

Exploring the Link Between Purpose-driven Leadership and Extra-role Behavior: The Mediating Roles of Engagement and Justice †

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Abstract: *This study examines the relationship between purpose-driven leadership and extra-role behavior, focusing on the mediating effects of employee engagement and organizational justice. A delayed-response field survey was conducted among 447 employees from 21 Croatian organizations. Mediation analysis revealed that purpose-driven leadership indirectly affects extra-role behavior through full mediation by employee engagement and organizational justice. These findings underscore that employee engagement and organizational justice are essential psychological mechanisms linking leadership and employees' discretionary behaviors. Introducing the concept of purpose-driven leadership to the Croatian context, this study offers novel insights into how leadership fosters positive workplace outcomes. The results provide practical implications for managers, highlighting the importance of aligning leadership strategies with engagement and justice to enhance extra-role behavior. However, limitations arise from data collection from a single source and the involvement of both private and public sector organizations, suggesting avenues for further research.*

Keywords: purpose-driven leadership; employee engagement; organizational justice; extra-role behavior; Croatian organizations

JEL Classifications: D23, M12, J24

† This paper was previously presented and published in the proceedings of the Odyssey 2025 conference.

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Introduction

In modern business environments, managers face various challenges in developing employees' positive attitudes and behaviors. Leadership style plays a pivotal role in fostering these attitudes, influencing employees' behavior and overall organizational effectiveness (Dartey-Baah et al., 2019; Kadar Khan et al., 2018; Kim, 2014; Niehoff et al., 1990; Organ et al., 2006; Paulisić & Gonan Božac, 2013). Previous research indicates a significant relationship between various employee attitudes, with particular attention given to the relationships between employee engagement (EE) and organizational justice (OJ) (Alvi & Abbasi, 2012; Ghosh et al., 2014; Mubashar et al., 2022; Saks, 2006), EE and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Ahmed et al., 2012; Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010; Kataria et al., 2013; Marić et al., 2019; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2012; Wahyu Ariani, 2013), as well as between OJ and OCB (Chegini, 2009; Jafari & Bidarian, 2012; Moorman et al., 1993; Sani, 2013; Zeinabadi & Salehi, 2011). These studies contribute to a better understanding of how the perception of justice within an organization and the level of employee engagement can influence their willingness to make additional contributions beyond their formal job responsibilities. However, the influence of purpose-driven leadership on these specific employee attitudes remains unexplored, underscoring the necessity of this study and highlighting a significant research gap. Therefore, given the growing recognition of purpose-driven leadership (PDL) and its role in shaping workplace dynamics, this study investigates how PDL relates to extra-role behavior (ERB) through the mediating effects of EE and OJ. The study thus addresses the following **research question**: *Do EE and OJ mediate the relationship between PDL and ERB?*

Theoretical framework

PDL as a new leadership perspective

Organizations increasingly recognize the significance of purpose as a key driver of long-term success. Purpose-driven organizations align their mission, values, and strategic goals to create meaningful impact beyond financial performance, fostering a sense of shared commitment among employees and stakeholders (Quinn & Thankor, 2018). By embedding purpose at the core of their operations, such organizations enhance employees' motivation, organizational resilience, and sustainable performance. Despite its evident importance, creating purpose-driven organizations is challenging because it requires deep integration of purpose, vision, and values with business strategies, often necessitating overcoming entrenched neoliberal beliefs that separate social impact from business objectives (Kempster & Jackson, 2023). In this context, PDL, also called purposeful leadership, emerges as a critical enabler, guid-

ing organizations toward aligning strategic decisions with a broader societal mission while cultivating EE and ethical work cultures.

PDL represents a contemporary leadership approach centered on shared purpose. It is built upon three fundamental principles: discovering a leader's personal purpose, helping others find their personal purpose, and connecting personal purpose with the broader organizational purpose (Cardona et al., 2019). Leaders who embrace PDL cultivate a strong organizational sense of purpose, directly influencing leadership engagement practices and contributing to positive outcomes, such as increased stakeholder commitment, enhanced organizational performance, and greater societal impact (Hong et al., 2021). By conducting a bibliometric analysis of research on purposeful leadership, Zaharuddin et al. (2024) defined it as "leading by prioritizing living example over communication, leading with deep purpose, or leading with an exponential purpose to overcome disruptive business challenges", emphasizing that the core aim of PDL is to address commercial and social challenges in a way that generates sustainable value for stakeholders.

Expanding on these principles, Joly (2021) presents PDL as a leadership model structured around five key dimensions: (1) being clear about one's own purpose, the purpose of those around them, and how it aligns with the company's purpose; (2) understanding one's role as a leader; (3) recognizing whom they serve; (4) being driven by values; and (5) leading with authenticity. Building on this model, PDL fosters deeper connections within organizations by integrating personal and organizational purpose, thereby creating a values-driven culture that strengthens trust, engagement, and long-term success. This shift toward PDL reveals the limitations of traditional top-down leadership models, in which purpose is defined at the top and cascades downward; instead, modern organizations must recognize that purpose already exists within their workforce and actively uncover, nurture, and align it at all levels (Cardona et al., 2019). Consequently, purpose-driven leaders must be authentic individuals with integrity who are deeply committed to building sustainable organizations, staying true to their core values, and courageously shaping their companies in ways that meet the needs of all stakeholders while recognizing their broader responsibility to society (Zu, 2019).

As leaders embrace this paradigm shift, they transcend conventional mindsets and recognize opportunities for organizational excellence by fostering networks of people united by a higher purpose, cultivating resilience, continuous learning, and collaboration (Nader & Maheshwari, 2023). Willingness to prioritize a collective purpose over personal gain reinforces a leadership model that is deeply rooted in authenticity and long-term impact. Building on this idea, Wilson (2017) conceptualized purpose as a guiding principle and a multidimensional force that operates on five interconnected levels—psychological, organizational, biological, energetic, and mathematical. This perspective broadens the understanding of PDL by suggesting that leadership shaped by purpose extends beyond individual and organizational levels,

influencing broader systemic dynamics. Through this holistic influence, PDL creates inspiring organizations that engage all stakeholders and ensure sustainable success.

Beyond its impact on organizations, PDL aligns closely with global sustainability efforts, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ferreira Ribeiro et al. (2024) noted several positive outcomes of PDL, including increased EE, enhanced organizational commitment, and improved overall performance. More specifically, PDL fosters sustainable business practices by promoting decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), supporting innovation (SDG 9), encouraging responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), strengthening ethical decision-making, and institutional integrity (SDG 16), and by cultivating strong stakeholder relationships, and aligning business objectives with societal well-being, it contributes to long-term sustainable success (Zaharuddin et al., 2024).

The importance of employees' attitudes in organizational behavior

The organizational behavior literature has highlighted several key employees' attitudes. When these attitudes are positive, they contribute to higher employee productivity and better organizational results. Robbins & Judge (2019) emphasized the importance of *job satisfaction*, *job involvement*, *organizational commitment*, *perceived organizational support*, and *EE* as fundamental employees' attitudes. Contrarily, Pološki Vokić (2018) stated that the most well-known employees' attitudes are *job satisfaction*, *EE*, *organizational commitment*, *OJ*, and *OCB*. A review of the literature on employees' attitudes revealed that *employee loyalty* is also considered an important employee attitude. This paper investigated EE, OJ, and ERB, which are closely related to OCB, as fundamental employees' attitudes.

One of the first challenges in conceptualizing EE is the lack of a universal definition of this employee's attitude. Kahn (1990) defined EE as the connection between employees and their work roles, in which employees physically, cognitively, and emotionally engage and express themselves while performing their roles. The cognitive aspect of EE concerns employees' beliefs about the organization; the emotional aspect concerns employees' feelings about their roles; the physical aspect concerns employees' physical energy to accomplish their work. Most often, EE has been defined as a positive and fulfilled state of mind associated with work, characterized by energy, dedication, and absorption (González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002a).

To explain the concept of OJ, it is crucial to note that it comprises three dimensions: *procedural*, *distributive*, and *interactional* justice. Although these three types of justice are defined based on different managerial decisions, without them, it wouldn't be easy to develop effective OJ (Ambrose & Schminke, 2007). Distributive justice is the fairness of resource distribution within an organization (Colquitt, 2001). Therefore, distributive justice refers to the allocation of resources. Procedural justice pertains

to the fairness of the management policies and procedures that regulate a process leading to organizational outcomes (Colquitt, 2001). Procedural justice focuses on the steps managers take to reach a just decision. Interactional justice is an employee's treatment resulting from managerial decisions (Colquitt, 2001). Specifically, interactional justice pertains to employees' interpersonal transactions with workplace authority figures (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Considering all three dimensions of OJ, Cropanzano et al. (2007) argued that OJ relates to how employees perceive the moral correctness of their treatment. In other words, OJ is employees' subjective assessment of managers' ethical and moral behavior.

OCB has been defined as an individual ERB that enhances organizational effectiveness, but is neither a requirement of the individual's job nor directly rewarded by the formal system (Organ, 1988). Organ's claim that OCB is ERB was criticized because some researchers included in-role behaviors in measuring OCB (Organ, 1994). However, Morrison's (1994) findings suggested that many OCB items may tap behaviors that employees and supervisors considered in-role. Organ (1997) responded by changing the definition of OCB and proposing that no reference to ERB should be made when describing or defining OCB. By contrast, Motowidlo (2000) explained that one major problem with Organ's (1997) redefinition of OCB is that not all researchers who used previously developed OCB scales were aware of this redefinition. Motowidlo (2000) suggested that two distinct definitions of OCB now exist in the literature: one with and one without an extra-role requirement.

Van Dyne et al. (1995) positioned OCB within a larger framework of ERB. More precisely, constructs related to OCB include contextual performance, prosocial behavior, and ERB (Van Dyne et al., 1995). ERB, similar to OCB, refers to actions that benefit the organization and extend beyond formal job responsibilities or predefined role expectations. However, this framework excludes much of the OCB compliance dimension because it generally involves adherence to expectations explicitly stated or implied in the job definition. However, Van Dyne et al. (1995) placed the helping dimension within ERB, characterizing it as an affiliative form of ERB. In other words, OCB is a type of ERB that strengthens emotional connections among employees, fosters positive feelings, and encourages unity and agreement rather than disagreement or discord within the organization.

Previous research and hypotheses

One form of ERB is OCB (Hall & Ferris, 2011; Organ et al., 2006). Researchers have established a mediating effect of EE on the relationship between predictor variables of EE (e.g., job characteristics, using strengths at work, perceived organizational and supervisor support, distributive and procedural justice) and OCB (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017; Marić et al., 2019; Saks, 2006). More precisely, Lavy-Lit-

tman-Ovadia (2017) examined associations between employees' use of character strengths at work and their productivity, OCB, and job satisfaction in a sample of 1095 employees. Marić et al. (2019) collected data from 255 employee-supervisor dyads to illustrate how formal job resources and job challenges are indirectly (via EE) related to OCB that benefits organizations (OCB-O). In his research on 102 employees across various jobs and organizations, Saks (2006) distinguished between job and organization engagement and measured their antecedents and consequences.

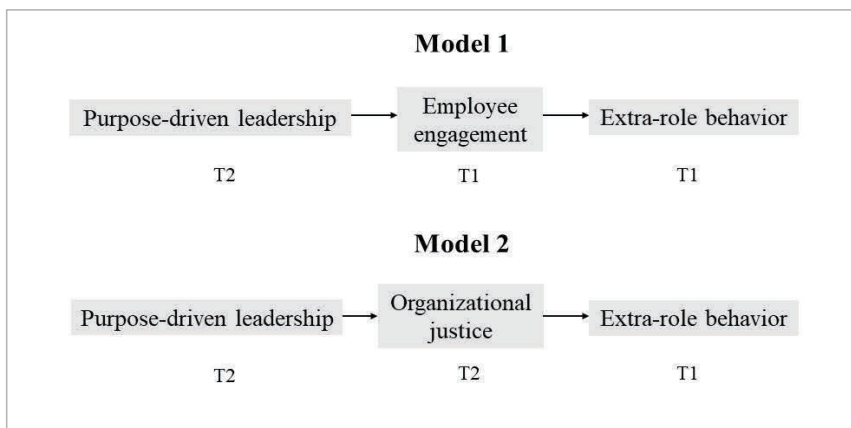
Previous research has also found that OJ serves as a mediator between different variables (e.g., perceived organizational support, role efficacy, and servant leadership) and OCB (Devasagayam, 2013; Zehir et al., 2013). More precisely, Devasagayam (2013) examined the relationships among perceptions of organizational support, role efficacy, and OCB, and the mediating effects of OJ, using a convenience sample of 276 people across globally distributed software organizations. By contrast, Zehir et al. (2013) used 300 respondents from private educational institutions in Turkey to investigate servant leadership's effects on OCB and job performance by influencing OJ (Zehir et al., 2013). Therefore, the following two hypotheses were formulated:

H1. EE mediates the relationship between PDL and ERB.

H2. OJ mediates the relationship between PDL and ERB.

This research examined the mediating effects of EE and OJ on the relationship between PDL (independent variable) and ERB (dependent variable). The study also sought to contribute to the theoretical understanding of PDL within the Croatian context. Based on the above research hypotheses, two conceptual models were formulated to test the mediating effects of EE and OJ on the relationship between PDL and ERB over two distinct time periods: T1 (April 2024) and T2 (October 2024), as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual models of research



Source: Authors' creation

Methodology

Measurement instruments

The study employed the following well-established measurement instruments: the Purpose-Driven Leadership Scale (4 items) developed by Marimon et al. (2016) for assessing PDL; the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (9 items) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002b) for assessing EE; the Organizational Justice Scale (8 items) developed by Elovainio et al. (2010) for assessing OJ; and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (3 items) for assessing ERB (Motowidlo, 2000). These instruments were selected because of their established reliability and validity in prior research. All measurement instruments used a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The internal consistency, measured through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was more than satisfactory ($> .70$) for all scales, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficients for measurement instruments

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
PDL	4	.964
EE	9	.930
OJ	8	.921
ERB	3	.864

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 2 shows all items' descriptive statistics, including total mean scores and standard deviations. The lowest mean value is 3.1521 (SD=1.00409) for one item related to measuring OJ, and the highest mean value is 4.2215 (SD=.82434) for the item related to measuring ERB. All mean values are at sufficiently high and satisfactory levels.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of items

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
PDL1	447	3.5839	1.06367
PDL2	447	3.6063	1.06167
PDL3	447	3.5011	1.07952
PDL4	447	3.5638	1.09824
EE1	447	3.3714	1.09662
EE2	447	3.3579	1.11324
EE3	447	3.3535	1.03974
EE4	447	3.1544	1.01154
EE5	447	3.4720	1.03460
EE6	447	3.8501	1.02978

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
EE7	447	3.8322	1.02263
EE8	447	3.8277	.99069
EE9	447	4.0940	.92068
OJ1	447	3.3669	1.02855
OJ2	447	3.1857	1.06260
OJ3	447	3.1521	1.00409
OJ4	447	3.9262	.99839
OJ5	447	3.9553	1.03645
OJ6	447	3.6421	1.04251
OJ7	447	3.6644	1.07318
OJ8	447	3.7025	1.04755
ERB1	447	3.9799	.93610
ERB2	447	4.2215	.82434
ERB3	447	4.1655	.84406

Source: Authors' calculations

Sample and procedure

The study aimed to test the mediating effect of EE and OJ on the relationship between PDL and ERB. A quantitative online survey questionnaire was used, and primary data were collected via a delayed-response field survey. In other words, retrospective measures were used to avoid subjectivity when assessing the dependent variable (Cox & Hassard, 2007; Miller et al., 1997). Respondents completed a questionnaire assessing EE and ERB at T1 (April 2024). Respondents also completed a questionnaire assessing PDL and OJ at T2 (October 2024). The time points were separated by 6 months.

The data were collected from 21 Croatian organizations in the private and public sectors with at least 20 employees. Most organizations were private (14), but seven were public. The largest number of private organizations came from the manufacturing industry (9), followed by the information and communication sector (3) and the financial and insurance sector (1). Public organizations that participated in the study are education institutions (2), hospitals (2), local and regional self-government units (2), and a non-profit public organization (1).

The final sample consisted of 447 respondents who participated in the survey. Regarding demographic characteristics, most respondents were between 30 and 44 years old (43.40%). Also, 282 respondents were female (63.09%), and 165 were male (36.91%). Most respondents had faculty (graduate), academy, or postgraduate study (43.85%) and 10 or fewer years of service in their current organization (57.05%). Most respondents worked as executives or operations workers (44.30%). Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the respondents' demographic characteristics.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Categories	N	%
Age	29 years or less	78	17.45%
	30 to 44 years	194	43.40%
	45 years and above	175	39.15%
	Sum	447	100.00%
Sex	Females	282	63.09%
	Males	165	36.91%
	Sum	447	100.00%
Educational level	Primary school or lower	8	1.79%
	Vocational secondary school up to 3 years	42	9.40%
	Vocational secondary school for 4 years or more, and high schools	111	24.83%
	First university degree and college	72	16.11%
	Faculty (graduate), academy and/or postgraduate study	196	43.85%
	Scientific master (MSc. Sc.) and/or doctoral degree (Ph.D.)	18	4.03%
	Sum	447	100.00%
Length of service in the organization	10 years or less	255	57.05%
	11 to 20 years	114	25.50%
	21 to 30 years	60	13.42%
	31 years and above	18	4.03%
	Sum	447	100.00%
Position in firm	Executive/operations workers	198	44.30%
	Professional/administrative workers	132	29.53%
	Lower/middle management	97	21.70%
	Top management	20	4.47%
	Sum	447	100.00%

Source: Authors' calculations

Research results and discussion

Conditional process mediation analysis was used to test the hypotheses using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). This methodological approach allows for a robust examination of mediating relationships and provides detailed insights into leadership's direct and indirect effects on ERB. Two conditional process-mediation analyses were conducted to test two models. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4. Considering that the direct effect of PDL on ERB is not significant, and the indirect effect is significant for both mediating variables, EE and OJ fully mediate the relationship between PDL and ERB. These findings support H1 and H2, underscoring the roles of EE and OJ in connecting PDL to ERB.

Table 4: Results of conditional process mediation analyses

Model	Direct effect			Indirect effect	Total effect c
	(X → Y)	(X → M)	(M → Y)	(X → M → Y)	
	c'	a	b	a x b**	
PDL → EE → ERB	-.0146	.4548	.4543	.2066*	.1920
PDL → OJ → ERB	.0271	.5979	.2758	.1649*	.1920

* p < .05
** 95% bootstrap confidence interval

Source: Authors' calculations

Although earlier research has confirmed the mediating role of EE (Marić et al., 2019; Saks, 2006) and OJ (Devasagayam, 2013; Zehir et al., 2013) in the relationships among different variables, this study is the first of its kind to examine the mediating role of EE and OJ in the relationship between PDL and ERB. Therefore, this study makes a strong contribution to the literature on organizational behavior, leadership, and employees' attitudes. Additionally, the research findings strongly support the thesis that leadership style influences employee behavior and workplace attitudes, as established in previous studies (Dartey-Baah et al., 2019; Kadar Khan et al., 2018; Kim, 2014; Niehoff et al., 1990; Organ et al., 2006; Paulisić & Gonan Božac, 2013). Furthermore, this study creates opportunities for future research on the relationship between PDL and other employee attitudes, such as organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and job involvement.

In addition to the significant scientific contribution, the results of this study confirmed the presence of PDL in Croatian organizations. They confirmed that employees are aware of the importance of this leadership perspective. The results may encourage managers to lead in line with PDL principles, as this leadership perspective offers numerous advantages and benefits. These benefits include positive employees' attitudes toward work and the organization, and improved organizational performance. When employees and managers are aware of their personal purpose and the purpose of their work, they directly contribute to achieving organizational goals.

Conclusions

Scientists and practitioners are aware of the clear benefits of creating purpose-driven organizations, including increased EE, OJ, and ERB. This study is the first to examine the mediating effect of EE and OJ on the relationship between PDL and ERB worldwide and in Croatia. It also introduces PDL into the Croatian organizational context, adding a novel dimension to the existing body of leadership literature. The research results may guide managers in adopting PDL to form positive employees' attitudes and behaviors in modern workplaces, with the ultimate goal of influencing

employees' work performance and overall organizational performance. Managers are encouraged to align individual and organizational purposes and foster an environment of justice and engagement to maximize employee contributions.

This study has several limitations. The first limitation is that only employees assessed all variables; data were collected from a single source, contrary to the recommendation in the literature (Cox & Hassard, 2007; Miller et al., 1997). Since employees assessed all variables, future researchers should consider including additional variables that managers and supervisors could evaluate in the model, such as work performance. Furthermore, the study involved organizations from both the private and public sectors, so future researchers could investigate whether there are differences in variables and research results between private and public organizations, and whether differences in variables and relationships can be observed across demographic characteristics.

Declarations/acknowledgment

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflicts of interest/Competing interests

There is no conflict of interest/Competing interests

Availability of data and material

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request.

Code Availability

The computer program results are shared through the tables in the manuscript.

Authors' Contributions

Nikolina Dreven: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection; Writing – original draft; Administration

Ivan Malbašić: Writing – literature review, editing and last version of manuscript;

Lorena Piki: Writing – literature review, Methodology, Data Collection.

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