

Do you lose by doing more? How organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization relates to career development

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Abstract

Based on social exchange theory, we develop a moderated mediation model, which posits that the indirect relationship between organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization (OCBO) and organizational reward growth via leader-member exchange (LMX) is moderated by employee political skill. Overall, two studies using cross-sectional data and three-wave data supported our model. Specifically, results suggest that (1) OCBO was positively related to LMX; (2) there was a stronger positive relationship between OCBO and LMX when employee political skill was high rather than low; (3) LMX mediates the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth; and (4) the indirect effect of OCBO in predicting organizational reward growth via LMX was stronger when employee political skill was high rather than low.

KEYWORDS

career, LMX, OCBO, political skill

Practitioner points

- Two studies were used to test the effect of organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization (OCBO) on career development.
- OCBO was related to LMX.
- LMX mediates the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth.
- Interaction of OCBO and political skill was related to LMX and organizational reward growth.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Leader-member exchange (LMX) describes the overall relationship quality formed by the interaction between a supervisor and an employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality LMX (as opposed to low-quality LMX) has a positive impact on reduced employee turnover (Vecchio & Gobdel, 1984), employee satisfaction and performance (Rosse & Kraut, 1983), and supervisor support and guidance (Liden & Graen, 1980). Therefore, the antecedents of LMX have become the focus of scholars. Previous studies have found that antecedents of LMX include liking and task performance (Wayne & Ferris, 1990), competence and conscientiousness (Liden &

Graen, 1980), trust (Van Dam et al., 2008), similarity (Liden et al., 1993), as well as individual discretionary behaviors including negotiation and increased communication (Graen & Scandura, 1987). Unfortunately, there is a lack of sufficient research on whether organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization (OCBO), a kind of individual discretionary behavior beneficial to the organization itself, such as complying with company norms and helping the operation of the company (Williams & Anderson, 1991), can promote LMX.

To meet this study need, we explore the impact of OCBO on LMX based on the principle of reciprocity in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). According to the principle of reciprocity, people will

experience a sense of obligation to reciprocate certain favors they have received with providing favors of their own (Blau, 1964). When an employee performs OCBO, he or she is contributing to the organization as a whole (Williams & Anderson, 1991). In this way, a supervisor, an agent of the organization, may directly benefit from the OCBO, which prompts him or her to reward a favor. OCBO is reciprocated, and over time, there may be a high level of mutual respect, trust, liking, and support between a supervisor and an employee (i.e., high-quality LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Therefore, the first purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of OCBO on LMX. By exploring the impact of OCBO on LMX, it can refine our understanding of the antecedents of LMX.

OCBO can have variance across individuals even if it has negative implications. Organization is an inherently political arena in which employees must develop the ability to persuade, influence, and control others to satisfy their own needs (Mintzberg, 1985). Political skill, a vital individual characteristic, refers to "The ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 127)." Employees with high political skills (as opposed to those with low political skills) can evaluate and understand the situation better (Ferris et al., 2007), and are more likely to use OCBO as a tool for gaining recognition (Liu et al., 2007). Indeed, employees with high political skills will not only conduct more OCBO in quantity, but also enhance the salience of OCBO in others' eyes in quality (Munyon et al., 2013). Therefore, the second purpose of this study is to investigate how employee political skill can moderate the relationship between OCBO and LMX. By focusing on employee political skill, it can provide valuable insights into the interaction between OCBO and individual characteristics.

Besides, empirical studies have shown that OCBO affects career development, such as organizational reward (Allen, 2006; Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999) and promotion (Hui et al., 2000). However, a meta-analytic review of OCB suggests that very few studies have begun to examine the mediating variables that connect OCBO to career development (N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009). Later, scholars call for in-depth study on the underlying mechanism of the impact of OCB on career development (Bergeron et al., 2013), but few scholars respond directly. This is a deficiency that should not be overlooked, as career development is a highly valued career pursuit by employees, and understanding the underlying mechanism by which OCBO influences career development can refine our understanding. Thus, the third purpose of this study is to identify and examine how LMX can act as an underlying psychological mechanism that may help to explain the

relationship between OCBO and career development (i.e., organizational reward growth, Weng & McElroy, 2012).

To summarize, we develop and test a moderated mediation model in which employee political skill moderates the relationship between OCBO and LMX, and LMX mediates the relationship between OCBO and career development. This model is guided by the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

All in all, this study has three main theoretical contributions. First, we identify and test the impact of OCBO on LMX. We argue that OCBO, as a kind of individual discretionary behavior, can play a positive role in the establishment of high-quality LMX, which extends the research on the antecedents of LMX. Second, we examine the mediating role of LMX in the relationship between OCBO and career development. This is in response to the call of previous scholars (Bergeron et al., 2013; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009), and refines our understanding of why and how OCBO affects career development. Third, we examine how OCBO's indirect effect on career development via LMX is moderated by employee political skill. This demonstrates the value of individual characteristics (i.e., employee political skill) on employees' discretionary behavior and the impact on subsequent career development. Our theoretical model is depicted in Figure 1.

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 | OCBO and LMX

OCBO, such as compliance with company norms, facilitating company operations, and tolerating poor working conditions, generally benefits the organization rather than the individual (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Since the organization is a direct beneficiary of OCBO, the organization should reward this kind of favor. Supervisors, as the agents of the organization, are more likely to attend to, observe, and appreciate the OCBO conducted by the employees (Ozer, 2011). For example, when employees comply with company norms (such as giving advance notice of absence from work and following informal rules), it reduces the workload of supervisors and enables supervisors to devote more resources to more productive uses (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000).

According to the principle of reciprocity in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), supervisors may reward the employees who do them favors with highly positive performance evaluation, which will positively influence the establishment of high-quality LMX between a supervisor and employees over time. Indeed, existing empirical studies have shown that

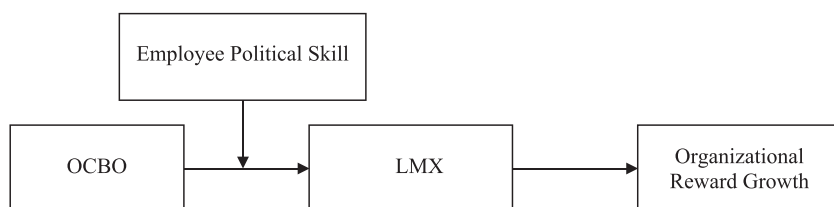


FIGURE 1 Theoretical model. LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization

OCBO positively affects supervisors' performance evaluation of employees (Ozer, 2011) and, in turn, significantly affects the quality of LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975). Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1 – OCBO is positively related to LMX.

2.2 | Moderating effect of employee political skill

Political skill reflects employees' ability to effectively understand and influence others at work (Ferris et al., 2005). We expect that employee political skill will moderate the relationship between OCBO and LMX. Previous studies have shown that individuals with political skills may use OCBO as a tool to gain recognition (Liu et al., 2007). As a result, they not only perform more OCBO, but also make these discretionary behaviors more salient in the eyes of others (Munyon et al., 2013), which can promote the establishment of high-quality LMX. Also, Eastman (1994) found that if the supervisor felt that the OCBO conducted by the employee was motivated by opportunism (e.g., to get a good impression and then win promotion and salary increase), the positive evaluation of the employee would be discounted, thereby inhibiting the establishment of high-quality LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Theoretically, employees with political skills can assess and understand the situation well (Ferris et al., 2007), which is conducive to conducting appropriate OCBO without exposing the opportunistic motivation behind the behavior. As a result, they are more likely to receive favorable evaluations from supervisors, thereby promoting the establishment of high-quality LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975). Indeed, existing empirical studies have indicated that employee political skill is not only positively related to the supervisor's evaluation of organizational citizenship behavior (Munyon et al., 2013), but also positively related to LMX (Epitropaki et al., 2016). As a result, employee political skill is expected to positively moderate the relationship between OCBO and LMX. Consequently, we propose:

Hypothesis 2 – employee political skill will moderate the positive relationship between OCBO and LMX. The relationship will be stronger when employee political skill is high rather than low.

2.3 | Mediating effect of LMX in the OCBO–career development relationship

Previously, we discussed how OCBO affects LMX (Hypothesis 1). Besides, we argue that the subsequent consequence of this effect is that career development captured by organizational reward growth will be accelerated. Organizational reward growth refers to employees' perception of the proportion and possibility of promotion and the speed, quantity, and possibility of salary increase (Weng & McElroy, 2012).

LMX theory holds that a supervisor and employees form a social exchange relationship of different qualities (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Employees who have high-quality social exchange relationship with a supervisor will obtain more resources, opportunities, support, and

guidance from a supervisor (Kim et al., 2015; Wayne & Ferris, 1990), which is beneficial to career development (i.e., organization reward growth). Indeed, previous empirical studies have shown that high-quality LMX will have a positive impact on bonus allocation and promotion opportunities (Law et al., 2000), challenging job opportunities and job promotion (Chen & Dean, 2007), and future promotion and career development opportunities (Liden et al., 2000). In a word, considering that OCBO is related to LMX, which in turn is related to career development, we propose:

Hypothesis 3 – the relationship between OCBO and career development (i.e., organizational reward growth) will be mediated by LMX.

2.4 | Moderated mediation effect of OCBO on career development

In Hypothesis 3, we propose that LMX will mediate the relationship between OCBO and career development (i.e., organizational reward growth). In Hypothesis 2, we propose that OCBO conducted by employees with different levels of political skills is different in quantity and quality, resulting in varying impacts on LMX. Combined with the above mediating and moderating hypothesis, we finally propose an integrated hypothesis: The mediating effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX will vary with the level of employee political skill.

The reason is that compared with employees with low political skills, employees with high political skills understand the situation better, which makes them not only able to seize the opportunity to conduct more OCBO, but also able to hide the opportunistic motivation behind the behavior to conduct more appropriate OCBO. As a result, employees with high political skills will win more favorable evaluations from their supervisors, which will facilitate the establishment of high-quality LMX and subsequent career development. Also, employees with high political skills have effective interpersonal influence on others and are more likely to establish high-quality LMX with a supervisor, which is conducive to career development. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 4 – employee political skill will moderate the mediated relationship between OCBO and career development (i.e., organizational reward growth) via LMX such that the mediated relationship will be stronger when employee political skill is high rather than low.

3 | OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

We used two independent studies to test the proposed theoretical model. Study 1 used cross-sectional data self-reported by employees. Key variables collected included organizational citizenship behavior (including OCBO and organizational citizenship behavior directed to individuals, referred to as OCBI), employee political skill, LMX, and organizational reward growth (Study 1). Study 2 used three-wave (1-month interval) data self-reported by employees. At Time 1, the key variables collected were organizational citizenship behavior (including

OCBO and OCBI) and employee political skill; at Time 2, the key variable collected was LMX; at Time 3, the key variable collected was organizational reward growth (Study 2). Through these two studies, we attempted to explore the constructive replication of our findings.

4 | STUDY 1

4.1 | Participants and procedure

A total of 360 valid questionnaires were obtained in Study 1. Data were collected via online methods. Participants recruited through the WeChat groups were sent a hyperlink to the online survey launched on SOJUMP (a professional online survey platform). Those who were interested clicked the hyperlink to enter the survey. We set a limit on questionnaire responses in the survey platform: each WeChat ID can only answer the questionnaire once. Before participants started filling in the questionnaire, we emphasized four points to them. First, you had to be currently employed adult employees. Second, our survey was anonymous, confidential, and only for academic research. Third, to spice things up, a random red envelope with a winning rate of 100% was set in the questionnaire (1 Yuan minimum). Finally, we would check each completed questionnaire within 48 h. If any suspicious responses were found, the questionnaires would be deleted, and the participants would not get the red envelope. Only those who agreed with the statements proceeded to answer the questionnaire.

The participants spanned different types of units, with 18.60% coming from state-owned enterprises, 36.10% from private enterprises, 3.90% from foreign-funded enterprises, 7.50% from government departments, 18.60% from public institutions, 1.90% from joint ventures, and 13.30% marked "other." Males accounted for 56.70% and females 43.30%. Regarding age, 33.60% were 25 or younger, 29.20% were 26–30, 27.20% were 31–35, and 10.00% were 36 or older. Regarding degree, 13.60% had a junior college degree or below, 55.00% had a bachelor's degree and 31.40% had a master's degree or above. Regarding tenure, 40.80% were 1 year or less, 28.10% were 1–3 years, 15.00% were 4–6 years, and 16.10% were more than 7 years or more.

4.2 | Measures

4.2.1 | OCBO

We assessed OCBO using a shortened four-item scale based on Williams and Anderson's (1991) six-item OCBO scale ($\alpha = .72$). A sample item is: "I will give advance notice when unable to come to work" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). We used a shortened OCBO scale because (1) our participants imposed length constraints to minimize survey fatigue; and (2) four-item measures of OCBO have been extracted in prior research (Wang, 2016). The two items from the original scale that were not included were "Great deal of time spent with personal phone conversations"; and "Complains about insignificant things at work."

4.2.2 | Employee political skill

Employee political skill was evaluated with the six-item scale used by Harris et al. (2007) ($\alpha = .80$). A sample question is: "It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

4.2.3 | LMX

We used a seven-item scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) to measure LMX ($\alpha = .84$; see He et al., 2017, for an example of past research utilizing this particular LMX measure in the Chinese context). A sample item is: "I feel that my immediate supervisor understands my problems and needs" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

4.2.4 | Organizational reward growth

Organizational reward growth was assessed with the seven-item measure developed by Weng and McElroy (2012) ($\alpha = .91$). Two representative items are "My promotion speed in the present organization is fast" and "My salary is growing quickly in my present organization" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

4.2.5 | Control variables

Participants' gender, age, degree, and tenure were collected and controlled because Gerstner and Day (1997) had demonstrated that these variables were related to LMX. Besides, to exclude the confounding effects of other OCB dimensions, we also controlled for OCBI. We assessed OCBI using a shortened four-item scale based on Williams and Anderson's (1991) seven-item OCBI scale ($\alpha = .83$). A sample OCBI item is "I will go out of way to help new employees" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Our reasons for using a shortened OCBI scale are the same as the reasons for using a shortened OCBO scale mentioned above. The three items from the original scale that were not included were "Takes time to listen to co-workers' problems and worries"; "Takes a personal interest in other employees"; and "Passes along information to co-workers." Age, degree, and tenure were not related to any dependent variables in Study 1 (Table 1) and thus were not included in the subsequent analyses.

4.3 | Results

4.3.1 | Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables are shown in Table 1. OCBO was positively related to LMX ($r = .55, p < .01$). LMX was positively related to organizational reward growth ($r = .60, p < .01$). Employee political skill was positively related to OCBO ($r = .61, p < .01$) and LMX ($r = .62, p < .01$), respectively.

TABLE 1 Results of descriptive statistical analysis (Study 1)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender ^a	1.43	0.50					
2. OCBI	4.04	0.65	-0.04				
3. OCBO	3.73	0.67	-0.02	0.58**			
4. Employee political skill	3.76	0.56	-0.05	0.56**	0.61**		
5. LMX	3.49	0.59	-0.11*	0.44**	0.55**	0.62**	
6. Organizational reward growth	3.26	0.82	-0.10	0.25**	0.44**	0.45**	0.60**

Note: $N = 360$.

Abbreviations: LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBI, organizational citizenship behavior directed to individuals; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

^a1–male, 2–female.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Regarding control variables, gender was positively related to LMX ($r = -.11, p < .05$), but it was not related to organizational reward growth ($r = -.10, ns$). OCBI was positively related to LMX ($r = .44, p < .01$) and organizational reward growth ($r = .25, p < .01$), respectively. OCBO was positively related to OCBI ($r = .58, p < .01$).

4.3.2 | Confirmatory factor analysis and common method variance (CMV)

Before testing our hypothesis, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to assess our measurement model. Results indicated that our four-factor model, consisting of Study 1's main variables (OCBO, employee political skill, LMX, and organizational reward growth), fits the data well ($\chi^2(246) = 729.31, p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.96$; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.07, comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.88, standardized root mean squared residual [SRMR] = 0.05). χ^2 difference tests indicated that the four-factor model was significantly better than the likely alternative models, including a three-factor model that combined the OCBO and LMX items ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 131.62, p < .001$) and a three-factor model that combined the OCBO and employee political skill items ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 53.25, p < .001$). A one-factor exploratory factor analysis with no rotation, that is, Harman's single-factor test (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003), extracted 37.74% of the cumulative variance, less than the 50% threshold that would indicate an issue with CMV.

4.3.3 | Hypothesis testing

We used hierarchical regression analysis and SPSS PROCESS developed by Hayes (2013) to test Hypotheses 1–4. Gender and OCBI were used as control variables in all test steps. The results of Hypotheses 1–3 are shown in Table 2, and the results of Hypothesis 4 are depicted in Table 3. Our results show that Hypotheses 1–4 are supported.

In Table 2, OCBO was positively related to LMX ($b = 0.44, p < .001$; Step 2), which supports Hypothesis 1; the relationship between OCBO and LMX was moderated by employee political skill ($b = 0.09, p < .001$; Step 4), which supports Hypothesis 2. Simple slope test indicated that

there was a positive relationship between OCBO and LMX when employee political skill was low ($b = 0.17, t = 2.99, p < .01$), but it was stronger when employee political skill was high ($b = 0.35, t = 6.04, p < .001$; Figure 2). OCBO was positively related to LMX ($b = 0.44, p < .001$; Step 2); LMX was positively related to organizational reward growth ($b = 0.54, p < .001$; Step 5), which supports Hypothesis 3. Also, the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX was significant ($b = 0.24, 95\%$ confidence interval [CI] = [0.17, 0.32]), which also supports Hypothesis 3.

We predicted that OCBO had an indirect effect on organizational reward growth through LMX at different conditions (+1 SD above and below the mean) of employee political skill (Hypothesis 4). In Table 3, we summarize the moderated mediation results, including the average indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX, and the indirect effect at high versus low levels of our moderator (i.e., employee political skill). To test for significance, we used SPSS PROCESS developed by Hayes (2013) to produce 95% bias-corrected CIs. Our analyses showed that the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX was significant at low level (-1 SD) of employee political skill ($b = 0.09, 95\%$ CI = [0.02, 0.18]), but it was stronger at high level (+1 SD) of employee political skill ($b = 0.19, 95\%$ CI = [0.11, 0.27]). Besides, the results in Table 4 also showed that the moderated mediating effect was significant (moderated mediation index = 0.05, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.11]). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

5 | STUDY 2

5.1 | Participants and procedure

The data used in Study 2 were collected from three surveys on the SOJUMP platform, each with an interval of one month. At Time 1, we invited participants to evaluate organizational citizenship behavior (OCBI and OCBO), employee political skill, and demographic variables. A total of 633 participants filled out questionnaires. At Time 2, participants who completed the survey at Time 1 were invited to evaluate LMX, and a total of 469 participants filled out questionnaires. At Time 3, participants who

TABLE 2 Test results of hypotheses 1–3 (Study 1)

Variables	LMX								Organizational reward growth	
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4		Step 5	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gender ^a	-0.10*	0.05	-0.10*	0.04	-0.08*	0.04	-0.07	0.04	-0.04	0.04
OCBI	0.44***	0.05	0.18**	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.05	-0.10*	0.05
OCBO			0.44***	0.05	0.26***	0.05	0.26***	0.05	0.20***	0.06
Employee political skill					0.42***	0.05	0.43***	0.05		
OCBO × Employee political skill							0.09***	0.02		
LMX									0.54***	0.05
<i>F</i>	45.89***		60.08***		68.95***		60.01***		56.18***	
<i>R</i> ²	0.21		0.34		0.44		0.46		0.39	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.20		0.33		0.43		0.45		0.38	
							<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	
Indirect effect							0.24	0.04	[0.17, 0.32]	

Note: *N* = 360. Standardized regression coefficients are reported.

Abbreviations: LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBI, organizational citizenship behavior directed to individuals; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

^a1–male, 2–female.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001 (two-tailed).

TABLE 3 Summary of the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX at high and low level of employee political skill (Study 1)

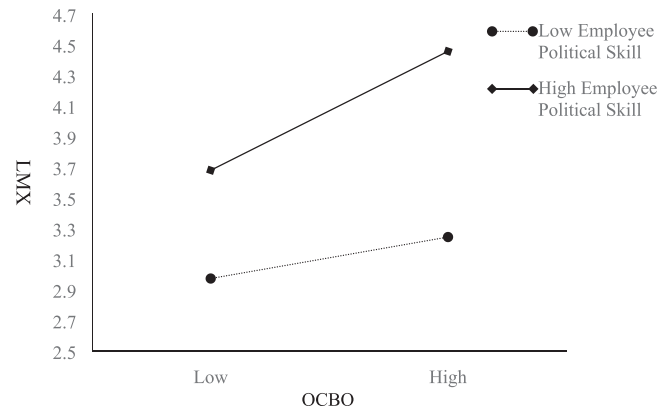
	Organizational reward growth
OCBO	
Average indirect effect	0.14* [0.09, 0.21]
Employee political skill	
High	0.19* [0.11, 0.27]
Low	0.09* [0.02, 0.18]
Significance test of moderated mediation	Moderated mediation index 0.05* [0.01, 0.11]

Note: *N* = 360. 95% confidence intervals are reported in brackets.

Abbreviation: OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

*All estimates were tested for significance.

completed the survey at both time points 1 and 2 were invited to evaluate organizational reward growth, and a total of 361 participants filled out questionnaires. By matching the WeChat ID left by the participants in each survey, 221 valid questionnaires were obtained. Thus, from the initial pool of participants invited to fill out questionnaires, our estimated response rate was 35% (221/633). To assess possible concerns related to attrition across time periods, we examined the variables' means of OCBO, employee political skill, and LMX for those who completed all three time

**FIGURE 2** The moderating effect of employee political skill on the relationship between OCBO and LMX (Study 1). LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization

periods with those who only completed Time 1, or Time 1 and Time 2 surveys, and did not find any statistically significant differences.

The participants spanned different types of units, with 11.30% coming from state-owned enterprises, 24.40% from private enterprises, 0.90% from foreign-funded enterprises, 1.80% from government departments, 47.50% from public institutions, 0.90% from joint ventures, and 13.10% marked “other.” Males accounted for 46.60% and females 53.40%. Regarding age,

32.10% were 25 or younger, 54.30% were 26–30, 9.00% were 31–35, and 4.60% were 36 or older. Regarding degree, 5.90% had a junior college degree or below, 68.30% had a bachelor's degree and 25.80% had a master's degree or above. Regarding tenure, 44.30% were 1 year or less, 38.90% were 1–3 years, 9.50% were 4–6 years, and 7.20% were more than 7 years or more.

5.2 | Measures

The measurement of OCBO ($\alpha = .72$), employee political skill ($\alpha = .70$), LMX ($\alpha = .88$), and organizational reward growth ($\alpha = .90$) was the same as that of Study 1.

5.3 | Control variables

As in Study 1, we collected and controlled for participants' gender, age, degree, tenure, and OCBI ($\alpha = .78$). Because gender, age, degree, and tenure were not related to any dependent variables in Study 2, we excluded these variables in the subsequent analyses.

5.4 | Results

5.4.1 | Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables are depicted in Table 4. OCBO was positively related to LMX ($r = .38, p < .01$). LMX was positively related to organizational reward growth ($r = .27, p < .01$). Employee political skill was positively related to OCBO ($r = .43, p < .01$) and LMX ($r = .43, p < .01$), respectively.

Regarding control variables, OCBI was positively related to LMX ($r = .18, p < .01$), but it was not related to organizational reward growth ($r = .11, ns$). OCBO was positively related to OCBI ($r = .48, p < .01$).

TABLE 4 Results of descriptive statistical analysis (Study 2)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. OCBI	4.09	0.41				
2. OCBO	3.83	0.51	0.48**			
3. Employee political skill	3.77	0.41	0.29**	0.43**		
4. LMX	3.53	0.58	0.18**	0.28**	0.43**	
5. Organizational reward growth	2.99	0.74	0.11	0.21**	0.25**	0.27**

Note: $N = 221$.

Abbreviations: LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBI, organizational citizenship behavior directed to individuals; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

** $p < .01$.

5.4.2 | Confirmatory factor analysis and CMV

As in Study 1, before testing our hypothesis, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to assess our measurement model. Results indicated that our four-factor model, consisting of Study 2's main variables (OCBO, employee political skill, LMX, and organizational reward growth), fits the data well ($\chi^2(246) = 576.12, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 2.34, RMSEA = 0.08, CFI = 0.86, SRMR = 0.07$). χ^2 difference tests indicated that the four-factor model was significantly better than the likely alternative models, including a three-factor model that combined the OCBO and LMX items ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 131.62, p < .001$) and a three-factor model that combined the OCBO and employee political skill items ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 53.25, p < .001$). A one-factor exploratory factor analysis with no rotation, that is, Harman's single-factor test (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003), extracted 27.99% of the cumulative variance, less than the 50% threshold that would indicate an issue with CMV.

5.4.3 | Hypothesis testing

We used hierarchical regression analysis and SPSS PROCESS developed by Hayes (2013) to test Hypotheses 1–4. OCBI was used as control variables in all test steps. The results of Hypotheses 1–3 are depicted in Table 5, and the results of Hypothesis 4 are shown in Table 6. Our results show that Hypotheses 1–4 are supported.

In Table 5, OCBO was positively related to LMX ($b = 0.40, p < .001$; Step 2), which supports Hypothesis 1; the relationship between OCBO and LMX was moderated by employee political skill ($b = 0.10, p < .05$; Step 4), which supports Hypothesis 2. Simple slope test indicated that there was a positive relationship between OCBO and LMX when employee political skill was low ($b = 0.23, t = 2.52, p < .05$), but it was stronger when employee political skill was high ($b = 0.43, t = 4.15, p < .001$; Figure 3). OCBO was positively related to LMX ($b = 0.40, p < .001$; Step 2); LMX was positively related to organizational reward growth ($b = 0.22, p < .01$; Step 5), which supports Hypothesis 3. In addition, the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX was significant ($b = 0.09, 95\% CI = [0.02, 0.19]$), which also supports Hypothesis 3.

We predicted that OCBO had an indirect effect on organizational reward growth through LMX at different conditions (+1 SD above and below the mean) of employee political skill (Hypothesis 4). In Table 6, we summarize the moderated mediation results, including the average indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX, and the indirect effect at high versus low levels of our moderator (i.e., employee political skill). To test for significance, we used SPSS PROCESS developed by Hayes (2013) to produce 95% bias-corrected CIs. Our analyses showed that the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX was significant at low level (–1 SD) of employee political skill ($b = 0.04, 95\% CI = [0.01, 0.13]$), but it was stronger at high level (+1 SD) of employee political skill ($b = 0.09, 95\% CI = [0.02, 0.19]$). Besides, the results in Table 6 also showed that the moderated mediating effect was significant (moderated

TABLE 5 Test results of Hypotheses 1–3 (Study 2)

Variables	LMX								Organizational reward growth	
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4		Step 5	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
OCBI	0.20**	0.07	-0.01	0.08	-0.05	0.08	-0.07	0.08	0.01	0.08
OCBO			0.40***	0.07	0.27***	0.08	0.30***	0.08	0.12	0.08
Employee political skill					0.34***	0.07	0.32***	0.07		
OCBO × Employee political skill							0.10*	0.05		
LMX									0.22**	0.07
<i>F</i>	7.16**		18.91***		21.99***		17.75***		7.03***	
<i>R</i> ²	0.03		0.15		0.22		0.25		0.09	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.03		0.14		0.22		0.23		0.08	
							<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	
Indirect effect							0.09	0.04	[0.02, 0.19]	

Note: *N* = 221. Standardized regression coefficients are reported.

Abbreviations: LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBI, organizational citizenship behavior directed to individuals; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001 (two-tailed).

TABLE 6 Summary of the indirect effect of OCBO on organizational reward growth via LMX at high and low level of employee political skill (Study 2)

	Organizational reward growth
OCBO	
Average indirect effect	0.06* [0.01, 0.14]
Employee political skill	
High	0.09* [0.02, 0.19]
Low	0.04* [0.01, 0.13]
Significance test of moderated mediation	Moderated mediation index 0.02* [0.00, 0.07]

Note: *N* = 221. 95% confidence intervals are reported in brackets.

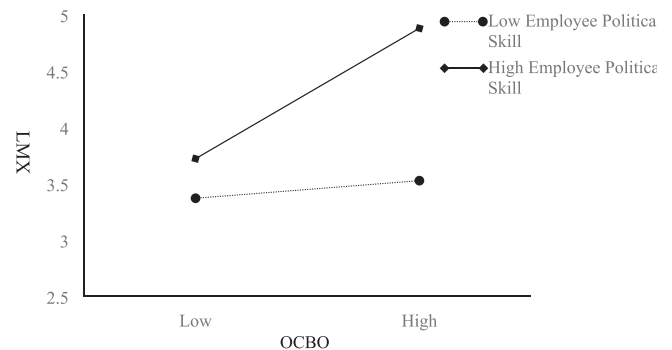
Abbreviations: LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization.

*All estimates were tested for significance.

mediation index = 0.02, 95% CI = [0.00, 0.17]). Consequently, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

6 | DISCUSSION

The findings based on analyzing the cross-section data of Study 1 (*N* = 360) and the three-wave data of Study 2 (*N* = 221) indicate that OCBO is positively related to LMX. Employee political skill was found to accentuate the relationship between OCBO and LMX. LMX

**FIGURE 3** The moderating effect of employee political skill on the relationship between OCBO and LMX (Study 2). LMX, leader–member exchange; OCBO, organizational citizenship behavior directed to the organization

mediated the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth. Furthermore, the conditional indirect effect of OCBO in predicting organizational reward growth via LMX was stronger under the condition of high employee political skill as opposed to low employee political skill.

6.1 | Theoretical implications

This study has three main theoretical contributions. First, this study enriches our knowledge of the antecedents of LMX. Current studies mainly focus on the antecedents of LMX, including performance evaluation, competence, and conscientiousness (Dansereau et al.,

1975; Liden & Graen, 1980), as well as supervisors' liking, trust, and similarity perception of employees (Liden et al., 1993; Van Dam et al., 2008; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). However, little attention has been paid to whether individual discretionary behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behaviors, have an impact on LMX and when the impact is stronger. Based on social exchange theory and empirical test, this study found that OCBO can affect LMX, and this effect is stronger when employee political skill is high.

Second, this study confirms LMX mediates the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth. Regarding the underlying mechanism of OCBO influencing career development, many scholars call for in-depth study (Bergeron et al., 2013; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009). In response to this call, we confirm that the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth is mediated by LMX. This finding not only refines our understanding of the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth but also extends the existing research: Supervisors's liking for employees mediates the relationship between OCBO and reward recommendation (Allen & Rush, 1998).

Third, this study confirms the mediating effect of OCBO in predicting organizational reward growth via LMX is moderated by employee political skill. Past studies have shown that there is significant variation in the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and career development. Allen (2006) found that the relationship between OCBO and promotion was stronger for men as opposed to women. Furthermore, Kiker and Motowidlo (1999) pointed out that contextual performance and task performance interactively influence supervisors' reward decisions. This study extends these previous studies and confirms that employee political skill enhances the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth via LMX. Besides, compared with the direct, mediated, or moderated models, our moderated mediation model is more comprehensive, which provides an integrated framework for understanding the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and career development, and also provides a new perspective for further study of this relationship.

6.2 | Practical implications

This study mainly has three practical implications. First, given the positive effect of OCBO on LMX and organizational reward growth, it is reasonable to suggest that employees can help themselves by taking time out for OCBO that is essential for maintaining organizational functioning (Organ & Ryan, 1995). Besides, the organization should also take steps to encourage employees to conduct OCBO and make them believe that OCBO is a way for them to build relationships with their supervisors and achieve organizational reward growth.

We also should note the value of considering individual characteristic (i.e., employee political skill) when trying to enhance the positive relationship between OCBO and LMX. We found that employee political skill can have a positive moderating effect on the

relationship between OCBO, LMX, and organizational reward growth. When employee political skill is high, the relationship between OCBO and LMX is strengthened. Thus, employees should consciously enhance their political skills. Furthermore, organizations can improve the political skills of employees by political skills development projects. In this way, it may help to enhance the effects of OCBO on LMX and organizational reward growth. This finding should be welcomed by employees and organizations because employees' career development is not only the focus of employees themselves but also the focus of organizations (Direenzo & Greenhaus, 2011).

Second, because we find that OCBO promotes organizational reward growth via LMX, the organization can assign employees who are inclined to conduct OCBO to LMX-related positions so that they can reap the benefits from OCBO. This helps the organization to put the right persons in the right positions: Employees with high (low) OCBO tendencies are put in positions with high (low) requirements for this behavior. This finding is of great benefit to organizations, which try to improve employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance by person-job fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Finally, regarding organizational citizenship behavior, scholars hold that employees will be concerned about the role pressure and the damage to task performance brought by "doing more." Therefore, they strongly call on organizations to explore ways to ease employees' concerns about conducting organizational citizenship behavior (Bergeron, 2007; Bolino & Turnley, 2005). Responding to this call, this study can help organizations to reduce employees' concerns about OCBO. Organizations can tell employees why OCBO has a positive effect on their career development and when the positive effect is stronger. Also, the organization can tell employees that OCBO does not necessarily cause role stress and sacrifice task performance. On the contrary, if you conduct OCBO, you will get some kind of reward from your supervisor, such as high-quality LMX, which will ultimately promote your career development.

6.3 | Limitations and future directions

Three limitations should be noted in interpreting the findings of this study. First, the ability to make causal inferences about hypothesized linear relationships is limited. The data from Study 1 are cross-sectional, so the ability to extrapolate the linear causality hypothesized in the model is limited. However, our theoretical view supports the causal order in the theoretical model. In Study 1, we assessed CMV for our variables using Harman's single-factor test, and did not find evidence of CMV. In Study 2, we used three waves of survey data (1-month interval), which not only helped to alleviate our concerns about CMV, but also helped to make an inference about the linear causality assumed in the model (Finkel, 1995). Nevertheless, as with Study 1, we used Harman's single-factor test to assess CMV, and did not find evidence of CMV. Also, according to Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010), multiwave longitudinal panel design where OCBO, LMX, employee political skill, and organizational reward growth were collected independently across time points, which

would have enabled us to ascertain the linear causality assumed in the model. Thus, we suggest that future scholars can try to do so.

Second, LMX is measured from the perspective of employees. Many existing studies have adopted and confirmed the effectiveness of the single-factor LMX structure (e.g., He et al., 2017; Liao et al., 2010), and the same is true in this study. However, Gerstner and Day (1997) pointed out that LMX should be measured from the perspectives of supervisors and employees. Thus, we suggest that future research can obtain LMX data from both supervisors and employees, which may generate different findings.

Finally, this study only focuses on LMX as a mediating variable in the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth. Future studies can compare this mediator with other mediators to refine our understanding of the underlying mechanisms behind this relationship. For example, when employees conduct OCBO, there is less work for supervisors to supervise employees, so supervisors can devote more resources to the “knife-edge” (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2000).

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), supervisors may reward the implementers of OCBO with high-performance evaluation, which is a critical antecedent for employees to gain faster organizational reward growth. Therefore, future research can examine how performance evaluation mediates the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth. Furthermore, given that performance evaluators assign different values to organizational citizenship behavior under different task interdependence (Bachrach et al., 2006), future research can test the moderating effect of task interdependence on the relationship between OCBO and LMX, as well as subsequent organizational reward growth.

7 | CONCLUSION

Do you lose by doing more? Based on the social exchange theory and two independent empirical studies, this study gives a convincing answer: No. Specifically, this study provides valuable insights into the effect of OCBO on career development (i.e., organizational reward growth) via LMX, as well as the moderating effect of employee political skill. OCBO is positively related to LMX. LMX mediates the relationship between OCBO and organizational reward growth. Employee political skill moderates the relationship between OCBO and LMX. The conditional indirect effect of OCBO in predicting organizational reward growth via LMX was stronger under the condition of high as opposed to low employee political skill. That is to say, Individuals with high political skills are more likely to seize opportunities to conduct appropriate OCBO more often, accentuating its effect on LMX and in turn subsequent organizational reward growth.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by all

authors. The first draft of the manuscript was written by the first author and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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