Transformational Leadership as a Mediating Mechanism between Workplace Civility and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in the Software Industry

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Abstract
This study investigates the relationship between the perceived workplace civility climate and transformational leadership style in predicting organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among software engineers. A correlational, cross-sectional design was employed, with a sample of 164 software engineers from Lahore, recruited through purposive sampling. Data were collected using self-report questionnaires measuring workplace civility, transformational leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior. The findings demonstrate a positive relationship between perceived workplace civility and organizational citizenship behavior. Transformational leadership partially mediates the relationship between perceived civility and organizational citizenship behavior, suggesting that promoting a polite and respectful workplace, along with effective and strong transformational leadership, can enhance voluntary helping behaviors among software engineering employees. The implications highlight the importance of organizational policies that encourage civility and leadership development to improve team cohesion, creativity, and productivity.
Keywords: Transformational leadership, Workplace Civility, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Software Engineers

Introduction

In today's demanding era, the success of any organization isn't dependent on task completion but relying on the employees' determination to go beyond the assigned tasks and the formal rules especially in those knowledge intensive and team based domains like software engineering industry. Such conduct is a voluntary one, referred as organizational citizenship behavior, and comprises social activities such as helping colleagues, sharing knowledge, and giving support (Shehzadi & Khan, 2024). In teams of software engineers, the assigned tasks are complicated, dependent, and require collaboration, hence this behavior can be the "glue" that connects team performance, morale, and innovation as it coordinate and collectively solve the problem (Malekar, 2020; Wonda, 2024). As the organizations rely on cross-functional collaboration and agile workflows, therefore the increase in employees' citizenship behavior in the workplaces is essential to maintain team cohesion, innovation, and productivity (Adegbola et al., 2024).

Undeniably, software engineering industry is standing on employees' collaborative effort, two main factors that influence this: the perceived quality of the interpersonal climate which refers to the level of civility, respect, and supportiveness in the workplace (Moslehpour et al., 2018) and the perception of the transformational leadership style which is about team leaders being inspiring, supportive, and attentive to employees' needs (Mala et al., 2022). An upbeat work environment can create psychological safety and the feeling of being part of the team, whereas a transformational leadership style can can motivate, inspire commitment, and build relational trust (Moda et al., 2024).

Workplace civility climate is the shared perception that the interactions on the personal level within a unit or an organization are characterized by respect, politeness, and consideration (Leiter et al., 2011; Peng, 2023). The civil climate is indicative of social support and fairness, thus meeting the employees' socio-emotional needs and leading them to initiate organizational citizenship behavior as a form of reciprocity. The factual data provide support for this argument. Harrilall and De Beer (2024) reported that civility was a significant predictor of work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior among employees in the financial sector in South Africa, while the lack of it increased the intention to quit the job. Similarly, El-Shahat et al. (2025) carried out a training program on civility and behavior among nurses and found that the levels of perceived civility and organizational citizenship behavior improved after the intervention, suggesting the existence of a causal link. In a different mixed-method study, Contridas and Picardo (2025) found that lower levels of workplace incivility were associated with higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior among nurses, with psychological capital and organizational commitment acting as mediators.

Similar trends have been identified in institutions of education and the public sector. Bijalwan et al. (2024) revealed a detrimental interaction between workplace incivility and organizational citizenship behavior in higher education institutions, which implied that untreated ill-mannered behavior lessens the trust and the mutual support factor. Ibrahim (2025) also argued that an environment that is positive and supportive in the organization was a good predictor of a higher level of organizational citizenship behavior among employees in the public sector. In a sum, these discoveries signal that a civility climate standards act as a social environment factor leading to organizational citizenship behavior by facilitating the employee's sense of security, the availability of social support, and acknowledgment all of which arouse the employee's willingness to exceed their set duties to the organization.

Most of the studies in organizational citizenship behavior, workplace climate, and leadership that have been reviewed, are largely based on the manufacturing, healthcare, education, or general corporate sectors (Iqbal et al., 2024). There are very few studies that have deeply investigated how these dynamics unfold in software development teams (Magana et al., 2023), where the team norms, technical complexity, and rapid change cycles set the unique challenges. Since software engineers are usually under high pressure, with tight deadlines, and require high levels of cooperation and coordination, understanding if a civil work climate and transformational leadership can increase organizational citizenship behavior in this environment is both theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964) is illustrating the effects of perceived workplace civility climate on employee interactions and attitudes. A major premise of this model is that workplace relationships depend on mutual exchanges where employees will be rewarded if they respond positively and take initiatives to treat others well. Employees are likely to acknowledge a civility climate if they are met with not only respect and politeness but also social norms that are supportive and they will feel an imperative to reciprocate positive behaviors that benefit the organization and their coworkers. The process of reciprocity thus leads to the enhancement of organizational citizenship behavior as the most probable ways of showing it are through discrete acts of kindness, cooperation, and helping others Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2003).

The transformational leader makes the workplace ethical and challenging for employees to follow supportive and friendly norms created there, while the presence of civility climate among employees ensures that respect is given and psychological comfort is achieved throughout the organization. These factors in themselves will make the employees feel obliged to engage in such behaviors (Primadona et al., 2025).

On one hand, the Transformational Leadership Theory provides explanation of how leadership can influence the employees to do more than required. On the other hand, the Social Exchange Theory explains the nature of respect in workplace interactions based on reciprocity. Moreover, the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Theory points to the discretionary behaviors as the most important factors that lead to organizational success. So, they comprise an integrated framework which can be used in understanding how the perceived workplace civility climate and transformational leadership lead to organizational citizenship behaviors of employees.

Rationale:

The software engineering industry is usually associated with challenging problems, short timeframes, and a high degree of interdependence between team members which is why the discretionary employees' behaviors become very important in the effectiveness of the organization. Among these behaviors, organizational citizenship behavior, as a set of voluntary, non-compulsory employee activities such as helping colleagues, sharing knowledge, and contributing beyond the formal job responsibilities (Fan et al., 2023), is essentially important to the facilitation of collaboration, innovation, and general team performance in software engineering teams and departments. Various studies have already recognized that citizenship behavior of employees is a result of influence from two main sets of contextual and relational factors. They also points out that perceived workplace civility climate and leadership styles are the main determinants of this (Dongmo and Tanova, 2025). A civility climate is an environment with respect, politeness, and supportiveness for employees in social interaction (Peng, 2023), which not only equips employees with psychological safety but also social resources which drive them to return the favor by engaging in behaviors that ultimately benefit the organization.

One of such behaviors is transformational leadership, a type of leadership that is characterized by inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, strengthens the impact of a civil climate by increasing trust, commitment, and intrinsic motivation of employees (Lee et al., 2023). Leaders who exemplify respect and value their team can change the environment civility perception into more vibrant engaging environment and increase citizenship behavior of employees. In this context, the role of transformational leadership can be understood as a mediator, which explains the civility-oriented environment impacting discretionary behaviors of software engineers. While these constructs are crucially significant both from a theoretical and practical perspective, very few studies have been conducted in this regard to examine their interplay specifically in software engineering industry that have led to this gap in research. So this study aimed to explain how workplace environment related to citizenship behaviors and mediated by leadership style, thereby filling an important gap in the area of workplace psychology in the software industry.
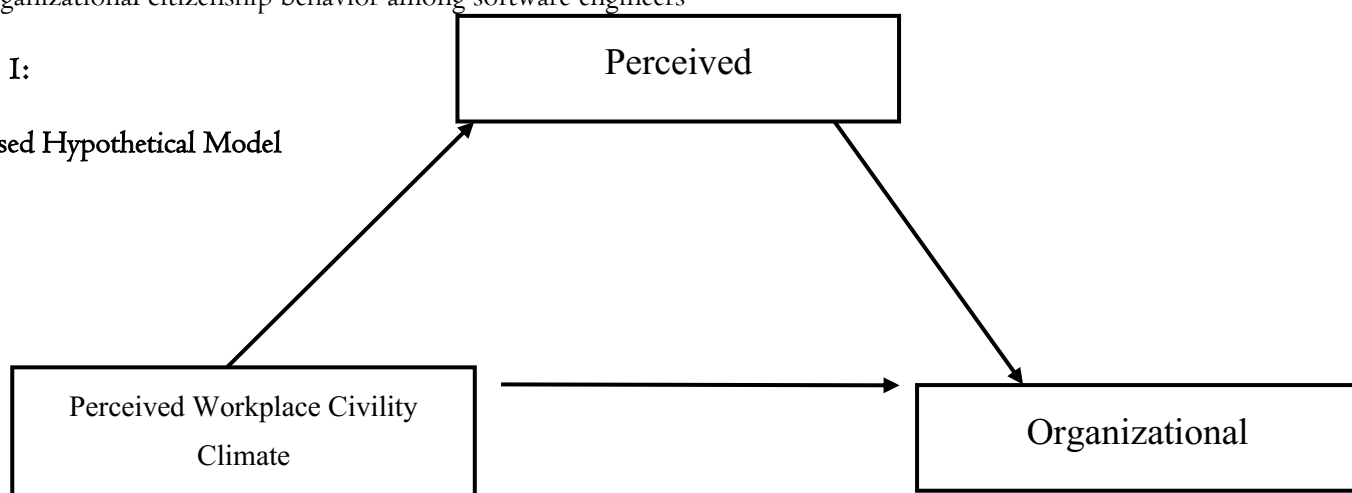
Hypotheses

H$_1$: There is a positive relationship between perceived workplace civility climate and organizational citizenship behavior among software engineers.

H$_2$: Perceived transformational leadership style mediates the relationship between perceived workplace civility climate and organizational citizenship behavior among software engineers

Figure I:

Proposed Hypothetical Model

Methodology

This chapter includes the design of research, strategy of collecting the sample, the criteria, the assessment measures, procedure for conducting research and ethical consideration that will use for data collection.
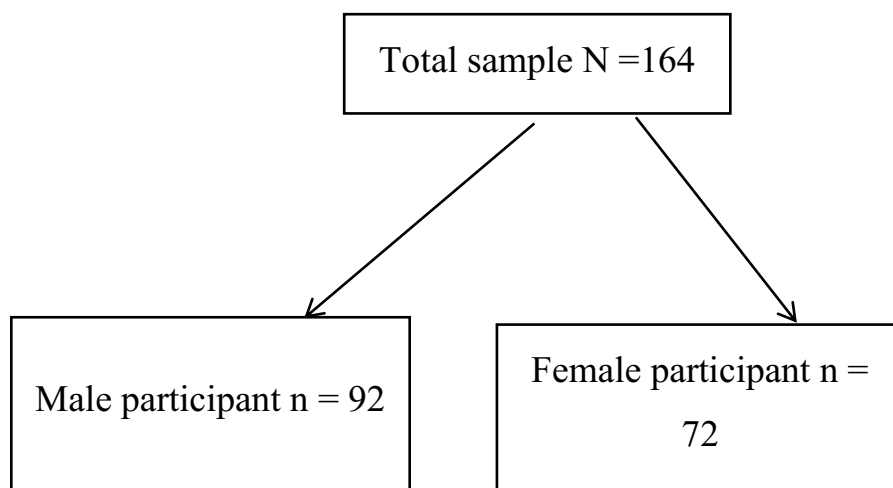
Research Design

Correlational study was used with cross sectional research design in order to investigate the relationship between perceived workplace civility climate, perceived transformational leadership style and organizational citizenship behavior in software engineer industry.

Sample and Sampling Strategy

For drawing appropriate sample size, G-power formula was used. The sample size was calculated for twelve predictors with an effect size of 0.15, alpha level of .05 and power of 0.80 (Cohen, 1983). That turned out the sample size of 164 employees working in software engineering industry. The sample was recruited by non-probability purposive sampling from Lahore via online mode of data collection from males and female.

Figure: 2

Sample Segregation

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              ┌─────────────────────────┐
              │   Total sample N =164   │
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               ╱                       ╲
    ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Male participant n = 92 │ │ Female participant n = 72 │
    └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
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Inclusion Criteria

Participants in the study were required to meet specific requirements. Sample both males and female are included if they were employees working in software engineering industry and were currently employed. They needed to have at least one year of experience in organization to ensure they were familiar with the workplace environment. Additionally, they had required to be native in Lahore and speak either Urdu or English. Lastly, each subject had to provide their informed consent prior to participating in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for excluded from the study involve people who currently have diagnosed with a mental illness, because their condition may have an impact on the findings. Furthermore, individuals who refuse to participate or give just partial answers will also be excluded. Individuals are not included if they were not currently part of an organization or did not have any work experience in their software engineering industry.

Assessment Measures

Following assessment measures will be used in the present study.

- Personal information sheet
- Perceived Workplace Civility Climate Scale (Ottinot, 2008)
- Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 1995)
- Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist (Spector, Bauer & Fox, 2010)

Personal Information Sheet

Demographic information sheet will be used to gather information from participants. This included age, gender, education, martial status and family background.

Perceived Workplace Civility Climate Scale (Ottinot, 2008)

The scale was developed by Ottinot (2008) to access the employees perceptions of civility in the workplace. This study used the 15-items, divided into three sub scale Intolerance for Incivility (6 items), Response (4 items) Policies and Procedures (5 items).Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. In the current study, the reliability each subscale was acceptable Policies and Procedures: $\alpha = .78$, Response: $\alpha = .66$ and Intolerance for Incivility: $\alpha = .76$.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 1995)

This 16-item scale was developed by Avolio and Bass (1995) to measure transformational leadership behaviors of leaders. The items measure different aspects of leadership, including providing support, inspiring motivation, encouraging innovation, and recognizing employee efforts. Participants respond using a 5-point Likert scale, where 0 = Not at all, 1 = Once in a while, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = fairly often, and 4 = frequently, if not always.The MLQ is widely used in leadership research and has demonstrated high reliability $\alpha = .917$.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist (Spector, Bauer & Fox, 2010)

The 10-item short version of the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist (OCB-C) was developed by Spector, Bauer, and Fox (2010) to measure **extra-role behaviors at work,** such as helping colleagues, volunteering for extra tasks, and supporting the organization beyond formal job duties. Participants respond using a **5-point frequency scale:** 1 = Never, 2 = Once or Twice, 3 = Once or Twice per Month, 4 = Once or Twice per Week, and 5 = Every Day. The OCQ also showed good reliability with $\alpha = .860$

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected online from software engineers, who were invited to participate after being informed about the study, and asked if they would want to participate. Following their expression of interest, they received the Consent Form and Information Sheet that were included with the survey. To guarantee moral and efficient data collecting, the process include a number of crucial steps. First, participants received an explanation of the study's goals and a guarantee that their answers would remain private. Prior to participation, written consent was obtained from each individual. The questionnaire was self-administered however, assistance was provided when participants required help in understanding specific items. Each set of the questionnaires required around 30-35 minutes for the administration participants were thanked for their quality time by a thank you. After data collection, results were analyzed.

Results

Participant Profile

The study utilized 164 valid responses for analysis. The sample profile figures are reported in Table 1. Participants between the ages of 23 and 55 years old were selected in compliance with the target population parameters. The sample represented the two education levels, two marital status, two residential areas, and two type of family systems, with somewhat more male participants than female ones.

Table 1

Participant Profile (**N = 164**)

Variables	n (*f*)	*M* (SD)
Gender		-
Male	92 (56.1)	
Female	72 (43.9)	
Education Level		-
Bachelor	109(66.5)	

Master	55(33.5)	
Marital Status		-
Married	47(28.7)	
Unmarried	117(71.3)	
Residential Area		-
Urban	132(80.5)	
Rural	31(18.9)	
Family System		-
Nuclear	91(55.5)	
Joint	73(44.5)	
Age	-	30.1(5.25)

Correlation Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Collinearity Diagnostics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, reliability measures, and collinearity diagnostics. As shown in Table 2, each latent factor returned a mean value exceeding 3.5. On the six-point Likert-type scale used in this study, these relatively high mean scores suggest that Generation Y customers exhibit sufficient trust, commitment, and loyalty based on the quality of banking services they receive. Each latent construct recorded a Cronbach's alpha value above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability (Malhotra, 2010). Regarding the correlation coefficients, statistically significant and positive relationships ($p < 0.01$) were observed among all latent factors, supporting the nomological validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, all correlation coefficients fell below the acceptable limit of 0.90, suggesting a low likelihood of multicollinearity among the constructs (Pallant, 2020).

Normality Test

The normality test are reported in Table 2 and normality of the study variables was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for 164 participants. The results indicated that Perceived Workplace Civility Climate, Perceived Transformational Leadership Style, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior met the assumption of normality, as their significance values were above 0.05, suggesting that the study variables were normally distributed. Overall, all study variables satisfied the assumption of normality.

Table 2

Normality Test of Study Variables (N=164)

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Sig.
Perceived Workplace Civility Climate	0.06	0.200
Perceived Transformational Leadership Style	0.07	0.066
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.05	0.200

Note: P > 0.05 indicates that the data do not significantly

Psychometric Properties

Table 3 presents the psychometric properties of the study variables for a sample of 164 participants. The Perceived Workplace Civility Climate scale consisted of 15 items, demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.74$). The Perceived Transformational Leadership Style scale included 16 items, also showing strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.81$). Similarly, the Organizational Citizenship Behavior scale, comprising 10 items and exhibited good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76. Overall, all scales used in the study showed acceptable to strong reliability.

Table 3

Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N=164)

Variable	*k*	Range (Min-Max)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Perceived Workplace Civility Climate	15	15 - 75	0.74
Perceived Transformational Leadership Style	16	16 - 80	0.81

Organizational Citizenship Behavior	10	10 - 50	0.76

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis of the study variables showed significant positive relationships among all three constructs. Perceived Workplace Civility Climate was strongly correlated with Perceived Transformational Leadership Style (r = 0.75, p < .01) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (r = 0.65, p < .01). Additionally, Perceived Transformational Leadership Style demonstrated a strong positive correlation with Organizational Citizenship Behavior (r = 0.85, p < .05). These findings indicate that higher levels of civility climate and transformational leadership are associated with greater organizational citizenship behavior among participants.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis of Study Variables (N=164)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Perceived Workplace Civility Climate	-	0.75**	0.65**
2. Perceived Transformational Leadership Style	-	-	0.85*
3. Organizational Citizenship Behavior	-	-	-

Note: $P^* < 0.05$, $P^{**} < 0.01$

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 found a significant relationship among perceived workplace civility climate, perceived transformational leadership style, and organizational citizenship behavior, suggesting Complementary Partial Mediation.

In the first step, the mediator perceived transformational leadership style was significantly predicted by perceived workplace civility climate (β = .65, p < .001). This indicates that higher levels of perceived workplace civility climate are strongly associated with higher levels of perceived transformational leadership style. This research suggests that a highly civil environment may paradoxically contribute to increased perceived transformational leadership style.

In the second step, perceived workplace civility climate remained a significant predictor of organizational citizenship behavior even after accounting for the mediator (β = .34, p < .001). Perceived transformational leadership style also significantly predicted organizational citizenship behavior (β = .63, p < .001). These findings suggest that while Perceived workplace civility climate has a direct positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior, perceived transformational leadership style plays a distinct and strong function in explaining organizational citizenship behavior.

The third step confirmed that the total effect of perceived workplace civility climate on organizational citizenship behavior was significant (β = .75, p < .001). Crucially, the indirect effect of perceived workplace civility climate on organizational citizenship behavior through perceived transformational leadership style was also statistically significant (B = .287, 95% CI [.138, .474]), as the confidence interval excluded zero. This confirms complementary partial mediation, demonstrating that perceived workplace civility climate influences organizational citizenship behavior both directly and indirectly through perceived transformational leadership style.

Overall, these results point to a scenario where individuals in a highly perceived civil climate are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors both because of the direct positive influence of the climate and because the climate also leads to a higher transformational leadership style, which itself is positively related to citizenship behavior of employees.

Table 5

Mediation Analysis of the Relationship between Perceived Workplace Civility Climate and Organizational Citizenship

Steps	Outcome Variable	Predictor	B	SE	β	p	R^2	ΔR^2	95% CI (LL,UL)
I	PTLS	Constant	I2.33	3.3I		<.00I	0.43	.43***	[5.798,18.862]
		PWCC	0.79	0.07	0.65	<.00I			[.645,.929]
2	OCB	Constant	2.06	I.I9		0.086	0.80	.37***	[−.293,-4.409]
		PWCC	0.24	0.03	0.34	<.00I			[.I7I,.30I]
		PTLS	0.36	0.03	0.63	<.00I			[.3II,.4I8]
3	OCB	Total Effect (PWCC)	0.75**-52	0.04	0.75	<.00I	0.57	.57***	[.452,.594]
		Direct Effect (PWCC)	-24	0.03	0.34	<.00I	-		[.I7I,.30I]
		Indirect Effect (via PTLS)	0.29	0.09	0.4I		-		[.I38,.474]

Behavior via Perceived Transformational Leadership Style

Note: *PTLS:* Perceived Transformational Leadership Style, *PWCC:* Perceived Workplace Civility Climate, *OCB:* Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Figure 4:

Statistical Model
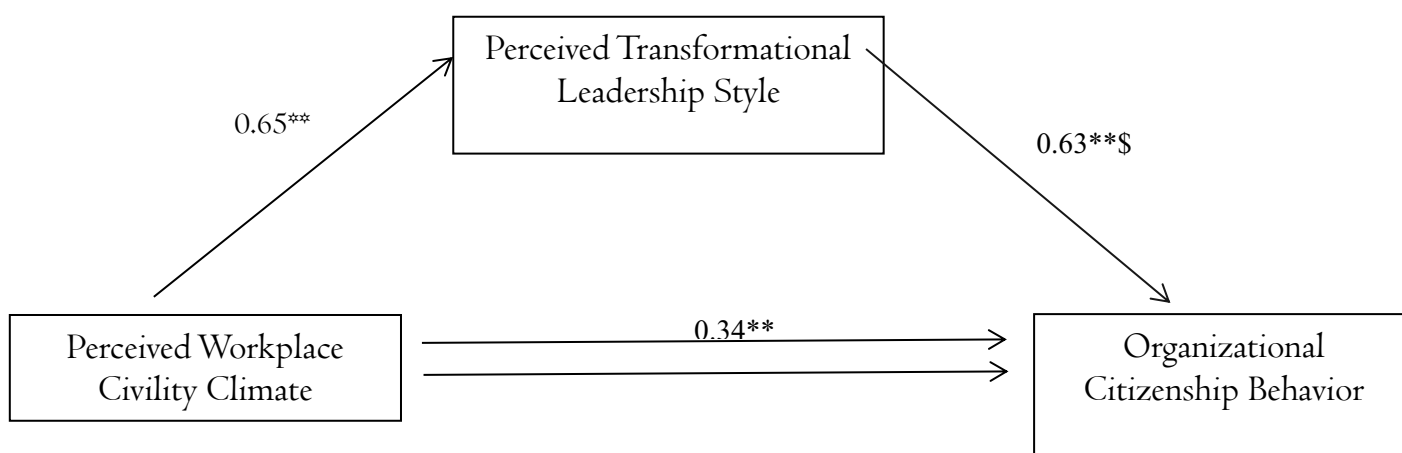
This model explores how high level of perceived workplace civility climate leads to increased organizational citizenship behavior, with perceived transformational leadership style acting as a partial mediator. The total effect ($\beta = -.75$**) indicates a strong relationship, while the indirect effect ($\beta = -.34$**) shows that transformational leadership

style partially explain how workplace civility climate impacts citizenship behavior of employees.

Discussion

The main aim of this research was to explore how software engineers experience workplace civility, transformational leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior. The research aim to find out a respectful work environment and a supportive leadership style inspire employees to show positive, voluntary behaviors at work. Another goal was to examine whether transformational leadership helps explain the relation between workplace civility and organizational citizenship behavior. Overall, the findings proved these purpose and showed strong, meaningful connection among all variables.

The first hypothesis suggested that there is a significant positive connection between perceived workplace civility climate and organizational citizenship behavior. The results support this hypothesis. Findings showed that when software engineers feel their workplace is respectful, polite, and supportive, they are more likely to work in helpful behaviors that helpful for the organization. This strong connection suggests that a civil and respectful atmosphere increases employee's motivation to go beyond their basic job duties. These results also align with earlier research showing that workplaces with more respect and politeness leads cooperation, trust, and helpful behaviors. Previous research shows that a positive workplace civility climate promote organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

Civility at work, characterized by respect, politeness, and consideration, provides social support and fulfills employees' socio-emotional needs, motivating them to inspire in voluntary behaviors (Leiter et al., 2011; Peng, 2023). Studies have confirmed this connection across different sectors. For example, Harrilall and De Beer (2024) mentioned that civility significantly predicted work engagement and OCB among financial sector employees, while a lack of civility increased turnover intentions. Research in higher education and public sector organizations also supports this trend, with positive and supportive climates predicting higher OCB (Bijalwan et al., 2024; Ibrahim, 2025).

The second hypothesis suggested that perceived transformational leadership mediates the relationship between workplace civility and organizational citizenship behavior. The result proved this hypothesis. The findings showed that workplace civility increases organizational citizenship behavior both directly and indirectly through transformational leadership. In easy words, when leaders behave motivating, and supportive ways, the positive effect of workplace civility becomes stronger. This means transformational leadership works as a bridge that helps explain how a respectful workplace leads to more positive employee behaviors.

These findings proved the important role of leadership in strengthening the impact of civility on employee outcomes. Transformational leadership has been regularly connected to organizational citizenship behavior Leaders who promote and provide individualized support, and intellectually stimulate employees inspire voluntary behaviors (Bakker et al., 2022; Scott et al., 2011). Empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership predicts civic virtue, altruism, responsibility, and courtesy directly, and indirectly through relational or contextual mediators such as trust, workplace spirituality, and emotional intelligence (Murtezaj & Ahmeti, 2021; Majeed et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2023).

Limitations

- Data were gathered through self-report questionnaires, which may include personal bias.
- The sample came from a less number of organizations, so it may not consider all IT workers.

Future Research

- Conduct longitudinal studies to see how these connection change over time.
- Include qualitative research to understand employees' personal experiences with civility and leadership

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