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The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment: A Quantitative Analysis of Trust and Satisfaction as Mediating Mechanisms

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement and organizational commitment, with trust and job satisfaction examined as mediating mechanisms. We employed a quantitative cross-sectional design across 150 public and private organizations in manufacturing, healthcare, education, IT, and service sectors. Stratified random sampling yielded 1,000 participants, and after data cleaning, 982 valid responses were analyzed using SPSS 29, AMOS, and R. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, multiple linear regression, and structural equation modeling were conducted. The results demonstrated that 81.5% of employees perceived ethical behavior in their leaders, and those reporting high ethical leadership exhibited 28.4% higher engagement and 26.9% greater organizational commitment compared to those with low ethical leadership perceptions. Multiple linear regression identified ethical leadership as the strongest predictor of organizational commitment (standardized $\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), followed by employee engagement ($\beta = 0.39$), trust in leadership ($\beta = 0.34$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.29$), collectively explaining 75.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.753$). Pearson correlations revealed strong positive associations between ethical leadership and engagement ($r = 0.83$), commitment ($r = 0.80$), satisfaction ($r = 0.77$), and trust ($r = 0.79$). Structural equation modeling confirmed an excellent model fit ($CFI = 0.97$, $RMSEA = 0.043$), supporting trust and satisfaction as significant mediators. The novelty of this work lies in providing robust quantitative evidence that ethical leadership systematically enhances both engagement and commitment through these mediating pathways. Therefore, our findings underscore the critical role of integrity, transparency, and accountability in leadership for fostering sustainable organizational performance and employee retention. This research contributes actionable insights for leadership development and organizational strategy.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Employee Engagement, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Trust, Job Satisfaction.

Introduction

With the increasing complexity in the modern-day organisational environments and it being increasingly brought under the magnifying glass by the different stakeholders, ethical leadership has been at the fore front in management discourse (Kim and Lee, 2024). The importance of ethical leadership via personal behaviours and interactions in organisations, and its use of supportive tone message to followers, has been well studied as a requisite for sustainable organisational success (Ashfaq et al., 2021). The leadership style reflects a set of values: integrity, fairness, transparency, accountability and principled decision making, which have an impact on all the factors related to the employee environment of the organization and also, on important employee-related outcomes. Although the relationship between ethical leadership and employee positive behaviors is theorized, empirical studies in this field quantifying the specific mechanism by which the effect of ethical leadership occurs are still a critical study subject (Serang et al., 2024). The research is backed by 150 institutions from different private and public organizations, including manufacturing, health, education, information technology sector and service sectors and in a developing economy (Khorsheed, 2015). These structures reside in a variety of corporate governance and HRM frameworks, all of which to some extent create a complex innovation ecosystem (Rouse, 2022). Leadership behaviours and the connection between these and the dynamics of this ecosystem are important to recognise when developing effective strategies within the organisation (Snell et al., 2023). The variations in organizational structures, cultural norms/traditions found in each of these areas gives great context to explore and study regarding the universal elements of ethical leadership.

This study aimed to closely study the impact of ethical leadership on the two vital intangible elements of employees which are employee engagement and organizational commitment. Engagement in the context of employee performance relates to the nature of employees being whole at work rather than just being within the bounds of society they belong to (Employee's engagement is their being whole, not just social, Tamer 2021). For example, the psychological and social bonding of a person to an organization has an impact on the reluctance to leave that organization (Hakimi, 2025). Ethical leaders serve as an important positive factor to influence the positive outcomes of working together, as indicated in the central hypothesis of this study, which assumes that ethical leadership is a positive factor that influences engagement and organizational commitment, while trust in leaders and job satisfaction are an important factor that makes this relationship between ethical leadership and positive outcomes possible (Junaidi, 2024). This is an innovation in their work because quantitatively designed to gather broad empirical evidence to support the mediation of trust and/or satisfaction. Using a large-scale, cross-sectoral sample, and state-of-the-art statistical methods (structural equation modeling), a systematic analysis of the causal pathways between ethical leadership and better employee outcome is offered. This methodological rigor helps enhance the generalizability of our conclusions and gives organization development practitioners insightful guidance. Overall, the results presented in this research are of great importance because they can be part of the leadership development programmes, performance-oriented frameworks, and human resource policies aimed at fostering an ethical environment that will benefit not only the health of employees but also reduce the intentions of employee turnover and ensure the continuity of the company (Imam & Kim, 2023).

In Section 2, a literature search is conducted and existing theory and empirical research on ethical leadership, employee engagement/organizational commitment is presented. In Section 3, the reasons for this study are described. Section 4 provides a account of the evolution of the underpinning principles: research variables are identified and operationalised. The findings and conclusions of the study are discussed in Section 5. Section 6 concludes by providing recommendations for practitioners and

policies, and ideas for future research. Data collection techniques and the data analytic procedures were reflected in Section 3 about samples selection that has been discussed above. Since the empirical results are derived from descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression models and structural equation model, they are presented in section 4. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings, in relation with other literature and practice. Finally, Section 6 synthesizes the key contributions and points out some limitations and directions for further research.

Literature Review

Social exchange theory and social learning theory have been used to inform theories underpinning the understanding of how ethical leadership positively impacts on employee outcomes. Social exchange theory provides an explanation for why relationships are trustful and become loyal exchanges when working (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and it may relate to the speed relationships are built. If the leadership exhibits ethical behaviors such as being fair, conducting themselves with integrity and transparency, their employees become helpful in return and reciprocate back by engaging, committing and doing citizen behaviours. The interdependent relationship shows hypothesized intervening mechanisms that were explored in our study.

After the teaching of the model of ethical behaviour, these followers observe and imitate the ethical behaviours of the leaders they have integrated into them; they are activated by the values and ethical principles that are produced by their leaders, they observe and imitate ethical behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Ethical leaders are more likely to promote followers' acceptance of the standards of ethical behavior, their commitment to the organization and their prosocial behaviours for the organization. Because of the moral contagion mechanism, it's possible that ethical leadership not only directly affects the outcomes of the employees, but also has a ripple-effect throughout the entire hierarchy of an organization. Empirical research consistently has found employee engagement to be positively associated with ethical leadership. For instance, in the case of the study of employees in the banking sector of Pakistan, the researchers found that employee engagement increased due to ethical leadership with the mediating variable of employee self-efficacy and employee organizational commitment (Ashfaq et al., 2021). Similarly, the role of the healthcare personnel in managing their employee's ethical behaviors in Turkey had a significant affect on organizations' commitment and performance (Tamer, 2021). Our hypothesis, that ethical leadership has significant impact on improved employee states is corroborated with these findings.

The idea of associating ethical leadership with organizational commitment has also garnered ample interest. In terms of the relationship between ethical leadership and organization commitment, the results of the regression analysis indicated that the negative effect of ethical leadership on affective commitment among followers through the continued ethical behavior of ethical leaders has a positive value of 0.037. The result of the regression analysis showed that the negative effect of ethical leadership on affective commitment among followers through the continued ethical behaviour of ethical leader has positive value 0.037. This is because ethical behaviour creates an organisational climate which facilitates good feelings, safe feelings and valued feelings which ultimately translates into employees' feelings at the organisation level. Furthermore, it has been found that work engagement (Alam et al., 2021) mediates the relationship between ELeadership and organizational civility and commitment level.

Leadership ethical behaviour becomes apparent when operating as a mediating factor in the leader's ethical behaviour-outcomes relationship, making the phenomenon of trust in leadership more

prominent. This issue of 'trust in leadership' enters into the 'trust and ethical leadership–outcomes' relationship. This notion of 'trust in leadership' becomes relevant in the 'trust and ethical leadership–outcomes' relationship. If leaders are seen as being committed to ethical and responsible behavior, they will earn the trust and reliability of their team members, which will result in greater employee engagement and commitment (Ramlawati et al., 2023). In the same way, job satisfaction is a mediating role between ethical behaviours and communication, interaction and decision making in the job, which influences increased satisfaction with job condition and job supervisors. A multiple mediation model showed that simultaneous effects of ethical leadership acted on affective commitment and work engagement and further downstream impact was of creativity (Asif et al., 2019).

Although these converging results exist, there are still some gaps in the literature that remain. Existing studies have been largely in one industry and/or one country settings, and have not been generalizable. Furthermore, although the individual mediating mechanisms that have been investigated, such as trust or satisfaction have been looked at individually, there is a lack in the literature of rigorously quantifying both pathways through a structural equation modelling study in large cross-sectoral samples. The present study addresses these limitations by incorporating a large number of analyses using a two-actor mediator model for both trust and job satisfaction in organizations in a variety of industry sectors ranging from manufacturing to health care, education, information technology to service.

Furthermore, literature studies have mostly focused on engagement or organizational commitment as separate outcomes, whereas our research investigates engagement and organizational commitment as a single entity to gain an understanding of their interrelatedness. This comprehensive strategy is vital because people who are engaged are more apt to build strong organization affiliation and committed employees are more engaged. These outcomes are abstracted onto a single model and lead to a more holistic understanding of how ethical leadership relates to the employee-organizational relationship, and how it has multiple pathways of influencing it. Hence, the present study is valuable for its extensive quantitative findings, which comprehensively outline a chain of mediation between ethical leadership and engagement and commitment, providing theoretical advancements and some insightful practices for leadership development interventions.

Methodology

Research Design and Approach

To investigate the relation between ethical leadership, employee engagement, organizational commitment and mediations of proposed mechanisms (trust and job satisfaction), quantitative: cross sectional research design were used. This design was chosen because it allows multiple variables to be measured, and test the hypotheses of interest about these variables in the population of interest at a single time period. By applying the cross-sectional approach, the relationship strengths and directions of the associations between the latent constructs of perceived ethical leadership, trust, satisfaction, engagement, and commitment are especially appropriate. The epistemological aspects of the study employed the positivism paradigm, due to the belief of the researcher that there are relationships between variables which can be objectified qualitatively in social sciences by collecting and analyzing data systematically.

Study Area, Population and Sampling

The study took place in 150 public and private organisations in a context of developing economy, chosen to be representative of institutional settings and regulatory environment. New enterprises from the five sectors that these were supporting were in manufacturing, healthcare, education, information

technology and services. To preserve the external validity of our results, responses were sampled from across a sectoral diversity, and to provide an opportunity to test the hypothesized relationships between ethical leadership and employee outcomes in diverse organizational ecosystems. The target subjects of the majority of participants in any hierarchical position with the school contained different perceptions about leadership behaviour.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the participants. The sample was sampled according to sectors (manufacturing, healthcare, education, IT, and services), type of organizational (public versus private) and job position (managerial versus non managerial) post sampling. The sample was stratified based on following variables: sectors (manufacturing, healthcare, education, IT, services), type of organization (public versus private), and job position (managerial versus non managerial) post sampling. The samples were randomly drawn from within each stratum, by use of a computer-generated casual sample structure sequence. This method allowed for evenly distributed representation by sector and by job-level and helped to avoid selection bias. The first sample was of 1000 participants with 200 from each of the five sectors.

Data Collection Instruments and Variables.

Multiple constructs pertinent to the study were assessed with a structured questionnaire with primary data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Demographic information (age, gender, educational qualification, work experience, job position etc.) and items of the Likert scale which involved the perception about ethical leadership, employees' engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, trust in leadership, organizational citizenship behaviour, employee retention intention, workplace communication, and satisfaction with performance appraisal. All the products were rated from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

In addition to the primary survey data, secondary data were also gathered to complement the primary survey findings, from organizational reports, human resource records and corporate governance documents. This helped to establish the validity of self-reported measures and to provide objective data with which to compare the response to the survey within the context of the operational situation within each organization. Both primary and secondary data were collected, which helped to triangulate data and added to the methodology of the study.

To determine content validity, the instrument was reviewed referring to the very large list of available scales available in the literature and the validated test. Ethical leadership was measured using the scale of ethical leadership wherein ethical indicators of integrity, fairness, transparency, and accountability were measured. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used to measure employee engagement by looking at the three facets of Vigor, Deduction, and Absorption. Organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment was measured using the questionnaire of the Three-Component Model. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used to assess job satisfaction and a trust scale was used to assess the trust in leadership, which includes 4 scales that measure cognitive and affective views.

Data Preprocessing Procedures

Exemplary systems processing was carried out before the numeric data analysis. The number of respondents whose answers were incomplete, i.e. where more than 20% of the answers were left blank was discarded from the data set. The missing data points not obtained were imputed with the median value of each variable since the median can be used on ordinal level data such as Likert-scale and is insensitive to extreme movements. For coding of data, the categorical variables were numbered and

validity checks were made to check consistency of the coded variables and the categories of the original responses. Data were identified as outliers using the Interquartile Range method and any data below 1.5 times the interquartile range below the first quartile or above the third quartile plus 1.5 times the interquartile range are labelled for analysis. All the variables like time of trip, race distance, travelling time, speed etc. were finally normalized using Min-Max normalization so that all the data can be compared between two constructs that are measured on different units. Cronbach's Alpha has been used for testing the degree of reliability and it was accepted moderate, respectively 0.70.

Evaluation Indicators and Analytical Strategy

Several composite indices were developed to reduce the key constructs of interest to a single (or fewer) index. Standardization was done to all ethical leadership items, and the computation of the Ethical Leadership Index was by taking a simple mean of all the items. Similarly, scores for the Employee Engagement Index, Organizational Commitment Index, Job Satisfaction Score, Trust in Leadership Index, Organizational Citizenship Behavior Score, and Employee Retention Intention Index were standardized and then each score was computed as the mean of the measures of each indice. The indices which were the most frequently applied in the subsequent inferential analyses were pictured.

The analytical approach was in three steps. Each of the demographic and perceptual variables was subjected to descriptive statistics which describe the data and their distribution in the sample. The bivariate relationships between the composites—measured as Pearson correlation coefficients—were then analyzed in order to provide in initial insights into the relationships between ethical leadership and employee outcomes, the last step in this study. Third, the unique contribution of ethical leadership, employee engagement, trust in leadership and job satisfaction in predicting organizational commitment was determined after controlling the demographic covariates via multiple linear regression. Moreover, a structural equation modelling with the maximum likelihood estimation was performed to test hypothesized mediating processes. Based on the above, the research model proposed was direct relations between ethical leadership with employee commitment and organizational commitment, and a direct relationship between employee commitment with job satisfaction. The chi-square to d.f., comparative fit index, Tucker-Lewis index, and root mean square error of approximation were used to assess the fit for the model. Prior to the main analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model and the χ^2 to be that the latent constructs were sufficiently represented by the corresponding indicator items.

The statistical analysis techniques used are descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and the Amos software by using the method of confirmatory factor analysis. Further validation and descriptive statistics were carried out in R program (version 4.3); and, preliminary calculations and data management in MS EXCEL.

Results

The present study after careful scrutiny and verification of data 982 valid response were used to reveal the empirical Result in 6 subsections. The results give a picture of the demographics of the sample that was used, give a written description of the ethical leadership perceptions and outcomes of ethical leadership constructs and indicate major statistical relationships which served as tests for tests of the hypotheses of this study. In particular, the data about participants, the distribution of ethical leadership outcomes, comparisons of employee engagement and organizational commitment and the results of regression, correlation and structural equation modeling are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Participant Characteristics

After data pre-processing, 982 valid responses were left to analyze. Knowing the characteristics of this sample is important in interpreting and understanding the conclusions reached in this study and noting how much they will apply to other samples. The 150 organisations were sampled to be representative both in terms of organizational position and industry wide and the group of individuals participating was uniformly distributed.

In terms of the socio-demographic dimension, in the sample there were more men (54.1%) than women (45.9%), giving an overall quite balanced sample similar to the male/female distribution of the overall group of people employed in the organizational ecosystem studied. This means that the potential imbalance in perception between women and men in terms of what they experience as ethical leadership and its effect will diminish. This intentional stratification was done in a sectoral manner: 42.6% of participants were working in public sector organizations and the remaining 57.4% were working in private sector organizations. In doing so, a proportional representation of public and private institutional settings can be helpful in comparing the latter with the impact of ethical leadership, while taking into account different governance systems, structural forms of accountability and/or organizational cultures (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012).

Over three quarters of respondents reported over five years of work experience in their organizations: 63.8% had more than five years of work experience. This is especially applicable to a study investigating organizational commitment and employee engagement from a perspective of longer-time employees: they are more likely to know how to view leader ethics in a stable manner and have a stable emotional attachment to the organization. Rather, 36.2 percent have been with its ranks for 5+ years, signifying the point of view of newer members of the organization, which can differ from the older member's. Those employees with greater experience could provide more reliable perceptual measures as they would be in a better position to make judgements as they have a lot of experiences relating to leadership behaviours and organisation policies.

Another interesting difference emerged with regards to education and position in a job. An array of staff positions were represented, with a diversity of views about leadership practice from novices to seniors. In order to ensure the leadership's and follower's perspectives were captured in evaluating ethical leadership practices, some 38% of the respondents were identified as managers and supervisors. The rest of the respondents (62%) were not managerial staff, offering a full picture of the perception and experience of ethical leadership around organizational levels. This inclusiveness makes our measurements more valid because some employees at the different levels have different understanding and reaction to the behaviors of ethical leadership (Qin et al., 2014).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographic Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	54.1
Gender: Female	45.9
Sector: Public	42.6
Sector: Private	57.4
Work Experience: More than 5 years	63.8
Work Experience: 5 years or less	36.2

The aforementioned demographic profile featuring gender parity, combined with industry representation of public and private sector staff, and experienced staff is a good foundation for analyses to follow. The distribution of these samples is in good agreement with the stratified sampling targets and they illustrated satisfactory application of the sampling strategy (Table 1). This demographic context helps to inform the impacts of ethical leadership, and the tentative links between ethical leadership and employee engagement and total organization engagement in the following subsections. The diversity in the sample contributes to the external validity of the conclusions drawn from the study as a whole, and provides increased confidence that the results could not reflect a narrow the sample group, perhaps even a biased group.

Ethical Leadership Outcomes

This study analysed the perception of ethical leader and associated factors in every employee level of the sampled employees and indicated that in general, employees perceived that it was an employee who was ethical. Specifically, 81.5% of employees believed their leaders demonstrated ethical behaviour, that is, observed behaviours associated with integrity, fairness, transparency and accountability from their leaders/supervisors and senior management. 87% of people have had personal experience with an ethical leader, which signals its effectiveness in the organisational ecosystem studied to the extent that it is a happening action that can be reproduced. This finding aligns with previous studies associating ethical leadership with positive employee experiences and an organization's human resource practices (Kim and Lee, 2024).

In addition, 76.8% of the staff indicated high confidence in the intentions, competence and reliability of people in management, which is also a high level of trust. As stated in the introduction, one of the critical elements of the social exchange between leader and follower that becomes evident is trust within the relationship, which was determined as having a moderate level of trust in this sample, based on the factors of credibility and capital in the exchange relationship (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). The empirical evidence found here supports theory that places trust as a crucial effect of ethical leadership and as a conduit for leaders to impact other employee effects.

73.6% of workers were satisfied with organizational communication, which means that CPCs who are rated as ethical are likely to create an open, transparent communication culture. Transparency regard information sharing, a very important factor of ethical leadership, reduce uncertainty and improve psychological safety and belonging of employees (Hosseini et al., 2025). Ethical leaders foster an environment conducive to worker's expression by having a majority "Communicati". So when majority make a statement of "Communicati", it means that the ethical leaders have been successful in establishing an environment conducive to the expression of workers.

Also, 78.4% of the workers expressed their having a favorable attitude to the organization's culture, meaning they agreed with the values, norms, and practices of the organization. An ethical culture can be achieved by ethical leadership which includes engaging in ethical behaviour, holding people accountable and rewarding staff who exemplify integrity. Overall, the large percentage of employees indicating that they have experienced a positive culture further supports the idea that ethical leadership goes beyond a leaders' influence on their followers to impact the organizational culture.

Table 2. Distribution of Ethical Leadership Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Percentage of Employees Reporting Positive Perceptions (%)
Perceived ethical behavior in leaders	81.5
High trust in organizational leadership	76.8
Satisfaction with organizational communication	73.6
Positive organizational culture	78.4

The summary of the findings on ethical leadership, shown in Table 2, indicate that overall, the findings indicate that ethical leadership is also quite prevalent, and that it was found to be correlated with the prospects of positive organizational conditions. These high percentages in all four outcome measures indicates that ethical leadership is a coherent concept, and potentially improves at the same time both trust and satisfaction with communication and cultural positivity. The pattern overall proved the theoretical assumption was supported that the ethical leadership's impacts on organizational functioning are multiplicative (as per Sharma et al 2019). The existence of these perceptual outcomes with good distribution allows the subsequent analyses of employee engagement and organizational commitment to be done. Next the analyses of employee engagement and organizational commitment can be done, based on the good distribution of these perceptual outcomes of ethical leadership.

Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment

We explored the comparative effects of ethical leadership on the important employee indicators further based on the positive images of ethical leadership. To measure these impacts the employees were divided into two groups based on their answer to how do they perceive ethical leadership: high ethical leadership group (those who scored above the median on the Ethical Leadership Index) and low ethical leadership group (those who scored below the median on the Ethical Leadership Index). Speaking of the comparisons, dichotomization enabled the researchers to compare the mean scores of each of the five measures (Employee Engagement Measure, Organizational Commitment Measure, Job Satisfaction Measure, Organizational Citizenship Behavior Measure, and Retention Intentions Measure) between the two groups. The differences detected were highly significant and were constant across all of the outcomes studied.

That is, the improvement (gain) in level of employee engagement was seen between the employees in the high ethical leadership group and those in the low ethical leadership group, (+28.4%). The difference is large, implying that possessing a high degree of ethical, fair, and clear behavior from bosses fosters an employee's psychological attachment to their work, which leads to the greater vigour, dedication, and absorption levels. This is aligned with S.E.T (Aswhaf et al., 2021) which stipulates that ethical leadership regulation reciprocity among the employees when they believe that their leaders are honest and moral. The magnitude difference suggests the significance of ethical leadership practice on organisational involvement and engagement specifically when looking at an impact on the organisational level, as well as a pragmatic, easy to measure, impact in terms of this exercising energy.

Also, workers who felt they saw high ethics in leadership had 26.9% greater organizational commitment. This finding validates that employees feel more loyal and committed to and identify with their companies when they have high levels of ethical leadership. When leaders are viewed as ethical, they foster an ethical climate for employees that fosters feelings of fairness and respect that leads to an employees' greater desire for continued employment and participation in organizational objectives (Hakimi, 2025). The scale difference (26.9%) suggests that ethical leadership is not just a possible

secondary determinant of commitment, but is a significant determinant itself that may mean the difference between organizations with strong and weak commitments among their employees.

The job satisfaction of the high group of employees increased 24.6% compared to the low group of employees. Ethical leaders increase staff satisfaction in their interactions with staff, in the clarity they create in the process of making decisions both inside and outside the company, and in how they lead people, which covers the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness of employees (Ramlawati et al., 2023). Overall, this result reiterates the idea that satisfaction plays a pivotal role as a mediator between ethical leadership and organizational outcomes.

With high ethical leadership, organizational citizenship behavior is increased by 22.8% more when compared with all other treatment conditions or the discretionary behavior which employee shows towards company. In relation to organizational followers, obeying norms that are applied ethically is expected to make other organizational followers do the same when it comes to extra-role behavior, organizational colleague support, volunteer exiting the organization to get a new job and positive organizational climate (Imam & Kim, 2023). This finding highlights the spillover impact of ethical leadership from the role outside tasks.

Last, the positive intention to keep employees was 20.7% higher in the high ethical leadership group as compared with the rest of participants. Leaders are regarded as ethical and are likely to be seen as more likely to stay with an organisation, thus reducing the likelihood of attrition. The fact that this finding has important practical implications at the same time is related to the considerable costs that establishments pay when employees are rotated and ethical leadership is something that can be changed to improve the stability of the employees (Tamer, 2021).

Table 3. Comparative Outcomes by Ethical Leadership Perception

Outcome Variable	Improvement in High vs. Low Ethical Leadership Group (%)
Employee Engagement	+28.4
Organizational Commitment	+26.9
Job Satisfaction	+24.6
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	+22.8
Employee Retention Intention	+20.7

There seems to be a clear gradient of results, with retention intention showing the least amount of variation and employee engagement showing the largest, as shown in the profile of results from the graduate to the undergraduate survey, which can be found in Table 3. The hierarchy as suggested implies that psychological are the most immediate outcomes of ethical leadership, psychological the outcome of attitudinal and behavioural the outcome of psychological. The response to all five of the indicators is positive and consistent, which lends support for the overall conclusion that Ethical Leadership has a general and meaningful impact on the employee-organizational relationship. The following subsections explore the unique predictive power of ethical leadership, as well as the mediating processes between it and the indicators of effectiveness, using more complex multivariate analyses, that leads from the comparative findings.

Regression Analysis

In order to further quantify the contribution of ethical leadership and its related variables to organizational commitment, a multiple linear regression analysis was done. Ethical leadership, employee engagement, trust in leadership, job satisfaction were predictor variables and organizational commitment that was the dependent measure. Demographic factors (age, gender, educational qualification, work experience and job position) were retained in the first model, but not found to be significant and were dropped from the model to ensure model parsimony. The ultimate regression equation was fitted into SPSS software with the help of the Enter key.

Table 4 shows that all four predictor variables were statistically significant in accounting for variance in organizational commitment and were presented. Ethical leadership was the most predictive (standardized regression coefficient (β) = .47). This discovery suggests that when there is a one standard deviation change in the perceived ethical leadership, other factors being equal, organizational commitment changes 0.47 standard deviations. This is significant because, as predicted by the theoretical models which above describe ethical leadership as an important aspect of the social exchanges relationships between employees and their organizations, the coefficient is large and this aspect stands as an important one that employees consider with their attitude towards the organization.

Employee engagement (スタンダード化 ()) was the second most impactful factor. The results on organization satisfaction and psychological involvement were positive, suggesting that employees have a stronger commitment to organization, they feel more attached to their work tasks, they work with vigor and dedication, and they feel absorbed. For both of them, this positive relationship aligns with theory regarding engagement as a positive and satisfying experience, that would increase emotional linkage with the employing organization (Mazzetti et al., 2023). It should be noted that with engagement included as a predictor in addition to the ethical leadership, the effect of ethical leadership on commitment can be separated and examined in this study in the SEM, and has been demonstrated to be imperative in addition to its indirect impact on commitment through engagement.

Likewise, in regard to leadership, it turned out that it predicted a lot of the data (..). This is a testament to their faith in the worthiness, abilities and accountability of their boss to improve employee loyalty and commitment. Besides, there is a notable mediation effect of the relation between employee and the organization due to the ethical leadership-employee commitment relation, as ethical behaviours lead to increase in credibility and the decrease in uncertainty which consequently increases the relation of the employees in the organization (Eldridge et al., 2020). This idea of trust being a mediator between ethical leadership and commitment continued to grow strength as a result of the strong connection that was established between trust and ethical leadership via the strong proximal effects of trust on moral orientation and leadership and the direct impacts of trust on commitment.

The standardized (β) showed a comparison smaller effect size and was statistically significant for job satisfaction. It showed it is less likely than the other three factors (ethical leadership, engagement, and trust) that satisfaction has an effect on commitment. This lesser correlation could reflect differences in the dimensions measured—Commitment measures an attitudinal component reflecting a greater psychological investment whereas Job Satisfaction measures hedonic components of the job experience, and are therefore more strongly associated with other attitudinal dimensions, such as relational and value-based dimensions (Xu et al., 2023).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Organizational Commitment

Predictor Variable	Standardized β	p-value
Ethical Leadership	0.47	<0.001
Employee Engagement	0.39	<0.001
Trust in Leadership	0.34	<0.001
Job Satisfaction	0.29	0.002

The overall model was significantly significant with the variance of 75.3% in organizational commitment (, ,). The sum of the 4 predictor scores differentials demonstrates a very high frequency of the variance in the sample at large, which is significant when compared to other simple poisons and interests such as intelligence, predisposition, need for affiliation, and socialization score. This is especially robust because of the complexity of the construct of organizational commitment as it is affected by several different individual, job, and organizational factors. Three-quarters of the variance in attachment (based on the responses shown in Fig. 2) can be traced back to ethical leadership, lack of engagement, lack of trust and lack of satisfaction, highlighting the pivotal importance of these four for understanding how employees feel about their organization. All of the regression assumptions were confirmed with a diagnostic test. There were no serious concerns for multicollinearity due to all of the omega squared or variance inflation factors being < 10.00 for all predictors. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.89 which is within the range 1.5-2.5, indicating independence of residuals. The results of the residual plots were that they were approximately normally distributed and there were no signs of heteroscedasticity. All Cook's distances were < 1.0 indicating no observations were influential for the model's coefficients. The results of these regression analyses go a long way in substantiating the main hypothesis of the study that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of organizational commitment while other factors that are well known to predict organizational commitment such as level of engagement, trust and satisfaction are controlled. Additionally, employees' commitment is expected to be influenced by the employees' leader because of the theoretical dominance of Ethical Leadership as a source of employee commitment , and many research studies examining the relationship between Ethical Leadership and its dependent constructs have already established that the latter has positively influenced employees' commitment (Ng & Feldman, 2015). There were eight variables that were found and identified as existing as Category 2 variables which are significant, including engagement and trust. The additional significant pathways added two other variables: engagement and trust that will be explored with the structural equation model in Section 4.6.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient correlations were performed for all of the key constructs used in this study to identify the relationship between the constructs used together. The following correlations are offered as a descriptive approximation of the level and direction of the relationships between variables prior to multivariate analyses which will be reported in the previous sections. The findings, summarized in Table 5 below, show that there is a significant positive relationship between all construct pairs overall with particular attention to those pairs that involve the construct of ethical leadership.

Correlation analysis revealed high positive relations of ethical leadership and the employee engagement . The present findings verify that job functions with high perceptions of having good leadership behaviors – integrity, fairness, transparency and taking accountability – have high levels of psychological investment in that job type. However, these findings are a strong correlation, suggesting that employees that have the higher perceptions of ethical behaviors from their leaders see a corresponding increase in their psychological investment in their job functions, which include integrity,

fairness, transparency and taking accountability. It is important to note the size of this correlation, which has a value of about 69%, meaning that there is nearly 70% overlap in the variance for employee engagement and ethical leadership that is independent of the variance due to individual differences and organizational contexts. This is in line with the theory on social exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which states that treating people with kindness from their ethical leaders will in turn be rewarded by increased effort and commitment on the part of the employee. Furthermore, the results of the comparison in Section 4.3 indicated that people in this High Ethical Leadership group were more engaged (28.4% more) demonstrating convergence – both at group level and at variable/convenience level. Similarly, organizational commitment was also significantly predicted by ethical leadership. Association with the organization and employees' emotional commitment are good indicators of ethical leadership, depending on the main study hypothesis. There is about 64% of variance in the analytical model that is common to both ethical leadership and commitment. This suggests that commitment is not simply a dependent variable affected by ethical leadership, as the two seem to be more than just casually correlated; they are both fundamental to and basic drivers of one another across the broad range of organizational situations from which this sample derives. This relationship is similar to the past meta-analysis results which provide clear evidence of the positive relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment that averages between +.32 and Ng & Feldman (2015). The slightly higher coefficient in the present study could be due to the fact that ethical leadership was measured using a multi-dimensional index which includes all four aspects of ethical leadership—integrity, fairness, transparency and accountability – at the same time which could lead to a more global assessment of the construct. It was also observed that there is a positive correlation between ethical leadership and Job satisfaction. This positive attitude around ethical leadership is linked to a greater satisfaction of the overall job environment, such as aspects related to social relations with coworkers, organizational values and opportunities for training and development. Personal characteristics of ethical leaders comprise behaviours that are associated with satisfaction; in this instance, they are the behaviours that satisfy employees' three psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci 2000). There is a significant correlation between the two and approximately 59% of the variance is explained by the association with ethical leadership, making behavioural factors of the leader an important part of an employee's judging of their job.

Additionally, there was a high positive correlation between ethical leadership and trust in leadership (, .), as well as between personal values and trust in leadership (, .). The ethical leadership proposed by theory is supported by empirical evidence in establishing a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and leaders' credibility or relational trust in the leader-subordinate relationship. Based on the relationship between the implementing of the ethical leadership and the credibility or relational trust between the leader and the subordinate (subordinate), the relationship between the two is stated that the implementation of the ethical leadership builds credibility or relational trust between the leader and the subordinate. Leaders ethical behavior helps to reduce uncertainty of an employee about his/her leaders' truthfulness and benevolence. A good role model from a good leader will help the employees clearly understand how trustworthy they are and how kind they are. While the correlation between trusts and ethical leadership is substantively similar at around 62% shared variance, there is conceptual overlap between the two with ethical behaviour being seen as a manifestation of and a driver of trust.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Key Constructs

Construct	1	3	4	5	6	7
1. Ethical Leadership	1.00					
2. Employee Engagement	0.83**					
3. Organizational Commitment	0.80**	1.00				
4. Job Satisfaction	0.77**	0.71**	1.00			
5. Trust in Leadership	0.79**	0.73**	0.69**	1.00		
6. Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.71**	0.65**	0.62**	0.66**	1.00	
7. Employee Retention Intention	0.69**	0.72**	0.63**	0.64**	0.61**	1.00

*Note. ** $p < 0.001$ for all correlations. All indices are composite scores standardized through Min-Max normalization.*

Inter-correlations between all other important constructs demonstrated respective high and positive values and were always significant as illustrated in Table 5. The correlations of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and the trust in leadership with employee engagement were high. Overall, there were also high correlations between organizational commitment and job satisfaction, respectively trust in leadership. The intercorrelations reveal that constructs are not inherently independent, but form a nomological network around the concept of ethical leadership, which are consistent with theoretical models that view commitment as a part of a general nomological network made up of a variety of closely related but distinct endogenous outputs such as engagement, satisfaction, and trust that are shaped by ethical leadership (Mozumder, 2018).

In addition, all values along the entire matrix (ranging from to) are fairly consistent in both size and direction, meaning that the variables measured are indeed measuring a phenomenon and that the positive leadership behaviors are consistently correlated to positive employee attitudes/behavioral intentions. The weak or negative correlations seen in the matrix, overall, further reinforce the theoretical position that an ethical leader is a positive resource and has multiplicative effects for multiple outcomes of his/her employees (Sharma et al., 2019). These are general correlations that confirm the general

tendency found in the regression results that were reported in Section 4.4, and can be taken together as a set of results that indicate the inter-relationships between the study variables (as set up for the analysis in the next subsection).

Structural Equation Modeling

We used structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation to thoroughly evaluate hypothesized mediating processes in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement and organizational commitment. There are also a number of advantages to this form of analysis over other forms of regression analysis: It can estimate multiple direct and indirect relationships simultaneously and non-measurable measurement error within the latent constructs can be introduced into this method of analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In this study, the factor loading items for each model in the measurement model were compared with the recommended threshold ($PL > 0.60$). The result of the confirmatory factor analysis showed that the items measured the construct of ethical leadership, trust in leadership, job satisfaction, employee engagement and organizational commitment had good representation of the latent construct.

The structural model proposed ethical leadership as the exogenous model and believed first order mediators – trust in leadership, job satisfaction – form a chain between ethical leadership and employee engagement, thereby predicting organizational commitment. This theory-based serial mediation is in line with the theoretical statements based on social exchange theory, in which ethical leadership creates trust and satisfaction, then satisfaction has a direct impact on an employee's engagement, which then contributes to higher organizational commitment (Elkhweeldi et al., 2025). To assess the partial mediation, the direct path between ethical leadership and the engagement/commitment was also added in the model as well.

In regard to these fit indices, as presented in Table 6, the proposed theoretical model is seen to provide a good empirical support for the hypothesized mediating pathways, since the overall fit is very good. Remarkable in this context is the excellent model fit, also in the model that was constructed and confirmed in this study showing multiple latent variables and indirect effects, it represents the strong foundation of the theoretical model developed.

Table 6. Structural Equation Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Observed Value	Recommended Threshold
Chi-square/df (χ^2/df)	2.05	< 3.0
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.97	> 0.95
Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)	0.96	> 0.95
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.043	< 0.05

The path coefficient of all the models confirmed some important findings related to the structural model that offers support to the hypotheses of the study. Ethical leadership – trust in leadership was a positive direct path with standardized with another standardized value indicating that ethical leadership in its whole life style—characterized as ethical, fair and transparent in all form of leadership—is perceived as trust in leadership by followers. Similarly, there was a strong relationship between employees' attitudes toward their experiences (satisfaction with their jobs) and their leader's behavior toward them (ethical leadership), with an ethical leader's attitudes being related to the attitudes of subordinates. This

result is consistent with past studies that showed that ethical leadership had a positive impact on employee trust and satisfaction (Reuben et al., 2024).

Trust in leaders had significant direct impact on employee engagement as did Job satisfaction. The correlations between the level of trust and engagement, as well as between job satisfaction and engagement were and . The results reported here suggest that trust in leaders and satisfaction with their jobs would go along with work psychology – as represented by increased vigor, willingness to dedicate and absorption. Moreover, the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement held after controlling for the mediating factors of trust and satisfaction was significant but withtenuant , representing partial mediation. The indirect positive and negative relationships between moral leadership, satisfaction and trust are typically posited to account for leadership's relationship to engagement. The pattern of direct and indirect relationships of moral leadership, trust and satisfaction is hypothesized to provide explanations for the influence of moral leadership on engagement.

Indeed, organizational commitment emerged as an excellent predictor of employee engagement , suggesting that employee engagement may be superior in predicting employees' feelings for their organizations. The ethical leadership to organizational commitment (B) link was also statistically significant, but became slightly weaker after the control of the engagement pathway , confirming the engagement pathway link between the two existed and could be argued as a partial mediation between the two. This seems to help justify theory suggesting there is a link between the proximal consequences of leadership and engagement, and that these later consequences of engagement are a prerequisite for more distant consequences like commitment (Ashfaq et al., 2021).

The results of the SEM confirm and complement the regression analysis results presented in Section 4.4. In line with the regression model, ethical leadership emerged as the most important determinant of organizational commitment (), although the SEM revealed an indirect effect between ethical leadership and organizational commitment through the mediator of engagement, in addition to trust and satisfaction. Direct effect caused by ethical leadership is also a bit lower in the SEM compared to regression coefficient because the SEM indirect effect is divided into direct and indirect effects. The decomposition provides a deeper understanding of the connections between ethical leadership and commitment, and the significance of the mediating process.

Besides, the very good model fit supports the convergent validity of the measurement tools in this study. All the indicator items have high factor loadings meaning that the composite indices in Section 3.5 provide a good reflection of underlying constructs. Results of structural model test obtained between the measures of correlation and the regression model was in the moderation range with reliable path (structural model) coefficient, including results of the test of the path (strong path) both can provide support for the structural model. These SEM findings were synthesized in the meantime from the descriptive result, the bivariate result, the theory and the variables found from the descriptive and bivariate SEM which was explained earlier to form a quantitative result. SEM results are the final results are produced in the final stage of the quantitative data analysis stage (all previous results in descriptive and bivariate were compiled into a whole and expressed in general terms so that the shape of a variable that affects the research results can be concluded and increase theories that explain the relationship between ethical leadership and employee outcomes.

Discussion

This has repercussions for practice and policy for organizational leaders, human resource people and policymakers. First, it was discovered that ethical leadership was the single most significant predictor

of organizational commitment, more so than engagement and satisfaction combined, or even engagement and trust (as much as 55% variance). It implies that investing in growing ethical leadership abilities utilizing training and improvement years, performance measurement models that are shown to promote moral values, and hiring procedures that value honesty may reap significant benefits for employees' loyalty and stability. For instance, if a particular organisation has experienced a high staff turnover, the organisation could provide leadership training programmes that directly target the factor that has resulted in low commitment within the organisation as found by this investigation in the form of ethical decision making, transparency in communication and accountability mechanisms. Second, by showing that under high ethical leadership, engagement is 28.4% higher, and commitment is 26.9% higher, it becomes clear that practitioners need to invest time and effort on high ethical leadership as a strategic business endeavor that positively impacts engagement and commitment of their employees. Considering public sector organizations are often constrained by their bureaucratic structures, and some public sector employees have less external motivation than the formal motivations they already experience, ethical leadership may be particularly valuable here, where 42.6% of the 102 organizations sampled exist. Thirdly, correlation analysis revealed ethical leadership positively related to both OCB and retention intention, meaning that ethical leadership in the organization leads to the emergence of employees who perform above their duty and are ready to stay in the organization. These can serve as reference points for human resource employee engagement questionnaires and as a reference for the correlation of leadership evaluation.

The present study is located in the above restrictions and several motives can be formulated for studying the matter further, which are logical extensions of the considerations that have been given. Another need is to repeat the studies in the future to capture any shifts over time in attitudes towards ethical leadership, and changes in the perceptions of employee engagement/commitment in relation to shifts in ethical leadership. Similar research could provide avenues for applying experience sampling to capture the shifts in ethical leadership perceptions and its effect on employee mood and behaviour with respect to the project throughout the day. Future research should also investigate the effect of moderators of these relationships found in this research such as organizational climate for ethics, industry norms and organizational culture. In certain industries, such as healthcare and the financial sector, where values are clearly defined and adhered to, perhaps is it that in those segments trust and satisfaction becomes more relevant than in less regulated sectors, like tech startups? Additionally, there are some areas that have been little explored and studied like: the exploration of the effect of ethical leadership in certain boundary conditions related to the personality traits of the employee (e.g., conscientiousness, moral identity) and related to the personality trait/disposition of the ethical leader (e.g., authenticity of ethical leadership, moral reasoning). Further studies could build on this research by investigating specific ways in which ethical leadership is related to employee engagement, such as psychological safety and meaningful work as another mediating factor, as hypothesis put forward by CV & MA (2024). In addition, studies based on experimental manipulation of ethical leadership behaviors (such as providing ethical feedback to leaders; coaching leaders in transparent decision-making processes) would lead to more compelling causal inference and policy implications for organizational development and change.

Conclusion

The present study aimed at evaluating the effects of ethical leadership on employee engagement and organizational commitment, while trust and job satisfaction were found to be mediators. It is then summarized, this ethical leadership has characteristics of integrity, fairness, transparency and accountability is one of the basis for determining employees' positive outcomes. The quantitative findings corroborated the above results, which revealed that three models exploring the connection

between ethical leadership (facet) dimensions and employee evaluations of engagement, commitment and intention to leave were all highly significant, with trust and satisfaction serving as mediators between the variables in these models. This research further supplements the relevant literature by establishing the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment for the first time empirically, in a sequential manner, in which the sequential process of enhanced trust and satisfaction leads to greater engagement, and therefore, ethical leadership is positively linked to processes and outcomes within the organisation. Therefore, this study elucidates the manner of ethical leadership, supports the theoretical predictions of social exchange theory, and extends the theory with identifying involvement as a 'proximal' predictor of commitment.

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