

THE MODERATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT IN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSON–SUPERVISOR FIT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR AMONG MUSLIM GOVERNMENT SERVANTS IN WISMA PERSEKUTUAN KOTA BHARU: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract: *This pilot study examines the relationship between person–supervisor fit and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and the moderating role of work engagement among Muslim government servants at Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu. Data were collected from 30 respondents using an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Measurement instruments for person–supervisor fit and OCB were adopted from Abdullah Thani (2019), while work engagement was measured using a validated scale. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28, employing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and hierarchical regression. Results indicated that person–supervisor fit was positively associated with OCB and that work engagement significantly moderated this relationship, strengthening the effect of supervisor compatibility on discretionary work behavior. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These findings support the feasibility of the instruments and procedures for a larger-scale study and contribute to the literature on supervisor relationships, engagement, and citizenship behavior in the Malaysian public sector.*

Keywords: *Person–supervisor fit, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior*

Introduction

Organizational effectiveness in the public sector increasingly depends on employees' willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond formal job descriptions, commonly referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Abdullah Thani et al., 2024). Such behaviors are essential in government agencies, where service quality, cooperation, and ethical conduct are vital to achieving public trust and institutional legitimacy. Understanding the factors that promote OCB among government servants is therefore an important area of scholarly and practical concern.

One factor that has received growing attention in organizational behavior research is person–environment fit, particularly person–supervisor fit (PS fit). Person–supervisor fit refers to the compatibility between employees and their immediate supervisors in terms of values, goals, interpersonal style, and work expectations (Zakiy, 2024). Given that supervisors serve as primary role models, evaluators, and sources of guidance, alignment between employees and supervisors plays a critical role in shaping attitudes, motivation, and discretionary behavior. Employees who perceive high levels of PS fit are more likely to experience trust, psychological safety, and satisfaction, which in turn foster cooperative and prosocial behaviors in the workplace.

Another construct that has been consistently linked to positive organizational outcomes is work engagement. Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Suma & Sapra, 2025). Engaged employees tend to demonstrate higher levels of energy, persistence, and involvement in their work roles, and are more inclined to go beyond formal job requirements. While work engagement has been examined as a direct predictor of performance and OCB, fewer studies have explored its role as a moderating variable that strengthens the impact of interpersonal or contextual factors on discretionary behaviors (Kizrak, 2025; Konakay et al., 2024).

In the context of Muslim government servants, particularly in regions such as Kota Bharu where Islamic values and ethical principles strongly shape workplace culture, the relationship between supervisor compatibility, engagement, and citizenship behavior may take on additional significance. Islamic teachings emphasize responsibility (*amanah*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), cooperation (*ta'awun*), and excellence (*ihsan*), which align closely with the concept of OCB (Abdullah Thani et al., 2023). Employees who experience strong compatibility with supervisors and high levels of engagement may be more inclined to express these values through voluntary and prosocial workplace behaviors.

Despite the relevance of these constructs, limited empirical research has examined the combined influence of person–supervisor fit and work engagement on OCB among Muslim government servants in Malaysia. Furthermore, methodological evidence regarding the reliability and feasibility of measurement instruments in this population remains scarce.

Therefore, this pilot study aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between person–supervisor fit and organizational citizenship behavior among Muslim government servants at Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu.
2. Investigate the moderating role of work engagement in the relationship between person–supervisor fit and organizational citizenship behavior.
3. Assess the reliability and suitability of the research instruments and analytical procedures using SPSS version 28 for a future large-scale study.

The findings of this pilot study are expected to provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed conceptual model and contribute to the literature on leadership relationships, engagement, and discretionary behavior in the Malaysian public sector.

Literature Review

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior refers to discretionary behaviors that are not explicitly required by formal job descriptions but contribute to organizational effectiveness (Abdullah Thani & Rosely, 2025). These behaviors include helping colleagues, demonstrating conscientiousness, participating responsibly in organizational activities, and maintaining positive attitudes even in challenging situations. In public sector organizations, OCB enhances teamwork, service quality, and institutional credibility, particularly in environments characterized by bureaucratic structures and resource constraints (Azhari et al., 2023).

Research has consistently linked OCB to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership style, and person–environment fit (Abdullah & Wider, 2022). However, limited attention has been given to how compatibility between employees and their supervisors specifically contributes to citizenship behavior, particularly in culturally and religiously grounded work environments.

Person–Supervisor Fit

Person–supervisor fit refers to the degree of congruence between employees and their supervisors in values, personality, work style, leadership preferences, and goals (Thani et al., 2022). High PS fit enhances trust, communication quality, and leader–member exchange, fostering positive emotional and psychological states among employees. When employees perceive alignment with their supervisors, they are more likely to internalize organizational goals, accept feedback constructively, and demonstrate loyalty and cooperation (Lam & Bexter, 2025).

Empirical studies have shown that PS fit is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and citizenship behavior (Ahmad et al., 2024). Supervisors who are perceived as compatible are more likely to inspire discretionary effort and voluntary behaviors among subordinates. Thus, PS fit is expected to be a significant predictor of OCB in government organizations.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is conceptualized as a persistent and positive work-related state characterized by vigor (high levels of energy and mental resilience), dedication (strong involvement and enthusiasm), and absorption (being fully concentrated and happily engrossed

in work) (Azhari et al., 2023). Engaged employees tend to demonstrate initiative, persistence, adaptability, and a willingness to invest discretionary effort in their roles.

Work engagement has been linked to a wide range of positive outcomes, including job performance, well-being, creativity, and organizational citizenship behavior (Chen et al., 2025). Engaged employees are more likely to exceed role expectations, assist colleagues, and contribute to organizational improvement initiatives. However, beyond its direct effects, work engagement may also function as a psychological resource that strengthens the impact of interpersonal and contextual factors on discretionary behavior.

Work Engagement as a Moderator

Moderation occurs when the strength or direction of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable depends on the level of a third variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this study, work engagement is proposed as a moderator of the relationship between person-supervisor fit and OCB. While PS fit may create favorable interpersonal conditions that encourage citizenship behavior, employees who are highly engaged are more likely to translate this compatibility into proactive and voluntary behaviors.

Engaged employees typically exhibit stronger motivation, commitment, and emotional investment in their work, enabling them to respond more positively to supportive and compatible supervisory relationships. Conversely, employees with low engagement may be less inclined to express discretionary behavior even when they perceive high supervisor compatibility. Therefore, work engagement is expected to amplify the positive effect of PS fit on OCB.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design and was conducted as a pilot study to evaluate the reliability, clarity, and feasibility of the measurement instruments and data analysis procedures prior to a larger-scale investigation. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.

Sample and Data Collection

The sample comprised 30 Muslim government servants working at Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate during the pilot phase. Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and advised that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. The sample size is consistent with methodological recommendations for pilot studies, which suggest 20–40 participants to assess instrument reliability and research procedures (Bujang et al., 2024).

Instruments

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 5 = “Strongly agree.”

Person–Supervisor Fit:

Person–supervisor fit was measured using a scale adopted from Abdullah Thani, assessing perceived compatibility between employees and their immediate supervisors in terms of values, work style, communication, and expectations.

Work Engagement:

Work engagement was measured using a validated scale adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2002), covering the three dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior:

OCB was measured using a scale adopted from Abdullah Thani, assessing discretionary behaviors such as helping colleagues, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue, and sportsmanship.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28. Descriptive statistics were first conducted to examine respondents' demographic profiles and overall distributions of the study variables. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the measurement instruments. Pearson correlation analysis was then employed to examine the relationships among person–supervisor fit, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. To test the moderating effect of work engagement, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. All predictor variables were mean-centered prior to creating the interaction term to minimize multicollinearity.

Results

Respondent Profile

The respondents consisted of male and female Muslim government servants from various departments within Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu. Most respondents had more than five years of service, indicating a relatively experienced workforce. The diversity in age, job category, and tenure provided sufficient variability for preliminary analysis and supported the suitability of the sample for a pilot study.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and suitability for further research.

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Person–Supervisor Fit	6	0.87
Work Engagement	9	0.90
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	16	0.89

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	Mean	SD
1. Person–Supervisor Fit	-			3.92	0.50
2. Work Engagement	.43*	-		4.05	0.46
3. Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.55**	.50* *	-	4.12	0.44

*p < .05, **p < .01 (two-tailed)

Discussion

This pilot study provides preliminary empirical evidence that person–supervisor fit is positively associated with organizational citizenship behavior among Muslim government servants at Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu. Consistent with person–environment fit theory and leadership research (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023), employees who perceive compatibility with their supervisors are more likely to demonstrate discretionary behaviors such as helping colleagues, maintaining positive attitudes, and voluntarily contributing to organizational effectiveness. More importantly, the findings indicate that work engagement significantly moderates the relationship between person–supervisor fit and OCB. Specifically, the positive effect of supervisor compatibility on citizenship behavior was stronger among employees who reported higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work (Choy et al., 2024). This suggests by Kristof Brown (2024), that engagement serves as a psychological resource that enables employees to translate supportive and compatible supervisory relationships into proactive and prosocial workplace behaviors.

In the context of Muslim government servants, these findings are particularly meaningful. Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), ihsan (excellence), and ta'awun (mutual assistance) emphasize responsibility, ethical conduct, and service to others. As suggested by Kidron and Vinarski Peretz (2026), when employees experience strong alignment with supervisors and high engagement, these values are more likely to manifest as organizational citizenship behaviors, strengthening both interpersonal harmony and institutional effectiveness.

Implications

This study offers important theoretical implications by extending person–environment fit literature through the integration of person–supervisor fit and work engagement in explaining organizational citizenship behavior within a Muslim public sector context. While previous research has largely examined direct effects of supervisor relationships on work outcomes, the present findings demonstrate that work engagement strengthens the impact of supervisor compatibility on discretionary behavior. This highlights the need to incorporate motivational and psychological states into models linking interpersonal fit to behavioral outcomes, particularly in value-driven organizational environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that public sector managers should focus on strengthening supervisor–subordinate compatibility through value-based leadership development, effective communication, and mentoring practices. In addition, initiatives that enhance employee engagement such as meaningful job design, recognition programs, supportive supervision, and opportunities for professional growth may amplify the positive effects of supervisor fit on citizenship behavior. By fostering both supportive supervisory relationships and high engagement, government agencies can cultivate a workforce that consistently demonstrates voluntary cooperation, ethical conduct, and service excellence.

Future Research

Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples across multiple government agencies and regions to enhance external validity. Longitudinal research designs could further clarify causal relationships among person–supervisor fit, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, future research may explore other mediators or moderators, such as organizational commitment, religiosity, ethical leadership, or psychological safety, to develop more comprehensive explanatory frameworks.

Conclusion

This pilot study provides preliminary evidence that person–supervisor fit positively influences organizational citizenship behavior among Muslim government servants at Wisma Persekutuan Kota Bharu and that work engagement strengthens this relationship. The findings support the reliability and feasibility of the measurement instruments adopted from Abdullah Thani and the suitability of SPSS version 28 for analyzing the proposed model. By integrating interpersonal compatibility and motivational states within a single framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of discretionary workplace behavior in Malaysia’s public sector. Ultimately, fostering strong supervisor–employee relationships and high work engagement may enhance ethical conduct, cooperation, and service quality in government institutions.

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