations. The maximum possible score in the assessment was 100 points. The survey was conducted between October 20 and November 30, 2023, and participants were invited to take part via online panels ([www.forbes.pl](http://www.forbes.pl), 2024).

To further enrich the study and enable an in-depth exploration of organizational practices, the author contacted employees from companies listed in the Best Employers 2024 ranking that are also based in Warsaw, Poland, and are listed on the Polish stock exchange. From the companies contacted, one organization agreed to participate (Table 2), providing 10 respondents representing different hierarchical levels in the organization (Table 3). This diversity of perspectives was considered vital for capturing a comprehensive view of employees’ perceptions.

**Table 2.**

*Company profile from which employees have taken part in the study*

Field	Details
Industry	Fast-moving consumer goods; health-oriented foods and beverages sold globally
Business segments	Dairy & Plant-Based; Waters; Specialized Nutrition (infant & medical)
Company form	Public company listed in the EU; global operations
Global workforce	89,528 employees (as of 2024)
Geographic footprint	Mainly Europe, North America, China/ North Asia/ Oceania, Latin America, and rest of the world in smaller volumes
Polish entity	circa 3200 employees; 7 manufacturing plants; competence centers serving 16 countries
Polish locations	Multi-site presence across the country (8+ locations incl. Warsaw, Opole and Katowice)
ESG/ certifications	B Corp coverage over most of global sales (92.8% of 2024 sales)

Source: own elaboration.

**Table 3.**  
*Interviewed participants profiles*

Interviewee code	Gender F – female, M – male	Experience at the company [years]	Position [level of hierarchy]
A	F	5	Middle level specialist
B	F	2	Manager
C	F	2	Senior level specialist
D	F	1,5	Junior level specialist
E	M	1	Intern
F	M	2	Middle level specialist
G	M	1,5	Senior level specialist
H	M	4	Manager
I	F	2	Senior level specialist
J	F	1	Middle level specialist

Source: own elaboration.

In summary, the applied research methodology was designed to ensure rigor and coherence in addressing the formulated research questions. The combination of systematic literature review, document analysis and qualitative interviews enabled a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between OCB and employee's PWB. This methodological approach provides a robust foundation for the analysis and interpretation of the study's findings presented in the following section.

#### 4. Data Collection and Ethics of the study

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between April 2025 and July 2025. Each interview lasted for approximately 60 minutes and took place online via Microsoft Teams platform, with the participants' consent for recording and possibility to remain anonymous which each participant took advantage of.

The interview focused on key themes relevant to the study, including organizational culture, examples of OCB, perceptions of managerial support and recognition, and the perceived impact of such behaviors on individual well-being. The interview questions were asked in the same order to each participant with the questions placed in appendix number 1.

The document analysis covered annual reports and public disclosures from 74 companies featured in the Best Employers 2024 ranking that were chosen accordingly with the previously stated criteria. These documents were examined for references to well-being initiatives, OCB-related practices, and employee support programs. The analysis combined keyword searches with a review of the broader context in which relevant terms appeared, ensuring that findings were grounded in the companies' narratives rather than isolated statements.

The study followed ethical guidelines for qualitative research. (Mirza, H., Mirza, C., Bellalem, 2023) Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the process.

All company data used in the document analysis came from publicly available sources, ensuring compliance with intellectual property and privacy regulations.

## 5. Results

The findings presented in this section are based on two main sources of empirical data:

1. Analysis of annual reports and public disclosures from 74 companies featured in the Best Employers 2024 ranking.
2. Semi-structured interviews with ten employees from a single company, meeting the selection criteria.

These empirical insights are interpreted considering the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier in literature review, particularly the dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2000) and Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989). The discussion of the findings is rooted in the research questions that were stated.

### **Relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and employee psychological well-being (PWB) in modern workplaces**

The relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and psychological well-being in modern workplaces appears as conditional rather than uniformly positive or negative, which can be seen in respondent's answers during the interviews. On one hand, when OCB is voluntary, employees often report it as energizing and meaningful. As employee A explained, "these activities recharge me more than they drain me... it was intense, but it was worth it" highlighting the benefits of contribution. Similarly, employee H described feelings of "self-satisfaction" and the opportunity to "learn something I can use in future" underlining how OCB can enhance competences and career growth. However, when OCB is imposed from levels higher than the employee's or remains unrecognized, it undermines the well-being, for example employee C noted that "things 'from above' stressed me out more... when I initiate something myself, I feel more in control and less stressed", while employee F admitted that "if I do something extra and no one notices then that's demotivating". Moreover, excessive OCB in the context of limited time resources generates pressure, as employee M acknowledged: "now... more stress would come from the OCB ones, because... I currently don't have much time". These accounts align with organizational reporting practices as companies like UPS emphasize structured recognition systems through initiatives such as "People Led" focusing on employee experience and culture, being focused on strong partnership and corporate culture. "People Led" program is strongly based on the probability of a referral of the workplace to a friend or family member of the employee's (UPS Annual Report, 2024). While Manpower explicitly links well-being to awareness of mental health and diversity at the workplace. Active engagement of

employees is also measured through cyclical surveys so called “pulse surveys” (Manpower Annual Report, 2024) and Orange incorporates psychological safety into its health and safety metrics (Orange Consolidated Annual Report, 2024). Similarly, ERBUD’s measures to track overtime and provide social dialogue mechanisms reflect the importance of protecting time slack, a condition repeatedly underscored in employee testimonies. Interestingly ERBUD’s Operations Report also highlights work-life balance, diversity and training and skills and development (Erbud Capital Group 2024 Operations Report, 2024).

Taken together, the evidence shows that OCB enhances PWB when it is chosen, visible, and adequately resourced, but can diminish well-being when it is imposed, invisible, or layered onto already overloaded roles. The decisive factors are managerial recognition, workload protection, and support structures that allow discretionary effort to be experienced as fulfilling rather than draining. From the reports provided by the companies it can be seen that the problems are being accounted for and there are structures that are suppose to be a safe net in terms of OCB and PWB; on the other hand it must be highlighted that the company’s micro environment and culture is a decisive factor that influences how employees perceive the situation they are in.

### **Business risks associated with promoting excessive OCB, such as employee burnout or reduced job satisfaction, and mitigation of such risks**

The interviews show that while OCB can be meaningful, promoting it excessively creates real-life business risks related to stress, burnout, and decline in motivation. Several respondents in the interview pointed to the problem of the time scarcity, with employee M admitting that “constant lack of time... now more stress would come from the OCB ones [behaviors], because I currently don’t have much time”, while employee L described being “regularly stressed from just how many things are going on”, indicating that additional extra-role behaviors can aggravate workload strain. This often is translated into unpaid overtime, as employee J noted, “with OCB I think I would take some overtime on my own”, suggesting hidden labour costs for both individuals and organizations. The lack of recognition further compounds these risks, with employee C adding, “I did a lot and no one noticed - that’s demotivating”, illustrating how invisible contributions deplete morale of the staff. Moreover, some respondents described difficulty in setting boundaries, such as employee G who confessed, “I just can’t say no”, which led to frustration and overload.

These findings resonate with organizational reports that emphasize the need for protective mechanisms, for example, ERBUD outlines practices around leave and overtime monitoring (Erbud Capital Group 2024 Operations Report, 2024), and Orange tracks both physical and mental health indicators (Orange Consolidated Annual Report, 2024), both of which mitigate the risk of OCB-driven fatigue. At the same time, firms such as Manpower highlight programs to raise awareness of mental well-being (Manpower Annual Report, 2024), showing recognition of the potential for stress spillover. Collectively, the gathered data suggests that the risks of

OCB are not fundamental but arise when they are introduced as compulsory, unrecognized, and unsupported. They can be mitigated through formal recognition systems, workload management practices, and explicit protection of voluntariness, which ensure that OCB contributes to organizational goals without sacrificing employee well-being, which corresponds with theory of PWB and OCB.

### **Implications of OCB for employee well-being in organizations with varying levels of managerial support and recognition systems**

The way OCB influences employee well-being depends largely on how much support and recognition people receive from their managers, making it a case that benefits from further discussion.

When employees feel supported and their efforts are noticed, OCB often brings positive emotions. For example, employee A said, “these activities recharge me more than they drain me... it was intense, but it was worth it,” showing that extra tasks can give energy when they are voluntary and valued. Employee H also mentioned “self-satisfaction” and the chance to “learn something I can use in future,” which suggests that OCB can build confidence and personal and career growth. However, when support and recognition are missing, OCB becomes tiring and discouraging. Employee C explained, “If I do something extra and no one notices - that’s demotivating”, and also admitted that “things ‘from above’ stressed me out more... when I initiate something myself, I feel more in control and less stressed”. This shows that imposed OCB without support is more stressful. Time pressure makes the problem worse, as employee M noted: “now... more stress would come from the OCB ones, because... I currently don’t have much time”.

The company reports back the notion up as UPS describes its “People Led” program to monitor employee experience (UPS Annual Report, 2024), Manpower promotes awareness of mental health (Manpower Annual Report, 2024), and Orange measures both physical and mental health outcomes (Orange Consolidated Annual Report, 2024), all examples of recognition systems that help employees cope with extra effort. Overall, OCB can improve well-being in supportive environments, but without recognition and managerial backing, it risks leaving employees overworked and demotivated.

## **6. Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that Organizational Citizenship Behavior has a complex influence on employee psychological well-being. Drawing on both interview data and organizational reports, the results indicate that OCB can generate either positive or negative outcomes, depending on the degree of managerial support, recognition systems and

voluntariness. This outcome is consistent with earlier available research in the field which has shown that discretionary behaviors are essential for collaboration, trust and innovation (Podsakoff et al., 2009), yet they may impose hidden costs on employees when performed excessively or under external pressure which was discussed by scholars, for example by Bolino and Turnley in 2003 as well as was visible in the research conducted in this study. On the positive side, employees reported that OCB gave them energy and meaning when it was voluntary and appreciated. These reports suggest that discretionary efforts associated with OCB may function as psychological resources when they are perceived as personally meaningful and development oriented. Rather than being experienced as draining, such behaviors can enhance employees' sense of self-efficacy and future-oriented competences, thus reinforcing PWB. Further through this process OCB may enhance work engagement which functions as a key psychological mechanism linking discretionary effort with improved PWB under supportive conditions. This aligns with the view that intrinsically motivated OCB may contribute to well-being by fostering learning, self-satisfaction, and personal growth, particularly in supportive organizational contexts. These findings support the idea that OCB can foster well-being that is linked to growth and purpose (Ryff, Keyes, 1995) and are consistent with earlier studies showing that OCB improves teamwork and satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2009; Robertson, Cooper, 2010). However, the interviews also showed risks when OCB is imposed, unrecognized or added to existing heavy workloads. In such contexts, discretionary behaviors tend to lose their voluntary character and are more likely to be experienced as externally driven obligations. This shift reduces employees' perceived sense of control and increases role overload, intensifying occupational stress and diminishing psychological well-being. Moreover, the absence of recognition weakens motivational resources, while time pressure constrains employees' capacity to sustain discretionary efforts without unfavorable well-being consequences. These examples align with the concepts of citizenship pressure and citizenship fatigue (Bolino et al., 2010), and also with Conservation of Resources theory, which argues that stress grows when personal resources such as time and energy are drained (Hobfoll, 1989). The analysis of company reports support these findings. Organizations that emphasize recognition and well-being, such as UPS, Manpower and Orange, provide conditions where OCB can strengthen well-being. In contrast there were companies which did not mention employee recognition in their reports, illustrating the potential risk of OCB becoming invisible and draining.

By conceptualizing stress and work engagement as central mechanisms through which voluntariness, recognition, and managerial support shape the outcomes of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, this study extends existing OCB research beyond descriptive accounts. Specifically, it demonstrates how discretionary behaviors enhance psychological well-being by fostering engagement and personal growth under supportive conditions, while generating strain and diminished well-being when such behaviors are perceived as obligatory, insufficiently recognized, or combined with excessive workload. In doing so, the study offers a coherent

explanation for why similar forms of OCB produce divergent psychological well-being outcomes across organizational contexts. These findings build on OCB by Organ (1988) and Podsakoff et al. (2009) and highlight the importance of managerial support, which acts as a bridging condition that decides whether OCB is a source of motivation or stress. However, while Podsakoff et al. (2009) focused mainly on outcomes of OCB at the unit level, this study highlights its conditional impact on individual well-being depending on recognition and support systems. In contrast to Bolino and Turnley (2003), who described the general risk of hidden costs linked to OCB, this study provides empirical evidence from interviews that lack of recognition and excessive workload directly translate into stress and demotivation of the employees which was seen in their subjective responses.

## **7. Summary**

This study demonstrates that the relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) in modern workplaces is complex and conditional. Concluding on interviews and document analysis, the findings indicate that OCB enhances well-being when it is voluntary, recognized, and supported by adequate resources, while excessive or imposed OCB generates stress, fatigue, and demotivation. It is important to mention that managerial support and recognition systems are key moderators of the relationship, as employees stated that acknowledgement and fair workload management transformed OCB into a positive, energizing experience. The analysis of annual reports strengthened these insights by highlighting organizational practices such as employee experience surveys, well-being programs, and overtime monitoring that create conditions for OCB to thrive without harm to well-being.

This article contributes to the growing literature on OCB and employee well-being by offering a multi-source perspective that connects employee narratives with organizational disclosures. For practitioners, the findings underscore the need to cultivate recognition-rich environments and protect voluntariness to ensure that OCB strengthens both individual well-being and organizational performance.

## **8. Limitations and acknowledgment**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative research design relied on a relatively small sample of ten interviews within a single company, which limits the ability of generalization of the findings. While this approach

allowed for in-depth exploration of employee experiences, it does not capture the diversity of organizational contexts. Secondly, the document analysis was restricted to companies listed in the Forbes Best Employers 2024 ranking, which may not represent organizations with weaker reputations or different industries. Third, the findings are subject to interpretation bias, particularly in coding and linking interview data with company reports. Finally, the cross-sectional design prevents conclusions about causality; it is not possible to determine whether OCB directly improves well-being or whether employees with higher well-being are more eager to engage in OCB.

Full interview transcripts are available from the author upon request.

## Acknowledgements

This work has been completed while the author was the Doctoral Candidate in the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School at the Lodz University of Technology, Poland.

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## Appendix

### Interview questions

1. How would you describe the organizational culture in your company?
2. Can you recall any examples where you got involved in things beyond your formal responsibilities?
3. How did you feel emotionally and mentally after doing those extra activities-what were your feelings and emotions?
4. What motivates you to help your coworkers or to go beyond your formal responsibilities?
5. Did you feel that all those extra activities you did, the help you offered to others-were they acknowledged or appreciated by the people you report to?
6. And how do you try to balance your core responsibilities with additional activities?
7. Have you ever felt stressed or overwhelmed taking on extra activities? And here, could you distinguish between those assigned by your manager and the ones you came up with yourself?
8. Does your organization support employees who go beyond their formal duties?
9. How would you describe or evaluate your overall well-being at work?
10. In your opinion, does engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) affect your personal well-being positively or negatively?