

The Relationship between Person–Environment Fit, Spiritual Intelligence, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Support Staff in Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study investigates the relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia (SPA). Person–environment fit is examined as the independent variable, spiritual intelligence as the mediating variable, and OCB as the dependent variable. Data were collected from 30 support staff using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Form. The instruments used were adapted from Abdullah Thani (2019) for person–environment fit and OCB, and King (2008) for spiritual intelligence. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)28, focusing on descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis. The results indicate satisfactory internal consistency for all constructs and reveal positive relationships among the variables. The findings confirm the suitability of the research instruments and procedures for a full-scale study and provide preliminary insights into the role of spiritual intelligence in enhancing organizational citizenship behavior in the Malaysian public sector.

INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations operate in an increasingly complex and demanding environment, where efficiency, accountability, and service quality are central to public trust. In Malaysia, government agencies are expected not only to implement policies effectively but also to deliver services in a manner that reflects professionalism, integrity, and responsiveness (Abdullah Thani et al , 2024). Within this context, employees at all levels play an important role in ensuring organizational effectiveness. While much attention has been given to managerial and professional employees, support staff form the backbone of administrative operations and are critical to the smooth functioning of public institutions such as Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia (SPA).

Support staff are often responsible for routine administrative tasks, coordination, documentation, and frontline service support. Although these roles may be formally defined, organizational effectiveness frequently depends on employees' willingness to go beyond their prescribed job descriptions (Abdullah Thani, et al., 2023). Such discretionary behaviors, commonly referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), include helping

colleagues, being proactive, demonstrating conscientiousness, and supporting organizational initiatives. In the public sector, where rigid procedures and limited material incentives are common, OCB becomes especially valuable in enhancing service delivery and organizational adaptability (Abdullah Thani & Rosely, 2025).

One factor that has been consistently associated with positive employee attitudes and behaviors is person–environment fit (P–E fit). P–E fit refers to the degree of compatibility between an individual and their work environment, including alignment between personal values, abilities, and organizational demands (Abdullah Thani, 2019). When employees perceive that their personal characteristics align well with organizational culture, job requirements, and work values, they are more likely to experience satisfaction, commitment, and motivation. In contrast, a lack of fit may result in disengagement, reduced performance, and withdrawal behaviors. For support staff in the public sector, who often work within highly structured environments, the perception of fit may significantly influence their willingness to contribute beyond formal role expectations.

In recent years, scholars have also begun to recognize the importance of inner psychological and spiritual resources in shaping workplace behavior. One such resource is spiritual intelligence, which refers to an individual's capacity to apply spiritual awareness, meaning, and values in daily functioning and decision-making (Amran et al., 2025). Unlike religiosity, spiritual intelligence is not confined to religious beliefs or practices; rather, it encompasses qualities such as self-awareness, ethical sensitivity, purpose, and the ability to derive meaning from work experiences (Amran et al., 2024). In organizational settings, spiritual intelligence has been linked to positive outcomes such as ethical behavior, resilience, emotional regulation, and prosocial conduct.

In the context of public service, spiritual intelligence may be particularly relevant. Public sector employees are often guided by values such as service to society, integrity, and responsibility. Employees with higher spiritual intelligence may be better equipped to align these values with organizational goals, even in the face of bureaucratic constraints or work pressures (Murwaningsih, & Liana, 2025). As a result, they may be more inclined to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization and its stakeholders, including organizational citizenship behavior.

Although prior studies have independently examined the effects of person–environment fit and spiritual intelligence on work outcomes, limited research has explored how these variables interact, particularly within Malaysian public sector institutions (Azhari et al., 2023). Specifically, little is known about whether spiritual intelligence plays a mediating role in explaining how person–environment fit translates into organizational citizenship behavior among support staff. Understanding this mechanism is important, as it offers insights into how organizations can foster both external alignment (fit) and internal resources (spiritual intelligence) to promote positive employee behavior.

Moreover, empirical research focusing on support staff remains relatively scarce. Most existing studies concentrate on managerial, professional, or academic employees, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences and behavioral drivers of support-level personnel (Amran et al., 2025). Given their essential role in administrative effectiveness, it is crucial to examine the factors that encourage support staff to contribute beyond their formal duties.

In response to these gaps, the present study focuses on support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia, examining the relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior. This study proposes that person–environment fit influences organizational citizenship behavior both directly and indirectly through spiritual intelligence. By adopting validated instruments and employing a quantitative approach, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence relevant to the Malaysian public sector context.

As a preliminary step, a pilot study is conducted to assess the feasibility of the research design, the clarity and reliability of the measurement instruments, and the suitability of data collection and analysis procedures. The findings of this pilot study are expected to inform refinements to the research instruments and methodology prior to a full-scale investigation. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to both academic literature and practical

understanding by highlighting the importance of aligning employees with their work environment while nurturing inner values and meaning to enhance organizational citizenship behavior in the public sector.

Problem Statement

Public sector organizations in Malaysia are expected to deliver efficient, transparent, and high-quality services to the public. Achieving these objectives depends not only on employees' formal job performance but also on their willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that support organizational functioning. Such behaviors, known as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), are particularly important in public institutions where formal reward systems and performance incentives are often limited (Kidron & Vinarski Peretz, 2026). Despite its importance, OCB among support staff in Malaysian public sector organizations, including Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia (SPA), has received relatively little empirical attention.

Existing studies on OCB within the Malaysian context have largely focused on private sector organizations or on managerial and professional employees in the public sector (Thani et al., 2022). Support staff, who play a crucial role in administrative operations and daily service delivery, remain underrepresented in empirical research. As a result, there is limited understanding of the factors that encourage or hinder OCB among this group (Abdullah & Wider, 2022). This lack of empirical evidence presents a challenge for public sector organizations seeking to enhance employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

One factor that has been widely associated with positive workplace behaviors is person–environment fit (P–E fit). Employees who perceive a strong alignment between their personal values, abilities, and the work environment are more likely to experience positive attitudes and demonstrate constructive behaviors at work (Tran, 2025). Although previous research has established a link between P–E fit and various work outcomes, including job satisfaction and commitment, the relationship between P–E fit and OCB among support staff in the Malaysian public sector remains insufficiently explored.

Furthermore, while P–E fit has been shown to influence employee behavior, the psychological mechanisms through which this influence occurs are not fully understood. In particular, there is a lack of research examining the role of spiritual intelligence as an mediating variable. Spiritual intelligence, which reflects an individual's capacity to apply meaning, values, and awareness in daily work life, may explain how employees translate perceived environmental fit into voluntary and value-driven behaviors (Sani & Ekowati, 2022). However, empirical studies integrating spiritual intelligence into models of OCB, especially within public sector settings, are scarce.

Additionally, many studies that examine complex behavioral relationships rely on instruments developed in different cultural or organizational contexts without sufficient preliminary testing. There is a need to ensure that measurement instruments for person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and OCB are reliable, clear, and culturally appropriate for support staff in SPA Malaysia. Without such validation, the accuracy and applicability of research findings may be compromised.

Therefore, a pilot study is necessary to address these gaps by examining the feasibility of investigating the relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior among support staff at SPA. This pilot study seeks to assess the reliability of the adopted instruments, the suitability of the data collection method, and the preliminary relationships among the variables. By doing so, it provides a foundation for a more comprehensive study that can offer meaningful theoretical and practical insights into enhancing discretionary work behavior in the Malaysian public sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to discretionary employee behaviors that are not formally required or explicitly rewarded but contribute to the effective functioning of an organization. These behaviors include helping colleagues, demonstrating conscientiousness, showing courtesy, and participating responsibly

in organizational affairs (Halid et al., 2024). In public sector organizations, OCB is particularly important because service delivery often depends on employees' willingness to exceed formal role requirements in the absence of strong performance-based incentives (Wang et al., 2024).

Previous studies have demonstrated that OCB is associated with improved organizational effectiveness, enhanced teamwork, and better service quality. In the public sector, OCB has also been linked to increased public trust and organizational reputation (Zayed et al., 2022). However, much of the existing literature focuses on private sector employees or professional and managerial roles, with limited attention given to support staff, despite their essential contribution to administrative operations.

Person–Environment Fit

Person–environment fit (P–E fit) refers to the degree of compatibility between an individual and various aspects of the work environment, including the job, organization, and work group (Kristof-Brown, 2024). The concept is grounded in interactionist theories, which emphasize that behavior is a function of both personal characteristics and environmental factors. P–E fit is commonly conceptualized in terms of value congruence, needs–supplies fit, and demands–abilities fit.

Research consistently shows that high levels of P–E fit are associated with positive work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, engagement, and reduced turnover intention (Ahmad et al., 2024). According to Farzaneh Hassanzadeh and Nasehifar (2024) employees who perceive a good fit with their environment are more likely to experience psychological comfort and motivation, which can translate into positive discretionary behaviors. Several studies have found a significant relationship between P–E fit and OCB, suggesting that employees who feel aligned with their organization are more inclined to contribute beyond formal job requirements (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023; Choy & Yeung, 2023).

In the public sector context, P–E fit may play an even more critical role due to the structured nature of work and the emphasis on public service values. When support staff perceive that their values and capabilities align with organizational expectations, they may be more willing to demonstrate cooperative and proactive behaviors.

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence has emerged as an important construct in organizational behavior literature, particularly in relation to meaning, ethics, and well-being at work. King (2008) conceptualized spiritual intelligence as a set of mental capacities that contribute to awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the non-material and transcendent aspects of one's existence. These capacities include critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion.

In organizational settings, spiritual intelligence has been associated with ethical decision-making, emotional regulation, resilience, and prosocial behavior (Srivastava et al., 2025). According to Pinto et al. (2025), employees with higher levels of spiritual intelligence are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful and to align their actions with personal and organizational values. This alignment can foster positive interpersonal relationships and a stronger sense of responsibility toward colleagues and the organization.

Within the public sector, spiritual intelligence may be particularly relevant, as public service is often guided by values such as integrity, accountability, and service to society (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Support staff with higher spiritual intelligence may be better equipped to cope with work pressures and to engage in behaviors that support organizational goals beyond formal requirements.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature on person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between person–environment fit and organizational citizenship behavior among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia.

Hypothesis 2

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between person–environment fit and spiritual intelligence among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia.

Hypothesis 3

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia.

Hypothesis 4 (Mediating Hypothesis)

H4: Spiritual intelligence mediates the relationship between person–environment fit and organizational citizenship behavior among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional pilot research design to examine the relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia (SPA). The purpose of conducting a pilot study was to assess the feasibility of the research design, evaluate the clarity and reliability of the measurement instruments, and determine the suitability of the data collection and analysis procedures prior to conducting a full-scale study.

The population of this study comprised support staff employed at SPA Malaysia. A total of 30 support staff participated in the pilot study, which is considered adequate for pilot testing aimed at evaluating instrument reliability and research procedures. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling, based on their availability and willingness to participate. This sampling approach is appropriate for pilot studies where the objective is not generalization but preliminary assessment of the research framework.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed online through Google Form. The use of an online platform facilitated efficient data collection and allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Prior to participation, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the questionnaire was completed.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, and years of service. The second section measured person–environment fit using items adapted from Abdullah Thani (2019), which assessed respondents' perceived compatibility with their work environment in terms of values, abilities, and organizational expectations. The third section measured spiritual intelligence using the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory developed by King (2008), which encompasses dimensions such as critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. The fourth section measured organizational citizenship behavior using items adapted from Abdullah Thani (2019), focusing on discretionary behaviors such as helping colleagues, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. All items were measured using a Likert-type scale.

The pilot study focused on evaluating the reliability and clarity of the research instruments. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 and above considered acceptable. Feedback

from respondents regarding item clarity and understanding was also taken into consideration for potential refinement of the questionnaire before the full-scale study.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and overall response patterns. Reliability analysis was performed to assess the internal consistency of the person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior scales. Pearson correlation analysis was then used to examine the preliminary relationships among the study variables. Due to the exploratory nature of the pilot study and the small sample size, mediation analysis was not conducted at this stage; instead, the mediating role of spiritual intelligence is proposed for testing in the full-scale study.

RESULTS

The data collected from 30 support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis focused on descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and correlation analysis to evaluate the suitability of the research instruments and to examine preliminary relationships among the study variables.

Descriptive analysis indicated that the respondents represented a range of demographic backgrounds in terms of age, gender, and years of service. This diversity suggests that the sample was adequate for assessing the clarity and applicability of the questionnaire among support staff at SPA. Overall, the respondents were able to complete the questionnaire without difficulty, indicating that the items were generally clear and understandable.

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the study. The results showed that all constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. The person–environment fit scale demonstrated acceptable reliability, indicating that the items consistently measured respondents' perceived compatibility with their work environment. The spiritual intelligence scale showed high internal consistency, reflecting the reliability of the instrument adapted from King (2008). Similarly, the organizational citizenship behavior scale exhibited satisfactory reliability, suggesting that the items adapted from Abdullah Thani (2019) were appropriate for measuring discretionary work behaviors among SPA support staff.

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the preliminary relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior. The results indicated a positive relationship between person–environment fit and organizational citizenship behavior, suggesting that support staff who perceived a higher level of compatibility with their work environment were more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefited the organization. In addition, a positive relationship was observed between person–environment fit and spiritual intelligence, indicating that employees who experienced a better fit with their environment tended to report higher levels of spiritual intelligence. The analysis also revealed a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior, suggesting that employees with higher spiritual intelligence were more inclined to demonstrate citizenship behaviors.

Due to the small sample size and exploratory nature of the pilot study, statistical significance testing and mediation analysis were not emphasized. Instead, the focus of the results was on identifying general patterns and determining whether the relationships among the variables were consistent with theoretical expectations. Overall, the findings provide preliminary support for the proposed research framework and indicate that the data collection method, instruments, and analytical procedures are suitable for use in a full-scale study.

Table 1 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Variables (n = 30)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Person–Environment Fit	8	0.81

Spiritual Intelligence	24	0.88
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	10	0.81

Note: Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Analysis Among Study Variables (n = 30)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Person–Environment Fit	1		
2. Spiritual Intelligence	0.53**	1	
3. Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.49*	0.55**	1

Table 1 shows that all measurement scales demonstrated acceptable to high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.81 to 0.88. The 8-item person–environment fit scale exhibited good reliability ($\alpha = 0.81$), indicating that it is suitable for measuring perceived compatibility with the work environment among support staff at SPA Malaysia.

Table 2 shows that person–environment fit was positively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior ($r = 0.49$, $p < .05$) and spiritual intelligence ($r = 0.53$, $p < .01$). Spiritual intelligence was also positively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior ($r = 0.55$, $p < .01$). These results provide preliminary support for the proposed relationships among the study variables and suggest that the instruments are appropriate for use in a full-scale study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The pilot study findings provide several important insights. First, the reliability results indicate that the instruments used to measure person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior are internally consistent and suitable for use with support staff at SPA Malaysia. This confirms that the adapted scales from Abdullah Thani (2019) and King (2008) are appropriate and comprehensible for the target population.

Second, the positive correlations among the variables align with theoretical expectations and prior research. The positive relationship between person–environment fit and organizational citizenship behavior suggests that support staff who perceive a strong alignment between their abilities, values, and work environment are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that P–E fit promotes motivation, engagement, and extra-role behavior (Lam & Baxter, 2025).

The positive correlation between person–environment fit and spiritual intelligence indicates that employees who experience a higher degree of environmental compatibility tend to report higher levels of spiritual awareness and personal meaning in their work. This aligns with King's (2008) conceptualization of spiritual intelligence, where alignment with meaningful contexts fosters reflection, purpose, and ethical action.

Additionally, the positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior suggests that employees with higher spiritual intelligence are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that support colleagues and the organization. This is consistent with prior research showing that spiritual intelligence promotes prosocial behavior, ethical conduct, and engagement in voluntary organizational activities (Al-Madadha et al., 2025; Pujiati et al., 2025).

Although mediation analysis could not be conducted due to the small sample size, the correlations provide preliminary support for the proposed mediating role of spiritual intelligence, indicating that it may explain how person–environment fit influences organizational citizenship behavior in a full-scale study.

Overall, the pilot study demonstrates that the research framework is feasible. The instruments are reliable, the data collection method via Google Form is practical, and the preliminary relationships among the variables are consistent with theoretical expectations. These results provide a solid foundation for a larger-scale study to further explore the mediating role of spiritual intelligence and to generate more generalizable findings within the Malaysian public sector.

CONCLUSION

The pilot study aimed to assess the feasibility of investigating the relationships between person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among support staff at Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia (SPA). Based on the findings, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the research instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability and internal consistency, indicating that the scales for person–environment fit, spiritual intelligence, and OCB are suitable for use with SPA support staff. Respondents were able to complete the online questionnaire without difficulty, confirming the practicality of using Google Form as a data collection tool.

Second, the preliminary correlation analysis revealed positive relationships among the variables. Person–environment fit was positively associated with both spiritual intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior, while spiritual intelligence was also positively correlated with OCB. These results provide initial support for the theoretical framework suggesting that employees who perceive greater compatibility with their work environment are more likely to develop spiritual intelligence and demonstrate discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization.

Third, although the pilot study did not test mediation due to the small sample size, the correlations suggest that spiritual intelligence may play a mediating role in the relationship between person–environment fit and OCB. This supports the conceptual proposition that inner capacities such as meaning-making and value-driven behavior may explain how environmental fit influences employees' discretionary actions.

In summary, the pilot study successfully confirmed the feasibility of the research instruments, data collection procedure, and analytical approach. The observed relationships among the variables provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed framework, laying the groundwork for a larger-scale study to further investigate these constructs and test the mediating role of spiritual intelligence.

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