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Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Fine Dining Hospitality Establishments: A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Employee Engagement and Perceived Organizational Support in Lebanon

Amira Daouk ^{1,2} ¹ School of Business, Lebanese International University, Beirut 146404, Lebanon; amira.daouk@liu.edu.lb² Department of Business, Girne American University, Mersin 10 Turkey, Girne (Kyrenia) 0090, Cyprus

Abstract

The behavior of employees in the hospitality industry has gained strategic significance as it has become a competitive service industry where the level of customer satisfaction is highly dependent on the discretionary contributions made by employees. This study examined whether Employee Engagement mediates the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior and whether the Perceived Organizational Support moderates the relationship of Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement among the employees working in a fine dining restaurant in Beirut, Lebanon. The study based its moderation mediation analysis on two theoretical frameworks—Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory. The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design and distributed 500 electronic questionnaires via Google Forms to staff working in upscale hospitality and fine dining restaurants after securing managerial approval. A total of 441 questionnaires were received. Following data screening procedures, 428 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. The analysis was performed using the following applications: AMOS 24, SPSS 27, and the PROCESS Macro 4.2 through 5000 bootstrap resamples. Results showed that Transactional Leadership was positively associated with OCB. Employee Engagement significantly mediated the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. POS was found to strengthen the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement, and the conditional indirect effect of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement was stronger when POS was high. Originality/value: This study addresses an important gap in the conditional process leadership literature by combining the concepts of Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, POS, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior into one empirical model tested in a hospitality setting plagued by a crisis. The results provide viable solutions for hospitality managers interested in developing improved Employee Engagement, discretionary behavior, and service quality in an operationally constrained environment.



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1. Introduction

As a service-intensive industry, the hospitality business depends heavily on employees' interaction with customers, how they relate to management and one another, and their willingness to perform work that is not necessarily part of their duties. In fine dining establishments, service quality and customer satisfaction depend heavily on employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Organ, 1994; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009; Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2022; Karatepe, 2016). These discretionary behaviors, performed beyond the requirements of formal job roles, have invariably been linked to enhanced service quality and better organizational performance across hospitality organizations (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). Leadership is considered an important determinant of employee attitudes and workplace behavior. Although hospitality research examined transformational, servant, authentic, and ethical leadership, Transactional Leadership remains relevant where fine dining service delivery requires structure, clarity, monitoring, feedback, and contingent reward (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Avolio et al., 1999; Breevaart et al., 2014). These leadership practices help staff understand performance expectations while promoting operational consistency and high service quality in fast-paced hospitality environments (Karatepe, 2013). The importance of Transactional Leadership becomes even greater during periods of economic and operational crisis. Lebanon has experienced a prolonged economic crisis characterized by extreme currency devaluation, high inflation, and a financial crisis, which has disrupted tourism activity. These circumstances have in turn increased costs and shortages of workers, increased employment turnover and hardship, and increased pressure to achieve service objectives even under conditions of little or no income (World Bank, 2024; UNDP, 2024). In this situation, hospitality organizations require leadership practices that provide role clarity, operational stability, and consistent performance expectations (Karatepe et al., 2021; Chen & Eyoum, 2021; Albrecht et al., 2024). Against this background, it has become both theoretically and practically important to understand how Transactional Leadership is associated with employees' discretionary workplace behavior. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory as backdrop, we look at the relationships among Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) for fine dining hospitality organizations within Beirut. More specifically, the study examines if Employee Engagement mediates, and Perceived Organizational Support moderates, the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The study examines relational variables within a leadership and hospitality focus during crises, contributing to both the hospitality and leadership literature by providing useful organizational data regarding the operations of an organization during a prolonged period of uncertain economic circumstances and uncertain operational success. The following section presents the research gap and novelty of the study, followed by the research objectives.

1.1. Research Gap and Novelty

While leadership research has exploded within the fields of organizational behavior and hospitality management, major gaps exist within the conceptual, contextual, and empirical domains of that research field (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Hoch et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019).

While there is considerable interest in research about leadership and employee behavior in the hospitality industry, there are several critical theoretical and empirical gaps that still exist. One of the most significant gaps is that there has been very little research conducted on the psychological processes by which Transactional Leadership is associated with employee Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Another gap is the investigation of

the situational factors that may enhance or detract from the effectiveness of Transactional Leadership in crisis-impacted hospitality environments. Finally, there is a lack of research into the effectiveness of Transactional Leadership in hospitality settings characterized by crises.

Second, while some of the previous studies have established an association between leadership styles and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), much of the prior research has focused on identifying direct-effect relationships between leadership and OCB, and very few studies have proposed or tested theoretical mechanisms to explain how leadership behaviors result in discretionary behaviors on the part of employees (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990, 2000; Hoch et al., 2018). The absence of these explanatory mechanisms limits our ability to understand theoretically how employee Organizational Citizenship Behaviors are positively associated with different leadership practices (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Saks, 2006). As such, Employee Engagement has the potential to serve as a critical mediating variable since employees who are engaged are more likely to be psychologically committed to the success of the organization and engage in proactive or citizenship-type behavior (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Karatepe, 2013).

Third, a large part of the larger organizational environment that leaders work within has been neglected within the Transactional Leadership literature to date (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Hoch et al., 2018). Employees do not just view the actions of leaders in isolation; they also form evaluations of those actions based upon a larger organizational environment or climate that is shaped by the characteristics of organizational support, fairness, and reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As such, Perceived Organizational Support may serve as an important contextual factor associated with the effectiveness of Transactional Leadership within hospitality organizations (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Karatepe, 2013). However, empirical research exploring the role of Perceived Organizational Support as a boundary condition between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement is limited (Breevaart et al., 2014; Saks, 2022).

Fourth, many of the leadership- and hospitality-related studies to date have taken place in relatively stable economic and institutional environments; there is an absence of research on crisis-affected economies within the international organizational behavior literature (Bamberger, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2021). As hospitality organizations in Lebanon continue to operate in a state of extreme economic instability, labor uncertainty, financial pressure, and disruption in tourism, this presents a unique and theoretically meaningful context for exploring how crisis-prone environments are associated with employees' perceptions of leadership, organizational support, and voluntary workplace behavior (Khan et al., 2021; Chen & Eyoum, 2021). Bass and Avolio (1993) contend that findings obtained from research in stable economies may not be totally generalizable or applicable to service environments that are prone to crises (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

This study's originality is in the development and testing of a comprehensive integrated moderated mediation context for how, as well as by what means, Transactional Leadership is positively associated with Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) by establishing an indirect approach through employees' engagement (Saks, 2006; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Hayes, 2018). The study also suggests that Perceived Organizational Support has a moderating effect on the relationship between Transactional Leadership and employees' engagement (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017). By combining the concepts of mediation and moderation into one conditional process model, the study expands existing simple direct effect approaches and provides a more thorough explanation of leadership efficacy within the hospitality setting. In addition, the study will add to the understanding of Transactional Leadership as a potentially effective form of leadership in hospitality-type service environments that experience ongoing operational pressure,

instability, and potential crises (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Breevaart et al., 2014; Karatepe, 2013). Finally, the study broadens Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory through its examination of the increased likelihood of generating greater behavioral performance outcomes from Transactional Leadership practices that are exchange-based, where employees perceive their organization to have high levels of support and are psychologically engaged with their work (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Cumulatively, these theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps provide justification for the proposed moderated mediation framework. Where prior studies on hospitality leadership have predominantly focused on the direct associations between leadership styles and employee outcomes or on isolated mediating or moderating mechanisms, less effort has been placed on understanding how Transactional Leadership is associated with Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement and under which organizational conditions this association is strengthened. Transactional Leadership is suitable for fine dining hospitality simply because service in situ relies on the codification of operating norms, the delivery of consistent service quality, timely feedback about the service level, surveillance of service delivery, and employees working together closely. Unlike organizational settings where innovation or strategic change is the rule, in fine dining settings, employees must obey (and in return have) steady observance of agreed-upon service values but also discover those values, as the guests expect them to, extemporaneously. Availability, role clarity, contingent rewards, corrective feedback, and effective monitoring thus become important to the transactional leader in maintaining service delivery, employee accountability, and total quality service to the use/client. In the fine dining context, Transactional Leadership is especially appropriate where hospitality organizations face resource constraints and induced crisis, such that working towards quality service amidst organizational uncertainties is essential for all managers. By employing Employee Engagement to explicate the mediating mechanism and Perceived Organizational Support to define the boundary condition of this relationship, this study provides a more meaningful explanation of leadership effectiveness than hospitality research has previously established. By investigating these relationships in Lebanon's crisis-ridden fine dining hospitality sector, this study expands the scope of application of Social Exchange and Organizational Support Theory to an under-researched service sector with theoretical and empirical contributions for hospitality leadership.

1.2. Research Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to assess the effect of Transactional Leadership style on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors within the context of fine dining hospitality environments in Beirut, Lebanon, and explore the underlying psychological and environmental processes that mediate this relationship (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Saks, 2006). In particular, the study intends to pursue the following research objectives:

- To examine the relationship between the Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among employees working in fine dining hospitality establishments.
- To investigate the mediating role of Employee Engagement in the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.
- To examine the moderating role of Perceived Organizational Support in the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement.
- To assess whether the indirect relationship of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement varies across different levels of Perceived Organizational Support.

- To contribute to the hospitality leadership literature by developing and empirically testing a conditional process framework within a crisis-affected service context.
- To provide managerial insights for hospitality organizations seeking to strengthen Employee Engagement, discretionary employee behavior, and service reliability under conditions of operational and economic uncertainty.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

Both Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory provide authoritative foundations for analyzing the relationship between leadership practices and employee attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The underlying concept shared between the two theories is the gradual development of employee–organization exchange relationships through a series of reciprocal interactions between organizational and individual employees (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Under the concepts of Social Exchange Theory, positive exchanges between employees (employee/fair treatment, employee/organizational support, employee/organizational fairness, and employee/organizational recognition) lead an employee to exhibit positively oriented workplace attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Under Social Exchange Theory, it is typically through both the formal obligations of exchanged contracts and also through social and psychological exchanged relationships (Blau, 1964). The result is that employees develop a greater connection to the organization based on their trust and commitment as well as the obligation created through these exchange relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006). Further applied to the current study, Transactional Leadership can be viewed in this context as structured mechanisms of leadership based on exchange. Specifically, a transactional leader establishes performance expectations for employees, establishes performance level expectations, identifies contingent rewards, monitors employee performance, and intervenes when performance standards/expectations are not met (Bass, 1985; Avolio et al., 1999). From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, Transactional Leadership establishes reciprocal exchange relationships in which employees perceive that their efforts are recognized and rewarded (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This is very important for hospitality organizations, where consistent service standards, timely coordination of operations, and expedient response to all demands placed on the organization are critical (Karatepe, 2013). These types of leadership practices help develop trust, confidence, and commitment between leaders and employees in the hospitality industry and increase employees' willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990; Saks, 2006).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) further suggests that employees who receive fair support in their exchanges with others will be more likely to display Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Organ, 1994). For example, employees may voluntarily help their coworkers, act to protect their organization's image, help to support the quality of service to customers, and contribute to the effectiveness of their organization as a reciprocal response to positive leadership treatment (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). As a result, SET provides a strong theoretical rationale for the proposed relationship between Transactional Leadership and OCB (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

However, the association between leaders and the behavior of employees may not be mediated solely by transaction; rather, important psychological mechanisms also may mediate this relationship (Saks, 2006; Albrecht et al., 2021). One example is Employee Engagement. Employees who receive appropriate support from their leaders through

clear directions, recognition, and performance-related support are likely to become psychologically committed to their work roles (Saks, 2006; Breevaart et al., 2014). Engaged employees frequently exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, emotional commitment, and discretionary effort, which may then stimulate increased OCB (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Karatepe, 2013). Therefore, Social Exchange Theory also lends support to Employee Engagement's mediating role in explaining how Transactional Leadership is positively related to Positive Workplace Behavior (Blau, 1964; Saks, 2006).

Along with the Social Exchange Theory (SET), this research also looks at Organizational Support Theory (OST), which states that employees have a global perception about how much the organization values their contributions and how much the organization cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Essentially, because of the way an employee views the organization's behavior, they form an assumption about how committed the organization is to them through the employee's perceptions of the organization's support for the employee (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The higher the perceived level of organizational support, the more likely it is that an employee will develop a greater emotional bond, trust, and willingness to return the support the organization has provided (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Caesens et al., 2017).

This study combines SET and OST to develop an overall understanding of both the mechanism and contextual factors through which Transactional Leadership is positively related to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). More specifically, Transactional Leadership should increase Employee Engagement through the process of reciprocity, but Perceived Organizational Support will enhance the effectiveness of those reciprocity transactions by providing additional reinforcement to the employee's belief that the organization supports and values them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Saks, 2006; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Recent hospitality and organizational behavior research (Albrecht et al., 2024; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023; Zhou & Segumpan, 2024) continues to support the relevance of Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory in the explanation of employee engagement, leadership effectiveness, and discretionary workplace behaviors across service organizations.

Social Exchange Theory provides the theoretical basis for H1 and H2, whereas Organizational Support Theory provides the theoretical basis for H3 and H4.

2.2. Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Transactional Leadership refers to a model of leadership based on a reciprocal relationship between leader and follower, whereby both parties offer something of value in exchange for respect, trust, and support. In this model, leaders clarify what performance expectations are, identify what each employee's role will be in the organization, monitor employee performance, and review employee performance against established performance indicators at predetermined intervals (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Avolio et al., 1999). The biggest difference between Transactional and Transformational Leadership is that Transformational Leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, and value-based change while Transactional Leadership is mainly about structure or compliance with anticipated outcomes, the reinforcement (reward or punishment) of the desired behaviors, and the establishment of an environment where proper behavior is encouraged (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). By clarifying expectations through clear communication and establishing performance-based reward systems, transactional leaders create opportunities for their employees to meet their responsibilities to the best of their abilities and continue delivering quality service to customers (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

While there are some criticisms of Transactional Leadership's focus on compliance and extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation, it is well suited to hospitality organizations,

which tend to have high service expectations, a highly structured work environment, and an emphasis on delivering consistent performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In these environments, employees must adhere to a set of established processes, provide high-quality service, and respond appropriately to customers' requests. Due to the importance of employee role clarification, timely performance feedback, recognition of employee accomplishments, and setting performance expectations, the application of these types of leadership practices may contribute to overall organizational effectiveness and service quality within hospitality environments (Karatepe, 2013; Breevaart et al., 2014).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (Organ, 1994) are behaviors that are voluntary on the part of employees and that contribute to the effectiveness of the organization. They include behaviors like voluntarily assisting co-workers in busy operating times, assisting new employees to adjust to their new workplaces, proactively addressing customer service issues, creating a positive environment for their company, and building a positive image for their organization (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012).

With respect to Social Exchange Theory, employees' perceptions of leadership practices as fair, supportive, and performance-increasing lead to positive workplace behaviors as an expression of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This means that Transactional Leadership may be an encouragement for OCB, endowing a predictable system of exchange and creating a basis for employees' understanding of the relationship that exists between effort and recognition and the resulting organizational outcomes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990).

In terms of actual findings about OCB and Transactional Leadership, the empirical evidence exists but is mixed. Several empirical studies illustrate a positive relationship between Transactional Leadership and discretionary behavior as they both reinforce work motivation and expectations through contingent reward systems (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990); while other studies purport that Transactional Leadership results in compliance-oriented behavior versus actual citizenship behavior, since employees may focus most on extrinsic rewards over intrinsic commitment to their organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). More recent research has also continued to find positive associations between leadership behaviors and OCB across samples, contexts, and leadership styles (Ha & Moon, 2023; Zhou & Segumpan, 2024).

In crisis-oriented hospitality settings such as Lebanon, it is particularly important for employees under uncertain economic and/or organizational climates to receive some form of outline, directions, specifications, and or some other form of performance clarity and structural integrity (Karatepe et al., 2021; Chen & Eyoun, 2021). Thus, Transactional Leadership serves to create a climate of increased confidence in meeting expectations of performance and priorities held by the organizations, which ultimately creates opportunities for discretionary action(s) in support of organizational continuity and quality of service delivery (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Breevaart et al., 2014; AlGhamdi et al., 2026).

H1. *TL is positively associated with OCB.*

2.3. Employee Engagement as a Mediating Variable

According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), Employee Engagement refers to a work-related psychological state that is positive and productive, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees are characterized by their high degree of emotional attachment, cognitive commitment, enthusiasm, and persistence in their work roles (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Albrecht et al., 2021). Therefore, within the hospitality sector, Employee Engagement is vital, as the quality of service is determined by the emotional energy, attentiveness, interaction with customers, and willingness of the employee to expend

discretionary effort in their customer experiences (Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Ribeiro et al., 2018).

There is a psycho-social mechanism in which the relationship between leaders and their employees will not occur directly, but rather through the establishment of positive attitudinal and motivational conditions (Saks, 2006; Albrecht et al., 2021). Transactional Leadership can foster Employee Engagement when transactional leaders reduce role ambiguity, clarify expectation, acknowledge performance achievements, and establish fair reciprocal exchange relationships (Breevaart et al., 2014; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Accordingly, Social Exchange Theory further supports the assertion that Employee Engagement may serve as a psychological mediator of the relationship between leadership and positive employee behavior (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006). When employees perceive that they have had positive exchange relationships with their leaders, they are likely to reciprocate those positive feelings through a higher level of psychological investment in their jobs (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006). Engaged employees are subsequently more likely to demonstrate Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), as they are emotionally connected to the success of the organization and are therefore more willing to expend discretionary effort on the job (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Ribeiro et al., 2018).

More recent empirical evidence also indicates that higher employee engagement is associated with stronger organizational citizenship behaviors across service organizations (Songio et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2023). For example, Karatepe (2013) examined the mediating role of engagement on workplace outcomes in the hospitality sector (Karatepe, 2013). Similarly, Bakker and Albrecht (2018) reported that work engagement significantly contributes to positive discretionary workplace behaviors (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Albrecht et al., 2024).

H2. *Employee Engagement mediates the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.*

2.4. Perceived Organizational Support as a Moderating Variable

As per the definition provided by Eisenberger and his associates, POS is defined by employees' global beliefs about the extent to which their organization values their contributions, as well as its level of concern for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Eisenberger and his colleagues developed the theory of POS, which holds that employees develop perceptions of organizational commitment towards themselves based on how they are treated, recognized, and supported by systems of support; whether they are treated equitably; and how the organization responds to them (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Employees' POS is especially critical to hospitality organizations because hospitality employees often find themselves in emotionally taxing situations, pressured by their workload, receiving customer complaints, feeling operationally stressed, and working nontraditional hours (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015). Under such circumstances, employees may feel very sensitive to whether or not the organization supports them in doing their jobs or whether the organization expects them to comply with performance expectations (Caesens et al., 2017).

Employees do not evaluate the behaviors of their leaders in isolation from the context of the organization in which the leader resides. They utilize a larger organizational climate context characterized by support, equity, trust, and reciprocity to interpret a leader's behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Because of this, employees' reactions to Transactional Leadership behaviors such as performance monitoring, contin-

gent rewards, corrective feedback, and goal clarification will tend to differ based upon the employee's POS (Breevaart et al., 2014; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

When POS is high, employees likely view Transactional Leadership as being developmental in nature, fair in intent, and intended to assist employees in succeeding in their roles (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Conversely, if POS is low, employees are likely to view Transactional Leadership as overly controlling, solely instrumental, and exhibiting a lack of genuine concern for the welfare of their employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Caesens et al., 2017).

In Lebanon, an example of a crisis-affected economy, the moderator role of POS becomes very important because individuals may have increased concerns about jobs (for example, job security), organizational continuity (for example, instability within an organization), their financial security (for example), and their own emotional exhaustion (Karatepe et al., 2021; Chen & Eyoun, 2021). In such situations, supportive workplace climates are likely to be critical to bolstering employee psychological resilience and enhancing responsiveness to their leader's behavior (Caesens et al., 2017; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015).

H3. *Perceived Organizational Support positively moderates the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement.*

2.5. Conditional Indirect Effect of Perceived Organizational Support

There is a growing emphasis among contemporary leadership researchers on using conditional process models to explain how and whether leadership is associated with employee outcomes. Conditional process models combine the concepts of mediation and moderation in an integrated framework that can help researchers more fully understand organizational behavior phenomena (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

The current study proposes that Employee Engagement serves as the psychological mechanism that facilitates the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is proposed to act as the contextually relevant condition that strengthens the mediation relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Specifically, POS is expected to moderate the Transactional Leadership–Employee Engagement relationship, thus influencing the strength of the indirect relationship between Transactional Leadership and OCB (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

When an organization has a high level of Perceived Organizational Support (POS), employees are likely to be more engaged due to the presence of Transactional Leadership practices such as recognition, feedback, and examples of good performance (Breevaart et al., 2014; Albrecht et al., 2021). Specifically, when Transactional Leadership practices are perceived as part of a positive, supportive, and fair organizational climate, employees are more likely to engage in Organizational Citizenship Behaviors such as cooperation, voluntary help to others, pro-active customer service, and support for the organization (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). Conversely, when there is a low level of POS, employees may perceive Transactional Leadership behaviors as being primarily supervisory or compliance based, rather than being supportive or developmental (Caesens et al., 2017; Eisenberger et al., 2002). Therefore, looking through the lens of moderated mediation provides a more complex understanding of the effectiveness of leadership, as an organization's context is significantly positively associated with leadership outcomes (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

H4. *The indirect relationship between Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement becomes stronger when Perceived Organizational Support is high.*

3. Conceptual Framework and Research Model

This research's theoretical basis is constructed using Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory, which can be used to explain the mechanisms and situational contexts through which the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior can be explained (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theoretical model integrates all of the direct, mediated, moderated, and conditionally indirect relationships into a single conditioned process model (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

In the model, Transactional Leadership is the predictor variable, and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior is the criterion variable. Employee Engagement is theorized to be the mediated variable, which provides an explanation for the psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Perceived Organizational Support serves as the moderator variable that positively moderates the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement. (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

This theoretical model indicates that Transactional Leadership is positively associated with Employee Engagement through establishing role clarity; providing performance expectations, contingent rewards, corrective feedback; and providing operational guidance to employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Breveaart et al., 2014). Higher levels of Employee Engagement are expected to be associated with higher levels of Organizational Citizenship Behavior through employees' voluntary cooperation and assistance to others within their workplace, and through their proactive contributions to their workplace (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Karatepe, 2013).

Thus, the theoretical model indicates a moderated mediation model whereby the indirect relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement will vary dependent upon the level of Perceived Organizational Support. More particularly, the indirect effect will be expected to be stronger when Perceived Organizational Support is perceived to be high (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

Methodologically, the proposed model is consistent with PROCESS Macro Model 7, where the first stage of the mediation process is moderated by a contextual variable (Hayes, 2015). While theoretically it might have been feasible to model Perceived Organizational Support as a mediator of the relationships among our study variables, and perhaps also to model Employee Engagement as a moderator of these relationships, we felt our proposed moderated mediation model most closely fits the theoretical underpinnings of our study. Social Exchange Theory posits that employees should reciprocate transactional leader behaviors through engagement, which is the psychological mechanism driving the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior, while Organizational Support Theory considers Perceived Organizational Support as a contextual condition that strengthens or weakens employees' responses to leader behaviors rather than treating POS as an outcome of leadership. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

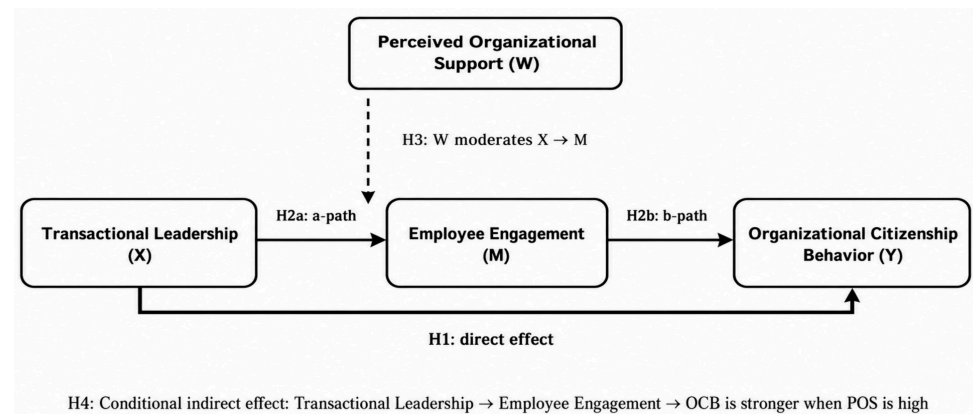


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional methodology was used in this study to analyze the relationships among Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support (POS), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) within fine dining hospitality businesses in Beirut, Lebanon (e.g., restaurants and hotels that offer an upscale experience). A quantitative methodology was deemed appropriate because the purpose of the research was to test empirically the hypothesized relationships developed from theory (theoretical constructs) by investigating the relationships between numerous latent variables through the application of proven statistical analysis methods (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023).

The research was deductive and based on theory, as the study's theoretical framework was developed based on Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory. The study was designed to test both direct and indirect relationships, as well as the conditional effect of POS on the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement.

Covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was used to assess the measurement model and examine construct validity. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 24, while SPSS 27 and PROCESS Macro 4.2 were used to conduct descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, mediation analysis, moderation analysis, and moderated mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023).

In this study, CB-SEM was used rather than Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because the orientation was to test and confirm theory, rather than to develop or predict theory. The model itself is grounded on Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory and involves consideration of overall model fit, construct validity, and the hypothesized relationships between latent variables. CB-SEM is the preferred approach to confirmatory research with a grounding in theory and an adequate sample size, while PLS-SEM is promoted for exploratory research, for prediction-oriented models, or for studies where sample sizes are limited (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023; Hair et al., 2022). Since the sample size was relatively large at 428 respondents and the orientation of the study was theory testing, CB-SEM appeared appropriate.

Bootstrap methodologies, using 5000 repetitions, were utilized for estimates of indirect effect and confidence interval through bootstrap procedures, which is often suggested as an acceptable method for mediation and conditional process analysis since it does not assume any normal distribution of indirect effects and provides better estimates for mediation and moderation relationships (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

As part of the analysis, control variables were also examined, such as gender, age, education level, and length of time spent with the organization due to the many studies conducted on organizational behavior and hospitality that indicate demographic characteristics can positively predict Employee Engagement, workplace perceptions, and discretionary organizational behavior (Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015).

4.2. Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The participants of the current study consisted of the people employed at upscale hospitality and fine dining establishments in Beirut, Lebanon. Because of the high reliance on employee interactions in the hospitality industry, as well as emotional labor, consistency in the delivery of service, and discretionary behavior on the job, effective leadership is important in this environment (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015).

Fine dining and upscale hospitality establishments were chosen due to the high levels of customer expectations, the intense demands of hotel operations, and the high levels of service quality expectations from customers (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). The study was conducted in Beirut as it is Lebanon's main center for hospitality and tourism and contains a high concentration of fine dining restaurants, luxury hotels, and service-oriented businesses.

The study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling method due to limitations with access and operational factors associated with hospitality organizations. Although probability sampling methods are usually highly preferred for quantitative research, many hospitality employees are not easily accessed due to the high demands of their work schedules, any confidentiality issues surrounding their business, operational pressures on managers, and the requirement for approval from management prior to providing access to employees (Etikan et al., 2016).

Before the data were collected from the sample of respondents, managers and HR representatives from the selected hospitality organizations were contacted and provided with the required approvals to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaires to the sample. Once the necessary approval from these hospitality organizations was obtained, the questionnaires were sent electronically via Google Forms to each participant through official communication channels as well as to employees' networks.

The high response rate may be a function of obtaining support from the participating hospitality organizations. After management approval, managers and/or HR representatives sent e-mails on the behalf of the researchers and encouraged employees to participate. The questionnaire being anonymous, easy to use, brief, and relevant to their jobs may have contributed to the rate.

The electronic distribution of 500 questionnaires resulted in a total of 441 usable responses (88.2% response rate) that were returned electronically. Six questionnaires were eliminated from the data screening process due to incomplete responses, extreme outliers, or patterned answering behavior. Seven questionnaires were excluded for excessive missing values/inconsistent responding. After the screening process, the final sample size consisted of a total of 428 valid questionnaires (85.6% of the total sample distributed).

Although participants completed the questionnaire online, a minority of responses had missing data because respondents tended to exit the survey before completing all items or submitted them incomplete. All responses with greater than 10% of their data missing, or that contained an inconsistent response pattern, were removed ahead of screening. Cases which "passed" but contained trivial amounts of missing data did not affect the analysis, thus no data imputation techniques were required. Only usable cases were retained during analysis.

The final sample size was considered statistically adequate for covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) and conditional process analysis. According to Hair

et al. (2019a), sample sizes greater than 200 are generally adequate for performing structural equation modeling (SEM) with latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019a). A G*Power version 3.1.9.7 analysis for multiple regression using a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80, and four predictors indicated a minimum required sample size of 85 respondents. The final sample of 428 respondents substantially exceeded this requirement, providing adequate statistical power for the analyses performed (Faul et al., 2009). Table 1 summarizes the data-screening process and the final number of valid questionnaires retained for analysis.

Table 1. Data screening and final sample.

Stage	Number	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	500	100.0% of distributed
Responses received	441	88.2% of distributed
Excluded due to incomplete responses, outliers, or patterned answers	6	1.36% of responses received
Excluded due to inconsistent patterns or excessive missing values	7	1.59% of responses received
Valid questionnaires retained for analysis	428	97.05% of responses received; 85.6% of distributed

4.3. Measures

The study variables were measured using previously validated scales from the organizational behavior and hospitality literature. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Transactional Leadership was measured using six items adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1995) and Avolio et al. (1999). Although MLQ perceives Transactional Leadership in terms of contingent reward and management-by-exception, our study treated Transactional Leadership as a higher-order construct, as have other empirical studies when examining its overall effects on employee attitudes and behaviors. As it was the objective of our study to assess the overall effect of Transactional Leadership as part of the proposed moderated mediation framework, treating it as an aggregated construct was deemed appropriate. Employee Engagement was measured using six items adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). Perceived Organizational Support was measured using six items adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). Organizational Citizenship Behavior was measured using six items adapted from P. M. Podsakoff et al. (1990).

The original measurement items were adapted to fit the fine dining and upscale hospitality context in Beirut, Lebanon. Minor wording adjustments were made to support contextual relevance, such as referring to supervisors, hospitality establishments, service employees, workplace support, and discretionary service behavior, while preserving the conceptual meaning of the original scales. The adapted questionnaire was reviewed by academic specialists in organizational behavior and hospitality management to support clarity, content validity, readability, contextual suitability, and appropriate sequencing of the items. The evaluation focused on simplicity of item wording, relevance of the item to the situation, item wording, and context for the Lebanese hospitality industry. Based on their feedback, some wordings were changed for clarity and ease of reading. No items were removed as all were generally relevant to the developed study constructs.

Because the target respondents included hospitality employees in Lebanon, the questionnaire was translated from English into Arabic using a translation and back-translation

procedure. First, the English version was translated into Arabic by a bilingual academic familiar with management and hospitality terminology. A second bilingual reviewer then back-translated the Arabic version into English. The original and back-translated versions were compared, and minor wording adjustments were made to support semantic equivalence, clarity, and contextual appropriateness. The measurement sources and example items for each construct are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement sources.

Construct	Role	Measurement Source	Example Item
Transactional Leadership	Independent variable	Bass and Avolio (1995); Avolio et al. (1999)	My supervisor clearly explains what employees will receive when performance goals are achieved.
Employee Engagement	Mediator	Schaufeli et al. (2002)	I feel enthusiastic about my job.
Perceived Organizational Support	Moderator	Eisenberger et al. (1986)	The organization values my contributions.
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Dependent variable	P. M. Podsakoff et al. (1990)	I willingly help others who have work-related problems.

4.4. Pilot Study

A pilot test involving 30 employees from fine dining and upscale hospitality locations in Beirut was used to assess the questionnaire's clarity, wording appropriateness, item ordering, and suitability for the Lebanese hospitality context (Hair et al., 2019a). Minor wording changes were made to increase clarity and contextual appropriateness based on participant feedback. Items were generally considered to be clear and consistent with employees' experiences in the workplace; hence, no significant restructuring was needed. Reliability analyses conducted at the pilot-testing stage for the constructs suggested acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for internal consistency, and experts evaluated the items for content validity. The pilot indicated that the wording was clear, relevant, and appropriate for the population. Pilot-test respondents were not included in the final sample employed in the statistical analyses.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data for this research project, ethical research principles were adhered to throughout the data collection process (Bell et al., 2022). Participation within this research study was completely voluntary. Before participating in filling out the survey, participants were informed as to why the study was being completed, and that it was of an educational nature (research study). Before accessing these Survey Questions, participants were required to review study information and give voluntary consent to participate. Electronic consent was obtained prior to completion of the questionnaire for all subjects who volunteered through the study. Participants were also made aware that they maintained the right to withdraw from the research study at any point in time without negatively affecting their situation or any other consequence.

No personally identifiable information was collected from respondents in order to maintain respondent anonymity and confidentiality (Bell et al., 2022). Prior to sending out the questionnaire, organizational approval was obtained from hospitality managers or any respective administrative representatives. To minimize the possibility of participants feeling coerced by obtaining manager approval, participants were told that participation was voluntary, that managers would not know who chose to participate or not, and that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. Managers did not see completed

questionnaires and individual-level responses, and all data were reported only in aggregate forms so participants could not be identified. Data collected from the respondents was securely maintained and analyzed solely by the researchers for educational purposes of furthering research.

4.6. Common Method Bias

Due to the fact that all data were collected from the same respondents at the same time using a self-administered questionnaire, common method bias was potentially an issue (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012). As such, both procedural and statistical remedies were implemented to reduce and investigate the potential for common method bias (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012).

Procedurally, respondents were assured that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential to reduce evaluation apprehension and social desirability bias. The wording of the questionnaire items was also relatively clear and neutral, and predictor, mediator, moderator, and outcome variables were placed in separate sections in the questionnaire to help reduce their tendency to extrapolate causation between constructs.

Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was performed as an initial examination of common method bias. The first unrotated factor accounted for 34.7% of the total variance, which is below the suggested threshold of 50%. Full collinearity VIF values were calculated according to Kock's (2015) recommendations. All VIF values were lower than the maximum threshold of 3.3, thereby confirming that neither multicollinearity nor common method bias represented a threat to the study. To assess the possibility of common method bias, the results of Harman's single-factor test and full collinearity VIF assessment are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Common method bias test.

Test	Criterion	Obtained Value	Decision
Harman's single-factor test	First unrotated factor should explain less than 50% of total variance	34.7%	Common method bias is not critical
Full collinearity VIF	VIF values should be below 3.3	All values below 3.3	Common method bias is not critical

4.7. Non-Response Bias

Non-response bias was assessed by comparing early and late respondents, as recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977). Late respondents are used as a proxy for non-respondents since late respondents should be more like those who never respond than those who respond earlier.

In this case, early respondents represent the first 25% of all valid responses, while late respondents represent the last 25% of valid responses. The survey was conducted during a single data-collection timeframe instead of multiple waves of collection. Following Armstrong and Overton (1977), respondents were categorized based on the order of when they submitted completed questionnaires. Based on our analytical sample of 428 respondents, this resulted in 107 early respondents, and 107 late respondents. Independent-samples t-tests were then computed to compare the two groups on the primary constructs, Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

All constructs were not statistically different from each other at $p < 0.05$. Non-response bias should not be a major concern in this study. Table 4 reports the comparison between early and late respondents used to assess non-response bias.

Table 4. Non-response bias assessment.

Construct	Mean Early Responses	Mean Late Responses	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Transactional Leadership	3.71	3.68	0.84	0.401	No significant difference
Employee Engagement	3.79	3.75	0.96	0.338	No significant difference
Perceived Organizational Support	3.63	3.59	1.03	0.304	No significant difference
OCB	3.86	3.82	0.91	0.363	No significant difference

4.8. Data Analysis Strategy

In this research, data were systematically collected, analyzed, and presented using a number of different techniques and methodologies. The first step in the Data Analysis process was to screen the data for response completeness, missing values, outliers, and normality. Descriptive statistics were also calculated in order to describe respondents' demographic information and give a summary of the total sample (Hair et al., 2019a).

The measurement instrument was tested for reliability using coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha) and through composite reliability. construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and the overall fit of the measurement model (overall model fit) were evaluated with confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 24 (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023). The assessment of convergent validity was achieved by using standardized factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant Validity was evaluated based on the Fornell–Larcker criteria and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015).

Multiple fit indices were then used to evaluate the fit of the measurement model (CFI, TLI, GFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and chi-square/df) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2023). SPSS 27 and PROCESS Macro (version 4.2) were used to test the hypotheses of this study (Hayes, 2015). Regression analysis was used to assess the direct effects; PROCESS Model 4 was utilized to assess the mediating effects; PROCESS Model 1 was used to assess the moderating effects; and PROCESS Model 7 was used to assess the overall effect of moderated mediation (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015).

5. Results

5.1. Respondent Profile

From 428 total questionnaires included in our study, valid responses from the demographic data presented above are critical to assessing the performance of employees in fine dining restaurants, upscale hotels, and other hotels in the city of Beirut, Lebanon (Hair et al., 2019a). Male respondents made up 56.3% of respondents; women made up 43.7%. The ratio between men and women is fairly even, thereby improving the overall representation and diversity of the sample size of study participants regarding their working positions within the hospitality sector.

Regarding age, the majority of those surveyed were between the ages of 26 and 35 years, at 39.5%, with respondents between 36 and 45 years of age making up the second largest category at 32.9%. The third category was the 18–25 age group with 16.6%, and finally, the fourth category was made up of informants aged 46 years and older with 11.0%.

In reference to education, 50.0% of participants stated that they held bachelor's degrees, with 32.2% holding master's degrees. In total, 11.9% of the respondent sample completed high school, while 5.9% were reported to have completed other forms of education. Regarding years worked in the hospitality industry, 40.0% of respondents indicated they had been employed for 5–10 years, and 29.0% reported having worked in that industry

for between 2 and 5 years. The demographic profile of the final sample is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 428).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	241	56.3
	Female	187	43.7
Age	18–25	71	16.6
	26–35	169	39.5
	36–45	141	32.9
	46 and above	47	11
Years of Experience	Less than 2 years	63	14.7
	2–5 years	124	29
	5–10 years	171	40
	More than 10 years	70	16.3
Education Level	High school	51	11.9
	Bachelor's degree	214	50
	Master's degree	138	32.2
	Other	25	5.9

5.2. Preliminary Data Screening and Normality Assessment

Before performing the analysis on the data, the dataset was assessed in terms of the presence of missing data, the existence of outliers, the pattern of responding, and the use of normal distributions in the data in order to prepare the data for multivariate analyses or structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023).

Any questionnaires with missing information, patterned responding, or inconsistent behavior in responding were excluded during the data screening process. In addition, the values of the multivariate outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance methods to prevent potentially erroneous values from distorting the analysis results (Tabachnick et al., 2007).

Skewness and kurtosis statistics were calculated to determine the normality of the variable distributions. According to Hair et al. (2019a), when performing structural equation modeling (SEM), skewness values within ± 2 and kurtosis values within ± 7 indicate they are normal. All of the variables were found to have skewness and kurtosis values within these specified thresholds, which indicates that they were normally distributed, and therefore the data are valid to utilize for multivariate analyses (Hair et al., 2019a).

In conclusion, the results indicate that the distributions of the data had no significant violations of the normality assumptions, thus providing further evidence that the data are valid for use in confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis, and conditional process modelling (Kline, 2023). Table 6 provides the descriptive statistics and normality assessment results for the main study variables.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics and normality assessment.

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transactional Leadership	3.70	0.71	−0.824	0.936
Employee Engagement	3.77	0.68	−0.915	1.104

Table 6. *Cont.*

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Organizational Support	3.61	0.73	−0.638	−0.842
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	3.84	0.66	−1.214	1.376

5.3. Reliability and Convergent Validity

To validate the reliability and convergent validity of all the constructs in the study, each measurement model was examined using four statistical measures: Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, standard (factored) loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2019a; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Reliability for all constructs was established to be at an acceptable (i.e., satisfactory) level, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.887 to 0.912 (all well over the 0.70 benchmark) and composite reliability between 0.901 and 0.924 (Hair et al., 2019a).

The establishment of convergent validity for each construct was completed through the use of standard (factored) loadings and AVE. All of the standardized (factored) loadings of the measurement items for each latent construct were above the 0.70 benchmark, showing that the measurement items for each of the latent constructs were adequately representative of their respective latent construct (Hair et al., 2019a). In addition, each construct had an AVE above the 0.50 benchmark, with values ranging from 0.648 to 0.682, which demonstrates that the constructs were able to account for a significant proportion of the variation in the associated measurement items (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The reliability and convergent validity results for the study constructs are reported in Table 7.

Table 7. Reliability and validity statistics.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Decision
Transactional Leadership	0.887	0.901	0.648	Acceptable
Employee Engagement	0.912	0.924	0.671	Acceptable
Perceived Organizational Support	0.894	0.908	0.659	Acceptable
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.903	0.917	0.682	Acceptable

To provide additional evidence regarding the adequacy of the measurement model, the standardized factor loadings for each measurement item are presented in Table 8.

As shown in Table 8, all standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.721 to 0.871. These results provide evidence of satisfactory indicator reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 8. Item-wise standardized factor loadings.

Construct	Item	Standardized Factor Loading
Transactional Leadership	TL1	0.842
	TL2	0.807
	TL3	0.765
	TL4	0.721

Table 8. Cont.

Construct	Item	Standardized Factor Loading
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.871
	EE2	0.839
	EE3	0.812
	EE4	0.776
	EE5	0.744
Perceived Organizational Support	POS1	0.856
	POS2	0.824
	POS3	0.795
	POS4	0.763
	POS5	0.741
	POS6	0.732
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	OCB1	0.868
	OCB2	0.836
	OCB3	0.809
	OCB4	0.782
	OCB5	0.751

5.4. Measurement Model Fit

AMOS 24 was utilized for confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model and to evaluate how well the observable indicators corresponded with their latent construct counterparts (Kline, 2023; Hair et al., 2019a). The proposed four-factor measurement produced acceptable goodness-of-fit values across multiple fit indices, with CFI, TLI, and GFI all above the threshold of 0.90 and RMSEA and SRMR below the threshold of 0.08; furthermore, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio was also within acceptable limits (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2023).

Further assessment of measurement validity included the evaluation of alternative measurement models that were compared to the proposed four-factor model, i.e., one-factor, two-factor, and three-factor models were estimated to identify either the potential for construct overlap or common method error for measurement (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003; Kline, 2023). The proposed four-factor model provided substantially superior fit indices to those of alternative measurement models, therefore confirming the distinctiveness of each construct (Hair et al., 2019a). Table 9 compares the fit indices of the proposed four-factor measurement model with the alternative measurement models.

Table 9. Measurement model fit and alternative model comparison.

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Decision
One-factor model	5.84	0.712	0.681	0.694	0.109	0.094	Poor fit
Two-factor model	4.31	0.804	0.771	0.783	0.088	0.081	Weak fit
Three-factor model	3.26	0.872	0.846	0.861	0.073	0.067	Moderate fit
Four-factor model	2.14	0.936	0.921	0.909	0.054	0.041	Acceptable fit

5.5. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity for each of the constructs was assessed using two different criteria: Fornell–Larcker and HTMT (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). Following the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is expected to be larger than the correlation coefficients between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of the AVE for Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior all surpassed their corresponding correlation coefficients. Additionally, the HTMT ratios, which serve as a more conservative measure of construct uniqueness, were all less than the recommended threshold of 0.85, confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct and differ conceptually (Henseler et al., 2015). The Fornell–Larcker criterion results for discriminant validity are reported in Table 10.

Table 10. Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Construct	TL	EE	POS	OCB
Transactional Leadership (TL)	0.805			
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.621	0.819		
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	0.584	0.677	0.812	
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	0.649	0.714	0.603	0.826

Table 11 presents the HTMT results used to further assess discriminant validity.

Table 11. HTMT results.

Relationship	HTMT Value	Decision
TL-EE	0.681	Acceptable
TL-POS	0.642	Acceptable
TL-OCB	0.703	Acceptable
EE-POS	0.741	Acceptable
EE-OCB	0.782	Acceptable
POS-OCB	0.662	Acceptable

5.6. Correlation Analysis and Multicollinearity

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated in order to explore potential relationships between the primary research variables prior to testing the hypotheses (Hair et al., 2019a). The correlation results showed that Transactional Leadership (IV), Employee Engagement (M), Perceived Organizational Support (IV), and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (D) were all significantly positively correlated, thereby providing some preliminary evidence of the hypothesized relationships that were set forth in the conceptual framework.

The second step of the analysis was to assess multicollinearity through tolerance (T) and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics (Hair et al., 2019a; Kline, 2023). The VIF values were all well within acceptable limits, as VIF did not exceed 5.00 for any of the indicated variables; additionally, all T values were above 0.20, indicating acceptable levels of tolerance (Hair et al., 2019a). The above results indicate that multicollinearity is not likely to be an issue, and therefore, the regression estimates are likely to be both stable and reliable. The Pearson correlation matrix among the main study variables is shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Correlation matrix.

Variables	TL	EE	POS	OCB
Transactional Leadership (TL)	1			
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.621 **	1		
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	0.584 **	0.677 **	1	
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	0.649 **	0.714 **	0.603 **	1

Note: ** indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

The tolerance and VIF statistics used to assess multicollinearity are reported in Table 13.

Table 13. Multicollinearity assessment.

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Decision
Transactional Leadership	0.612	1.634	No multicollinearity
Employee Engagement	0.538	1.859	No multicollinearity
Perceived Organizational Support	0.571	1.751	No multicollinearity

5.7. Hypotheses Testing

5.7.1. Direct Effect Analysis

The direct effect of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior was examined using regression analysis (Hair et al., 2019a). The results demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$). As such, employees who observe a greater degree of Transactional Leadership are likely to engage in discretionary work behaviors that contribute to the functioning of the organization and quality of service (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; P. M. Podsakoff et al., 1990). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Table 14 presents the regression results for the direct effect of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Table 14. Direct effect analysis.

Relationship	β	t-Value	p-Value	Result
TL $\rightarrow$ OCB	0.486	10.731	<0.001	Supported

5.7.2. Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of Employee Engagement in the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior was examined using PROCESS Macro Model 4 with 5000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2015). The bootstrapped indirect effect's confidence interval did not include zero and thus was statistically significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Hence, Transactional Leadership was positively associated with Employee Engagement and therefore Employee Engagement will have a positive relationship on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported. The mediation analysis results for the indirect effect through Employee Engagement are reported in Table 15.

Table 15. Mediation analysis (indirect effect of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement).

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Result
TL $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ OCB	0.247	0.181	0.338	Significant

5.7.3. Moderation Analysis

Using PROCESS Macro Model 1 to analyze the moderation of Perceived Organizational Support on the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement, the interaction of Perceived Organizational Support and Transactional Leadership was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.271, p < 0.001$) (Hayes, 2015). Therefore, the results provide evidence that Perceived Organizational Support moderates the positive relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported. Table 16 reports the moderation analysis results for the interaction between Transactional Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support.

Table 16. Moderation analysis.

Interaction Effect	β	t-Value	p-Value	Result
TL $\times$ POS $\rightarrow$ EE	0.271	5.942	<0.001	Supported

Note: β = standardized regression coefficient; LLCI = lower limit of the 95% bootstrap confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit of the 95% bootstrap confidence interval; a hypothesis is considered supported when $p < 0.05$ or when the bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero.

5.7.4. Conditional Indirect Effect Analysis

In order to test the moderated mediation relationship from the conceptual model, PROCESS Macro Model 7 utilizing bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was employed (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015). The PROCESS Macro Model 7 was selected because it is the accepted method for testing conditional process models with both mediation and moderation. The model provides bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for indirect effects (Hayes, 2015) and has been frequently used for investigating moderated mediation in organizational and behavioral research. Since the latent constructs had previously demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity in confirmatory factor analyses, PROCESS Model 7 was considered to be adequate for estimating the proposed conditional indirect effects. The moderated mediation index was statistically significant since the bootstrapped confidence interval did not include zero (Hayes, 2015). Results indicated that the indirect effect of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement differed according to levels of Perceived Organizational Support. More specifically, indirect effects were strongest at high levels of Perceived Organizational Support, moderate at normal levels of Perceived Organizational Support, and least at low levels of Perceived Organizational Support. As a result, hypothesis 4 was accepted. The moderated mediation results, including the index of moderated mediation, are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17. Conditional indirect effect.

Effect (β)	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Result
0.127	0.074	0.204	Significant

Table 18 shows the conditional indirect effects of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior at different levels of Perceived Organizational Support.

Table 18. Conditional effect β at levels of POS.

Level of POS	Effect β	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Interpretation
Low POS (−1 SD)	0.173	0.112	0.258	Significant but weaker
Mean POS	0.247	0.181	0.338	Significant
High POS (+1 SD)	0.321	0.236	0.421	Significant and stronger

5.8. Explained Variance and Predictive Strength

To evaluate the explanatory power of the proposed model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated for the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2019b). Based on the results, the model accounted for 48% of the variance in Employee Engagement and 56% of the variance of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. These values represent moderate to high levels of explanatory power in organizational behavior and hospitality (Hair et al., 2019b; Chin, 1998). The explanatory power of the model, based on the coefficient of determination, is reported in Table 19.

Table 19. Explained Variance.

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Employee Engagement	0.48	Moderate explanatory power
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.56	Moderate-to-substantial explanatory power

The final structural model, including the standardized coefficients and conditional indirect effect, is presented in Figure 2.

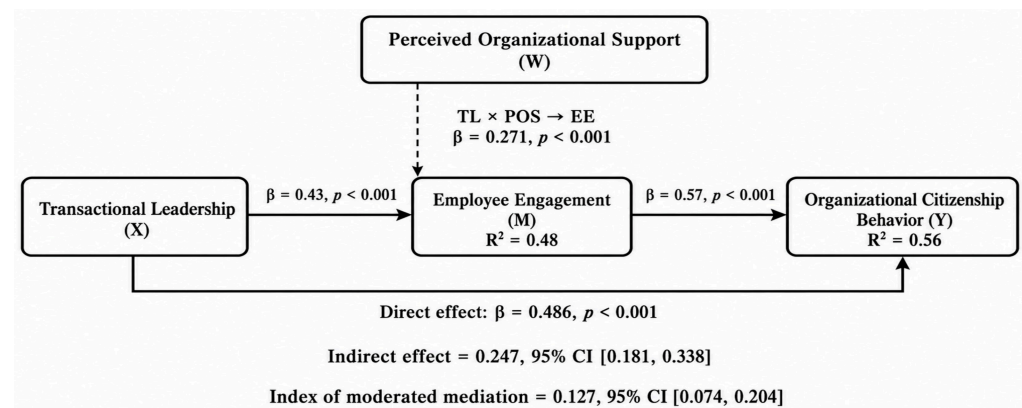


Figure 2. Structural model with standardized coefficients and conditional indirect effect.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the connections between Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The study was conducted in fine dining hospitality locations throughout Beirut, Lebanon. All hypotheses of this research were validated, and the results show that when employees are engaged and perceive the support of the organization as highly favorable, Transactional Leadership has a positive relationship on discretionary employee behavior.

Transactional Leadership was positively related to OCB. This is supportive of Social Exchange Theory as the employee reciprocates this type of structured leadership with discretionary relational workplace behavior. Judge and Piccolo (2004) conducted pioneering work along this line of enquiry, whilst more recent studies by Ha and Moon (2023), and Zhou and Segumpan (2024) have also reported positive relationships in service organizations between leadership and employees tackling discretionary contributions. This may be because Transactional Leadership is effective at providing clear expected role behaviors and providing performance feedback regarding these expectations leading to reciprocity through exceeding one's specific fields of role function, and this comes more naturally in hospitality (which is a vulnerable service area due to economic turbulence). We extend previous work by indicating that this relationship also holds in the economically challenging Lebanese hospitality sector.

Second, Employee Engagement acted as a mediating factor in the relationship between Transactional Leadership and OCB. The results of our study demonstrate that Transactional Leadership is not only directly associated with OCB through the use of control or reward systems. It can also enhance employees' psychological involvement in their work (Saks, 2006; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Songio et al., 2023). When there is clarity about what is expected of them and they perceive their efforts as being valued, employees tend to exhibit greater engagement levels and therefore engage in voluntary behavior that is beneficial to their co-workers, customers, and organization (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2006). Our results are also in line with more recent findings by Songio et al. (2023), Santos et al. (2023), and Albrecht et al. (2024), whereby employee engagement is most positively associated with discretionary workplace behaviors and wider organizational outcomes. One possible explanation is that more engaged individuals have a strong psychological attachment to their work and the organization and engage in discretionary behaviors beyond the scope of the task. In the Lebanese hospitality context, where individuals continue to serve under economic uncertainty and under difficult service conditions, employee engagement may become a crucial mechanism for the association between Transactional Leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. Our findings extend previous hospitality research by demonstrating the importance of employee engagement in a crisis-afflicted service context.

Third, POS acted as a moderating factor in the relationship between Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement. This finding indicates that the effects of similar leadership behaviors may not be the same across all organizational environments. When employees perceive their organization as valuing and supporting them, Transactional Leadership will have a higher degree of effectiveness at generating engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). By contrast, if employees expect low organizational support, a Transactional Leadership agenda focused on performance expectations and contingent rewards may be perceived as more controlling than developmental, which may weaken its positive relationship with employee engagement. This interpretation is in line with the work of Caesens et al. (2017) and is bolstered by more recent work by Caesens and Stinglhamber (2023), wherein they found that perceived organizational support fosters employees' positive responses to organizational practices and leadership behaviors. The implication of these findings is that while effective leadership is important, supportive environments are equally vital for achieving employee engagement, especially in the economically volatile circumstances that hospitality organizations often operate in.

Fourth, the moderated mediation analysis confirmed that the indirect effect of Transactional Leadership on OCB through engagement was greater when POS is high. This finding provides a more nuanced view of the effectiveness of leadership and indicates that Transactional Leadership should not be isolated from the broader context of the organizational support climate. Leadership behavioral practices and organizational support systems work in concert to create Employee Engagement and discretionary behavior (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015). A potential reason for the finding is that employees are more adept when they perceive that their organization cares about them and is concerned about their well-being; under these conditions, a leadership style with clearly articulated transactional expectations of the employee's behavior and actions as a guide, followed by reward, is more appropriate to elicit and facilitate engagement, which in turn, is positively associated with organizational citizenship behavior. This finding extends recent studies of hospitality leadership by showing that Transactional Leadership is not only contingent upon leadership behaviors but also the context within which these behaviors are being deployed (AlGhamdi et al., 2026) and also shows that organizational support reinforces the indirect relationship between Transactional Leadership and organizational citizenship behavior through employee engagement. A potential explanation for this moderated mediation

effect is that employees are more likely to reciprocate Transactional Leadership behaviors when they feel they are supported by the organization. When working in a supportive organizational environment, contingent rewards, performance feedback, and role clarifications are more easily interpreted as true investments than control-oriented practices, thereby strengthening their effect on employee engagement and subsequent organizational citizenship behavior. This finding expands Social Exchange Theory by illustrating not only that Transactional Leadership is most effective when leaders can carry on valuable exchanges with their workers, but also that leader–follower exchanges are contingent on the overall “supportive climate” of the wider organization within which they take place. Perceived organizational support is thus an important boundary condition that amplifies the indirect relationship between Transactional Leadership and organizational citizenship behavior via employee engagement (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023; AlGhamdi et al., 2026).

Since employees and organizations face an economic climate that includes pressure, uncertainty, and disruption in how they deliver service, the results obtained in this research are relevant to the context of how employees and organizations in the Lebanese hospitality industry manage under these types of circumstances. Under these types of conditions, employees may need a strong structured leader as well as some organization-based assurance for their jobs. A Transactional Leadership style will give employees clear direction on their job performance, whereas POS will promote an employee’s belief that when they meet organizational expectations, they will also be treated with care, support, and reciprocity from the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

7. Theoretical Contributions

Several theoretical contributions are made to the literature on leadership, hospitality, and organizational behavior by this work. It does this first by extending Social Exchange Theory. Transactional Leadership can inspire Organizational Citizenship Behavior through Employee Engagement (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Saks, 2006). It therefore supports the view that when employees have clear expectations, receive recognition, and have a good exchange relationship with the organization, they will reciprocate through psychological engagement, and will therefore perform voluntarily behaviors at work (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Second, this work contributes to Organizational Support Theory by demonstrating that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) enhances the positive response of employees to Transactional Leadership (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The Perceived Organizational Support (POS) serves to augment the engagement effects of Transactional Leadership by acting as a contextual reinforcer. This is an important contribution because it demonstrates that the effectiveness of leaders is determined not just by their behavior, but also by whether employees perceive that the organization provides care and support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The current research findings build upon previous studies of leadership-conditioned relationships through the integration of both mediation and moderation into an empirically validated leadership model (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2015). The present study does not treat direct leadership relationship as an absolute predictor of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) but instead shows how Transactional Leadership functions and is most effective at specific points in time. The findings from this study move the leadership research discussion from a direct-effect description of leadership to a more comprehensive psychological and contextual leadership model.

Next, the results of this research advance the hospitality management literature by establishing Transactional Leadership as a viable leadership theory in fine dining and high-service venues. Although much of the hospitality research supports transformational,

servant, or ethical leadership styles, the findings from this study provide clear evidence that transaction-based and performance-oriented (transactional) leadership styles are well-suited for organizations that require high service consistency, operational coordination, and reliability (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Karatepe, 2013).

Finally, the results of this study provide important contributions to the international management and organizational behavior literature by providing data from Lebanon's hospitality industry, which has historically been excluded from the international literature regarding leadership and organizational behavior due to the lack of data. This exclusion is significant because organizations, employees, and hospitality service industry workers within a country that has been significantly impacted by economic crisis may exhibit a different reaction to both organizational support and leadership than those working within stable economic environments (Hallinger, 2018).

Although other theoretical perspectives like the Job Demands–Resources and Conservation of Resources perspectives could also provide insights into Employee Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, we adopted Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory in our model as they provide a more straightforward explanation of the principle of reciprocal exchange in social relationships and thus underlay our proposed moderated mediation model more closely. Other, different theoretical perspectives can also be used to explore these relationships, and we encourage their development in hospitality leadership research.

8. Practical and Managerial Implications

The results provide significant implications for hotel and foodservice managers. First, managers may contribute to recognizing the importance of Transactional Leadership. Employees in a fine dining operation need clear expectations, structured feedback, and performance standards, as well as recognition for these areas, to provide consistent service and to be motivated to go above and beyond their job requirements (Bass, 1985; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Second, hospitality companies must invest consistently in Employee Engagement. Engaged employees will help their colleagues, respond positively to guests, and maintain service quality (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2006). Engagement can be enhanced by recognizing employees for their contributions, providing timely feedback, creating opportunities for involvement, and linking performance expectations to equitable rewards (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Third, organizations need to enhance Perceived Organizational Support for employees by showing concern for employees' well-being, acknowledging their efforts, providing practical assistance to employees during times of stress, and establishing fair methods of communication (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is not only an employee relations concern; it is a strategic factor that enhances the effectiveness of leadership practices (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Fourth, Lebanon's hospitality organizations ought to implement an integrated leadership structure to help create a supportive work environment for their employees. As economic uncertainty increases and operational pressure mounts, employees require both structural support and emotional support. While Transactional Leadership tells the employee what to do, the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) informs employees that their employer is willing to provide the necessary supports for them during economic uncertainty. When applied together, they will help support engagement, OCB and service consistency (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Fifth, hospitality managers can use the information obtained within the current research to develop specific HR-related practices. Examples of such practices would include

developing transparent reward systems, developing supervisor training programs and employee recognition initiatives, developing structured feedback systems, and developing well-being support policies. Such practices will be beneficial in fine dining environments, where employees are required to be able to maintain emotional stability, service excellence, and customer responsiveness during economically stressful situations (Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Karatepe, 2013).

More specifically, restaurant owners and managers may help strengthen Employee Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior through relatively straightforward Transactional Leadership practices, such as clarifying performance expectations, providing timely and instructive feedback, rewarding high performance, and evaluating performance consistently, equitably, and fairly. In addition, increasing the supportive elements of the organizational context (such as managing access to managers, recognition, and development) would likely strengthen the positive effects of Transactional Leadership on employee attitudes and discretionary behaviors in the workplace.

9. Conclusions

This study explored the association between Transactional Leadership (TL) and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) of employees in fine dining and upscale hospitality settings in Beirut, Lebanon, providing support for moderated mediation. TL was positively related to OCB, such that employees who perceived higher levels of Transactional Leadership also reported more frequent discretionary workplace behavior of helping colleagues, supporting service quality, and going beyond one's job requirements. Employee Engagement (EE) mediated the association between TL and OCB, supporting the notion that this psychological state is an important mechanism by which TL is linked to citizenship behavior. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) positively moderated the relationship between TL and EE, meaning that the association between TL and engagement was enhanced when employees perceived that they received greater organizational support. Finally, a conditional indirect effect was also supported, such that the indirect association between TL and OCB through EE was stronger at greater levels of POS.

Our findings contribute to the hospitality literature as well as the literature on leadership and organizational behavior. The study extends Social Exchange Theory, showing that Transactional Leadership practices of role clarity, performance expectations, feedback, and recognition are positively related to Employee Engagement and discretionary workplace behavior. Moreover, the findings support Organizational Support Theory, demonstrating that POS enhances employees' reactions to leadership practices. By joining mediation and moderation within one conditional process model, the study contributes towards a more nuanced explanation of how and under what conditions Transactional Leadership is associated with OCB in a hospitality context. This is particularly important in Lebanon, where hospitality organizations operate amidst economic uncertainty, institutional instability, and high service pressure.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that hospitality organizations may foster leadership practices that exhibit structure while also nurturing a supportive organizational climate. To this end, managers may introduce explicitness in performance expectations, offer ample cues through continuous feedback prompts, engrave deserving efforts in operational artefacts of remembrance, and implement fair reward systems without engaging in favoritism. At the same time, organizations can enhance POS via concern for employee welfare, practical support provisions during difficult periods, and open communication throughout. In this way, hospitality organizations create enabling conditions that predispose employees to feel more engaged and act as good citizens in

the organization life-cycle process, where service reliability and progress is the product delivery path.

Despite its contributions, the study has a number of limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prohibits researchers from making claims regarding causal relationships of TL, EE, POS, and OCB. Second, the reliance on self-reported data from the same respondents provides an opportunity for common method bias, though procedural and statistical remedies were applied to reduce it. Third, the use of convenience sampling limits how widely the findings might be applied beyond the fine dining and upscale hospitality establishments in Beirut. Fourth, the study was conducted in one national context, and as such its findings may not apply in full to hospitality organizations operating in more stable institutional or economic contexts.

Future research may address these shortcomings by employing multi-source data, such as supervisor-rated OCB or objective service-performance indicators, to overcome common method variance. Longitudinal studies can also be developed to investigate how leadership, engagement, support, and citizenship behavior develop over time. Future studies may test the model in other hospitality segments, other Lebanese regions, or other crisis-affected and stable economy formations. Finally, additional mediators and moderators, such as psychological safety, organizational trust, job insecurity, or emotional exhaustion can be examined to deepen understanding of the conditions under which Transactional Leadership is related to employees' positive behavior.

10. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several study limitations to acknowledge. First, this study employed a cross-sectional research design, preventing the establishment of temporal precedence and also limiting the ability to draw definite causal inferences among Transactional Leadership, Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Although these relationships have theoretical underpinnings in Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Support Theory, the findings should be interpreted as associative. Future research studies should use longitudinal, time-lagged, or multi-source research designs to examine the temporal ordering of these relationships and strengthen causal interpretation.

The study's sample was limited to fine dining and upscale hospitality restaurants in Beirut. Although there are numerous fine dining and upscale hospitality establishments, future research could expand the sample sites by including restaurants in other geographic areas of Lebanon (i.e., Mt. Lebanon, Jounieh, Byblos, Tripoli, Saida, Tyre, and Zahle) or comparing Lebanon with other hospitality markets throughout the Middle East.

In this study, convenience sampling was used due to a lack of access to an appropriate sampling frame. Accordingly, future research could utilize probability sampling methods or stratified sampling methods with appropriate sample sizes to support generalizability of results (Etikan et al., 2016).

This study was limited to the use of self-report questionnaires. To provide more robust data, future research could employ a combination of employee surveys that also include supervisor ratings, customer satisfaction metrics, and qualitative interviews (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Future research could investigate additional mediators and moderators, such as job satisfaction, organizational justice, psychological empowerment, trust in leadership, emotional intelligence, burnout, resilience, and workplace stress. Additionally, comparative studies could explore how different styles of leadership (i.e., transactional, transformational, servant, ethical, or digital) associate with levels of Employee Engagement and OCB.

Another limitation of the research was the nested structure of the data; employees were recruited from a number of fine dining restaurants, but the analyses did not consider any potential clustering at the restaurant level. Although respondents were not distributed evenly across establishments, making multilevel modeling not feasible, we encourage future research with larger samples from a single organization to use multilevel analyses to consider whether the individual and organizational levels are both positively related to Employee Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

The study's use of convenience sampling, a non-probability-based method, limits its ability to generalize findings due to its limitations. However, this technique is appropriate given the limited access to hospitality operations. Thus, the results reflect only the views of employees in the sampled fine dining and upscale hospitality venues in Beirut and do not reflect all hospitality operations in Lebanon. Future research that employs a probability or stratified sampling design and incorporates hospitality operations in other Lebanese regions would enhance the external validity of the results.

Furthermore, the results should be interpreted in the context of Lebanese fine dining restaurants that have been subjected to long periods of economic and organizational instability. Caution should be applied when attempting to generalize the findings to other areas of the hospitality sector and service industry sectors in other countries with different cultural, economic, and organizational environments. Future studies may replicate our model in other hospitality sectors and in a cross-national context.

Lastly, future studies could implement multi-wave, multi-source design approaches to further mitigate the risk of CMV and increase the ability for causal claims to be made. By using this methodology, a researcher can obtain data pertaining to leadership perceptions, Employee Engagement, and OCBs at multiple different times and from multiple sources (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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Informed Consent Statement: All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses before completing the survey. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

POS	Perceived Organizational Support
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
TL	Transactional Leadership
EE	Employee Engagement

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