

Research Paper

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

The present quantitative study investigates the dimensions of Psychological Ownership (PO); Affection (PO_A), Connectedness (PO_C) and Obligation (PO_O) as correlates to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) among employees at higher and lower hierarchical levels in the organisation. Utilising a cross-sectional correlational design, the research compared managerial (n = 76) and non-managerial (n = 57) with a total of 133 employees to identify disparities in organisational possessiveness and the predictive validity of PO dimensions on discretionary work behaviours. Data were analysed using t-tests, Pearson correlation, and linear regression. Results revealed, as hypothesised, a statistically significant hierarchical difference, with managerial employees reporting substantially higher levels of PO than non-managerial employees ($t = 4.89$ at $df (78)$ with $p < .001$). The Obligation dimension exhibits the most pronounced disparity with Cohen's $d = 1.08$, which shows a larger effect size. Furthermore, all PO dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with OCB ($p < .001$), where obligation emerged as the strongest correlate ($r = .49$). Regression analysis confirms, psychological ownership as predictor of OCB, accounting for 18.6% of its variance ($R^2 = .186$, $\beta = .431$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that organisational interventions aimed at fostering a "culture of ownership," particularly increased autonomy and stewardship for lower-level employees, are essential for enhancing citizenship behaviours and overall organisational health.

Keywords: *Psychological Ownership, affection, obligation, connectedness, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Hierarchical Levels*

In the contemporary landscape of organisational psychology, the relationship between employees and their organisations has evolved from formal transactional interactions to deeper, more emotionally embedded connections. Increasingly, employees are not merely fulfilling contractual obligations but are also developing a psychological sense of ownership over their work, roles, and organisations. This phenomenon of psychological ownership (PO) is defined as a cognitive (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). Unlike legal or formal ownership, psychological ownership originates from the subjective and emotional feeling of possession. This state significantly impacts employees behaviours, attitudes, and

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Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

discretionary actions within the organisation (Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, & Gardner, 2007).

Psychological ownership appears as a critical construct for understanding proactive, extra-role behaviours that underpin organisational effectiveness. It generates a sense of attachment and responsibility that propels employees to act in the organization's best interests even when such these contributions go beyond their assigned duties (Dawkins, Tian, Newman, & Martin, 2017). The multidimensional nature of PO, often conceptualised through affection (emotional attachment), connectedness (a sense of belonging), and obligation (felt responsibility), provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand how different psychological facets contribute to discretionary work behaviours.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), which Organ (1988) defined as voluntary and discretionary behaviour not formally rewarded but vital for enhancing overall organisational performance. OCB includes acts such as assisting coworkers, protecting organisational resources, and promoting a positive organisational climate (Podsakoff, McKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). These behaviours reinforce organisational functioning and adaptability, making them crucial in knowledge-driven, dynamic workplaces.

Researchers have long sought to understand the antecedents of OCB, with factors such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and perceived organisational support receiving considerable attention (Farr, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Nonetheless, psychological ownership has recently emerged as a significant intrinsic motivational factor promoting organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). When employees internalise their roles and perceive psychological ownership, they are more likely to demonstrate dedication beyond formal obligations, engage in pro-social behaviour, and safeguard organisational well-being (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009).

Psychological Ownership and Occupational Status

Despite growing evidence on the link between PO and OCB, the relationship is not necessarily uniform across organisational strata. A hierarchical level is the position or rank an employee occupies within the organisational structure and can significantly shape the experience and expression of psychological ownership (Pierce & Jussila, 2011). Individuals in elevated positions generally exhibit enhanced autonomy, engagement, and control, which are recognised precursors of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2003). Conversely, employees at lower levels frequently encounter structural limitations, constrained decision-making opportunities, and restricted access to information, which can impede the cultivation of ownership sentiments.

Consequently, the dimensional expression of psychological ownership may differ by hierarchy. For instance, higher-level employees may demonstrate ownership primarily through obligation and connectedness, reflecting their role responsibilities and embeddedness in strategic processes. Conversely, lower-level employees' ownership may manifest more strongly through affection, a personal emotional connection to their tasks or teams rather than the organisation as a whole. (VandeWalle, Van Dyne, & Kostova, 1995). These differential patterns suggest that hierarchical position may bring changes in the resultant relationship of PO and OCB.

Psychological Ownership and OCB Dimensions

The dimensional structure of PO provides valuable insight into its influence on specific facets of OCB. The affection dimension captures emotional attachment, akin to affective commitment, and predicts altruism and courteous behaviour (Ramos, Man, Mustafa, & Ng, 2014). Connectedness reflects belonging and identification with organisational values, encouraging loyalty and civic virtue. Finally, obligation a sense of moral responsibility—drives conscientiousness and protective behaviour toward organisational interests (Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009). Theoretical frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) support this perspective, suggesting that internalised ownership satisfies the intrinsic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thus enhancing discretionary motivation.

Although prior research has evidenced a positive link between PO and OCB, studies examining their dimension-wise relationships remain limited and fragmented in the Indian context. Few have integrated a hierarchical lens to explore whether the strength and nature of these relationships vary across organisational levels. For instance, Avey et al. (2009) and Dawkins et al. (2017) acknowledged psychological ownership as a predictor of citizenship behaviours, but they did not specify the hierarchical contingencies influencing these patterns. Therefore, a systematic understanding of how PO dimensions (affection, connectedness, obligation) relate to OCB across hierarchical strata remains underdeveloped.

While psychological ownership has gained recognition as a key psychological mechanism driving positive work outcomes, three gaps persist in the existing literature:

- **Hierarchical differences in PO:** Limited empirical evidence exists comparing the dimensions of psychological ownership across hierarchical levels within organisations. Most studies have treated employee samples as homogeneous, neglecting structural variations in authority, autonomy, and control (Pierce & Jussila, 2011).
- **Dimension-specific relationship between PO and OCB:** Prior research has often examined the overall effect of PO on OCB without differentiating how specific dimensions (affection, connectedness, and obligation) predict distinct aspects of citizenship behaviour (Avey et al., 2009; Dawkins et al., 2017).
- **Integrated correlation framework:** Few studies have simultaneously investigated dimension-wise and overall correlations between psychological ownership and OCB, particularly considering occupational status. This gap limits the theoretical understanding of how ownership feelings This function operates under different structural conditions, such as varying levels of employee engagement and organisational culture, which can influence the expression of citizenship behaviour.

This study examines how different structural conditions, such as varying levels of employee engagement and organisational culture, can influence the expression of citizenship behaviour.

At a theoretical level, this study extends the multi-dimensional model of PO by contextualising it within hierarchical dynamics, thereby enriching existing frameworks on employee–organisation relationships. It also bridges motivational and behavioural perspectives by demonstrating how ownership feelings translate to voluntary conduct.

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

From a managerial standpoint, the findings can guide leaders in designing autonomy-enhancing practices, participative decision-making, and communication mechanisms that foster ownership among all levels of employees. Recognising hierarchical nuances enables organisations to cultivate equitable climates where both higher- and lower-level employees experience meaningful psychological attachment to their work and institutions.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the preceding discussion, the study delineates the following objectives:

1. To observe hierarchical differences in the dimensions of psychological ownership (affection, connectedness, and obligation).
2. To find the correlation between dimensions of psychological ownership (affection, connectedness, and obligation) and organisational citizenship behaviour.
3. To find the overall correlation between the dimensions of psychological ownership and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Hypotheses

Grounded in extant literature and theoretical rationale, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H₁:** There is a significant difference across hierarchical levels of employees in the psychological ownership and its dimensions.
- **H₂:** There is a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological ownership (affection, connectedness, and obligation) and organisational citizenship behaviour.
- **H₃:** Psychological ownership is a significant predictor of organisational citizenship behaviour.

Research Model

The given study investigates the correlational link between the tripartite dimensions of psychological ownership affection, connectedness, and obligation and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) among employees situated at distinct hierarchical levels. By conceptualising these three dimensions as antecedent predictors, the research explores how the internal sense of possessiveness and emotional attachment directly influences an individual's propensity to engage in discretionary, extra-role behaviours that support organisational effectiveness. Utilising a categorical approach to distinguish between higher and lower hierarchical tiers, the framework examines the manifestation of these psychological states across different structural roles, providing a nuanced analysis of how rank-based positioning relates to the strength of the ownership-citizenship connection. Ultimately, the study seeks to clarify how the specific drivers of affection, social integration, and felt duty serve as the primary engines for prosocial behavior, offering critical insights for both theoretical discourse and Managerial Implications in fostering a more committed and active workforce. Refer fig (1) for understanding structural model of the study.

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

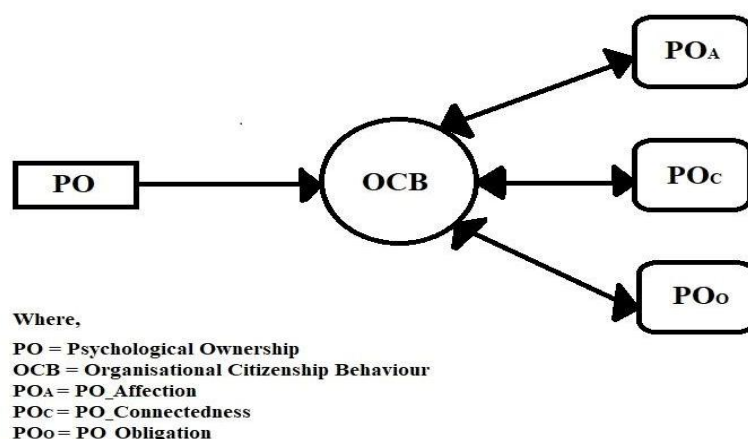


Figure 1: Conceptual model of research

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study sample comprised of 133 permanent employees ($N = 133$) working in various organisations. Utilising purposive sampling technique, participants were selected on the basis of their hierarchical standing to facilitate a comparative analysis between two groups: managerial ($n = 76$) and non-managerial ($n = 57$) employees. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 50 years, representing a mid-career demographic with established professional identities. To ensure that the respondents possessed a sufficiently stable psychological bond with their organisation, the inclusion criteria required participants to be full-time, permanent employees with a minimum of two years of continuous service. Conversely, the exclusion criteria omitted part-time or contractual employees and those with less than two years of tenure, as it will not provide them an opportunity for the development of PO and OCB. This rigorous selection process was designed to enhance the internal validity of the findings by adjusting for tenure-related variances in organisational commitment and involvement.

Tools

Two measures were used in this study.

1. **Psychological Ownership** by Amit Shukla and S. Singh (2015): It is a 12-item multidimensional scale with 3 dimensions, i.e., (i) Affection, (ii) Connectedness, and (iii) Obligation. Cronbach's alpha reliability is more than 0.8 and sufficient internal consistency reliability.
2. **The Organisational Citizenship Behaviour** scale that was developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) and adapted by A.P. Singh and Akhilendra K. Singh (2010) is a 24-item questionnaire with five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree =1 to strongly disagree=5. It has 5 dimensions i.e. (i) Altruism (ii) Courtesy (iii) Civic virtue (iv) Sportsmanship (v) Conscientiousness. The Cronbach's alpha reliability is greater than 0.85.

Procedure

To ensure ethical and methodological rigour, the data collection process followed a standardised protocol: participants were personally contacted at their workplaces. A formal assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was assured to them. They were assured that the data will be used for academic purposes only and in no way will it be utilised elsewhere. They were requested to fill out the questionnaire as honestly as possible, as there were no

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

right and wrong responses; also, there was no time limit. After obtaining informed consent, they were given the required instructions, followed by the administration of a structured survey battery comprising a demographic profile (e.g., age, tenure, designation) and standardised scales for Psychological Ownership (PO) and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). The researcher was available to answer any questions about procedures or terminology. When the participants were done, the questionnaires were collected at their convenience. A formal debriefing was done, and expression of gratitude were shown to them for their participation.

RESULTS

Reliability and Preliminary Analysis

The psychometric integrity of the study's instruments was established through internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The 12-item Psychological Ownership (PO) Scale demonstrated exceptional reliability ($\alpha = .952$), indicating a high degree of inter-item consistency. Similarly, the 24-item Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) Scale exhibited robust internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .836. Both instruments significantly exceeded the established threshold of .70 (Nunnally, 1978), confirming their suitability for the current sample ($N = 133$).

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference across hierarchical levels of employees in psychological ownership and its dimensions.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the psychological ownership and its dimensions (Affection, connectedness and obligation) for managerial and non-managerial employees. Table 1 shows the difference in PO, PO (affection), PO (connectedness) and PO (obligation) between managerial and non-managerial employees.

Table 1: Difference in PO, PO_A, PO_C, PO_O between Managerial(M) and Non-Managerial (NM) employees

	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for equality of variance			t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	t-test for equality of variance			
			F	Sig.					Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the differences	
											Lower	Upper
PO	M	75.18	7.33									
	NM	65	14.37	25.62	<.001	5.32	131	<.001	10.17	1.91	6.39	13.95
PO_A	M	25.11	3.19									
	NM	22.14	5.05	8.23	.005	4.15	131	<.001	2.97	.717	1.55	4.39
PO_C	M	24.60	2.99									
	NM	21.21	5.02	18.12	<.001	4.84	131	<.001	3.38	.699	2	4.77
PO_O	M	25.46	1.98									
	NM	21.64	4.90	59.64	<.001	6.14	131	<.001	3.81	.620	2.58	5.03

Psychological Ownership (PO), Managerial(M), Non-Managerial (NM), Psychological ownership_Affection (PO_A), Psychological ownership_Connectedness (PO_C), Psychological ownership_Obligation (PO_O).

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

The above analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in overall PO scores between groups, t at $df(131) = 5.32$ with $p < .001$. The Mean value i.e. $M = 75.18$, $SD = 7.33$, was found significantly high among managerial employees as compared to non-managerial employees ($M = 65.00$, $SD = 14.37$). The mean difference was 10.17, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 6.39 to 13.95.

Psychological Ownership-Autonomy (PO_A)

A significant difference was observed for the PO_A dimension, t at $df(131) = 4.15$, $p < .001$. Managers exhibited higher levels of autonomy-based ownership ($M = 25.11$, $SD = 3.19$) than their non-managerial counterparts ($M = 22.14$, $SD = 5.05$). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference of 2.97 was [1.55, 4.39].

Psychological Ownership connectedness (PO_C)

Results for PO_C indicated a significant disparity between the two groups, $t(131) = 4.84$, $p < .001$. Managers reported higher connectedness related to ownership ($M = 24.60$, $SD = 2.99$) than non-managers ($M = 21.21$, $SD = 5.02$). The mean difference was 3.38, 95% {CI} [2.00, 4.77].

Psychological Ownership obligation (PO_O)

Finally, a significant difference was found higher in obligation based ownership, $t(131) = 6.14$, $p < .001$. Managerial employees ($M = 25.46$, $SD = 1.98$) demonstrated higher scores than non-managerial employees ($M = 21.64$, $SD = 4.90$), with a mean difference of 3.81 and a 95% confidence interval of [2.58, 5.03].

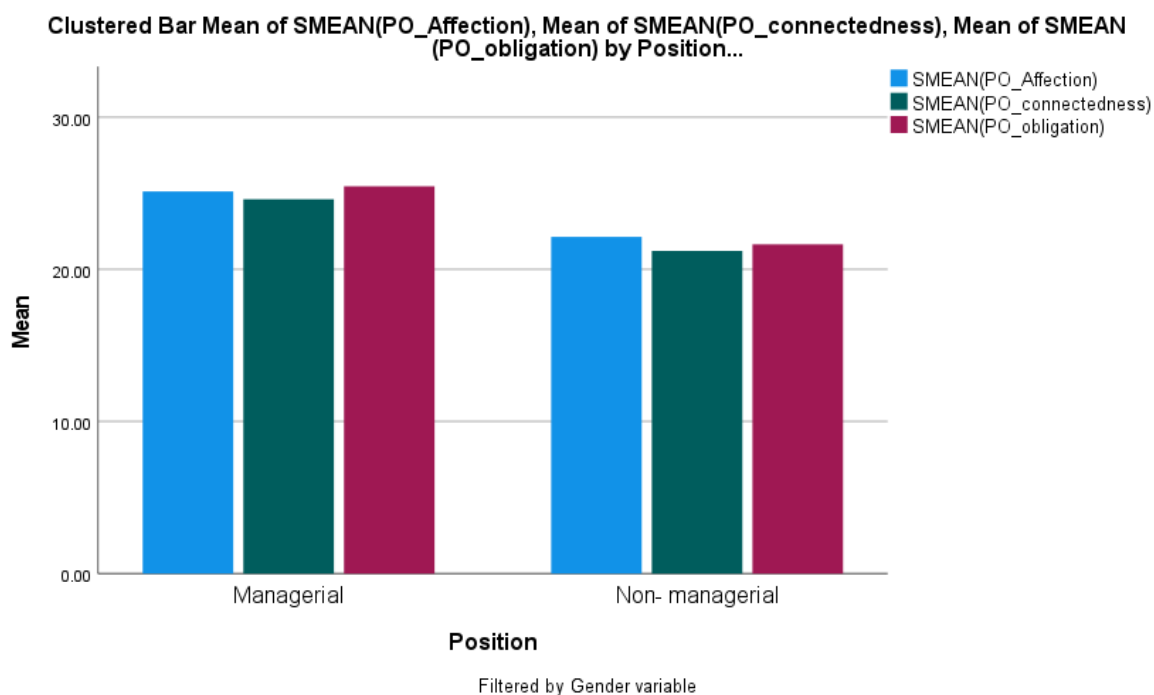


Figure 2: Comparison of Psychological Ownership Dimensions (Affection, Connectedness, and Obligation) by Job Position

The comparative distribution of mean scores for the three dimensions of psychological ownership; Affection (PO_A), Connectedness (PO_C), and Obligation (PO_O) are illustrated in

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

Figure 2. Graphical representation reveals a consistent pattern, wherein managerial employees report higher mean levels across all three constructs compared to non-managerial employees. Specifically, the gap is most pronounced in the **Obligation** dimension, where managers mean score approach higher than non-managerial overall mean score. These visual disparities align with the previously reported t-test results, confirming that the psychological attachment with the organization and perceived responsibility are significantly more developed among those in leadership positions.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of psychological ownership (affection, connectedness, and obligation) and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Pearson product moment correlation of OCB and dimensions of PO was found to be higher to moderately and statistically significant. As hypothesized, the analysis revealed significant positive correlations across all variables ($p < .001$). Specifically, a significant positive correlation was observed between Affection and OCB ($r = .31$). Connectedness demonstrated a stronger positive relationship with OCB ($r = .43$). The strongest correlation was found between Obligation and OCB ($r = .49$). According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, these correlations represent small-to-moderate and moderate effect sizes. These findings indicate that as an employee's emotional attachment, sense of belonging, and felt responsibility toward the organization increase, their engagement in discretionary citizenship behaviors also increases. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 is fully supported.

Table 2: Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

	Mean	SD	PO _A	PO _C	PO _O	OCB
PO _A	23.84	4.34	1			
PO _C	23.15	4.32	0.86**	1		
PO _O	23.83	4.00	0.82**	0.85**	1	
OCB	88.73	9.62	0.31**	0.43**	0.49**	1

**Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 3: Psychological ownership is a significant predictor of organisational citizenship behaviour.

To test Hypothesis 3, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which total Psychological Ownership (PO) predicts Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Model Fit and Variance Explained the regression model, was found to be statistically significant, $F(1, 131) = 29.93$, $p < .001$, indicating that the model significantly predicts the outcome variable. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) was .431, and the R Square (R^2) was .186. This suggests that Psychological Ownership accounts for 18.6% of the total variance in Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

Predictive Power of Psychological Ownership: The results from the coefficients table indicate that Psychological Ownership is a significant positive predictor of OCB (beta =

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

.431, $t = 5.47$, $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = .346$) suggests that for every one-unit increase in an employee's sense of psychological ownership, their OCB score increases by approximately 0.35 units. The 95% confidence interval for the slope [.221, .471] does not include zero, further confirming the reliability of the predictor. Based on these findings, Hypothesis 3 is fully supported.

Table 3 Linear Regression Analysis for Psychological Ownership Predicting OCB

Predictor	B	SEB	β	t	p	95% CI for B
(Constant)	64.22	4.54		14.13	< .001	[55.23, 73.21]
Psychological Ownership	0.35	0.06	.43	5.47	< .001	[0.22, 0.47]

Note. $R^2 = .186$

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to explore the intricate relationship between hierarchical positioning, psychological ownership, and organizational citizenship behavior among employees. The empirical evidence gathered from 133 participants provides a robust validation of the proposed research model, confirming that an employee's sense of "possessiveness" towards their organization is a critical driver of discretionary work effort. The support for Hypothesis 1 confirms that Managerial employees experience significantly higher levels of Psychological Ownership (PO) compared to non-managerial employees, with a substantial effect size. This disparity can be explained theoretically by the concept of three routes to PO proposed by Pierce et al. (2001): control, intimate knowledge, and self-investment. Managerial positions typically offer greater autonomy and decision-making authority (control), deeper access to strategic organizational information (intimate knowledge), and higher levels of professional responsibility (self-investment). In contrast, non-managerial roles may be more routine or restricted, limiting the psychological "space" for ownership to develop. Notably, the Obligation dimension showed the largest hierarchical difference, suggesting that higher-ranking officials do not just "feel" more attached; they internalize a much stronger moral burden of stewardship toward the organization's success. Ownership acts as a Catalyst for Citizenship Behavior. The confirmation of Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 establishes Psychological Ownership as a potent predictor of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), explaining nearly 19% of its variance. While all dimensions correlated positively with OCB, the sense of Obligation emerged as the strongest correlate ($r = .49$). This finding aligns with Social Exchange Theory (SET), which suggests that when employees feel a sense of ownership, they no longer view their work through a narrow "contractual" lens. Instead, they perceive a "covenantal" relationship, where going above and beyond, such as helping colleagues or defending the organization's reputation, is viewed as protecting their "own" identity. The regression model ($\beta = .431$) highlights that PO is not merely a passive feeling but an active psychological state that compels employees to engage in extra-role behaviors that sustains organizational health.

Theoretical and Practical Implications.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the burgeoning literature on psychological ownership in the Indian public/semi-public sector, highlighting how formal status influences internal psychological states. It shifts the focus from what the organization "gives" to the employee (satisfaction) to how the employee "views" the organization (ownership). Practically, these results offer a clear roadmap for organizational interventions (1) *Job Redesign for Non-Managerial employees*: To bridge the ownership gap, management may consider "job enrichment" strategies that increase autonomy and information sharing for

Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

lower-level employees. (2) *Fostering Stewardship*: Since Obligation was the strongest driver of OCB, leadership training may emphasize the "meaning of work" and the collective impact of individual contributions to foster a sense of duty. (3) *Participative Decision Making*: Involving employees in small-scale departmental decisions can trigger the "control" route to ownership, ultimately boosting citizenship behaviors across the hierarchy.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study may work as a pedestal where future researchers might consider longitudinal studies to observe how ownership evolves and citizenship behaviors develop over a period of time by the employees in the organization.

An alternate suggestion may be to employ more than one methodology to capture the intricate relationships among variables and also to deal with possibilities of bias and social desirability.

Further the study can be conducted in different kinds of organization such as public and private as the pattern of ownership, incentive system, employee commitment etc may vary across different kinds of organisations.

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Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

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Tripartite Dimensions of Psychological Ownership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: A Correlational Study

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Conflict of Interest

The authors are declaring that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. No financial support or personal relationships were involved that could have influenced the objectivity of the research findings or the interpretation of the data.

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