

The impact of Leader-Member exchange on the job satisfaction and civic virtue relationship: insights from Italian service organisations

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Abstract

Building on the social exchange theory, this study explores the moderating role of leader-member exchange (LMX) quality in the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), specifically civic virtue. Hayes' regression approach was used to analyse data from fifteen Italian service organisations. The results reveal a significant positive association between job satisfaction and civic virtue. Furthermore, LMX quality was found to amplify this relationship, with a more pronounced effect observed when LMX quality was high. This underscores the crucial role of fostering positive leader-member relationships to promote OCB directed toward the organisation, such as civic virtue. The study also enhances the theoretical understanding of civic virtue and its relationship with job satisfaction and LMX quality, thereby enriching the academic discourse in the field of OCB. Lastly, the study provides practical implications for organisations aiming to improve workplace dynamics and enhance employee engagement in extra-role behaviours.

Keywords: civic virtue, OCB, job satisfaction, LMX, moderation.

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1. Introduction

Employee contributions within the organisation often extend beyond the parameters of their job duties. Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) encompass these employees' discretionary actions beyond formal job duties (Organ, 1988). While not explicitly compensated or required, OCBs significantly contribute to organisational effectiveness (Koys, 2001). Indeed, scholars conceptualise OCBs as integral components of a broader performance framework, underscoring the critical role of individual attitudes at work, such as job satisfaction and the relationship with leaders, in influencing such behaviour (Ilies et al., 2007; Whitman et al., 2010), which constitute a significant aspect of effective individual performance in the workplace (Nielsen et al., 2012; Werner, 2000).

Scholars often investigate OCBs as a general construct (Bhal, 2006; Indarti et al., 2017; Ng et al., 2021; Varela González & García Garazo, 2006) or explore specific OCBs in detail based on Organ's (1988) primary categories: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue (Podsakoff et al., 1990). However, despite previous relevant research, the findings present mixed results regarding specific behaviours, underscoring the need for further investigation and analysis to comprehensively understand its impact within organisational contexts, specifically on service-based organisations (Yoon & Suh, 2003). OCBs and the specific related behaviours are particularly relevant in service-based organisations due to their impact on the overall customer experience (Barroso Castro et al., 2004; Bienstock et al., 2003; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Research has shown that employees engaging in OCBs can significantly impact overall service performance (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Tsai et al., 2007) and present low levels of absenteeism and intention to leave the organisation (Cho & Johanson, 2008).

Unlike tangible products, services are simultaneously produced and consumed, placing employees at the heart of the service organisation, as they are both the producers and the deliverers of the service (Ma & Qu, 2011; Varela González & García Garazo, 2006). Research has shown that service organisations often face quality gaps due to discrepancies between the services employees deliver and the standards or specifications set by the organisation. These discrepancies, in turn, create gaps between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the services received (Bienstock et al., 2003; Parasuraman et al., 1985).

In this regard, Bienstock et al. (2003) argued that discretionary behaviours, which the organisation does not formally require, play a critical role in shaping the quality of service provided to customers. Many dimensions of service quality are influenced by the independent initiatives of employees, whose actions can significantly impact customer satisfaction.

A significant behaviour identified as an OCB is civic virtue, which is related to the responsible participation in, involvement, or interest of the individual in the life of the organisation (Organ, 1988), encompassing behaviours such as attending voluntary meetings, staying informed about organisational issues, and actively participating in organisational initiatives, even when not explicitly required (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Nielsen et al. (2012), by investigating civic virtue and its impact on group

performance, particularly considering the time consumed in preparing and engaging in civic virtue behaviours, showed a positive influence of civic virtue in performance, outweighing its associated time costs. Reflecting employees' sense of responsibility towards the organisation and their willingness to contribute to organisational success beyond their job requirements, civic virtue behaviours are crucial for service organisations. By engaging in civic virtue behaviours, employees can gain deeper insights into the alignment—or potential misalignment—between the organisation's designed service standards and the service they actually deliver. For instance, by voluntarily attending meetings, engaging in discussions with colleagues, and keeping informed about organisational communications (Podsakoff et al., 1990), employees become better aware of the organisation's service standards and expectations. This ongoing information allows them to identify gaps in service delivery better, address operational challenges, and coordinate efforts with their peers (Yoon & Suh, 2003). As a result, civic virtue behaviours help bridge the gap between intended service design and actual service execution, fostering greater alignment with organisational standards and ultimately improving customer satisfaction.

Consequently, understanding the factors that impact employees' civic virtue behaviours in service organisations is an important condition for the vigorous development of the service industry (Khan et al., 2020). The present study aims to examine the determinants of civic virtue behaviours while focusing on individual and contextual factors.

With this aim, the research involves job satisfaction, a crucial attitude influencing employee motivation, productivity, and organisational commitment toward the organisation (Judge et al., 2020). Although the relationship between job satisfaction and the broader construct of OCB has been well-established across various work settings (Foote & Li-Ping Tang, 2008; Ilies et al., 2009), to the best of our knowledge, little research has focused on the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue in service-based organisations. To deepen our understanding of this relationship, this research examines the contextual interplay between leaders and employees in the workplace, specifically exploring how the quality of relational dynamics influences employees' reactions and behaviours at work (Kim et al., 2010).

Based on these premises, the research model described in the following section investigates the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue among employees, focusing on the moderating role of the quality of the relationship between leader and follower (LMX). Grounded in the theoretical framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET, Blau, 1964), the study seeks to elucidate how the quality of relationships between leaders and employees influences the manifestation of civic virtue behaviours by impacting the effect generated by job satisfaction levels.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: the following section delineates the theoretical background and concepts underpinning our research. The third section examines the mechanisms through which job satisfaction may influence civic virtue behaviours and explores the moderating effect of LMX on this relationship. The fourth section outlines the research methodology, detailing the sample of employees drawn from fifteen service-based organisations participating in the study. Section five presents the preliminary analysis and hypotheses tested and

elucidates the research findings, laying the groundwork for discussing conceptual and practical implications in the sixth section. Finally, the last section critically reflects on the study's limitations and proposes avenues for further research.

2. Theoretical and conceptual background

The literature argues that OCBs frameworks and their determinants must evolve from their foundations in manufacturing toward service interactions (Ma & Qu, 2011). For this purpose, the relevant HRM/OB literature from the hospitality and healthcare literature can be used as a theoretical basis for investigating employees' civic virtue OCB in this research on service-based organisations.

In this literature, social exchange has been consistently recognised as a significant motivator for employees' OCBs. Scholars agree that employees in the service industry engage in social exchanges with various groups, including supervisors or leaders, coworkers, and customers (Kim et al., 2010). The feelings of obligation stemming from reciprocity and trust in these relationships can motivate employees to exceed their role requirements (Ma & Qu, 2011; Meira & Hancer, 2021; Wang & Huang, 2019).

Consequently, while other theories, such as Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), have been proposed with Social Exchange Theory (SET) as relevant bases for studying various OCB in service industries (Ravichandran et al., 2007), SET offers a direct lens for analysing the reciprocal nature of workplace relationships (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2018). SLT focuses on behavioural modelling, while SIPT explores how social cues shape attitudes and behaviours. However, in-service environments, interpersonal exchanges and the quality of relationships are critical, making SET's emphasis on trust, obligation, and reciprocal exchanges between leaders and employees particularly well-suited for investigating civic virtue behaviours (Ma & Qu, 2011; Meira & Hancer, 2021; Wang & Huang, 2019; Xu et al., 2022).

SET posits that individuals at work participate in continuous interactions that establish obligations and hold the potential to cultivate high-quality relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2016). These interactions involve exchanging resources, such as support, information, and assistance, influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviours at work. Moreover, the theory explains that individuals in the workplace join in a process guided by a reciprocity norm based on their perceptions of how they are treated. In other words, employees are inclined to react to the treatment they receive from their organisation, colleagues, and leaders with actions that reflect or reciprocate the perceived level of support, fairness, and respect.

Consistent with SET, employees engage in civic virtue behaviours to the extent that they perceive favourable treatment by their organisation. Accordingly, individuals who perceive positive treatment from their organisation evaluate their work positively and, as a result, engage in civic virtue behaviours to reciprocate.

Attitudes are crucial factors for consequent behaviours at work (Ajzen, 2012), including OCBs. Job attitudes are defined as the evaluations of one's job, comprising one's feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to one's job. Various job attitudes

exist and depend on different dimensions, such as the job's target, specificity, and nature. Moreover, job attitudes can be observed from different levels of analysis, beginning with the global attitude, which is comprised of lower-order, more specific attitudes (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012, p. 343).

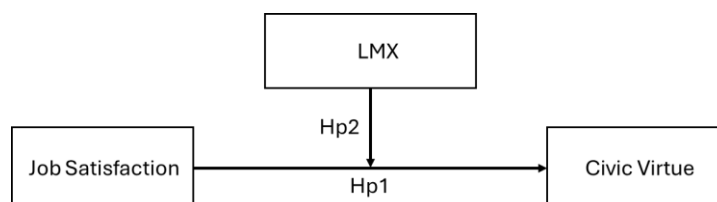
Job satisfaction is considered the most crucial employee attitude by scholars (Judge et al., 2017; Judge et al., 2020; Saari & Judge, 2004), and it is particularly important for both individuals (Saari & Judge, 2004; Woznyj et al., 2022) and organisational performance (Kessler et al., 2020). Job satisfaction is conceptualised as a holistic evaluative assessment of one's job situation, spanning a continuum from positive to negative valence (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Judge et al., 2020).

Studies informed by social exchange theory and the reciprocity norm (Blau, 1964) suggest that employees feeling satisfied with their work situation reciprocate their organisation by investing time and effort in activities beyond their formal job responsibilities, including civic virtue behaviours (Ehigie & Otukoya, 2005; Paillé, 2006). Consistently, Varela González and García Garazo (2006), in their study within the service organisations, found that more satisfied employees were more motivated toward this kind of behaviours. Furthermore, empirical evidence has underscored the mutually reinforcing dynamic between subordinates and higher-level authorities, such as leaders, which significantly impacts employees' job attitudes and behaviours (Hu et al., 2016). Building upon insights from research in the hospitality industry (Ma & Qu, 2011; Ravichandran et al., 2007) and drawing on LePine et al.'s (2002), which underscores the role of moderating factors in the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue as a subset of OCB, our study proposes that the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) plays a critical role in shaping the association between job satisfaction and civic virtue behaviours..

Building upon Varela González and García Garazo (2006) study, which focused on the hospitality industry and defined different behaviours compared to Organ's (1988) conceptualization, this study aims to explore the specific extra-role behaviours of civic virtue. It will investigate the moderating effect of LMX on the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue behaviours, as depicted in Figure 1 of the research model.

The hypotheses are thus detailed in the subsequent section.

Figure n. 1 – Conceptual model



Source: our elaboration

3. Hypotheses development and research model

3.1. *Job satisfaction and civic virtue relationship*

Among the work-related attitudes, job satisfaction is pivotal for employees at work. While the relationship between job satisfaction and in-role performance remains a topic of debate (Bowling, 2007), scholars acknowledge that satisfied employees benefit the organisation beyond their work requirements, such as extra-role behaviours (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Bowling, 2010).

Considering the association of individuals' attitude and behaviour (Ajzen, 2012), we propose that satisfied employees who assess their jobs positively are more inclined to engage in civic virtue. Indeed, research has shown that satisfied employees feel interested in the success of their organisation, leading to greater loyalty and engagement toward it (Ng et al., 2021; Varela González & García Garazo, 2006).

As with other job attitudes, satisfaction can also be directed towards various job-related targets, such as pay or supervision, and can be broken down into sub-facets by studies (e.g., raises, benefits, supervisor competence, and supervisor human relations, etc.) (Judge et al., 2020; Weiss, 2002). Previous research has suggested that the specificity of satisfaction should align with the behavioural consequence being examined (Judge et al., 2020). Consequently, for the author, it's pertinent to incorporate overall job satisfaction (hereafter referred to as job satisfaction), which is defined as a comprehensive evaluative judgment of a job situation spanning from positive to negative (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Judge et al., 2020) to explore its impact on civic virtue, deemed an organisational-level behaviour (Chambel & Alcover, 2011; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Indeed, as a form of social exchange, OCBs can be classified into organisation-directed OCBs and interpersonal-directed OCBs with whom the employee interacts while performing their job (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Considering the multifaceted nature of OCBs, research suggests that the two broad categories possess distinct sets of antecedents and outcomes, attracting thus the interest of researchers to explore the specific pathways through which specific OCBs manifest. Indeed, focusing on the specific dimensions within each category and the actual patterns of their occurrence within organisations proves to be a valuable approach to understanding the nuanced ways employees contribute extra-role effort in the workplace (Klotz et al., 2018). Encompassing behaviours such as willingness to engage actively in the organisation through attending meetings, participating in policy discussions or keeping informed and monitoring for potential threats and opportunities, civic virtue represents a higher-level focused behaviour on the organisation as a whole (Chambel & Alcover, 2011; Imer et al., 2014).

Various studies have examined the role of job satisfaction in mediating phenomena to explain the effects on OCBs of contextual factors, such as organisation service orientation (Varela González & García Garazo, 2006), workplace spirituality (Belwalkar et al., 2018), individual dispositions such as personality (Ilies et al., 2009), emotions at work (Ziegler et al., 2012), and positive psychological capital (Jung & Yoon, 2015). Based on these studies, it becomes clear that job satisfaction plays a

pivotal role in promoting discretionary behaviours like civic virtue in service-based organisations. Its importance lies in shaping how employees respond to various workplace dynamics, and for service performance, it is highly unlikely for employees to consistently deliver exceptional service if they are not satisfied with their job (Varela González & García Garazo, 2006).

However, in the context of service organisations, few studies have explored in detail the direct relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue behaviours (Khan et al., 2020). The existing little research on service-based organisations explored similar concepts related to job satisfaction, such as psychological contracts, showing that it directly impacts civic virtue (Mushtaq & Umar, 2015; Yoon & Suh, 2003). This is likely because the positive emotions of employees associated with job satisfaction experiences, motivate individuals to engage in behaviours that reinforce those positive feelings (Belwalkar et al., 2018). Thus, civic virtue appears to be an additional channel through which job satisfaction positively influences organisational performance (Whitman et al., 2010). Therefore, based on the argument presented above, we propose our first hypothesis as follows:

H_{p1}: Job satisfaction is associated with civic virtues behaviours.

3.2. The moderating role of the LMX

According to the follower-based perspective, the reciprocity norm of SET suggests that employees are likely to respond reciprocally to the treatment they receive from their organization (Wayne et al., 2002). In practice, this means that employees who perceive positive treatment are more inclined to exhibit favourable attitudes and behaviours, such as higher job satisfaction and increased engagement in civic virtue behaviours (Chambel & Alcover, 2011). This dynamic is particularly relevant in service-based organisations, where social interactions between employees, coworkers, leaders and customers are frequent and central to the business (Kim et al., 2010). In such environments, employees regularly evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of continuing or disengaging from social interactions, which influences their motivation to take part in voluntary civic virtue behaviours that support the organisation. It follows that the social exchange process plays a critical role in guiding employees' decisions about which behaviours are suitable in specific contexts, shaping how they contribute to organisational goals through discretionary actions (Khan et al., 2020).

In addition, in the day-to-day operations, leaders serve as the compass guiding employees. Leaders represent the organisation in employees' eyes and convey its ethos directly to them (Tourish, 2014). Indeed, research has demonstrated that individual perception of organisational support is associated with the quality of relationships between leaders and followers (Wayne et al., 2002). Leaders engage in a diverse array of exchange relationships with their followers, including providing physical and mental effort, emotional support, and resource and information exchanges. SET emphasises the reciprocal nature of these interactions, with both

leaders and followers deriving benefits from the exchange. Such exchanges are critical to developing the quality of relationships between leaders and followers, also noted as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which builds trust and enhances organisational outcomes (Martin et al., 2016).

Focusing on our study, employees who perceive high-quality LMX relationships, characterised by trust, respect, and mutual support (Liden et al., 1997), are more inclined to engage in civic virtue behaviours as a form of reciprocity. The literature from the service industry shows that subordinates with high LMX relationships are more likely to go beyond their required duties to reciprocate the favourable treatment they receive from their leaders (Ma & Qu, 2011), engaging thus in civic virtue behaviours (Hu et al., 2016). Consistently, Estiri et al. (2018) found that LMX positively affected civic virtue in hospitality organisations, confirmed also by Ürek and Uğurluoğlu (2019) in healthcare organisations. Consequently, when employees trust in the relationship and feel that their contributions will be valued and supported by their supervisor, they are more willing to take initiative, participate in voluntary activities, and contribute to the organisation in ways that extend beyond their formal job requirements (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2018).

Therefore, according to SET and the norm of reciprocity, and taking into account previous studies in pertinent service contexts, it is reasonable to propose that the impact of job satisfaction on civic virtue may be strengthened or weakened depending on the quality of the LMX relationship. In other words, satisfied employees who experience high-quality LMX relationships are more inclined to engage in civic virtue behaviours compared to those experiencing low-quality LMX relationships. This discrepancy in propensity can be attributed to the absence of perceived support, trust, respect, and mutual aid from leaders in the latter scenario. This trust fosters a more proactive and engaged workforce, where employees feel empowered to act in the best interest of the organisation. Therefore, we propose:

Hp2: LMX moderates the job satisfaction–civic virtue behaviours relationship, such that the relationship will be more positive for high LMX relationships (as compared to low).

4. Research method

4.1. Data collection and sample

The study encompasses fifteen Italian service-based organisations offering diverse services, including healthcare, childcare, social assistance, housekeeping, cultural and educational tours, nursing, teaching, management, freight and passenger transportation, and agricultural services. The author initially contacted these entities through a representative trade association to establish connections with them. After this first contact, a collaborative effort was made with each organisation to identify internal individuals aligned with specific criteria established by the authors.

The study utilised a web-based survey method with a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions. Data collection took place between late 2020 and early 2021, involving top managers board and middle-level managers and employees with relevant job responsibilities. This method, consistent with prior research (Newman et al., 2018), mitigates common method bias. After an initial email introducing the research's aim and a web link to the anonymous survey, a reminder was sent after 15 days to encourage invited participants to complete the survey.

A total of 515 survey invitations were distributed, yielding 222 responses from participants, thereby achieving a response rate of 43%. Of the respondents, 22.5% belong to micro-sized organisations, 14.4% are from small-sized, and 40.1% are medium-sized, while the remaining 23% are from large organisations.

After excluding partial questionnaires with missing data, we retained 200 usable responses for all subsequent analyses. Most respondents were female (64%), with the largest age group being 41-50 years old (39.5%), followed by those over 50 (31.5%), individuals aged 31-40 (24%), and those in the 18-30 age bracket (5%). Like comparable samples (Ashiru et al., 2022), nearly 75% of participants held a university degree, consistent with the service provided and job position held. On average, participants had a working tenure of 14.8 years with the organisation.

4.2. Measures

Self-perception scales were employed to measure the variables outlined in the survey (Spector, 2019), using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Our questionnaire design, based on previous scales validated in literature, recognises the valuable perspective of employees in assessing their own job satisfaction and OCBs (Varela González & García Garazo, 2006). Moreover, we followed previous studies (Chambel & Alcover, 2011; Van Dyne et al., 1994) to focus on the specific type of variables relevant to the focus of the research, namely organisation-targeted variables. Further, by incorporating self-perception measures, we acknowledge the depth of insight individuals have into their own experiences related to overall job satisfaction and contributions in terms of civic virtue-related behaviours, aspects often not readily observable by managers (Organ, 1988).

Job satisfaction (JobSat) was assessed using three items taken from Fast et al. (2014). This measure indicates the global satisfaction level commonly used to assess overall employee attitude (Holland et al., 2011) ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Civic Virtue (CivicVirt). The dependent variable is adopted from the OCB scale by Podsakoff et al. (1990) as adopted by previous studies (Chiaburu et al., 2014; Paillé, 2006), which found civic virtue as a distinct type of OCB loading significantly on their intended factors ($\alpha=0,79$).

LMX. The study adopted Wayne *et al.*'s (1997) scale ($\alpha=0,91$) measuring the relationship quality between leader and follower.

Control variables. Five control variables allowed the power of alternative explanations, which reduced the alternative explanation of the present results. We thus controlled our results according to previous studies (Chiaburu et al., 2014; Klotz

et al., 2018), including organisation, size (1=micro, 2=small; 3=medium; 4=large) position, age, gender (1=female; 2=male), and education.

Table 1 shows the main descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables being studied.

5. Results

5.1. Validity and reliability

Following the recommendations by Cheung et al. (2023), for establishing convergent validity, we assessed the CR, standardised factor loadings and AVE (Source: *own computations*)

Table 2). All the constructs investigated have composite reliability (CR) higher than 0.70 and the standardised factor loadings of the items below 0.6. Finally, all the constructs have the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) higher than 0.50. We conclude that convergent validity was achieved. As for discriminant validity, first, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using IBM AMOS version 26. After removing an item from the Civic Virtue measure, as previously noted for a low factor score in the authors' original scale (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and considering the standardised residual covariances in this study (Brown & Moore, 2012), the resulting goodness-of-fit indices suggest that the overall model structure reasonably fits the covariances well: CMIN/DF= 1,715; CFI = 0,978; SRMR = 0,05; RMSEA= 0,06 (Hair, 2009; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015).

Alternative models shown in Table 3 were considered, but they showed a poor fit, confirming that the factor structures of the research variables align with the conceptual model. Second, we compared the square root of the AVE of each construct with the correlation coefficients (Source: *own computations*)

Table 2), finding the former more significant for all constructs. Finally, the correlation coefficients among the four constructs were not below 0.7. Hence, our analyses raise no major concerns, leading us to conclude discriminant validity has been achieved.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and Pearson's correlations.

	Mean	StDev	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Civic Virtue	5,48	1,29	1								
2. Job Satisfaction	5,52	1,29	,398**	1							
3. LMX	5,38	1,23	,221**	,393**	1						
4. Organisation	9,22	5,28	-0,073	-0,118	-0,019	1					
5. Size	3,15	0,93	-0,035	-0,013	-0,086	-,274**	1				
6. Position	1,74	0,44	-,286**	-0,117	0,030	-0,038	0,117	1			
7. Age	2,98	0,87	0,041	0,027	-0,132	-,208**	,358**	-0,083	1		
8. Gender	1,36	0,48	-0,104	-0,005	-0,008	-0,029	-,173*	-0,125	-0,038	1	
9. Education	4,41	1,20	0,009	-0,076	0,077	-,156*	-0,085	0,070	0,034	-0,048	1

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

* The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

N=200

Source: own computations

Table 2 CRs AVEs, and intercorrelations

	CR	AVE	MSV	MAXR(H)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1)JobSat	0,885	0,724	0,221	0,927	0,851		
(2)LMX	0,915	0,684	0,209	0,921	0,457***	0,827	
(3)CivVirt	0,802	0,577	0,221	0,822	0,470***	0,245**	0,76

*Source: own computations***Table 3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

	<i>CMIN/DF</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Three-factors original model	1,715	0,978	0,055	0,06
Two-factor model 1: combination of independent and moderator variables	9,472	0,724	0,161	0,206
Two-factors model 2: combination of independent and dependent variables	4,875	0,874	0,109	0,14
Two-factors model 3: combination of moderator and dependent variables	6,318	0,827	0,156	0,163
Single model factor	4,875	0,874	0,109	0,14

Source: own computations

5.2. Hypothesis testing

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted utilising Hayes' Process macro (2017) within the SPSS software to examine the proposed hypotheses, incorporating a bootstrapping technique. This approach provides a valuable method for hypothesis testing, enhancing the robustness of inferences while alleviating normality assumptions through random sampling, thereby generating a distribution of the test statistic. Consequently, researchers can directly derive confidence intervals and p-values from the observed data.

The results, presented in Table 4, display the path coefficient (β) along with its significance, standard error (SE), and confidence intervals (CI) obtained through bootstrapping. The bootstrapping procedure involved a sample size equivalent to the number of cases, with a minimum of 5,000 samples. The variables were systematically introduced into the equation, and control variables were centred for analysis (Dawson, 2014). Observing the effect of control variables on CivVirt, results show that only position has a significant negative effect on OCB in all models.

Model 2 (Table 4) shows that JobSat has a significant positive association with CivVirt ($\beta=0.32$; $p<0.001$), supporting thus Hp1. Next, we examine the moderating role of LMX. The results of Model 3 showed that JobSat \times LMX has a significant effect ($\beta= 0.10$; $p<0.05$) in predicting CivVirt, supporting Hp2. In the aforementioned analysis, all VIF threshold values were found to be less than 5 (Hair et al., 2021).

We examined interaction plots to better understand how moderation varies across high and low interaction scenarios. As mentioned earlier, we centred the variables to guarantee accurate visualisations of the tested interaction (Dawson, 2014). Figure 2 proves that the relationship between JobSat and CivVirt is influenced by the quality of LMX. The graph illustrates comparable levels of CivVirt among subjects with high and low JobSat in the context of low-quality LMX. Conversely, individuals exhibiting low JobSat and high LMX display the lowest levels of CivVirt. Finally, a distinct increase in CivVirt is observed among those with high JobSat within high-quality LMX contexts. This analysis underscores the necessity of considering LMX quality when assessing the effectiveness of high or low JobSat in promoting CivVirt. It suggests that the efficacy of JobSat in enhancing CivVirt cannot be definitively determined without accounting for the quality of LMX.

We conducted alternative models using SPSS to ensure thoroughness and robustness in our analysis. These alternative models included one with an additional predictor related to loyalty as a second attitude toward the organisation, another testing the original model with 10,000 bootstrapped samples, and two further models tested within subsamples, specifically micro and small organisations as well as medium-sized and large organisations. The results from these analyses consistently confirmed the hypotheses supported by the original model, reinforcing that our findings are not confounded by other attitudes toward the organisation or affected by organisation size. Furthermore, we assessed the linearity of the relationships among the variables through both statistical tests and visual inspection. The linearity test yielded significance, indicating a strong linear relationship, while the deviation from linearity > 0.05 suggests that the linear model is appropriate for our data.

Table 4 Regression results based on bootstrapping approach

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	b	SE	p	[LLCI; ULCI]	b	SE	p	[LLCI; ULCI]	b	SE	p	[LLCI; ULCI]
Organisation	-0,03	0,02	n.s.	[-0,06; 0,01]	-0,012	0,48	0,00	[-0,04; 0,02]	-0,01	0,02	n.s.	[-0,04; 0,02]
Size	-0,08	0,11	n.s.	[-0,29; 0,13]	-0,046	0,65	n.s.	[-0,26; 0,15]	-0,06	0,10	n.s.	[-0,26; 0,13]
Position	-0,88	0,20	0,000***	[-1,20; -0,53]	-0,781	0,00	n.s.	[-1,09; -0,44]	-0,79	0,19	0,000***	[-1,16; -0,42]
Age	0,01	0,11	n.s.	[-0,19; 0,22]	0,027	0,78	n.s.	[-0,16; 0,21]	0,06	0,10	n.s.	[-0,14; 0,27]
Gender	-0,41	0,19	0,03*	[-0,78; -0,05]	-0,375	0,04	0,000***	[-0,7; -0,02]	-0,43	0,17	0,01**	[-0,77; -0,08]
Education	0,00	0,07	n.s.	[-0,14; 0,15]	0,029	0,67	n.s.	[-0,1; 0,17]	0,04	0,07	n.s.	[-0,09; 0,18]
JobSat					0,32	0,00	0,000***	[0,17; 0,5]	-0,18	0,25	n.s.	[-0,65; 0,31]
LMX					0,10	0,22	n.s.	[-0,06; 0,27]	-0,43	0,26	n.s.	[-0,95; 0,09]
JobSatxLMX									0,10	0,05	0,04*	[0,005; 0,19]
	R ² =0.08 F(6,193)=4,065 p<0.001				R ² =0.26 F(8,191)=8,949 p<0.001				R ² =0.26 F(9,190)=7,56 p<0.001			

Notes:

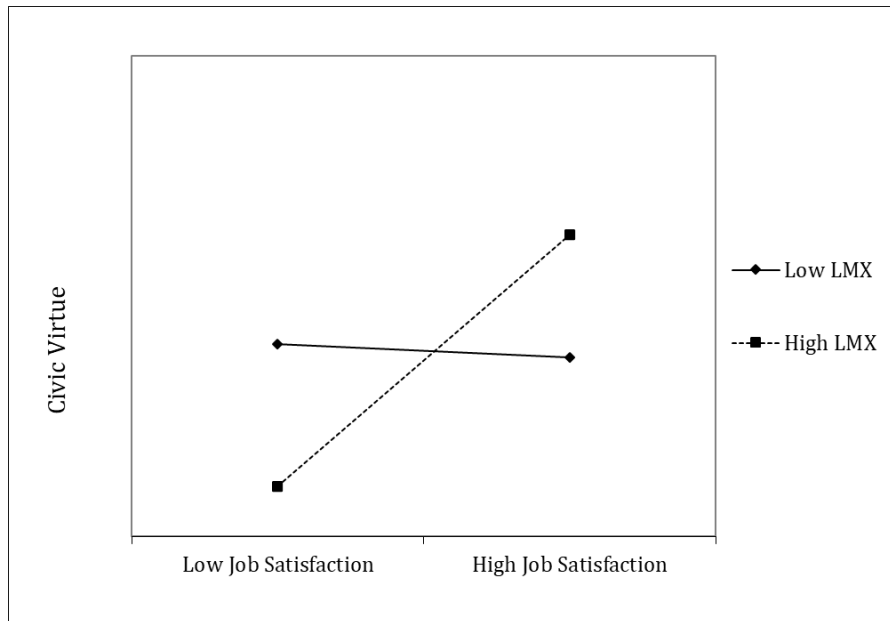
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

N=200

LLCI; ULCI=Lower/Upper Limit Confidence Interval

Source: own computations

Figure 1 Moderating effect of LMX on the relationship between Job satisfaction and Civic virtue



Source: own computations based on Dawson (2014)

6. Discussion and theoretical implications

The current study explores the relationship between job satisfaction and Civic Virtue Behaviour and examines its impact within service-based organisations.

The literature has established a relationship between job satisfaction and OCB contributing to organisational performance (Indarti et al., 2017). However, limited research delved into the relationship between job satisfaction and distinct OCB manifestations, especially within service-based organisations (e.g., Foote & Li-Ping Tang, 2008; Varela González & García Garazo, 2006). This study contributes to the existing literature by unveiling insights into civic virtue behaviours, thus paving the way for future inquiries into the mechanisms by which specific OCBs operate within service-based contexts.

One key finding of our study highlights the beneficial influence of job satisfaction on employees' civic virtue. This result closely aligns with the principles of the reciprocity norm within SET (Blau, 1964), further validating its applicability in service-based contexts. It reinforces prior research that positions SET as a valuable framework for understanding the social interactions and relationships that emerge in service environments (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2018; Ma & Qu, 2011; Meira & Hancer, 2021; Wang & Huang, 2019; Xu et al., 2022), where reciprocal exchanges between employees, supervisor or leaders, coworkers and customers are particularly

pronounced (Kim et al., 2010). Our empirical results confirm that employees who assess their job positively, thus resulting in high overall job satisfaction, reciprocate by participating in extra-role behaviours of civic virtue. Although not explicitly mandated, behaviours associated with civic virtue—related to the responsibility of participating in, involvement in, or concern about the organisation's life (Podsakoff et al., 1990)—are critical for fostering a supportive social and psychological environment essential for optimal work performance. Through this responsible participation in the organisation's life, employees gain deeper insights into its service standards and expectations, equipping them with the knowledge necessary to better align their work with organisational goals. By staying informed and actively participating in meetings and collaborative processes, employees help mitigate the quality gaps between the services they deliver and the standards set by the organisation (Bienstock et al., 2003; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Therefore, civic virtue behaviours can contribute to improving service quality, helping to bridge the gap between intended and perceived service outcomes, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and organisational success.

Moreover, our findings reveal a moderating effect wherein the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue is contingent upon the quality of LMX. This finding deepens our understanding of the key relationship by highlighting the significant role that LMX quality plays in fostering OCB. It challenges the traditional assumption that job attitudes, such as job satisfaction, are the sole drivers of OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995). Instead, it emphasises the need for a more nuanced perspective that considers the quality of interpersonal relationships within the organisational context. This insight is particularly relevant for service organisations, where the dynamics of social interactions and internal collaboration are central to organisational success. Given the limited research examining the interplay between job satisfaction, civic virtue, and LMX in service settings, these findings underscore the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping employee behaviours that contribute to service quality and customer satisfaction.

Specifically, our results indicate that when employees experience high levels of job satisfaction, a high-quality LMX amplifies their inclination to engage in civic virtue behaviours significantly, compared to situations characterised by lower LMX quality. This finding resonates with the tenets of SET: satisfied individuals tend to exhibit higher extra-role behaviours at work, such as civic virtue, when they perceive a favourable exchange relationship with their supervisor, who stimulates higher levels of positive reciprocation.

This finding also aligns with Cha and Borchgrevink's (2018) claim about the effect of the psychological safety provided by a strong leader-member relationship in reducing the perceived risks associated with discretionary actions, encouraging employees to invest more effort into behaviours like civic virtue.

In addition, prior research in both general (Becker & Kernan, 2003) and service-based contexts (Dagenais-Cooper & Paillé, 2012; Ma & Qu, 2011; Xu et al., 2022) suggests a limited direct relationship between employee perceptions of leader-targeted dimensions—such as perceptions about the quality of LMX—and civic virtue behaviours, which reflect a broader, organisation-wide focus. Indeed, Ilies et al.

(2007) argue that direct reciprocation is more likely to occur at the interpersonal level, manifesting in behaviours such as helping, altruism, and courtesy. In contrast, where behaviours like conscientiousness, civic virtue, and job dedication prevail at the organisational level, reciprocity from social relationships is less immediate. This distinction further emphasises the differentiation between citizenship behaviours aimed at individuals and those directed towards the organisation. Also in service organisations, civic virtue behaviours tend to stem from broader organisational commitment rather than immediate supervisor-employee dynamics. However, although the connection is not direct, the results of our study show that LMX can play a crucial role in shaping the conditions under which civic virtue behaviours flourish. Strong interpersonal relationships between leaders and employees create an environment that amplifies the influence of other factors, like job satisfaction, on these discretionary behaviours. In this way, LMX enhances the organisational context, fostering a supportive climate where employees are more inclined to go beyond their formal roles.

Specifically, it strengthens the inclination of highly satisfied employees to reciprocate positively, aligning with the principle of reciprocity. Similarly, in contexts characterised by diminished levels of job satisfaction, a high-quality LMX relationship appears to exacerbate individuals' engagement in civic virtue behaviours. Interestingly, this adverse trend is even more pronounced than situations characterised by low LMX quality, which reveal similar results regardless of the level of satisfaction. This phenomenon can be interpreted in the context of the above prior literature suggesting that LMX, emphasises individuals' relationships with their leaders, and more effectively stimulates OCBs directed towards them (Becker & Kernan, 2003) even in service organisations (Dagenais-Cooper & Paillé, 2012), or targeted at customers and co-workers (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2018). The high-quality leader-member relationship may highlight a perceived incongruity in contexts marked by low job satisfaction with high LMX. Employees may perceive a discrepancy between the positive treatment received from their leader and the prevailing dissatisfaction with their work. This, in turn, could foster a reluctance to engage in organisation-targeted civic virtue behaviours, potentially leading them to prioritise positive behaviours directed towards their leader, colleagues and customers. This observation presents a compelling avenue for future research in service contexts that could build upon our study by exploring the differential effects of job satisfaction and LMX quality on various OCBs with different targets (Ma & Qu, 2011; Xu et al., 2022). Specifically, such research could investigate how employees respond to job satisfaction and LMX in terms of leader-directed, colleague-directed, and customer-directed OCBs (Ilies et al., 2009; Wayne et al., 2002).

7. Practical implications

Our study findings implicate some suggestions for service-based organisations. Service-based organisations rely a relevant part of their performance on the discretionary efforts of their employees to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

In this context, the observed substantial impact of job satisfaction on civic virtue OCB underscores the critical role of human resource management programs in nurturing positive individual job attitudes at work (Organ & Ryan, 1995). As our research indicates, employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviours, going above and beyond their formal job duties to contribute to the organisation's overall success.

By implementing strategies aimed at integrating job satisfaction enhancement initiatives into the broader HRM framework (Rosa et al., 2023), such as providing opportunities for skill development and career advancement (Ilies et al., 2009), and fostering a positive work environment characterised by open communication and supportive leadership, organisations can cultivate a workforce that is motivated to exhibit civic virtue behaviours.

Indeed, the critical role of the LMX relationship in fostering the effect of job satisfaction on civic virtue underscores the importance of cultivating high-quality work relationships characterised by trust and mutual respect between leaders and their subordinates. Bowler et al. (2010) indicated that the absence of OCBs in formal job descriptions often results in different expectations and attributions by both employees and leaders, influencing behaviours of supervisors, the employee and also coworkers toward the employee. Leaders should thus encourage and recognise OCBs. Consequently, consistent with the study by Varela González and García Garazo (2006), our findings suggest that leaders seeking to encourage higher levels of extra-role behaviour from their employees need to set up ongoing LMX relationships with their followers through openness, trust, support and effective communication. By setting clear expectations, support and trust, managers can empower employees to surpass their current formal service requirements and inspire their higher levels of extra-role behaviours, ultimately contributing to organisational success.

Further, to accomplish this objective, organisations should also invest in leadership development programs that emphasise cultivating positive work relationships, effective communication strategies, and recognising discretionary behaviours.

8. Limitations and future research

While our research offers promising initial insights, it is essential to acknowledge its inherent limitations. The cross-sectional design employed in this study restricts our ability to definitively establish the direction of causality between job satisfaction and extra-role behaviours (Mori & Cavaliere, 2022), such as civic virtue. Since data collection occurred at a single point, we cannot conclusively determine whether job satisfaction leads to increased civic virtue behaviours, or vice versa. However, the extant literature largely supports a direct relationship between job satisfaction and OCBs (e.g., Judge et al., 2020; Organ & Ryan, 1995), which aligns with our research model. To enhance the generalisability of our findings, future research efforts could implement longitudinal or experimental designs. Such approaches would enable a more rigorous examination of the temporal sequence and causal relationships

between the variables of interest. Furthermore, longitudinal designs would facilitate a closer investigation of the long-term influence of LMX, which inherently evolves over time, on employee attitudes and behaviours.

Moreover, leaders' trust might significantly affect how LMX moderate the relationship between the phenomenon investigated (Martin et al., 2016; Nataloni & Pilati, 2022).

In this regard, it is essential to recognise that other moderators may influence the relationship between job satisfaction and civic virtue behaviours. In addition to trust, contextual elements, employees' perceptions and individual dispositions could potentially moderate this relationship. For example, organisational culture that values employee engagement and empowerment may strengthen the positive association between job satisfaction and civic virtue behaviours. Employees who hold both positive and negative evaluations, given the presence of both positive and negative affect and/or adequate and inadequate job facets, might affect civic virtue behaviours (Ziegler et al., 2012). Also, conscientiousness (Bowling, 2010) might foster satisfied individuals to engage in actions that involve expending effort toward their organisation, including civic virtue. Future research might, therefore, expand our results on civic virtue behaviours considering the above reflections.

In our study, the control variables of position and gender were found to influence civic virtue behaviours significantly. As for position, holding a higher-level position within the organisation may naturally encourage greater engagement in civic virtue behaviours. Employees in elevated hierarchical roles are likely to feel a stronger sense of responsibility and influence over organisational outcomes, which can motivate them to take on more active, voluntary involvement in behaviours that support organisational governance and performance. In the context of gender differences in OCB, Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) is often cited to explain the differing motivations and expectations that influence men's and women's participation in OCBs, including civic virtue. This theory posits that societal norms, roles and stereotypes shape the behaviours expected from each gender, with women often associated with communal characteristics such as collaboration, and supportiveness, while men are typically linked to more agentic traits like assertiveness and dominance (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Franke et al., 1997). While studies have linked OCB-civic virtue behaviours to masculine traits such as assertiveness and ambition (Chiaburu et al., 2014; Kidder, 2002), our findings align with Estiri et al. (2018) indicating a decrease in men's engagement in these behaviours.

A possible explanation for our result is that gender stereotypes may not have been triggered among the respondents (Chiaburu et al., 2014). Furthermore, the specific context of service-based organisations, which often feature less hierarchical structures, replaced by trust, human relationships, and motivation (Radević et al., 2023) may provide different gender cues. In such environments, the emphasis on collaboration and interpersonal relationships could lead to reconfiguring how civic virtue behaviours are perceived and enacted, influencing both men's and women's engagement in these discretionary actions.

Finally, as noted by Chiaburu et al. (2014) and grounded in Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), it is plausible that specific civic virtue behaviours may manifest

differently for men and women due to varying societal expectations. In our study, the civic virtue behaviours examined include attending non-mandatory but important meetings, staying informed about organisational changes, and keeping up with internal announcements and communications (Podsakoff et al., 1990). These behaviours, involving information gathering, are often characterised by collaboration and communication—traits typically aligned with the communal roles traditionally ascribed to women. However, the literature distinguishes additional behaviours referred to as civic virtue, such as exercising influence, which are more change-oriented and involve exerting control (Graham & Van Dyne, 2006), and are more closely associated with assertiveness and decisiveness, traits linked to masculine stereotypes. This divergence suggests that women may be more inclined to engage in civic virtue behaviours emphasising cooperation and information-sharing. At the same time, men might be predisposed to adopt behaviours exerting influence.

These gendered potential distinctions within civic virtue behaviours underscore the need for further research into how gender expectations shape engagement in civic virtue behaviours and also the other sub-categories of OCB, especially in service organisations where social interaction and customer-facing responsibilities play a pivotal role. This understanding is critical for fostering environments that encourage both men and women to contribute meaningfully to organisational success.

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Appendix

Original scales adopted in this study.

7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

Independent variable

Job satisfaction (Job Satisf) - Fast et al. (2014)

- a. All in all, I like working on this job.
- b. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.
- c. Overall, I think I'm as happy as I could be with this job.

Civic Virtue (CivicVirt) - Podsakoff et al. (1990)

- a. I attend meetings that are not mandatory but are considered important.
- b. I attend functions that are not required but help the company's image.
- c. I keep abreast of changes in the organization.
- d. I read and keep up with organization announcements, memos, and so on.

LMX (Scandura & Graen, 1984)

- a. I usually know where I stand with my boss.
- b. My boss has enough confidence in me that he/she would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so.
- c. My boss understands my problems and needs.
- d. I can count on my boss to "bail me out," even at his or her own expense, when I really need it.
- e. My boss recognises my potential.