








“Impact of emotional intelligence on SME employees’ performance: Mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior”

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IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON SME EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

Abstract

This study delves into the intricate correlation between emotional intelligence and employee performance within the dynamic setting of Saudi small and medium enterprises. Acknowledging the increasing importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace, this study examines how emotional intelligence influences employee performance, with particular attention to the mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior. Employing a comprehensive research framework, the study integrates quantitative methods to analyze data collected from 248 employees across various Saudi-based small and medium enterprises. The findings indicate that high emotional intelligence enhances employee performance, with organizational citizenship behavior serving as a crucial mediator, strengthening the positive impact of emotional intelligence on performance. The results demonstrated a robust positive correlation with organizational citizenship behavior ($\beta = 0.719^{***}$) and a moderate positive correlation with employee performance ($\beta = 0.314^{***}$). In addition, organizational citizenship behavior played a significant positive mediating role between employee intelligence and employee performance ($\beta = 0.397^{***}$). This suggests a nuanced interplay among emotional intelligence, organizational citizenship behavior, and overall employee performance within the specific context of Saudi small and medium enterprises.

Keywords

emotional intelligence, employee performance,
organizational citizenship behavior, Saudi Arabia, SMEs

JEL Classification

M12, M19

INTRODUCTION

In today's workplace, emotional intelligence has become as important as traditional intelligence and technical skills. Recognized for its impact on individual success, relationships, and workplace dynamics, emotional intelligence is crucial for fostering positive and productive environments. Employee performance, a multifaceted concept, includes both task-related outcomes and behaviors that enhance the organization's overall well-being and functionality. This has led to a significant shift in industrial-organizational research, focusing more on the intrinsic factors that influence employee performance. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better at navigating modern workplace complexities. Such employees tend to exhibit better job performance due to their ability to manage stress, communicate effectively, and adapt to changes. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) includes voluntary, extra-role activities that enhance organizational effectiveness, like helping colleagues and promoting a positive work environment.

Employee performance is a crucial factor in the success of all organizations, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which face significant challenges when workforce performance declines. The lack of adequate employee performance in SMEs is a major issue, prompting extensive research into its causes. Understanding the interplay between emotional intelligence, OCB, and employee performance is vital for optimizing human capital. By revealing how emotional intelligence affects performance, organizations can better tailor strategies for talent development, leadership training, and employee well-being. Employee performance and OCB seemed to be overlapped with several researchers who used different terms for somehow similar concepts. Although many studies have examined the relationships between these discrete variables, research on their collective and integrated impact is still lacking. Industrial experts and scholars have not yet fully explored the collective effects of these components.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence builds strong interpersonal relationships and navigates workplace challenges. High emotional intelligence fosters better communication, collaboration, and decision-making, leading to improved productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Rahim and Malik (2010) explored the impact of age, education, gender, and marital status on emotional intelligence, which subsequently influences organizational performance. The findings indicated age exhibited a negative correlation with emotional intelligence and, consequently, organizational performance; education level positively influenced emotional intelligence; gender showed a positive association with emotional intelligence, while marital status demonstrated an insignificant relationship with emotional intelligence. Although emotional intelligence does not guarantee increased profits for an organization, it progressively contributes to improved organizational performance over time (Rahim & Malik, 2010; Ramlal et al., 2022). Given the dynamic nature of the business environment and the rapidly evolving economy, organizations are prioritizing the development of emotional intelligence abilities through targeted training programs aimed at improving skills and equipping employees to effectively navigate and resolve conflicts in the workplace (Anand et al., 2019). Consequently, emotional intelligence demonstrates a significant correlation with emotional performance (Gondal & Husain, 2013).

Research shows that emotional intelligence significantly affects business students' academic performance and boosts their IQ (Khan, 2019). Emotional intelligence allows individuals to recognize, regulate, and manage their own and oth-

ers' emotions, greatly influencing overall organizational effectiveness. Recognizing its importance, organizations are investing in management programs and strategies to enhance their workforce's emotional intelligence (Serhan & Gazzaz, 2019). Goleman (2016) identifies several key elements of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions for effective self-regulation; motivation drives goal achievement with resilience; empathy fosters understanding and connection with others; and social skills enable effective communication and teamwork. These components of emotional intelligence help individuals navigate emotional complexities, leading to personal growth, successful relationships, and effective leadership.

Coined by Organ (1988), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization." In today's era of technology and globalization, OCB is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage. Despite its development decades ago, OCB remains a significant and extensively studied concept. The complexities of the globalized work environment highlight the impact of employee well-being and behavior on organizational effectiveness (Ocampo et al., 2018). Bolino et al. (2002) discussed that Graham (1991) proposed a conceptualization of organizational citizenship involving political philosophy and modern political theory. Building on this theoretical perspective, Graham (1991) identified three organizational citizenship dimensions: obedience, loyalty, and participation. Obedience involves employees adhering to organizational rules and procedures. Loyalty refers to employees

prioritizing organizational interests over personal gains. Participation denotes active involvement in the organization. Subsequent research revealed three types of engagement: social engagement, which includes active participation in organizational matters and social activities; involvement in advocacy, where employees engage in advancing the organization by suggesting ideas and encouraging coworkers; and functional engagement, where employees exceed job expectations by taking on additional tasks and staying updated with advancements.

Empirical research has identified three distinct forms of employee participation. Social participation involves active engagement in organizational matters, such as staying informed about company activities and joining voluntary events. Advocacy participation is characterized by employees challenging norms, proposing improvements, and encouraging others to share their ideas. Functional participation includes contributions beyond standard job requirements, such as taking on additional tasks, staying updated with advancements, pursuing further training, and working extra hours to complete critical projects (Bolino et al., 2002). Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) enhances employee performance significantly (Ersoy et al., 2015). According to Organ (1988), OCB includes dimensions like altruism (selfless support for colleagues), civic virtue (active involvement in organizational affairs), conscientiousness (going beyond assigned duties), courtesy (respectful interactions), and sportsmanship (handling workplace challenges with fairness). These dimensions foster a positive, cooperative work environment, boosting organizational culture and performance.

Employee performance improves when intelligence is valued, failures are accepted, and a cooperative environment with job rotation is fostered. Minimizing complexity, communication gaps, and monotonous tasks enhances the work environment, promoting growth and innovation (Gondal & Husain, 2013). Key performance indicators include technical skills, conceptual understanding, and interpersonal relations. Technical skills involve the effective use of methods and equipment; conceptual skills require an understanding of organizational alignment; interper-

sonal skills include cooperation and motivation (Widyawati & Karwini, 2019). Enhancing emotional intelligence is crucial for optimal performance. Factors like company culture, work location, and career opportunities also impact performance (Manickam & Latha, 2021; Robbins et al., 2013; Gitongu et al., 2016).

Emotional intelligence is crucial for enhancing employee performance by enabling them to understand and manage their emotions, handle stress, and adapt to organizational changes. Emotional intelligence is often more significant than IQ in determining effective employee performance (Gondal & Husain, 2013). It fosters positive relationships, effective teamwork, and an expanded social network, all contributing to improved performance (Seibert et al., 2001). In culturally rich, developing countries like Saudi Arabia, effective emotional management leads to significant performance gains, supporting individual and organizational goals and positively impacting the national economy (Baloch et al., 2015). Emotional intelligence is a key personality trait that enhances job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It also aids in team building, contributing to overall organizational success (Kaur & Sharma, 2019). A positive organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) environment boosts employee performance and reduces turnover (Osisioma et al., 2016). Emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize and manage one's own and others' emotions, fosters a collaborative work environment, leading to better organizational outcomes (Alheet & Hamdan, 2021).

Voluntary behaviors that benefit organizations and colleagues are significantly influenced by employees' emotional factors (Chang et al., 2007). Employees with cooperative and supportive attitudes often expect similar behavior from others (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Research shows a strong positive link between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (VandeWaa & Turnipseed, 2012). Emotional intelligence, which involves observing, understanding, and managing emotions, positively impacts OCB (Turnipseed, 2017). Key emotional intelligence attributes include self-awareness, emotional understanding, goal setting, and self-confidence (Narayanan, 2016). Employees

with higher emotional intelligence levels are more inclined toward OCB, leading to greater job satisfaction and organizational success, even if their discretionary behaviors are not formally rewarded (Ghewari & Pawar, 2021).

Podsakoff et al. (2009) identify five dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB): altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and conscientiousness. Altruism involves employees working together to accomplish tasks, while courtesy means showing respect to coworkers. Sportsmanship is demonstrated by maintaining a positive attitude despite challenges, and civic virtue refers to employees' concern for the organization's welfare. Conscientiousness entails going beyond assigned tasks to support colleagues and the organization. These dimensions collectively improve employee performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009). OCB significantly influences employee performance, with altruism having the strongest impact on both individual and organizational outcomes. HR policies and practices also play a crucial role in moderating the relationship between OCB and performance (Mallick et al., 2015). OCB and employee engagement are vital HR variables, with OCB being a key predictor of job performance and organizational success (Hermawan et al., 2020; Basu et al., 2017; Waqiah et al., 2021).

This study is how employee intelligence and organizational cultural behavior enhance employee performance, ultimately improving overall organizational effectiveness and performance. Importantly, it addresses a gap by examining these dimensions within the context of Saudi Arabian SMEs, an area that has not been previously explored.

Drawing on theoretical foundations, the study developed the following hypotheses (Figure 1):

- H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on SME employee performance.
- H2: Emotional intelligence has a significant positive impact on SME organizational citizenship behavior.
- H3: Organizational citizenship behavior has a positive impact on employee performance.
- H4: Organizational citizenship behavior has a positive mediating impact on emotional intelligence and employee performance.

The extensive literature review determined the most appropriate survey tools for each variable. Table 1 outlined the dimensions of the three constructs, namely emotional intelligence, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee performance.

Table 1. Study variables

Construct	Indicator/Dimension	Reference
Emotional intelligence	1. Self-awareness	Goleman (2016)
	2. Managing emotions	
	3. Motivation	
	4. Empathy	
	5. Social skills	
Organizational citizenship behavior	1. Altruism	Organ (1988)
	2. Civic virtue	
	3. Conscientious	
	4. Courtesy	
	5. Sportsmanship	
Employee performance	1. Quality of work	Robbins et al. (2013)
	2. Quantity of work	
	3. Effectiveness	
	4. Independency	

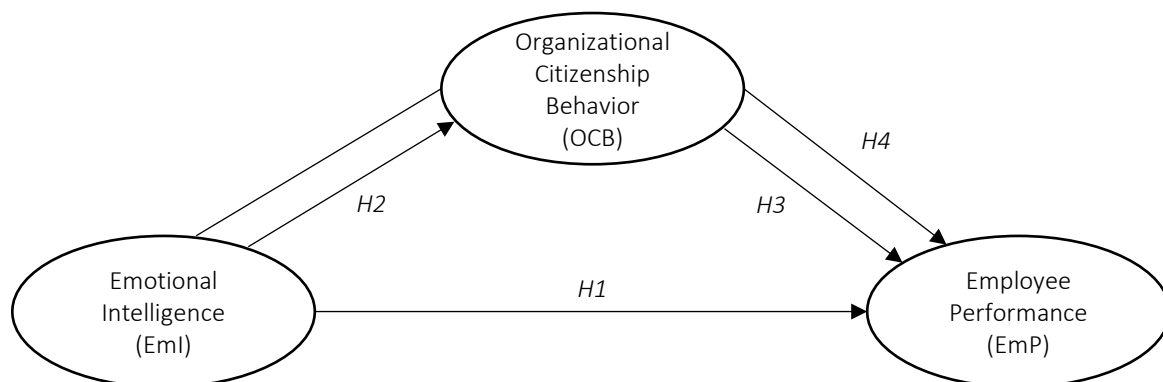


Figure 1. Research framework

2. METHODOLOGY

The study has formulated measurement items by incorporating variables utilized in previous studies within the research domain. A questionnaire adapted from Goleman (2016) was employed to assess emotional intelligence, comprising five items. The five items pertaining to organizational citizenship behavior were drawn from Organ (1988), while indicators of employee performance, consisting of four items, were sourced from Robbins et al. (2013). For this cross-sectional study, all the modified questionnaire items have been designed and administered to the respondents by the use of a 5-level scale with 1 meaning highly disagreed to 5 denoting highly agreed.

Data were obtained from employees serving various positions of Saudi SMEs. Before administering the questionnaire, a G*Power software was used to calculate the lowest number of respondents suitable for this study. The computation produced the lowest sample size of 74, utilizing the 0.80 power while adopting a 5% significance level, an effect size of 0.15, and one tail with two predictors – that is, employee performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Based on the minimum sample size, 260 questionnaires were distributed to employees of SMEs; 254 were retrieved, and 248 were considered usable for this study. An appointment was made by the firm owners to contact their employees with confirmation calls before data collection through self-administered questionnaires and e-mails using a convenience sampling technique to obtain data from the respondents. Initial data screening and descriptive analysis were performed using the SPSS before adopting the partial least square structural equation modeling.

As demonstrated in Table 2, 59% are men within the age range of 30 or more years. On their educational level, the results suggest that the majority have had secondary and above as the highest level of education, including diploma, first degree, and master/Ph.D. levels. More so, about 45% of the respondents had previous work experience with businesses existing beyond 6 to 10 years. Further, in terms of the number of employees, most of the respondents indicated 20 or fewer employees, constituting almost 86%, and about 63% of the firms they worked for operate in the services sector.

Table 2. Participants' demographics

Item	Category	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	146	58.9
	Female	102	41.1
Age range (years)	20-29	32	12.9
	30-39	98	39.5
	40-49	101	40.7
	50 or more	17	6.9
Educational level	Schooling	20	8.0
	Diploma	78	31.5
	Bachelor degree	81	32.7
	Master's degree	59	23.8
Duration of work experience (years)	5 or less	82	33.1
	6 to 10	112	45.2
	11 or more	54	21.8
Years of business existence	1 to 5 years range	99	39.9
	6 to 10 years range	102	41.1
	11 or more years	47	19.0
Number of employees	20 or less employees	213	85.9
	21 to 50 employees	25	10.1
	51 or more employees	10	4.0
Business sector	Manufacturing	92	37.1
	Services	156	62.9

Note: n = 248.

3. RESULTS

This study analyzed the measurement model before testing the structural model. The measurement model was evaluated to identify the convergent/reliability, internal consistency, and validity of the study variables (Hair et al., 2020). The convergence validity test investigates if the variables being measured by the items loaded are just those of interest. Variable item loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values have been considered to determine the accuracy of convergence (Hair et al., 2019). Though this study reported Cronbach's alpha values as well, Hair et al. (2020) reiterated that composite reliability demonstrated greater precision compared to Cronbach's alpha. When all of the indicators appear to be connected with their underlying variables, a high degree of convergence has been demonstrated. In order to establish if a consistency problem was not discovered, relevant factor loadings and cross-loadings are often inspected mainly to assess whether items are loading on the appropriate assessed parameter in accordance with the rule. According to Hair et al. (2019), if an indicator loads highly greater than

Table 3. Reliability test

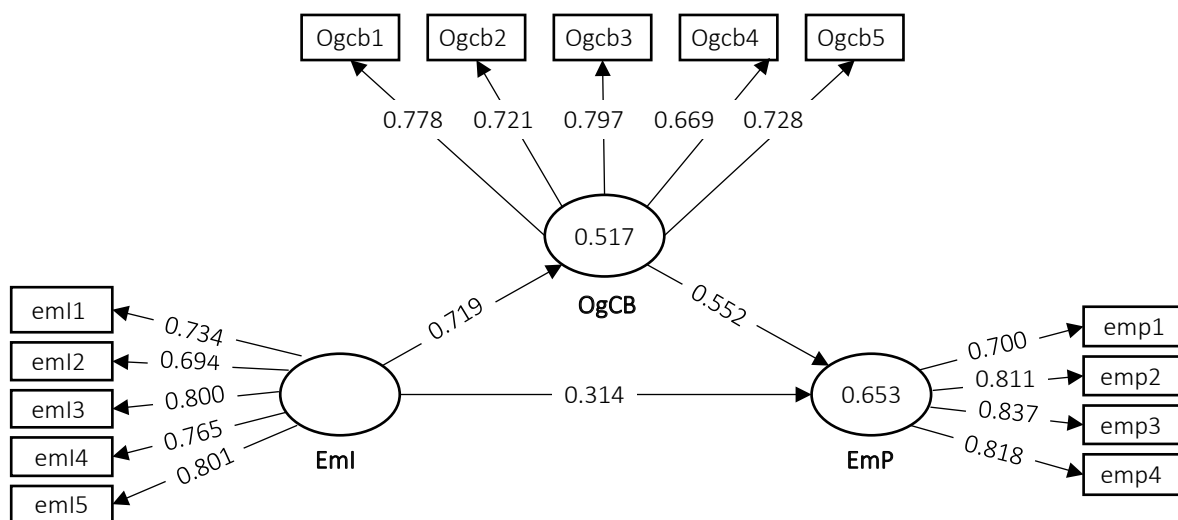
Variables	Items label	Items loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Emotional Intelligence	Em1	0.734	1.572	0.816	0.872	0.577
	Em2	0.694	1.488			
	Em3	0.800	1.945			
	Em4	0.765	1.675			
	Em5	0.801	1.926			
Employee Performance	EmP1	0.700	1.421	0.802	0.871	0.630
	EmP2	0.811	1.933			
	EmP3	0.837	1.942			
	EmP4	0.818	1.758			
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	OgCB1	0.778	1.740	0.792	0.858	0.548
	OgCB2	0.721	1.434			
	OgCB3	0.797	1.750			
	OgCB4	0.669	1.312			
	OgCB5	0.728	1.624			

0.50 on its linked component, the measurement scale has convergent validity. Additionally, no item should load higher on any other parameter than the variable that it was intended to measure.

Table 3 entailed item loadings, VIF of items, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and the AVE values meant to assess the convergent validity of the latent variables. As shown, all the item loadings were above 0.70 except a few that scored below 0.70, though they met the requirements according to the existing literature. The Cronbach's alpha and CR values were also above 0.70, and their corresponding AVE values also exceeded 0.50. Again, the individual items' VIF values were within the acceptable

range and did not exceed 5, as provided by Kline (2023), which states that VIF values should be between 1 and 5. The results of the measurement of the variables in Table 2 signify convergent validity, making all the items acceptable, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The degree of dissimilarity between the variables being evaluated and other distinct variables is determined by assessing how distinctly reliable the variables are. Thus, item loadings must not be truly unrelated to other factors under examination. Hence, a discriminant validation guaranteed that the measurement had undergone the appropriate examination of links between different elements.



Note: EmI = emotional intelligence; EmP = employee performance; OgCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

Figure 2. Measurement model

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Variables	Eml	EmP	OgCB
A. Emotional Intelligence (Eml)			
B. Employee Performance (EmP)	0.876		
C. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OgCB)	0.888	0.930	

In line with variance-based studies using structural equation model testing of PLS-SEM, the Fornell-Larcker procedure for determining discriminant validity is not appropriate according to existing literature (e.g., Henseler et al., 2015; Zaato et al., 2024). As a result, this study found Fornell-Larcker unreliable and determined the discriminant validity using the multitrait-multimethod matrix or the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) procedure to examine the study’s discriminant validity. Based on Zaato et al. (2023), when the HTMT ratio exceeds 0.950, it suggests an issue of discriminant validity. As per the HTMT rule, this study actually measured the constructs and had no problem with discriminant validity, as per Table 4.

In addition to assessing the measurement model, this study also resorted to the bootstrapping method to examine the study’s structural model with the aid of the PLS-SEM. Using the PLS-SEM is more appropriate to determine the direct and indirect relationships of any study involving endogenous and exogenous variables concurrently. The PLS-SEM is also suitable for testing any study hypotheses involving small or large sample sizes and when the data have nonstandard distribution (Henseler, 2018). Next to testing the measurement model, the bootstrapping technique was used to determine the significance of the path coefficients of the PLS-SEM analysis direct and specific indirect effects. The bootstrapping results based on the direct path coefficients of the hypotheses are illustrated in Table 5 and Figure 3.

Table 5 reveals that hypothesis 1, which tested emotional intelligence and employee performance

association, is positive and statistically significant, generating a p -value < 0.001, with a beta coefficient of 0.314 and a standard error of 0.056. The t -value is 5.600, indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Again, the Lower Level and Upper Level Confidence Level Bias Corrected values 0.218 and 0.402 are positive with a small Effect Size (F^2) of 0.137. Hence, hypothesis 1 has been supported by the PLS-SEM bootstrapped path coefficient values.

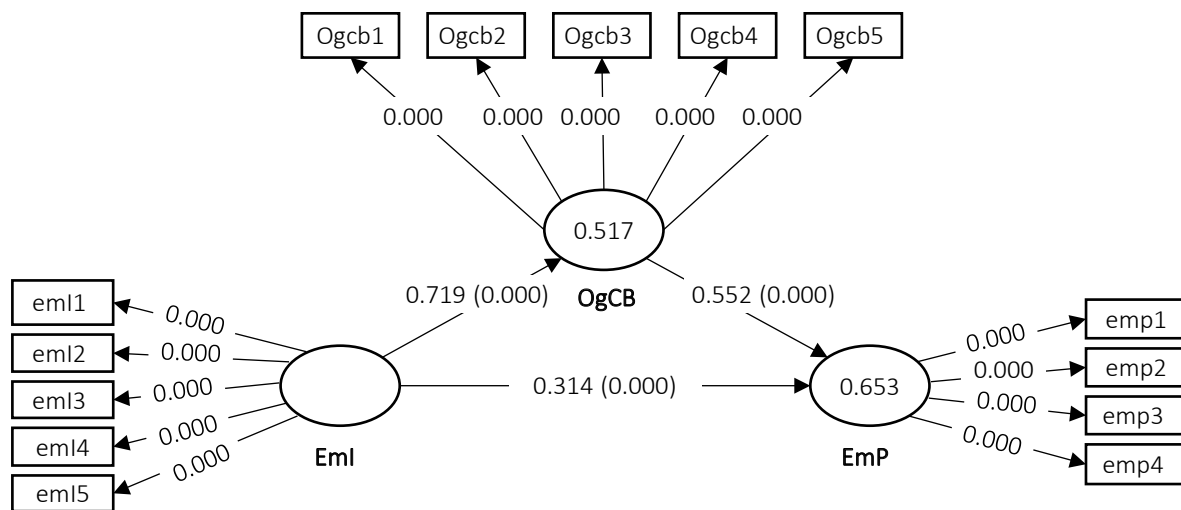
Hypothesis 2 tested whether a significant relationship existed between employee performance and organizational citizenship behavior. The results proved statistically significant, where the p -value is less than 0.001, with a beta coefficient of 0.719 and a standard error of 0.029. The t -value is 24.650, an indication of a very strong significant relationship and positive Lower Level and Upper Level Confidence Level Bias Corrected values of 0.665 and 0.762, which also supported the significant outcome.

Furthermore, a large F^2 of 1.070 suggests a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. Hypothesis 3 tested the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and employee performance. The results found a statistically significant p -value of less than 0.001, a beta value of 0.552, and a standard error of 0.057. The t -value was also 9.714, all indicating strong evidence of a positive and statistically significant relationship. By inferring, the Lower Level and Upper-Level Confidence Level Bias Corrected values are 0.455 and 0.640, with the Effect Size (F^2) of 0.425 testi-

Table 5. Path coefficients of hypothesized relationships

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Relationships	Std beta value	Std error	T value	P values	LL & UL CLBC	F ²	Results
H1	Eml → EmP	0.314	0.056	5.600	0.000	0.218;0.402	0.137	Supported
H2	Eml → OgCB	0.719	0.029	24.650	0.000	0.665;0.762	1.070	Supported
H3	OgCB → EmP	0.552	0.057	9.714	0.000	0.455;0.640	0.425	Supported

Note: LL&UL CLBC means Lower Level and Upper Level Confidence Level Bias Corrected values. Eml = emotional intelligence; EmP = employee performance; OgCB = organizational citizenship behavior.



Note: Eml = emotional intelligence; EmP = employee performance; OgCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

Figure 3. Structural model

fyng to the significant relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and employee performance. Briefly, the results supported the three stated hypotheses that determined the direct effect of the study variables, as the structural model illustrates in Figure 3.

Table 6 validates the proposed hypothesis that organizational citizenship behavior positively mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance following Hayes (2009) and Rungtusanatham et al. (2014). The bootstrapping analysis results provided in Table 6 signify a positive and a statistically significant mediating effect ($\beta = 0.397$; standard error of 0.046, $t = 8.23$; and $p < 0.001$), which indicates strong evidence of a statistically significant intervening effect of organizational citizenship behavior amidst emotional intelligence and employee performance relationship. The output also found LL and UL CLBC values of 0.325 and 0.472, which show no straddle between zero and suggest a mediation effect. According to Lachowicz et al. (2018) and Kenny (2021), mediation F of 0.158 (i.e., medium effect size) was manually calculated based on

the specific indirect effect and evidenced that the study’s tested mediation is supported.

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined the interactive effect of organizational citizenship behavior on the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance among SMEs of Saudi Arabia. Thus, this study attempted to investigate whether organizational citizenship behavior plays a mediating role for emotional intelligence and employee performance relationship.

The study accepts H1. Thus, emotional intelligence has a positive and statistically significant influence on employee performance with a p -value of 0.000, which is considered smaller than or is < 0.050 . The positive significant influence of emotional intelligence on organizational performance has been supported by Kaur and Sharma (2019) and Zaato et al. (2023). They demonstrate that people who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are capable of exhibiting enhanced job performance,

Table 6. Mediation pathway effect

Mediating Relationship	Std beta (β) value	Std error	T value	P values	LL&UL CLBC	F ²	Results
H4: Eml → OgCB → EmP	0.397	0.046	8.716	0.000	0.325;0.472	0.158	Supported

Note: Eml = emotional intelligence; EmP = employee performance; OgCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

as they can effectively manage stress, communicate with colleagues, and adapt to changing work environments. The current study has evidence that the higher the level of SME workers' emotional intelligence, the greater it would manifest in their performance.

Similarly, H2 infers a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. This finding confirmed earlier statistically substantial link between employees' emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior (Ghewari & Pawar, 2021; Liao et al., 2022). The result suggests that SME owners that promote organizational citizenship behavior among their employees will further enhance organizational citizenship behavior, ensuring that employees continue to improve their performance by maintaining a positive psychological state and relating better among themselves and customers.

Moreover, H3 tested the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and employee performance. The outcome is in agreement with Dinka's (2018) assessment of organizational citizenship behavior and employee performance among Dire Dawa University employees and Santa et al.'s (2023) research on the impact of emotional intelligence on operational effectiveness with the mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior and leadership.

Further, H4 suggested a positive and statistically significant mediating effect of organizational

citizenship behavior on the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance, producing a p-value less than 0.001. This result supports Santa et al. (2023), who proved that organizational citizenship behavior positively mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and the operational effectiveness of firms. They further affirmed that the ability of employees with high levels of emotional intelligence capability to exhibit better job performance, as they can effectively manage stress, communicate with colleagues, and adapt to changing work environments, is attributed to organizational citizenship behavior.

This study has some limitations that can serve as a basis for further studies. This study used self-response measurement of responses on all the study variables, which may have biased responses that may hinder the ability to generalize the findings. Second, this current study is a cross-sectional study that focuses on a quantitative approach. For further understanding of this study framework, subsequent studies can use a longitudinal approach and either qualitative or mixed-methodological approaches. Further, the sample size can be increased with the introduction of controlling variables like gender, age, educational level, perceived organizational support, and social capital as mediators or moderators for more insights. In brief, a cross-cultural comparative study can augment the findings in terms of how emotional intelligence, with the mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior, explains employee performance in SMEs.

CONCLUSION

The paper investigated connections between emotional intelligence, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee performance. The study provided a detailed understanding of the complex dynamics among the three variables and their influence on each other. Consequently, it has deepened the knowledge giving confidence in organizational citizenship behavior capacity to further clarify the impact of emotional intelligence on workers' performance and guarantee favorable workforce results for SMEs.

The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between the variables, with all proposed pathways in the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis being confirmed. The mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior for emotional intelligence and employee performance was verified. The findings demonstrated that all the measurement scales adopted for the variables from previous studies were valid and yielded a high level of validity and reliability.

The results made a significant impact by bridging the research gap on how emotional intelligence can contribute to employee performance with organizational citizenship behavior playing a mediating function, which are necessary elements for SMEs' development and sustainable performance. Employees with high levels of organizational citizenship behavior play a substantial role in their emotional intelligence to become more skillful at observing and regulating their emotions, which will consequentially influence their performance. Additionally, the study outcome highlights the need for SME owners/managers as well as policymakers to appreciate the effect of employees' emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior and devise strategies on how to promote them within organizations to contribute to employee performance.

Further research is needed to extend beyond the scope of the present study. Additionally, empirical research involving individuals across various nations and industries could reveal valuable insights into the complex interactions among the studied constructs. Identifying other variables that might directly or indirectly impact emotional intelligence, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee performance could set new benchmarks.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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