



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

Dr. Sonia Sethi ¹, Dr. Hina Saleem ², Daniya Rehan ³

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63544/jbii.v5i9.192>

Affiliations:

¹ Lecturer, Department of Management Sciences, Islamia College Peshawar, Pakistan

Email: sonia.sethi@icp.edu.pk

² Assistant Professor, IBIT, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Email: hsaleem@ibitpu.edu.pk

³ MPhil, Management Sciences, Institute of Administrative Sciences, The University of the Punjab, Lahore

Email: daniya.rehan@hotmail.com

Corresponding Author's Email:

² hsaleem@ibitpu.edu.pk

Copyright:

Author/s

License:



Article History:

Received: 28.07.2026

Accepted: 18.08.2026

Published: 02.09.2026

Abstract

Purpose: This study explores how ethical leadership is associated with employees' commitment to educational institutions and examines whether job satisfaction helps explain this association.

Design/Methodology/Approach. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among employees of educational institutions using a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. The quality of the measurement model was established through reliability and validity assessments, while the proposed relationships were tested using R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , path coefficients, and bootstrapping.

Findings. The findings demonstrate that employees' perceptions of ethical leadership are positively associated with both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In addition, employees who reported greater satisfaction with their jobs also showed stronger commitment to their institutions. The mediation analysis further revealed that job satisfaction provides a significant pathway linking ethical leadership with organisational commitment. The model explains 57.4% of the variance in job satisfaction and 63.8% of the variance in organisational commitment.

Research Limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and the sample was drawn from a specific geographical context, which may restrict generalizability. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs and larger, more diverse samples.

Practical Implications. For educational institutions, developing fair, transparent, responsible, and supportive leadership practices may contribute to a more committed and stable workforce. Institutions should focus on enhancing working conditions, employee recognition, professional development, and workplace relationships to improve both job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Originality/Value. This study contributes to the literature by examining ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment within one integrated mediation model in the context of Pakistani educational institutions, addressing a gap in the existing research.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment, Educational Institutions, SmartPLS

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The role of leadership is becoming a more significant factor to the attitudes of employees and the effectiveness of an organisation, especially in educational institutions where employees are required to carry out professional, academic and social duties at the same time. Leadership effectiveness in these environments goes beyond the mere attainment of institutional goals, and encompasses the way that leaders wield authority, make decisions, communicate with staff, and address ethical issues. Ethical leadership has thus been increasingly discussed as it focuses on fairness, integrity, responsibility, transparency and respect in leader-follower relationships. Empirical studies in recent years have shown that ethical leadership is correlated with positive attitudes and behaviours of employees, such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, trust, and organisational justice (Özdoğru & Sarier, 2024; Dinc & Kocyigit, 2017). In a recent study, which included



47 empirical studies and 18,423 participants, the relevance of ethical leadership in education was highlighted by the strong positive relationships between ethical leadership and job satisfaction and organisational commitment of teachers (Özdoğru & Sarier, 2024).

1.2 Problem Statement

Ethical leadership is concerned with appropriate moral behaviour by leaders and the promotion of moral behaviour by followers. The conceptualisation of ethical leadership was first developed by Brown et al. (2005), however, research in recent years has continued to show its relevance in the current organisational issues. Ethical leaders model behaviour with regard to honesty, fairness, accountability and responsible decision-making for employees. These behaviours are particularly important in educational organisations as institutional leaders have a significant impact on decisions relating to workload, promotion, evaluation, recognition, professional development and allocation of organisational resources. If employees feel these processes are fair and transparent, they can have more positive attitudes towards their leaders and institutions. Recent studies in the field of education have also demonstrated that ethical leadership has the potential to foster ethical workplace conduct and desired employee outcomes within the organisation (Guo et al., 2023). Despite growing research on ethical leadership, limited studies have directly tested job satisfaction as a mediator between ethical leadership and organisational commitment in higher education, particularly in Pakistan. This study addresses this gap by examining all three constructs within one model using a quantitative, cross-sectional design and PLS-SEM through SmartPLS (Hasan et al., 2023; Nawaz et al., 2022).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

2.1.1 Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977) provides a theoretical basis for understanding the importance of ethical leadership. Employees watch and model the behaviour of leaders and may then mimic behaviours that seem appropriate, rewarded or socially valued. Bandura's theory is a basic one and predates the five-year empirical literature requirement but is theoretically relevant to understanding the role of leaders as important models of behaviour. This view is supported by recent evidence, which shows that the psychological and organisational mechanisms between ethical leadership and employees' attitudes and behaviours are present (Guo et al., 2023; Muhammad & Shujjaudin, 2023). Muhammad and Shujjaudin (2023) in higher education institutions in Pakistan, found that ethical leadership can foster an ethical climate which in turn can lead to employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment.

2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) supports the view that fair and supportive treatment promotes positive employee responses. This theory suggests that when employees feel they are treated fairly and supportively, they are likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours towards their organisation. Ramlawati et al. (2023) and Limpo and Junaidi (2023) found that job satisfaction helps connect ethical leadership with organisational commitment.

2.2 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is a growing field of organisational research due to the fact that employees' perceptions of fairness, integrity, responsibility and transparency can have a noteworthy impact on their attitude towards their work and organisation. In general, ethical leadership is defined as the way leaders behave in their personal conduct and interpersonal relationships and how they encourage followers to behave (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leadership focuses on responsible decision making, justice and value-centred practices which affect the effectiveness of the institution and employees' perceptions. Leadership styles and governance practices are crucial to the functioning of an organization within educational institutions (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2023a; Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025).

The significance of ethical leadership in educational institutions is particularly high, since the school's principal, the university's administration, and the academic management have to make decisions about workload, promotion, performance assessment, professional development, recognition, and organisational resources. Hence, the working relationship between the employees and the leader of the institution is often used to assess organisational justice. Cansoy et al. (2021) found that ethical leadership was positively



associated with teachers' job satisfaction and ethical climate. Similarly, Hasan et al. (2023) reported a significant positive effect of ethical leadership on job satisfaction among 386 faculty members in Balochistan, Pakistan, using SmartPLS. Their findings also identified organisational commitment and psychological empowerment as mediators.

2.3 Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects employees' overall feelings and evaluation of their work and is an important concept in organisational behaviour. Locke (1976) viewed it as an employee's positive or negative response to their job experiences. Leadership is among the factors that can shape these perceptions, particularly when leaders promote fairness, respect, trust, communication, and support. Employees tend to experience greater job satisfaction when leaders value their input, acknowledge their contributions, implement policies fairly, and maintain transparent communication. When leaders behave ethically and supportively, their employees have better experiences at work as they feel valued, trusted, and supported in a positive organizational climate.

There are leadership factors that affect the psychological outcomes and job-related attitudes of employees such as recognition and workload management (Asif & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2026). In addition, institutional support and professional working environments (Bukhari et al., 2025; Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2023b) are the other factors that have an impact on teachers' well-being. Cansoy et al. (2021) reported a positive relationship between ethical leadership and teachers' job satisfaction, partly explained by the ethical climate within schools. Research from Pakistan provides similar evidence. Ejaz et al. (2022) found positive links among ethical leadership, job satisfaction, worker well-being, and employee voice among university faculty. Nawaz et al. (2022) likewise reported a significant relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction using SmartPLS. Hasan et al. (2023) confirmed this relationship among faculty members in Pakistani higher education.

H1: Ethical leadership has a significant impact on job satisfaction.

2.4 Ethical Leadership and Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is the employees' psychological bonding and identification with the organisation. The three-component model of Meyer and Allen (1991) is still a basic model, which separates affective, continuance and normative commitment. The framework is an older one, but still serves as a theoretical basis for current empirical studies. Ethical leadership can foster organisational commitment as it can build trust and make the employees feel that they are important to the organisation. Ethical leadership fosters employees' attachment to organizations by building the trust, fairness, and commitment-oriented relationship between employees and organizations.

Good leadership practices in educational institutions help increase the effectiveness of the organization and boost employee morale (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2023a; Rafiq-uz-Zaman et al., 2025b). If employees feel that leaders are fair, honest and supportive, they might feel more attached to the organisation's goals and be more likely to stay in the organisation. There are strong indications in recent research for this relationship. In the education sector, ethical leadership was found to be positively associated with organisational commitment (Guo et al., 2023). Zehra et al. (2022) in Pakistan revealed that there was a positive correlation between ethical leadership, perceived work environment and organisational commitment among school teachers in Karachi. They employed PLS-SEM for quantitative analysis, and 560 teachers participated in their study.

H2: Ethical leadership has a significant impact on organisational commitment.

2.5 Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment

Job satisfaction and organisational commitment represent different dimensions of employees' workplace attitudes, although they are closely associated. Job satisfaction reflects how employees perceive and feel about their jobs, while organisational commitment refers to the degree of attachment and loyalty they develop towards their institution. Employees who have positive experiences at work may develop a stronger sense of belonging and greater commitment to their organisation.

Recent empirical evidence supports this relationship. Nguyen et al. (2024), in a study of 418 employees using PLS-SEM, found positive relationships between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment, with psychological capital helping to explain these associations. Evidence from educational



settings provides further support. Nguyen et al. (2024) examined educational managers in Vietnam using SmartPLS 4 and found that job satisfaction positively influenced organisational commitment. The study also identified person–organisation fit and workplace enjoyment as positive moderators of this relationship. Similarly, Ramlawati et al. (2023) found that job satisfaction played an important mediating role between ethical leadership and organisational commitment.

H3: Job satisfaction has a significant impact on organisational commitment.

2.6 Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

The direct effect of ethical leadership on organisational commitment may not fully explain employees' attachment to their institutions. Job satisfaction may provide an important pathway, as ethical leadership can promote fairness, trust, support, and recognition, thereby improving satisfaction and commitment. This argument aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that positive treatment encourages favourable employee responses.

Recent evidence supports this mechanism. Job satisfaction is a psychological mechanism that could mediate the relationship between employees' organizational outcomes and leadership behaviours. If the leaders establish supportive and ethical environment in the workplace, then the employees' satisfaction level will be high, leading to higher organizational commitment (Asif & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2026; Fatima et al., 2025). Ramlawati et al. (2023) identified job satisfaction and engagement as important links between ethical leadership and organisational commitment. Hasan et al. (2023) also found a significant relationship between ethical leadership and faculty job satisfaction in Balochistan.

H4: Job satisfaction significantly mediates between ethical leadership and organisational commitment.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and theoretical foundations, the following conceptual framework is proposed:

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



2.7. Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

RO1. To examine the direct effect of ethical leadership on job satisfaction

RO2. To examine the direct effect of ethical leadership on organisational commitment

RO3. To examine the direct effect of job satisfaction on organisational commitment

RO4. To investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment

2.8 Research Questions

Correspondingly, the study poses four research questions:

RQ1. Does ethical leadership significantly influence job satisfaction in educational institutions?

RQ2. Does ethical leadership significantly influence organisational commitment in educational institutions?

RQ3. Does job satisfaction significantly influence organisational commitment in educational institutions?

RQ4. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment?



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Philosophical Orientation

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional approach to examine the associations between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment within educational institutions. This design was appropriate for testing the proposed hypotheses and determining the statistical relationships among the study variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data were gathered at one point in time from academic and administrative employees who were selected purposively because of their relevant experience with institutional leadership (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of academic and administrative employees working in educational institutions. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had relevant experience with institutional leadership and were willing to participate in the study. The sample size was determined based on the requirements of PLS-SEM analysis, which recommends a minimum sample size of 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at a particular construct (Hair et al., 2021).

3.3 Instrument Development

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used for primary data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

Section A: Demographic information (gender, age, education, job position, experience)

Section B: Measurement items for the three constructs

Ethical Leadership: Assessed using the scale of Brown et al. (2005) with 6 items. Sample items include: "My leader listens to what employees have to say" and "My leader disciplines employees who violate ethical standards."

Job Satisfaction: Measured through Spector's (1997) scale with 5 items. Sample items include: "I feel satisfied with my job" and "I enjoy my work."

Organisational Commitment: Measured using Meyer and Allen's (1991) instrument with 6 items. Sample items include: "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation" and "I am proud to tell others that I work for this institution."

All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed to employees of educational institutions. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The questionnaire was administered either in person or through online platforms, depending on the accessibility of participants. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of responses was provided to all participants.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted with SmartPLS using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The analysis followed a two-stage approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988):

Stage 1: Measurement Model Assessment

1. Indicator loadings (≥ 0.70 recommended)
2. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability ≥ 0.70)
3. Convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE ≥ 0.50)
4. Discriminant validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio, HTMT < 0.85)

Stage 2: Structural Model Assessment

1. Collinearity assessment (VIF < 5)
2. Path coefficients and significance (bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples)
3. Coefficient of determination (R^2)
4. Effect size (f^2)
5. Predictive relevance (Q^2)



6. Mediation analysis (specific indirect effects).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study followed appropriate ethical measures on informed consent, voluntary participation, respondent anonymity and data security. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights to withdraw at any time. The study did not collect data on participant identities, and the grouped data set was maintained for study and analysis only. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely and accessible only to the research team.

4. Results and Analysis of the Study

This chapter reports the findings concerning ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. PLS-SEM using SmartPLS was employed to assess the proposed relationships and mediation effect (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis involved two main stages: measurement model assessment and structural model assessment.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Before testing the proposed structural paths, the measurement model was assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs. Hair et al. (2021) recommend indicator loadings of around 0.708 or higher, composite reliability values between 0.70 and 0.95, and AVE values of 0.50 or above.

4.1.1 Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

Table 1.

Outer Loadings of Measurement Items

Construct	Item	Loading
Ethical Leadership	EL1	0.812
	EL2	0.846
	EL3	0.791
	EL4	0.824
	EL5	0.858
	EL6	0.779
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.821
	JS2	0.847
	JS3	0.805
	JS4	0.876
	JS5	0.814
Organisational Commitment	OC1	0.834
	OC2	0.871
	OC3	0.812
	OC4	0.856
	OC5	0.823
	OC6	0.794

All outer loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming satisfactory indicator reliability. The highest loading was found for EL5 (0.858), JS4 (0.876), and OC2 (0.871), indicating these items strongly represent their respective constructs.

4.1.2 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 2.

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Ethical Leadership	0.901	0.804	0.925	0.674
Job Satisfaction	0.899	0.902	0.924	0.710
Organisational Commitment	0.708	0.712	0.930	0.689

All constructs satisfy the recommended criteria:

- Cronbach's alpha and rho A values exceed 0.70



- Composite reliability values exceed 0.90
- AVE values exceed 0.50

These results confirm satisfactory internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for all three constructs.

4.1.3 Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Table 3

Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Matrix

Constructs	Ethical Leadership	Job Satisfaction	Organisational Commitment
Ethical Leadership	—		
Job Satisfaction	0.784	—	
Organisational Commitment	0.756	0.821	—

All HTMT values remain below the 0.85 criterion (Henseler et al., 2015), with the highest value of 0.821 observed between Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment. This confirms satisfactory discriminant validity and indicates that the three constructs are empirically distinct.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

4.2.1 Collinearity Assessment

Table 4

Inner VIF Values

Predictor	Dependent Construct	VIF
Ethical Leadership	Job Satisfaction	1.000
Ethical Leadership	Organisational Commitment	2.612
Job Satisfaction	Organisational Commitment	2.612

The VIF values range from 1.000 to 2.612, all falling below the recommended threshold of 5. This confirms that multicollinearity is not problematic.

4.2.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 5

Coefficient of Determination

Construct	R^2
Job Satisfaction	0.574
Organisational Commitment	0.638

The findings indicate that ethical leadership explains 57.4% of the variance in job satisfaction, while ethical leadership and job satisfaction jointly account for 63.8% of the variance in organisational commitment. These values indicate strong explanatory power.

4.2.3 Effect Size (f^2)

Table 6

Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2	Effect
Ethical Leadership → Job Satisfaction	1.345	Large
Ethical Leadership → Organisational Commitment	0.126	Small–Medium
Job Satisfaction → Organisational Commitment	0.287	Medium

The results indicate that ethical leadership has a large effect on job satisfaction. Its direct effect on organisational commitment is relatively smaller, while job satisfaction demonstrates a medium effect on organisational commitment.

4.2.4 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Table 7

Predictive Relevance

Construct	Q^2
Job Satisfaction	0.401



Organisational Commitment

0.436

Both Q^2 values are greater than zero, confirming that the structural model has adequate predictive relevance.

4.2.5 Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effects)

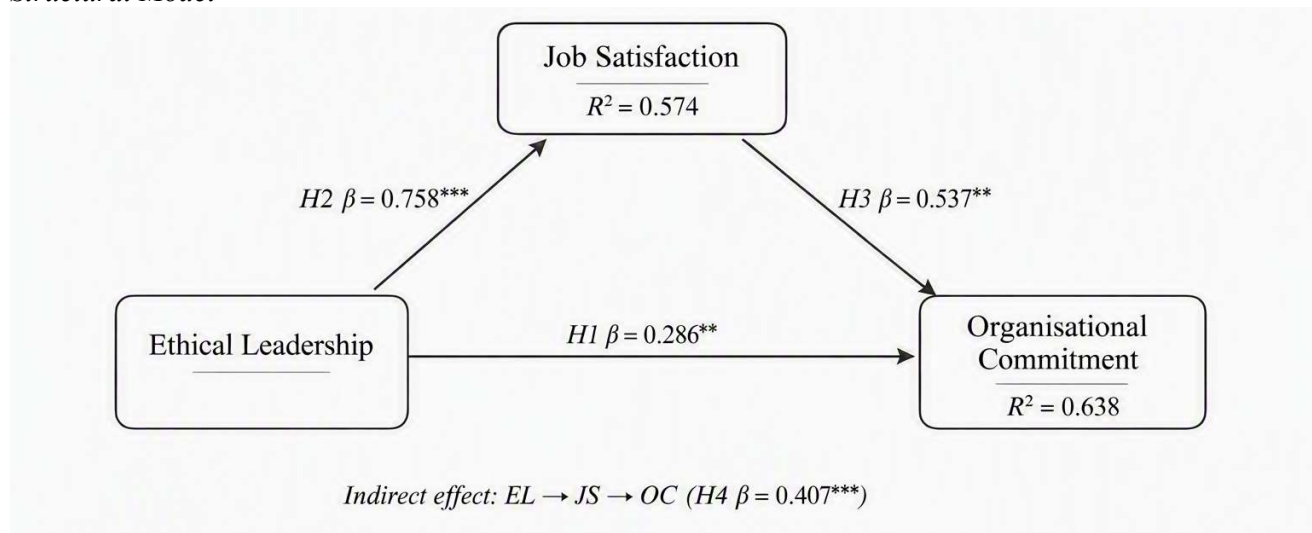
Table 8

Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	EL $\rightarrow$ OC	0.286	0.061	4.689	0.004	Supported
H2	EL $\rightarrow$ JS	0.758	0.038	19.947	0.000	Supported
H3	JS $\rightarrow$ OC	0.537	0.064	8.391	0.001	Supported

Figure 2

Structural Model



4.2.6 Mediation Analysis (H4)

Table 9

Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H4	EL $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ OC	0.407	7.679	0.000	Supported

The results reveal a significant positive indirect effect ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for H4. Because the direct effect of ethical leadership on organisational commitment also remained significant, the findings indicate partial mediation. Thus, ethical leadership contributes to organisational commitment both directly and through employees' job satisfaction.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the empirical results in the context of the theoretical background and existing literature. The findings supported all four hypotheses, demonstrating positive relationships between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment, with job satisfaction serving as a significant mediator.

5.1 Ethical Leadership and Organisational Commitment (H1)

H1 proposed a positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment, which was supported by the results. The significant positive path ($\beta = 0.286$, $p = 0.004$) indicates that employees are more likely to feel attached to their educational institutions when they perceive their leaders as fair, honest, trustworthy, and responsible. This finding is consistent with the social learning perspective (Bandura & Walters, 1977), which suggests that employees observe and learn from their leaders' conduct. Brown et al. (2005) similarly argued that ethical leaders demonstrate appropriate behaviour and communicate clear ethical standards, which can shape employees' attitudes and responses.



If employees consistently see ethical behaviour from leaders, they might have more trust in management and have a more positive view of the organisation. These perceptions can help to build greater organisational attachment. The finding is also in line with Neubert et al. (2009), who reported a positive relationship between ethical leadership and affective organisational commitment. Likewise, Ng and Feldman (2015) found that ethical leadership was positively related to organisational commitment. Educational institutions also provide supporting evidence. Akar (2018) found a positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment in education organisations. This relationship can be significant in educational institutions, as leaders make decisions that impact the professional lives of employees, such as workload allocation, promotion, recognition, evaluation and professional development.

5.2 Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction (H2)

The second hypothesis was related to the effect of ethical leadership on job satisfaction. The results show a high positive correlation between the two constructs ($\beta = 0.758$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that ethical leadership can be a significant factor in employees' positive job perceptions. This result is similar to the result of Brown et al. (2005), who found follower satisfaction as an important outcome of ethical leadership. This finding is also in line with Neubert et al. (2009) finding that ethical leadership is positively related to job satisfaction.

The strong link between ethical leadership and job satisfaction could be attributed to the direct impact that leaders have on employees' work experiences. Ethical leaders should be fair, listen to their concerns, communicate honestly and make decisions according to consistent standards. This can lead to feelings of injustice being lowered and respect and organisational support being raised among employees. The discovery is particularly applicable to schools. In the context of higher education institutions in Balochistan, Pakistan, Hasan et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and faculty job satisfaction, revealing that ethical leadership had a significant impact on faculty job satisfaction. This further supports the argument of the importance of ethical leadership for enhancing employees' work experience in the context of Pakistan's education system.

5.3 Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment (H3)

The third hypothesis suggested that job satisfaction is positively related to organisational commitment. The results corroborate this relationship ($\beta = 0.537$, $p = 0.001$). Organisational commitment is more likely to be seen when employees are more satisfied with their work. This is in line with the conceptualisation of job satisfaction given by Locke (1976). If the employees have positive attitudes towards their work experiences, they are likely to have more positive attitudes towards their organisation.

Leadership satisfaction, working conditions, recognition, relationships and professional opportunities can thus be a factor in organisational attachment. Another explanation of the relationship is provided by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). If employees are treated well and have positive working conditions, they can return the favour with positive attitudes towards their organisation. Job satisfaction can thus be considered an important psychological reaction to positive organisational experiences. A similar positive relationship between ethical leadership and affective organisational commitment and job satisfaction was also found by Kim and Brymer (2011). Similarly, in the educational environment, Rizwan et al. (2017) also found positive correlations between ethical leadership, job satisfaction and organisational commitment of employees in private educational institutions in Islamabad.

5.4 Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction (H4)

The fourth hypothesis suggested that job satisfaction would be a mediator between ethical leadership and organisational commitment. The results suggest that the indirect effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting the proposed mediation. Theoretically, this finding is important because it implies that there is a pathway between ethical leadership and organisational commitment that is not direct. Rather, ethical leadership might first enhance employees' job experiences, and then increase organisational commitment. Ethical leadership is thus a resource in the workplace that can impact employee satisfaction as well as overall organisational attachment.



The finding is in line with Neubert et al. (2009) and Kim and Brymer (2011), who showed that ethical leadership impacts key employee attitudes via organisational mechanisms. Rizwan et al. (2017) investigated the mediating role of organisational commitment between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. The present model takes a different approach, as it considers job satisfaction as a mediator between ethical leadership and organisational commitment. This offers another perspective on the ways in which ethical leadership can enhance employees' commitment to educational institutions.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

First, the findings offer support for the use of social learning theory in the field of ethical leadership. Ethical leaders set visible behavioural models for employees, and employees can have positive attitudes as a result of consistent ethical behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Secondly, the results confirm the significance of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Leaders' ethical treatment can be seen as a good organisational resource, which can lead to employees' reciprocation in terms of satisfaction and commitment. Third, the results add to the existing literature on ethical leadership by combining ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment in a single mediation model. These constructs are not studied separately, but the study shows how job satisfaction can be a link between leadership behaviour and organisational commitment.

5.6 Practical Implications

Leadership development programmes should emphasise ethical practices such as fairness, transparency, accountability, effective communication, and responsible decision-making. Institutions should also provide employees with appropriate channels to express concerns and receive timely responses, as open communication can strengthen trust and job satisfaction. Regular assessments of employee satisfaction can further help administrators identify issues related to workload, recognition, leadership support, working conditions, and professional development.

Overall, the findings support the proposed conceptual framework, confirming positive relationships between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. The significant mediating effect highlights job satisfaction as an important pathway through which ethical leadership strengthens organisational commitment. Therefore, educational institutions should focus not only on retaining employees but also on creating ethical, supportive, and fulfilling work environments. Promoting fairness, integrity, honesty, and genuine concern for employees can improve their work experiences and encourage stronger commitment to their institutions.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the relationships between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment in educational institutions, focusing on the mediating role of job satisfaction. A quantitative design was employed, with the proposed relationships tested through PLS-SEM using SmartPLS. The study assumes that leadership practices can influence employees' attitudes towards their jobs and institutions.

The findings showed a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.286$, $p = 0.004$), indicating that employees tend to demonstrate stronger institutional attachment when their leaders are perceived as honest, fair, responsible, trustworthy, and respectful. Ethical leadership practices, particularly transparent communication, consistent behaviour, fair treatment, and responsible decision-making, can strengthen employees' confidence in institutional leadership. This finding is consistent with earlier research identifying ethical leadership as an important factor associated with organisational commitment (Neubert et al., 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2015).

Job satisfaction was also positively and significantly influenced by ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.758$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that employee's attitude towards their leaders is strongly related to their satisfaction with their job. Educational staff can feel more satisfied when they are recognized, supported, have open communication, are treated fairly, and are given a chance to voice their opinions. Ethical leadership can thus help to create a positive work culture where workers are appreciated and respected. The results of this study



corroborate earlier research that found ethical leadership to be associated with increased job satisfaction (Brown et al., 2005; Neubert et al., 2009), including in higher education settings (Hasan et al., 2023).

The findings also supported the positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.537$, $p = 0.001$). When employees are happy with their working environment, their relationship with their supervisors and colleagues, their recognition, their professional development, the policies of their institutions, and their overall working environment, they may become more attached to their institutions. This increased satisfaction can then help to retain staff and support the institution's mission.

One of the most important results was the mediation of job satisfaction between the relationship of ethical leadership and organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$). According to the mediation result, ethical leadership has a direct and indirect effect on organisational commitment via job satisfaction. Ethical leadership can generate a supportive organisation that is fair, honest, respectful and concerned with employees. Such conditions can enhance job satisfaction, leading to greater commitment and loyalty from employees to the institution.

6.2 Recommendations

The results suggest that schools need to reinforce ethical leadership by conducting regular training on integrity, fairness, transparency, accountability, respectful communication and responsible decision-making. Promotions, workload, performance assessment and resource allocation should be done with clear and consistent processes to enhance employees' sense of fairness. Institutions should also promote the involvement of employees and open communication by holding regular meetings, consulting, feedback systems and grievance procedures.

Job satisfaction is a mediator between ethical leadership and organisational commitment, so management should pay attention to improving the working environment, workload management, recognition, career promotion, professional autonomy, and training. Effective recognition systems and professional-development opportunities can further enhance employees' satisfaction and commitment.

Ethical leadership and job satisfaction are important organisational priorities that should be considered by educational administrators. Leaders should always set a positive example for staff and ensure that institutional policies are applied fairly, without favouritism. Frequent confidential surveys of employee satisfaction and organisational commitment can be used to detect issues in the workplace and to measure the effectiveness of improvement programs.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are several limitations of this study. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences. Longitudinal studies are suggested to assess the changes in ethical leadership, job satisfaction and organisational commitment over time. Second, the sample was drawn from a specific geographical context, which may restrict generalizability. Larger and more diverse samples from other cities and educational institutions should be used in future studies to enhance generalizability. Comparative studies between public and private institutions may be used to establish whether the proposed relationships are different for the two types of institutions.

Third, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and common method variance. Future studies could incorporate multiple sources of data or objective measures to address this limitation. Fourth, the study focused on three variables only. Other factors that could be explored in future studies include organisational justice, leadership trust, employee engagement, psychological empowerment, perceived organisational support, and turnover intention.

Finally, qualitative and cross-cultural studies may also offer a more in-depth understanding of the employees' experience of ethical leadership. Despite these limitations, the study confirms that ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and job satisfaction is an important mediator between ethical leadership and organisational commitment. Schools should thus encourage leadership that is fair, honest, open, respectful and supportive of employees. Improving employee



satisfaction through initiatives and strengthening ethical leadership can help create a more committed, motivated and stable workforce.

Author Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The authors did not receive financial support from any funding agency or external organization for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The SmartPLS output files, including measurement and structural model results, can be shared for verification and further research purposes. Due to privacy and confidentiality agreements with participants, raw survey data may not be publicly distributed but can be accessed through the corresponding author with appropriate data use agreements. The authors are committed to transparency and will provide detailed methodological information and analysis protocols upon request.

References

- Akar, H. (2018). Meta-Analysis Study on Organisational Outcomes of Ethical Leadership. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 13(4), 6-25.
- Asif, M., & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2026). The silent disengagement: A quantitative analysis of leadership, recognition, and workload as predictors of quiet quitting among knowledge workers. *Al-Aasar*, 3(1), 271–303. <https://doi.org/10.63878/aaj1525>
- Azhar, A., Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M., & Sajid, S. M. (2025). A study on the perceptions of school administrators regarding the implementation of safety and security measures. *Research Journal for Social Affairs*, 3(5), 591–605. <https://doi.org/10.71317/RJSA.003.05.0359>
- Bandura, A., & Walters, R. H. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1, pp. 141-154). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-hall.
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life* (Vol. 1964). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 97(2), 117-134.
- Bukhari, S. T. N., Muhammad, R. G., Latif, A., Shah, H., & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2025). An integrated model of emotional intelligence, stress coping, and teacher well-being. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 119–132. <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i4.1101>
- Cansoy, R., Parlar, H., & Türkoğlu, M. E. (2021). The effect of school principals' ethical leadership on teacher job satisfaction: The mediating role of school ethical climate. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 8(4), 210-222.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dinc, M. S., & Kocyigit, Z. (2017). Do Job Satisfaction and Demographic Characteristics of Female Teachers influence their Affective Commitment to Schools?. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), 475-484.



- Edeh, E., Lo, W. J., & Khojasteh, J. (2023). Review of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Using R: A Workbook: By Joseph F. Hair Jr., G. Tomas M. Hult, Christian M. Ringle, Marko Sarstedt, Nicholas P. Danks, Soumya Ray. Cham, Switzerland: Springer,(2021). 197 pp. 0,OpenAccess; 59.99, Hardcover Book.
- Ejaz, T., Anjum, Z. U. Z., Rasheed, M., Waqas, M., & Hameed, A. A. (2022). Impact of ethical leadership on employee well-being: the mediating role of job satisfaction and employee voice. *Middle East Journal of Management*, 9(3), 310-331.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Fatima, N., Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M., Arshad, I., Rasheed, I., & Fatima, A. (2025). The role of human resource management in teacher training for inclusive education: A phenomenological study. *Indus Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 551–564. <https://doi.org/10.59075/ijss.v3i3.1921>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of marketing research*, 18(1), 39-50.
- Gollagari, R., Beyene, B. B., & Mishra, S. S. (2022). Ethical leadership, good governance and employee commitment: Testing a moderated mediation model in public universities of Ethiopia. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22, e2742.
- Guhao, E., & Masunag, M. (2024). Organizational climate, transformational and ethical leadership: A structural equation model on organizational commitment of teachers. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 20(2), 1-1.
- Guo, F., Xue, Z., He, J., & Yasmin, F. (2023). Ethical leadership and workplace behavior in the education sector: The implications of employees' ethical work behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1040000.
- Hair Jr, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N. P., & Ray, S. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using R: A workbook (p. 197). Springer Nature.
- Hair, J., & Alamer, A. (2022). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example. *Research methods in applied linguistics*, 1(3), 100027.
- Hasan, G., Irshad, M., & Khan, D. (2023). The Role of Ethical Leadership for the Faculty Job Satisfaction: A Case of Higher Education Institutes of Baluchistan. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 17(2), 66-81.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 43(1), 115-135.
- Johnson, A. (2025). Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of High School Principals' Leadership Styles on School Culture, Teacher Job Satisfaction, and Retention in Virginia (Doctoral dissertation, National University).
- Kim, W. G., & Brymer, R. A. (2011). The effects of ethical leadership on manager job satisfaction, commitment, behavioral outcomes, and firm performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(4), 1020-1026.
- Li, Q. (2024). Ethical leadership, internal job satisfaction and OCB: the moderating role of leader empathy in emerging industries. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 901.
- Limpo, L., & Junaidi, J. (2023). Influence of empowering and ethical leadership on employees' job satisfaction, performance, and organization commitment. *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, 11(1), 22-36.
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*.
- Malik, N., & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2025). The role of artificial intelligence in educational leadership and management for service quality in Pakistani higher education: A narrative review. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, 8(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.63878/jalt2080>



- Mehmetoglu, M., & Venturini, S. (2021). Structural equation modelling with partial least squares using Stata and R. Crc Press.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human resource management review*, 1(1), 61-89.
- Muhammad, J., & Shujjaudin, M. (2023). Ethical Leadership and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior of the Follower: A Case of Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 534-542.
- Nawaz, A., Aihua, G., & Khan, M. F. (2022). Effectiveness of ethical leadership on job satisfaction: Mediating role of organizational citizenship behaviour. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(4), 1324-1341.
- Neubert, M. J., Carlson, D. S., Kacmar, K. M., Roberts, J. A., & Chonko, L. B. (2009). The virtuous influence of ethical leadership behavior: Evidence from the field. *Journal of business ethics*, 90(2), 157-170.
- Neves, M. D. L. G. (2025, January). The relationship between ethical leadership, teacher motivation, and commitment in public schools in Portugal. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 9, p. 1456685). Frontiers Media SA.
- Ng, T. W., & Feldman, D. C. (2015). Ethical leadership: meta-analytic evidence of criterion-related and incremental validity. *Journal of applied psychology*, 100(3), 948.
- Nguyen, K. V. H., Wu, W. Y., Chi, H. K., & Truong, T. H. T. (2024). Examining the relationship among ethical leadership, psychological capital, and work outcomes through the lens of social identity theory and socialization resources theory. *Sage Open*, 14(2), 21582440241255759.
- Özdoğan, M., & Sarier, Y. (2024). The relationship of ethical leadership with teachers' organizational behavior, attitudes, and perceptions: A meta-analysis study. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1538.
- Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2023a). Analysis of Leadership Styles and Decision-Making Effectiveness in Public Sector Universities in Pakistan: A Systematic Review. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 72–91. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v2i1.209>
- Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2023b). Teacher Professional Development & Well-being in the Era of Hybrid and Remote Instruction: Challenges, Opportunities, and Pathways Forward. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(4), 76–88. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v2i4.211>
- Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2025). Unpacking the Leadership and Governance Crisis in Pakistani Universities: Structural, Political, and Institutional Drivers. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 3(4), 901–912. <https://doi.org/10.59075/pk8zan95>
- Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M., Ashraf, I., Shah, H., & Farah, N. (2025a). Educational environment and teacher performance in the context of special education institutions in Pakistan: A review paper. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(2), 17–35. <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.552>
- Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M., Bano, S., & Naveed, Y. (2025b). Comparative Analysis of Authoritative and Democratic Leadership Styles and Their Impact on School Management Effectiveness. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 105–117. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v4i2.132>
- Ramlawati, R., Serang, S., Arminas, A., Junaidi, J., & Wicaksono, R. (2023). The role of ethical leadership on employee commitment to the organization: The mediating role of job satisfaction and job engagement. *Organisational Psychology*, 13(1), 73–91. <https://doi.org/10.17323/2312-5942-2023-13-1-73-91>
- Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using R. *Handbook of market research*, 587-632.
- Rizwan, M., Zeeshan, C., & Mahmood, S. (2017). The impact of perceived ethical leadership and organizational culture on job satisfaction with the mediating role of organizational commitment in private educational sector of Islamabad, Pakistan. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 9(1), 75-100.
- Santiago-Torner, C. (2025). Ethical leadership and organizational commitment in the Colombian electricity sector: the importance of work self-efficacy. *Tec Empresarial*, 19(1), 68-90.



- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., & Lewis, P. (2012). Research methods for business students.
- Spector, P. E. (1997). Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences (Vol. 3). Sage.
- Udin, U., Nurfitri, D., & Shaikh, M. (2023). Ethical leadership and job satisfaction: Extending the dual mediation mechanism. *BISMA (Bisnis dan Manajemen)*, 47-66.
- Zehra, A., Naz, A., Zehra, S., Danish, S. M., & Lashari, A. A. (2022). Ethical leadership as a predictor of perceived work environment and organizational commitment: A survey from school teachers in Karachi. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(10), 4557-4572.

