

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTES OF KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to understand the impact of ethical leadership on employee performance in higher education institutes in Karachi. Therefore, after a thorough survey of the literature a simple and unique model has been developed to reflect the indirect association of ethical leadership with employee performance. The model is blended with intrinsic motivation which is the prime factor that ethical leaders have used to foster employee performance. The sampling frame for this study includes all the private institutes of Karachi and the sample used for the study is based on 250 experienced and permanent faculty members from faculties of management sciences. Analysis has been made through SMART-PLS and analytics indicated that ethical leadership affects the intrinsic motivation of employees & employee performance in the private higher educational institutes of Karachi.

Key Words: Ethical Leadership, Intrinsic Motivation, Employee Performance, Higher Education Institutes, Universities and Karachi.

BACKGROUND

Unethical acts committed by giant and large-sized corporations resulted in an increase of focus towards the change in leadership style. The other reason for the increased focus on the leadership style is the focus of the media as multiple unethical cases like Enron were reported by well-known media houses and news agencies across the world. Therefore, the focus of organizational leadership moves from a task-oriented leadership style towards an employee-oriented style of leadership. The reason for the shift is to make employees feel valued and comfortable. Among these styles, one of the most important leadership styles is “*Ethical Leadership*” (Malik et al., 2016). Previously Ethical Leadership has been tested with organizational justice, employee motivation, job satisfaction, organizational culture, etc (Asarkaya & Akaarir, 2021).

Ethical leadership is defined as appropriate conduct through personal relationships and activities. This form of leadership is also termed as the promotion of such a way of acting among supporters through two-way communication, support, and direction. Ethical

leadership is the way to influence subordinates by triggering moral actions etc (Zhang et al., 2018). However, ethical leaders must possess characteristics like honesty, trustworthiness, altruism integrity, etc (Tu & Lu, 2016). Hence, followers may perceive ethical leaders as their true role models and try to reciprocate them. Hence, ethical leadership may force subordinates to be involved in positive work behaviors like safety concerns to safeguard against any incidents, etc. Moreover, ethical leadership can also develop a just climate which is required to foster productivity in the long run. Last but not least ethical leadership is also an effective tool to align the values of employees with organizational values (Li & Bao, 2020)

INTRODUCTION

Employees are perceived as the most valuable asset of any firm. None of the organizations can prosper and grow without employee satisfaction and performance. Hence, there is always a connection between leadership style and employees which is

also true for ethical leadership and employees (Bello, 2012). However, leaders can influence the mood, motivation, and employee performance. Hence, the ethical behavior of leaders is required to be ethical to influence their subordinates in the required manner. Studies mentioned ethics as termed the heart of leadership. Therefore, ethics are associated with multiple theories and have been vastly examined by researchers all over the globe (Asarkaya & Akaarir, 2021).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Little has been known about the way used by ethical leaders influence their subordinates and their moral attitudes. Therefore, it is better to understand how the ethical leadership may influence subordinates. Moreover, there is also a lack of studies that may highlight how subordinates may transform ethical leadership from supervisor into their actions (Zhang et al., 2018). Hence, in light of these parameters, the major objectives of this study are to understand ethical leadership, its mechanism, and its impact on the actions and outcomes of the subordinates. Moreover, studies regarding Asian countries indicated further studies are also required to understand the impact of ethical leadership in Pakistan (Danish et al., 2020). However, studies conducted about Asian markets are less inclined toward higher education except few e.g., Malik et al (2016) and Shareef and Atan (2019) but the studies are conducted mostly without structural equation modeling, and none of these are focused on employee performance as indicated by Kelidbari et al (2016) and Walumbwa et al (2011)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Evident Literature on ethical leadership explored the association between ethical leadership and extra-role performance based on social exchange theory and social learning theory.

These theories believe that ethical leader motivates their subordinates through providing favorable treatment e.g., respect and fairness, etc. However, some other theories indicate that ethical leadership uses intrinsic motivation & modifying job characteristics, etc (Tu & Lu, 2016). On the other side social learning theory indicates that individuals try to adapt the behavior of people with higher social status. The same applies to employees who adopt the behavior of their supervisor. Hence, legitimate to believe that subordinates of ethical leaders will be

found to be higher in fulfilling their tasks with responsibility and will also help their colleagues' by focusing on learning and imitating effectively (Yang & Wei, 2017)

On the other hand, previous studies e.g., Tu and Lu (2016) indicated that the use of self-efficacy with the moderation of intrinsic motivation yields reliability values lesser than 0.70. Hence, this study uses intrinsic motivation as the mediator between ethical leadership and employee performance. However, Danish et al (2020) also use intrinsic motivation as the mediator between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior of employees but the mediation is not valid for the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment. However, it can also be negatively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior in the long run (Khan et al., 2020) but always related with positive work outcomes (Li & Bao, 2020). Most of the studies indicated that ethical leadership leads to an increase in employee job performance (Bello, 2012). Li and Bao (2020) also reflected that positive work outcomes may also be reflected as an increase in employee job performance. Therefore, using these parameters, this study has been conducted with ethical leadership as the major predictor and employee performance as the outcome variable with the mediation of intrinsic motivation. The relationship may also be conceptualized through Yidong and Xinxin (2013) that ethical leadership tends to increase the intrinsic motivation of individuals to produce positive impact over the job related outcomes

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical Leadership and Employee Performance

Initial studies linked with employee performance indicated that employee performance is based on employee behavior. Therefore, it is adequate to believe that employee performance is a construct that does not rely on outcomes produced by the employee. However, later studies reflected that HR practices like recruitment, performance appraisals, and compensation are the firm of HR strategies that have a significant & positive association with employee performance and productivity (Malik et al., 2016). Bello, (2012) highlighted that. A study by Toor and Ofori (2009) suggested that ethical leadership has a mediating role between organizational culture and employee performance. That means ethical leadership acts as a tool to

increase employee concern, efforts, and productivity. Similar has also been confirmed by Kelidbari et al (2016) that there is an indirect association between ethical leadership and employee performance.

However, the study of Malik et al (2016) posited a definite and positive association between ethical leadership and employee performance. Similarly has also been indicated that ethical leaders make their employees grasp adequate attitudes and skills which foster their level of productivity (Tanoto & Tangkawarow, 2023). Hence based on the literature this study postulated that:

H_{1A}: There is a positive association between ethical leadership at higher educational institutes of Karachi and employee performance

Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Performance

Intrinsic Motivation means that the employees are involved in the work based on their interest in work-related activities rather than monetary rewards. The literature highlighted that intrinsic motivation might be treated as a trait or a state that influences individual actions and performance. However, most of the researchers termed intrinsic motivation as the temporal state that causes or transforms individual behavior (Tu & Lu, 2016). Intrinsic motivation is associated with psychological rewards that are associated with the actions and behaviors of employees (Bulo & Tumbuan, 2015). Piccolo et al (2010) indicated that intrinsic motivation is a potent predictor of employee performance. Intrinsic motivation produces positive impact on the objective and subjective characteristics of the job that ultimately results in innovative work behavior. Studies also extended that intrinsic motivation produces energy, excitement, concentration, commitment, and creativity towards the work (Bulo & Tumbuan, 2015). Studies also indicated that intrinsic motivation is one of the prime elements that increase employee inherited enjoyment in performing the task ultimately fostering overall employee performance (Tanoto & Tangkawarow, 2023).

Hence based on the literature this study postulated that:

H_{2A}: There is a positive association between the intrinsic motivation of employees from higher

educational institutes in Karachi and employee performance

Ethical Leadership and Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation comes from individual interest and pleasure rather than monetary rewards. Moreover, intrinsic motivation is also required to foster tacit knowledge to foster an overall understanding of employees (Tanoto & Tangkawarow, 2023). The quantitative study concerning the public sector universities from the Kurdistan City of Iraq indicated a positive association between ethical leadership and employees' intrinsic motivation of employees (Shareef & Atan, 2019).

Hence based on the literature this study postulated that:

H_{3A}: There is a positive association between ethical leadership in higher educational institutes of Karachi and intrinsic motivation

Ethical Leadership, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Performance

Bulo and Tumbuan (2015) indicated that there is a mediation of intrinsic motivation between ethical leadership and individual creative work. However, the association must be explored in different countries and cultures to examine the validity & generalizability of the construct. However, the impact of ethical leadership on employee work outcomes might be more significant in public sector organizations where ethical leaders may use intrinsic motivation as the differentiator in a more effective manner. However, further studies may explore the impact of intrinsic motivation on employee performance in industries that tend to amplify the association (Bedi et al., 2016). Similarly study by Shareef and Atan (2019) indicated that intrinsic motivation is a significant mediator between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and ethical leadership and turnover intention of academic employees from public sector universities in Iraq.

Hence based on the literature this study postulated that:

H_{4A}: Intrinsic motivation mediates between ethical leadership and employee performance in higher educational institutes of Karachi

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology is perceived as the part that is used to indicate that about the formulation of the study along with the necessity and use of every element that is used in the formulation of the research (Kothari, 2004). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) indicated that research methodology may also be bifurcated into two parts i.e., Research Design and Sampling Design

Research Design:

The purpose of the study is correlational as the study tested the association between ethical leadership and employee performance to higher educational institutions in Karachi. The relationship was not previously explored through quantitative studies and previous studies were also not aligned with structural equation modeling. Therefore, in line with Sekaran and Bougie (2016), it is optimal to use cross-sectional as the purpose of the study that is conducted in a non-contrived study setting, field experiment as the type of experiment, and individual as the unit of analysis. Moreover, the philosophy of research used in the formulation of this study is epistemology as the study not only tested new relationships to fill theoretical gaps but also the methodological gaps through applying SEM. Hence, better to use Saunders et al (2015) to use epistemology as the philosophy, post-positivism as the philosophical stance, and survey as the research strategy

Sampling Design:

Previous studies on the effect of ethical leadership claim that data collection through convenience sampling may not be an appropriate way of data collection (Tu and Lu, 2016).

However, research studies also preferred non-probability sampling in recent times especially the quota sampling method as it is less costly and has almost similar advantages as probability sampling (Yang & Banamah, 2014). However, studies about Pakistan were based on the banking sector (Danish et al., 2020) and schooling (Khan et al., 2020), etc. Very few studies concerning Pakistan are associated with the higher education sector e.g., Malik et al (2016) which is not only based upon inexperienced faculty but also limited to universities of Punjab with lower model fit. Therefore, this study uses quota sampling to select faculty members of private sector universities and higher educational institutes of Karachi to remove anomalies from the study and

relate the findings specifically with the private sector universities and institutes of Karachi. The sample used in the study is 200 respondents as the study only includes permanent and experienced faculty members from the discipline of management sciences. This postulate seems in line with the work of Mangi et al (2021) which investigated the impact of transactional and transformational leadership in universities offering degrees in management sciences.

Research Instrument:

This study has been based on the LIKERT scale questionnaire as used by Bulo and Tumbuan (2015); Malik et al. (2016) and Shareef and Atan (2019) etc. However, to devise a questionnaire effectively and to relate it to employee performance this study uses Kalshoven et al (2011); Charoensap et al (2019); Chughtai et al (2015), and Tanoto and Tangkawarow (2023). Initially, 350 questionnaires were circulated however due to the workload of faculty around 75 questionnaires were not returned and 25 questionnaires were rejected due to inappropriate replies or missing elements. Therefore, the response rate for this study is 75%.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

According to Benitez et al (2020), SMART-PLS is now regarded as the superior option for factual testing. For the analysis of data, programming uses two different types of models, such as intelligent and developmental. The inquiry will follow the cues provided by Afthanorhan (2014) and Benitez et al. (2020). Since the study's model is a particular form of intelligent estimating model. The supporting tables from the previous section will then show interesting factual measures, and the latter one will show inferential factual measures.

The reason for Table 1 is to demonstrate outer loading for every component to feature the build's dependability related to large information and a variety of techniques of online retailers. The base worth that might approve the choice of any component in the development is 0.60 (Afthanorhan, 2014). However, the ideal scope of significant worth for external stacking begins from 0.708 (Sarstedt, Ringle, and Mena, 2012), and assuming the worth of the component is lesser than 0.708 and causing in reduction of by and large unwavering quality of build then it should be erased (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2016).

Thus every one of the components remembered for Table 1 is by all accounts successful as the negligible worth of any component remembered for Table 1 is 0.705 which is higher than the conidian shown by Afthanorhan (2014).

	Employee Performance	Ethical Leadership	Intrinsic Motivation
EL1		0.775	
EL2		0.705	
EL3		0.803	
EL4		0.716	
EP1	0.821		
EP2	0.794		
EP3	0.851		
EP4	0.788		
IM1			0.833
IM2			0.812
IM3			0.882
IM4			0.853

Table 1: Outer Loading values

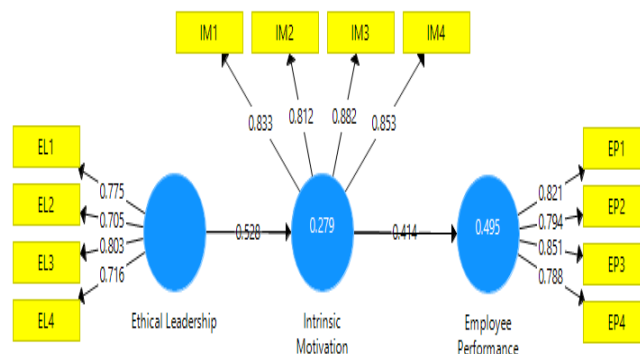


Figure 1: Research model to show CFA

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.495	0.489
Intrinsic Motivation	0.279	0.274

Table 2: Quality Criteria for Accuracy

Table 2 is named as quality criteria and the utilization of the instrument is to demonstrate the level of made sense of change brought about by free factor (Benitez et al., 2020). The technique for assessment of R is the same as that of relapse (Andreev et al., 2009) the least incentive for the instrument is 0.26, and 0.5 and 0.75 are termed as moderate and excessive impacts (Cheah et al., 2018). Accordingly, as per these actions the worth of R is treated however moderate as the incentive for the apparatus may be 0.489 which is adequate to indicate the change in the dependent variables through using Cheah et al., (2018)

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Performance	0.830	0.833	0.887	0.662
Ethical Leadership	0.742	0.744	0.838	0.564
Intrinsic Motivation	0.867	0.873	0.909	0.715

Table 3: Construct reliability & convergent validity

Table 3 illustrates how well limits connect to one inactive variable estimate a comparable construction. To showcase develop unwavering quality via Cronbach's Alpha, Dillon-Goldstein's rho, and AVE, the table also includes two unwavering quality measures, such as Cronbach's Alpha and Dillon-Goldstein rho (Sijtsma, 2009a&b). As a result, the

model can guarantee growth dependability and focused legitimacy in the light of these activities. These claims are true since the upsides of Dillon-Goldstein rho are greater than 0.7 to ensure unchanging quality in the construction, and the upsides of composite dependability and AVE are greater than 0.5.

	Employee Performance	Ethical Leadership	Intrinsic Motivation
Employee Performance			
Ethical Leadership	0.774		
Intrinsic Motivation	0.730	0.645	

Table 4: Discriminant Validity through HTMT Ratio

Table 4 demonstrates discriminant validity among various variables in the study model (Cheung and Lee, 2010). The percentage is considered ideal for showcasing it, which is the justification for using HTMT as a way to demonstrate segregate legitimacy (Benitez et al., 2020). However, the highest value that HTMT can sustain is 0.85 (Hair Jr, Sarstedt,

Ringle, and Gudergan, 2017), and any value higher than this is ineffective for highlighting the discriminant validity. Therefore, using Table 4 there is no reason to believe that the model lacks discriminant validity as there is no value in Table 4 that is greater than or equal to 0.85.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Ethical Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.391	0.392	0.099	3.965	0.000
Ethical Leadership -> Intrinsic Motivation	0.528	0.537	0.077	6.881	0.000
Intrinsic Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.414	0.412	0.105	3.930	0.000

Table 5: Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Ethical Leadership -> Intrinsic Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.218	0.223	0.071	3.054	0.002

Table 6: Specific Indirect Effects

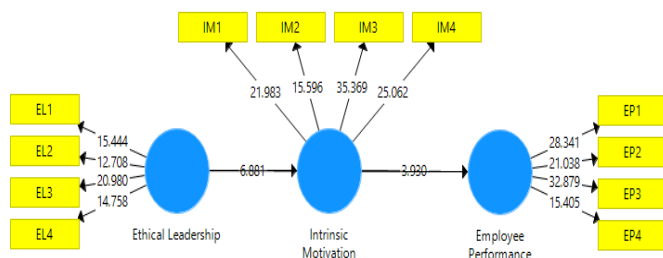


Figure 2: Path Coefficient

Table 5 and Table 6 along with Figure 2 are used to indicate the effect of variables on each other. These tables are part of inferential statistics (Hair et al., 2019). Measurements that are important to analyze

the effect in Table 5 and Table 6 are t-measurements (Durate and Amaro, 2018) and p-values (Kock and Hadaya, 2018). The criteria for t-statistics is that the value must be greater than or equal to 1.97 and for p-values the criteria is that the value must be lesser than or equal to 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, under Table 5 and Figure 2, it is visible that there is a significant association between Ethical Leadership and Intrinsic Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Performance, and Ethical Leadership and Employee Performance.

However, using Table 5 along with Table 6 it has also been visible that intrinsic motivation is a legitimate mediator between ethical leadership and employee performance. This can also be viewed through observing Table 6 which confirms the mediation through specific indirect effect. However, a more

comprehensive understanding can be achieved by checking Table 5 and Table 6 together which indicate that ethical leadership has a stronger association with intrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation has also a better association with employee performance as compared to the association of ethical leadership and employee performance (Direct Association)

Hence based on the above-mentioned points and illustration, it is better to reject H_1O , H_2O , H_3O , and H_4O

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm the theoretical triangulation based on social exchange theory and social learning theory. Therefore, legitimate to declare that theories & theoretical triangulation are in line with Tu and Lu (2016).

Hence the extension of the research model and the relationship of ethical leadership with employee performance also looks true and applicable in the Asian setting along with the high probability of a positive association in the higher education sector. Other than Tu and Lu (2016) model was also been developed by considering Bello (2012); Danish et al (2020); Khan et al. (2020) Li and Bao (2020); Yang and Wei (2017) and Yidong and Xinxin (2013). Therefore, legitimate to declare that the use of indications, postulates, models, and associations by all of these researchers are valid for the study, the higher education sector of Pakistan, and ethical leadership.

The claim is valid as the findings of the study confirm that there is a positive association between ethical leadership and employee performance as indicated by Malik et al (2016) and Tanoto and Tangkawarow (2023) but the presence of intrinsic motivation also causes an indirect association between ethical leadership and employee performance which affirms the postulates by Bedi et al. (2016) and Shareef and Atan (2019). The claims of Bedi et al. (2016) and Shareef and Atan look more effective by considering the path coefficient.

RECOMMENDATIONS & AREA FOR FURTHER STUDIES

After conducting a thorough analysis it has been recommended that organizations must try to enforce ethical leadership as it tends to make employees enjoy work-related tasks and activities. Enjoyment of work-related tasks and activities are main element to boosts employee job satisfaction (Halawi, 2024) and

the importance of the enjoyment of work is very important for the teaching profession (Bredmar, 2013), especially in the higher education sector (Pishchik, 2020). Therefore, it is better to use the implications and indications of this study to improve the education and higher education sector of Pakistan and other developing sides of the world. Therefore, further research work is deemed necessary on the role and significance of ethical leadership in the higher education sector. Therefore the use of this model may be linked with serial or parallel mediation to understand the impact more effectively.

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