

## THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNAL CUSTOMER (EMPLOYEE) ON THE EXTERNAL CUSTOMER IN CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR: A MEDIATED MODEL THROUGH CUSTOMER SUPPORT PERCEPTION

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**Abstract:** *Organizational citizenship behaviour, which refers to employees exhibiting extra-role behaviours without expecting any tangible reward, can also be observed in customers. Similar to employees, customers can also engage in voluntary behaviours that are beneficial to the business (customer citizenship behaviour). These behaviours exhibited by both employees and customers are important for businesses to achieve their goals and survive. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to determine the direct and indirect effects of employees' citizenship behaviours on customers' citizenship behaviours. The study formulated hypotheses based on social exchange theory, examining organizational citizenship behaviour's direct effect on customer citizenship behaviour as well as its indirect effect on customer support perception. To test these hypotheses, data were collected from 302 customers of clothing stores in Turkey. The data were analysed using SPSS, AMOS, and Process MACRO (for SPSS and SAS) programs. The data were subjected to various procedures. Specifically, frequency analysis, normality test analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and reliability analysis were conducted. In addition, detection analyses for method-related problems (multicollinearity and common method bias), correlation analysis, and regression analysis were performed. The results indicated that the data met the assumption of a normal distribution, the scales used were reliable and valid, and there was no evidence of multicollinearity or common method bias. Controlling for demographic variables, the correlation analysis revealed positive relationships between perception of organizational citizenship behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour and customer support perception. The regression analysis conducted to test the hypotheses revealed that organizational citizenship behaviour has a positive effect on customer citizenship behaviour. Moreover, the results indicated that customer support perception plays a mediating role in this effect. In other words, organizational citizenship behaviour affected customer citizenship behaviour both directly and indirectly (through customer support perception). These findings indicate that employees who are "good soldiers" influence customers to be "good soldiers" as well. Therefore, the study proved the importance of the internal customer (employees) for businesses in influencing the behaviour of external customers. Implications were made based on the findings in the study.*

**Keywords:** consumer behaviour; customer citizenship behaviour; organizational citizenship behaviour; support perception; clothing stores.

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**1. Introduction.** Citizenship behaviour is defined as individuals going beyond their job descriptions and exhibiting all kinds of beneficial behaviours for businesses (or companies) (Organ, 1988). Although these beneficial behaviours, also referred to as extra role behaviours or extra role performance (Seman et al., 2022; Podsakoff et al., 2000), were initially considered to be employee-specific behaviours, recent research has started to address them from the point of view of the customer. Scholars have suggested that citizenship behaviours reduce employee absenteeism and turnover from an employee perspective and increase job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and performance (LePine et al., 2002; Podsakoff et al., 2009). In addition, although there are a limited number of studies on customer-oriented citizenship behaviours compared to employee-oriented behaviours (Groth, 2005; Yi et al., 2011; Gong & Yi, 2021), it has been stated that it affects positive variables for both customers and employees, such as customer well-being, customer socialization, employee satisfaction, employee commitment and employee performance. Although the focus is different (OCB includes employee behaviour, CCB includes customer behaviour), the outcome that both types of citizenship strive to achieve is positive outcomes for the employee, the customer, and ultimately the business. In other words, citizenship behaviours (OCB and CCB) increase business performance, affecting and spreading positive attitudes and behaviours in employees and customers (Nielsen et al., 2009; Gong & Yi, 2021). Given the similarities in outcomes, the present study examined employee-oriented and customer-oriented citizenship behaviours together, investigating whether citizenship behaviours exhibited by employees affect the citizenship behaviours of customers and, if so, the mechanisms underlying this effect and the direction of the relationship.

This study is expected to make some contributions to the sector and the literature by examining the relationship between OCB and CCB, with a focus on the mediating role of customer support perception. The OCB-CCB relationship, examining the effect of employee citizenship behaviour on customer citizenship behaviour, is a topic that has been studied minimally in the literature (Chan et al., 2017), and no such studies have been conducted on Turkish samples. Assessing OCB and CCB together is crucial, as they both contribute to a shared business goal. It is important to understand how desirable behaviours are transmitted from internal customers (employees) to external customers. As a result, the present study has contributed to the fields of organizational behaviour and marketing by investigating whether employees who exhibit OCB, referred to as "good soldiers" by Organ (1988), influence customers to exhibit similar behaviour. Second, this study is the first to determine the path from OCB to CCB through customer support perception based on the perspective of social exchange theory. In other words, from the perspective of this theory, it is thought that when employees serve customers beyond their job descriptions (OCB), customers will exhibit beneficial behaviours beyond what is expected of them (CCB), and this situation will occur with the mediating role of customer support perception. Therefore, the study attempted to determine how beneficial extra role behaviours that are important for the business to achieve its goals are transferred from the internal customer (employees) to the external customer.

**2. Literature Review.** Organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), commonly referred to as extra role performance or behaviour (Podsakoff et al., 2000), refers to employee behaviour that is not formally recognized or incentivized by the organization's official reward system or job description but nonetheless contributes to the overall benefit of the organization (Organ, 1988). This behaviour is an important behaviour for the organization that depends on the employee's willingness, is not rewarded directly, and facilitates and improves the functioning of the organization (Organ, 2018). This extra role behaviour is associated with positive results for employees, such as low absenteeism, low turnover intention, low actual turnover, high satisfaction, high commitment and high performance (LePine et al., 2002; Podsakoff et al., 2009). OCB can affect positive outcomes not only for the employee but also for the customer. One of these positive outcomes may be customer citizenship behaviour (CCB). CCB expresses the behaviours that customers exhibit voluntarily beyond their role expectations (Gruen, 1995). In other words, they are voluntary behaviours that the customer does not have to exhibit in order to successfully produce or provide the service in a business but are beneficial for the activities of this business (Groth, 2005). These behaviours have basic characteristics such as being voluntary, a lack of expectation for reward in return, and benefiting businesses in different ways (Bove et al., 2009). CCB behaviours that include these characteristics include three basic behaviours: recommending the business to others, being helpful to other customers, and giving feedback on the services of the business (Groth, 2005). Exhibiting these CCB behaviours enables customer-related outputs such as perceived service quality, customer well-being and customer socialization (Groth, 2005; Gong & Yi, 2021) and employee-related outputs such as employee satisfaction, performance and commitment (Yi et al., 2011). Eventually, the organization's performance and likelihood of survival increase (Gong & Yi, 2021). Therefore,

it is important to determine the variables that affect CCB. This study predicted that OCB, which is a variable related to the employee, is an important variable that affects CCB.

The relationship between OCB and CCB can be explained from the perspective of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). According to this theory, individuals tend to act rationally, that is, to respond in kind to individuals who benefit and help them (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Vasudevan & Aslan, 2022). According to the theory, when employees engage in OCB by going beyond their role definitions and seeking solutions to customer problems, customers may feel obliged to respond with similarly positive behaviours. Ultimately, customers will tend to voluntarily display behaviours that are beneficial to the business, even if they are not expected to (i.e., CCB). Therefore, employees providing assistance to customers beyond their defined roles (OCB) and customers recognizing and appreciating this behaviour (CCB) may lead them to benefit the organization. This perspective based on social exchange theory is supported by the literature. Studies have shown that customers' perception of OCB positively affects customer value, leading customers to exhibit increased beneficial behaviours towards the organization (Choi et al., 2019; Guo & Zhou, 2013). The following hypothesis was developed based on this perspective and the aforementioned research:

**H<sub>1</sub>** OCB has a direct positive effect on CCB.

The study also examines customer support perception as a variable. Customer support perception (CSP) is conceptualized with reference to perceived organizational support (POS). CSP is the level at which a business values the contributions of its customers and cares about their well-being (Yi & Gong 2009). The more a business attaches importance to customer ideas and well-being and the more it helps it in any problem, the higher the CSP will be (Cintamür, 2022). High CSP positively affects customer self-efficacy, customer motivation (Im & Qu, 2017), customer commitment (Bettencourt, 1997), customer satisfaction (Yi & Gong, 2009), and customer perception of reputation (Cintamür, 2022).

The present study assumes that CSP may have a mediating role in the relationship between OCB and CCB and bases this set of relationships on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). When employees help customers (i.e., OCB), although not necessarily for their well-being and benefit (Kim & Jang, 2022), customers attribute this behaviour to the business and perceive that the business supports them. In other words, the exhibited OCB creates the perception that the welfare of the customers is taken into account and that the business is trying to solve the problems they encounter (CSP). Drawing on social exchange theory, when customers perceive support from employees in the form of OCB, they are more likely to engage in helpful behaviours towards the organization as part of the service provision process (Bettencourt, 1997). Thus, the extra role behaviours exhibited by employees for the benefit of customers (Ma et al., 2013) are perceived as evidence that the organization values the well-being of its customers (Cintamür, 2022). This perception, in turn, can lead customers to engage in voluntary and beneficial behaviours towards the organization, as supported by previous research (Bettencourt, 1997). Therefore, a possible mediating hypothesis for the relationship between OCB and CCB is as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>** CSP plays a mediating role in OCB's effect on CCB.

**3. Methodology and research methods.** The study collected data from customers of a clothing store using convenience sampling and the survey method to test the research hypotheses. The data were collected from customers in Turkey, who were asked to respond to the survey with regard to the clothing store they frequented the most and its employees. In the study, a single store was not taken into consideration; reliable inferences were made for the sector by trying to reach customers of different types of clothing stores. Voluntary participation in the research was requested, and the questionnaire form was sent to approximately 340 customers both online (e-mail and WhatsApp) and in hard copy. Of those who returned, 302 questionnaires were taken into consideration. The study used voluntary participation, and the survey was delivered to customers both online (via email and WhatsApp) and in printed format. Data from 302 surveys were analysed. The analysis revealed that the majority of the respondents were male (52.6%) and had a bachelor's degree (62.9%). The study found that the majority of respondents (36.2%) had an income in the range of 8500-15500 TL and that most respondents (39.4%) belonged to Generation Y.

The study utilized the organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), customer citizenship behaviour (CCB), and customer support perception (CSP) scales. A 3-item scale developed by Chan et al. (2017) was used for OCB. The level of CCB was determined by the 7-item scale developed by Yi & Gong (2008). For CSP, the 4-item scale in Cintamür's (2022) study was used. The scales include items such as "The salespeople of this store help me voluntarily, even if it means going beyond the job requirements" (OCB), "I say positive things about this store to others" (CCB) and "This store cares about my ideas (customer support)". Each scale item was prepared using a five-point Likert-type scale (1: Strongly Disagree ... 5: Strongly Agree). After the translation of all scales, three expert opinions were consulted, and the final version was given.

**4. Results.** The data in the study were analysed using SPSS, AMOS, and Process MACRO programs. Before conducting the main analyses, the normality assumption was tested, confirming that the data met the normality assumption as indicated by the skewness and kurtosis values (OCB skewness = -0.532, kurtosis = -0.619; CSP skewness = -0.512, kurtosis = -0.351; CCB skewness = -0.678, kurtosis = 0.139), which were within the range of -2 to +2 (George & Mallery 2016). Reliability and validity analyses were conducted on the scales used in the study. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed for validity. The analysis revealed that the item factor loadings were higher than the reference value of 0.40 (see Table 1; between 0.620 and 0.797 for OCB; between 0.637 and 0.729 for CSP; between 0.594 and 0.663 for CCB) (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, various model scenarios were constructed for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ascertain the validity of the research model. The analysis revealed that the research model (in which three variables are considered separate factors) met the criteria of the model fit index more than the other models (Table 2). For validity, the AVE (average variance extracted) values of the scale were calculated (Table 1). This criterion for validity was also met since these values (OCB=0.527; CSP = 0.464; and CCB=0.404) were above 0.40 (Tavares et al., 2019).

**Table 1.** Findings of reliability and validity

	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
		0.758	0.768	0.527
OCB-1	0.797			
OCB-2	0.750			
OCB-3	0.620			
		0.812	0,826	0,404
CCB-1	0.632			
CCB-2	0.620			
CCB-3	0.644			
CCB-4	0.658			
CCB-5	0.594			
CCB-6	0.638			
CCB-7	0.663			
		0.775	0.775	0.464
CSP-1	0.664			
CSP-2	0.729			
SCP-3	0.637			
CSP-4	0.691			

Sources: developed by the authors.

The study used Cronbach's alpha and CR (composite reliability) values higher than 0.70 as references to assess the reliability of the scales (Hair et al., 2017). The analyses and calculations determined the values to be Cronbach's alpha= 0.758 and CR= 0.768 for OCB, Cronbach's alpha= 0.775 and CR= 0.775 for CSP, and Cronbach's alpha= 0.812 and CR= 0.826 for CCB, ensuring reliability (see Table 1).

**Table 2.** Comparison of measuring models

Models	CMIN/DF	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMR
	$0 < \chi^2/CMIN/DF \leq 5$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\leq 0.08$	$\leq 0.10$
Measurement model (three-factor model)	2.347	0.943	0.927	0.067	0.067
Model 1 (two-factor model <sup>a</sup> )	3,081	0.906	0.888	0.083	0.082
Model 2 (two-factor model <sup>b</sup> )	3,367	0.893	0.872	0.089	0.085
Model 3 (two-factor model <sup>c</sup> )	3.388	0.892	0.871	0.089	0.086
Model 4 (one-factor model <sup>d</sup> )	3.411	0.890	0.870	0.089	0.086

Notes: n = 302; OCB=Organizational citizenship behaviour, CSP=Customer support perception, CCB=Customer citizenship behaviour. <sup>a</sup> Two-factor model= OCB and CSP combined into a single factor. <sup>b</sup> Two-factor model= OCB and CCB combined into a single factor. <sup>c</sup> Two-factor model= CSP and CCB combined into a single factor. <sup>d</sup> Harman's single-factor model, all variables combined into a single-factor

Sources: developed by the authors.



The necessary examinations were made for multicollinearity and common method bias before analysing the hypotheses. VIF (variance inflation factor) and tolerance indices were used to identify multicollinearity. The absence of multicollinearity was confirmed after assessing the VIF and tolerance values of the variables, where both variables had a VIF below 10 (VIF=2.177) and a tolerance value above 0.10 (tolerance=0.459) (Marcoulides & Raykov, 2019). Harman's single-factor test was used to control for common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Since the model fit values of the three-factor structure (see Table 2, measurement model (three-factor model)) met the reference criteria and the model fit values of the single-factor structure (see Table 2, Model 4 (one-factor model)) did not, it was determined that there was no common method bias.

The study controlled for demographic variables prior to conducting regression and utilized Pearson correlation analysis (for data that were normally distributed). The results showed significant positive correlations between OCB and CSP ( $r=0.734$ ), OCB and CCB ( $r=0.664$ ), and CSP and CCB ( $r=0.692$ ) (Table 3). The significance level of the relationships indicated that regression analysis for hypothesis testing was appropriate.

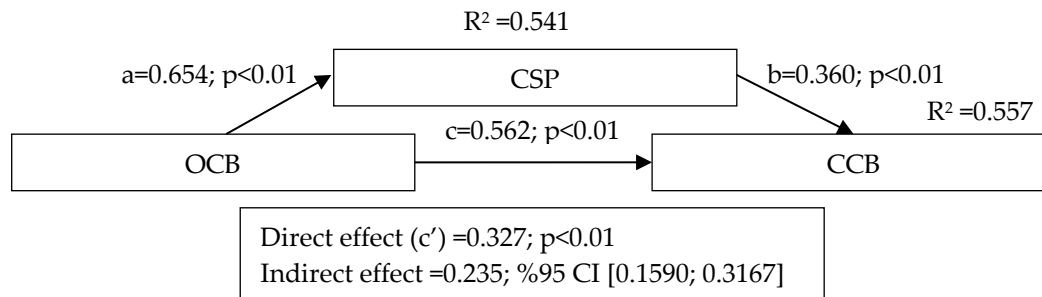
**Table 3.** Relationships between variables

Control Variables	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
Gender	1. OCB	3.585	1.026	1		
Age	2. CSP	3.642	0.921	0.734**	1	
Education	3. CCB	3.642	0.832	0.664**	0.692**	1
Income						

$N=302$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; OCB=Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, CSP=Customer Support Perception, CCB=Customer Citizenship Behaviour.

Sources: developed by the authors.

The hypotheses of the study were examined using Model 4 and the PROCESS Macro program developed by Hayes (2013) for SPSS and SAS. Figure 1 presents the findings regarding the direct and indirect effects of OCB on CCB.



**Figure 1.** Hypothesis test results (Model 4)

Sources: developed by the authors.

The findings in Figure 1 revealed that OCB has a direct positive affect on CCB ( $B = 0.327$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), so H1 was accepted. At the same time, the findings showed that OCB positively affected CSP ( $B = 0.654$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while CSP positively affected CCB ( $B = 0.360$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, OCB also affected CCB through CSP, and this indirect effect (mediation) was found to be positive and significant ( $B = 0.235$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H2 was also supported.

**5. Discussion and Conclusions.** The study found that OCB affects CCB both directly and through CSP. The direct effect size was 0.327 ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the indirect effect size was 0.235 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, it has been observed that customers who perceive OCB have an increased perception of support from the organization, and this perception of support increases CCB. This finding is in line with research findings suggesting that the perception of OCB behaviour leads to beneficial situations for the customer and the organization (Choi et al., 2019; Guo & Zhou, 2013). Therefore, the study found that CCB, which is important

for business performance (Gong & Yi, 2021), will spread as employees exhibit citizenship behaviours; that is, customers who are "good soldiers" can be obtained with employees who are "good soldiers". Several theoretical and practical implications can be made through these findings. The study demonstrated that the path from OCB to CCB is mediated by CSP, supporting the perspective of social exchange theory. Therefore, when employees exhibited behaviours that were not in their job descriptions but were beneficial to customers (OCB), customers perceived that the business cared about them (customer support perception), and ultimately, customers exhibited behaviours that were beneficial to the business beyond what was expected of them (CCB). In addition, this finding expands on Chan et al.'s (2017) study while differentiating OCB's mechanism of action on CCB.

The present study clearly shows that the behaviour of internal customers (employees) affects the behaviour of external customers. For this reason, the behaviours desired to be seen in customers should be exhibited primarily by employees. Therefore, customers who perceive the extra efforts of salespeople will recommend the business to others in order to appreciate their effort and respond to the store, also making suggestions to the store to improve their services.

It is essential to recognize the limitations of this study when interpreting the findings. Data were collected cross-sectionally, using the convenience sampling method and having a single mediating variable among the study's limitations. In addition, only the Turkish sample was focused on, which may limit its generalizability to other cultural contexts. It can be suggested that future studies should extend the research model with moderator variables such as culture and personality, conduct causality-based longitudinal studies, and use samples from different sectors such as restaurant and hospitality businesses in different countries. It is also recommended that future studies consider potential extraneous variables and obtain data longitudinally. In addition, although OCB is stated as a variable that produces expected and beneficial behaviours (LePine et al., 2002), OCB also has negative consequences such as fatigue, insomnia, and time pressure (Celik & Turunc, 2010). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies explore negative consequences and create models to balance positive and negative consequences.

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**Вплив внутрішнього клієнта (співробітника) на зовнішнього клієнта у системі управління поведінкою організації: посередницька модель сприйняття підтримки клієнта.**

Організаційна громадянська поведінка – це явище, коли співробітники в організації виконують додаткові дії без очікування фінансової винагороди. Ця форма поведінки також може спостерігатися серед клієнтів. Клієнти, подібно до співробітників, можуть вчиняти добровільні дії, які корисні для бізнесу (громадянська поведінка клієнта). Ця активність, як у співробітників, так і в клієнтів, є ключовою для досягнення бізнесом своїх цілей та забезпечення стабільності. Метою дослідження є вивчення прямого та опосередкованого впливу громадянської поведінки співробітників на громадянську поведінку клієнтів. Методологічною основою дослідження є фундаментальні положення теорії соціального обміну, спрямованої на аналіз впливу організаційної громадянської поведінки на поведінку клієнтів та її опосередкований вплив на сприйняття підтримки клієнта. Для підтвердження висунутих в роботі гіпотез було зібрано дані від 302 клієнтів магазинів одягу в Туреччині. З метою обробки даних в роботі використовувалися програми SPSS, AMOS і Process MACRO (для SPSS і SAS). Дослідження включало різні етапи аналізу, такі як аналіз частот, перевірка на нормальність розподілу, підтвердження факторної структури та надійності обраної шкали вимірювання. Додатково, вихідні дані дослідження були перевірені на можливість наявності проблем, пов'язаних з мультиколінеарністю. Результати кореляційного та регресійного аналізів показали, що організаційна громадянська поведінка має позитивний вплив на громадянську поведінку клієнтів. Емпіричні результати дослідження підтвердили, що сприйняття підтримки клієнта відіграє важливу посередницьку роль в цій взаємодії. Ці результати свідчать про важливість ролі співробітників для бізнесу у формуванні поведінки клієнтів. Дослідження має значення для розуміння та підвищення ефективності.

**Ключові слова:** споживча поведінка; громадянська поведінка клієнта; організаційна громадянська поведінка; сприйняття підтримки; магазини одягу.