Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Citizenship Behavior of Civil Servants in Ethiopia: Psychological Contract as a Mediator and Organizational Cynicism as a Moderator

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There is a gap in understanding how psychological contracts mediate and organizational cynicism moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of psychological contracts and the moderating role of organizational cynicism in the association between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors among Ethiopian civil servants. The study included 322 (58% male) permanent government workers from three reform towns in southern Ethiopia. The findings revealed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors, psychological contracts, and organizational cynicism. The analysis using structural equation modeling indicated that the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors was partially mediated by psychological contracts among civil servants. Additionally, organizational cynicism was found to have a significant moderating role in the association between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors. As a practical implication, this study offers concrete recommendations for organizations intended to improve employee behaviors. It also contributes to the broader understanding of psychological contracts, emotional intelligence, and organizational cynicism in civil servants.

Key words: emotional intelligence, psychological contract, organizational cynicism, organizational citizenship behavior, civil servants

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Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been recognized as a key factor in improving institutional productivity (Kim et al., 2020). As workers continue to work in a dynamic work environment, organizations rely more on individuals who willingly contribute to successful change both inside and outside of their official job obligations (Ocampo et al., 2018). Workers are said to be displaying good citizenship in an organization when they go above and beyond their assigned tasks to assist their coworkers and the company (Bogler & Somech, 2021). Researchers' interest in studying OCB has grown very quickly, with applications across a wide range of fields as well as organizational types (MacKenzie et al., 2018).

The benefit of studying this citizenship behavior lies in its favorable role on both individual and organizational level outputs (Mackenzie et al., 2018). In this regard, government organizations encountered numerous challenges in maintaining employee performance, including employee turnover, engagement, social loafing, poor performance, absenteeism, and overall worker discontent (Dinka, 2018). On the contrary, employees may lack recognition from the organizations or kindness from colleagues; this may erode their motivation and lead them to organizational cynicism (Kim, 2019), which refers to an unfriendly attitude resulting from a conviction that the organization is dishonest and will continually try to defraud its employees (Nair & Kamalanabhan, 2010). Consequently, employees feel a break or violation when promises inherent in the psychological contract are not met, or their organization fails to live up to its commitments (Bari et al., 2022; Griep & Bankins, 2022; Jahanzeb et al., 2020; Zhong et al., 2023). In the process of addressing these obstacles, the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) has been overlooked due

to the influence of scientific management and the misconception that emotions disrupt the workplace. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological contract and the impact on workers' organizational citizenship behavior, including the moderating role of organizational cynicism.

Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability and trait to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It plays a crucial role in interpersonal relationships and has been found to have a significant impact on various aspects of organizational behavior (Mohammad et al., 2013; Salovey & Grewal, 2005; Yang et al., 2013). EI has emerged as a crucial factor influencing various aspects of workplace dynamics, particularly in the context of OCBs. OCB refers to discretionary behaviors that go beyond formal job requirements and contribute to the overall functioning and effectiveness of an organization (Suleman et al., 2020). These behaviors include helping colleagues, volunteering for additional tasks, and showing loyalty towards the organization. Scholars have increasingly recognized the relevance of emotional intelligence in predicting these behaviors, as individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate complex social situations, understand the emotions of others, and manage their own emotions effectively (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between EI and OCB, shedding light on the positive correlation between the two (Callea et al., 2019; Cejudo et al., 2018; Guerra et al., 2019, Jain, 2012; Tofighi et al., 2015; Wijekoon et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2013). For instance, Goleman's (1995) model of emo-

tional intelligence, which includes components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, has been found to be associated with employees' pro-activity, willingness to help colleagues and overall engagement in behaviors that contribute to a positive organizational climate (Brackett et al., 2011; Côté et al., 2010).

The research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2001) and Gong et al. (2020) indicates that workers with higher EI have higher job satisfaction and higher organizational commitment and are less likely to change jobs. Study by Beenen (2021), Jordan and Troth (2004) also found statistically significant positive relationships between EI, empowering leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement. Further study by Wong and Law (2002a) showed that employees with higher levels of EI were more likely to engage in OCB, such as helping colleagues, volunteering for additional tasks, and showing loyalty towards the organization. This suggests that individuals who possess the ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand and empathize with the emotions of others, are more inclined to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization beyond their formal job requirements. Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Miao et al. (2017) confirmed that the relationship between EI and OCB was stronger when OCB was measured using supervisor ratings compared to self-report measures. This suggests that supervisors may have a better perspective on employees' OCB and can more accurately assess the impact of emotional intelligence on these behaviors.

Psychological Contract as Mediator

The psychological contract refers to the unwritten and implicit expectations and obligations between employees and their organizations, encompassing beliefs about mutual obligations, promises, and the socio-emotional exchanges within the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989). As employees with high emotional intelligence navigate workplace interactions adeptly, their ability to recognize and manage emotions, coupled with empathetic understanding, can influence the formation and fulfillment of the psychological contract. When employees perceive that their emotional intelligence is acknowledged and valued by the organization, a positive psychological contract may develop, fostering a sense of trust, reciprocity, and loyalty (Goleman, 1995; Hui et al., 2004; Zhao et al., 2007).

Research has suggested that a positive psychological contract, shaped by EI, can act as a mediator, influencing the manifestation of OCB. Employees who perceive a fair and supportive psychological contract are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that go beyond their formal job roles (Raja et al., 2004). Research suggests that the psychological contract, which represents the perceived mutual obligations and expectations between employees and their organization, plays a critical role in affecting individual intelligence and organizational success (Shih & Chen, 2011; Conway & Briner, 2005). When employees perceive a positive psychological contract, characterized by trust, fairness, and reciprocity, they are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior.

A study by Eisenbeiss et al. (2008) found a positive relationship between EI, OCB, and a psychological contract. They found that employees with higher levels of EI were more likely to perceive a positive psychological contract, which, in turn, led to increased OCB. Similarly, another study by Farh et al. (2007) examined the mediating role of the psychological contract in the relationship between EI and OCB. They found that employees with higher levels of EI were more likely to have

positive perceptions of psychological contract, which, in turn, predicted higher levels of OCB. When employees perceive a positive psychological contract, they are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization. Therefore, understanding how emotional intelligence shapes the psychological contract and subsequently influences organizational citizenship behaviors is crucial for organizational leaders aiming to enhance employee engagement and foster a positive workplace culture (Okpu & Igbedion, 2021).
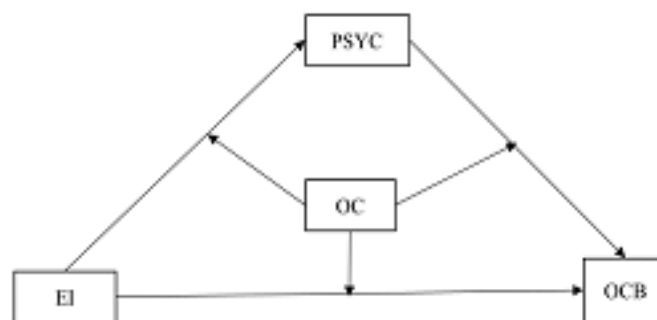
Organizational Cynicism as Moderator

The literature has extensively documented the links between EI, OCB, and Psychological Contracts (Johnson & Lee, 2020; Smith et al., 2018). However, comparatively less attention has been paid to the role of cynicism in this relationship (Brown & Jones, 2018). Organizational cynicism, characterized by negative attitudes and distrust towards an organization, introduces a nuanced perspective to the interplay between EI and OCB. Research suggests that employees with high EI are presumed to exhibit a greater understanding of social dynamics, empathy, and effective emotional regulation. However, when organizational cynicism prevails, it may act as a counterforce, attenuating the positive impact of emotional intelligence on OCB (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008; Lilius et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2018). Employees experiencing high levels of organizational cynicism may perceive their emotionally intelligent behaviors as futile or inconsequential, leading to a diminished inclination to engage in discretionary, extra-role behaviors that contribute positively to the organization. The skepticism arising from organizational cynicism may create a sense of futility regarding the value of investing emotional intelligence in workplace interactions.

Expanding on the importance of cynicism could enhance the understanding of its implications for organizational dynamics and employee behavior. Cynicism may serve as a critical factor influencing employees' perceptions of their work environment, affecting their attitudes, behaviors, and, ultimately, organizational outcomes (Robinson & Smith, 2017). By exploring the role of cynicism more deeply, researchers can shed light on its potential relation to employee engagement, commitment, and job performance (Garcia & Martinez, 2016). Furthermore, elucidating the significance of cynicism can contribute to the development of effective strategies for managing organizational culture and fostering positive workplace relationships. Understanding how cynicism arises, its consequences and potential mitigating factors can inform the professionals creating interventions aimed at promoting a more positive organizational climate and enhancing employee well-being (Huang & Wang, 2019).

Current Study

Although it is plausible to speculate that psychological contract may act as a mediator in the connection between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior of government organizational workers, it is not evident in Ethiopia, where emotional intelligence is not recognized enough. Therefore, the main goal of this research project was to discover whether the psychological contract mediates the association between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors of workers in Ethiopia. In addition, the moderating role of organizational cynicism in the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship was investigated in this study. The hypotheses are that psychological contract would mediate the association of emotional intelligence and

Note. Moderated mediation model PSYC – Psychological contract, EI – Emotional intelligence, OC – Organizational cynicism, OCB – Organizational citizenship behavior

Figure 1 Moderated mediation model.

worker's organizational citizenship behaviors, and the mediation pathway would be moderated by organizational cynicism, see Figure 1.

Methods

Participants

From January to March 2023, a cross-sectional survey was conducted involving government employees in Wolaita zone south, Ethiopia. The researcher's university ethics committee granted ethical approval for the study. Inclusion criteria required all participants to be permanent government workers. Participants were recruited from three reform towns, including the capital city of Southern Ethiopia, which is located 385 kilometers from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The selection of the reform towns (Sodo, Boditi, & Areka) was made due to the significant presence of numerous organizations and employees within them. Their respective bosses, researchers, and psychology graduates introduced the survey to civil servants. A sub-sample of 322 (58% male) (M_{age} = 26.45, SD = 2.78) civil servants

were randomly selected. The sample size was determined proportionally based on the population of each sector in the selected towns. The choice of Wolaita as the research location stemmed from the researchers' firsthand observations and various complaints voiced by members of the community regarding the service delivery of government civil servants. The determination of the sample size can be found in supplementary materials.

Procedure

Two senior language instructors, who are native speakers and teach at language departments, translated the questionnaire into the nation's official language. The survey measures were translated and reverse-translated, following Brislin's guidelines to ensure conceptual parity (Brislin, 1986). A pilot test was conducted to check the reliability of the items across different cultures. Written permission was obtained from the heads of participating sectors, who then communicated the research purpose to the workers. The sampling frame was acquired, participants were

stratified by sectors and sex, and a consent letter was sent to all participants. Civil servants completed the questionnaires, which assessed their EI, OCB, psychological contract, and organizational cynicism. Data confidentiality was rigorously maintained by ensuring that participant's data would be used exclusively for scientific research and would not be shared with any other individual without their explicit consent.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence

EI was evaluated using a revised inventory consisting of 16 items (Wong & Law, 2002b), such as "I have a good understanding of my own emotions." Participants responded on a five-point scale, ranging from "very low" to "very high." Items were averaged, with high scores indicating high levels of emotional intelligence. To ensure the reliability of the measure, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91). Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the fit of translated emotional intelligence measure to the data. The results of the CFA indicated a good fit, as evidenced by the following fit indices: χ^2/df = 2.47, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.04, RMSEA = 0.073.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

To evaluate organizational citizenship behavior, a set of 36 items developed by Sharma & Jain (2014) were used. Participants rated these items, such as "I create a healthy and cheerful atmosphere at the workplace," on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores on the scale indicate a greater presence of OCB.

The measurement's reliability was found to be strong, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .822. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to assess how well the model fit the data. The results indicated a good fit, with a chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio of χ^2/df = 1.91, a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.965, a Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of 0.952, a standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.030, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.057.

Psychological Contract

Psychological contract was assessed using a set of 17 items adopted from different researchers (Conway & Briner 2005; Rousseau, 1989; Tyler & Blader 2003) that were determined through factor analysis. Participants were asked to reply to items like "I do this job just for the money." Participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of this scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be .86, indicating satisfactory reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) demonstrated that measure of psychological contract fit well with the collected data, as evidenced by a chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio of χ^2/df = 1.68, a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.972, a Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of 0.96, a standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.03, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.05.

Organizational Cynicism

Organizational Cynicism was measured using 14 items adopted from different previous literature (e.g., Rayan et al., 2018). Items like "I believe that the organization I work for says one thing and does another." Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Items were averaged, with high scores indicating high levels of organizational cynicism. To ensure the reliability of the measure, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90). The results of the CFA indicated a good fit, as evidenced by the following fit indices: χ^2/df = 1.67, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.04.

Data Analysis

To address multicollinearity, the continuous variables were normalized before conducting the analysis. Pearson correlations and descriptive statistics were then calculated for each variable. Next, a series of structural mediation models were developed to explore whether the relationship between EI and OCB is related to the psychological contract of employees. Following the mediation analysis, a moderated mediation model was constructed to examine the moderating role of organizational cynicism. To further investigate the potential moderating effect, the Johnson-Neyman (J-N) approach and a straightforward slope test were utilized (Hayes, 2017). Significance tests and confidence interval (CI) estimations were performed on 5000 bootstrap samples. To control for Type I error, p-values were adjusted using the Benjamini and Hochberg (B-H) technique (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).

Data analysis for the current study was conducted using Amos 26.0 and SPSS 25.0. Prior to the statistical analysis, missing data related to the main study variables were assessed, and no missing information was found.

Results

Common Method Bias

In the present study, all data were gathered through self-report measures, which could introduce a common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To address this concern, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the presence of a common method bias (Harman, 1976). According to Harman (1976), common method biases occur when a single factor dominates or when one factor accounts for more than 40% of the variance in all items loaded simultaneously in factor analysis. The findings from the factor analysis in this study revealed that a single factor accounted for 16.91% of the total variance, indicating the absence of significant common method bias.

Descriptive and Correlation Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and associations among variables. The level of Emotional intelligence exhibits a sig-

Table 1 *Means and correlations result*

Variables	1	2	3	4
EI	-			
PSC	.365**	-		
OC	.273*	.442**	-	
OCB	.589**	.361**	.376**	-
M	57.01	98.56	54.03	44.49
SD	12.73	21.86	12.84	11.85

Note. EI – means emotional intelligence, PSC – means psychological contract, OC – means organizational cynicism, OCB – organizational citizenship behavior.
*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

nificant correlation with organizational citizenship behavior of civil servants, psychological contracts and organizational cynicism. The significant correlation between EI and OCB among civil servants underscores the importance of fostering emotional intelligence skills within the workforce.

Mediation Analysis

The research investigated the role of psychological contract in mediating the association between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior of civil servants. When psychological contracts were absent, emotional intelligence significantly correlated with civil servants' organizational citizenship behavior (b = 0.587, SE = 0.0477, t = 11.096, p < 0.001). The study found a notable indirect effect, supporting the hypothesis that psychological contract partially mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior (b = 0.162,

p < 0.001). Additionally, even in the presence of the mediator, the direct effect of emotional intelligence on organizational citizenship behavior remained significant, see Figure 2 (b = 0.527, p < 0.001).

Moderated Mediation Analysis

A significant interaction between emotional intelligence and organizational cynicism and its effect on organizational citizenship behavior was found in the model (see Tables 2 and 3). A simple slope test showed that the predictive role of EI on OCB was tempered for civil servants with higher organizational cynicism (B_{high} = 0.186, SE = 0.073, t = 2.54, p < 0.001, 95% CI = [0.042, 0.329]; B_{low} = 0.327, SE = 0.066, t = 4.977, p < 0.001, 95% CI = [0.198, 0.457]). The indirect effect of EI on OCB through psychological contract is moderated by organizational cynicism. The hypothesis was supported as the index of moderated mediation (index = 0.119, 95% CI = [0.004/0.0302]) is significant.
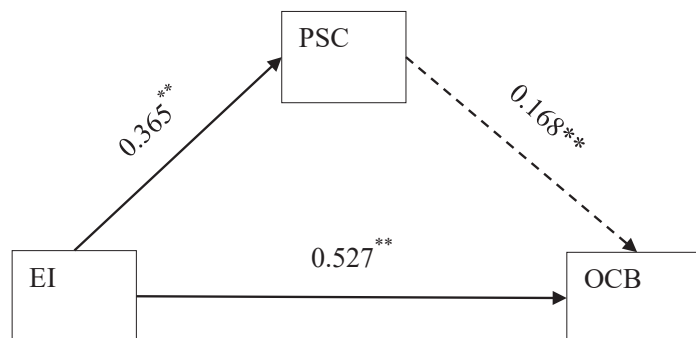
Note. The coefficients presented are standardized regression coefficients. For conciseness, the figure does not display control variables such as gender, religion (similar information follows). EI represents emotional intelligence, PSC denotes psychological contracts, and OCB signifies organizational citizenship behavior.

*p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001

Figure 2 Mediation path.

Table 2 *Direct relationships between emotional intelligence, psychological contracts, organizational citizenship behavior, and interaction effect of EI and OCB on PSC*

Relationship	Unstandardized Coefficient	*t*-value	*p*-value
EI → PSC	.256	5.10	.000
PSC → OCB	.169	3.54	.000
EI → OCB	.527	11.06	.000
EI × OCB → PSC	.012	1.477	.001

Note. EI represents emotional intelligence, PSC denotes psychological contracts, OC represents organizational cynicism and OCB signifies organizational citizenship behavior.
*$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 3 *Moderated mediation index*

EI Level	Standardized Effect	Standard Error (SE)	Confidence Interval (CI) Low/High
EI (low)	.031	.016	.006 - .068
EI (high)	.055	.0195	.022 - .098
Index of Moderated Mediation	.119	.008	.004 - .030

Note. EI refers to emotional intelligence, PSC indicates psychological contracts, OC represents organizational cynicism, and OCB signifies organizational citizenship behavior. The designation EI (high) refers to the condition of highest organizational cynicism, while EI (low) indicates the state of lowest organizational cynicism.

Sensitivity Analysis

To verify the stability and reliability of the results, structured mediation models and moderated mediation models were rerun with emotional intelligence as a latent variable, including three observed indicators: frequency, intensity, and resolution. The study found that the findings of the latent variable model were consistent with those of the observed variable model constructed in the main analyses.

Discussion

There is an existing gap in the understanding of the role of psychological contracts as po-
tential mediators and the moderating relation of organizational cynicism in the relationship between EI and OCB in the context of Ethiopian organizational culture. This study aimed to address these gaps and found that emotional intelligence predicted civil servants' organizational citizenship behaviors, and psychological contracts partially mediate this relationship. In addition, organizational cynicism significantly moderates the direct and indirect relationship of emotional intelligence with civil servants' organizational citizenship behaviors.

Previous studies have shown that emotional intelligence, as an essential skill for organizational success, could positively predict organizational citizenship behaviors (Jain, 2012; Tofighi et al., 2015; Wijekoon et al., 2017).

Our findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between EI and OCB. Individuals with higher levels of EI are more likely to engage in OCBs. This is because EI enables individuals to effectively manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of others, which in turn enhances their ability to engage in prosocial behaviors and maintain positive relationships with colleagues. For example, individuals with high emotional intelligence may be more empathetic, understanding, and supportive towards their coworkers, leading them to engage in behaviors such as helping others, volunteering for additional tasks, or providing emotional support. These OCBs contribute to a positive work environment, increased job satisfaction, and improved organizational performance (Alotaibi et al., 2001; Côté et al., 2010; Gong et al., 2020; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Karimi et al., 2020; Wong & Law, 2002a).

Our study finding also supported the findings of previous studies (Jain, 2012; Mohammad et al., 2013; Tofighi et al., 2015; Salovey & Grewal, 2005; Wijekoon et al., 2017). Therefore, emotional intelligence should be a target in interventions aiming at the success of each organization. As the mediating role of the psychological contract, this study's findings supported the hypothesis. The mediating role of psychological contract in the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors suggests that the perception of a mutual understanding and agreement between employees and their organization influences the extent to which emotional intelligence translates into organizational citizenship behaviors. When employees perceive a positive psychological contract, characterized by trust, fairness, and reciprocity, they are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors.

This study also found a moderating role played by organizational cynicism in the as-sociation between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors. In this model, emotional intelligence serves as the predictor influencing both psychological contracts and organizational citizenship behavior, while organizational cynicism moderates the mediation process between EI and OCB through psychological contracts. This framework suggests that individuals with varying levels of emotional intelligence may perceive and interpret their psychological contracts differently, leading to distinct patterns of organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational cynicism, acting as a moderator, further shapes the indirect relationship between EI and OCB through psychological contracts. By examining how organizational cynicism moderates the mediation process, this model provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between individual characteristics, organizational perceptions, and behavioral outcomes among civil servants (Brown & Jones, 2018; Garcia & Martinez, 2016).

Conversely, considering cynicism as the mediator and psychological contracts as the moderator presents an alternative perspective on the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior. In this alternative model, emotional intelligence may directly relate to organizational cynicism, which, in turn, shapes individuals' perceptions of their psychological contracts. These psychological contracts, in conjunction with organizational cynicism, then relate to organizational citizenship behavior. While this model offers a different conceptualization of the relationships among the variables, it may overlook the potential role of emotional intelligence in shaping individuals' perceptions and responses to organizational dynamics. By placing greater emphasis on the mediating role of cynicism, this alternative model may provide insights into the mechanisms through which negative organizational attitudes af-

fect organizational citizenship behavior, but it may not fully capture the role of individual differences in emotional intelligence in shaping these processes (Huang & Wang, 2019; Robinson & Smith, 2017). Overall, comparing these two models highlights the importance of considering different conceptualizations of the relationships among emotional intelligence, organizational cynicism, psychological contracts, and organizational citizenship behavior in understanding the dynamics of employee behavior in organizational contexts.

In summary, emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with OCB within organizations. It indicates that employees with good traits of understanding their emotions and others' emotions, who also have a high ability to control their emotions, can develop OCB. The mediating role of psychological contract suggests that a positive perception of the employment relationship enhances the translation of emotional intelligence into OCB. However, the moderating effect of organizational cynicism highlights the importance of addressing negative attitudes and fostering a positive organizational climate to fully leverage the potential of EI in promoting OCB. Organizations seeking to enhance their overall performance and employee well-being should consider incorporating emotional intelligence training programs into their human resource development initiatives. By nurturing EI competencies among employees, organizations can potentially cultivate a work environment conducive to higher levels of OCB, ultimately fostering a positive workplace culture.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

Practical implications of this study suggest a multifaceted approach for organizations to enhance overall employee behavior and performance. Human resource management strategies can be tailored to specifically target the improve-ment of emotional intelligence through initiatives such as training programs and workshops. Psychological contract management is crucial, ensuring that organizational policies align with employee expectations to foster a positive and mutually beneficial employment relationship. Organizations can implement initiatives aimed at enhancing employee commitment and engagement, emphasizing transparent communication, fair treatment, and the fulfillment of promises. Leadership development programs should incorporate elements that bolster emotional intelligence, acknowledging its positive correlation with organizational citizenship behaviors. Addressing and mitigating organizational cynicism is essential, requiring leadership efforts to cultivate a positive organizational culture and establish fair practices, ultimately reducing cynicism among employees.

Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the study advances the Psychological Contract Theory by establishing a meaningful link between emotional intelligence, psychological contracts, and organizational citizenship behaviors, shedding light on the mediating role of psychological contracts in shaping employee behaviors. The research underscores the importance of understanding moderating effects, particularly the role of organizational cynicism on the relationship between EI and OCB, contributing valuable insights to organizational behavior theories. Moreover, by contextualizing EI research within the Ethiopian civil service sector, this study lays the groundwork for future exploration of cultural and contextual factors that influence the intricate dynamics between EI and organizational outcomes.

Limitations and Future Implications

Considering the strengths and implications, it is essential to acknowledge several limita-

tions. Firstly, cross-sectional studies, while valuable for capturing a snapshot of a population's characteristics at a particular point in time, are inherently limited in their ability to establish causal relationships or track changes over time. Since data is collected from different individuals at a single time point, cross-sectional studies cannot account for temporal sequencing or determine the direction of causality between variables. Secondly, the study's sample was derived solely from the southern part of Ethiopia, limiting the generalization of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts. To enhance the applicability of the results, future research should incorporate more demographically balanced and cross-cultural samples for replication and extension of the current findings. Thirdly, a well-recognized concern associated with self-report data is social desirability, which might have influenced participants' responses (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). To mitigate this bias, employing multi-informant measurements that include reports from leaders, immediate supervisors, and peers would provide a more comprehensive view of employees' organizational experiences, as suggested by Bettencourt et al. (2017).

Conclusions

The findings of this study confirmed a significant relationship between EI and OCB. Additionally, the psychological contract and organizational cynicism were identified as crucial factors shaping civil servants' EI and its connection to OCB. To enhance overall performance and employee well-being, we recommend that organizations integrate emotional intelligence training programs into their human resource development initiatives. By fostering EI competencies among employees, organizations can promote higher levels of OCB and cultivate a positive organizational culture.

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