



THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL CULTURE ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN SAUDI ARABIA LABOR MARKET

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Abstract

Ethical Culture is a vital component driving firms' practice, significantly affecting employee Performance. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between Ethical Culture and employee Performance. Moreover, the study investigates the mediating effect of job satisfaction on Ethical Culture, and employee Performance. In addition, the study used an online questionnaire technique for collecting the data for the purpose of this study, Data was collected from 200 employees working in different companies in Saudi Arabia, both public and private sectors. The findings indicate a positive and significant relationship between Ethical Culture, job satisfaction, and employee Performance. These findings highlight the importance of Ethical Culture within organizations which is enhancing job satisfaction, leading to improved employee Performance. The study is beneficial for Saudi Arabia Labor Market to plan the strategies for their employees in terms of organizational sustainability and success. Accordingly, the study provides implications for the organizations to realize the importance of ethical culture in improving job' satisfaction and employee performance.

Keywords

Ethical Culture, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance, Integrity

1. Introduction

The current competitive conditions are increasingly competitive. This requires companies or organizations to be able to improve employee performance in achieving increased productivity in quality and quantity, so that they can compete with other companies and even be able to be above other companies (Schuldt & Gomes, 2020). There is no organization that can be sustained globally in the 21st century without an organizational culture, as this culture serves as the road map on which organizations make decisions, allowing employees to have a better sense of their organization leading to performance (Barrow, 2019).

Ethical culture plays a critical role in shaping employee attitudes, job satisfaction, and overall performance in organizations. When employees believe their employer prioritizes integrity and justice, they are more likely to be engaged and productive. A great work atmosphere not only improves job satisfaction, but it also helps the firm succeed overall. Several studies have found a strong correlation between ethical culture, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Amri et al. (2021) point out the importance of ethical rules in workplace efficiency, but Martinez et al. (2015) maintain that the absence of ethical principles can lead to lowered motivation. However, some researchers, such as Paais and Pattiruhu (2020), provide contradictory findings, highlighting the need for additional research.

This study examines how ethical culture effects job satisfaction and employee performance in Saudi labor market. By evaluating this link, firms can build better tactics to increase workplace ethics and employee productivity. The importance of this study lies in its focus on ethical culture and its impact on job satisfaction and employee performance, which are key factors for organizational success. By understanding how ethical values, integrity, and ethical leadership affect employees, organizations can create better work environments that improve motivation, reduce turnover, and increase productivity

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ethical Culture

Ethical culture is the cautious act of implementing and adopting policies that are generally acceptable as right by the majority of the stakeholders of the firm. Truxillo, Bauer and Erdogan (2016) succinctly put it that “having an organizational culture that emphasizes ethical behavior can cut down on misbehavior of organizations”, they concluded that “whether an organization develops a culture that emphasizes doing the right thing even when it is costly comes down to whether leaders, starting with the CEO, consider the ethical consequences of their actions. Leaders with a moral compass set the tone when it comes to ethical dilemmas”. Treviño and Weaver (2003) define ethical culture as those behaviors that encourage ethical deeds in firms.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction describes employees’ feelings regarding the fulfillment of his/her work outcome (Bamberger et al., 2014). Work-related feelings include efforts, career development opportunities, relationships with coworkers, work placement, and organizational structure (Pang & Lu, 2018). Meanwhile, personal feelings related to one’s self, including age, health, ability, and education. Job satisfaction reflects one’s feelings related to his/her job (Bezdrob & Šunje, 2021; Seema et al., 2021). It results from employees’ positive attitude toward their job and works environment. A business organization’s capacity should be able to fulfill its employees’ job satisfaction. As the executor of the organization’s business goal, job satisfaction acts the main factor determining employee performance.

Job satisfaction is purely felt by someone who loves his job (Abdelmoteleb, 2019). Each individual may have a different level of satisfaction depending on the values system applied within themselves. This difference in satisfaction levels may be accounted for by individuals’ satisfaction when working in the organization. It is important to consider elements of job satisfaction in order to improve the organization’s business performance (Qureshi et al., 2019; Sony & Mekoth, 2019). By taking elements of job satisfaction into considerations, organizations may improve the business process efficiency performed by employees. By fulfilling employees’ job satisfaction, organizations can eliminate negative effects such as boredom, fatigue, turnover, and absenteeism. The business organization should be able to fulfill its employees’ work- related needs in order to accelerate the work process and improve performance.

2.3. Employee performance

Employee performance is the result of work that can be achieved by a person or group of people in an organization, in accordance with their respective authorities and responsibilities, in an effort to reach the relevant organization legally, morally and ethically (Barasa et al., 2018). Job requirements that are fulfilled optimally are indicative of achieving success in work. With this achievement work requirements are an important factor in the success of employee performance (Sutanto, 2016).

According to a study by Bataineh (2020) on the impact of work ethics on employee performance in international SMEs in Al-Hassan Industrial Estate, work ethics improve employee job performance. Additionally, the qualities of a good employee include integrity, responsibility, equality, and self-discipline. According to a study by Bataineh (2020) on the impact of work ethics on employee job performance in international SMEs in Al-Hassan Industrial Estate, work ethics improves employee job performance in SMEs in Al-Hassan. Additionally, the company should provide all auditors with the necessary information honestly, managers should be given authority to manage employees, managers should treat all employees fairly, and workers should complete the tasks assigned to them.

Human resources represent a crucial aspect in enhancing organizational performance. Success in an organisation cannot be separated from the role of its management members, (Newland, 2012). Employee's performance significance in public sector organizations can't be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in enhancing organizational performance. Employee performance is a key indicator of employee

quality, reflecting the accomplishment, success, and productivity of individuals or organizations over a specified timeframe regarding their tasks (Manansal, 2014). Employee performance in the organisation can be divided into two, namely in- role performance and extra-role performance. (Sulistyowati, 2014). In-role performance shows the ability of employees to carry out work according to their job description. Meanwhile, extra- role performance is employee performance shown by behaviour that exceeds their work (Sulistyowati, 2014). Employee performance can be represented by job satisfaction and employee work performance. Both cannot be separated from the influence of the leadership style applied by a leader in the organisation (Sarita & Agustia, 2009). (Sarita & Agustia, 2009). Furthermore, the effective implementation of the internal control system within the organization plays a role in structuring a transparent and regulated workflow aimed at accomplishing organizational objectives. According to (Osei et al., 2022) monitoring activities and proper separation of authority can support employee productivity and performance.

2.4. Impact of Ethical Culture on Employee Performance

A well-established ethical culture in an organization has a direct impact on employee performance since it shapes behavior, motivation, and decision-making. Ethical workplaces promote professionalism, honesty, and commitment among employees, resulting in higher productivity and job quality (Treviño & Weaver, 2003). Truxillo, Bauer, and Erdogan (2016) found that firms that emphasize ethical behavior have lower workplace conflicts and higher performance levels.

In addition Ferdinan and Lindawati (2021) and Ratnasari et al. (2020) discovered that organizations with strong ethical cultures instill a sense of duty and accountability in their employees, which leads to improved job performance and goal achievement. However, Paais and Pattiruhu (2020) argued that ethical culture alone does not ensure good performance unless combined with effective leadership and clear reward systems. Given these findings, it is critical to explore how ethical culture affects employee performance in Saudi organizations.

3. Methodology

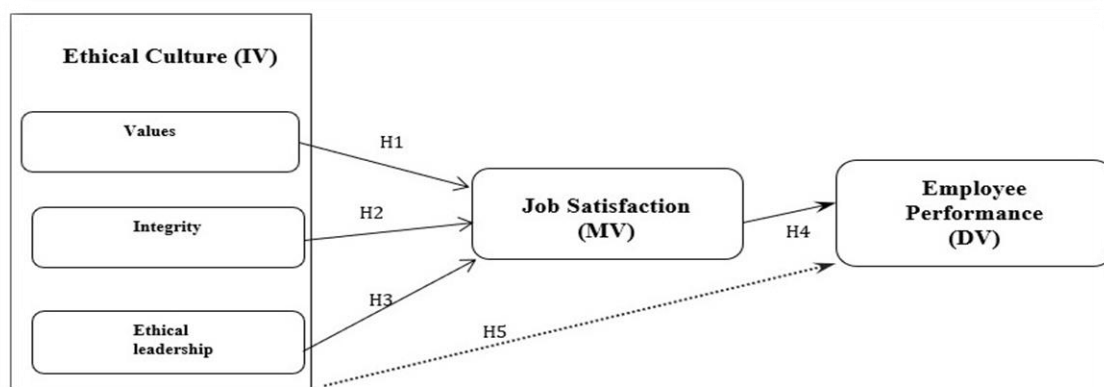
3.1. Sample

The study used a quantitative survey design. A total of 200 responses were collected using a structured questionnaire with validated scales for each construct. The questionnaire included items on ethical values, integrity, ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The Likert scale (1 to 5) was used to capture participant responses. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS, including descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha for reliability, Pear

3.2. Measure

The questionnaire included two sections: the first covered demographic data such as age, gender, and experience. The second measured the study variables with a total of 21 items: ethical culture (12 items across values, integrity, and ethical leadership), job satisfaction (4 items), and employee performance (5 items). All responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

4. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis



Based on the research problem and objectives, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Ethical values positively affects job satisfaction
- H2: Integrity positively affects job satisfaction
- H3: Ethical leadership positively affects job satisfaction
- H4: Job satisfaction positively affects employee performance
- H5: Ethical culture positively affects employee performance

5. Data Analysis

- *Demographic factors analysis:*

To determine the Characteristics of Participants, frequencies and percentage were used, as shown in table (1).

Table (1). Demographic Information

Selected Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	82	41.0
	Female	118	59.0
	Total	200	100.0
Age	Under 25	21	10.5
	25-34	68	34.0
	35-44	46	23.0
	45-54	48	24.0
	55 and above	17	8.5
	Total	200	100.0
Years of experience	Less than one year	24	12.0
	1-3 Years	16	8.0
	4-6 Years	30	15.0
	7-10 Years	47	23.5
	More than 10 Years	83	41.5
	Total	200	100.0
Educational level	Diploma	24	12.0
	Bachelor's degree	128	64.0
	Master degree	37	18.5
	Ph.D	11	5.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the study population according to their demographic characteristics, as for the gender variable, (59.0%) of the respondents are female, while (41.0%) are male, and for the age variable, (34.0%) are between (25-34) years old, while (8.0%) are (55) years old and above. With regard to the variable of years of experience, 41.5% of the respondents have more than 10 years of experience, while 8.0% of the respondents have between 1-3 years of experience, and with regard to the variable of educational qualification, the largest percentage of respondents have a bachelor's degree with percentage of (64.0%), while 5.5% have a doctorate degree.

- *Reliability Analysis*

Table (2) illustrates the Cronbach's Alpha values attributed to each construct of the questionnaire and for the entire questionnaire. the stability coefficients of the study tool ranged between (0.858 and 0.963) which are high and trustful when applying the present study tool.

Table (2). Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimensions	Reliability coefficient
Values	.901
Integrity	.858
ethical leadership	.950
ethical culture in the organization	.951
Promotion	.942
Self-development opportunities	.960
Job satisfaction	.963
Employee performance	.866

- **Pearson Correlation Analysis**

To make sure of Study Tool validity, the Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted between each paragraph and the total score of the dimensions, As show in table 3 below.

Table (3). Pearson Correlation (Ethical Culture)

Values		Integrity		Ethical leadership	
Items	Person correlation	Items	Person correlation	Items	Person correlation
1	.732**	6	.724**	10	.790**
2	.780**	7	.797**	11	.847**
3	.761**	8	.780**	12	.848**
4	.737**	9	.788**	13	.831**
5	.704**	-	-	14	.827**
	.874**		.919**		.906**

Table 3 illustrates the Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. It is clear that all correlation coefficients for the statements and sub-dimensions were significant at the 0.01 level, as the correlation coefficients for the statements ranged between (0.704 - 0.848) and for the sub-dimensions between (0.874 - 0.919), These values represent strong and reliable correlation coefficients, which can be confidently used in applying the current study tool.

Table (4). Pearson Correlation (Job Satisfaction)

Promotion		Self-development opportunities	
Items	Person correlation	Items	Person correlation
15	.823**	20	.914**
16	.892**	21	.887**
17	.886**	22	.913**
18	.874**	23	.892**
19	.854**	-	-
	.958**		.952**

Table 4 illustrates the Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. Table 4 showed that all correlation coefficients for the statements and sub-dimensions were significant at the 0.01 level, as the correlation coefficients for the statements ranged between (0.823 - 0.914) and for the sub-dimensions between (0.952 - 0.958), These values represent strong and reliable correlation coefficients, which can be confidently used in applying the current study tool.

Table (5). Pearson Correlation (Employee Performance)

Items	Person correlation
24	.752**
25	.717**
26	.834**
27	.784**
28	.833**
29	.798**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. Table (5) revealed that all correlation coefficients for the statements were significant at the 0.01 level, as the correlation coefficients for the statements ranged between (0.717 - 0.834). These values represent strong and reliable correlation coefficients, which can be confidently used in applying the current study tool.

Testing Research Model Fit:

Table 6 shows the model-fit indicators for the path analysis model of the relationship between ethical Cultures (independent), job satisfaction (mediating), and job performance (as a dependent).

Table (6). Model Fit Result

Indicator	Value	Range
Chi-square (cmin)	33.791	Non-significant
Significant value	0.089	Non-significant
Cmin/df	1.405	Less than 3
GFI	1.0	0 to 1
NFI	1.0	0 to 1
IFI	1.0	0 to 1
CFI	1.0	0 to 1
RMSEA	0.071	0 to .1

As illustrated in Table (6) and Figure 1 the model demonstrates strong goodness-of-fit indicators. The chi-square value is 33.791, with a significance level of 0.089, which is statistically insignificant, thereby supporting the adequacy of the model fit. Additionally, the ratio of the chi-square value to the degrees of freedom is 1.405, which falls within the acceptable threshold, further confirming the model's suitability. Moreover, the goodness-of-fit indices exhibit optimal values, including RMSEA = 0.071, CFI = 1.0, IFI = 1.0, NFI = 1.0, and GFI = 1.0. These results collectively indicate an excellent fit for the path analysis model, effectively capturing the relationships between ethical cultures (as the independent variable), job satisfaction (as the mediating variable), and job performance (as the dependent variable).

Figure 1: Model Fit Analysis

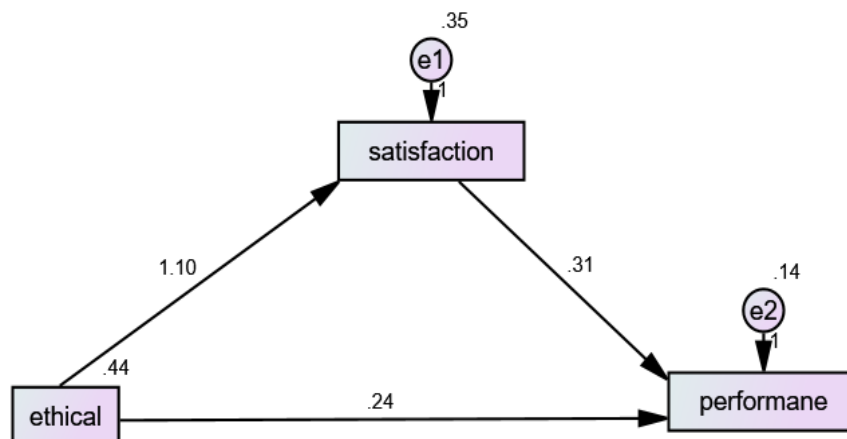


Table (7). Path Analysis Results

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Job satisfaction	<---	Ethical value	1.098	.064	17.215	***	par_1
Employee performance	<---	Job satisfaction	.309	.045	6.852	***	par_2
Employee performance	<---	Ethical value	.240	.064	3.740	***	par_3

Table (7) presents the outcomes of the (Path analysis), focusing on the path coefficients between various constructs. Based on the data presented in the preceding table, it is evident that ethical cultures, as an independent variable, exert a direct and statistically significant impact on job satisfaction, which serves as a mediating variable. This conclusion is supported by the regression coefficient value of 1.098, which achieves statistical significance at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, the findings reveal a statistically significant effect of job satisfaction on job performance at the same level of significance (0.01), with a regression coefficient of 0.309. Finally, the results indicate the presence of a statistically significant direct effect of ethical cultures on job performance at the 0.01 level when job satisfaction is considered as a mediating variable. This relationship is reflected in the regression coefficient value of 0.240, underscoring the critical role of job satisfaction in mediating the influence of ethical cultures on job performance. The previous results were also confirmed by the results of model-fit analysis presented previously in table (6).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study confirmed that ethical culture plays an important role in enhancing job satisfaction and employee performance. The results showed that ethical values, integrity, and ethical leadership all have a significant and positive impact on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction also had a strong effect on employee performance, explaining 52.6% of the variance in performance. Additionally, ethical culture had a direct impact on employee performance, accounting for 45.3% of the variance.

Regarding to the first hypothesis: Ethical values positively affects job satisfaction, results revealed that, ethical values have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction levels within the company. The t-value was found to be (9.457) with a significance level of (0.001), besides the coefficient of determination R^2 (0.308) suggests that ethical values, as an independent variable, account for approximately (30.8%) of the variance in employees' job satisfaction levels within the company. The previous finding indicates that ethical values play a pivotal role in creating a stable and fair work environment that provides employees with a sense of psychological and job security. When a company is committed to ethical principles such as transparency, fairness, and respect for workers' rights, this leads to a reduction in anxiety or fear related to the workplace. This sense of security strengthens employees' trust in management and the organization as a whole, contributing to a higher level of job satisfaction. An employee who feels that their decisions and interests are protected by clear ethical frameworks is more willing to invest in their work and channel their positive energy toward achieving the company's goals. Companies that adhere to ethical values always strive to ensure fairness in dealings whether in the distribution of rewards, the provision of career opportunities, or in handling internal issues. This type of management creates a positive shift in employees' attitudes, as they feel they are part of a just system that recognizes their efforts and values their contributions. As a result, their loyalty to the company increases, and they become more willing to stay for longer periods and continue to give their best.

The findings of second hypothesis revealed that: Integrity has a significant impact on job satisfaction, as indicated by a t-value of 11.154 and a significance level of 0.001, in addition the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.386$) indicates that Integrity explains approximately 38.6% of the variance in employees' job satisfaction within the company. The previous result indicates that integrity acts as a key driver for achieving organizational justice by promoting transparency and equality in dealing with employees. When decisions related to promotions, rewards, and performance evaluations are based on objective and unbiased criteria, employees feel that they are part of a fair system that recognizes their efforts and values their contributions. This sense of fairness reduces feelings of frustration or

dissatisfaction that may arise from bias or inequality, thereby increasing the level of job satisfaction. Besides integrity contributes to building mutual trust between management and employees, which is one of the main factors that enhance organizational loyalty. When management adheres to honest and transparent practices, employees become more willing to take on responsibilities and give their best to achieve the company's goals. This trust also creates a sense of psychological and professional stability, as employees feel that their rights and interests are protected by clear ethical frameworks.

Regarding to the third hypothesis: ethical leadership have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction levels within the company. The t-value was found to be (11.471) with a significance level of (0.001), in addition the coefficient of determination R^2 (0.399) suggests that ethical leadership, as an independent variable, account for approximately (39.9%) of the variance in employees' job satisfaction levels within the company. The previous results revealed that, Ethical leadership enhances fair and transparent practices within the organization. When leaders adopt principles such as integrity, honesty, and fairness in decision-making, it fosters a sense of trust and respect between employees and management. This perception of organizational justice leads to increased job satisfaction, as employees feel they are treated equitably and that their efforts are recognized and rewarded based on their actual performance.

The findings of fourth hypothesis showed that: job satisfaction has a significant impact on employee performance levels within the company, besides the coefficient of determination R^2 (0.526) reveals that job satisfaction, as an independent variable, accounts for approximately (52.6%) of the variance in employee performance levels within the company. The previous result reflects that when employees are satisfied with their jobs, they tend to demonstrate greater commitment to work requirements and exhibit a high level of effort and dedication. Job satisfaction enhances employees' intrinsic motivation, making them more willing to give their best and work hard to achieve the company's goals. This leads to improved output quality and increased efficiency in task execution. In addition, Job satisfaction is closely linked to employees' psychological and professional stability. When employees feel satisfied, they become less susceptible to stress or frustration, enabling them to focus more on their tasks and avoid professional errors. This psychological stability positively reflects on their daily performance and enhances their ability to handle challenges effectively.

Regarding to the fifth hypothesis: ethical culture has a significant impact on employee performance levels within the company, Furthermore, the coefficient of determination R^2 (0.453) indicates that ethical culture, as an independent variable, explains approximately (45.3%) of the variance in employee performance levels within the company. The previous result shows that, An ethical culture enhances transparency and fairness in dealing with employees. When ethical values such as integrity, equality, and respect are a core part of the company's culture, it creates a stable and fair work environment. Employees who feel that company decisions are based on clear ethical principles are more willing to put in effort and achieve high performance because they trust the internal system of the organization.

Furthermore, an ethical culture contributes to improving professional relationships within the company. An ethical environment fosters cooperation and mutual respect among employees themselves and between employees and management. This positive atmosphere reduces internal conflicts and creates a supportive environment that encourages employees to give their best. As a result, team performance improves, which positively impacts the overall productivity of the company.

7. Managerial applications

The results of this study offer important implications for managers and organizational leaders. Since ethical culture has been shown to significantly improve job satisfaction and employee performance, companies should focus on promoting ethical values in the workplace. This includes encouraging honesty, fairness, and integrity at all levels of the organization. Moreover, it is recommended that leaders act as ethical role models to build trust and respect among employees. Providing clear policies and transparent decision-making processes can also help ensure fairness and motivate employees to perform better. Additionally, creating training programs to raise awareness about ethical behavior and encouraging open communication will contribute to a positive work environment, enhance employee loyalty, and support long-term organizational success.

8. Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study provided useful insights, there were still some limitations. First, the research was conducted only in Saudi Arabia and included employees from both the public and private sectors. This means that the results may not apply to other countries or different work environments. Additionally, the sample size was limited to 200 employees, which may affect the generalization of the findings to larger populations. Moreover, data collection was done using a questionnaire only. Since participants answered based on their opinions and feelings at that specific time, there is a possibility of bias in the responses. For future research, it would be valuable to conduct similar studies in different countries or industries to see if the results remain consistent. Furthermore, using other research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, may help provide a deeper understanding of how ethical culture influences job satisfaction and employee performance. Finally, future studies could also explore other related factors like employee motivation and engagement to offer a broader and more comprehensive view of the topic.

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