

Impact of Leadership Style on Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employee behavior and fostering organizational effectiveness. This study examined the impact of leadership styles; autocratic, democratic, and transformational on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Additionally, it explored the moderating role of emotional intelligence (EI) in this relationship. The paper employed a descriptive and causal research design. Data were collected from 245 employees working in Nepalese organizations using a structured questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used to analyze data. Constructs were validated through Cronbach's alpha. The results found that transformational and democratic leadership styles positively influence OCB, while autocratic leadership has a negative impact. Moreover, EI significantly moderates these relationships by enhancing the positive effects of democratic and transformational leadership while reducing the adverse impact of autocratic leadership. This study contributes to the existing literature on leadership and OCB by integrating the moderating role of EI. It provides valuable insights for Nepalese organizations to adopt leadership styles that cultivate a more engaged and proactive workforce.

Keywords: transformational leadership, leadership styles, organizational citizenship behavior, emotional intelligence, Nepal

Introduction

The connection between leadership styles and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been a central focus in organizational behavior research, with increasing attention given to the role that leadership plays in shaping employees' discretionary behaviors. Organizational citizenship behavior refers to actions that go beyond the formal job description and contribute to the functioning of the organization, such as helping colleagues, exhibiting initiative, and demonstrating a high level of commitment

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(Podsakoff et al., 2020). These behaviors, although not explicitly required, have been shown to improve workplace dynamics, foster a positive organizational culture, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness (Huang et al., 2021). Therefore, fostering OCB has become increasingly important for organizations striving for long-term success in a competitive and dynamic environment.

The influence of leadership style on OCB has been widely explored, with transformational leadership being identified as particularly effective in encouraging such behaviors. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire employees by articulating a compelling vision, providing intellectual stimulation, and creating an atmosphere of trust and respect, which leads to higher levels of OCB (Northouse, 2021). In contrast, transactional leadership, characterized by a focus on rewards and punishments based on performance, has been linked to lower levels of OCB, as it primarily addresses basic job responsibilities rather than fostering voluntary, discretionary behaviors (Kim et al., 2022). However, these relationships are often more nuanced, suggesting the importance of additional factors that can shape the outcome of different leadership styles on OCB.

A relatively recent area of focus in leadership research is the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in moderating the impact of leadership style on employee behavior. EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, and has been shown to enhance leaders' effectiveness in managing interpersonal relationships and motivating employees (Bar-On et al., 2020). Leaders with high EI are better able to create an emotionally supportive work environment, build strong relationships with followers, and address conflicts, all of which can encourage OCB (Palomera et al., 2021).

Despite its growing importance in leadership theory, the role of EI as a moderating factor in the relationship between leadership style and OCB remains underexplored. Some recent studies have suggested that EI could significantly enhance the effectiveness of leadership in promoting OCB. For instance, leaders with high EI may better understand and address the emotional needs of their employees, fostering a supportive atmosphere where OCB is more likely to thrive (Koyuncu et al., 2021). Moreover, EI may buffer against potential negative outcomes from transactional leadership by improving the quality of interactions and creating a more supportive work environment (Kim et al., 2022). These findings suggest that emotional intelligence could be a key moderator that influences the strength and direction of the relationship between leadership style and OCB.

Furthermore, the influence of EI in leadership may vary depending on cultural and organizational contexts, as well as individual differences in emotional regulation abilities

(Joseph et al., 2021). For example, in high-context cultures where interpersonal relationships are central, EI may play an even more important role in fostering OCB, as employees place a higher value on relational dynamics. This highlights the need for further research to explore how EI interacts with leadership style to influence OCB in diverse contexts. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the moderating role of EI in the relationship between leadership style and OCB. By examining both transformational and transactional leadership styles and exploring how EI moderates these relationships, the research seeks to provide new insights into the mechanisms that promote OCB.

Literature Review

Leadership style is a critical determinant of OCB, which encompasses discretionary, non-mandatory behaviors that enhance organizational effectiveness. Transformational, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles significantly influence OCB, with varying degrees of impact moderated by EI. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring a shared vision and fostering intellectual stimulation, has consistently shown a strong positive association with OCB. Leaders with this style create an environment of trust and mutual respect, motivating employees to engage in behaviors that exceed formal job requirements (Buil et al., 2020).

Democratic leadership also positively influences OCB by promoting collaboration and participative decision-making. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of belonging and trust among employees, leading to higher engagement and voluntary contribution to organizational goals (Cyr, 2020). Conversely, autocratic leadership often demonstrates a negative relationship with OCB, as it emphasizes control and limits employee autonomy, reducing motivation for discretionary efforts. However, leaders with high EI can mitigate these negative effects by recognizing and addressing the emotional needs of their teams (Goleman, 2020).

EI serves as a critical moderator in the relationship between leadership styles and OCB. Leaders with high EI are adept at managing interpersonal relationships, fostering an emotionally supportive work environment, and inspiring OCB. Studies highlight that EI enhances the effectiveness of transformational and democratic leadership styles while buffering against the detrimental effects of autocratic leadership (Joseph et al., 2021).

The moderating role of EI is particularly evident in collectivist cultures, where interpersonal relationships are prioritized. In such settings, emotionally intelligent leaders can align their leadership styles with cultural expectations, further promoting OCB (Kim et al., 2022). The interplay of leadership style and EI underscores the

importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training in leadership development programs to enhance organizational performance and employee well-being.

Social Exchange Theory. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a well-established framework that explains how interpersonal relationships are driven by the exchange of resources, whether tangible or intangible. In the context of organizational behavior, SET suggests that employees engage in OCB as a way of reciprocating the positive treatment they receive from their leaders (Cropanzano et al., 2020). When leaders demonstrate supportive, empathetic, and empowering behaviors, employees feel obliged to reciprocate by engaging in behaviors that benefit the organization, even if such behaviors are not formally required (Danish & Usman, 2020).

Different leadership styles impact the quality of these exchanges. For example, transformational and democratic leadership styles are associated with high-quality exchanges, as these styles emphasize individualized attention, trust-building, and motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2020). On the other hand, autocratic leadership, characterized by control, directive behaviors, and limited employee autonomy, may create less favorable exchanges, leading to a diminished sense of obligation to engage in OCB (Venkatesh & Kar, 2021). However, EI can play a moderating role here, as leaders with high EI may mitigate the negative impact of an autocratic style by displaying emotional awareness and sensitivity toward their subordinates' needs (Joseph et al., 2021). Leaders with high EI are more likely to build positive social exchanges, even in environments where leadership tends to be more authoritarian, by recognizing and addressing the emotional needs of their employees (Goleman et al., 2020).

SET also underscores the role of EI in enhancing social exchanges. Leaders who possess high EI can accurately assess and respond to their employees' emotional states, creating a positive work environment and reinforcing supportive, reciprocal relationships. This, in turn, promotes OCB, as employees feel emotionally supported and valued (Joseph et al., 2021). Furthermore, leaders with high EI can adapt leadership style to suit the emotional needs of employees, which enhances the likelihood of positive exchanges and increases the occurrence of OCB.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory focuses on the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers. According to LMX, leaders develop individualized relationships with each employee, which can vary in quality. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by trust, mutual respect, and emotional support, leading to greater employee engagement and performance, including OCB (Harms et al., 2021). LMX theory posits that employees who enjoy high-quality exchanges with their leaders are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors,

such as helping others and showing organizational loyalty, because they feel a sense of obligation and connection to their leaders and the organization (Epitropaki et al., 2020).

Transformational and democratic leadership styles are more likely to foster high-quality LMX relationships, as they prioritize individualized attention, empowerment, and employee development (Northouse, 2021). These leadership styles promote mutual respect and trust, which are the cornerstone of positive LMX relationships.

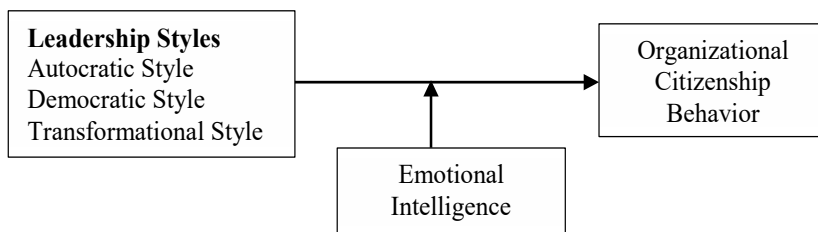
Transformational leaders, for instance, inspire their followers by articulating a compelling vision and demonstrating commitment to their personal and professional growth (Avolio et al., 2020). Such behaviors strengthen the leader-follower bond, which in turn fosters OCB, as employees feel emotionally supported and valued.

EI plays a crucial role in the quality of LMX relationships. Leaders with high EI are better equipped to understand, manage, and respond to their followers' emotional needs, thereby enhancing the quality of their interactions. These leaders can tailor their behavior to meet the emotional and developmental needs of their employees, which strengthens the trust and respect inherent in high-quality LMX relationships (Carmeli et al., 2020). Furthermore, EI enables leaders to effectively navigate conflicts, provide constructive feedback, and manage stress, all of which contribute to maintaining high-quality exchanges and encouraging OCB (Dulebohn et al., 2021).

In contrast, leaders with low EI may struggle to build and maintain high-quality LMX relationships, as they may fail to recognize and address their followers' emotional needs (Goleman, 2020). Low-quality LMX relationships are characterized by a lack of trust and emotional support, and are less likely to result in OCB (Epitropaki et al., 2020). Even within such environments, leaders with high EI can improve LMX quality by demonstrating empathy, effective communication, and emotional regulation, thus promoting OCB (Joseph et al., 2021). Following literature, the best-suited conceptual framework for the given study is as follows:

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Source. Abdullahi et al. (2020)

Leadership Style and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The role of leadership style in influencing organizational behavior has been well-documented. Leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, and transformational have varying impacts on employees' willingness to engage in OCB.

Autocratic Leadership and OCB. Autocratic leadership is often described as a directive style where decision-making authority is centralized, and employee involvement is minimized. This approach can lead to a lack of trust, reduced motivation, and limited engagement among employees, negatively impacting discretionary behaviors like OCB. Research highlights that employees under autocratic leaders often feel micromanaged, undervalued, and less empowered, which discourages voluntary efforts beyond their job roles (Lee et al., 2023). Studies in hierarchical cultures, such as those prevalent in South Asia, further suggest that autocratic leadership reduces team cohesion, directly affecting OCB (Zhu et al., 2022).

H1: Autocratic leadership is negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Democratic Leadership and OCB. Democratic leadership emphasizes collaboration, participative decision-making, and inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging and trust among employees. Leaders adopting this style encourage open communication, empowering employees to contribute to organizational decisions. Such environments positively impact OCB, as employees feel valued and motivated to engage in behaviors that enhance organizational effectiveness (Wang et al., 2023). Recent evidence suggests that democratic leadership significantly improves team dynamics and encourages employees to support colleagues and the organization proactively (Almatrooshi et al., 2023).

H2: Democratic leadership is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Transformational Leadership and OCB. Transformational leadership is widely recognized for its ability to inspire and motivate employees through visionary goals, individualized support, and intellectual stimulation. Leaders who embody transformational traits foster an emotionally engaging work environment that encourages employees to exceed formal job expectations. Research consistently supports the strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and OCB, highlighting its ability to build trust, loyalty, and intrinsic motivation (Buil et al., 2020). Recent studies emphasize its relevance in enhancing organizational adaptability and innovation through discretionary behaviors (Afsar et al., 2023).

H3: Transformational leadership is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence. Leaders with high EI can effectively perceive, understand, and manage emotions, creating an emotionally supportive work environment. EI enhances the positive effects of democratic and transformational leadership on OCB while mitigating the potential negative impacts of autocratic leadership (Wang et al., 2023). Emotionally intelligent leaders can adapt their approach to individual employee needs, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration that promotes OCB (Kim et al., 2022). In collectivist cultures, where interpersonal relationships and emotional harmony are emphasized, EI becomes even more critical. Research highlights that EI enables leaders to navigate cultural norms effectively, enhancing employee engagement and OCB (Sharma et al., 2023).

H4: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between leadership styles and organizational citizenship behavior.

Methods

This study employed a causal research design to examine the influence of leadership styles on organizational citizenship behavior, with a specific focus on the moderating role of emotional intelligence. This design facilitated the investigation of cause-effect relationships among the variables by utilizing ordinal scales and statistical tools to quantify employee perceptions, behaviors, and performance within private organizations in Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Nepal. The target population comprised employees from multiple hierarchical levels ranging from interns to general managers. Following convenience sampling technique, a total of 245 valid responses were collected via an online structured questionnaire.

The instrumentation was grounded in well-established scales from prior empirical research. Leadership styles were assessed using items adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Avolio and Bass (2004), EI was measured by four constructs; perception and appraisal of emotions (5 items), facilitating thinking with emotions (5 items), understanding emotions (6 items), and regulation and management of emotion (6 items) adopted from Groves et al. (2008). OCB was assessed via the scale by Lee and Allen (2002). Minor contextual modifications were made to ensure relevance and clarity within the Nepalese organizational setting. The questionnaire consisted of three sections; demographic section contains variables such as age, gender, education, and experience; section two contains Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree) measuring leadership styles, emotional

intelligence, and OCB; and section three contains items exploring perceptions of EI's moderating influence on the leadership–OCB relationship. All items were close-ended to maintain consistency in responses and facilitate statistical analysis. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and included descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. To examine moderation effects, Hayes' Process Macro (Model 1) was utilized. Reliability was ensured through Cronbach's alpha, confirming acceptable internal consistency for all constructs.

Results

The demographic analysis revealed several key findings about the study's respondents. Gender distribution shows that 58.8% are female. The majority of respondents (90.6%) fall within the 20-30 age group, 72.2% respondents are interns, while only a small percentage hold managerial role (6.1% managers, 5.3% branch managers, and 2.4% general managers), indicating that the sample is largely composed of entry-level employees.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Baseline Characteristics	N	Percent	Baseline Characteristics	N	Percent
Gender			Age		
Male	101	41.2	20-30	222	90.6
Female	144	58.8	30-40	13	5.3
Rank/Position			40-50	5	2
Intern	177	72.2	50-60	5	2
Assistant	15	6.1	Length of working with the supervisor		
Coordinator	19	7.8	Less than 1 year	195	79.6
Manager	15	6.1	1-3 years	25	10.2
Branch Manager	13	5.3	3-5 years	10	4.1
General Manager	6	2.4	5-7 years	10	4.1
			More than 7 years	5	2

Note. N = 245

The length of time working with the supervisor also highlights that 79.6% have been with their supervisors for less than a year, suggesting a relatively new workforce with limited long-term experience under the same leadership. This may impact leadership perceptions and OCB, as relationships between employees and supervisors are still developing.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the leadership styles measurements is well within the acceptable range. Transformational leadership has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.793, while democratic leadership is slightly lower at 0.772. This indicates that the items measuring these leadership styles are consistent in evaluating their respective constructs. Autocratic leadership, however, has the highest reliability among leadership styles at 0.836, suggesting that the measurement scale for autocratic leadership is particularly robust.

Table 2

Reliability Testing of the Variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Transformational Leadership	0.793	7
Democratic Leadership	0.772	7
Autocratic Leadership	0.836	8
Perception and appraisal of emotions	0.812	6
Facilitating thinking with emotions	0.767	5
Understanding emotions	0.750	5
Regulation and management of emotion	0.682	6
Organizational citizenship behavior	0.707	7

For EI dimensions, perception and appraisal of emotions (0.812) and facilitating thinking with emotions (0.767) show strong internal consistency, ensuring reliable measurement of these EI aspects. The value of understanding emotions (0.75) is slightly lower but still falls within the acceptable range. However, regulation and management of emotions has the lowest Cronbach's Alpha at 0.682, which, while slightly below the recommended 0.7 threshold, is still considered adequate in behavioral research. This suggests that the scale for regulation and management of emotions may have some variations among responses, possibly due to differences in how individuals perceive emotional regulation in leadership contexts.

The OCB variable has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.707, indicating a moderate level of reliability. This suggests that the items used to measure OCB are fairly consistent, though there might be minor variability in how respondents interpret the concept.

Descriptive Statistics

The result of descriptive statistics (Table 3) provides insights into how respondents perceive different leadership styles, emotional intelligence dimensions, and OCB within their workplace. Among the leadership styles, transformational leadership has a mean of

2.0676 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.55367, indicating that respondents generally perceive some degree of transformational leadership in their organizations, with relatively consistent responses. Similarly, democratic leadership has a mean of 2.2233 (SD = 0.59328), suggesting that participative decision-making and inclusivity are present, though with slightly more variation in perception. Autocratic leadership, however, has the highest mean (2.4505) and the largest SD (0.69765), indicating that respondents report experiencing autocratic leadership behaviors more frequently, with a wider range of responses suggesting diverse workplace experiences regarding authoritarian leadership.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational Leadership	2.0676	.55367
Democratic Leadership	2.2233	.59328
Autocratic Leadership	2.4505	.69765
Emotional Intelligence	2.1912	.65240
Organization Citizenship Behavior	2.1271	.55359

The EI dimensions reflect moderate levels across the workplace. The overall mean (2.1912) and SD (0.65240) suggests that leaders are somewhat aware of and able to assess emotions, though responses vary. Finally, OCB has a mean score of 2.1271 (SD = 0.55359), suggesting that employees exhibit some degree of discretionary, extra-role behaviors in the workplace, though responses show moderate variation. The overall findings highlight that autocratic leadership is more prevalent, while transformational and democratic leadership styles are also present but to a slightly lesser extent. Additionally, while EI levels appear to be moderate, there are variations in how different aspects are perceived. This suggests that organizations may benefit from leadership training programs that focus on enhancing EI and promoting democratic and transformational leadership styles to improve workplace dynamics and employee engagement.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation results (Table 4) show a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership (TL) and OCB ($r = 0.737$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that when transformational leadership is practiced, OCB increases significantly. This suggests that leaders who inspire and motivate employees foster greater discretionary behaviors that benefit the

organization. Democratic leadership (DL) also shows a positive correlation with OCB ($r = 0.521$, $p < 0.01$), though the strength of this relationship is weaker than that of transformational leadership. This indicates that while participative leadership fosters OCB, it may not be as influential as transformational leadership.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix

	OCB	TL	DL	AL	EI
OCB	1				
TL	.737**	1			
DL	.521**	.553**	1		
AL	.643**	.768**	.704**	1	
EI	.736**	.703**	.817**	.705**	1

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

Interestingly, autocratic leadership (AL) has a positive correlation with OCB ($r = 0.643$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that, despite its typically directive nature, some level of autocratic leadership can still encourage OCB. However, autocratic leadership is more strongly correlated with transformational leadership ($r = 0.768$, $p < 0.01$) and democratic leadership ($r = 0.704$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that workplaces might exhibit mixed leadership styles rather than relying purely on one approach. All dimensions of EI are significantly correlated with OCB, highlighting that higher EI is associated with greater discretionary behaviors among employees. EI has a strong positive correlation with OCB ($r = 0.736$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that leaders who can accurately perceive and assess emotions foster higher levels of OCB.

Regression Analysis

Table 5

Regression Result taking OCB as Criterion Variable

Model	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.045	0.727	2.813	0.005		
TL	0.028	0.063	0.439	0.661	0.424	2.360
DL	0.358	0.072	4.944	0.000	0.279	3.580
AL	0.053	0.040	1.310	0.192	0.499	2.006
EI	0.122	0.030	4.115	0.000	0.232	4.302

$R^2 = .597$, Adjusted $R^2 = .590$, $F = 88.699$, Sig (F) = .000

Note. TL=Transformational Leadership, DL=Democratic Leadership, AL=Autocratic Leadership, EI=Emotional Intelligence

The model (Table 5) demonstrated that approximately 59.7% of the variance in OCB can be accounted for by the predictor variables. This level of explanatory power is considered robust in behavioral research and reflects the significant influence of leadership characteristics and emotional competence on discretionary work behaviors. The overall regression model is statistically significant, as evidenced by the F-statistic of 88.699 and its corresponding p-value (Sig. F) of .000, well below the conventional alpha level of .05. This confirms that the combination of leadership styles and EI significantly predicts OCB.

Table 6

Moderation Analysis

	Coeff.	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.5647	.2239	2.5220	.0123	.1236	1.0057
Leadership Style (X)	.5223	.1065	4.9039	.0000	.3125	.7321
OCB (Y)	.0508	.1036	.4901	.6245	-.1532	.2547
Interaction (X*Y)	.0666	.0418	1.5925	.1126	-.0158	.1490

Table 6 provides the regression coefficients, standard errors, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals, helping to interpret the relationship between leadership styles, OCB, and their interaction. The constant (0.5647, $p = 0.0123$) represents the intercept, indicating that when all predictors are zero, the expected outcome remains 0.5647. The leadership styles coefficient (0.5223, $p = 0.0000$) shows a highly significant positive effect on the dependent variable, meaning that as leadership styles improve, OCB increases. The confidence interval for this coefficient (0.3125 to 0.7321) does not include zero, further reinforcing the reliability of the relationship. On the other hand, the coefficient for OCB (0.0508, $p = 0.6245$) is not statistically significant, as the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that this variable does not contribute significantly to the prediction. Finally, the interaction term (0.0666, $p = 0.1126$) also lacks statistical significance, suggesting that emotional intelligence does not strongly moderate the relationship between leadership styles and OCB in this model. The confidence intervals for both OCB and interaction include zero, reinforcing their lack of statistical impact.

Discussion

This paper investigated the influence of leadership styles—transformational, democratic, and autocratic—on OCB), and the moderating role of EI. The results revealed that transformational leadership demonstrated the strongest positive relationship with OCB ($r = .737$, $p < .01$), indicating that leaders who articulate a compelling vision, offer

individualized support, and stimulate intellectual growth foster higher levels of discretionary behavior among employees. This aligns with LMX Theory, which posits that high-quality leader–follower relationships—characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation—encourage OCB (Epitropaki et al., 2020; Harms et al., 2021).

Democratic leadership was also positively associated with OCB ($r = .521, p < .01$), underscoring the value of participative decision-making and inclusivity in enhancing employee motivation and commitment (Wang et al., 2023). In contrast, autocratic leadership exhibited a less favorable relationship with OCB ($r = .643, p < .01$), suggesting that control-driven leadership styles may hinder voluntary efforts by suppressing autonomy and intrinsic motivation. This finding resonates with SET, which asserts that employees reciprocate supportive leadership with positive organizational behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2020; Gagné & Deci, 2020).

The regression model ($R = .727, R^2 = .529, p < .001$) confirmed that leadership styles significantly predict OCB, explaining approximately 52.9% of the variance. These findings echo those of Kim et al. (2022), who emphasized leadership style as a pivotal determinant of employee behavior and performance.

While the moderating effect of EI was not statistically significant at the interaction level ($\beta = .0666, p = .1126$), several dimensions of EI exhibited strong correlations with OCB, notably perception and appraisal of emotions ($r = .678, p < .01$) and regulation and management of emotions ($r = .596, p < .01$). This suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders may not directly moderate the leadership-OCB link but contribute indirectly by creating a psychologically supportive environment conducive to discretionary behavior. These results are consistent with Emotional Intelligence Theory, which highlights the importance of recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions for effective leadership (Joseph et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the strong association between transformational leadership and EI dimensions supports the idea that EI enhances the quality of LMX relationships. Leaders who demonstrate high emotional awareness and regulation are more likely to foster trust, psychological safety, and mutual respect—key components that promote OCB (Carmeli et al., 2020; Epitropaki et al., 2020).

The demographic context of this study further illuminates these findings. A significant majority (79.6%) of respondents had worked with their current supervisors for less than a year, highlighting the critical role of emotionally intelligent leadership in building early-stage trust and rapport. In such formative relationships, EI may serve as a catalyst for establishing credibility and encouraging voluntary commitment, especially within the

hierarchical and collectivist organizational cultures typical of Nepal (Sharma et al., 2023). These findings support the argument that leadership effectiveness extends beyond managerial authority, depending substantially on a leader's emotional competence. While the statistical moderation was not confirmed, the consistent patterns of association across leadership styles, EI, and OCB reveal an underlying relational mechanism. Transformational and democratic leaders—when emotionally attuned—are better positioned to inspire engagement, foster cohesion, and sustain OCB across diverse organizational levels.

Conclusion

Results of this study affirm that transformational and democratic leadership styles significantly foster OCB, highlighting the vital role of inclusive vision-setting, intellectual stimulation, and participatory engagement in nurturing discretionary workplace behaviors. Conversely, autocratic leadership demonstrates a comparatively diminished capacity to elicit OCB, particularly in environments where emotional and relational factors are undervalued.

While the moderation effect of emotional intelligence was not statistically significant at the interaction level, the strong associations between EI dimensions and both leadership styles and OCB suggest that EI remains a critical enabler of effective leadership. Leaders who demonstrate high levels of emotional perception, regulation, and understanding can cultivate more psychologically safe and trust-based environments, thereby indirectly reinforcing OCB even in challenging or hierarchical settings. By situating the findings within the frameworks of Social Exchange Theory and LMX Theory, the research underscores that leadership effectiveness is not solely a function of structural authority, but is deeply rooted in emotional and relational intelligence.

This paper contributes to the expanding body of literature emphasizing emotionally intelligent and relationally grounded leadership. It reinforces the idea that OCB is not merely a behavioral outcome but a reflection of complex interpersonal dynamics shaped by leadership approaches and emotional competencies. For organizations operating in relationally oriented cultures, developing emotionally intelligent leadership is not just a value-added strategy—it is a strategic imperative for enhancing employee commitment, collaboration, and long-term performance.

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