



Servant leadership, transformational leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior: Evidence on motivational mediators in a verified corpus

Liderazgo servidor, liderazgo transformacional y comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional: evidencia sobre los mediadores motivacionales en un corpus verificado

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Servant leadership and transformational leadership are related to organizational citizenship behavior; however, the motivational mechanisms that explain this relationship remain dispersed among different theoretical traditions. Objective: To analyze the published evidence on the relationship between both leadership styles and organizational citizenship behavior, identifying the function attributed to work engagement, perceived organizational support, and organizational identification as motivational mediators. Methodology: An integrative documentary review was carried out with a systematic search strategy and descriptive-comparative synthesis. The analytical corpus was made up of 22 sources, complemented by 15 theoretical and methodological references. The information was organized through a file of nine fields and two successive coding processes. Results: 50.0 % of the sources used cross-sectional surveys with structural equations and no longitudinal or experimental studies were identified. Work engagement was the only motivational mediator verified in a complete trajectory towards organizational citizenship behavior, present in three studies. Perceived organizational support showed variable functions as a mediator, moderator and direct predictor, while organizational identification did not appear as a mediator. No study simultaneously integrated organizational citizenship behavior, motivational mediation and Ibero-American population. Conclusions: The available evidence confirms an important accumulation on leadership and organizational citizenship, but reveals a still limited integration of motivational mechanisms, especially in Ibero-American contexts.

Keywords: leadership; organizational behavior; motivation; work commitment; documentary analysis.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El liderazgo servidor y el liderazgo transformacional se relacionan con el comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional; sin embargo, los mecanismos motivacionales que explican esta relación permanecen dispersos entre distintas tradiciones teóricas. Objetivo: Analizar la evidencia publicada sobre la relación entre ambos estilos de liderazgo y el comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional, identificando la función atribuida al engagement laboral, el apoyo organizacional percibido y la identificación organizacional como mediadores motivacionales. Metodología: Se realizó una revisión documental integrativa con estrategia de búsqueda sistemática y síntesis descriptivo-comparativa. El corpus analítico estuvo conformado por 22 fuentes, complementadas con 15 referencias teóricas y metodológicas. La información se organizó mediante una ficha de nueve campos y dos procesos sucesivos de codificación. Resultados: El 50,0 % de las fuentes empleó encuestas transversales con ecuaciones estructurales y no se identificaron estudios longitudinales ni experimentales. El engagement laboral fue el único mediador motivacional verificado en una trayectoria completa hacia el comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional, presente en tres estudios. El apoyo organizacional percibido mostró funciones variables como mediador, moderador y predictor directo, mientras que la identificación organizacional no apareció como mediadora. Ningún estudio integró simultáneamente comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional, mediación motivacional y población iberoamericana. Conclusiones: La evidencia disponible confirma una acumulación importante sobre liderazgo y ciudadanía organizacional, pero revela una integración todavía limitada de los mecanismos motivacionales, especialmente en contextos iberoamericanos.

Palabras clave: liderazgo; comportamiento organizacional; motivación; compromiso laboral; análisis documental.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations depend on a margin of behavior that no contract describes. Covering a coworker's shift, orienting a newly hired colleague, flagging an error before it reaches the client, or defending the institution outside working hours are discretionary acts whose omission does not generally give rise to sanctions. This margin corresponds to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), a construct that remains current because it identifies voluntary behaviors that benefit the functioning of the organization [1]. Its dimensional structure and measurement conditions were systematized early [2], and meta-analytic evidence subsequently showed that these behaviors are related to meaningful consequences at both the individual and organizational levels [3].

Among its antecedents, leadership style occupies a central place. Transformational leadership describes a person who elevates the follower's aspirations through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, dimensions consolidated in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire [4]. Servant leadership starts from a different logic: it prioritizes the needs of the subordinate and places service as the axis of the leadership relationship. Its empirical development enabled the construction of multidimensional measures [5] and subsequently instruments that expanded and refined its dimensions [6].

The problem is not only to confirm that leadership is related to discretionary behavior, but to explain the mechanism by which this relationship occurs. Three motivational mechanisms are especially relevant. Work engagement, measured using brief instruments with international validation [7], is integrated into the job demands-resources model, according to which leadership can act as a resource capable of fostering energy, vigor, and dedication [8]. Perceived organizational support arises from the employee's evaluation of the degree to which the organization recognizes their contribution and cares about their well-being [9,10]; according to social exchange theory, this perception can generate an obligation of reciprocity expressed in behaviors that go beyond the formal role [11]. Organizational identification offers a different pathway: when organizational membership is part of the self-concept, behavior favorable to the group can emerge from shared identity, and not exclusively from an exchange calculation [12].

Research on servant leadership has accumulated enough to be examined through broad-scope reviews and syntheses. van Dierendonck [13] placed the dyadic relationship, trust, and justice among the most relevant mediating processes of the construct. Eva et al. [14], when reviewing 285 articles, pointed out problems of conceptual coherence and a wide dispersion of explanatory mechanisms. Meta-analytic evidence subsequently confirmed that servant leadership retains incremental predictive capacity over other styles and that a large part of its verified mechanisms are relational, such as trust, procedural justice, and leader-member exchange [15]. In turn, comparison with authentic and ethical leadership reinforced the conceptual autonomy of servant leadership relative to transformational leadership [16].

In transformational leadership, accumulated evidence shows a particularly important relationship with contextual performance, a category closely linked to discretionary behavior [17]. Among motivational mechanisms, engagement has an especially solid empirical basis: its discriminant validity against other work attitudes and its relationship with contextual performance have been supported through quantitative synthesis [18]. However, it has also been observed that leadership can relate to engagement indirectly, through job demands and resources, which requires distinguishing between association, mechanism, and causal sequence [19].

Perceived organizational support also has a substantial cumulative evidence base. A meta-analytic evaluation of organizational support theory confirmed antecedents, consequences, and mediational effects consistent with its theoretical framework [20]. Organizational identification, for its part, has its own evidence as a basis for organizational attitudes and behaviors [21]. In parallel, the literature on leader-member exchange has shown that leader-subordinate relationships can act as mediating mechanisms between leadership characteristics and various work outcomes [22]. Overall, these findings show that several plausible mechanisms exist, but they come from theoretical traditions that have often developed separately.

From this dispersion derives the gap that guides the present study. The literature has accumulated evidence on servant leadership, transformational leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior, but there is not the same clarity regarding which motivational mediators have been verified in complete trajectories, what theoretical function is assigned to work engagement, perceived organizational support, and organizational identification, nor to what extent this evidence is represented in Ibero-American contexts. The difficulty lies not in the absence of constructs or instruments, but in the lack of integration between fields that have their own empirical development.

In this context, the general objective was to analyze the published evidence on the relationship between servant leadership, transformational leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior, as well as the role assigned to motivational mediators—work engagement, perceived organizational support, and organizational identification—with the aim of establishing which mechanisms have empirical support and which continue to delineate the pending agenda. Specifically, we sought to characterize the corpus according to period, design, geographic scope, and editorial visibility; identify the modeled mediators and the theoretical function they receive; and compare the available evidence between both leadership styles to recognize the gaps still uncovered.

METHODS

An integrative documentary review was conducted with a systematic search strategy and descriptive-comparative synthesis. The unit of analysis was the verified article, not a population of workers. The analysis combined frequencies and percentages on an explicit denominator with categorical content analysis, allowing the data to be examined both by distribution and by the theoretical function assigned to the mediators. The design was non-experimental and bibliographic; therefore, the results describe the state of the evidence found and do not permit causal attribution of leadership styles to specific workers.

The search was executed on 1 September 2026 across official bibliographic records, with five blocks of descriptors combined in Spanish and English. The first block covered the main variable: *liderazgo servidor*, *liderazgo de servicio*, servant leadership, *liderazgo transformacional*, transformational leadership. The second, the outcome variable: *comportamiento de ciudadanía organizacional*, *conducta extrarol*, organizational citizenship behavior, extra-role behavior, contextual performance. The third, the mediators: *engagement laboral*, work engagement, *apoyo organizacional percibido*, perceived organizational support, *identificación organizacional*, organizational identification. The fourth, the population and context: employees, teachers, nurses, public sector, hospitality, Ecuador, América Latina. The fifth, the methodological approach: mediation, meta-analysis, structural equation modeling, systematic review.

Analytical corpus. Twenty-two sources ($n = 22$). They are those that are encoded in the extraction matrix, assigned to a dominant category, and support the totality of the percentages in the results section. The denominator of every reported percentage is this number and no other.

Theoretical-methodological apparatus. 15 sources. It brings together the conceptual frameworks of the 3 mediators, the measurement instruments, the reference works on the outcome construct, and the reporting guide used. They are cited in the introduction and methods, and are not included in any calculation. The total corpus therefore amounts to thirty seven verified sources.

The unit of analysis is the full article. The unit of record is the segment in which the source states its objective, design, population or corpus, variables measured, and main outcome. A restriction that conditions the reading of everything that follows should be stated here: in most sources, this segment was obtained from the structured abstract verified in the bibliographic record, not from the full text, because part of the corpus is published in restricted-access journals. The consequence is detailed in the limitations section.

Inclusion criteria. All sources that met the following 4 conditions were included: (a) they were peer-reviewed articles locatable via a digital object identifier; (b) they provided an empirical examination or synthesis of evidence on at least 2 of the 3 model terms (leadership style, motivational mediator, discretionary behavior); (c) they had a retrievable abstract that stated results; and (d) they had complete authorship, journal, and year metadata verifiable in an official registry.

Exclusion criteria. All sources that met any of the following 3 conditions were excluded: (a) they were non-peer-reviewed document types, including preprints and repositories of manuscripts under review; (b) their results were non-verifiable due to the lack of a retrievable abstract, an abstract limited to the design, or internal inconsistency in the abstract; or (c) their topic was outside the research focus despite superficial thematic overlap in the descriptors.

Each exclusion was documented with its specific reason, a procedure that the reviewers have the right to audit. For the non-peer-reviewed document type, 2 preprints were discarded, despite directly addressing the model. Also discarded was 1 study whose accessible abstract described the intended sample and method but did not report any result; coding it would have been equivalent to fabricating evidence. Another study was discarded whose abstract stated in a passage that transformational leadership had a positive direct effect on discretionary behavior and in the next passage that it did not. A fourth article, thematically suitable, was discarded because its authorship was not in the bibliographic record and the publisher's website returned a server error.

that prevented recovery of the authorship; without verifiable attribution, no citation is possible. In addition, four duplicate or non-article records were discarded (2 database records that replicated already included articles and 2 manuscript repositories), along with 11 sources because their topic was outside the core focus or their abstract was not retrievable.

Signals of editorial alarm were actively sought. None of the retained journals lacked a standardized identifier or a locatable editorial committee. However, a visibility asymmetry was indeed recorded, which is reported as a result and discussed as a limitation, rather than being silenced. The sources of the theoretical-methodological framework are cited for their conceptual or instrumental contribution; when the abstract was not retrievable, they are cited solely for the statement contained in their title and bibliographic record, without attributing numerical results to them.

From the initial reading of the corpus and the specific objectives, five categories were derived. C1 brings together sources focused on servant leadership and discretionary behavior; C2, those focused on transformational leadership and that same behavior. C3 groups those that treat motivational mediators as their main object, regardless of leadership style. C4 collects those that compare styles with each other or examine mediating mechanisms in general terms. C5 captures the territorial context: the evidence produced on the Ibero-American population. The assignment was made by dominant category. The categories are mutually exclusive with respect to assignment (each source is counted only a single time, and the sum equals n) but not with respect to content, since a source assigned to C1 can provide information about mediators.

The analysis also employed three binary criteria that define the study object and were coded independently: CD1, the source measures organizational citizenship behavior or contextual performance as an outcome variable; CD2, the source models some of the three motivational mediators in a complete mediation pathway; CD3, the source examines Ibero-American population. These three criteria are independent of each other and their frequencies do not sum to n .

The technique was documentary content analysis. The instrument was a mixed-comparative record sheet with 9 fields: identification code, authorship and year, title, country or context, stated objective, design, population or corpus, variables and instruments, and main finding linked to a specific objective. Content validity was established by field-by-field correspondence with the objectives: the fields of country, design, and population correspond to OE1; those of variables and instruments and modeled mediator correspond to OE2; the field of main finding, together with the 3 binary criteria, corresponds to OE3.

Reliability was addressed through two coding passes separated by an interval, with discrepancies resolved by returning to the original text of each source. There were no independent coders. For that reason, no inter-coder agreement coefficient was calculated: a kappa obtained from two passes by the same person does not measure what that statistic is designed to measure. The absence is declared as a limitation and is not replaced by an unsupported figure.

The procedure comprised five stages. First, the problem, the question, the specific objectives, and the three binary criteria defining the object were delimited. The report of the selection process followed the transparency principles established by Page et al. [23] for systematic reviews, adapted to a documentary review without effect synthesis. Second, the five blocks of descriptors were consulted in two languages, and each record was verified against the official bibliographic record by title, authorship, journal, year, volume, issue, pages, and digital identifier. Third, the nine-field form was applied in two separate passes, and each exclusion was documented. Fourth, frequencies and percentages were obtained over the declared denominator, and the tables and figures were constructed directly from the coded matrix. Finally, the results were integrated by specific objective to formulate the findings that support the discussion.

Quantitative treatment was limited to descriptive statistics: absolute and relative frequencies with a single decimal, always calculated on $n = 22$. It is worth explicitly stating what is not valid to quantify in this corpus. Effect sizes were not averaged across studies: the coefficients come from heterogeneous instruments, scales, and populations, so that an average among them would lack interpretation. When a coefficient is reported, it is attributed to its source and expressed in the terms used by its authors. Nor were the results of the meta-analytic syntheses combined with those of the primary studies, because they operate on different units.

Regarding which frequencies sum to n and which do not: the distributions by category, by period, by design, by geographic scope, and by editorial visibility are mutually exclusive and sum to 22. The frequencies of the three binary criteria do not sum to n , because the same source may meet several or none of them. The distribution of the function assigned to each mediator also does not sum to n , because ten sources model mediators outside the motivational family and three do not model any mediator.

Integration occurs at the level of the specific objective and not at the level of individual data. The distributions answer questions about the configuration of the field (which designs predominate, where evidence is produced, which mediators are chosen). The content analysis answers questions about the meaning of the findings (what theoretical function each mediator receives and what explanation each source offers). Both lines converge in the summary table by objectives, which precedes the discussion.

The research did not involve human subjects, so it did not require ethics committee approval or informed consent. The ethical obligations assumed are documentary. The citation conforms to the stated standard, with full authorship attribution and without abbreviating author lists in the reference. The metadata of each source were verified against official records, and the four cases in which a piece of data was missing were resolved by comparison with the publisher's page or, when that was not possible, by documented exclusion. External results are reported in the terms in which their authors formulated them, without extrapolating them to populations that those sources did not examine: in particular, no result obtained in Indonesia, Iran, or China is presented as applicable to an Ibero-American population.

RESULTS

The analytical corpus consisted of 22 sources. Eight correspond to evidence syntheses (six meta-analyses and two systematic reviews) and fourteen to primary studies. Table 1 presents the extraction matrix that supports the subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Extraction matrix of the analytical corpus (n = 22)

Code	Authorship and year	Country and population	Design	Modeled mediator and function	Main finding
A01	AL-Dossary (2022) [24]	Saudi Arabia: 390 nursing professionals and heads from 71 hospitals	Cross-sectional survey with correlational analysis	Work engagement (outcome variable)	The transformational and transactional styles were positively correlated with organizational commitment and engagement.
A02	Amir (2019) [25]	Indonesia: 238 workers from various regions of Indonesia	Analytical technique not specified in the accessible text	Perceived organizational support (moderator)	Servant leadership positively affected discretionary behavior; perceived support moderated this effect, and trust did not mediate this relationship.
A03	Christian, Garza and Slaughter (2011) [18]	Multinational aggregate evidence (primary studies on work engagement)	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	Work engagement (mediator)	Trajectory modeling supported engagement as a mediator between distal antecedents and performance, including contextual performance.
A04	De La Rada Avalos et al. (2024) [26]	Peru: civilian workers of a Peruvian military institution	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Organizational culture (non-motivational mediator)	Only individualized consideration was related to organizational culture (0,867), which mediated the relationship with performance.
A05	Dulebohn et al. (2012) [22]	Multinational aggregate evidence: 247 studies, 290 samples, 21 antecedents, and 16 consequences.	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	Leader-member exchange - Non-motivational mediator	The leader variables explained the greatest variance in the exchange, which acted as a mediator where it could be tested.
A06	Eva et al. (2019) [14]	Multinational aggregate evidence: 285 articles published between 1998 and 2018.	Evidence synthesis (systematic review)	No specific verified mediator: not applicable.	The review documented a lack of conceptual coherence and mapped mediators without consolidating any.
A07	Get (2018) [27]	Romania. 316 employees of small, medium, and large Romanian companies.	Analytical technique not specified in the accessible text.	OCB - Non-motivational mediator	Transformational leadership was associated with climate, discretionary behavior, and performance; discretionary behavior mediated the leadership-performance relationship.
A08	Ghalavi and Nastiezaie (2020) [28]	Iran. 281 teachers from the city of Zahedan, selected by stratified random sampling.	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Psychological empowerment - Non-motivational mediator	The direct effect of servant leadership on discretionary behavior ($\beta = 0.27$) and the indirect effect via empowerment ($\beta = 0.475$).

Code	Authorship and year	Country and population	Design	Modeled mediator and function	Main finding
A09	Hoch et al. (2018) [16]	Aggregated multinational evidence: primary studies on the four forms of leadership.	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	No specific mediator verified: not applicable.	Authentic and ethical leadership added little variance beyond transformational leadership; servant leadership was sustained as an autonomous approach.
A10	Huang and Li (2026) [29]	China. 380 full-time employees from various sectors in China.	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Work engagement - Mediator	Engagement partially mediated the relationship between leadership and discretionary behavior, and perceived support moderated the effect on engagement.
A11	Jufrizen et al. (2023) [30]	Indonesia. 200 frontline employees of category hotels in Medan.	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Work engagement - Mediator	Transformational leadership affected discretionary behavior through affective commitment and engagement ($p < 0.05$ for both paths).
A12	Khian and Bernarto (2021) [31]	Indonesia. 39 teachers from a vocational training center in Singkawang (census).	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Perceived organizational support - Direct predictor	Servant leadership, perceived support, and well-being positively influenced discretionary behavior as direct predictors.
A13	Kurtessis et al. (2017) [20]	Aggregate multinational evidence: 558 primary studies.	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	Perceived organizational support - Mediator	The theory of organizational support predicted the antecedents, consequences, and mediational effects across 558 studies.
A14	Lee et al. (2020) [15]	Multinational aggregate evidence. 130 independent studies	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	Trust, procedural justice, and leader-member exchange - Non-motivational mediator	Incremental validity of servant leadership; the verified mediators were trust, procedural justice, and exchange.
A15	Lopez Ospina and Meneghel (2017) [32]	Colombia. 6,301 respondents from 13 Colombian companies	Cross-sectional survey with structural equation modeling	Work engagement - Outcome variable	All effects were significant; organizational clarity predicted engagement above supervisor support.
A16	Mahembe, Engerbrecht and Dannhauser (2016) [33]	South Africa. 288 teachers from 38 schools in Western Cape.	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Affective commitment - Non-motivational mediator	Positive relationships between servant leadership and discretionary behavior, and between affective commitment and discretionary behavior.
A17	Morales Cardenas, Perez Sanchez and Haidar Torres (2019) [34]	Mexico. 250 employees of seven supreme audit entities	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Perceived organizational support - Direct predictor	Perceived support had an effect on commitment (0,756) and on ethical climate (0,732).
A18	Schaufeli (2015) [19]	Netherlands. Representative sample of the Dutch working population ($n = 1,213$)	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Job demands and resources - Non-motivational mediator	Leadership influenced engagement and burnout only indirectly, through job demands and resources.
A19	Sutanto and Hoo (2025) [35]	Indonesia. 37 employees from Surabaya, purposive sampling.	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	Job satisfaction and organizational commitment - Non-motivational mediator	Servant leadership had no effect on discretionary behavior except when mediated by satisfaction and commitment.
A20	Sutiyatno (2024) [36]	Indonesia. 58 employees of a private bank in Magelang	Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	OCB - Non-motivational mediator	Servant and authentic leadership affected discretionary behavior, which mediated their effect on performance.
A21	van Dierendonck (2011) [13]	Multinational aggregate evidence. Available literature on servant leadership.	Evidence synthesis (systematic review)	Dyadic relationship, trust and justice - Non-motivational mediator	The conceptual model places dyadic relationship, trust, and justice as the main mediating processes.
A22	Wang et al. (2011) [17]	Multinational aggregate evidence. 117 independent samples from 113 primary studies	Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	No specific verified mediator - Not applicable	Stronger link with contextual performance than with task performance and an augmenting effect on contingent reward.

Note: A01-A22 identify the corpus sources. Citations in brackets correspond to the Vancouver numbering of the bibliographic references.

As observed in Table 1, the corpus brings together 2 types of evidence with different evidentiary weight. 8 sources are evidence syntheses (six meta-analyses and 2 systematic reviews) that aggregate hundreds of primary studies: A14 synthesizes 130 independent studies, A13 reaches 558, and A22 analyzes 117 samples. The remaining fourteen are primary studies whose samples range between 37 and 6,301 participants, a range of 2 orders of magnitude. This dispersion requires reading the coincidences with caution: when A19, with 37 participants, disagrees with A08, with 281, the discrepancy does not have the same informative value in both directions. The matrix also shows that the mediator column is populated in nineteen of the twenty-2 rows, but that the motivational family occupies only a part of them.

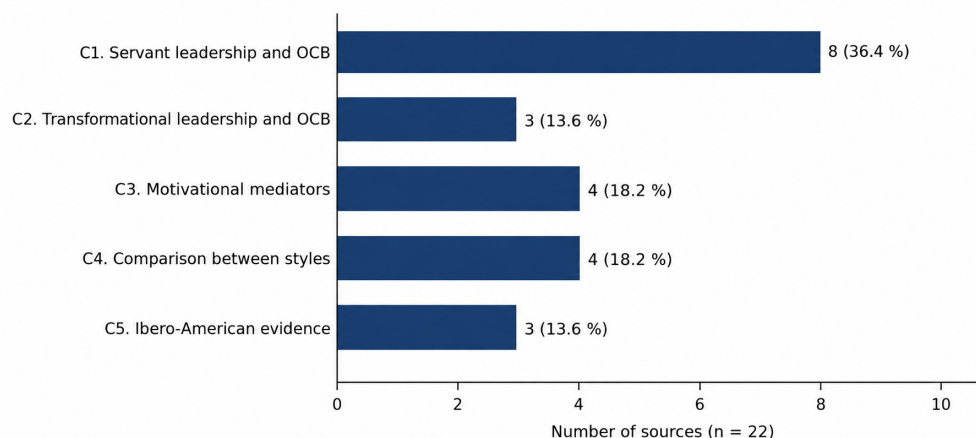
As observed in Table 2, production is concentrated in the 2016-2020 period, with ten sources (45.5%), followed by the 2021-2026 period with seven (31.8%). The dominant methodological feature is the presence of eleven cross-sectional surveys with structural equations (50.0%), plus a correlational survey (4.5%) and 2 sources whose analytical technique is not specified in the accessible text (9.1%).

Table 2. Characterization of the analytical corpus according to period, design, scope, and visibility (n = 22)

Dimension and value	f	%
Publication period		
2011-2015	5	22,7
2016-2020	10	45,5
2021-2026	7	31,8
Methodological design		
Cross-sectional survey with structural equations	11	50,0
Evidence synthesis (meta-analysis)	6	27,3
Analytical technique not specified in the accessible text	2	9,1
Evidence synthesis (systematic review)	2	9,1
Cross-sectional survey with correlational analysis	1	4,5
Geographic scope		
Multinational aggregate evidence	8	36,4
Other countries (China, Iran, Netherlands, Romania, South Africa, Saudi Arabia)	6	27,3
Indonesia	5	22,7
Ibero-America (Colombia, Mexico, Peru)	3	13,6
Editorial visibility of the journal		
High international visibility	10	45,5
Regional or low visibility	12	54,5

Note: The distributions by dimension are exclusive within each block and were calculated over n = 22.

Figure 1. Distribution of the analytical corpus by analysis category (n = 22)



Note. Own work based on the coded matrix.

There are no sources in the corpus reporting a longitudinal or experimental design. Geographically, eight sources (36.4%) are syntheses of aggregated multinational evidence, six (27.3%) come from various countries, five (22.7%) focus on Indonesia, and three (13.6%) examine Ibero-American populations. Editorial visibility is distributed almost evenly: ten sources (45.5%) in journals with high international visibility and twelve (54.5%) in journals with regional circulation or low visibility.

As shown in Figure 1, servant leadership (C1) accounts for 36.4% of the corpus (8 sources), transformational leadership (C2) for 13.6% (3 sources), comparative syntheses (C4) for 18.2% (4 sources), C3 for 18.2% (4 sources), and C5 for 13.6% (3 sources). The larger share of servant leadership does not imply that transformational leadership has been researched less; rather, evidence on transformational leadership reaches the corpus mainly through the comparative syntheses of C4. The five categories are mutually exclusive and together cover the entire analytical corpus.

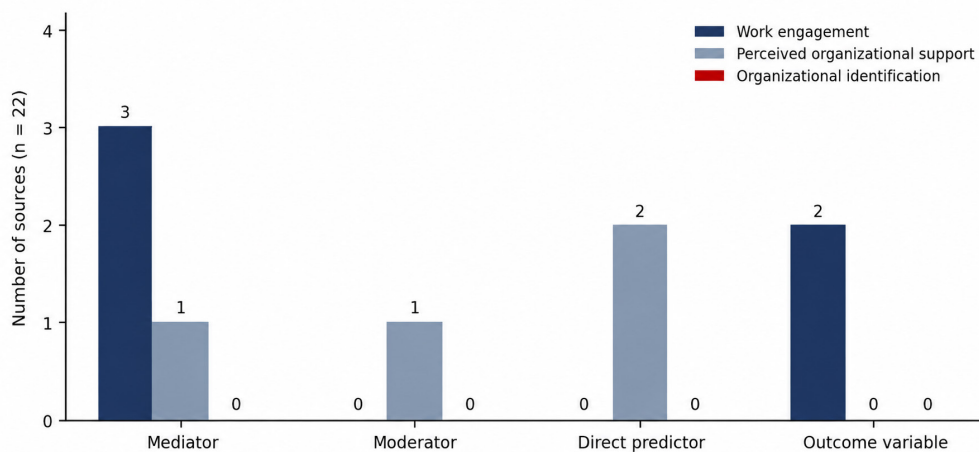
Table 3. Theoretical function assigned to the motivational mediators in the analytical corpus (n = 22)

Motivational mediator and assigned function	f	%	Sources
Work engagement			
Mediator	3	13,6	A03, A10, A11
Moderator	0	0,0	—
Direct predictor	0	0,0	—
Outcome variable	2	9,1	A01, A15
Perceived organizational support			
Mediator	1	4,5	A13
Moderator	1	4,5	A02
Direct predictor	2	9,1	A12, A17
Outcome variable	0	0,0	—
Organizational identification			
Mediator	0	0,0	—
Moderator	0	0,0	—
Direct predictor	0	0,0	—
Outcome variable	0	0,0	—
Mediator not belonging to the motivational family	10	45,5	A04, A05, A07, A08, A14, A16, A18, A19, A20, A21
No specific mediator verified	3	13,6	A06, A09, A22

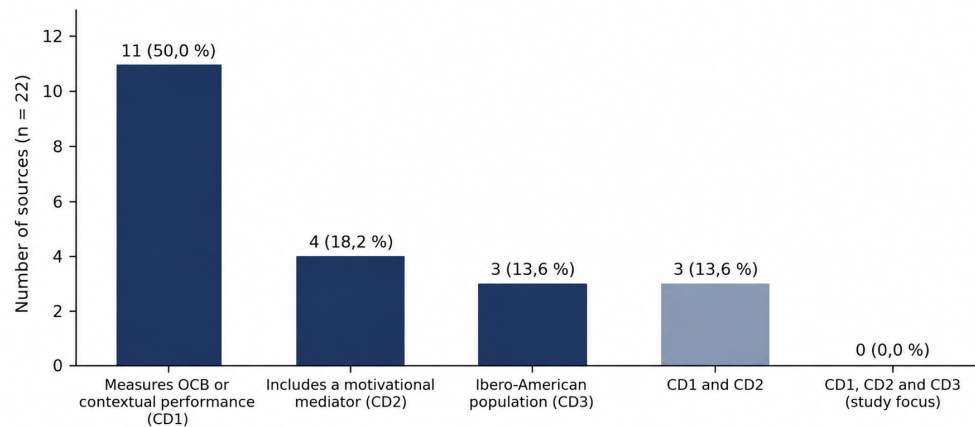
Note. The frequencies do not add up to n because a source may measure multiple mediators, and 13 sources do not model any mediator in the motivational family.

As observed in Figure 2, the distribution of functions is markedly unequal among the 3 mediators. Work engagement appears as a mediator in 3 sources (13.6%) (A03, A10, and A11) and as an outcome variable in 2 (9.1%). Perceived organizational support is distributed across 3 distinct positions: mediator in a source (4.5%), moderator in a source (4.5%), and direct predictor in 2 (9.1%). Organizational identification registers 0 sources (0.0%) in the four functions examined. Ten sources (45.5%) model mediators outside the motivational family. These are psychological empowerment, affective commitment, job satisfaction, trust, procedural justice, leader-member exchange, organizational culture, job demands and resources, and discretionary behavior itself as a mediator toward performance. 3 sources (13.6%) do not test any mediator.

As observed in Figure 3, the 3 conditions are met separately with decreasing frequencies: eleven sources (50.0%) measure discretionary behavior or contextual performance, four (18.2%) model a motivational mediator in a complete path, and 3 (13.6%) examine an Ibero-American population. The intersection of the first two conditions retains 3 sources (13.6%): A03, A10, and A11. The intersection of the 3 conditions retains none: 0 sources, 0.0%. The empty bar is deliberately included in the figure because the absence is itself a result and not a blank space. Its scope should be clarified: this is an absence in the indexed literature located through the five blocks of descriptors used, not a statement about the nonexistence of the phenomenon.

Figure 2. Theoretical function assigned to each motivational mediator

Note: Own elaboration based on the coded matrix.

Figure 3. Compliance with the conditions defining the object and its intersection (n = 22)

Note: CD1: measures OCB or contextual performance; CD2: models the motivational mediator; CD3: examines the Ibero-American population.

Table 4. Synthesis of results by specific objective

Objective	Primary outcome	Reading
OE1	11 sources (50.0%) use cross-sectional surveys with structural equations, and none reports a longitudinal or experimental design; 12 (54.5%) are published in journals of regional visibility, and 5 (22.7%) come from a single country.	The field has volume and analytical sophistication, but not the variety of designs that mediation inference requires. Geographic concentration limits generalization.
OE2	Work engagement is modeled as a mediator in three sources (13.6%); perceived organizational support receives three distinct functions in four sources (18.2%); organizational identification does not appear in any function (0.0%).	Only a single mediator among the three motivational mediators has verification in trajectory. The second presents theoretical ambiguity and the third is absent from the corpus despite having its own framework.
OE3	The two comparative meta-analytic syntheses (9.1%) verify relational mediators; two sources report direct effects or null mediations versus four that report positive ones; three Ibero-American sources (13.6%) do not measure discretionary behavior.	The advantage of servant leadership is established in aggregate, but its verified mechanism is not motivational. The heterogeneity of results and the territorial gap delimit the pending agenda.

Note: The synthesis integrates descriptive frequencies and the qualitative interpretation of the findings without combining heterogeneous effect sizes.

As observed in Table 4, the three objectives converge on a consistent diagnosis. The abundance of publications on leadership and discretionary behavior does not translate into verification of motivational mechanisms: the corpus contains much evidence on association and little on explanation. This asymmetry between volume and verification is what the next section interprets.

DISCUSSION

The results show a clear discrepancy between the breadth of the literature on leadership and the available evidence on its motivational mechanisms. Although the corpus brings together consistent associations among leadership styles, attitudes, and organizational behaviors, the verification of mediated pathways is much more limited. This difference is relevant because knowing that leadership is related to organizational citizenship behavior is not equivalent to establishing how that relationship occurs.

The first finding that conditions the interpretation is methodological. Half of the corpus uses cross-sectional surveys with structural equations, and no source reports longitudinal follow-up or an experimental design. Recent studies modeling transformational leadership, engagement, and discretionary behavior maintain this cross-sectional logic [29,30], while other correlational works stop short of testing a mediated trajectory [24]. Furthermore, when predictor, mediator, and outcome come from the same informant and are collected at a single time point, there is a risk of common method bias [37]. The sophistication of modeling has advanced faster than the capacity of the design to establish temporal order. Under these conditions, an indirect coefficient may be compatible with the proposed theoretical sequence, but also with a reverse reading; therefore, the main need is to introduce temporal separation between measurements.

Work engagement appears as the motivational mediator with the most consistent positioning. Jufrizen et al. [30] verified an indirect pathway from transformational leadership to discretionary behavior through engagement, whereas Huang and Li [29] found partial mediation in a model that also incorporated perceived organizational support as a moderator. The convergence between the two studies is important: although they differ in overall model structure, engagement occupies an intermediate position between leadership and behavior in both cases. This supports its usefulness as a reference mechanism, but it does not yet allow asserting causal superiority over other mediators given the predominance of cross-sectional designs.

Perceived organizational support shows a less stable pattern. Amir [25] positioned it as a moderator of the relationship between servant leadership and discretionary behavior, whereas Khian and Bernarto [31] treated it as a direct predictor of organizational citizenship behavior. This difference is not trivial, because mediation, moderation, and direct prediction represent distinct theoretical explanations. The corpus suggests that part of this variation depends on the level from which the predictor is formulated: when the focus is on the immediate supervisor, institutional support may function as a contextual condition; when the focus shifts toward the organization, it may acquire a more direct explanatory role. Therefore, the function of the construct should be justified before estimating the model, not after observing the coefficients.

Primary studies in servant leadership broaden the range of mechanisms. Ghalavi and Nastiezaie [28] identified an indirect pathway through psychological empowerment; Sutanto and Hoo [35] found that the effect on discretionary behavior operated through satisfaction and commitment; and Mahembe et al. [33] related servant leadership to affective commitment and organizational citizenship. These results do not contradict the relevance of engagement, but they show that the literature distributes its attention among motivational, attitudinal, and relational mechanisms. The consequence is a fragmented accumulation: there are several plausible explanations, although few have been tested simultaneously within the same sample.

Heterogeneity also appears in the position occupied by organizational citizenship behavior itself. Sutiyatno [36] modeled it as a mediator between leadership styles and performance, whereas AL-Dossary [24] examined leadership, engagement, and commitment without modeling a complete pathway to organizational citizenship. These differences show that OCB is not always used as a final outcome, making it difficult to directly compare studies that employ similar constructs but place them in different positions within the model.

The territorial gap is equally relevant. In Colombia, López Ospina and Meneghel [32] analyzed organizational climate as an antecedent of engagement; in Mexico, Morales Cárdenas et al. [34] examined perceived organizational support and commitment; and in Peru, De La Rada Avalos et al. [26] studied transformational leadership, organizational culture, and performance. The three

studies show that in Ibero-America there are methodological capabilities and instruments to study variables close to the model, but none simultaneously integrates leadership, a motivational mediator, and organizational citizenship behavior. The observed gap is therefore an integration gap rather than an absolute absence of regional research.

Of the twenty-two sources, none met the three conditions defined by the study and none placed organizational identification as a mediator. This result should be interpreted as an absence within the localized corpus, not as the non-existence of the mechanism. Overall, the evidence favors engagement as the most verified motivational mediator, shows an unstable theoretical position of perceived organizational support, and leaves open the incorporation of organizational identification. The main limitations derive from the size of the corpus, the partial dependence on abstracts, and the absence of independent coders. The future agenda should prioritize temporal designs, simultaneous comparison of mediators, and Ibero-American studies that integrate the three conditions in the same model.

CONCLUSIONS

The reviewed evidence presents a marked concentration of cross-sectional designs based on surveys and structural equation models, with no longitudinal or experimental studies among the twenty-two sources analyzed. This limitation makes it impossible to solidly affirm the causal direction of the proposed relationships, therefore, the statistical sophistication observed is not always accompanied by designs capable of demonstrating temporality or causality.

Work engagement is the motivational mediator with the most support for explaining the link between leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, although testing it through complete trajectories is limited to a small percentage of the corpus. Perceived organizational support, for its part, shows variable roles as mediator, moderator, or antecedent, which indicates that its function depends on the level at which leadership is conceptualized and requires greater theoretical precision.

Comparisons between leadership styles show that servant leadership has favorable evidence (even incremental explanatory capacity) compared with transformational leadership. The most frequently identified mechanisms are relational variables—trust, justice, and commitment—whereas other motivational and identity-related variables have received little empirical attention.

Iberoamerican scholarly output possesses the methodological capacity to analyze variables such as climate, organizational culture, and commitment, yet it does not incorporate organizational citizenship. This omission limits the possibility of contrasting comprehensive models across different regional contexts and restricts the generalization of results obtained in different cultural contexts.

Overall, a gap of integration between leadership styles, motivational and identity mediators and organizational citizenship behavior is identified. None of the twenty-two sources examined simultaneously brings these components together in the same model, and there is particularly little consideration of organizational identification as a mediating mechanism. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal designs, incorporate these variables together, and evaluate the models in Ibero-American contexts, with the purpose of establishing not only the existence of associations, but also their direction, magnitude, and organizational applicability.

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