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## **Beyond the counter: unveiling the nexus of workplace training, employee engagement, and citizenship behaviour in Fijian retail**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the impact of workplace training on the citizenship behaviour of frontline employees in Fiji's retail sector. The study found that employee engagement mediates the relationship between workplace training and citizenship behaviour. Additionally, perceived organisational support moderates the relationship between engagement and citizenship behaviour. Providing well-equipped workplace training and a supportive environment can encourage employee engagement, leading to increased productivity and extra-role behaviours crucial for organisational success. When employers provide training programs, it enhanced the in-role performance of employees and motivate them to go beyond their expected duties which enhanced performance, particularly in high-pressure work environments where front line retail employees work. For small developing economies like Fiji, training programs are a cheaper and faster way to upskill existing and new employees to meet the increasing consumer demand without significant adjustments in operational costs.

**Keywords:** employee engagement; workplace training; perceived organisational support; POS; organisational citizenship behaviour; OCB; Fiji.

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**Biographical notes:** Narendra Prasad currently works as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. His research focuses on strategic human resource management practices, specifically on high-performance human resource management practices and the black box mechanism in the HRM to performance nexus.

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Iffat Sabir Chaudhry is an Associate Professor of Management at Al Ain University, Abu Dhabi campus. Her research interests include workforce psychology and interventions to strengthen pro-organisational behaviours, and the diagnosis and design of viable management systems.

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## 1 Introduction

In today's competitive markets, service sector organisations must prioritise customer needs and provide customer-centric services to attract and retain their customer base (Dam and Dam, 2021). To ensure lasting customer satisfaction and loyalty, contemporary organisations need proactive and flexible employees who exhibit a strong sense of personal initiative (Sonnentag, 2003). This means that employees are expected to go beyond their formal job descriptions and complete complex tasks assigned to them, referred to as employee discretionary behaviour in organisational behavioural literature (Organ, 2018). Although employees' discretionary behaviours are crucial to the functioning of organisations, they are often treated as personal employee choices, with no consequences for failing to exhibit them (Huang et al., 2019; Lee and Ha-Brookshire, 2018). Organisational citizenship behaviour, hereafter OCB, is an example of such employee discretionary behaviour, which is widely documented in the extant literature. This behaviour is not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, but it is significantly desired by the employers for effective functioning of the organisation (Organ, 1997). Although OCB is a distinct concept, it is often used interchangeably with other terms such as contextual, pro-social, and extra-role performance in literature (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986).

The social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), lays the foundation for understanding employees' OCB. According to the theory, there is a mutual relationship between the employee and the organisation, wherein the employee assesses the value of their contributions and the organisation's concern towards them before reciprocating (Meira and Hancer, 2021; Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu, 2018; Liaquat and Mehmood, 2017; Lynch et al., 1999). However, since no formal incentives or rewards are associated with OCB

(Vigoda-Gadot, 2006), it is crucial to identify the factors that can inspire employees to go beyond their regular job duties, particularly in the services sector where employees consistently face incessant demands from the customer and management for prompt service delivery (Harvey et al., 2018). Such proposition is an important concern in academia and practice, as identification and confirmation of such antecedents can help organisations foster a positive work environment and enhance employee engagement in a high pressure and highly interactive working environment.

Several studies have indicated that work related attitudinal factors such as job satisfaction, workplace fairness, employee commitment, leader supportiveness, workplace spirituality and personal values are crucial in promoting OCB across different sectors (Organ, 2018; Guan and Frenkel, 2019 ; Harry Gnanarajan and Kengatharan, 2022). However, similar studies propose that further research is required to identify and validate unexplored factors, particularly those originating from the human resource management (HRM) domain, to enhance its impact on OCB in an organisational setting (Taamneh et al., 2018). A widely studied HRM-initiated antecedents is training and development initiatives, which experts believe can significantly influence organisational performance, including OCB (Zhu et al., 2018). Smaller studies have indicated that training efforts initiated by employers or self-funded training initiatives encourage favourable OCB among frontline employees in the retail sector. The latter comprises underqualified, poorly educated, and untrained employees (Jehanzeb, 2020).

The retail sector, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, requires effective training strategies due to their high turnover rates and constant inflow of new, often untrained personnel. Unlike larger retail multinational companies in the West, which have better economies of scale and have been the focus of most OCB-related studies (Lo Presti et al., 2019), these small businesses often have limited training budgets, poorly planned training programs, an absence of an established training department, limited in-house training opportunities, high turnover of skilled employees (Cooke et al., 2022). As a result, they often struggle to secure necessary training funding from locally based or external donor agencies to support training initiatives. Due to such constraints, the frontline employees, who represent the face of these retail outlets, are often deprived of proper training opportunities. They are asked to do more with limited resources, affecting their performance levels. Given their relative importance in representing the company image through everyday customer interactions, it seems imminent to understand whether (and if so, how) organisational training can influence frontline employees' citizenship behaviours in the retail sector (Ellinger et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2004). Moreover, despite the positive impact of HRM practices of training on both employees and organisational outcomes (e.g., Lee and Ha-Brookshire, 2018), its direct influence on OCB in small-size businesses remains undocumented. This is a gap that requires further research (Giancaspro et al., 2022; Alfes et al., 2013).

Thus, this study explores how perceived accessibility, benefits, and managerial support for employee training in the retail sector impact their citizenship work behaviours. Second, employee engagement is examined as a mediating factor in employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional expressions in exerting extra-role performances in the study (Kahn, 1990). Third, as employees pursue their socio-emotional needs and evaluate the benefits of their increased work efforts, they develop general perceptions about the organisation. This is influenced by whether the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986a; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Therefore, the study also assesses whether the

employees perceived organisational support (POS) moderates the relation between their work engagement and citizenship behaviours.

This study aims to fill two critical research gaps. Firstly, western based studies have shown that contextual factors significantly shape employees' OCB (Torlak and Koc, 2007). However, it's inappropriate to generalise the findings from the Western context to emerging economies where societal and cultural dynamics differ from western countries (Paine and Organ, 2000). Thus, this research aims to investigate the citizenship behaviour of frontline workers in Fiji's retail sector to comprehend their attitudes and behaviours when exposed to training and development initiatives. Fiji is an emerging economy with fast growing retail and services sector. As the sector's employment practices is often unregulated, those working in it suffer from poor working conditions, limited career opportunities, and low wages. Hence, the results of this study would provide valuable insights into how employees in a differently unique setting respond to those reported scenarios in other established studies. Secondly, small, and medium-sized businesses as in retail sector often face high operational costs, lower efficiency, and high employee turnover challenges. In today's digital age, entrepreneurs are expected to play a crucial role in national progress and development and be socially responsible by contributing to clean environment and ensuring employee well-being. These external pressures require companies to reevaluate their management practices and adopt a new sense of purpose, corporate character, culture, survival, sustainability, and innovation. Promoting organisational citizenship among employees can be a cost-effective solution to enhance the company's bottom line, amidst all the avenues to cut costs and raise profitability while adhering to national and political expectations (Belwalkar et al., 2018; Banwo and Du, 2020). Therefore, small businesses can invest in cost-effective training and development initiatives to enhance the competence of their staff and improve the company's bottom line. Such strategies, if successful, can be effective solutions for businesses of similar magnitude in the evolving workforce of local and regional retail industry.

Theoretically, this study is based on SET, which suggests that social behaviour is the outcome of an exchange process, being rooted in the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964). SET suggests that individuals assess the potential benefits and risks of their social relationships, and based on the balance of risks and rewards, they either sustain or terminate their relationships. The primary aim of the exchange is to maximise benefits while minimising costs. Although most relationships involve some give-and-take, they are not always equal. SET implies that the value of the benefits and costs of each relationship determines whether one continues with the social association. SET has been successfully applied across various fields, including sociology, psychology, and economics (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Konovsky and Pugh, 1994). Further discussions on SET and its implications are presented in the following section.

## **2 Social exchange based conceptual framework and hypotheses**

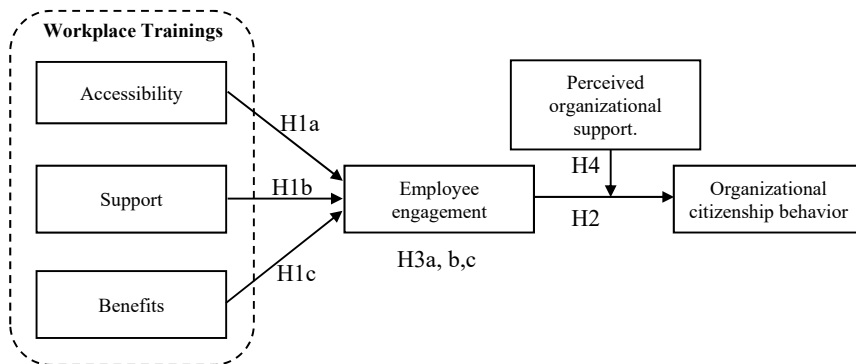
Effective planning and implementation of workplace training is crucial for modern management practices. It helps improve essential skills and knowledge aligned with organisational values and goals, thus enhancing organisational effectiveness (Wang et al., 2009). Workplace training plays a vital role in organisational performance, as highlighted by several studies including Al-Khasawneh et al., (2022), Lai et al., (2017) and

Sabharwal et al. (2023). This study focuses on how workplace training impacts employee work engagement and OCB from the perspective of SET (Blau, 1964). In the contextual sense, when employees perceive training as a genuine need to improve their work performance or advance their career, they respond positively reciprocate to organisational demands. The positive attitude and behaviour can be attributed to a social exchange that occurs over time in employee-employer relationships. (Blau, 1964) suggest that social exchange occurs as a continuous transaction between employees and employers, leading to a positive reciprocal attitude and behaviour in response to the care shown by management through training provisions.

Organisations are said to be the main initiators of SET, which involves social exchanges where they treat and support their employees with the expectation of positive reciprocation. This treatment results in increased commitment, engagement, better performance, and extra-role behaviours that improve organisational effectiveness, as per the SET (Blau, 1964). Employers who provide training and support to their employees signal their willingness to invest in their competencies and regard them as pivotal for the company's success. Employees who get the opportunity to participate in training programs perceive that their employer cares and values their development-related needs. Therefore, they likely reciprocate their POS with their high level of work engagement, leading to higher in-role, voluntary, and extra-role performance (Organ, 1988).

Therefore, the study suggests that the training provided to the employees, which is perceived as valuable for their learning and development, and the support offered to them by the managers to facilitate the training process and outcomes, influence employee's engagement leading to increased OCB, moderated by their POS. The study framework is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** Conceptual model – influence of workplace training on employees' work-related attitudes and behaviours



## 2.1 Workplace trainings and employee engagement

Workplace training refers to a well-organised and planned, activity aimed to either change or modify the attitudes and behaviours of the employees (Khan and Iqbal, 2020). The present study considers three aspects of training, including employees' perceived access to training, managerial support for providing training, and employees' perceived benefits from the training for two reasons. Firstly, past studies have demonstrated that these perceptions are vital to employee work-related attitudes (e.g., Noe and Wilk, 1993;

Bartlett, 2001; Chen, 2017). Secondly, these perceptions provide an overall view of how employees perceive the training provided by their organisation. The training-related benefits emphasise employees' concerns for individual interests, supervisor support for training reflects their concerns about interpersonal relationships and access to training indicates their perceptions of organisational support.

*Perceived access to training* refers to the extent to which employees believe they have sufficient space and opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities required to maintain their current position and future professional development needs (Noe and Wilk, 1993). It also depends on whether there are any organisational constraints preventing their participation (Bartlett, 2001). Studies have shown that access to workplace trainings have a positive impact on employees' work engagement, employees intention to stay, productivity and citizenship behaviours (Fletcher, 2016; Huang et al., 2019; Mustafa et al., 2023; Sugiarto and Huruta, 2023). However, more than simply having access to training may not be adequate in an employment relationship. The literature on training suggests that managerial support is also crucial in helping employees with the learning and development process, as it provides them with the necessary resources and emotional support for better learning outcomes amongst employees (Johnson et al., 2018). Such support is also necessary for achieving the necessary behavioural change and increased employee productivity. It is important to ensure that employees have access to relevant training and are supported in completing available opportunities. We expected that perceived access to training would be positively associated with employee engagement and OCB amongst employees.

*Perceived support for training* refers to the ways manager praises, share information, and expresses positive attitudes about the training programs (Ibrahim et al., 2020). In addition, managers should ensure that employees have adequate resources, time, and necessary equipment to attend employer or self-initiated training activities (Fecteau et al., 1995). Research has shown that when employees feel supported by their managers, they are more motivated to attend and learn from the training and are likely to implement the knowledge and skills acquired from the training into their work settings (Muduli and Raval, 2018). However, it has been found that if employees do not perceive the training as useful for their job performance and career growth, the training may not have a significant impact on their work attitudes and behaviour (Sahinidis and Bouris, 2008). Hence, the individual perception of the training's usefulness plays a crucial role in shaping employee attitude and behaviour (Fletcher, 2016). Past studies report a strong correlation between employee support for training and their job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and commitment levels with the organisation (Sahinidis and Bouris, 2008; Newman et al., 2011; Fletcher, 2016; Mansour et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to consider the perceived support for available training as a factor influencing employee engagement and extra-role behaviours at work.

*Perceived benefits of training* are job-related knowledge and skills that employees acquire through training. This leads to a change in behaviour and better performance outcomes, which helps them perform their tasks more effectively. As a result, they can earn better financial rewards or promotions (Bartlett, 2001).

Workplace training can significantly impact employees' level of engagement by improving their motivation and technical capabilities in performing tasks (Sendawula et al., 2018; Fletcher, 2016). Employee engagement in this study refers to using employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities to perform their jobs effectively (Kahn, 1990). Access to various training and learning opportunities can enhance

employees' knowledge and skills, leading to greater work engagement. Organisational training when well supported can also help employees learn new work systems and interact effectively with peers or customers from diverse backgrounds. Employees are more likely to feel engaged in achieving organisational goals and reaching professional milestones when they are provided with opportunities to develop in-house, supportive resources from managers and training that they perceive as valuable.

Hence, the study hypothesises that:

H1 Workplace training's

- a accessibility
- b support
- c benefits relate positively to employee engagement.

## 2.2 *Reciprocal employee engagement and organisational citizenship behaviour*

According to the SET, employees tend to express higher engagement and positive attitude towards their organisation if they receive necessary economic and socio-emotional resources such as training, learning and development opportunities, and other similar benefits. This is because they feel obliged to reciprocate the support provided by their organisation (Alfes et al., 2013; Fletcher et al., 2018). Better employee outcomes and discretionary behaviours result from increased employee engagement (Neuber et al., 2022).

In this indirect relationship, provision of training-related variables elicit enthusiasm and personal energy among employees (Fletcher et al., 2018), who exhibit highly valued and desired work behaviours, i.e., citizenship behaviours, the behaviours that are not part of the formal requirement of a job (Organ, 2018).

Employer-initiated training investment represents personalised commitment to employees that they might reciprocate in positive ways (Latorre et al., 2016). Likewise, supportive organisational training practices, can facilitate workplace safety and psychological empowerment, which motivates the employees to sense a stronger role obligation and inspire to strive for extra-role and task-related goals (Yoon and Suh, 2003). Accessibility to the training opportunities align with employees' expectations of fair treatment, organisational justice, and just reward allocations from their employers. Conversely, if employees perceive lack of learning and development opportunities in the work environment, they likely develop inconsistent interpretations and uncertainty about their work, hindering their engagement and extra-role performance. Therefore

H2 Employee engagement has a positive influence on employee OCB.

H3 Employee engagement mediates the relationship between workplace trainings

- a accessibility
- b support
- c benefits and employee OCB.

## 2.3 *Moderating role of perceived organisational support*

Employees tend to form a perception of how much their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This is called 'POS.' (Kurtessis et al.,



2017; Eisenberger et al., 1986b). Studies show that when employees feel well-supported, they show higher job commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. They may also exhibit moderate citizenship behaviours towards the organisation (Rockstuhl et al., 2020). Engaged workers are more willing to dedicate their efforts and abilities to their work, but not all of them seek to attain organisational goals. The level of POS may determine the extent to which engaged employees reciprocate in the form of extra-role behaviours (Neuber et al., 2022). In a supportive work environment, engaged employees with higher POS are likely to transform their engagement into citizenship behaviours. However, when employees feel deprived of adequate organisational support, they may be less inspired to indulge or demonstrate citizenship behaviours, even if they exert adequate work efforts. Thus

H4 POS moderates the relationship between employee engagement and OCB, such that the relationship is stronger at higher POS and weaker at lower POS.

### **3 Methods**

#### *3.1 Context*

The study focused on Fiji, a small South Pacific country with a population of approximately one million people. Most of the Fiji's population (57%) are iTaukei, who are indigenous Fijians, and around 38% are of Indian descent. In recent years, Fiji has become an attractive market for foreign investment and an important entry point in the South Pacific (Huang and Patman, 2013). The services sector contributed to nearly 70% of Fiji's total gross domestic product in 2019, with 15% accounted for by direct retailing and wholesaling activities (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The local grocery and hardware retailing outlets merchandise from fixed point-of-sale locations. Most young women are employed in the local food and hardware retail industry, with most needing further post-secondary education. Pay is relatively low, with part-time and precarious work practices standard in this industry. The study sample was selected from the front-line employees working in the retail sector of Fiji, considering its significant economic contribution. The findings can be generalised to similar developing economies with cultural similarities, as there is no empirical evidence for improving employees' citizenship behaviours in the Fijian context.

#### *3.2 Study participant*

Using random sampling method, questionnaires were distributed among 922 frontline employees working in 37 groceries and hardware retail outlets throughout Fiji. An effective response rate of 62% resulted in 572 completed questionnaires. The study sample showed higher participation from female respondents (75%,  $n = 429$ ) compared to the male ( $n = 143$ ); mostly from the age group of 20 to 30 years (81%). 78% of the respondents were employed as full-time workers whereas 22% were working as part-time employees. With respect to education, 70% of the study respondents had completed high school, followed by 22% participants who had completed a certificate or a diploma from university (one or two years of full-time university education). Only 7% were degree holders from a university. 55% of the employees had less than two years of work

experience, compared to 17% of participants with more than ten years of work experience. Ethnicity-wise, 79% respondents were Indo-Fijians, followed by iTaukei (16%), and Chinese (5%). The high participation from Indo-Fijians employees reflected accurately the high employability of this ethnicity in the Fijian retail industry. The detailed results are available in Table 1.

**Table 1** Demographic profile of survey respondents

| Demographic variables     | Category          | Research sample (n = 572) |                |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|                           |                   | Frequency                 | Percentage (%) |
| Gender                    | Female            | 429                       | 75%            |
|                           | Male              | 143                       | 25%            |
| Age                       | 20–30 years       | 463                       | 81%            |
|                           | 31–40 years       | 63                        | 11%            |
|                           | 41–50 years       | 17                        | 3%             |
|                           | Above 50 years    | 29                        | 5%             |
| Tenure with organisation  | ≤ 2 years         | 314                       | 55%            |
|                           | 2 – 5 years       | 80                        | 14%            |
|                           | 5 – 10 years      | 80                        | 14%            |
|                           | ≥10 years         | 98                        | 17%            |
| Educational qualification | High school       | 400                       | 70%            |
|                           | Certificate level | 80                        | 14%            |
|                           | Diploma level     | 52                        | 9%             |
|                           | Degree            | 40                        | 7%             |
| Work status               | Full-time         | 446                       | 78%            |
|                           | Part-time         | 126                       | 22%            |
| Ethnicity                 | i-Taukei          | 92                        | 16%            |
|                           | Indians           | 452                       | 79%            |
|                           | Chinese           | 28                        | 5%             |
|                           | Others            | -                         | -              |

### 3.3 Measures

All the study constructs were operationalised and reflectively measured using seven-point Likert scales, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (7). The items adopted for measuring the study endogenous and exogenous constructs are as follows:

- Work training: Accessibility was measured using the three items adopted from Bartlett (2001), and Bulut and Culha (2010), e.g., “I am aware of the amount and type of training that my organisation is planning for me in the coming year”.
- Work training: Support was measured using five items adopted from Bartlett (2001) and Noe and Wilk, (1993) (see Bulut and Culha, (2010)), including “My manager enthusiastically supports my participation in training programmes,” “My manager makes sure I get the training needed to remain effective in my job”.
- Work training: Benefits were measured using five – item scale adopted from a study by Bulut and Culha (2010), e.g., ‘Participating in training programmes will help my

personal development’, ‘Participating in training programmes will help me perform by job better’.

- Employee engagement was assessed using six items adopted from Gruman and Saks, (2011). For example, ‘I share the same work values as my colleagues’.
- OCB of the employees was measured with the 11-item scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzi, (1993). An item included ‘I am always ready to lend a helping hand to those around me’, ‘I don’t take extra or long breaks while on duty’, etc.
- POS was measured using the 12-item survey of POS developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The survey included questions such as ‘does the organisation values my contribution to its well-being’ and ‘does the organisation really cares about my well-being’ among others.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables, were calculated using IBM SPSS (results given in Table 2). The exogenous variables particular to employees’ training, including:

- a accessibility
- b benefits, had mean values of 3.13 and 3.40, respectively, compared to the
- c support provided for the training(s), which yielded a higher mean of 5.72, indicating that employees ‘somewhat agreed’ that their respective management supports their training needs.

On the other hand, the mean values of the mediating variable of employee engagement (M = 3.70) and the endogenous variable of OCB (M = 3.61) remained higher than the mid-values of the scale. However, they demonstrated fair agreement on the POS (M = 5.73), suggesting their respective organisations somewhat supported them.

Table 2 Descriptive analyses

|   |                            | Mean | (SD)  | Cronbach's<br>$\alpha$ | Correlations |        |        |        |        |   |
|---|----------------------------|------|-------|------------------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
|   |                            |      |       |                        | 1            | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6 |
| 1 | WT-accessibility           | 3.13 | 0.930 | 0.846                  | 1            |        |        |        |        |   |
| 2 | WT-support                 | 5.72 | 0.988 | 0.927                  | 0.247*       | 1      |        |        |        |   |
| 3 | WT-benefits                | 3.40 | 0.942 | 0.907                  | 0.101*       | 0.041* | 1      |        |        |   |
| 4 | Employee engagement        | 3.70 | 0.803 | 0.825                  | 0.216*       | 0.080* | 0.215* | 1      |        |   |
| 5 | Perceived org. support     | 5.73 | 0.973 | 0.825                  | 0.635*       | 0.124* | 0.101* | 0.014* | 1      |   |
| 6 | Org. citizenship behaviour | 3.61 | 0.798 | 0.875                  | 0.267*       | 0.301* | 0.178* | 0.252* | 0.266* | 1 |

Note: n = 572 \* denotes p-value < 0.01.

#### 4.2 Preliminary analysis: testing the measurement model

To assess the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The outcomes of the CFA revealed an acceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 394.037$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.85$ ; goodness of fit index [GFI] = 0.90; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.96; Tucker-Lewis's index [TLI] = 0.95; and root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.05). The coefficient values for all of the measures were above 0.70, indicating that all the measures were reliable. All the measures' coefficients were higher than 0.70, confirming that all measures were sufficiently reliable. Composite reliability ranged from 0.84 to 0.93, and all factor loadings were significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and within acceptable limits. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating support for convergent validity, such that the items adequately represent the conceptual underpinning of the latent constructs (Hair et al., 2011). As for discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its inter-construct correlations, which further supports the validity of the measures (Hair et al., 2011). Finally, Harman's single-factor test, which assesses potential common method bias, showed that the first factor explained only 19.74% of the variance, suggesting that this bias is unlikely to be a major concern. Details provided in Table 3.

**Table 3** Results of confirmatory factor analysis

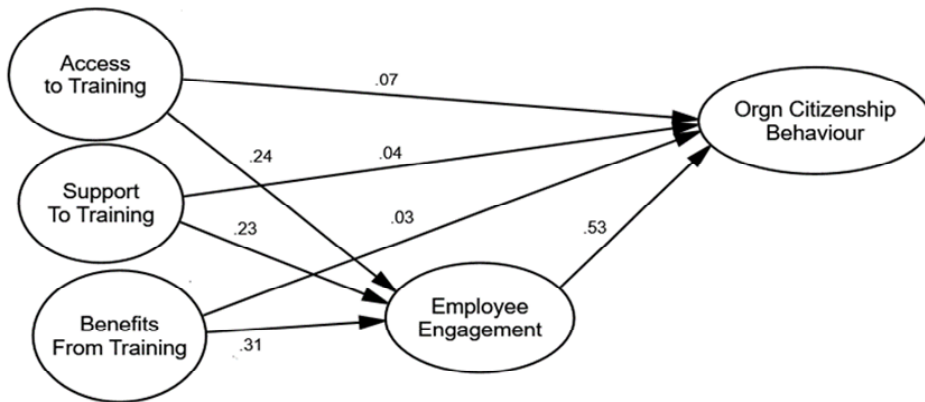
| <i>Latent variable</i> | <i>Items</i> | <i>Standardised factor loading</i> | <i>Composite reliability</i> | <i>Average variance extract</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| WT-accessibility       | 1            | 0.923                              | 0.88                         | 0.73                            |
|                        | 2            | 0.922                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 3            | 0.696                              |                              |                                 |
| WT-support             | 1            | 0.807                              | 0.84                         | 0.58                            |
|                        | 2            | 0.781                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 3            | 0.745                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 4            | 0.726                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 5            | 0.777                              |                              |                                 |
| WT-benefits            | 1            | 0.846                              | 0.88                         | 0.56                            |
|                        | 2            | 0.842                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 3            | 0.813                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 4            | 0.753                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 5            | 0.705                              |                              |                                 |
| Employee engagement    | 1            | 0.848                              | 0.87                         | 0.64                            |
|                        | 2            | 0.848                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 3            | 0.817                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 4            | 0.692                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 5            | 0.701                              |                              |                                 |
|                        | 6            | 0.699                              |                              |                                 |

**Table 3** Results of confirmatory factor analysis (continued)

| <i>Latent variable</i>             | <i>Items</i> | <i>Standardised factor loading</i> | <i>Composite reliability</i> | <i>Average variance extract</i> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Perceived organisational support   | 1            | 0.970                              | 0.91                         | 0.65                            |
|                                    | 2            | 0.954                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 3            | 0.751                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 4            | 0.745                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 5            | 0.716                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 6            | 0.780                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 7            | 0.747                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 8            | 0.744                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 9            | 0.848                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 10           | 0.776                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 11           | 0.931                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 12           | 0.699                              |                              |                                 |
| Organisation citizenship behaviour | 1            | 0.936                              | 0.93                         | 0.63                            |
|                                    | 2            | 0.908                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 3            | 0.859                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 4            | 0.819                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 5            | 0.800                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 6            | 0.759                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 7            | 0.695                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 8            | 0.686                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 9            | 0.646                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 10           | 0.766                              |                              |                                 |
|                                    | 11           | 0.961                              |                              |                                 |

### 4.3 Hypotheses testing

A covariance-based structural equation model (SEM) was utilised to test Hypotheses 1 to 3 using AMOS 25. This approach allowed for testing the entire scope of hypothesised relationships simultaneously, whereas other statistical techniques examine single relationships one at a time (Hair et al., 2011). A full mediation model was found to have a satisfactory fit with indices of  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.00$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), GFI = 0.898, CFI = 0.945, TLI = 0.959, and RMSEA = 0.027 (as depicted in Figure 2). It was found that accessibility component of workplace training had a significant positive influence on employees' engagement level ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thus accepting hypothesis 1a. Additionally, it was confirmed that the support for training received by employees from their managers also had a significant positive impact on their work engagement ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), accepting hypothesis 1b. Furthermore, it was found that the perceived benefits of training significantly influenced employees' engagement at work ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), accepting hypothesis 1c.

**Figure 2** Path results of research model

Subsequently, the impact of employee engagement on their citizenship behaviour was tested, and the results confirmed a significant positive relationship between the two ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting hypothesis 2. The study also confirmed that employee engagement mediates between the training-related variables (accessibility, support, and benefits) and OCBs. Therefore, Hypotheses 3a to 3c are accepted.

To assess the moderating role of POS (hypothesis 4), the study followed Zhao and Cavusgil's (2006) technique of splitting the data into two groups according to the mean score for POS. 64% of the data above the mean value of 5.73 represent the high POS group, and the remaining data below the mean are low POS. The comparison of these two subsamples in AMOS indicates the chi-square value and degrees of freedom pertaining to the models with and without equality constraints on a particular path of interest. The values for the model without equality constraints serve as baselines for the chi-square difference tests. If the unconstrained model has a significantly lower chi-square than the constrained model, in the hypothesised direction, the results offer support for the moderating hypothesis (Zhao and Cavusgil, 2006). The results showed that the standardised path coefficient in the high POS group is higher ( $0.80$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than that in the low POS group ( $0.37$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and that the chi-square difference between the constrained and unconstrained models is significant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 6.73$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings confirmed the moderating effect of POS on the relation between employee engagement and their citizenship behaviour, thus accepting hypothesis 4 of the study.

## 5 Discussion

This study is based on the fundamental assumption of SET. It aims to investigate how employees reciprocate when they perceive workplace training opportunities from their firms to enhance their workplace knowledge and skills. The study focuses on two aspects of employees' response - their work engagement and OCB while considering accessibility, perceived support, and perceived benefits of the training offered by their employers. Additionally, the study examines how POS moderates the relationship between employee work engagement and citizenship behaviour.

First, the study confirmed a positive and significant association between workplace training-related constructs and employee engagement. Having accessibility to quality

training programs proved beneficial to employees, possibly for their improved performance and career development. Similarly, managerial, and supervisory support for training positively affects employee work engagement levels. Interestingly, in this study, perceived benefits for training scored higher ( $\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$ ) compared to accessibility ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.001$ ) and support for training ( $\beta = 0.23, p < 0.001$ ), which is in contrast to similar studies conducted in Indian hospitality (Dhar, 2015); and a Jordanian hospital involving full-time nurses (Rawashdeh and Tamimi, 2019). The current study focuses on the frontline retail sector employees who may not have the advanced qualifications required for career progression within the industry. These employees can benefit greatly from employer-initiated training, which can improve their future career prospects within their current company or another company of similar magnitude. This could be the reason for the difference in correlation between perceived benefits from training in the study. The study confirms that workplace training-related constructs are a significant predictor of retail employees' work engagement and citizenship behaviour, supporting the findings of Sendawula et al. (2018). The study further found that employee engagement mediates between workplace training and employees' citizenship behaviour, as per the SET. Furthermore, the results showed that employees' work engagement and citizenship behaviour are moderated by their POS.

Second, this study examined the perception of workplace training as a multi-dimensional construct beyond just accessibility to training. It also includes the employees' perception of the managerial/supervisory support available to them to complete the training successfully, as well as the learning outcomes and benefits of training for their work performance and career opportunities. The positive findings have strengthened the unprecedented study approach of considering workplace training as a multi-dimensional concept, rather than combining training and development practices together as a whole (Ertan and Şeşen, 2022) or integrating it with other HRM practices such as employee selection (Wang et al., 2020) in determining its role in increasing employees' work engagement and extra-role behaviours. When employees have access to training for the improvement of their work knowledge and skills, and when they perceive that their manager/supervisor provides adequate support and resources during their learning and development process, it improves their engagement at work and better transferability of the knowledge and skills acquired through the training, as reported earlier by Fecteau and colleagues (1995). Furthermore, when employees perceive that the training offered to them is beneficial for their work productivity and future career opportunities, it improves their work engagement and extra-role performance (Fletcher, 2016).

Third, this study aims to expand on multinational industries-centred research by examining training-related variables' effects on employee engagement in a developing country from a social exchange perspective (SET) as perceived by employees. According to SET (Blau, 1964), training as an investment by the employer can potentially elicits positive work motivation among employees, ultimately leading to enhanced organisational performance in the forms of employee engagement and OCB. Conversely, a lack of training related opportunities might lead to decreased job-related motivational and instrumental resources. This research correlates training with employee engagement thus providing avenues to further research for identification of additional antecedents of employee engagement, especially those related to the HRM domain (Neuber et al. 2021). The findings warrant the notion that support for, and well-provisioned workplace training can encourage employees to devote more energy to their work and make them

psychologically more available for performing their work roles. Furthermore, the results of this study align with prior researches that suggest that training as a HRM practice stimulates positive employee attitudes.

Forth, although OCB is crucial, per definition is not part of the official job requirement and is thus difficult to implement in workplace situations. Based on SET premise, the study findings confirmed that by providing training beneficial to the employees (and supporting it) is reciprocated positively by the employees through increased in-role and extra-role engagement among Fijian retail employees. The study findings also confirmed employee engagement as a mediating mechanism of the training – OCB relationship. The retail sector employees with positive perceptions of training and development practices in their organisations are likely to be engaged with their jobs, so they also are more likely to enact OCB. The findings support evidence provided (e.g., by Alfes et al. 2013) that employee engagement mediates the relationship between HR practices and organisational performance.

Finally, our study also affirmed that high employee engagement leading to positive citizenship behaviour is contingent to the level of POS. This is consistent with previous studies that suggest that POS can expedite employee engagement and OCB (e.g., Alfes et al. 2013). In a trusting, autonomous work environment, employees tend to access and benefit from various training and development opportunities and likely are sensitive to their manager's organisational expectations. They perform their discretionary work-related tasks more diligently and identify with the organisation if they find evidence of reciprocity, respect for social needs, and organisational rewards and promotion practices.

### *5.1 Managerial implications*

Organisations in today's fast-paced world face various challenges, such as fierce competition, and ever-changing industry demands. To mitigate these challenges, they need to be flexible and innovative and have the right people with right attitudes, especially at the front line, to lead and handle business challenges. However, recruiting qualified workers has become challenging due to demographic changes, increased mobility, and intense global competition for talent. Therefore, organisations should focus on retaining, developing, and most importantly motivating their existing labour force to cope with these workplace challenges. In this context, OCB, which is strongly linked to work engagement and training-related variables, plays a critical role. Hence, organisational practitioners and researchers must understand the psychological processes POS behind employee engagement and OCB.

Thus, for retail managers in small developing countries such as Fiji and elsewhere who seek greater returns from their training-related investments, our findings confirm that training, along with employee engagement, fosters OCB. To compete with other businesses, retail businesses should furnish employees with continuous training opportunities to facilitate their knowledge and skill transfer and to help the employment relationship prosper (Dermol and Čater, 2013). When indirect turnover costs, e.g., from lost investment in training, lost staff expertise, and reduced service quality and productivity) are high, as in the Fijian retail sector, managers should develop an intensive, cost-effective, in-house learning culture to promote knowledge and skill development. In particular, they could exploit e-learning and other computer-based



applications because small and medium-sized businesses may lack the time and resources to offer full-fledged training programs (see, e.g., Fisher et al., 2021).

In addition, the present study suggests that retail managers should ensure that employees feel supported at work. This could be achieved in many ways – some more closely related to training and others more general. For example, organisations could grant employees sufficient opportunities to practice and accommodate their attendance at training by rearranging their work schedules; retail organisations could more generally support their employees by rewarding high-achieving employees with promotions and verbally acknowledging their work efforts.

## 5.2 Conclusions, limitations, and future directions

The study examines the effects of multidimensional workplace training on employee performance in the form of employee engagement level and citizenship behaviour. It addresses the need for research to clarify the mechanisms connecting HRM to performance. It identifies employee engagement as a mediator of the relationship between workplace training and OCB, with POS moderating the link between engagement and OCB. The study is based on empirical evidence from frontline employees working in grocery and hardware retailing firms in Fiji, and it extends our understanding of the HRM-to-performance nexus in the retailing sector.

The study focuses on small – and medium-sized retail outlets in Fiji, which is a society marked by high masculinity, collectivism, and ethnic diversity. This is a strength of this study because academic research is often dominated by samples from Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich et al., 2010), but this is also limitation because this distinct context implies the need for caution before generalising the current study results to other cultures or countries. Additional studies should validate the proposed research model in different cultural contexts or geographical regions. Furthermore, the descriptive, cross-sectional data collection process also creates temporal ambiguity and prevents any casual claims about the directions of the hypothesised relationships. Further studies could apply longitudinal designs to substantiate the proposed causality of the focal relationships. Future research in the retail context should also explore the importance of training variables for sales. Whereas this study only focused on OCB, it would be interesting to know whether training variables also support sales performance among frontline retail employees and whether this relationship is also mediated by employee engagement.

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