Relation between Employee Productivity, Job Satisfaction, and Ethical Leadership in the Context of Work-Life Conflicts

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Abstract

Purpose

Determine how ethical leadership affects job happiness and productivity through the lens of work-life conflict. There is widespread agreement that health care workers' job happiness and productivity are positively impacted when they have a reasonable work-life balance. According to the available data, a leader's ethical behavior has a positive effect on the output of his or her team. Ethical leadership may also affect workplace productivity and satisfaction by influencing how workers feel about the balance between their personal and professional lives.

Methods

Data was obtained through electronic surveys from employees, their direct supervisors and managers across a sample of Emirati businesses, following a longitudinal methodology in which staff members from across the organization contributed to the data collection process. Initially, I emailed and used WhatsApp to distribute the survey link to 500 workers; those workers in turn invited their immediate superiors to complete the questionnaire, which was subsequently returned to the authors of the study.

Results

Multiple regression analyses concluded that an ethical leadership style significantly affects worker satisfaction, engagement, and output. Employee output was linked to a leader's commitment to ethics through a mediating factor of job satisfaction. The results of the study imply that a leadership style with an emphasis on ethics may improve employees' perceptions of their productivity and work-life balance.

If managers truly care about their staff, they will adopt ethical leadership practices that encourage work-life harmony.

Introduction

Work-life conflict, as described by Hammig et al. [1], refers to tensions that arise between professional and personal obligations. The health care workforce in many industrialized countries reports that work-life conflict is a key contributor to stress on the job. In recent decades, a disconnect between work and personal life has been linked to rising workloads, longer hours, rotating schedules, and a lack of available workers according to Fereday & Oster, Bryson et al., Lewis et al. [2] Shift work, especially on nights and weekends, is essential in the health care industry, therefore work-life conflict is a major issue for those in the field according to Grzywacz et al., [3] This is especially true for women, who make up a disproportionately large percentage of the health care workforce according to Wieclaw et al. [4]

When an employee's job begins to interfere with their personal life, a phenomenon known as "work-life conflict" can arise, which can have a negative impact on the employee's job satisfaction, productivity, feelings of exhaustion, and mental health according to Yanchus et al., Cortese et al., Franche et al. Allen et al. [5] As a consequence of this, they have been connected to reduced levels of productivity in the job, an increase in the number of sick days taken, and even considerations among healthcare employees of leaving the healthcare profession entirely according to Lidwall et al., Grzywacz et al., Killien [6] Work-life conflict has been shown to be a mediator of the linkages between workplace stressors and the outcomes of low employee productivity and low job satisfaction. This has been the finding of a number of studies. It has been established, for example, that high work expectations lead to increased sentiments of work-family conflict, which is connected with a decrease in job satisfaction. This decrease in job satisfaction is also correlated with a decrease in overall life happiness according to Cortese et al. [7]. It has been demonstrated that stress brought on by work that spills over into one's personal life acts as a mediator between depressive symptoms and a high effort-reward imbalance according to Franche et al. [8] Global nursing shortages are caused in large part by staff sickness and turnover, and both employee productivity and job satisfaction are considered as essential indications of these phenomena as Schreuder et al., Coomber & Barriball described [9].

Efforts to improve employees' work-life balance, as advocated by organizations like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the World Health Organization, have been shown to boost efficiency, work satisfaction, and productivity of employees Nabe-Nielsen et al. [10]. Organizational support, especially from management, has been shown to reduce reports of work-family conflict, which in turn has been shown to increase reports of job satisfaction both directly and indirectly according to Cortese et al., Frye & Breaugh[11]. It has been stated that management backing can help create a family-friendly workplace by influencing the culture of an organisation and encouraging employees to take advantage of work-life balance programs and policies according to Frye & Breaugh, Batt & Valcour, Allen[12] . Few studies have looked at the impact of leadership behaviors on workers' views of work-life conflict, despite the fact that research on management support is abundant. Ethical leaders, in particular, may play an important role in promoting productive workplaces across a variety of industries according to Dunham-Taylor, Tomey[13]. Ethical leaders pique the curiosity and loyalty of their followers in the group's objective by facilitating creative problem-solving and a narrow set of behaviors, as well as by opening up opportunities for fresh

approaches to old problems according to Seltzer et al., Bass [14]. Leaders with this quality motivate their people to put their own interests aside in order to achieve something greater. To better care for patients, ethical leaders can provide nurses and other medical staff the tools they need to address challenges and assume accountability according to Dunham-Taylor, Nielsen et al. [15] Therefore, and ethical leadership has been linked to increased output and contentment on the part of nurses and other healthcare employees according to Weberg [16].

Despite the fact that studies on the role of ethics in leadership have been conducted for a considerable amount of time according to Barnard. It has only been during the last ten years that ethical leadership has been acknowledged as a unique subset of leadership according to Brown et al. [17]. Recent expansion in the study of ethical leadership has offered tangible proof that the topic is both viable and relevant. Okan and Akyüz and Miao et al. [18] confirmed that there is a positive association between ethical leadership and traits such as honesty, idealistic influence, concern, and justice. These factors are all associated with ethical leadership. The findings of Neubert et al. [19] corroborate the findings of Brown et al. regarding the predictive power of ethical leadership for a variety of employee job outcomes. These employee job outcomes include the leader's effectiveness, contentment, eagerness to put extra effort into the job, and most importantly, the ability to report moral concerns. A limited number of research have been conducted to investigate the underlying mechanisms relating ethical leadership practices with results such as psychological empowerment of employees Avey et al. [20]

It is the leader's responsibility to shape their team's outlook on the workplace according to Yukl [21]. Leaders who uphold the highest ethical standards do so by their actions and the beliefs they instil in their followers as Brown and Mitchell [22] said. There is a substantial correlation between ethical leadership and follower happiness with their leaders, as shown by previous research according to Guttmann [23] .

In the first place, people start by looking up to ethical leaders as positive examples because their repute, integrity, and regard for the wellbeing of their workers Stouten et al. [24]. They give them a chance for criticism, and it helps them gain understanding of their own agency at work and the relevance of their work Piccolo et al. [25]. Having these qualities makes them a more desirable person according to Brown and Trevio, [26]. Skakon J., Nielsen K., Borg V. & Guzman J. [27] found that when workers are treated with more care and respect by their superiors, they are more likely to show gratitude by expressing emotions like happiness on the job.

Second, ethical leaders treat people equitably when making crucial decisions including job design, evaluating employee productivity, and conducting promotional activities according to Brown and Trevio, [28]. Employees are more likely to trust and feel enthusiastic about their work when their leaders exhibit these actions and characteristics according to Huang, L., & Paterson, T. A [29]

In the third place, the concept of ethical leadership is explored as an ongoing process of moralization, in which subordinates give significance to the leaders' morality if and only if those actions are connected to the employees' own core moral beliefs. Farh, J. [30] indicating the impact of charismatic leadership's many ethical components on misconduct in the workplace, Brown and Mitchell [31] discovered value congruence. Through the use of preexisting values or the creation of new ones, charismatic leaders efficiently build value congruence within themselves and followers, which in turn increases job satisfaction Shamir et al. [32]

Methods

Using electronic surveys, we compiled information from a wide range of Emirati company employees, including those at the supervisory and managerial levels. I initially sent a link to the questionnaire through email and WhatsApp to all 500 staff members; these workers then forwarded the information to their immediate superiors so that they may complete and return the survey to the study's authors. The participants come from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including those in education, healthcare, finance, and other areas. We provided a cover letter with each survey that explained its aim and made it clear that taking part was entirely optional. We guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of all responses. We also provided participants with postage-paid return envelopes so that they could mail the surveys back to the study's authors.

For the first time point (T1), we polled our entire team with a series of questions and received 430 back (a response rate of 84%). After 7 months, a second round of questionnaires (T2) were given out to all 400 employees, of whom 274 responded (62%). A total of 188 people completed both the baseline and follow-up surveys. The bulk of this study's participants were women, and their responses served as the study's basis for the analysis (refer to Table 1). They had been working at their current job for 9 (standard deviation = 7.70) years and their average age was 45 (SD = 9.90). The standard deviation for age was 9.90 (at time 1). Educators made up 61 percent of the survey, while academics made up 12 percent, professionals from a variety of organizations made up 21 percent, and bankers made up 8 percent. This longitudinal sample is very representative of the T1 and T2 samples as a whole when it comes to demographic factors like the level of education, gender, and age of the participants.

Table 1*: Participant characteristics*

	Baseline and follow-up
Response rate	188 (53%)
Age	45.0 (SD 9.9)
Gender (% women)	110 (93%)
Tenure (in years) 9.0 (SD 7.7)	9.0 (SD 7.7)
Health-care assistants	39 (21%)
Universities	23 (12%)
Schools	115 (61%)
banks	15 (8%)

"The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" (Carless et al. 2000). Statements such, "My leader encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questioning assumptions" are examples of what can be included. The scale ran from 1 (to an extreme degree) to 2 (to a considerable degree), 3 (to a lesser degree), 4 (to a moderate degree), and 5 (to a negligible degree). The first Cronbach's was 0.90.

Questionnaire measures

Data on employee productivity and job satisfaction were obtained at follow-up, while questions about ethical leadership and work-life conflict were acquired at baseline to reduce frequent technique biases (see Podsakoff et al., [33] Issues including priming, social desirability, and situational effects are mitigated with this method according to Podsakoff et al. [33]

Ethical leadership

The GELS "Global Ethical Leadership Scale" created by Carless et al. was used to quantify this (2000). MLQ "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" and the LPI "Leadership Practices Inventory" are two examples of longer scales that this short questionnaire has strong convergent validity with across all 7 items (Carless et al. 2000). Statements such, "My leader encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questioning assumptions" are examples of what can be included. The scale ran from 1 (to an extreme degree) to 2 (to a considerable degree), 3 (to a lesser degree), 4 (to a moderate degree), and 5 (to a negligible degree). The initial Cronbach's alpha value was 0.90.

Work–life conflict

Two items from the revised "Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire" (COPSOQ; Pejtersen et al., [34] were used to assess this. How much of your personal life do you feel like you have to sacrifice because of the demands of your job? Do you feel like you have to choose between work and your personal life? These were the several options for answers: 1 = completely; 2 = mostly; 3 = somewhat; 4 = not at all The initial value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.90.

Job satisfaction

A five-point scale was used to determine this. One item could read, "How pleased are you with your employment overall, all things considered?" We asked for a 1 (very satisfied), a 2 (somewhat satisfied), a 3 (somewhat unhappy), and a 4 (very disappointed). A higher score indicates greater happiness in one's current position. In terms of Cronbach's alpha, the value was 0.82.

Employee's productivity. (Five items)

Leadership effectiveness has been shown to affect company culture in numerous research and studies. Leaders that score highly on spirituality are more likely to put in place processes and systems that foster employee autonomy while also being team-focused, flexible, consistent, and coordinated. His subordinates would benefit from his ability to communicate the organization's vision, mission, and goals with clarity. The attrition rate can be lowered and organizational learning can flourish in such an atmosphere since fewer complaints and conflicts over roles will arise. Thus, it follows that spiritual leadership serves as a catalyst for raising workers' levels of spiritual intelligence. Workers who are also spiritually savvy help their leader create a more spiritual work environment. As a result, they become more intrinsically motivated. Employees who are more intrinsically motivated than by external rewards are more likely to make positive contributions to the success of their firm. They'll be more productive, which will boost their morale and set the tone for a successful company culture. Yet again, a driver for greater productivity is a dynamic and stable organizational culture that focuses on both internal and external factors. A powerful morally healthy organization with an appropriate corporate culture is established when an already productive staff promotes and encourages the new hires to achieve even greater outcomes. Employees' levels of effectiveness and efficiency over the last 12 months were quantified using this scale according to Bech et al. [35]. An item can read, "Have you accomplished the targets with excellent efficiency during the last year?" Those who responded indicated their preferences by selecting: A score of 1 indicates always, 2 always, 3 often, 4 often but not always, 5 seldom, and a score of 6 never. The analysis required reversing the scale so that greater values indicated more staff productivity. The reliability coefficient, known as Cronbach's a, was calculated to be 0.85.

Demographic measures

Gender, age, gender, marital status (1 = single, 2 = married), numbers of children in the family and years of service in the current position were gathered and used as confounding variables in the analyses.

Data analysis

The analysis was performed using SPSS, version 19.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). All possible correlations were analyzed. An investigation on the links between ethical leadership practices at the outset, work-life conflict, and subsequent job happiness and productivity among the same group of workers (n = 188) was undertaken using a regression analysis. The well-known method for assessing mediating factors developed by Baron and Kennys [36] was used to establish whether or not the hypotheses were supported. Ethical leadership is a predictor of both job satisfaction and staff productivity, therefore understanding the mediating influences between these two variables is important. In order for there to be any kind of mediation between the independent (ethical leadership) and mediated (work-life conflict) and dependent (employee productivity and job satisfaction) variables, all three of these factors must have some sort of link with one another (Baron & Kenny [36] Since demographic factors like tenure, employment, gender, age, marital status, and number of dependents at home have been shown to influence both job happiness and productivity, we included them as covariates in our analysis. The threshold for statistical significance was determined to be lesser than 0.05.

Results

All of the hypothesized connections were shown to have statistically significant correlations (P < 0.05 and q > 0.19; see Table 2). There were no regression tests performed. The mediation hypothesis was examined by estimating three regression equations. The first formula regressed ethical leadership on work-life conflict (see Table 3). Ten percent of the variation in work-life conflict may be attributed to ethical leadership (P < 0.001, F6,119 = 4.71). The second formula regressed job satisfaction (the criterion variable) against the degree of stress brought on by competing obligations at work and home (see Table 4). After accounting for cohabitation, number of dependents, tenure, gender, and age, work-life conflict was found to account for 10% of the variance in the dependent variable, job satisfaction (P <0.01, F6,119 = 1.05). The final equation regressed work satisfaction on ethical leadership. Ten percent of the variance in job satisfaction may be attributed to ethical leadership (P <0.01, F6, 119 = 2.26). Work-life conflict was introduced as a mediator because of the robust correlation between ethical leadership and contentment on the job. Table 5 displays the findings. Ethical leadership must have a smaller b coefficient for mediation to take place. In actuality, this was not the case. Consequently, we discovered that both ethical leadership and work-life conflict had direct effects on employees' happiness on the workplace. It was shown that there was no intermediate role played by work-life conflict between ethical leadership and employee happiness.

The process was carried out once more, this time using the employees' output as the criterion for success. Discord between work and personal life was regressed on productivity,

the criterion variable. There was a significant relationship between work-life conflict and the outcome variable ($P < 0.05$, $F6,117 = 2.96$). Ethical leadership was the only significant predictor of worker output ($P < 0.01$, $F6,117 = 1.74$) after adjusting for demographic variables such as age, gender, length of service, marital status, and number of dependents. The beta was diminished and became insignificant after work-life conflict was factored in. Employee productivity appears to have been a mediator between ethical leadership and its underlying cause, work-life conflict.

Table 2: *Descriptive and zero-order correlations for study variables*

Scale	M	SD	Range	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8				
1. Ethical leadership T1 59.10	20.64	0–100					
2. Work–life conflict T1	37.71	25.98	0–100	0.30**			
3. Employee's productivity T2		67.63	15.76	12–100	0.20*	0.30**	
4. Job satisfaction T2	64.91	15.68	8.25–100	0.29**	0.19*	0.38**	
5. Gender T1	–	–	–	0.09	0.0	0.01	0.02
6. Age T1 in years	43.78	11.16	20–63	0.05	0.07	0.10	0.06
0.07							
7. Tenure T1 in years	11.58	10.22	0–35	0.04	0.02	0.13	0.08
0.17** 0.48**							
8. Partner T1	1.25	0.43	1–2	0.0	0.03	0.15	0.06
0.0 0.0 0.01							
9. Children at home T1	1.81	1.04	1–4	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.0
0.02 0.31** 0.20** 0.23**							

Table 3: *Results of regressions of work–life conflict on Ethical leadership*

Ethical leadership			
Mediator	β	R2	F
		d. f.	
Work-Life conflict	0.29*	0.10**	4.71*
	6119		

Age, gender, tenure, cohabitation and number of dependents was controlled in all analyses. *$P < 0.05$, **$P < 0.01$.

Table 4: *Results of regressions of Employee productivity   and job satisfaction on work–life conflict*

Work-life conflict				
Mediator	β	R2	F	d. f.
Job Satisfaction	0.20*	0.05*	1.05*	6119
Employee productivity	0.30**	13**	2.96**	6117

All analyses accounted for confounding factors such dependents, cohabitation, length of employment, gender, and age. *$P < 0.05$, **$P < 0.01$.

Table 5: *Results show paths from ethical leadership to job satisfaction and employee productivity, both with and without mediation effects for work-life conflict, as measured by standardized b coefficients and relative changes in R2.*

Criterion	Predictor	Model 1 Without work–life conflict			Model 2 With work–life conflict			Δ
		β	F (d.f.)	Total R2 / R2	β	F (d.f.)	R2	
Job satisfaction	Ethical leadership	0.27**	2.19 (8,218)**	0.17** 0.02	0.40**	3.46 (6,119)**	0.05**	
Employee productivity	Ethical leadership	0.15*	2.81 (7,116)*	0.15** 0.07	0.20**	2.12 (6,117)	0.06*	

Discussion

This study found that workers in schools with students reported higher levels of work-life conflict when their supervisors lacked ethical leadership practices. There was a direct correlation between ethical leadership actions and worker happiness and output. We also discovered that work-life conflict moderated the link between ethical leadership and employee output. In addition to bolstering the body of literature linking ethical leadership to increased productivity in the workplace Weberg, [37] , our results shed light on the connections between an ethical leadership style and employees' reports of feeling well-balanced in their daily lives.

It was our hypothesis that leaders who acted ethically would inspire their teams to feel less tension between their professional and personal lives. Our results lend credence to this theory and add to the expanding body of research on the critical role of coaches and supervisors in promoting healthy work-life balance according to Colombo & Ghislieri, Allen [38],. Specifically our research supports the idea that managers and supervisors can encourage a healthy work-life balance for their workers by employing a rather more ethical leadership style according to Wang & Walumbwa [39]. This may be due to the fact that ethical leaders create a safe space for their followers to develop as people and pay close attention to their needs, serving as mentors and coaches according to Avolio, Bass [40]. In addition to giving workers more control over their schedules, this could make them more at ease when making use of family-friendly policies and programs at their places of employment according to Wang & Walumbwa [39].

High work demands are associated with low job satisfaction and employee productivity, and research has shown that employees' views of work-life conflict play a significant mediating role between these two factors according to Cortese et al. [41]. Our findings contribute to this body of work by showing that ethical leadership is connected with reduced feelings of work-life conflict, which in turn has a beneficial effect on productivity among employees. The constructive leadership style of an ethical leader can shield workers from the negative effects of low productivity by encouraging workers to improve their job and giving each worker individualized attention to help them grow professionally and personally while also allowing them greater flexibility in their personal lives. According to the research according to Nielsen et al., [42], ethical leaders are able to affect workplace dynamics by inspiring team members to invest more fully in the organization's goals. The positive effects on employees' work-life balance and output could result from this. This hypothesis has to be investigated and tested further.

Contrary to our expectations, we did not identify a moderating role for work-life conflict between job satisfaction and ethical leadership. Both factors were found to have a positive impact on workers' happiness on the job, lending credence to the relevant research according to Cortese et al., Weberg [41] According to surveys, employee satisfaction at work is low and is correlated with stress levels. Due to their unique contributions to the concept of work-life conflict, job satisfaction, and ethical leadership may be independently related with it. A good leader could boost morale in the workplace by encouraging participation, providing incentives, and providing morale-boosting support, for instance. However, if workers believe they have fewer professional responsibilities that intrude with personal affairs, they may be more satisfied with their jobs. This is not due to a lack of involvement, difficulties, or rewards from their work. Taking this into account is similar to the results of Cortese et al. [41] , who discovered that increased work demands are related to high judgments of work-family conflict, which in turn are related to low views of job satisfaction. These results may provide more explanation for why work-life conflict mediates the relationship between employees' productivity and ethical leadership but not with regards to employees' job happiness. Having good ethical leadership may contribute to job satisfaction, but that doesn't guarantee high employee productivity if workers are also stressed out by a lack of balance between their professional and personal lives.

Limitations of the study

Numerous drawbacks exist in this investigation. To begin with, despite being a longitudinal study, it relied on self-reported data, which could have introduced bias. Multiple methods were employed in an effort to reduce prejudice according to Podsakoff et al. [43]. For both sets of data, we mixed and matched questionnaire items across scales to prevent respondents from recognizing a pattern. We also tried to use items that were clear, concise, and precise, and that protected the privacy of our survey takers. For this reason, we incorporated a number of control variables into our analysis, as there are many potential mediators between work and personal life (number of children at home, partner, tenure, gender, age). It is possible that other explanatory variables, such as working circumstances, worktime preferences, working hours, shift work patterns, and work demands, exist but are not considered in this investigation. These factors need to be considered in future investigations. Unfortunately, we omitted information about these organizations' efforts to promote work-life balance. This could moderate the effect of ethical leadership on workers' perceptions of their work-life balance Wang & Walumbwa, [39] and increase the amount of variance accounted for by a more positive perception of workers' work-life balance, which in turn increases workers' job satisfaction and productivity. Data and information on workplace rules and programs should be included in future studies.

In this research, we looked at how competing priorities can cause tension in one's life, such as when one's job and one's family responsibilities collide. Studies that have focused on the topic have claimed that work-family conflict mainly represents the worries of employees with dependants, sick and disabled parents, or someone else requiring care, so it is possible to question the applicability of our conclusions. Studies that exclusively evaluate work-family conflict do not account for the effects of employment on the personal life of persons who are childless or single. So, our research comes complete with the ongoing dialogue on the difficulties of balancing work and personal responsibilities. However, we only used two criteria to gauge the extent to which work interferes with one's personal life and time. Ideally, future research would employ a more nuanced method of gauging work-life conflict.

In this analysis, we used a unified scale to measure several aspects of ethical leadership Bass, Judge & Piccolo [44]. This scale has been deemed a valid and trustworthy indicator of

ethical leadership and there is a strong correlation between the four dimensions of ethical leadership according to Avolio & Bass [40] Although this study suggests that ethical leadership has a positive effect on work-life conflict, more research is needed to determine whether or not the elements of ethical leadership have direct effects.

There are a few problems with this study, the most obvious ones being the uneven representation of the sexes and the limited applicability of the findings outside of an aged care context. Given that decreased levels of job satisfaction and the desire to leave are known to be particularly frequent in the health-care professions, it has been argued that ethical leadership plays a significant influence in many. Given the extensive prior study on ethical leadership in education and health care organizations, our findings make a substantial contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Conclusion and implications

This research adds to what is already known about ethical leadership and the issue of work-life conflict. Findings from this study imply that an ethical leadership style is linked to lower levels of work-life conflict and higher levels of employee productivity. More research is needed to confirm these associations in different health care occupations and contexts, and to account for contextual factors like work-life balance regulations and programs. This research lends credence to the notion that managers in the health care industry should embrace an ethical leadership style in order to improve not just the work-life balance of their employees but also their health and their employees' productivity. It is important to expand on these results in future studies to learn how specific components of ethical leadership behaviors affect various facets of workers' work-life conflict.

Ethical leadership is important, but it can't make up for poorly designed employment, and good leaders should encourage their organizations to make those adjustments for the sake of their employees' well-being and productivity.

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