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# From trait affect to situated performance of change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior: the pathway through situational construal and emotion utilization

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Prior studies indicate that fostering change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (OCB-CH) among employees, wherein they actively contribute to the collective welfare of modern organizations, correlates positively with their positive affect. However, the precise mechanisms linking trait positive affect with OCB-CH remain unclear. This study used aggregated 5-day daily diary data from a sample of 236 full-time employees in Greece to examine positive affectivity differences in the characteristics of situational experiences and how these differences relate to employee OCB-CH via the use of emotions to facilitate performance. Employing multilevel structural equation modeling, the findings revealed a positive association between trait positive affectivity and the situation characteristics of duty, intellect, and positivity, from the DIAMONDS taxonomy. Furthermore, it was determined that perceptions of situational characteristics and emotional utilization sequentially mediated the relationship between positive affectivity and OCB-CH. This study enhances our understanding of how employee trait positive affectivity influences the manifestation of positive change in the form of OCB-CH within organizations.

## KEYWORDS

positive affect, situation characteristics, use of emotion, organizational citizenship behavior, extra-role behavior, DIAMONDS, diary studies

## 1 Introduction

Employees may exceed their formal job requirements by engaging in what is known as change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (OCB-CH; Choi, 2007). OCB-CH is a specific form of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) that shares the properties of affiliative behavior exhibited in other forms of OCB but is also aimed at constructive changes in work methods, processes, and policies. In contrast to other forms of OCB that focus on preserving the status quo, OCB-CH challenges it. While this type of behavior is not governed by a formal organizational reward system, it significantly contributes to the effective functioning of the organization and is considered valuable in rapidly changing organizational landscapes (Chen et al., 2023). Its determinants are likely rooted within the individual rather than the broader organizational context,

given the absence of formal requirements for such behavior and its focus on changing aspects of the organization (Zampetakis and Arvanitis, 2024). Understanding the nature of these intra-individual psychological processes poses a challenge, requiring a deeper comprehension of the roles of personality, affect and motivation. At this intra-individual level, and in comparison with established predictors of job satisfaction and five-factor models of personality traits, a recent meta-analysis showed that OCB-CH is more strongly predicted by trait positive affect (PA; Chiaburu et al., 2022). However, the processes through which an individual differences variable, such as trait PA, leads to the situational enactment of OCB-CH are not yet well-understood. Our focus in this research is to delve deeper into the role of trait PA in the situated performance of OCB-CH by taking into account situational variables.

We draw on the model presented by Rauthmann et al. (2014) which includes (a) the individual (i.e., traits), (b) situational characteristics, and (c) behavior. OCB-CH, like any behavior, takes place within a situated context as a result of individual and situational factors as well as their interaction (Lewin, 1946). While our starting point is trait PA, an individual factor, a comprehensive account of OCB-CH would have to take features of situation experiences into account. We employed the DIAMONDS situational taxonomy, which comprises eight classes of situation characteristics (Duty, Intellect, Adversity, Mating, pOsitivity, Negativity, Deception, and Sociality) and encompasses most common major dimensions of previous taxonomies (Rauthmann, 2015). The properties of these situations do not necessarily influence individuals' behavior directly. According to the Situation Construal Model (Funder, 2016), behavior is influenced by the construal of the situation or, in other words, the subjective interpretation of the situation according to an individual's personality. Positivity of construal is related to positive behavioral outcomes (Morse P. et al., 2015; Morse P. J. et al., 2015). We concentrated on whether PA contributes to positive situational construal and in turn to the performance of the positive enactment of OCB-CH. Because PA here is used instrumentally to implement positive change, we also focus on Use of Emotion (UOE) as a manifestation of positively-valenced situations that would mediate the relationship between situational construal and OCB-CH. We expand existing research on situation characteristics, often studied with student samples (Rauthmann, 2015; Sherman et al., 2015) by investigating their role in work settings. Our study advances understanding of their role in the trait PA and OCB-CH relationship. In Figure 1, we present our theoretical model.

## 1.1 Trait PA and OCB-CH

According to Chiaburu et al. (2022), there are two major explanations for the association between PA and OCB-CH. First, the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2004) asserts that PA broadens thought-action repertoires, contributing to creativity, which is associated with OCB-CH (Barratt, 2015). Second, PA is associated with the behavioral approach system (Carver et al., 2000), which is more likely to correlate with OCB-CH, as OCB-CH is a positive approach behavior that goes beyond the mere

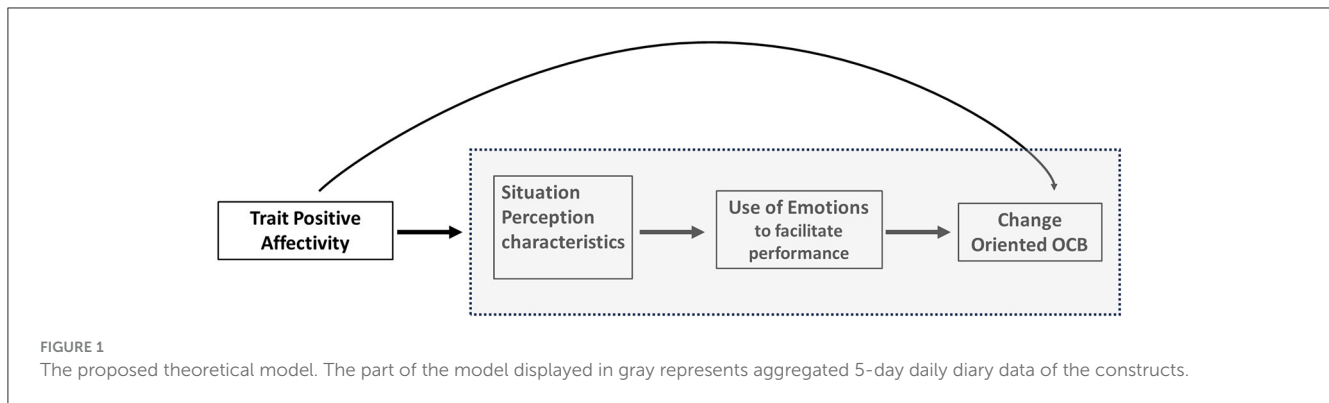
fulfillment of job requirements (Zampetakis and Arvanitis, 2024). This latter "approach" explanation may also account for how individuals construe situations in ways that encourage acts of going beyond job requirements to improve an organization. On the contrary, negative affect would be associated with the avoidance system that would, at best, predict fulfillment, but not exceeding, of job requirements.

## 1.2 Trait PA and situation construal

It is not easy to disentangle affect from situational perception. In fact, certain situations (Duty, Intellect, Mating, pOsitivity, and Sociality) are significantly correlated with state PA, possibly due to the overlap between affect and situational perception (Horstmann and Ziegler, 2019). While there may be overlap between state affect and situational perception, *trait affect* precedes situational perception. Studies exploring person-situation transactions reveal that individuals' traits influence their tendency to select or create certain situations or to perceive these situations differently (Rauthmann et al., 2015). Trait PA will likely influence the positive construal of situations (Sherman et al., 2013). If indeed there is overlap between situations and affect, then trait PA may lead individuals to orient themselves and define situations as the types of situations that overlap with state PA. Therefore, trait PA will be positively associated with average levels of Duty, Intellect, Mating, pOsitivity, and Sociality. Because we focus on the organizational setting where Mating and Sociality are not necessarily viewed as pleasant as in other settings, we hypothesize that, in workplace situations, trait PA will be positively associated with average levels of experienced Duty, Intellect and pOsitivity.

## 1.3 Situation construal and use of emotion

How do individuals proceed from having trait PA and a resultant orientation toward positively valenced situations to the enactment of OCB-CH? Part of the answer arguably lies in the properties of the situations themselves. Duty calls for action; intellect calls for creativity. A person experiencing positive affect in these situations will utilize it to respond successfully to the situational requirements. This utilization refers to an aspect of Emotional Intelligence that is called *utilization* or *use of emotion* (UOE) and involves persistence in tasks, creative thinking and flexible planning (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). In our research, we treat UOE as a situational property that arises from situational requirements that are intertwined with positive affect. In other words, we treat UOE as enacted *in situ*, consistent with prior research (e.g., Pekaar et al., 2017). Moreover, we hypothesize that trait affect relates to OCB-CH indirectly, via an orientation to positively valenced situations and the enactment of UOE. Among the three types of situations (Duty, Intellect, and pOsitivity), pOsitivity may exhibit a slightly different pattern because, unlike the other types, it does not necessarily entail behavioral cues. In this case, UOE may play a different role. Therefore, we approach pOsitivity in a slightly more exploratory manner.



## 2 Method

### 2.1 Procedure and participants

This study, part of a broader project on the effects of situation construal on employee OCB-CH, was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the authors' institution (REC approval code: 69/170224). It included employees from private and public sectors in Greece, recruited through the authors' personal networks ( $n = 102$ ) and a snowball method involving 28 students from an elective work psychology course. Each student recruited five employees for an online daily experience survey, contributing 140 participants. Students received extra course credit. This diverse sampling approach was employed to recruit a heterogeneous sample of full-time employees.

All 242 employees received an email with a cover letter, consent form, study purpose (understand daily situation characteristics at work), and an explanation of voluntary participation. Incentives included feedback and anonymity guarantees. Employees accessed a secure Google Forms link for a baseline survey, with 239 completing it, using their own created unique identification number. A week later, participants received a daily survey link for 5 consecutive workdays, to be completed by 7:00 pm. Google Forms timestamps each response to track completion times. After excluding three dropouts on the 1st day, the final dataset included 236 complete, 5-day employee diaries. On the first page of the daily survey, respondents were asked to recall and describe a situation that occurred at work that day and they considered important. They subsequently rated the psychological characteristics of the situation. On a separate page of the survey, respondents answered questions about their reactions after the situation had occurred.

Employees in our sample averaged 41.80 years old ( $SD = 14.57$ , range 18–65), with 59% female. Most had a university degree (55.08%), followed by high school (22.03%) or Master's/Ph.D. (21.61%) qualifications. The remainder had secondary school certificates. About 49% worked in the public sector (e.g., local government, schools, hospitals), and the rest in the private sector (e.g., retail, production, and sales). On average, participants worked 37.59 h per week ( $SD = 12.61$ , range 18–85) and had 13.33 years of tenure in their current job ( $SD = 10.79$ , range 2–38).

### 2.2 Measures

All instruments were translated into Greek from the English version using a backward translation method (Brislin, 1970). Discrepancies between the original English version and the back-translated version led to adjustments in the Greek version, taking linguistic and cultural differences into account. The specific measures used in the study are described below.

#### 2.2.1 Baseline questionnaire

The baseline questionnaire included demographic questions and several dispositional measures. For this study we used a short version of the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule scale (I-PANAS-SF; Thompson, 2007) in Greek to assess trait PA and trait NA. The I-PANAS-SF comprises five adjectives to assess trait PA (active, alert, inspired, determined, and attentive) and five adjectives to assess trait NA (upset, hostile, ashamed, nervous, and afraid). Since we were interested in trait PA and NA, we asked participants to rate each adjective on the extent to which it described how they felt that way *in general*, using a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Omega ( $\omega$ ) reliability coefficient for trait PA was 0.85 and for trait NA was 0.77. The baseline questionnaire was completed once at the beginning of the study.

#### 2.2.2 Daily questionnaire

All instruments were adapted to fit within a daily diary format. In the case of constructs with multiple items, we utilized multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MLCFA) to calculate the McDonald's omega ( $\omega$ ) composite reliability coefficient for within-person change (Geldhof et al., 2014). Each daily assessment commenced with the stem, "Today at work..."

##### 2.2.2.1 Daily situation experiences

We used the Situational Eight (S8-I; Rauthmann and Sherman, 2016) scale for the assessment of the psychological situational characteristics. The S8-I uses a single item for each of the eight DIAMONDS situational characteristics (Rauthmann and Sherman, 2018). Participants were instructed to rate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = "extremely uncharacteristic" to 5 = "extremely characteristic," the following characteristics: "work had to be done"

(Duty), “deep thinking was required” (Intellect), “somebody was being threatened, accused, or criticized” (Adversity), “potential romantic partners were present” (Mating), “the situation was pleasant” (pOsitivity), “the situation contained negative feelings (e.g., stress, anxiety, guilt, etc.)” (Negativity), “somebody was being deceived; Deception) and “social interactions were possible or required” (Sociality). Items were presented in random order to participants on each day.

2.2.2.2 Daily use of emotions

We used four items from the Wong and Law (2002) emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS) which had been adapted into Greek by Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008). Sample item: “I was a self-motivated person.” Participants expressed their ratings using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = “Did not apply to me today” to 5 = “Totally applied to me today.” Omega ( $\omega$ ) coefficient ( $\omega_{\text{between}} = 0.88$ ,  $\omega_{\text{within}} = 0.77$ ) indicated acceptable reliability for the four items. According to Zampetakis and Mitropoulou (2024) the UOE construct is equivalent at both the within-person and between-person levels (i.e., is a configural cluster construct).

2.2.2.3 Daily change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior

Daily OCB-CH was assessed using a 3-item scale adapted from Zampetakis and Lanivich (2024). Sample item: “I inspired others to think about their work in new and stimulating ways.” Participants expressed their ratings using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = “Did not apply to me today” to 5 = “Totally applied to me today.” Omega ( $\omega$ ) coefficient ( $\omega_{\text{between}} = 0.92$ ,  $\omega_{\text{within}} = 0.83$ ) indicated acceptable reliability for the three items.

2.2.3 Controls

At the within person level, we accounted for day-of-the-week variations. At the between person level, where our hypotheses were formed, we controlled for employee age, gender, tenure, educational level. We also controlled for employee levels of trait NA (Kaplan et al., 2009).

2.3 Analytical approach

Our data have a hierarchical structure with daily data (Level 1,  $N = 1,180$ ) nested within employees (Level 2,  $N = 236$ ). We used multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) to test our proposed theoretical model via Mplus 8.11 software. Our hypotheses were tested at the between person level (Level 2). In Supplementary material 1 we provide details for our analytical approach.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics

Preliminary analyses suggested that the assumptions of the general linear model are satisfied. In Table 1 we provide descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations of the main study variables along with intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) of the daily variables.

TABLE 1 Within and between person descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations.

	M	SD	ICC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Trait PA	3.35	0.78		-											
2. Trait NA	2.32	0.83		-0.57***	-										
3. Duty	3.84	1.31	0.20	0.18***	-0.01	-									
4. Intellect	3.12	1.27	0.21	0.15**	0.00	0.44***	-								
5. Adversity	2.24	1.44	0.22	-0.12	0.17***	0.06*	0.12***	-							
6. Mating	1.53	1.06	0.32	-0.06	0.10***	-0.14***	-0.11***	0.24***	-						
7. Positivity	2.46	1.27	0.17	0.14***	-0.16***	-0.03	-0.08*	-0.30***	0.02	-					
8. Negativity	2.92	1.44	0.24	-0.16***	0.24***	0.12***	0.20***	0.55***	0.08**	-0.48***	-				
9. Deception	1.66	1.14	0.25	-0.09	0.17***	-0.09**	0.06*	0.50***	0.38***	-0.21***	0.34***	-			
10. Sociality	3.95	1.22	0.35	0.05	-0.06	0.21***	0.16***	0.04	-0.06*	0.18***	0.15***	-0.11***	-		
11. UOE	3.57	0.93	0.39	0.29***	-0.08**	0.33***	0.31***	-0.04	-0.05	0.09**	0.02	0.00	0.21***	-	
12. OCB-CH	3.11	1.17	0.35	0.24***	-0.12***	0.29***	0.29***	-0.05	-0.02	0.21***	-0.03	0.01	0.17***	0.55***	-

Within-person correlations are presented above the diagonal (N = 1,180). Between person correlations are presented below the diagonal (N = 236). The between-person level data were averaged across 5 days.

\*p < 0.05.  
 \*\*p < 0.01.  
 \*\*\*p < 0.001.

In [Supplementary material 2](#) we provide the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of all the variables of the study.

Results for the ICC values suggested that all daily variables displayed sizable within-person variance and follow previous research concerning characteristics of situation experiences (e.g., [Sherman et al., 2015](#)), OCB-CH ([Zampetakis and Arvanitis, 2024](#)), and UOE (e.g., [Zampetakis and Mitropoulou, 2024](#)). These results justify our multilevel modeling method. We conducted a series of MLCFAs on our focal variables (details in [Supplementary material 3](#)). Results provide evidence of construct discriminant validity.

[Table 1](#) results align with the [Chiaburu et al. \(2022\)](#) meta-analysis, indicating that PA and NA correlated positively ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.001$ ) and negatively ( $r = -0.12, p < 0.001$ ), respectively to OCB-CH. Moreover, our results suggest that PA and NA are associated with average levels of experienced situation characteristics in theoretical meaningful ways and in line with previous research (e.g., [Horstmann and Ziegler, 2019](#)).

## 3.2 Hypothesis testing

We tested three path models (details in [Supplementary material 4](#)). In [Figure 2](#), we present the results of our final model (Model 3-M3). In this model, the total explained variance of OCB-CH by the collective set of predictors was 49% at Level 2 and 14.4% at Level 1.

At Level 2 (between person) results are in line with theoretical expectations: PA was positively related to Duty, Intellect and pOpositivity. Duty and Intellect were positively related to UOE and pOpositivity was positively related to OCB-CH. Examining the results for indirect relationships, the proposed model suggested an indirect relationship of PA on OCB-CH (effect  $b = 0.20$ ) through situation characteristics and UOE. Analyses with the Monte Carlo (MC) method suggested that the 95% MC CI did not contain zero: 95% MCCI [0.09 – 0.32], thus, supporting the indirect relationship of PA with OCB-CH. The indirect relationship of PA through: Duty and UOE was 0.08, 95% MCCI [0.02 – 0.17]; intellect and UOE was 0.06, 95% MCCI [0.009 – 0.14]; pOpositivity was 0.05, 95% MCCI [0.002 – 0.12] (please see SM5 for detailed results and SM6 for alternative models).

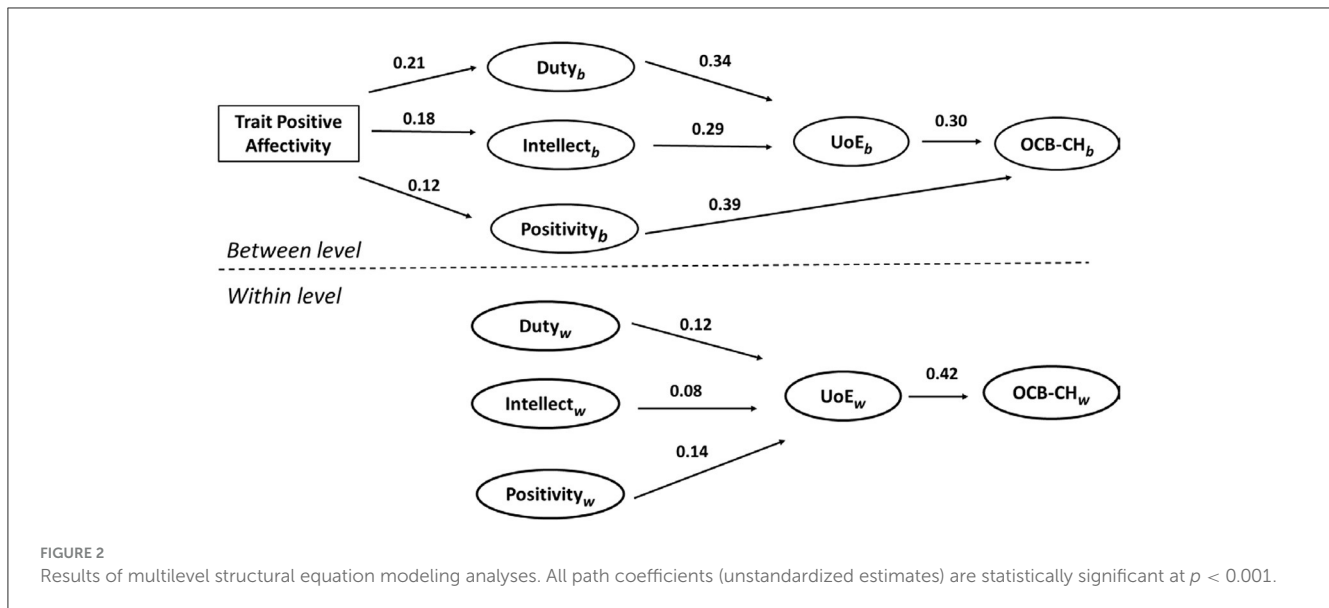
## 4 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to elucidate the processes underlying the established link between trait PA and OCB-CH ([Chiaburu et al., 2022](#)) by looking into the daily, situated performance of OCB-CH, using a 5-day daily diary design. We hypothesized that trait PA, being linked to the behavioral approach system ([Carver et al., 2000](#)), would be associated with certain situation construals that foster the enactment of approach behaviors, including OCB-CH. Our results showed that trait PA was positively associated with the average levels of experienced situation characteristics of Duty, Intellect and pOpositivity. That is, employees with the tendency to experience more positive emotions were more likely to perceive situations as important if

they contained the following properties: attending tasks, fulfilling duties and/or resolving problems (Duty), intellectual engagement and cognitive demands (Intellect) and were pleasant and fun (pOpositivity; [Rauthmann and Sherman, 2018](#)). Especially Duty and Intellect pose requirements for doing work and thinking hard and, arguably, stimulate creative behavior that goes beyond job requirements to benefit others, thereby explaining our finding that these situations are positively associated with OCB-CH.

Moreover, to the extent that trait positive affect is associated with demanding aspects of the workplace, it may serve the instrumental purpose of positive change within the organization through the UOE. Our results showed that average levels of Duty and Intellect have an indirect relationship with OCB-CH through average levels of enacted UOE. This is an important finding, as it supports the notion that OCB-CH is “generated and maintained to a greater extent by affect-driven processes” ([Chiaburu et al., 2022](#), p. 10), shedding light on the role of UOE in facilitating this process. The enactment of UOE suggests that employees use emotions related to situational characteristics to effectively direct their attention and effort toward OCB-CH behaviors. Therefore, our theoretical model was overall supported by our findings.

The situation of pOpositivity warrants a separate mention in our discussion. This type of situation is expected to be associated with trait positive affect but does not pose any environmental cues for OCB-CH, as Duty and Intellect do. Still, in a within-person analysis, it exhibits the same pattern with Duty and Intellect: Trait positive affect arguably orients individuals to pOpositivity construals and, subsequently, through UOE, to the performance of OCB-CH. In a between-person analysis, the pattern slightly changes. The situation of pOpositivity has a direct effect on OCB-CH, unmediated by UOE. In simple words, this difference regarding pOpositivity situations means that, whereas the explanation for the association between within-person positive affectivity and OCB-CH includes UOE, to account for between-person individual differences, UOE is no longer relevant. This slight variation points to the unique abstract nature of pOpositivity situations which carry a pleasant feeling without exhibiting environmental cues that pose a challenge for individuals (as Duty and Intellect do) and require the instrumental use of PA. Arguably the intellectual demands and prosocial duties that are inherent in the other situations can be compensated, within pOpositivity situations, in the form of intrinsic individual creative and prosocial tendencies, consistent with the framework of Self-Determination Theory ([Ryan and Deci, 2017](#)). More specifically, having an autonomy orientation is associated with trait PA and creativity ([Ye et al., 2014](#)), more adaptive emotional regulation ([Roth and Benita, 2023](#)) and the performance of extra-role behavior ([Papachristopoulos and Arvanitis, 2024](#)). Therefore, an autonomy orientation may be a latent individual difference variable that accounts for the effect of trait PA on OCB-CH in abstract pOpositivity situations in a way that does not necessitate UOE (because autonomy orientation is already associated with adaptive emotional regulation). Of course, unless more individual differences variables are included in the study design, it is not safe to conjecture on the exact nature of between-individuals findings of pOpositivity, but this may also prove a promising avenue for further research.



## 4.1 Study limitations

Our model does not discern between various forms of person-situation interactions, but rather refers to the situation as it is perceived by employees. Because we asked participants to retrieve information from memory, our study cannot determine whether participants with greater PA tend more often to retrieve, when asked to at the end of the working day, situations involving Duty, Intellect and pOsitivity or whether they tend to perceive situations in a way that is consistent with the qualities of these situations in their everyday work life (thus influencing their subsequent retrieval). It is very difficult to assess the relative extent to which (a) the perception of these situations and (b) their retrieval from memory, has been influenced by associated affective processes (Kihlstrom et al., 2000). Future research can employ a more comprehensive research design involving measuring PA and present-moment prompted measures of situational construal in order to disentangle the complex interaction between affective and cognitive processes (i.e., related to perception and memory) in situational construal and enactment of OCB-CH. In our model, we did not incorporate state affect. As empirical research has verified that situational characteristics are indeed connected to state affect (Horstmann and Ziegler, 2019), future research studies could include state affect in their research design. Finally, our study is based on self-report of affect-laden situations, all measured concurrently in daily reports. Consequently, the causal nature of the relationships between traits, situational attributes, UOE, and OCB-CH requires further scrutiny and warrants further investigation in future research.

## 4.2 Practical implications

The results of the present study provide initial evidence for managers and practitioners aiming to foster OCB-CH among their employees. Our findings highlight the importance of

understanding how employees' trait PA affects their perception of situational characteristics. Employees with higher levels of trait PA tend to consider situations that involve Duty, Intellect and pOsitivity as important. Recognizing these tendencies can guide managers in tailoring interventions and strategies to capitalize on employees' predispositions. More research is needed before we can provide more specific suggestions to practitioners. Moreover, the study suggests that interventions aimed at promoting OCB-CH could benefit from targeting employees' perceptions of situational characteristics. By focusing on aspects related to Duty, Intellect, and pOsitivity, interventions may effectively enhance employees' inclination toward engaging in OCB-CH behaviors. Considering the role of enacted UOE in facilitating OCB-CH, managers may consider implementing emotion management training programs focused on using emotions to address challenges related to intellect and duty. These programs can help employees develop skills to effectively utilize emotions related to situational characteristics to enhance their engagement in OCB-CH behaviors.

## 5 Conclusion

Up to date, the connection between positive affectivity and employees' positive-oriented change behavior, specifically in the form of OCB-CH, has been ambiguous. Our study shows a positive association between trait PA and OCB-CH that can be explained by a focus on positively-valenced situations with environmental cues that foster creative and prosocial aspects of work and facilitate the use of positive emotion. More research work is needed on the interplay between situations and traits, especially through the use of daily situational prompts.

## Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by University of Crete Research Ethics Committee (REC approval code: 69/170224). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

LZ: Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AA: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships

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## Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/forgp.2024.1443994/full#supplementary-material>

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