



Enhancing organizational citizenship behaviors through ethical leadership and empowerment: Educational institution's context

Jose Vallente A. Ballesteros: Director of Alumni and External Affairs, Divine Word College of Laoag.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: June 01, 2025

Received in rev. form. June 20, 2025

Accepted: July 30, 2025

Published: September 10, 2025

Keywords: *ethical leadership, leadership empowerment, organizational citizenship behavior*

JEL Classification: M14

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the influence of ethical leadership and leadership empowerment on the organizational citizenship behavior of the employees. To deepen the concept of the study, the literature was reviewed. The study used descriptive assessment and a correlational research design. The population of the study was the employees of the Divine Word College of Laoag. Data gathered using research questionnaires and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data. The study found that ethical leadership was high, but leadership empowerment was low, and organizational citizenship was high. However, the correlation analysis found a significant relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior, while no correlation exists between leadership empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior. The study acknowledges its limitations, primarily due to its limited scope and the number of variables examined. It is suggested to conduct further study to include more variables that affect OCB.

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Introduction

Organizational success is never built on numbers alone. While companies often pour resources into financial growth and competitive skills, many forget that people and values drive long-term progress. Scholars like Jenkins and Neal (2023), Kun and Gadancz (2019), and Wagner et al. (2025) remind us that work relationships, motivation, behavior, and values are just as significant as profit margins. Unfortunately, aspects such as ethical leadership, empowerment, and organizational citizenship behavior are still frequently downplayed, even though they play a central role in creating a healthy and high-performing workplace (Malik et al., 2023; Gabriunas, 2017; Jackson & Lasthuizen, 2023).

Ethical leadership, for example, goes far beyond simply enforcing rules. It builds a culture of fairness, honesty, integrity, and respect. Leaders who demonstrate these moral values earn the trust of their teams, inspire better performance, and help retain talent. Research has long shown how companies thrive when led ethically (Al Habusi et al., 2020; Tyler & Blader, 2013;

Hosseini & Ferreira, 2023). Sadly, many organizations only realize this after unethical practices result in scandals or even bankruptcy (Body, 2023; Palmer et al., 2016; Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2024).

Closely intertwined with ethical leadership is the concept of empowerment. When employees are trusted with autonomy and encouraged to participate in decisions, they feel valued, motivated, and more innovative. Empowerment builds confidence and nurtures psychological well-being (Muafi et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2022). On the other hand, disempowerment creates a sense of helplessness, lowers morale, increases turnover, and can even reinforce marginalization and discrimination (Vorauer & Pesnik, 2023; Lopez-Garcia et al., 2023; Rogers, 2014; Diamond, 2024). Clearly, employees thrive not only when they are led well, but when they are trusted and heard.

Naturally, when ethical leadership and empowerment are present, positive work behaviors follow. One of the most valuable of these is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)—the kind of helpfulness, cooperation, and initiative that employees freely offer even when it's not part of their job description (Lilly, 2018; Vargas-Hernández & Vargas-Gonzalez, 2023; Hazzi, 2018). These actions are not rewarded with extra pay, but they build a culture of care, productivity, and loyalty. As Muzamil and Shah (2025) point out, workplaces where OCB is high often experience smoother collaboration and greater success overall.

Despite the importance of these three elements—ethical leadership, empowerment, and OCB—very few studies have actually explored how they influence one another in a single framework. This study seeks to fill that gap. It investigates how ethical leadership and empowerment affect employees' organizational citizenship behavior. In doing so, it hopes to shed light on how leaders can cultivate a more engaged, ethical, and committed workforce.

To tell this story fully, the study begins by laying down the context and purpose, then moves through a review of the theories and previous studies surrounding the three core concepts. It continues by explaining how the research was carried out—where it took place, who participated, and what tools were used. From there, it presents and analyzes the actual data gathered, and finally, it discusses the findings and draws meaningful conclusions.

Literature review

A brief review of ethical leadership and its properties

Achieving high organizational performance requires not only knowledge, skills, and financial capital but also ethical behavior or ethical leadership (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2025; Abun et al., 2023; Saleem et al., 2024). Yukl et al. (2013) emphasized that effective leadership includes ethical conduct alongside task, relationship, and change-oriented behaviors. However, the concept and measurement of ethical leadership vary across authors.

Kanungo (2001) defined ethical leadership as behavior that promotes positive outcomes for others and avoids harm. Similarly, Kalshoven et al. (2011) highlighted that ethical behavior benefits followers, the organization, and society. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) viewed ethical leadership as a combination of integrity, moral standards, and fair treatment of employees. Ethical leaders act based on moral norms and consider the well-being of others. Both Brown et al. (2005) and Treviño et al. (2003) noted that ethical leaders serve as role models, reinforcing ethical behavior and influencing followers through imitation and learning.

Due to varying definitions, the dimensions of ethical leadership are often inconsistent. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) initially identified fairness, power sharing, and role clarification as key dimensions, later expanding to seven with the addition of people orientation, integrity, ethical guidance, and concern for sustainability (De Hoogh, Den Hartog & Kalshoven, 2011). These dimensions, also noted by Brown et al. (2005), suggest that ethical leadership involves both character traits and the active promotion of ethical conduct:

- Fairness – equal and unbiased treatment of employees.
- Power sharing – involving subordinates in decision-making (Resick et al., 2006).
- Role clarification – clearly defining expectations and responsibilities.
- People orientation – showing care and support for employees (Treviño et al., 2003).

- Ethical guidance – instructing and rewarding ethical actions.
- Integrity – consistency between words and actions (Yukl, 2006).
- Concern for sustainability – environmental responsibility.

Other scholars presented alternate models. Wulumbawa et al. (2008) identified self-awareness and relational transparency in authentic leadership, while Barbuto & Wheeler (2006) emphasized altruism and emotional healing. These overlapping constructs created ambiguity about which dimensions truly belong to ethical leadership.

Yukl (2011) critiqued the broader frameworks, arguing that the essential components of ethical leadership are fairness, integrity, and ethical guidance. Yukl et al. (2013) further consolidated the construct by developing the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), which focuses on honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency with espoused values, and ethical communication. They reduced the original 10-item scale to 8 items, forming a unidimensional construct adopted by the current study.

Based on a review of instruments such as the Treviño, Brown & Hartman (2003) ethical leadership survey, the De Hoogh & Den Hartog (2008) ELWQ, the authentic leadership questionnaire (Wulumbawa, 2008), and others, the current researcher agrees with Yukl et al. (2013) that the most relevant indicators of ethical leadership include honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency, ethical communication, and ethical guidance. Therefore, this study adopts the unidimensional ELQ of Yukl et al. (2013) as its measurement tool.

The influence of ethical leadership on performance

Numerous studies have demonstrated that ethical leadership positively influences various organizational outcomes. Bhatti et al. (2021) found that ethical leadership enhances project success through the mediating roles of trust and knowledge sharing. Similarly, Ashfaq et al. (2021) and Chinwe et al. (2017) reported that ethical leadership increases employee work engagement and commitment, particularly when accompanied by self-efficacy and organizational commitment. This implies that ethical leadership alone is insufficient; it must be supported by psychological factors such as self-efficacy and commitment to maximize its impact.

Several scholars, including Malik et al. (2016), Nauman and Qamar (2018), Qing et al. (2019), Yozgat and Mesikiran (2016), Kim and Brymer (2011), and Guo (2022), recommend ethical leadership as a preferred leadership style to improve job satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance, especially when linked with efforts to develop self-efficacy and commitment. Rantika and Yustina (2017) further emphasized that ethical leadership promotes employees' well-being and psychological empowerment.

Conversely, the absence of ethical leadership can lead to job dissatisfaction and negative organizational outcomes. Schyns and Schilling (2013) associated unethical leadership with destructive and counterproductive employee behavior. This finding was supported by Shen and Lei (2022), Sypniewska (2020), and Bagyo (2018), who noted that unethical leadership harms both employees and organizational stakeholders. Kilic and Gunsul (2019) specifically noted that counterproductive behavior resulting from unethical leadership leads to increased job dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, and diminished performance.

The concept of empowerment and empowering leadership

Empowerment has been discussed by various authors such as Bennis and Nanus (1985, 2007), House (1988), and Nielsen (1986). Bennis and Nanus emphasized that leadership in the 21st century is centered on empowerment—developing leaders at all levels, leading through vision, sharing information broadly, inspiring employees, facilitating teamwork, coaching, and driving change. In this modern view, leaders should no longer be the sole decision-makers or controllers, but facilitators of others' growth. Similarly, House (1988) advocated leadership behaviors that increase subordinates' motivation and capability. Nielsen (1986) added that by providing sufficient resources, leaders enhance employees' sense of self-worth, noting a positive link between psychological empowerment and organizational performance.

There is no single universally accepted definition of empowerment. Merriam–Webster defines it as the act of granting authority or power to perform duties. The Cambridge Dictionary describes it as gaining freedom and power to control what happens to

you. Collins Dictionary similarly sees empowerment as giving people power and status in a given situation. Within this study, empowerment refers to giving employees the authority and autonomy to perform their roles independently of direct control. Legally, empowerment also means authorization (Thomas, 1990), where leaders permit employees to make decisions and carry out tasks on their behalf.

An empowering leadership style involves sharing power to enhance employees' motivation and engagement (Zhang & Zhou, 2014). It fosters psychological empowerment, which in turn leads to better performance outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995). Hao et al. (2018) found that empowering leadership positively correlates with task performance, creativity, and work passion. When employees are trusted to perform their duties with minimal supervision, their commitment and engagement increase. Chen et al. (2011) also confirmed that empowering leadership improves cooperation, innovation, and team commitment.

Other studies support these findings. Humborstad (2014) noted that empowering leadership enhances job performance, while Wellins (1991) reported that empowered employees become more proactive and solution-oriented. Lee et al. (2018) further found that empowering leaders are more effective at promoting creativity, organizational citizenship behavior, and trust among employees compared to leaders who focus solely on task control.

Elements of empowerment

Based on the meaning of leadership and the concepts of empowerment and empowering leadership, the following core elements emerge:

1. Vision-mission-oriented empowerment

The foundation of empowerment lies in a clear and shared vision and mission. Empowerment serves as a tool to achieve these stated organizational goals (Temkin, 2018). Employees who understand and internalize the vision and mission do not need strict supervision because these principles guide their work. Leaders must motivate employees toward these goals (Chiang et al., 2020; Pizzolitto et al., 2022). Therefore, employees should be involved in formulating the vision, mission, objectives, and key result areas (Inyang, 2013; Khan et al., 2020; Morato, 2006). This promotes a collective vision—not just the leader's vision (Jensen & Bro, 2018; Tipurić, 2022). A shared vision also supports delegation of authority (Flemming & Kowalski, 2025; Cooper & Hamman, 2021), allowing employees to make informed decisions, which streamlines control and reduces unnecessary oversight (Searle et al., 2018).

2. Independence or autonomy

The term autonomy originates from Greek roots meaning “self-rule” and refers to self-governance and independent decision-making (Agich, 1993, 1994). In this context, autonomy means that employees have the freedom to carry out their duties with minimal interference (Bjørlo, 2024). This allows individuals to make informed decisions and perform their tasks based on personal judgment (Manda-Taylor et al., 2022; Lukow & Rozyńska, 2015). Job autonomy is positively linked to job satisfaction and performance (Saragih, 2011; Morgeson et al., 2005).

3. Delegation of authority

Delegation involves assigning decision-making authority to subordinates, recognizing that leaders cannot handle all tasks alone (Abun, 2018; Klasmeier et al., 2025). Bennis and Nanus (2007) emphasized delegation as the downward transfer of authority. Serrat (2017) noted that delegation motivates employees and gives meaning to their roles. Effective delegation includes the transfer of authority, responsibility, and accountability (Bennis & Nanus, 2007). Employees must act within the scope of delegated authority and remain accountable to the delegator (Hepworth, 2023). Research shows that delegation significantly improves job performance (Al-Jammal & Al-Khasawneh, 2015).

4. Individual goal-oriented empowerment

Empowerment must be tied to clear goals. Its purpose is to give employees authority to achieve organizational objectives through their own decision-making (Modise, 2023; Chhotray et al., 2017). Organizational goals should be cascaded into departmental and individual goals. Goal-setting theory states that clear individual goals influence behavior and performance (Stavrou et al., 2015). Goal orientation directs effort and motivation toward achievement and success. It also fosters intrinsic

motivation, encouraging employees to perform well and accomplish assigned tasks (Ordóñez et al., 2009). Borlongan-Conway et al. (2010) further confirmed that goal orientation positively correlates with creative performance.

The concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has its roots in political philosophy. The term “citizenship” originates from political philosophy and related disciplines (Graham, 1991). According to Graham (1991), drawing from Aristotle (1941), Cary (1977), and Inkeles (1969), citizenship in an organizational context parallels citizens’ responsibilities, which can be categorized into obedience, loyalty, and participation. In this sense, citizenship behavior and citizenship responsibilities are synonymous (Graham, 1991).

Obedience requires citizens to respect established structures and processes. Loyalty extends beyond mere compliance, demanding attention to the interests of others, the collective, and the values upheld by the state. This includes contributing voluntarily to the state, safeguarding its reputation, and cooperating for shared goals rather than individual gain. Participation involves active engagement in governance, where a good citizen not only implements existing laws but also helps shape them in response to emerging needs. Through participation, citizenship behavior encompasses devoting time and effort to governance responsibilities, sharing information and ideas, and engaging in discussions on societal issues (Graham, 1991).

Applied to organizations, Inkeles (1969) classified three corresponding organizational responsibilities: organizational obedience, loyalty, and participation. Organizational obedience entails adherence to organizational structures, job descriptions, and policies (Grossi et al., 2007). A model organizational citizen follows rules, respects the chain of command, is punctual in task completion, and responsibly manages organizational resources (Yakobi & Weisberg, 2020). Organizational loyalty reflects identification with leaders and the organization as a whole, prioritizing collective over individual or departmental interests (Hosseini & Ferreira, 2023). This includes defending the organization against threats, promoting its reputation, and cooperating with others to achieve common goals. Organizational participation requires employees to engage actively in organizational governance, such as attending optional meetings, sharing ideas, and supporting dissenting viewpoints to prevent groupthink (Inkeles, 1969).

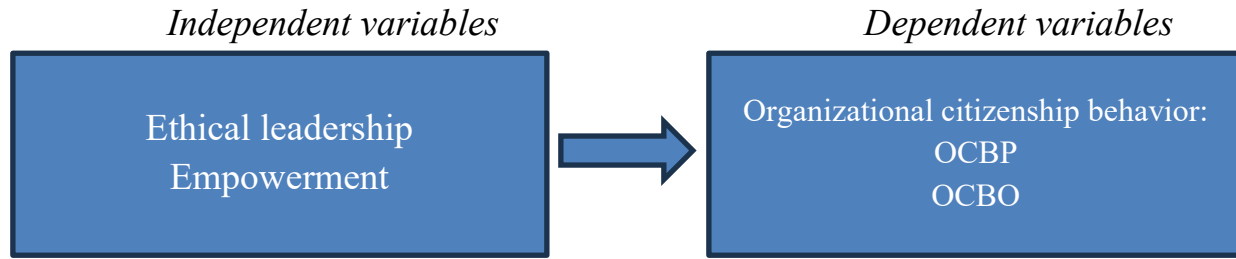
Building on these philosophical foundations, early researchers conceptualized OCB in organizational terms. Bateman and Organ (1983) and Smith et al. (1983) described OCB as behaviors that go beyond formal role requirements or job descriptions for the benefit of the organization. This aligns with the principles of obedience, loyalty, and participation, where a good organizational citizen complies with rules, engages in extra-role activities, and participates in organizational discussions and initiatives (Van Dyne et al., 1994). Katz (1964) identified three essential behaviors for organizational functioning: remaining within the system, fulfilling role requirements dependably, and engaging in innovative or spontaneous actions beyond prescribed duties. Smith et al. (1983) emphasized that organizations rely not only on prescribed behavior but also on cooperation, helpfulness, suggestions, gestures of goodwill, and altruism. Similarly, Roethlisberger and Dickson (1964) highlighted cooperation as a prosocial act that sustains internal equilibrium and emerges from informal organizational dynamics.

Over time, research on OCB has sought to define its standard dimensions. Contemporary studies emphasize organizational loyalty and participation, in line with political philosophy (Graham, 1991; Inkeles, 1969), rather than focusing on obedience. Organ and Ryan (1995) noted that OCB pertains to positive work behaviors extending beyond formal rules and job descriptions. Initial empirical work by Smith, Organ, and Near (1983), as well as Bateman and Organ (1983), identified two OCB dimensions: altruism and general compliance. Later, Organ (1988) and Wang et al. (2013), cited by Abun et al. (2021), expanded these into five dimensions: conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue, courtesy, and altruism. Sportsmanship reflects maintaining a positive attitude despite challenges, conscientiousness entails caring for others, civic virtue involves voluntary participation in organizational activities, courtesy denotes politeness and consideration, and altruism prioritizes helping others (Organ, 1988; Wang et al., 2013, cited by Abun et al., 2021; Psychologist World, n.d., cited by Abun et al., 2021).

Podsakoff et al. (2000) proposed seven OCB dimensions: helping behaviors, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development, encompassing the dimensions identified by Organ (1988). Fox and Specter (2002) later synthesized these multiple dimensions into a single overarching concept:

altruistic behavior. This includes actions that benefit both colleagues and the organization, effectively encompassing the behaviors highlighted by Organ (1988) and Podsakoff et al. (2000).

Conceptual framework



Source: Yukl, et al. (2013), Searle, Hayes & Weiss (2018), Bennis and Nanus (1985, 2007), Spector and Fox (2002).

Figure 1: This figure explains the content of the study, which examines the extent of the influence of ethical leadership and empowerment on the organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

Statement of the problems

The study determined the impact of ethical leadership and empowerment on the organizational citizenship behavior of the employees. It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of ethical leadership of administrators?
2. What is the level of leadership empowerment?
3. What is the extent of the organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees, in terms of OCBP and OCBO?
4. Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior?
5. Is there a relationship between leadership empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior?

Hypothesis

Exercising a particular leadership style always affects the behavior of the employees positively or negatively (Larik & Lashari, 2022). The same is true with leadership empowerment. Empowerment and disempowerment lead to specific outcomes which can be positive and negative (Setiawan et al., 2020). The current study intends to examine the influence of ethical leadership and leadership empowerment on the organizational citizenship behavior of employees.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study limits its investigation of the topic to ethical leadership and empowerment, specifically focusing on the employees and administrators of the Divine Word College of Laoag.

Research methodology

The research methodology refers to the specific procedures used to conduct the study scientifically, and it usually serves as the basis for determining the quality and validity of the research (Leedy, 1974). Conducting quality research requires correct procedures and methodology to carry out the investigation. Therefore, good research must adopt a specific research design and should specify the locale of the study, where the study is conducted, and its population. Furthermore, it should have a straightforward procedure for data collection, the necessary instruments, and appropriate statistical tools for analysis.

Research design

This research is quantitative in nature and employs both descriptive and descriptive correlational research designs. According to Baht (2020), descriptive research is a “research method that describes the characteristics of the population or the phenomena that are studied. It focuses more on the ‘what’ of the research subject rather than the ‘why’ of the research subject” (para. 1). This design is appropriate for determining the level of empowering leadership exhibited by office heads or managers and its effect on employees’ job satisfaction. As noted by Ariola (2006), cited in Abun (2019), descriptive research aims to present

what appears in the data collected through questionnaires and statistical analyses. It is used to describe profiles, frequency distributions, and the characteristics of people, situations, phenomena, or relationships between variables. In essence, it explains “what is” regarding the data.

For this study, the descriptive correlational method was also applied to examine the level of moral leadership and its influence on employees’ moral behavior. This approach allows for an assessment not only of the current status of leadership and employee outcomes but also of the relationships between these variables.

The locale of the study

The study was conducted at the Divine Word College of Laoag, located in Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

Population

The population of the study consisted of all administrators and employees of the College. Using a total enumeration sampling method, all 160 employees, including department heads, were selected as respondents for the study.

Data gathering instruments

Data were gathered using questionnaires. The questionnaire on ethical leadership was adapted from Yukl et al. (2013), while the questionnaire on empowering leadership styles was adopted from Searle et al. (2018). Both instruments were validated by subject matter experts with over 15 years of leadership experience and doctoral degrees in educational management. Additionally, the questionnaire on organizational citizenship behavior was adapted from Spector and Fox (2002).

Data gathering procedures

Collecting data from any institution requires adherence to proper procedures to ensure ethical conduct. Maintaining integrity in data collection is a fundamental aspect of quality research. Accordingly, the researcher followed the established protocols. Letters were sent to the Presidents of the Colleges to request permission for distributing the questionnaires. The researcher also personally met with the Presidents and employees to encourage their participation. The retrieval of the completed questionnaires was coordinated between the President's representative, the researcher, and the support of the College’s employees and faculty.

Statistical treatment of data

In this descriptive study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate weighted means, which helped determine the level of ethical leadership, the various empowering leadership styles of administrators as perceived by employees, and the organizational citizenship behavior of employees. Meanwhile, inferential statistics, specifically Pearson’s *r*, were used to examine the correlations among ethical leadership, empowering leadership styles, and employees’ organizational citizenship behavior.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>
<i>4.21-5.00</i>	<i>Strongly agree/Very High</i>
<i>3.41-4.20</i>	<i>Agree/High</i>
<i>2.61-3.40</i>	<i>Somewhat agree? Moderate</i>
<i>1.81-2.60</i>	<i>Disagree/Low</i>
<i>1.00-1.80</i>	<i>Strongly disagree/Very Low</i>

Data presentation and analysis

This section presents and analyzes the data gathered through research questionnaires. The presentation follows the statement of the problems.

Problem 1: What is the level of ethical leadership of administrators?

Table 1: level of ethical leadership of administrators

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. Shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values	3.75	A/H
2. Communicates clear ethical standards for members.	3.73	A/H
3. Sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions	3.62	A/H
4. Is honest and can be trusted to tell the truth	3.73	A/H
5. Insists on doing what is fair and ethical, even when it is not easy	3.68	A/H
6. Talks about the importance of honesty and integrity	3.70	A/H
7. Can be trusted to carry out promises and commitments.	3.74	A/H
8. Holds members accountable for violating ethical practices in their work	3.71	A/H
Composite Mean	3.71	High

Source: Yukl, et al. (2013).

Legend:

4.21-5.00	Strongly agree/Very High
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat agree? Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree/Very Low

The data show that administrators’ ethical leadership, as a whole, received a composite mean rating of 3.71, which is interpreted as high. This indicates that employees generally perceive their administrators as demonstrating strong ethical leadership. Examining the indicators individually, all items also fall within the high range. Employees agreed that administrators communicated ethical standards (3.73), demonstrated concern for moral values (3.75), led by moral example (3.62), told the truth (3.73), insisted on doing what is right even when difficult (3.68), emphasized honesty and integrity (3.70), fulfilled promises (3.74), and held members accountable for ethical violations (3.71).

These high ratings suggest that administrators consistently exhibit integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness in their decisions and actions. They foster an ethical organizational climate, align organizational goals with social responsibility, and treat employees with respect and dignity, valuing their contributions (Paez-Gabriunas, 2024; Malikrk, 2024; Malik & Khan, 2025; Naeem & Syed, 2024).

Problem 2: What is the level of leadership empowerment in terms of:

- a. Vision-mission oriented empowerment
- b. Autonomy-oriented empowerment
- c. Delegation of authority
- d. Individual goal-oriented empowerment?

Table 2: Level of leadership empowerment in terms of vision-mission oriented

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. Employees are invited and involved in creating the vision and mission of the organization.	2.96	SWA/M
2. The vision and mission of the institution are clear to the employees	3.07	SWA/M
3. There is a communication of vision and mission to all employees	3.07	SWA/M
4. There is a disclosure of the strategy to achieve the vision and mission	2.95	SWA/M
5. Constant update of the attainment of vision and mission to the employees	2.87	SWA/M
6. Encourage employees to initiate activities in line with the vision and mission	3.01	SWA/M
7. Employees are allowed to make their decisions based on the vision and mission	2.99	SWA/M
8. There is the conduct of the regular assessment of the work together with the employees, in line with the vision and mission	2.97	SWA/M

Composite Mean	2.96	SWA/M
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Source: Searle et al. (2018)

The table indicates that overall employee empowerment, particularly vision-mission-oriented empowerment, received a composite mean rating of 2.96, which falls within the moderate range. This suggests that employees perceive their involvement in vision and mission-related initiatives as neither low nor high, but moderate. Specifically, employees moderately agreed that they were invited to contribute to crafting the vision and mission (2.96) and found the vision-mission clear (3.07). They also moderately acknowledged that administrators communicated the vision and mission (2.95), disclosed strategies to achieve them (2.87), encouraged initiatives aligned with the vision-mission (3.01), allowed independent decision-making (2.99), and conducted regular assessments together with employees in line with the vision-mission (2.97).

A moderate rating in vision-mission empowerment implies that administrators have not fully empowered employees to participate meaningfully in shaping or implementing the organization’s vision and mission. The communication of vision, mission, and strategies remains limited, and employees have restricted autonomy in initiating actions to achieve organizational goals. Effectively leveraging the vision and mission as an empowerment tool can clarify the organization’s purpose, foster a shared identity, and motivate employees to contribute to common objectives (Franco, 2010; Khan et al., 2020; Voigt et al., 2024; Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2019; Brod & Skarupski, 2024).

Table 3: Level of leadership empowerment in terms of autonomy-oriented empowerment

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. The management allows the employees to perform their work on their own based on what they know best	3.04	SWA/M
2. The management encourages self-thinking and creativity at work	3.01	SWA/M
3. The management does not intervene too much in the work of employees	3.01	SWA/M
4. The management motivates employees to determine or govern themselves	2.96	SWA/M
5. The employees are allowed to make their own decisions	2.98	SWA/M
6. The management appreciates ideas and recognizes employees' efforts	2.96	SWA/M
7. The employees are given easy access to the institution’s resources to perform their job	3.01	SWA/M
8. The management minimizes supervision and control of the work of employees	3.04	SWA/M
Composite Mean	3.04	Moderate

Source: Searle et al. (2018)

The data indicate that leadership empowerment, specifically autonomy-oriented empowerment, received a composite mean rating of 3.04, which falls within the moderate range (Somewhat Agree). Individually, all indicators were similarly rated as moderate. Employees moderately agreed that leaders empowered them to perform tasks based on their knowledge (3.04), think creatively (3.01), act independently without intervention (3.01), govern themselves (2.96), make decisions (2.98), access institutional resources to perform their work (3.01), and experience minimized control and supervision (3.04).

A moderate rating in autonomy-oriented empowerment suggests that administrators have not fully granted employees the freedom to perform tasks and make decisions independently. This indicates a limited recognition of the importance of supporting employees’ inherent need for autonomy, which is essential for motivation, engagement, and well-being (Minnaert et al., 2011; Gagne, 2003; Meng et al., 2023; Zimmerman, 2000). According to self-determination theory, when individuals experience control and self-direction in their actions, they are more likely to demonstrate interest, creativity, and persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2024; Zampetakis & Arvanitis, 2024).

Similarly, the table on delegation of authority shows a composite mean rating of 3.10, which is also moderate (Somewhat Agree). Employees moderately agreed that they were given the authority to arrange their work (3.10), accomplish assigned tasks (3.16), decide on task execution (3.02), make decisions (2.97), access necessary resources (3.01), follow guidelines for tasks (3.05), understand the limits of their authority (3.06), and be accountable to the delegating supervisor (3.01).

These moderate ratings indicate that administrators have not fully empowered their subordinates through delegation. Effective delegation involves entrusting decision-making power and responsibility to individuals, which promotes efficiency, fosters a dynamic work environment, and enhances employee ownership and responsibility (Choi et al., 2014; Hwang & Han, 2006; Cooper & Hamman, 2021). While delegation and empowerment are distinct concepts, they are interrelated: delegation provides authority, whereas empowerment nurtures self-efficacy and initiative. When used effectively together, delegation can serve as a catalyst for empowerment, enabling employees to develop skills, take initiatives, and contribute meaningfully to organizational growth (Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2019; Modise, 2023; Aithal et al., 2024).

Table 4: level of leadership empowerment in terms of individual goal-oriented

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. The individual employee is given a specific goal to accomplish	3.17	SWA/M
2. The goals that are given to the employees are clearly defined	3.07	SWA/M
3. Specific key result areas to be accomplished are identified	3.09	SWA/M
4. The goals to be accomplished by the employees are determined by a certain percentage of accomplishment	3.01	SWA/M
5. Employees are evaluated based on what they have accomplished	3.08	SWA/M
6. Performance evaluation is based on the tasks given to the employees to accomplish the goal	3.07	SWA/M
7. The performers are recognized and rewarded	2.91	SWA/M
8. There are awarding ceremonies to recognize employees who are performing excellently in their jobs	2.89	SWA/M
Composite Mean	3.17	SWA/M

Source: Searle et al. (2018)

The data in the table show that leadership empowerment, specifically in terms of individual goal orientation, received a composite mean rating of 3.17, indicating a moderate level of agreement (Somewhat Agree). This suggests that employees perceive individual goal-oriented empowerment as moderate, neither very high nor very low. Examining the indicators individually, all items also fall within the moderate range. Employees agreed that they were assigned specific goals to accomplish (3.17) which were clearly defined (3.07). Key result areas were identified (3.09), and goal accomplishment was measured by percentage (3.10). Employees also acknowledged that their accomplishments were evaluated (3.08), documented (3.07), and that those who achieved their goals were recognized or rewarded (2.91), with awarding ceremonies held to celebrate achievements (2.89).

Individual goal-oriented empowerment reflects an employee’s capacity to set, pursue, and achieve personal objectives, fostering a sense of agency and control over their work and professional development. It involves understanding one’s goals, developing strategies to achieve them, and experiencing satisfaction from accomplishing them (Liu et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019).

Table 5: Summary of leadership empowerment

Indicators	Mean	DR
1 <i>Vision-mission oriented</i>	3.04	moderate
2 <i>Autonomy- Oriented empowerment</i>	3.10	moderate
3 <i>Delegation of Authority empowerment</i>	3.08	moderate
4 <i>Individual goal-oriented empowerment</i>	3.17	moderate
Overall Mean	3.10	moderate

Source: Searle et al. (2018)

In summary, the data show that leadership empowerment received an overall mean rating of 3.10, which is considered moderate (Somewhat Agree). This indicates that, overall, leadership empowerment is neither very high nor very low. When examined across individual dimensions—autonomy, delegation of authority, and individual goal orientation—each was similarly rated

as moderate. This suggests that administrators have not fully empowered their subordinates to perform duties and make decisions independently.

Leadership empowerment involves delegating authority and responsibility to employees, fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy in their work. It includes sharing power, supporting employees' development, and encouraging initiative and decision-making, which in turn cultivate self-reliance, psychological empowerment, and the capacity for self-leadership (Ye et al., 2022; Cheong et al., 2019; Yin & Liu, 2022).

Problem 3: What is the extent of the organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees, in terms of OCBP and OCBO?

Table 6: extent of the organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees, in terms of OCBP

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. Lent a compassionate ear when someone had a work problem	3.75	A/H
2. Lent a compassionate ear when someone has a personal problem	3.68	A/H
3. Change vacation schedules, workdays, or shifts to accommodate coworkers' needs	3.61	A/H
4. Help a less capable coworker lift a heavy box or other objects	3.69	A/H
5. Went out of the way to encourage coworkers or express appreciation	3.69	A/H
6. Defended a coworker who was being 'put down' or spoken ill of by other coworkers or supervisors	3.65	A/H
7. Help coworkers with personal matters, such as sharing food or drinks	3.73	A/H
8. Lent money or personal property to a coworker	3.65	A/H
Composite Mean	3.68	A/H

Source: Fox & Spector (2002).

The data in the table show that, overall, employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in terms of concern for co-workers received a composite mean rating of 3.68, which is considered high (Agree). This suggests that, generally, employees demonstrate a strong level of care and support for their colleagues. Examining the indicators individually, all items were similarly rated as high. Employees highly agreed that they listened compassionately to coworkers facing work problems (3.75) or personal issues (3.68), assisted colleagues with physical disabilities in carrying heavy objects (3.69), sacrificed time to accommodate coworkers' needs (3.61), expressed appreciation for the work of others (3.69), defended coworkers (3.65), helped others with personal problems (3.73), and lent personal property to colleagues (3.65).

High OCB related to helping others reflects employees' willingness to consistently go beyond formal job responsibilities to assist coworkers, without expecting direct reward or recognition. This may include helping with heavy workloads, mentoring new employees, or volunteering for challenging projects (Abun et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2023; Johansson & Hart, 2023).

Table 7: extent of the organizational citizenship behaviors of the employees, in terms of OCBO

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. Help new employees get oriented to the job	3.68	A/H
2. Offered suggestions to improve how work is done	3.66	A/H
3. Volunteered for extra work assignments	3.66	A/H
4. Said good things about your employer in front of others	3.70	A/H
5. Said good things about your school in the community outside the school	3.66	A/H
6. Give up meals and other breaks to complete the work	3.71	A/H
7. Offered suggestions for improving the work environment	3.69	A/H
8. came in early or stayed late without pay to complete a project or task	3.64	A/H
Composite Mean	3.68	A/H

Source: Fox & Spector (2002).

The data indicate that employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in terms of helping the organization received a composite mean rating of 3.68, which is considered high (Agree). This suggests that, overall, employees demonstrate a strong tendency to support and contribute to the organization beyond their formal job responsibilities. Individually, all indicators were rated high. Employees highly agreed that they helped orient new employees to their jobs (3.68), suggested improvements to work processes (3.66), volunteered for extra assignments (3.66), spoke positively about the institution to others (3.70), promoted the school in the community (3.66), sacrificed time to accomplish work (3.71), helped improve the work environment (3.69), and arrived early or stayed late to finish tasks (3.64).

High OCB related to helping the organization reflects employees' willingness to go above and beyond their formal duties to benefit the institution. This includes supporting colleagues, volunteering for additional tasks, and actively contributing to a positive and productive work environment (Wilhelm et al., 2022; Anderson, 2017; Spanouli et al., 2023; Jankelova et al., 2024).

Table 8: Summary of leadership empowerment

Indicators	Mean	DR
1 OCBP	3.68	High
2 OCBO	3.66	High
Overall Mean	3.67	High

The data reveals that overall, the organizational citizenship behavior of the employees gained an overall mean rating of 3.67, which is high (agree). It means that the organizational citizenship behavior of the employees is not very high, nor is it very low, but rather it is moderate. Taking the dimensions singly, both are rated within the same level of mean rating, which is high. High organizational citizenship behavior means that the employees consistently go above and beyond their job descriptions to support their colleagues and organizations. It is characterized by discretionary behavior that benefits the overall work environment and contributes to organizational effectiveness beyond what is formally required (Nguyen et al., 2022; Wilhelm, 2024; Smith et al., 2020; Ozluk & Baykal, 2020).

Problem 4: Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior?

Table 9: Relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior engagement

Ethical leadership	Pearson's r	Interpretation	p-value/ Significance	Decision (Ha)
OCBP	0.155*	+Weak Relationship	0.050/Significant	Supported
OCBO	0.174*	+Weak Relationship	0.028/Significant	Supported
OCB as a whole	0.169*	+Weak Relationship	0.032/Significant	Supported

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Source: SPSS

The correlational result reveals that ethical leadership had a significant influence on organizational citizenship behavior (r = 0.169, p < 0.032), thus the alternative hypothesis is accepted/supported. While the correlations are **weak**, they are **positive and statistically significant**. This suggests that employees are **more likely to exhibit extra-role, voluntary behaviors** both toward coworkers and the organization when their leaders demonstrate ethical leadership. Although the strength of the relationship is not high, it is consistent across the different dimensions of OCB, supporting the idea that ethical leadership plays a role in encouraging such behaviors.

Problem 5: Is there a relationship between leadership empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior?

Table 11: Relationship between leadership empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior

Leadership Empowerment	Pearson's r	Interpretation	p-value/ Significance	Decision (Ha)
OCBP	0.019	+Weak Relationship	0.812/Not Significant	Not Supported
OCBO	-0.030	-Weak Relationship	0.704/Not Significant	Not Supported
OCB as a whole	-0.005	-Weak Relationship	0.947/Not Significant	Not Supported

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: SPSS

The correlational result reveals that leadership empowerment had no significant influence on organizational citizenship behavior ($r = -0.005$, $p < 0.947$); thus, the *hypothesis is not supported*. These findings suggest that variations in leadership empowerment do not meaningfully influence employees' discretionary behaviors toward their coworkers or the organization. As all p -values are far above the 0.05 significance threshold, the research hypothesis is not supported.

Results and discussion

The study examined the effects of ethical leadership and leadership empowerment on employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Findings show that administrators' ethical leadership was rated high, suggesting that employees perceive their leaders as demonstrating integrity, fairness, and concern for moral values. Individually, employees agreed that administrators communicated ethical standards, led by moral example, fulfilled promises, emphasized honesty, and held members accountable for ethical practices. High ethical leadership appears to foster a positive organizational climate, promoting behaviors that go beyond formal job responsibilities. This aligns with prior research indicating that ethical leaders inspire trust, loyalty, and discretionary behaviors among employees (Paez-Gabriunas, 2024; Malik & Khan, 2025; Naeem & Syed, 2024).

Leadership empowerment, however, received a moderate rating overall, with individual dimensions—autonomy, delegation of authority, and goal-oriented empowerment—also rated moderate. Employees moderately agreed that they were given freedom to perform tasks independently, access to resources, and clarity in goal-setting. While empowerment provides opportunities for initiative and self-direction, the moderate ratings suggest that administrators have not fully maximized their employees' potential for autonomous decision-making and self-leadership. This indicates that while empowerment strategies are present, they may be inconsistently applied or limited in scope (Minnaert et al., 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2024; Choi et al., 2014).

Organizational citizenship behavior among employees was rated high across two dimensions: concern for co-workers and helping the organization. Employees reported supporting colleagues with work and personal issues, volunteering for extra tasks, promoting the institution positively, and contributing to a better work environment. High OCB reflects employees' willingness to go beyond their formal roles without expecting direct rewards, supporting the idea that positive leadership behaviors can cultivate discretionary efforts (Abun et al., 2021; Wilhelm et al., 2022; Johansson & Hart, 2023).

Correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between ethical leadership and OCB, particularly in employees' care for colleagues and contributions to the organization. This indicates that ethical leadership encourages employees to engage in extra-role behaviors. In contrast, the moderate level of leadership empowerment did not significantly influence OCB, suggesting that employees' discretionary behaviors are more strongly driven by the ethical example of leaders than by formal empowerment initiatives. This finding highlights the central role of ethical leadership as a motivating factor for employees' organizational citizenship behaviors.

The findings carry practical implications. Management should prioritize ethical leadership development through training, mentoring, and selection based on moral values. Encouraging discretionary behavior through recognition, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, and implementing mechanisms for addressing ethical concerns can further strengthen OCB. The results also emphasize that while empowerment is important, its effectiveness may depend on contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and individual differences among employees.

Theoretically, the study supports social exchange theory, social learning theory, organizational justice theory, and leader-member exchange theory. Ethical leaders foster trust and reciprocity (social exchange), provide role models for discretionary behavior (social learning), ensure fairness (organizational justice), and build high-quality leader-subordinate relationships (LMX), all of which motivate employees to exhibit OCB. At the same time, the limited impact of leadership empowerment challenges assumptions that empowerment alone drives discretionary behaviors, suggesting that additional factors must be considered in promoting OCB.

The study, therefore, demonstrates that ethical leadership is a powerful driver of organizational citizenship behavior, while leadership empowerment, if only moderate, may be insufficient to significantly influence employees' discretionary behaviors. Cultivating ethical leadership and a supportive work environment can encourage employees to go beyond their formal roles, contributing meaningfully to their colleagues, the organization, and the overall mission of the institution.

Conclusion

This study explored how ethical leadership and leadership empowerment influence employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The findings reveal that administrators exhibit high ethical leadership, while leadership empowerment is moderate, and employees demonstrate high OCB. Importantly, ethical leadership was found to have a significant positive effect on OCB, suggesting that when leaders model integrity, fairness, and ethical conduct, employees are inspired to go above and beyond their formal duties. In contrast, leadership empowerment did not show a significant impact, indicating that ethical guidance may play a more crucial role in motivating discretionary behaviors than formal empowerment alone.

While these results highlight the power of ethical leadership, the study is limited to employees of Divine Word College of Laoag and only considers two leadership factors. Future research could expand this scope by examining additional variables and integrating frameworks such as social exchange theory and social learning theory to better understand the factors that drive OCB.

Ultimately, the study underscores a clear takeaway: cultivating ethical leadership is not just a managerial ideal—it is a vital catalyst for fostering a committed, proactive, and supportive workforce. By prioritizing ethical practices, institutions can inspire employees to contribute meaningfully to their colleagues, the organization, and its broader mission.

Author's contribution: *The paper is authored by the person named in this paper.*

Funding: The study was funded by the author

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