

# Authentic Leadership: A Study of the Relationship between Authentic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Research Administrators at Research Universities

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between followers' perceptions of their leaders' Authentic Leadership Style (Self Awareness, Relational Transparency, Internal Moral Perspective and Balanced Processing), and followers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Organizational and Participant Levels) in research administration. The sample consisted of followers ( $N = 212$ ) from the membership of the National Council of Research and University Administrators. Followers' perception of leaders' leadership style was measured using the *Authentic Leadership Questionnaire Rater Form, Version 1 Rater*, created by Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007) to measure the leadership characteristics of the Authentic Leadership Model. Followers' organizational citizenship behavior was measured using the *Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist (OCB-C)*, a 20 item scale created by Fox, Spector, Goh, Bruusema and Kessler (2102). The OCB is an instrument designed to assess the frequency of organizational citizenship engaged in by employees, measuring followers' organizational citizenship behavior at the participant and organizational levels. Results from multiple regressions indicated that tenure at research universities among research administrators is a significant predictor of followers' organizational citizenship behavior at the participant level. Results are discussed and recommendations for future research are offered.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studies have suggested a positive association between authentic leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). However, more research is needed on the relationship between Authentic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) at the OCBP individual level and at the OCBO group level in research administration.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to identify the relationship between research administrators' perceptions of the Authentic Leadership of their leaders, as measured using the *Authentic Leadership Questionnaire* (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2007), and research administration professionals' Organizational Citizenship Behavior as measured using the *Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist* (Spector & Fox, 2009). The intention of this study ultimately is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the relationships between Authentic Leadership Behaviors and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors in research universities.

## CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

### Authentic Leadership

"The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing followers to be leaders... The authentic leader is true to him/herself and

exhibits behavior that positively transforms or develops followers into leaders themselves" (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243).

### Authentic Leadership Subscales

*Self Awareness*: the degree to which the leader is aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others

*Transparency*: the degree to which the leader reinforces a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions

*Ethical/Moral*: the degree to which the leader sets a high standard for moral and ethical conduct

*Balanced Processing*: the degree to which the leader solicits sufficient opinions and viewpoints prior to making important decisions (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007, p. 1)

## RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND QUESTIONS

This study examined whether a relationship exists between Authentic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior, at the participant and organizational levels for research administrators while controlling for gender, age, tenure, ethnicity, and education. This research topic was divided into three research questions.

The questions were examined in a non-experimental, correlational study. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data from this study. Additionally, bivariate

correlations are reported. All statistics were tested at the  $p < .05$  error rate. Descriptive statistics of participant demographics also are reported.

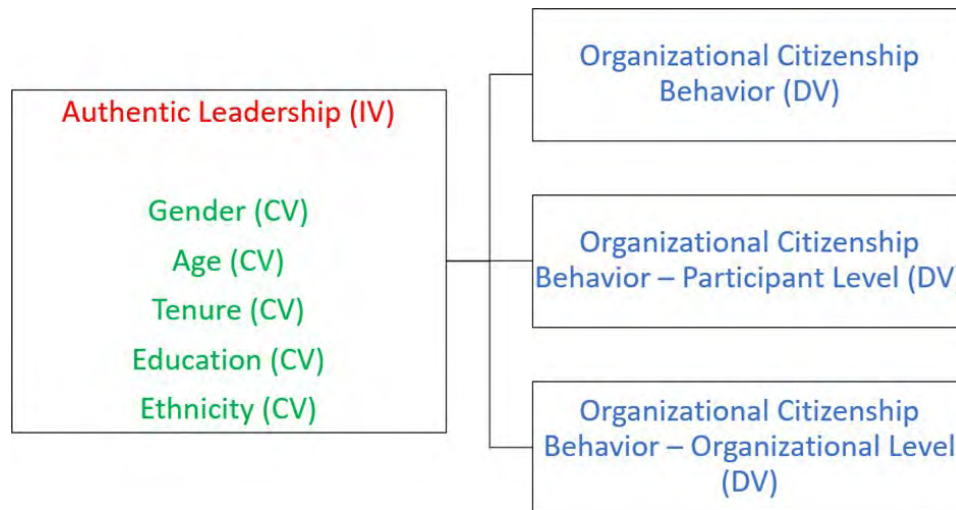


Figure 1. Study design

### Research Questions

**First Research Question (RQ1).** Is there a relationship between followers' perceptions of the leader's Authentic Leadership Style (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective) and follower's Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Benefit Organization, OCBO), among research administrators when controlling for followers' gender, age, tenure, ethnicity, and education?

**Second Research Question (RQ2).** Is there a relationship between followers' perceptions of the leader's Authentic Leadership Style (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective) and

follower's Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Benefit Co-Workers, OCBP), among research administrators when controlling for followers' gender, age, tenure, ethnicity and education?

**Third Research Question (RQ3).** Is there a relationship between followers' perceptions of the leader's Authentic Leadership Style (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective) and followers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Overall OCB), among research administrators when controlling for followers' gender, age, tenure, ethnicity, and education?

## DATA RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics: Control Variables

Figure 2 details the breakdown of survey respondents between male and

female. Of a total of 211 respondents to this question ( $N = 211$ ), females comprised 84.36% of the study (178 responses), while males only accounted for 15.64% (33 respondents).

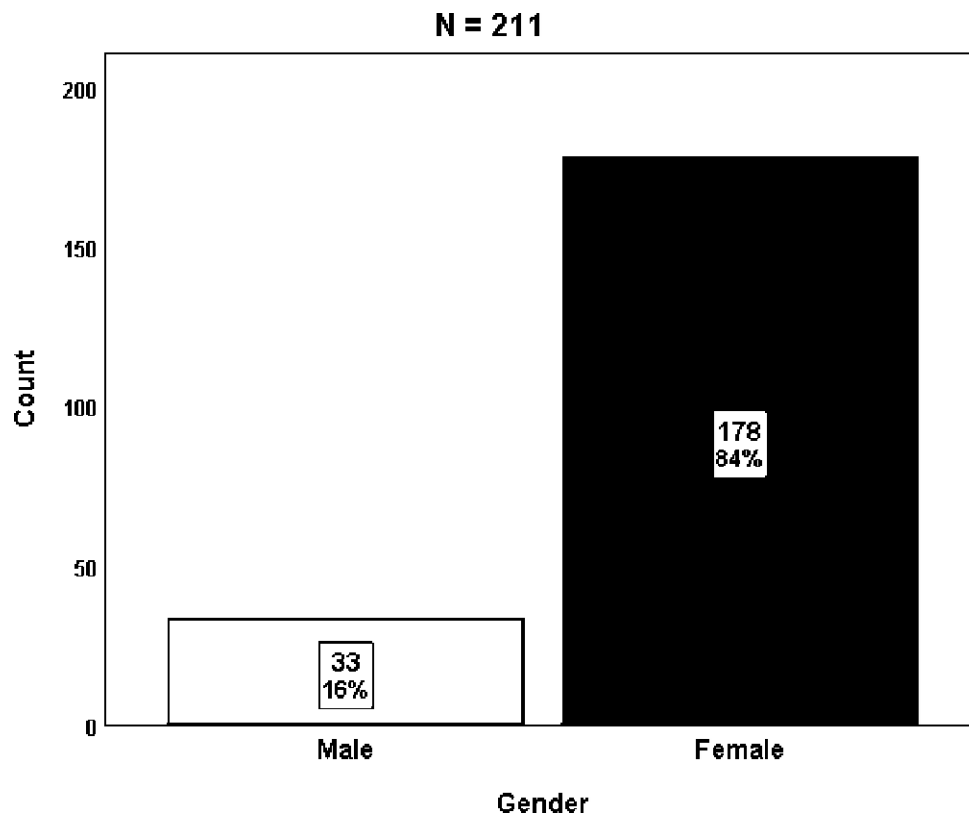


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics for gender

Figure 3 details the demographics of respondents' age, by category. There was a total of 212 respondents ( $N = 212$ ). For ages 21 to 29, there were 8 respondents; ages 30 to 39, 49 respondents; ages 40 to 49, 56 respondents; ages 50 to 59, 71 respondents

(33.36%); and ages 60 and above, 28 respondents. There were no respondents in the age 18–20 years category. A substantial majority, 83.01% or 176 survey respondents, were between the ages of 30 and 59.

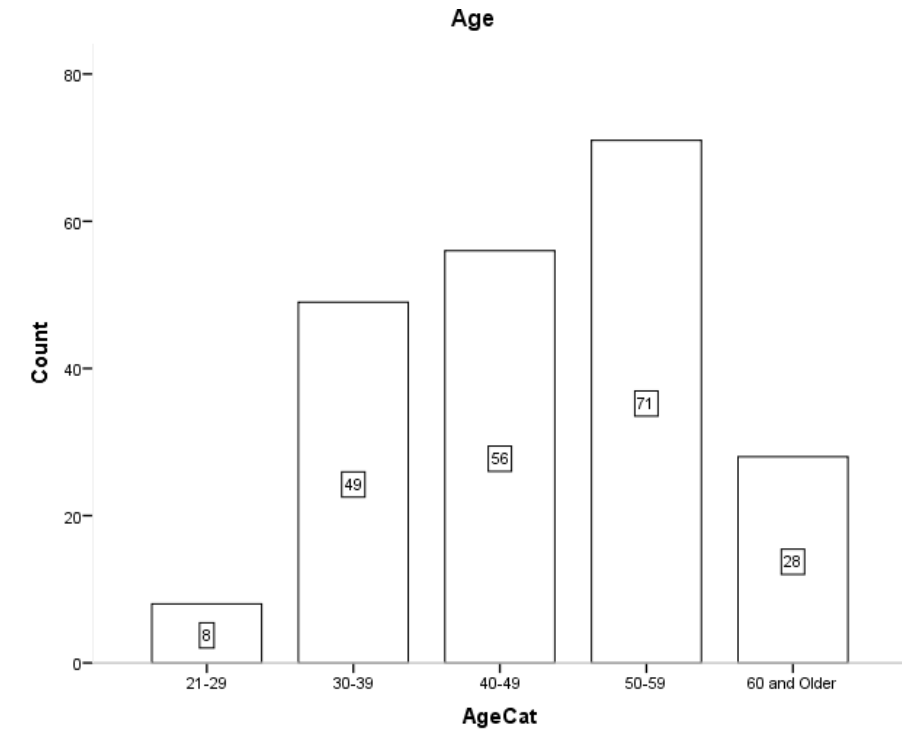


Figure 3. Descriptive statistics for age distribution

Figure 4 displays the distribution of continuous scores for the variable “Years of Service”. Years of Service is a continuous variable, where respondents could choose any number of years working in their current profession. The total number of respondents for this question was 212 ( $N = 212$ ), and the mean Years of Service was 14.78 ( $SD = 9.73$ ). The results of this variable

are positively skewed (positive skewness = 0.461). When used in correlation and regression analysis, variables with skewed distributions may lead to underestimated relationships relative to the population, which could lead to a Type II error. However, because the skewness value is less than 1, the assumption of normality was not considered to have been violated

in this case.

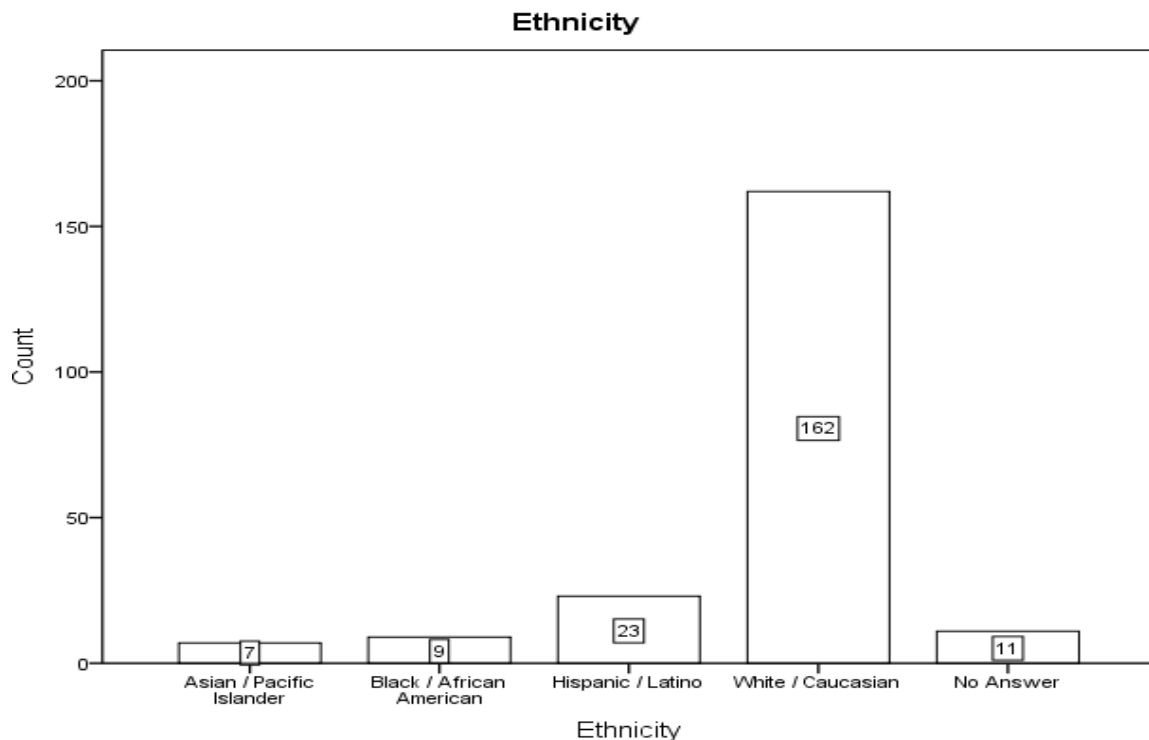


Figure 4. Descriptive statistics for ethnicity

Education data were collected on a categorical basis—respondents were asked to select their highest degree of education reached from the following choices:

- High School or GED;
- Some College;
- Associate’s Degree;
- Bachelor’s Degree;
- Graduate Degree; or PhD, MD, or JD

The original data are reported in Figure 5 (N = 212). Likely due to the nature of the

research administrator field, based at the college and university level and where a substantial educational background is typically required, the levels of responses for GED/High School, Some College, and Associate’s Degree were low. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, those three categories were collapsed into one category, High School through Associate’s Degree. These data are reported in Figure 6.

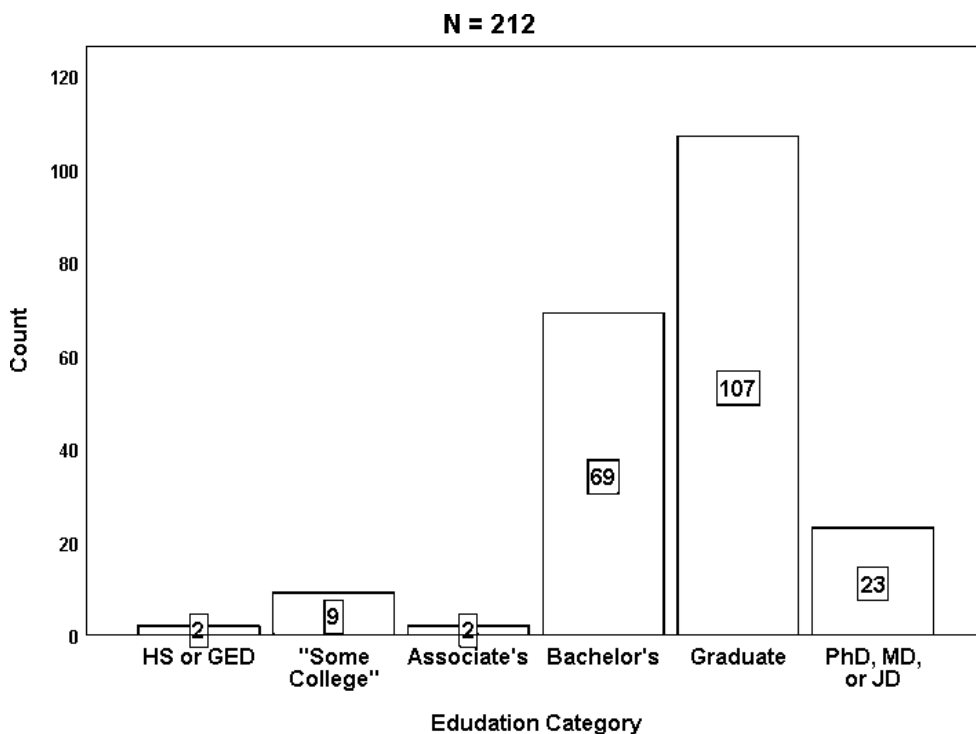


Figure 5. Descriptive statistics for education prior to collapsing data

As stated above, categories of High School/GED, Some College, and Associate’s Degree were collapsed, with 212 respondents ( $N = 212$ ). By collapsing categories, the between-groups degrees of freedom ( $df_1$ ) was reduced, thereby increasing overall degrees of freedom ( $df_2$ ) when this variable was used as a predictor

in multiple regression analysis. Graduate degrees in this sample account for over 50% of the total respondents. This, again, is not a representation of the population at large, but instead a representation of the research administrator field, which can be expected to have an overall higher level of education.

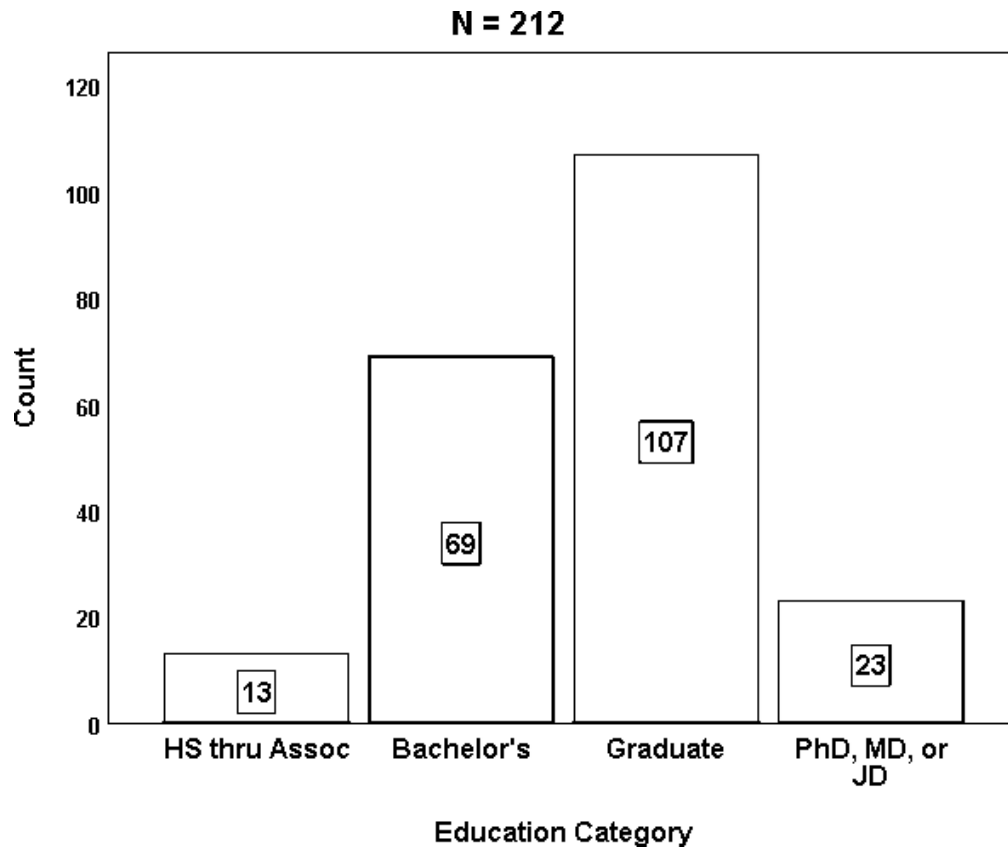


Figure 6. Descriptive statistics for education, collapsed

Figure 7 displays the distribution of scores for the OCB survey. With 20 questions in the survey (19 in this study since a question was missed on the survey), each with a possible score of one to five points, the possible total scores ranged from 19 to 95. A “middle” score, where each question is given 3 points, would have resulted in a total OCB score of 57. Respondents ( $N = 212$ ) scored a mean of 59.87 ( $SD = 10.53$ ). The median was 59.00

and the mode was 55.00. The skewness for this variable is 0.283; because the skewness is  $< 1$ , the assumption of normality was not violated. The Instrument Scale = 1–5. The Possible Range = 19–95 (a question was missed on the survey), and the Sample Range = 30–95.



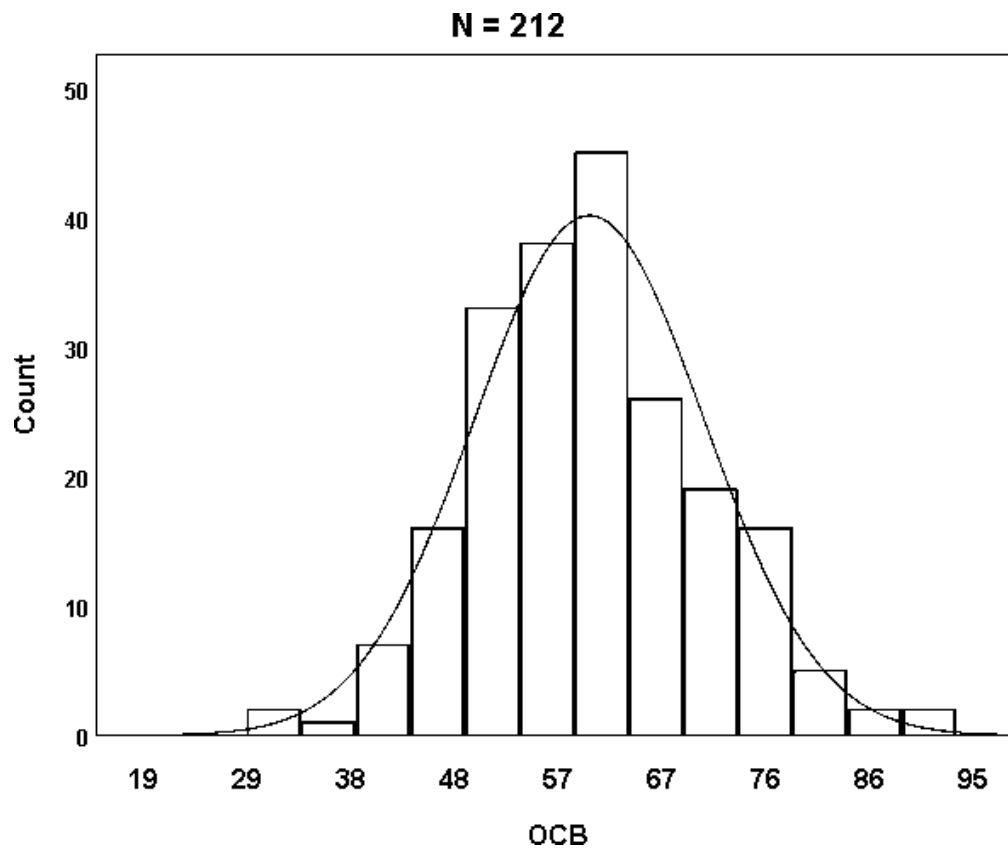


Figure 7. Descriptive statistics for organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)

Figure 8 describes the scores of respondents on the OCBO subscale. With 6 questions in this subscale, and possible scores from 1 to 5 points, the range of possible scores is 5–25. Respondents ( $N = 212$ ) scored a mean of 20.47 ( $SD = 3.82$ ), with

a median of 20.46 and a mode of 21. Skewness was  $-.020$ , so the assumption of normality was not violated. A possible range was 5–25 and a sample range was 10–25.

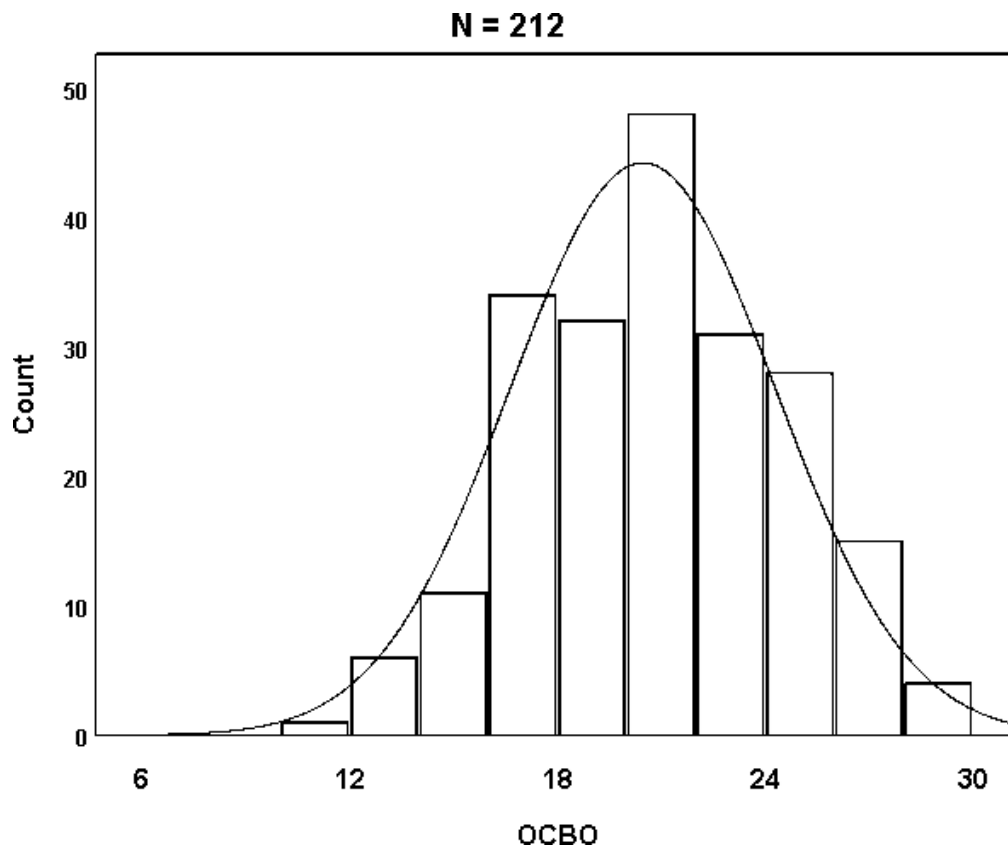


Figure 8. Descriptive statistics for organizational citizenship behavior at the organizational level (OCBO)

Figure 9 details the respondents' responses to the subscale of the OCB, which relates to how individuals participate in their organizations via connections with other individual members of the organization ( $N = 212$ ). Again, scores can range from 5 points to 35 points, as each of 6 questions can be given a score of 1 to 5

points. For this subscale, there were a total of 212 respondents, with a mean of 15.07, ( $SD = 3.10$ ), a median of 15.00, and a mode of 14.00.

Skewness was 0.369, so the assumption of normality was not violated. The possible range was 5–25 and the sample range was 8–25.

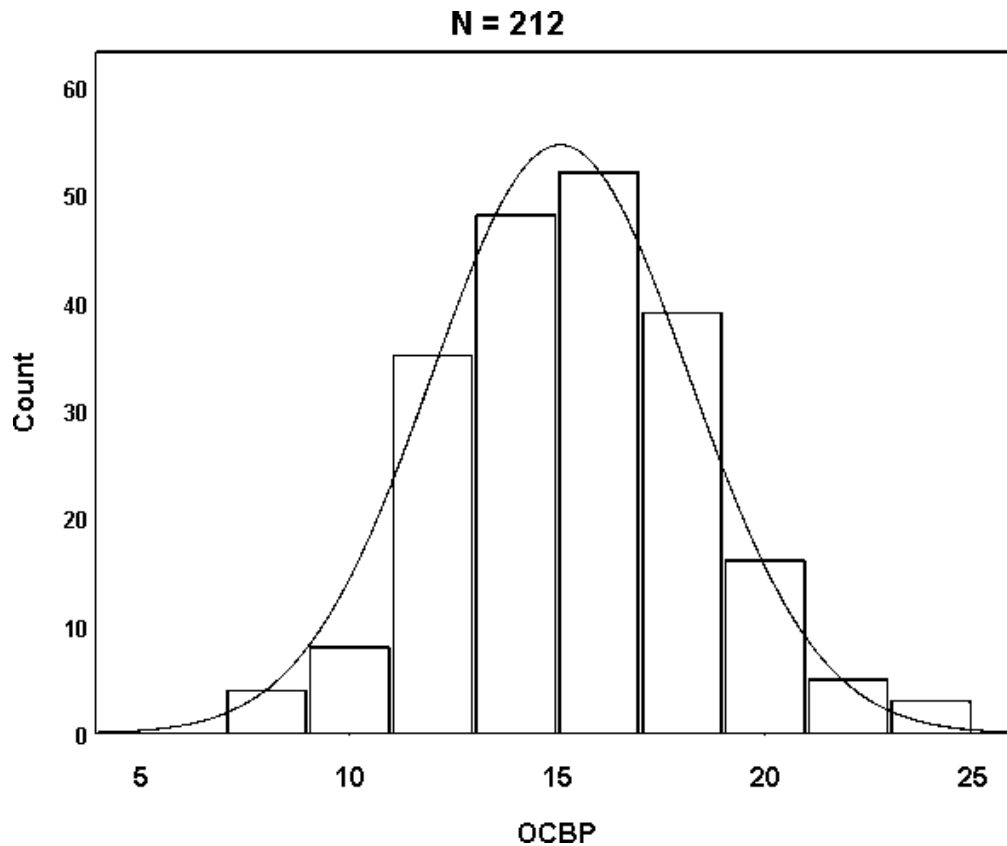


Figure 9. Descriptive statistics for organizational citizenship behavior at the participant level (OCBP)

Figure 10, Descriptive Statistics on Self Awareness, offers findings derived from the questions asked on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire that relate to the leader’s self-awareness as perceived by each respondent. The statements rated by respondents that relate to this dimension are:

- My leader seeks feedback to improve interactions with others.
- My leader accurately describes how others view his or her capabilities.
- My leader knows when it is time to re-evaluate his or her positions on important issues.

- My leader shows he or she understands how specific actions impact others.

For this distribution, mean score for the self awareness of the leader was 2.68. The mean was 2.50. The mode was 4 (with a possible score range from 0 to 4). The standard deviation was 1.16,  $N$  was 211, and negative skewness was -0.35. The Normative Mean ( $N = 892$  groups) = 2.2. One sample  $t$ -test indicated that the sample mean was significantly greater than the normative mean,  $t(210) = 2.06, p = .04$

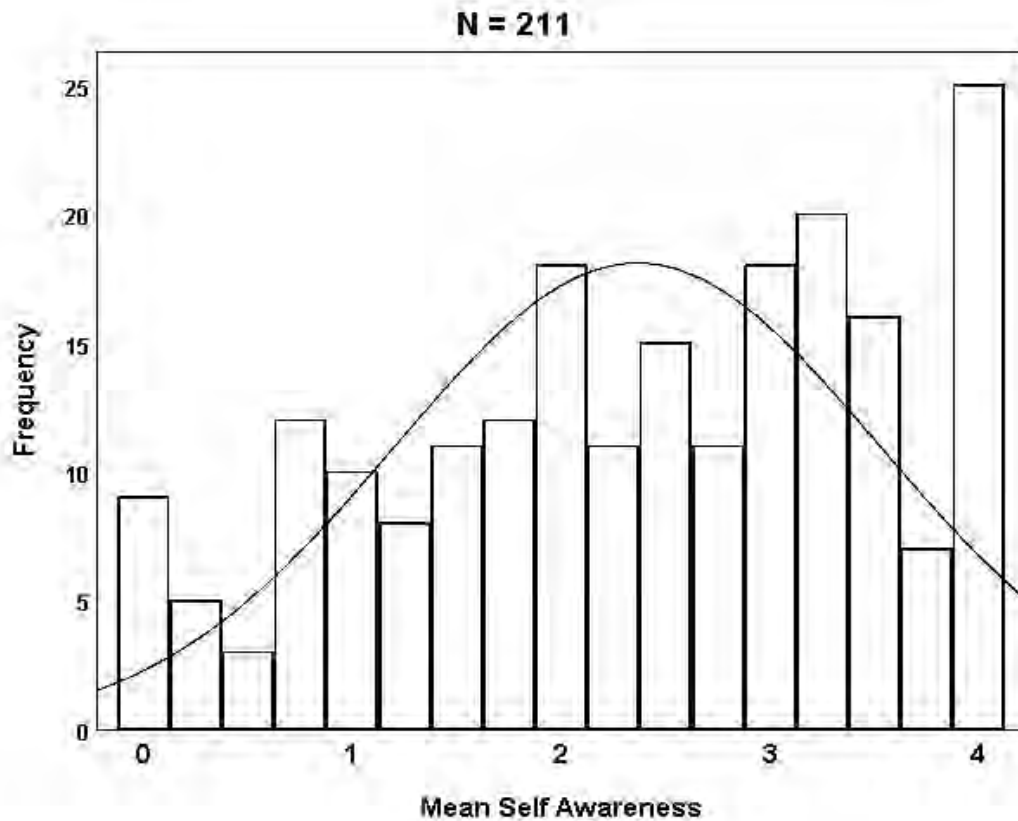


Figure 10. Descriptive Statistics on Self-Awareness

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study showed that tenure accounted for 1.9% of the variance in Organizational Citizenship Behavior overall and for 2.01% of the variance in Organizational Citizenship Behavior at the personal level. Tenure, in this study, was the only predictor of OCB, possibly indicating that individuals who spend many years in research administration are dedicated to the cause of furthering research, find value in their work, and wish to improve organizational performance.

Regarding tenure, mixed results emerged from the review of the literature. This study's results correspond to a meta-analysis study by Ng and Feldman (2011) which suggested that tenure is positively related to OCB. In this study, it was determined that tenure partially moderated the relationship between commitment and OCB. Another study (Organ & Ryan, 1995), which explored the relationship among altruism, compliance, and OCB, found that no relationship existed between tenure and organizational citizenship behavior.

Results shown in Table 1 suggest that tenure was significantly positively correlated with both OCB and OCBP.

In this study, only a small percentage of the variance in OCB was accounted for by the predictors. This may indicate that in the research administration field, other factors influence OCB more than the variables examined in this study. One possibility that might be explored further is the authentic leadership of faculty members, who work closely with research administrators and who may in some organizations take on the role of leader in a day-to-day sense. Other

areas to examine could include the hierarchical structure of the college/university, and whether research administration is centralized (all in one office, with day-to-day interaction with the leader), or decentralized (leadership administrators based out of departments and rarely interacting which supervisors personally). It may also be worthwhile to look outside of research universities and colleges, into other research organizations. Those could include private research organizations or hospital-based research institutions.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

	Tenure	SA	RT	BP	IMP	OCB	OCBP	OCBO
Tenure	1							
SA		1						
RT		.89**	1					
BP		.87**	.91**	1				
IM		.88**	.89**	.89**	1			
OCB	.14*					1		
OCBP	.15*					.89**	1	
OCBO						.87**	.69**	1

Correlation is significant at the .05 level\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level

## IMPLICATIONS

Although causation cannot be established by this study, leaders may wish to consider the value of tenure (years of service) by undertaking initiatives that promote longevity among followers. Leaders may want to consider implementing mentorship programs to

capitalize on the relationship between tenure and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Because there is not a clear tie between Authentic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior within research institutions, efforts may be taken by leadership to directly influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior through discussion of organizational

citizenship behavior rather than focusing solely on leadership style.

The current literature suggests that Authentic Leadership has positive significant relationships with Organizational Citizenship Behavior. That relationship was not found in the present study. This may be due to ceiling effects on all leadership subscales in this study, which may have underestimated correlations relative to the population and could have contributed to a Type II error.

Additionally, the nature of the research administration field may have contributed to the expected relationship not being found in this study. Research administration is largely compliance-focused and rigid, with heavy emphasis on procedures, which may not lend itself to the variance in Organizational Citizenship Behavior that may be found in other fields. The task-oriented nature of the industry may limit the influence of Authentic Leadership, which is more relationship-oriented. And finally, in hindsight, it may have been more appropriate to request that the research administrators rate their faculty mentors, as opposed to their direct supervisors, since they typically have more daily interaction and guidance from the faculty members with whom they work.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The primary limitation of this study is that it captures the unique factors among research administrator leaders and

followers in a college and university setting only, and so findings cannot be generalized to the rest of society as a whole. While this analysis offers the benefit of insight into both the research administration field and how Organizational Citizenship Behavior occurs in a highly structured environment in higher education, it does not provide insight into industries that are less structured or in non-educational sectors.

Additionally, sampling for this survey is purposive, not random. The reason for this is to include only research administrators in college and university roles and provide insight into this industry; however, the drawback is that under these circumstances, too, results cannot be generalized to society at large. A final limitation is the slight variance of  $N$  among variables; not all participants answered all questions of surveys. Additionally, the non-random sampling for this study and lack of variability in demographics limits the generalizability of the results of this study to the broader population.

Finally, ceiling effects on leadership predictors may have contributed to the probability of a Type II error, where additional or stronger relationships exist that were not identified in the study.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Research administration provides an interesting platform for research on leadership and organizational behavior

because the structure of research administration in the college and university environments is rigid and characterized by bureaucratic processes, standard operating procedures, and specific guidelines from funding agencies about how to develop and submit research proposals and how research expenditures are to be tracked and reported.

Future studies may take several directions. Research in this area could be expanded to include other factors within research institutions as possible contributors to organizational commitment, such as university structures and hierarchy. There may be a benefit to exploring differences between centralized research administration and department-based research administration structures, to see whether Organizational Citizenship Behavior is more directly impacted by leader behavior in research administration roles wherein faculty have less direct involvement with research administrators and the administrators report more meaningfully to their research administration supervisors. Although

faculty do not supervise research administrators, in university systems where faculty and research administrators work closely together, the research administrator may perceive the faculty member as a leader, rather than just the direct supervisor.

Additionally, future studies might focus on research institutions based outside of universities, such as non-university or private organizations. These institutions may have a less rigid, bureaucratic, and policy driven environment. There may be some benefit to investigating the relationship between Authentic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in these less structured environments to see if a significant relationship exists among research administrators.

Future studies also may include examining overall ALQ due to the high correlations among subscales. It also may be beneficial to explore additional research measures, including the LBDQ-Ideal (Halpin, 1957), as it includes leadership factors that are not focused on interpersonal relationships, such as Initiation of Structure.

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