

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Boosting service excellence: How dual-focus organizational citizenship behavior bridges customer orientation and performance in a Central Asian Airline

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Keywords

Customer orientation
Customer-oriented OCB
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Conservation of resources theory
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Customer service performance

Abstract

In this research, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) has been thoroughly examined for its causes, with less attention paid to its effects. This study formulates and examines the relationship between customer orientation and customer service performance through the mediating roles of customer-oriented OCB and environment-oriented OCB using Conservation of Resources theories. These relationships were tested using data gathered from 276 employees of Kazakhstan Airlines. The hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). These findings confirm strong positive direct effect of CO on CSP and CO-OCB. Crucially, the analyses revealed a significant negative direct relationship between CO and EO-OCB, suggesting a resource-allocation trade-off in which an intense customer focus depletes the resources available for internal support activities. However, both CO-OCB and EO-OCB significantly mediated the relationship between CO and CSP, confirming that both direct customer service efforts and indirect systemic maintenance behaviors are necessary for good performance. Theoretically, this study extends COR and SET theories by detailing the differential resource investment strategy of customer-oriented employees in high-pressure service environments. Practically, these findings suggest that it is advisable for the management of Kazakhstan Airlines to implement specific reward systems for CO-OCB and provide protected time and resources to prevent the depletion of effort dedicated to critical EO-OCB.

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INTRODUCTION

In the intensely competitive aviation environment of Central Asia, here by Kazakhstan Airlines, the ability to develop and maintain service excellence is critical to organizational success and is a key differentiator in the marketplace (Serikbayeva et al., 2025). While a body of research indicates that an employees' service mindset shapes their performance, the actual way in which this mindset is expressed has complex and undiscovered mediators, particularly in this unique cultural and industry setting (Gong, 2025). Customer service performance represents the dependent outcome of this study; it describes the effectiveness and efficiency of employees when performing service tasks that are in line with or above customer expectations (Ali

& Khan, 2025). Customer service performance is much more than performing the tasks associated with a single interaction or "transaction." It also includes the quality of the service interaction, the service recovery aspect of problem-solving, and customer satisfaction (Robet et al., 2024). The concept has evolved from its origins at a time when a pure quantitative lens was applied to service output to today's more inclusive definitions and measures, which consider customers' perceptions and variables such as timeliness, assurance, caring, and empathy (Chen et al., 2024). To enhance customer loyalty, trigger positive word-of-mouth, drive repeat business, and ultimately impact the bottom line and reputation of an airline such as Kazakhstan Airlines in the global market.

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Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) are considered important sources of service quality, customer value-oriented behaviors, and good corporate reputation in a wide range of industries, including tourism and hospitality (Iqbal et al., 2025; Park & Kim, 2024). OCBs can be viewed in two types: Those aimed at external stakeholders (e.g., a customer-oriented OCB (CO-OCB) and an environment-oriented OCB (EO-OCB)) and those directed by OCBs encountered internally among peers and the organization itself (Gong, 2025). In previous studies, OCBs directed toward internal stakeholders, such as other employees Liu et al. (2024) and Park and Kim (2024) and pressing performance Chen et al. (2024), have received more focus than external stakeholder-oriented OCB. Additionally, Camacho et al. (2024) found that researchers often tend to omit or ignore the analysis of certain types of OCBs targeted at different external stakeholders, such as consumers and the environment. Along with some of the pressures listed by Amrutha and Geetha (2024) and Cheng et al. (2023), the airline industry faces escalating pressures from passengers, for example, regarding willing and timely services, the environmental impact or usability of resources, and a host of factors that add to the mounting pressure. Moreover, both governmental and non-governmental organizations are pressuring airlines to engage in environmentally responsible practices (Camacho et al., 2024). Recognizing the magnitude of CO-OCB and EO-OCB for both customer experience and the airline's image and sustainability, airlines must weigh their priorities in promoting both CO-OCB and EO-OCB among employees (Kim & Jang, 2023). The importance of OCBs can be quite significant as they signify the behavioral consumer that represents the potential to engage an individual with a positive mindset into a behavioral action that enhances customer service experiences or provides legitimacy to the organizational environment needed for customer service (Akbari & Shayegh, 2023; Qu et al., 2022).

Employee efforts to deliver administrative services that satisfy customer expectations are referred to as customer orientation (Zhao, 2022). Customer satisfaction may result from the manager's treatment of the staff, which affects CO (Gonu et al., 2023). CO is important because it can eventually lead to different stakeholders being satisfied with the caliber of services. Kim and Jang (2023), demonstrates the degree to which an individual emphasizes the wants and needs of the customer, typically displayed through proactive behavior in listening, empathizing with the customer, and addressing the customer's problems. The origins of customer orientation stem from the more general marketing construct from the mid-20th century, which shifted the business idea from production and selling to

marketing to customer needs (Chen et al., 2024; Park & Kim, 2024). Over time, the concept of customer orientation evolved from an organizational strategy to an individual employee characteristic recognized as a significant predictor of effectiveness on the frontline (Zhang et al., 2025). Customer orientation is essential to service excellence as the first antecedent, as employees must have an internalized belief in the value of the customer to engage in extra-role behaviors, "drive to delight the customer" or "drive to maximize service quality" that can truly delight the customer (Akbari & Shayegh, 2023). Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory Hobfoll (2011) and social exchange theory Cook et al. (2013), the literature examines a dual-mediation model that evaluates customer-oriented OCB and the less-explored environment-oriented OCB as distinct mechanisms through which employee customer orientation influences customer service performance. This contributes to a more complex causal model that delineates discretionary behaviors directed at customers versus discretionary behaviors pertaining to the organizational context (Park & Kim, 2024). This study identifies which specific types of OCB—customer-focused or environment-focused—play a greater leveraging effect on service performance. Therefore, airlines can refine training programs and performance management systems to promote the most effective extra-role behaviors that enhance service performance excellence.

This study intends to address three notable gaps. The first gap is that nearly all studies reviewed originated from a Western or highly developed Asian economy. Therefore, the amount of empirical evidence from a Central Asian context (Kazakhstan) is limited, restricting the generalizability of existing models and problematic as it overlooks the potentially distinct cultural considerations impacting employee behavior and service performance within Kazakhstan. The second gap concerns the mediating mechanisms. In the majority of studies, either OCB was left out of the equation or OCB was measured unidimensional without considering that attitudes towards two significant groups of stakeholders may result in differing impacts on service performance (Iqbal et al., 2025; Park & Kim, 2024). Although some studies have tested customer-oriented OCB and environment-oriented OCB separately, no study has tested the unique and comparative mediating effects of each type of OCB in the context of the airline industry. Finally, despite the importance of service performance in aviation, the literature has yet to empirically test this type of comprehensive, multi-path model in relation to employees in the airline industry, in which aspects of safety, procedures, and customer interaction create a uniquely interspersed context for employees.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The first section presents the theoretical framework and hypotheses. Next, we discuss the research methodology, data collection, sampling, and measurements of the study. The research results and their consequences are then discussed. Finally, we note the limitations of our study and suggest possible directions for further investigation.

THEORETICAL VIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Underpinning Theories

This research is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which asserts that social behavior is the result of an exchange process that optimizes benefits and mitigates costs. In an organizational context, SET indicates that employees feel obligated to reciprocate the treatment they have received when the organization succeeds in treating employees well (Cropanzano, 2005). When employees have a high customer orientation, they internalize a key value of the service organization. The internalization of values is a psychological resource that employees leverage to engage in OCB or voluntary, extra-role behaviors to reciprocate perceived support, a sense of belonging, and alignment with the organizational mission (Cook et al., 2013). Hence, SET illuminates the connection between an orientation (mindset) and action (OCB) for the organization's good.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers a more precise psychological instrument that enhances the understanding of the relationship between customer orientation, OCB, and customer service performance. According to Hobfoll (2011), COR theory suggests that individuals are motivated to acquire, maintain, protect, and cultivate the resources available to them. In our context, resources can be understood broadly as personal attributes, conditions, and energies. With respect to our research, a strong customer orientation can be considered a personal resource, or more specifically, a relatively stable personal resource that gives the employee a sense of purpose and problem-solving confidence in customer encounters (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This resource reduces the emotional labor costs of working in customer service and tends to make the difficulty of service jobs less stressful and more enjoyable (Hobfoll, Shirom, et al., 2000).

A strong emphasis on customer service signifies a genuinely internalized belief system, a stable characteristic that allows employees to use that psychological energy and proper emphasis to maneuver multidimensional and demanding service interactions (Hobfoll, Shirom, et al., 2000). This resource is unique as it serves as a sense of meaning that diminishes the inherent costs of emotional labor and interactional demands of service work, making the employee more resistant to those costs. Past

COR studies have documented that employees often expend their resources in behaviors that exceed the expectations of their employment responsibilities and receive resources such as positive feedback, acknowledgment, or a sense of professional accomplishment (Hobfoll, 2018). Thus, customer orientation as a resource is the enabling fuel to expend in the extra effort of an OCB rather than just driving to conserve energy in serving the customer. Behaviors such as voluntary assistance to a customer or taking the initiative to suggest improvements in procedures are not merely duties but an investment of resources. Employees leverage customer-oriented resources to invest in resource generation. CO-OCB generates resources, such as goodwill from customers and praise from supervisors, to employees, and EO-OCB generates resources, such as social capital among coworkers and team effectiveness (Gonu et al., 2023). OCBs successfully translate the internalized resource into superior customer service performance, which then returns to the employee's resource pool in the form of validation and professional success (Camacho et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2023).

CUSTOMER ORIENTATION IMPACT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Both concepts emphasize developing long-lasting competitive advantages with superior customer service, indicating that customer orientation is a component of relationship marketing (Karasan et al., 2022). Like marketing relationships, customer orientation seeks to enhance customer satisfaction and create long-lasting relationships with consumers to generate and sustain the profitability of the firm (Park & Kim, 2024). Chen et al. (2024) identified customer orientation as a critical element of market orientation. "In addition to the relevance of customer orientation itself to the creation of greater value for the firm as well as the customer", a deep understanding and comprehension of a customer's wants is also helpful. Gong (2025) highlights that "two key features" of customer orientation are: Cultural and behavioural; whereas the cultural feature refers to the more fundamental aspects of the organisation, the behavioural feature refers to customer orientation in relation to the absorption, creation, and distribution of market information and react.

Several studies have empirically supported this relationship, showing that customer-oriented employees demonstrate higher performance levels than less oriented employees (Cheng et al., 2023; Gonu et al., 2023; Kim & Jang, 2023). Zhu et al. (2023), for instance, identified a strong positive relationship between employee customer orientation and manager-rated service performance in multiple industries. Likewise, Akbari and Shayegh (2023) demonstrated that employee customer

orientation is a significant antecedent of service performance, as customer-oriented employees exhibit more empathetic behavior and proactively resolve conflicts, both of which are important on-the-job behaviors for service performance in customer employment situations. In addition to the cognitive skills associated with being customer-oriented, customer-oriented employees are more likely to generate appropriate customer responses that are customized for customers (Qiu et al., 2022). Behaviorally, customer-oriented employees are more likely to expend greater effort and engage in adaptive selling/servicing behaviors, in which they adjust their behaviors according to situational cues in the interaction to ensure customer satisfaction (Gong et al., 2022; Karasan et al., 2022). Although there is an established direct relationship, it is equally important to contextualize these studies in the airline industry, where the industry is highly procedural and regulated. Thus;

H1: Customer orientation has direct effect on customer service performance

Customer Orientation impact on Customer-Oriented OCB

Gonu et al. (2023) defines customer orientation as the "the ability of a provider to constantly assess customers' latent needs and determine their potential needs." "Consumer orientation," which involves a series of activities directed toward a task like customer support, is a limited sense of customer orientation, hence it is also called "functional customer orientation," since it is limited to actions that customers would typically expect from their salesperson when they perform in a businessperson mode (Park & Kim, 2024). Similarly, Kim and Jang (2023) argued that customer orientation as a strategic choice is to pay attention to all the resources of the business to help service and satisfy profitable customers. Kiiru et al. (2022) and Lee et al. (2021) argued that maximizing revenues from customer orientation requires the company to evaluate customer value and immediately prioritize marketing efforts to the real consumer segment with the highest added costs. Gonu et al. (2023) define customer orientation as the ability of an organization to service profitable customer need through a customer-centric organizational structure to achieve positive outcomes in the marketplace.

Employees with a strong customer orientation embrace the belief that it is important to serve the customer; this orientation serves as an internal script or resource that prompts discretionary behavior in the future (Abuelhassan & AlGassim, 2022). CO-OCB is the manifestation of that core orientation through behaviors that assist customers, voluntary accounts of time committed to helping customers, personal service in attention to customer needs, and enthusiasm for customer interactions.

Research suggests that when employees engage in customer-centered ways of thinking, they are comparably more likely to devote discretionary time and effort to helping customers and see these "extra-role" actions as little more than their professional identity and part of their success (Chaturvedi & Verma, 2023; Gonu et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2023). For instance, Chen et al. (2024) found that customer-oriented front-line employees reported higher levels of helping behaviors towards customers, such as anticipating customer needs and proactively trying to meet needs. This connection is usually explained via social exchange theory, in which the customer-oriented employee sees a psychological reward (pleasure, affirmation of self-worth) in doing helpful customer-oriented actions, reinforcing the helping behavior. Robet et al. (2024) in the services industry further supported this connection, establishing that employee customer orientation is a high economic precursor and useful way to assess each individual, emphasizing that the tendency to serve is paramount to providing CO-OCB and "going the extra mile" for the customer. Thus;

H2: Customer orientation has direct effect on customer-oriented OCB.

Customer Orientation impact on Environment-Oriented OCB

EO-OCB is characterized by voluntary acts intended to enhance the internal organizational context of the organization. This includes helping coworkers, providing feedback on processes, and fostering a positive working environment (Sulphey et al., 2024). Employees with high customer orientation understand that the highest level of service outcomes is not provided in a vacuum but rather requires a supportive and well-functioning internal environment. Amrutha and Geetha (2024) suggests that the desire to provide high-quality service consistently drives employees to perform actions that impact the efficacy of teams and efficiency of organizations. For example, a customer-oriented employee may help train a new coworker because the employee knows that a well-trained coworker is a major contributor to reducing the likelihood of service failure with their collective customer base (Akbari & Shayegh, 2023; Qu et al., 2022).

When an employee cares about good customer satisfaction, they will likely care about the organizational health that will support their customer orientation (Akterujjaman et al., 2022). Research on prosocial motives shows that employees motivated to help outside stakeholders (customers) are motivated to help inside stakeholders as a proactive mechanism to maintain the system (Camacho et al., 2024). While the focus has historically been on general OCB, the logic extends to EO-OCB: A customer-oriented employee is more likely to provide suggestions for procedures or training for service recovery because these be-

haviors help preserve and improve the service delivery platform they are an active part of, thereby maximizing their ability to satisfy a customer in the long term (Sulphey et al., 2024). Examining the evidence of a systemic view supports the theoretical premise that strong customer orientation will lead employees of Kazakhstan Airlines to be more likely to engage in EO-OCB-type behavior, as these behaviors contribute to the underlying tasks in support of achieving service excellence.

H3: Customer orientation has direct effect on environment-oriented OCB.

CUSTOMER-ORIENTED OCB AS MEDIATING

Customer orientation is a requisite antecedent, but it is a discretionary effort that serves as a proximal behavioral bridge (Abuelhassan & AlGassim, 2022). While employees who may be considered high in customer orientation are predisposed to serve, they are able to serve customers and realize that service potential through CO-OCB voluntary assistance to customers, additional care and attention, and anticipating customer needs that exceed their formal job requirements (Cheng et al., 2023). The significance of this mediating role is due to these extra-role behaviors being directly linked to customer experience, and they often distinguish between satisfactory and exceptional services (Chen et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2023). Therefore, the customer-oriented attitude serves as the motive, while the CO-OCB provides the value-added action that leads to superior performance ratings. Ali and Khan (2025) and Robet et al. (2024) that stated the ways in which CO-OCB is stimulated by internal CSR. Employee CO-OCB is shaped by resources such as improved service competence, self-efficacy and management support. Employees' service skills and competencies are improved by internal CSR initiatives, such as training and skill development programs. This increases self-efficacy and lowers burnout, which in turn encourages employees to go above and beyond their designated roles, including participating in CO-OCB (Gong, 2025; Peng et al., 2023).

CO-OCB entails staff members going above and beyond their official responsibilities to address specific client demands, such as helping travelers make reservations (Ali & Khan, 2025). Zhang et al. (2025) and Zhu et al. (2023) that revealed that the impact of an employee's customer orientation on objective sales performance was significantly mediated by their involvement in CO-OCB, such as communicating positively with customers and resolving customers' concerns. In addition, a meta-analysis of OCB demonstrated a strong relationship with organizational effectiveness, especially in service environments where OCBs were visible to customers (Li et al., 2023; Park & Kim, 2024). The mediating mechanism of CO-OCB is presumably even stronger

in high-contact contexts such as the airline industry of Kazakhstan Airlines because these discretionary behaviors provide help when customers face an unforeseen baggage situation, or a distraught customer directly remediates service failures and enhances perceived service quality, thereby linking an employee's internal motivation to an observable performance outcome (Gong, 2025; Robet et al., 2024). Thus;

H4: Customer-oriented OCB has mediating impact between customer orientation and customer service performance

Environment -Oriented OCB as Mediating

EO-OCB consists of volunteer initiatives to protect the community's natural environment and encourage sustainable practices inside the organization (Qu et al., 2022). Airline employees are urged to participate in EO-OCB to reduce their carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. Camacho et al. (2024) include refraining from using the airport lift for short distances, minimizing food waste by carefully providing food for passengers, conserving energy and water, and promoting the use of environmentally friendly vehicles. Additionally, prior studies have mostly ignored the results of EO-OCB in other tourism and hospitality industry segments, such as hotels (Akbari & Shayegh, 2023; Sulphey et al., 2024). Little is known about the functions of EO-OCB and its results, particularly in the airline industry. EO-OCB refers to voluntary behaviors that enhance the internal efficiency, stability, and climate of cooperation within the organization, such as helping a coworker, facilitating morale, or supplying recommendations for improving processes (Amrutha & Geetha, 2024). Although these are not customer-facing behaviors, they have implications for service performance because they create an internal context that supports service excellence. An employee who possesses high Customer Orientation has some incentive to participate in EO-OCB because they recognize that a service system that functions flawlessly and colleagues who are willing and competent to do their jobs are necessary to delight external customers every time service is delivered (Akterujjaman et al., 2022). EO-OCB makes the internal "environment" more stable, reliable, and speedy while freeing resources of employees to engage externally with the customer; in short, it decreases errors, response times, and employee resources, which has implications for the final quality and reliability of customer service performance (Chaturvedi & Verma, 2023).

Li et al. (2023) demonstrated that internal OCBs make measurable, positive contributions to team effectiveness, which is positively related to external customer satisfaction. The implication is that the psychological resource of Customer Orientation is not just utilized externally when direct service is provided to

customer but also internally to build organizational structural and social resources that are essential for long-term organizational success in service (Robet et al., 2024). The value of assessing this form of mediation is that it adds further granularity to service behaviors since EO-OCB shows that an employee's orientation that yields benefits for performance happens both via the observable acts of direct service to customers and the often invisible, but critical, work require to maintain and improve the work environment and organizational support systems for service excellence (Peng et al., 2023). Through this process, employees gain an understanding of the organization's

other-directed cognitive goals and values which reduces self-interest predisposition and promotes other-directed behaviors that have positive organizational implications, such as behaving in an environmentally friendly manner (Gong, 2025). Perceived organizational support, which encompassed levers to support employee well-being, was positively associated with EO-OCB (Chaturvedi & Verma, 2023). Based on these empirical circumstances it is argues that internal CSR initiatives may facilitate participation in EO-OCB by airline employees.

H5: Environment-oriented OCB has mediating impact between customer orientation and customer service performance.

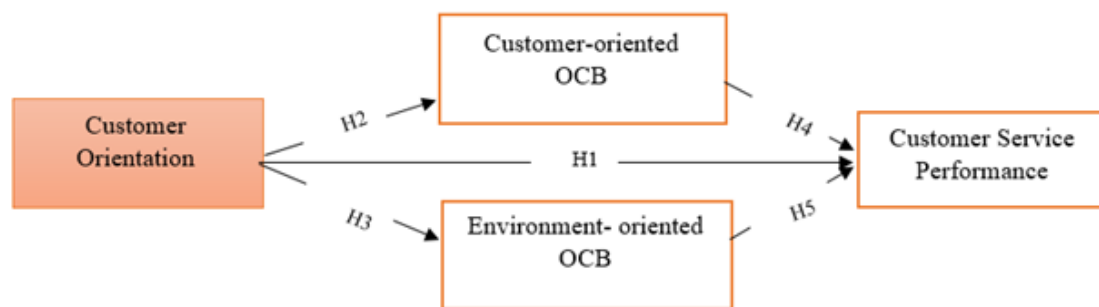


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Collection

The data for this study gathered from 276 employees of Kazakhstan Airlines to test the theorized relationships within one organizational and cultural context. The researchers, prior to conducting the study, obtained formal approval and cooperation from the Human Resources department of Kazakhstan Airlines. The researchers administered the survey instrument utilizing the established scales for all the study variables (customer orientation, CO-OCB, EO-OCB, and customer service performance) in a manner that maximized participation while minimizing disruption to airline operations. Hard copy surveys were distributed during non-peak times (e.g., night shifts and regular meetings), targeting various sections of airline personnel (e.g., flight attendants, ground personnel, ticketing staff). Additionally, to improve coverage across all departments an electronic questionnaire was developed and distributed via email through the chief pursers and supervisors, along with a letter indicating the purpose of the research and assuring anonymity for all respondents. Using this multi-modal approach, the researchers aimed to ensure a high response rates and data reliability.

Participants and Sample Size

This study focused on the employees of Kazakhstan Airlines but recognized that these employees held different occupations,

such as flight attendants, ground staff, and ticket sellers. A primary inclusion requirement was for the respondents to have been employed at Kazakhstan Airlines for a minimum of six months. In total, a substantial number of questionnaires were collected from the initial distribution, with a specific goal of representing the entire employee population of 276 employees. Following the original response phase of data collection, a comprehensive and structured data preprocessing plan was followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the final data set. After applying all filtering methodology and protocols, a finalized cleaned dataset of 276 valid respondents was determined, indicating an excellent overall response and quality rate of the data and achieving the entire size of the original target population.

The final sample was evaluated to ensure statistical sufficiency and quality. The Sample Size Justification confirmed that the final sample size of $N=276$ was indeed sufficient for the planned Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The sample size exceeded Boomsma (2000), guideline of 100 cases as the minimum criterion for SEM. Thus, the sample size of 276 respondents substantially surpassed that minimum, granting the study adequate statistical power to assure the validity of testing all hypotheses proposed in relation to customer orientation, dual-focus OCB, and customer service.

Measurements of Variables

The constructs were operationalized using scales taken from established literature to establish content validity and reliability. All items in the survey utilized a five-point Likert scale with varying levels of agreement (which were coded as 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree").

Customer orientation was measured with a 5-item scale developed by Gonu et al. (2023). Item included "I try to respond quickly and accurately to questions from external stakeholders". Customer-oriented OCB was measured with a 4-item scale developed by (Park & Kim, 2024). Item included "I respond to customer requests and problems in a timely manner". Environment-oriented OCB was measured with a 9-item scale developed by (Park & Kim, 2024). Items included "I stay well-informed about my company's environmental initiatives" and "I volunteer for projects, initiatives or events that address environmental issues within my workplace". Customer service

performance was measured with a 6-item scale developed by (Gonu et al., 2023). Items included "the employee is able to help customers when needed" and "the employee is able to ask good questions and listen to find out what a customer wants".

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile of Employees

The final sample, consisted of 276 employees of Kazakhstan Airlines. Demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1, including gender, position, organization tenure, education, and age. The sample exhibited a strong female bias, with females comprising 88.7 % (245) of the sample. This is consistent with the large representation of flight attendants (67.9%) and ticket sellers (23.6%) found in the sample, as these are occupations in the Asian aviation industry that tend to have a female workforce. Regarding organizational tenure, most of the sample fell within 1-6 years, with 1-3 years accounted for 43.9% and 3-6 years accounted for 43.4%, totalling over 87

TABLE 1. Sample characteristics of Kazakhstan airlines employees (N=276)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	245	88.7%
	Male	31	11.3%
Position	Flight Attendants	187	67.9%
	Ticket Sellers	65	23.6%
	Ground Staff	24	8.5%
Organizational Tenure	6 months – 1 year	13	4.7%
	1–3 years	121	43.9%
	3–6 years	120	43.4%
	> 6 years	22	8.0%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	188	68.1%
	Graduate/Professional Degree	88	31.9%
Age Group	18–24	17	6.2%
	25–35	136	49.3%
	35–44	117	42.4%
	> 55	6	2.1%

Measurement Model Evaluation

The PLS-SEM method was utilized through SmartPLS to evaluate the measurement model (Hair et al., 2024). First, the results indicated that all the indicator loadings established were all over 0.708, meaning the construct explained more than 50% of the indicator's variance. Thus, the indicator had an acceptable level of item reliability (Hair et al., 2024). Second, the constructs' internal consistency reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CA). All reliability values exceeded 0.70, indicating the threshold level of reason-

able reliability (Hair et al., 2024). Third, convergent validity was examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results indicated that all AVEs across all items linked to a given construct were greater than 0.50, confirming an acceptable convergent validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2024). Finally, multi-collinearity was identified and the possibility of CMB was evaluated using VIFs. Multi-collinearity, which may be an indication of CMB, is suggested by high VIF values, which show that a predictor variable has a high correlation with one or more other predictor variables. The VIFs were computed

for each predictor variable in the model during the study. All constructs' VIF values were much below the widely recognized cutoff of 3.3, suggesting that CMB is not present, and that multicollinearity is not an issue.

All individual item loadings (O.L.) range from the lowest value of 0.712 (CSP5) to the highest value of 0.908 (CO-OCB3), all of which exceed the recommended threshold of 0.707. The AVE values for all constructs have a minimum of 0.626 (customer service performance) to a maximum of 0.720 (customer-oriented OCB), all of which exceed the benchmark of 0.50, indicating that more than 50% of the variance for each construct is explained

by respective items, and thus supports acceptable convergent validity. The internal consistency reliability is also robust. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.865 (customer orientation) to 0.926 (environment-orientated OCB), and the Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.903 (customer orientation) to 0.938 (environment-oriented OCB). As all alpha and CR values exceed the traditional benchmark of 0.70, the scales are consistent and reliable. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all individual items across constructs range from a minimum of 1.645 (CO1) to a maximum of 3.235 (EO-OCB9).

TABLE 2. Assessment of measurement model: Validity, alpha and reliability

Variables	Items	O.L	VIF	Alpha	CR	AVE
Customer Orientation	CO1	0.747	1.645	0.865	0.903	0.651
	CO2	0.829	2.764			
	CO3	0.871	3.184			
	CO4	0.777	1.895			
	CO5	0.805	1.984			
Customer-Oriented OCB	CO-OCB1	0.804	1.987	0.868	0.911	0.720
	CO-OCB2	0.902	3.232			
	CO-OCB3	0.908	3.146			
	CO-OCB4	0.771	1.708			
Environment-Oriented OCB	EO-OCB1	0.815	2.966	0.926	0.938	0.629
	EO-OCB2	0.791	2.552			
	EO-OCB3	0.746	2.009			
	EO-OCB4	0.779	2.379			
	EO-OCB5	0.784	2.670			
	EO-OCB6	0.808	2.882			
	EO-OCB7	0.829	2.883			
	EO-OCB8	0.720	1.866			
	EO-OCB9	0.857	3.235			
Customer Service Performance	CSP1	0.809	2.498	0.879	0.909	0.626
	CSP2	0.857	2.663			
	CSP3	0.857	2.851			
	CSP4	0.780	2.180			
	CSP5	0.712	1.788			
	CSP6	0.717	1.680			

TABLE 3. Discriminant validity

	1	2	3	4
CO-OCB	0.848			
Customer Orientation	0.664	0.807		
Customer Service Performance	0.790	0.729	0.791	
EO-OCB	0.801	0.658	0.703	0.793

Additionally, the discriminant validity of the measurement variables was confirmed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of the AVE on the diagonal was greater than the correlation of the model

constructs, indicating that all model variables demonstrated discriminant validity (see Table 3, 4). Moreover, HTMT values across all variables were less than 0.85, further supporting the criterion for discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2024).

TABLE 4. HTMT

	1	2	3	4
CO-OCB				
Customer Orientation	0.766			
Customer Service Performance	0.790	0.833		
EO-OCB	0.788	0.725	0.768	

Structural Model: Direct and Mediation Effects

To evaluate the exploratory and predictive capacity of the model, the coefficient of determination R^2 for the endogenous latent variables was assessed. R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 were regarded as strong, moderate, and weak, respectively, according to Hair et al. (2024). The results suggest that the model's predictors explained 44.1% of the variance in CO-OCB, 43.3% in EO-OCB, and 70.1% in CSP. The proposed model also reported a "Standardized Root Mean Square Residual" (SRMR) of 0.078. Hair et al. (2024) was used to estimate the structural model outcomes. First, the structural model was assessed for potential collinearity issues. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the predictor constructs were below the cut-off score of 3.0, indicating that collinearity did not meaningfully affect the estimates of the structural model. Second, the size and significance of the path coefficients were examined. To assess the significance of the path coefficients, a bootstrapping procedure was performed, in which 10,000 bootstrap samples were gener-

ated and hypotheses testing at the 0.05 significance level (Hair et al., 2024). The direct effects of customer orientation were evaluated with hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, all of which were strongly supported ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, CO had a significant positive direct effect on customer service performance ($\beta = 0.348$, $T = 8.648$). In addition, CO had a very strong positive direct effect on customer-oriented OCB ($\beta = 0.664$, $T = 19.812$). CO also had a strong negative direct effect on environment-oriented OCB ($\beta = -0.658$, $T = 19.949$). Most importantly, the mediating hypotheses were also supported as follows: H4, which proposed that CO-OCB mediates the relationship between CO and CSP, had a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.332$, $T = 5.748$), and H5, which proposed the mediation of EO-OCB, was also significant ($\beta = 0.249$, $T = 3.903$), although the effect size was smaller. Thus, both forms of OCB mediate the effect of an employee's customer orientation on their service performance.

TABLE 5. Direct and mediation results

	Relationships	β	T Values	p Values
H1	Customer Orientation -> Customer Service Performance	0.348	8.648	0.000
H2	Customer Orientation -> CO-OCB	0.664	19.812	0.000
H3	Customer Orientation -> EO-OCB	-0.658	19.949	0.000
H4	Customer Orientation -> CO-OCB -> Customer Service Performance	0.332	5.748	0.000
H5	Customer Orientation -> EO-OCB -> Customer Service Performance	0.249	3.903	0.007

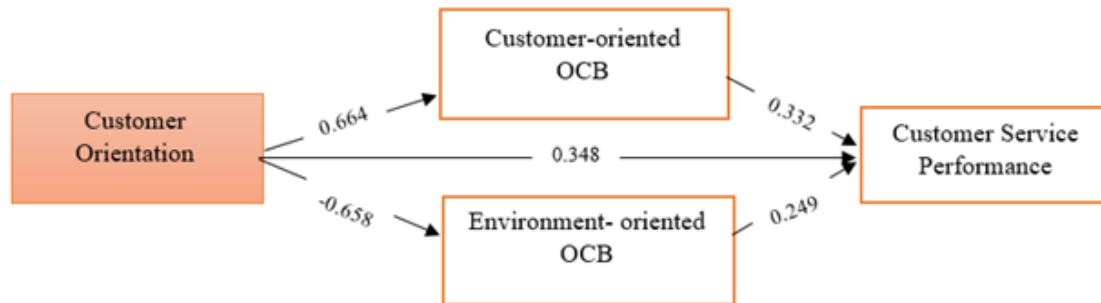


FIGURE 2. Structural model

DISCUSSION

The evidence gathered from the analysis of the structural model offers considerable support for the proposed framework, as well as insights into the contrasting mechanisms of customer-oriented and environment-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors. First, the findings provide confirmation of a direct positive effect of customer orientation, consistent with prior research (Chen et al., 2024; Gonu et al., 2023; Park & Kim, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, this finding is consistent with COR theory, which positions CO as an important personal resource. An employee who has been socialized to value customer satisfaction is better equipped cognitively and emotionally to serve effectively, thus reducing psychological challenges and ultimately leading to positive performance outcomes. This association further corroborates the central hypothesis that an employee's service mind will drive service delivery success in high-contact environments, such as Kazakhstan Airlines.

This finding strongly supports the importance of the behavioral consistency principle, revealing that the psychological resource of CO is redirected into discretionary activities with external customers (Chen et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023; Robet et al., 2024). From a Social Exchange Theory (SET) perspective, when the employee possesses strong customer-focused values (which can be interpreted as a form of organizational alignment and value to support) there is reciprocity and employee investment of energy into actions that benefit that customer. The employee is not trying to justify the investment of CO, rather, they view the investment of the CO resource in CO-OCB as an opportunity to elicit positive feedback and affirmation that would further build their resource pool, according to the orientation of COR theory.

Although the direct effect of customer orientation on EO-OCB was significant, the result was importantly negative. This implies important resource allocation trade-offs for employees in high-stress airline contexts. Although prior studies on generalized OCB that suggest a positive relationship with CO, the strong negative path indicates that the high resource commitment as-

sociated with a high CO is being so firmly organized around the high CO's external, customer-facing activities, thereby reducing mental energy or time previously spent on internal organizational maintenance activities (Akbari & Shayegh, 2023; Camacho et al., 2024; Qu et al., 2022). This is a strong example of the COR principle in employee resource conservation under conditions of perceived stress as they view prioritizing direct service execution over internal systemic quality improvement as the more important consideration. Through this, it also captures a potential strategic imbalance for management or contradictory to some level of a management perspective.

Hypothesis H4, which states that CO-OCB mediates the relationship between CO and CSP, received strong support. This result demonstrates that CO-OCB is the closest approximation and strongest behavioral mechanism to convert the employee's internal state into superior service performance outcomes. The customer-oriented mindset (the resource) gives the frontline employee license to go "off script", intentionality visible and discretionary actions now of truth, which directly improve customers' perceived quality and satisfaction and increase performance ratings (Sun et al., 2023). This mediation is a powerful example of the SET principle, where the employee's reciprocal, extra-role effort directly returns value to the organization through improved service outcomes. It establishes that organizational service excellence emerges through "extra-mile" behaviors.

Lastly, Hypothesis H5, which proposes that EO-OCB mediates the CO and CSP relationship, was also supported, although with a smaller indirect effect size. This mediation indicates that a high customer orientation may reduce the direct engagement in EO-OCB (see H3); however, the portion of EO-OCB that a service employee performs still contributes to the eventual service outcome. EO-OCB (for example, team harmony or improved procedures) constitutes a significant investment in systemic resources that are stable to support the service environment and reducing errors, thus indirectly influencing the reliability and quality of customer service performance (Amrutha & Geetha,

2024).

Theoretical Implications

The research makes significant contributions to the theoretical understanding of employee behavior and resource management in a service context using Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory Hobfoll (2011) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) within the setting of Kazakhstan Airlines employees. First, the study contributes to COR Theory by testing an empirical two-stage mediation model examining both CO-OCB and EO-OCB mechanisms to determine how Customer Orientation impacts Customer Service Performance. Prior research has primarily examined OCB generally or CO-OCB specifically; CO-OCB and EO-OCB as separate but co-present pathways indicating CO as a resource under COR Theory and subsequently showing how employees invest that resource. The most noteworthy finding was that CO had a negative direct association with EO-OCB, but still had a statistically significant indirect association with CSP, bubbling up in a new synthesis where initiatives to manage employee behavior under CSR, which can be construed as tradeoffs of resources, occurred under a high-performance needs, service environment. Highly customer-oriented employees of airlines appear to favor expending scarce available resources on outward, customer-oriented behaviors rather than internal, contextual CO-OCB behaviors when presented with the immediate imperative to perform. This expanded use of COR theory extends its utility to be the acculturation of resources from one channel of focus to another into service employee roles.

In addition, this research contributes to both SET and COR Theory by clarifying the two forms of OCB as the behavioral representation which brings an internal mindset to external service outcomes. SET provides the rationale - CO reasoning that creates a desire to give back to the organization beyond the work role; COR theory provides the process. By establishing the channeling of CO through CO-OCB and, indirectly EO-OCB, to develop CSP, the research validates these extra-role behaviors are more than coincidental, but rather a purposeful investment by the employee to attain and cultivate valuable organizational resources (e.g., reputation, positive feedback) which reinforce or elevate their professional identity (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The study does more than establish the just direct effects; it deepens our understanding of the specific behaviors by which the resource of customer orientation becomes transmitted to performance value at airlines.

Practical Implications

The results of this research provide several actionable implications for the ongoing management of airlines and other service organizations with a desire to increase customer service performance. The direct positive relationship of customer orientation with performance, and CO-OCB greatly suggest there is a need to focus on employee mindset. Management should make efforts to ensure the recruitment and selection processes apply CO-focused psychometric tools that attempt to assess potential applicants' degree of innate CO. Recurring training and development programs should focus on developing a service mindset that reinforces an emphasis on empathy, problem-solving, and customer needs rather than simply following procedure for compliance. Given CO flows strongly into CO-OCB there is an expectation for leadership to recognize, reward and reward discretionary customer-oriented behavior with ceremonial acknowledgement or performance appraisal measures that include "going the extra mile" measures. The outcome of this returns the dynamic of the social exchange theory encouraging the employee to further invest their own resources at work to benefit the customer.

Employees deeply committed to customer service may choose not to help their internal teams or improve internal processes with the focus they have on delivering service immediately to the customer. An obvious avenue is to promote formal mechanisms to allow for 'off-line' time for employees to collaborate or mentor, or provide constructive input to help their colleagues improve processes or service outcomes. Providing the employees with organizational resources (time, support, etc.) to enact EO-OCB will enable airlines to benefit from the indirect association with performance, while improving service quality with more consistent and supportive service, with fewer errors and omissions over time. Regulatory bodies, like the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines, should consider working with independent employee unions that assure employee security and respect in accordance with their employment contracts, thus minimizing the notion of resource loss (Zhang et al., 2025). Managers should be trained in professional development trainings and workshops as role models sharing personal strategies for establishing healthy work-life boundaries e.g., discouraging phone calls during family time, and minimizing work-related emails sent outside of workhours. This creates the necessary psychological and time resources that employees need and can as well uphold overall well-being. Similarly, mental health resources that include preventative training, physical and mental fitness classes (yoga, pilates), counseling services, etc. should be offered when an employee assistance program is in place and part

of the benefit package to ensure maintenance of continuous resources.

Limitations and Future Research

This study while providing considerable theoretical and practical implications for Kazakhstan Airlines, acknowledges several limitations that suggest avenues for future research. First, the findings should be generalized with caution due to the specific sample characteristics. Although the final sample size was (N=276), most respondents were female flight attendants, which may bias the detected behavioral patterns. Although gender was controlled, prior studies indicate that the effectiveness and expression of discretionary behaviors can vary across gender. Consequently, future research should aim to obtain more representative sample across different functional roles in Kazakhstan Airlines—for example, maintenance and management—or widen the context to other Central Asian or global airlines to validate the findings. Also, replicating the established model in other high-contact service industries such as tour operators, hospital-ity organizations, or retail would enhance the generalizability and provide useful cross-industry comparisons on the operation of COR and SET principles outside of the airline context.

A second limitation involves the cross-sectional research design since the data were collected at one point in time. This design limits the ability to accurately estimate mediation effects and establish temporal relationships among variables. Because COR Theory fundamentally describes a dynamic process of resource investment, gain, and loss over time, a longitudinal study is strongly recommended. Future research using a

longitudinal design would more accurately test how changes in customer orientation—as a personal resource led to subsequent changes in OCB engagement and resulting Service Performance, affording a richer understanding of the resource accumulation spirals predicted by COR. The current study also focused on individual-level variables. Future research should extend the model by investigating potential team or unit-level OCBs and their subsequent impact on performance. This would address how individual CO resources aggregate to stimulate collective reciprocal behaviors (SET) within a team unit, further enriching the multi-level application of these theories within the airline sector.

Finally, future studies can extend the COR and SET frameworks by exploring more elaborate boundary conditions that reflect the demanding nature of airline work. Given that the airline environment often involves uncertainty and the potential for customer mistreatment, future research should examine potential three-way interactions between employee resources—such as CO-external stressors like customer mistreatment, and the subsequent OCBs. Situated within COR Theory, such an approach would make clearer exactly how the presence of the CO personal resource helps equip employees to deal with negative environmental contexts and how this psychological resource is deployed to compensate for resource loss arising from stressful social exchanges with customers. The analysis of such interactions would result in a richer, more contextualized grounded understanding of the ways in which employees cope with and manage resources in the face of resource threats.

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