


Original Article

Performance prediction based on employees' job engagement mediated by ethical leadership

Fahimeh Forootani ¹ , Alireza Manzari Tavakoli ^{1*} , Navid Fatehi Rad ¹ , Sanjar Salajegheh ¹ ,
Mahdi Mohammad Bagheri ¹ 

¹ Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

Corresponding author and reprints: Alireza Manzari Tavakoli, Associate Professor, Department of Management, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

Email: a.manzari@iauk.ac.ir

Received: 01 Feb 2023

Accepted: 17 Aug 2023

Published: 23 Aug 2023

Abstract

Background: Education has a great impact on the social, economic and cultural progress of society. This study's goal was to develop a thorough model for performance prediction that was based on employee job engagement and was mediated by moral leadership.

Methods: This study was applied and a descriptive-correlational. The statistical population was included 341 people from employees and managers of the education department in Kerman province. They were chosen at random by a stratified sample. Information was gathered using questionnaires created by the researcher, including a work performance questionnaire with 28 questions, a job engagement questionnaire with 34 questions, and a questionnaire on ethical leadership with 46 questions. Assessing the validity of the components by the Delphi method by surveying 30 experts and the results of fit of the components obtained with AMOS software were determined. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the variables was more than 0.7, suggesting that the items were internally coordinated and that the reliability was confirmed.

Results: With the increase of behavioral involvement such as commitment to time, intensity and seriousness of work, cognitive involvement such as concentration, work attraction and emotional involvement such as enthusiasm and mental flexibility, along with the rise in ethical leadership, the degree of ethical leadership in education grew, the level of performance, the employment of employees increased.

Conclusion: The importance of mediating role of ethical leadership in education department employees in predicting performance based on job engagement can be used by managers in the area of learning and education in the country.

Keywords: Attitude; Employment; Ethics; Leadership; Work Performance.

Cite this article as: Forootani F, Manzari Tavakoli A, Fatehi Rad N, Salajegheh S, Mohammad Bagheri M. Performance prediction based on employees' job engagement mediated by ethical leadership. *Soc Determinants Health*. 2023;9(1):1-10. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22037/sdh.v9i1.41079>

Introduction

In order to promote ethical behavior at work, a leader's ethical leadership style is crucial. Ethical leadership cultivates employee devotion to the company while communicating the ethical ideals of the institution. Creating a lasting competitive edge, recruiting and motivating bright employees, and encouraging them to show

off their strengths in the workplace are some of the biggest difficulties facing firms today (1). Organizations value their employees as the most valuable asset. Education Organization is one of the organizations that have a great impact on the social, economic and cultural development of society (2). Focusing just

on issues like teaching techniques and instructional tools is insufficient because the presence of a motivated workforce is a crucial component of students' growth (3). Based on the studies, the human dimension of each individual is related to social health processes and increasing employee welfare (i.e. job engagement in the workplace) (4). The three ideas of power, commitment, and recruitment are used to define job engagement, which is a key element of the human dimension of workers (5) and is defined by a satisfied status and the mental state associated with work (6).

Job engagement will lead to more cooperation in work and provide more appropriate services to the clients (7). For this reason, investigating the motivational factors such as job engagement of employees has been considered by organizational researchers (8). Job engagement is associated with a positive and active attitude towards work. Kahn (9) introduced the idea of engagement as a means of directing and inspiring individuals to be enthused about their job. Zhang & Bartol (10) define it as positive emotions such as joy, pleasure and enthusiasm that can meet job demands and explain a large share of job performance (11). Leaders can use their influence to promote ethical behaviors or negatively to encourage unethical behaviors (12). Recent research has looked at the subject of ethical leadership in the workplace and how it affects organizational productivity (13). According to a study, ethical leadership affects worker performance directly and indirectly through employee behavior and civic engagement (14). Studies examining the connection between ethical leadership, leadership effectiveness, and organizational performance have shown that ethical leadership and leadership effectiveness are two key drivers of improved organizational performance (15). The findings indicate a favorable and substantial correlation between moral leadership and work engagement (16, 17). In the link between the variables of job engagement and job

performance, ethical leadership plays a moderating function.

Methods

The present research was applied and correlation survey. The statistical population consisted of 3016 employees and managers of education department in Kerman province. Among them, 341 people were randomly selected and included in the study according to Morgan table. They were chosen using a stratified random selection technique, depending on their educational level. So that first the samples were classified according to education and then they were selected based on the proportionality of the current sample size in the stratified layers of the education. Data were gathered using questionnaires created by the researcher. Job engagement questionnaire includes three dimensions; 1) Behavioral (physical) engagement with components of commitment to time (questions 1 to 3), intensity of physical work (questions 4 to 7), work seriousness (questions 8 to 11), 2) Cognitive (perceptual) engagement with components of focus on work (Questions 12 to 16), work absorption (questions 17 to 21), 3) emotional engagement with components of work enthusiasm (questions 22 to 31), and mental flexibility (questions 32 to 34)). Ethical Leadership Questionnaire includes two dimensions; 1) Ethical personality with components of personality traits (questions 1 to 12), ethical behavior (questions 13 to 24), 2), ethical management with components of modeling of ethical behavior (questions 25 to 28), establishing ethical standards (questions 29 to 38), and ethical responsibility (questions 39 to 46). Job performance questionnaire includes two dimensions; 1) Task (technical) performance (questions 1 to 12), 2) and contextual performance (questions 13 to 28). A Likert scale with 5 possible points was used to grade the questions. The validity of the questions was validated based on the opinions of experts on both the face and the substance. When the internal

Table 1. Employees in the education department's work engagement and performance are being examined for the potential mediating effect of ethical leadership.

Job engagement Ethical leadership job Performance	a	b	c	Sa	Sb	z	VAF	sig
	0.51	0.567	0.598	0.24	0.598	4.377	0.325	0.001

consistency of the items and confirmation of reliability were assessed, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for job engagement (0.915), ethical leadership (0.919), and job performance (0.904) were greater than 0.7. AMOS-21 software was utilized for the data analysis, which included structural equation modeling.

Results

Work engagement (and its aspects) and work performance are related, although the link might be mediated by the ethical leadership variable. Based on Table 1, data analysis using the Sobel test reveals that the z value is 4.377 and the p-value is 0.001. Because of this, ethical leadership mediates the link between employees' job satisfaction and job performance in the education sector. The VAF (Variance Accounted For 10) value is 0.325, which indicates that the mediating variable of ethical leadership indirectly explains 0.325% of the connection between work engagement and job performance. Employees in the education department's behavioral engagement and work performance are correlated, although there is a mediation effect played by ethical leadership.

Table 2 displays the results of the Sobel test analysis of the data, which indicates that the z value is 3.12 and the p-value is 0.001. The link between behavioral engagement and the work performance of employees in the education department is therefore mediated by ethical leadership. The VAF score is 0.328, indicating that ethical leadership indirectly mediates 0.328% of the association between behavioral engagement and work performance.

Employees in the education department's cognitive engagement and work performance are correlated, but that link is moderated by ethical leadership.

Table 3 data analysis using the Sobel test reveals a z value of 4.22 and a p-value of 0.001 for the data. So, in the link between cognitive engagement and the work performance of employees in the education department, ethical leadership plays a moderating function. The VAF score is 0.311, which indicates that the mediating function of moral leadership accounts for 0.311% of the connection between cognitive excitement and work performance.

Table 2. Examining the link between workers' conduct and job performance in the education department and the mediating impact of ethical leadership.

Behavioral Engagement ethical leadership Job performance	a	b	c	Sa	Sb	z	VAF	sig
	0.437	0.567	0.507	0.365	0.598	3.12	0.328	0.001

Table 3. The link between workers' cognitive engagement and job performance in the education department is being examined to see if ethical leadership has a moderating effect.

Cognitive engagement	a	b	c	Sa	Sb	z	VAF	sig
Ethical leadership	0.419	0.567	0.527	0.271	0.598	4.22	0.311	0.001

Table 4. Examining the link between workers' emotional involvement and job performance and the moderating impact of ethical leadership

Emotional engagement	a	b	c	Sa	Sb	z	VAF	sig
Ethical leadership	0.377	0.567	0.416	0.282	0.598	4.08	0.339	0.001

Table 5. Fit indices for the developed models and the final model

Model fit indices	X ²	Df	X ² /Df	NPAR	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Developed model	430.37	72	5.98	33	0.876	0.859	0.82	0.858	0.121
Modified (final) model	200.62	65	3.09	40	0.925	0.947	0.925	0.946	0.078
model of independence	2606.36	91	14.09	14	0.33	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.285

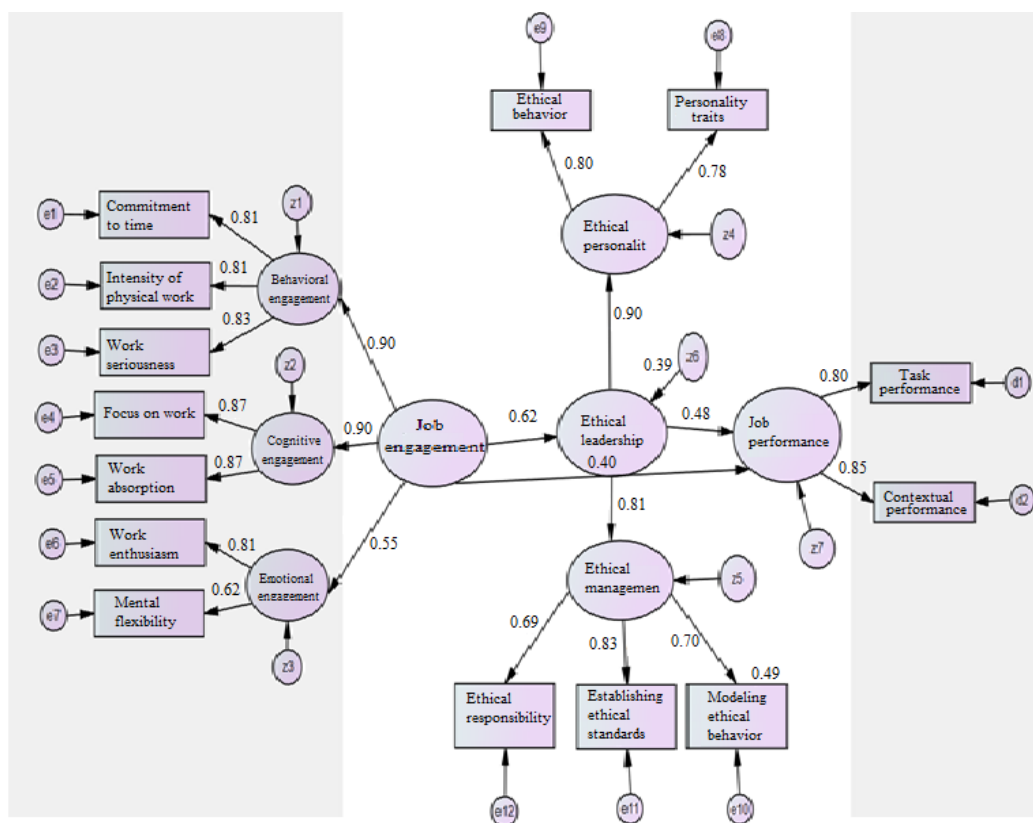


Figure 1. The developed model of job performance prediction based on job engagement mediated by ethical leadership in education department employees in the present study

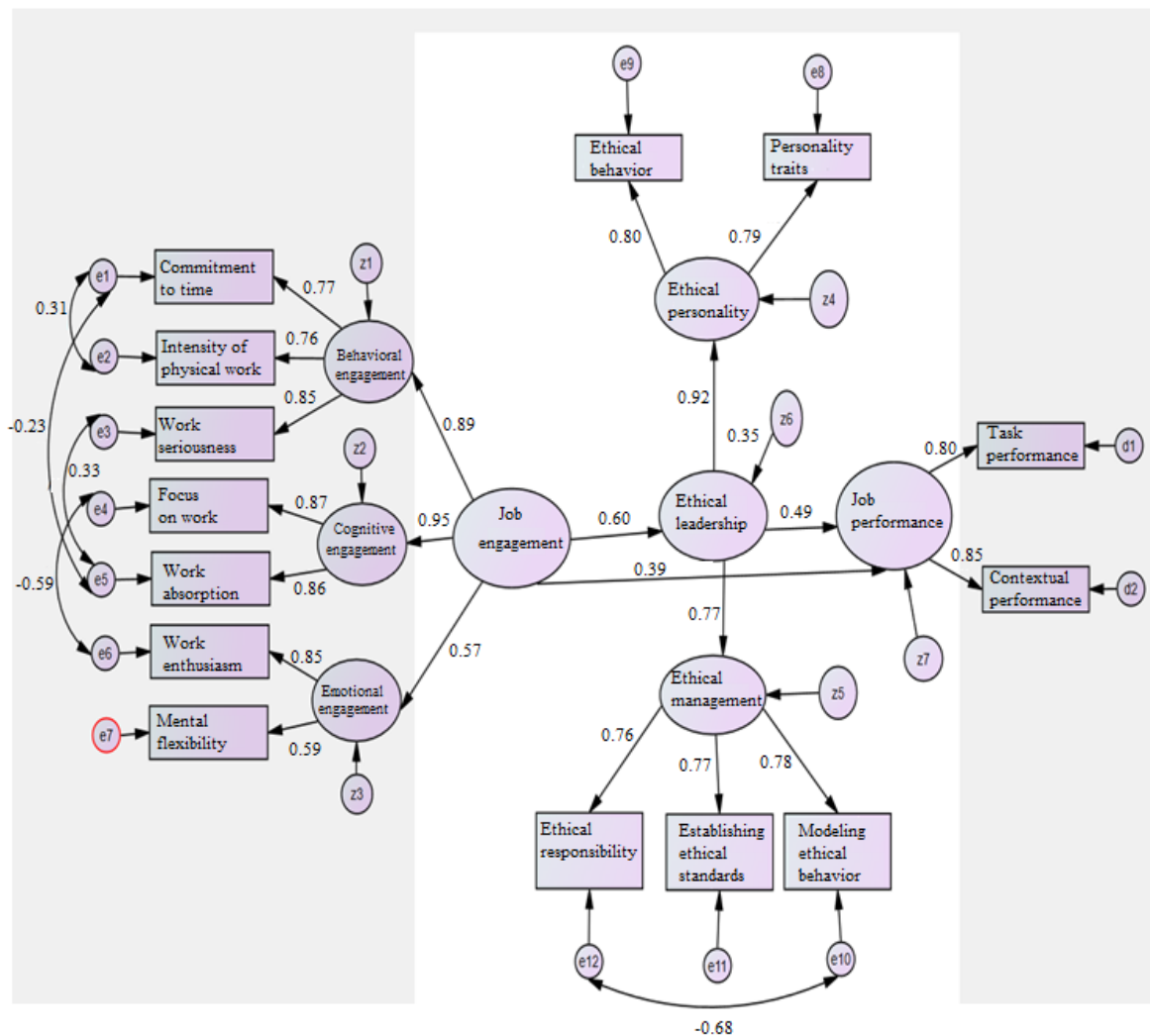


Figure 2. Modified model of job performance prediction based on job engagement mediated by ethical leadership in education department employees in the present study

Employees in the education department who are emotionally engaged perform better on the job, and this relationship is moderated by ethical leadership.

Table 4 data analysis using the Sobel test reveals a z value of 4.08 and a p-value of 0.001 for the data. Consequently, ethical leadership plays a moderating function in the interaction between workers of the education department's emotional involvement and their job performance. The VAF value is 0.339, which indicates that the mediating variable of ethical leadership indirectly accounts for 0.339%

of the link between emotional involvement and work performance.

Predicting job performance based on job engagement mediated by ethical leadership in education department employees has an acceptable fit.

The results of a few of the initial model's fit indices, as shown in Table 5, suggested that the proposed model needed to be improved and adjusted. The dimensions of the research variables were therefore incorporated into the model in the following stage based on the modified

indices (MI) in the Amos22 output of the covariance routes (Figure 2).

Using the general fit indices of the above table, it can be stated that:

A positive outcome is indicated by the non-significant chi-square (CMIN) value of 200.62 and the significance threshold of $P = 0.001$. However, the degree of freedom (Df) also plays a crucial role in this situation. The degree of freedom (Df) of the fitted model, which is equal to 65, is also approaching the degree of freedom of the independent model, which is equal to 91, making the model attractive.

The produced model (NPAR), whose value is 40, has a lot of free parameters, indicating that the researcher did not readily use the degrees of freedom in developing the model. This is acceptable.

Regarding the ratio indices, it should be noted that the CMIN / DF value in this table is 3.09, indicating an appropriate status for the model. Additionally, the created factor model's RMSEA value of 0.078 suggests that the model is acceptable.

The Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) are both 0.925 and 0.946 in the table above, respectively. So, the model is deemed acceptable based on these indexes.

The goodness of fit index (GFI) and incremental fit index (IFI) values in the table above, both of which point to acceptable levels, are 0.925 and 0.947, respectively. The measuring model for this research is pretty appropriate, as seen by the value of general fit indices in the aforementioned table.

As a result, the model described in this research may be considered satisfactory given the values of the final model's fit indices (developed model). The model's regression coefficients demonstrate that the aforementioned factors adequately account for the job performance prediction based on job engagement with the mediating variable

of ethical leadership in education department personnel.

Discussion

According to the findings of the research, ethical leadership mediates the link between work engagement and its aspects (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement) and the performance of employees in the education department. In other words, by increasing behavioral engagement such as commitment to time, intensity of physical work and work seriousness, increasing cognitive engagement based on focus on work and work absorption and increasing emotional engagement such as increasing engagement at work and mental flexibility, the level of ethical leadership in education department employees also increases and with the increase of ethical leadership, the level of job performance of employees increases. Breevaart et al. demonstrated the mediating function of leadership exchange in the connection between job engagement and job performance in accordance with validating these findings (18).

As a result of work engagement and organizational trust, Kazemi Sangsarki came to the conclusion that ethical leadership indirectly influences both organizational commitment and performance (19). The findings of this study are also consistent with those of studies by Doostar (20), Shakib & Raga-ei (21), Soorani Yancheshmeh (8), Mousavi et al. (22), Cheng et al. (23), and Engelbrecht et al. (24) that came to the same conclusion because they discovered a connection between job engagement and ethical leadership. Additionally, these findings concur with research by Amoshahi & Karimi (25), Majdzadeh et al. (26), Derakhshanmehr et al. (27), Mehrparsa (28), Asghari (29), Alshammari et al. (30), Khokhar & Zia-ur-Rehman (14), and Madanchian et al. (15), which found a connection between ethical leadership and worker performance. Teacher performance assessment may play a significant role in

raising the productivity and effectiveness of educational quality in schools because education quality and effectiveness demand an educational monitoring and guiding system in all areas connected to teaching-learning processes. According to an organizational psychological study, job performance is the most crucial factor, not only for the organization's survival but also for its ability to become more productive (31).

Findings of a study was demonstrated that the self-efficacy variable, with a beta value of 0.38, the work engagement variable, with a beta coefficient of 0.32, and the intrinsic motivation variable, with a beta coefficient of 0.29, are all capable of substantially and positively predicting teachers' job performance (3). According to the Jamarouni's findings, conflict management practices may be improved by ethical leadership, which can lead to performance improvement (32).

Zarei demonstrated how the dimensions of psychological capital have a direct and favorable impact on job engagement and the dimensions of authentic leadership have a direct and favorable impact on psychological capital. Each of the authentic leadership dimensions has a significant indirect impact on job engagement, indicating the important role of psychological capital in the components of authentic leadership and job engagement (33) while the dimensions of authentic leadership have a direct impact on job engagement. In a different study by Molaey the findings revealed that people who have high job engagement report higher levels of job satisfaction, which boosts personal drive for responsibility and hard work as well as higher performance in meeting organizational goals (34).

A study by Basit came to the conclusion that job engagement had a favorable and substantial impact on job performance (35).

According to a study by Demirtas et al., "the moderated influence of ethical

leadership, via meaningful work, on followers' engagement, organizational identification, and envy" The findings demonstrated that involvement and identity within a company are directly and significantly impacted by ethical leadership. Additionally, the data showed how meaningful employment had an indirect impact on these two factors. The findings further demonstrated that job envy is significantly and negatively impacted by ethical leadership (36).

A culture of trust and confidence is fostered by ethical managers, and this connection inspires employees to want to work hard for the firm (37). Breevaart et al. findings show that job resources (independence, growth possibilities, and social support) mediate the favorable association between leader-member interaction and employee job performance, and employee job engagement mediates this relationship. The results of the current investigation agree with other studies (18).

Recommendation

It is advised, in light of the findings of this study, to carry out research in other public and non-public companies, compare the findings with those of the current study, and look at additional management and organizational variables influencing the work engagement of education department managers and staff.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be stated that when education department employees feel that they have high energy and perseverance to achieve job goals, they believe in the leaders of the organization and have innovation and creativity in their work to solve problems, consult with experts inside and outside the organization, perform their job duties seriously and persistently. They also feel good about their job and have enough motivation for their job, follow organizational rules and react to violations in the organization, follow the rules in the organization. Also, they feel

responsibility to provide high-quality services to clients, spend their non-executive time on solving the organization problems, present new ideas, and welcome creative and new ideas to improve the quality. Also, they are not disappointed in doing hard works, welcome criticism of clients and are less disturbed in doing the organizational affairs. As a result, the employees will provide high quality services in education department, pay more attention to client satisfaction, try to do things quickly and accurately, and their efforts in the organization will increase and their efficiency and job performance will be significantly enhanced. The results of the present study can be used by managers and planners.

Authors' contribution

Fahimeh Forootani and Alireza Manzari Tavakoli developed the study concept and design. Navid Fatehi Rad acquired the data. Sanjar Salajegheh and Mahdi Mohammad Bagheri analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the intellectual content, manuscript editing and read and approved the final manuscript.

Informed consent

Questionnaires were filled with the participants' satisfaction and written consent was obtained from the participants in this study.

Funding/financial support

There is no funding.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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