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## Exploring Mediating Impact of Ethical Leadership and Political Behavior on the Interplay between Work Ethic Climate and Job Satisfaction at Middle Technical University

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### Abstract

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This study explores the mediating role of ethical leadership and political behavior in affecting the correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction at Middle Technical University. For this purpose, a descriptive correlational research design was utilized to examine the intended outcomes. For collecting the required data, a thirty-item questionnaire was developed to assess the predictions defined by the research topic. Reviewing the existing literature and specialist opinion in organizational psychology was the basis for designing the questionnaire. Subsequently, the questionnaire was pilot-tested to examine the targeted questions' clarity, usefulness, and relevance. The final questionnaire comprised 30 Likert-scale items administered online to 180 randomly selected employees working at Middle Technical University. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using structural equation modeling, SmartPLS, and Pearson correlation coefficient formula. The findings revealed that ethical and political leadership significantly positively affect the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. The results may have important implications for professional practices, employee well-being, and organizational performance.

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### 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic and competitive academic landscape, the pivotal role of ethical leadership and political behavior in influencing organizational culture and improving employee satisfaction cannot be denied. Over the past few decades, lack of full compliance with ethical leadership and political behavior standards has been reported to be the principal culprit mediating the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction in various organizations in general and higher education settings in particular.

Conceptually interpreted as right or wrong behavior, ethics is often used as an index for evaluating the moral standards associated with customs, habits, and behaviors of individuals or societies to determine whether they are reasonable [1]. Not surprisingly, business agencies emphasizing productivity tend to establish ethical, solid management and leadership in the workplace. Suggesting that work ethics place a high premium on the importance of hard work by individuals, [2] believes that the "Social entrainment of this value is considered to enhance character through hard work that is respective to an individual's field of work."

Consequently, a work ethic climate is important because it assumes that employees with ethical behavior tend to comply with moral rules and policies that ensure the proper actualization of the prespecified goals in an organization. As [3] maintains, an ethically positive working climate evokes moral values like integrity and honesty, making employees fully comply with the highly valued organization policies and principles. As such, employees who believe in work ethics are often more productive and adhere dutifully to the work standards set by the organization.

Many studies have reflected that an organization's work ethic climate may have a burgeoning impact on employee job satisfaction [4][5]. While a positive work ethic climate highlights the significance of hard work, commitment, and integrity, an adverse environment is characterized by employee truancy, apathy, and a lack of dedication.

It is often stated that the work ethic climate in an organization is strongly and positively correlated with employee job satisfaction [6]. Employees with a positive work ethic climate are more motivated, dedicated, and inherently satisfied. By contrast, employees with a negative attitude about work ethic climate demonstrate less job satisfaction and lower levels of job performance.

Consequently, managers and leaders in different enterprises should fully understand the importance of the factors mediating the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. For one thing, it is often reported that leadership can be a determinant in such a relationship

[7]. Ethical leadership or demonstrating ethical behaviors like honesty, impartiality, fairness, and respect for others can positively affect employee attitudes and actions by creating an atmosphere of trust. This can promote decision-making processes and create a positive organizational culture. Thus, serving as role models, it is generally agreed today that ethical leadership can play a mediatory role in the correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction [8].

Political behavior is defined as applying managerial tactics like manipulation, coalition-building, and favoritism to attain personal or organizational goals. Such tactics may be informal and unofficial since they often rely on clandestine behind-the-scenes efforts to impose ideas, maximize power, or attain other personal or organizational objectives [9].

Although much of the political behavior concept has often been viewed negatively, its appropriate practice can create a helpful instrument for directing complex organizational dynamics by paving the way for success in competitive contexts. However, some suspect that, if not practiced intelligently, political behavior can also evoke negative consequences, leading to conflicts, low trust, poor productivity, and resentment. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how political behavior can mediate the interconnection between work ethic climate and job satisfaction.

The above remarks show that work climate shapes employee attitudes and organizational relationships. Therefore, understanding the interplay between work ethic climate and job satisfaction has become an important area of research in management studies. Interestingly, previous studies have been chiefly concerned with the mediatory role of ethical leadership in influencing ethical work climate and job satisfaction. Few studies have examined the mediating impact of moral leadership and political behavior on the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction, particularly in an academic setting like Middle Technical University.

## **2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development**

Ethical leadership is one of the core elements of organizational behavior and management, drawing on several theories. These theories provide a wide range of insights guiding leaders to promote and strengthen ethical behavior within their organizations. [10] define work climate as how the organization practices, supports, and rewards unique routines. The ethical aspects of work climate define a normative system that provides employees with a yardstick to help them react to moral issues in the workplace.

Differently stated, the ethical work climate portrays the moral consequences of organizational practices. Such a climate develops and grows when employees believe that certain forms of ethical behavior constitute the standards and norms required for organizational decision-making. These normative values reflect how a positive work ethic climate makes employees believe that "the right thing to do is the only thing to do" [11].

Several theories comprise the general framework that defines the foundation upon which ethical leadership is laid: social learning, transformational, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical decision-making theories. By integrating the insights associated with these theoretical frameworks, organization leaders can cultivate an atmosphere of commitment, integrity, and trust in which employee morale, involvement, and work performance can be significantly improved. By using the knowledge offered by these theories, leaders and managers can influence employees' ethical or unethical behaviors [12].

### **2.1 Work Ethic Theories**

The behavioral psychologist [13] introduced a theory called Social Learning Theory (SLT). It assumes that observation and modeling are critical factors determining how and why individuals learn behavior from their environment. The theory can have several real-world applications. For instance, behaviors might be transmitted based on observational learning. People learn through observing positive role models. By observing the behaviors of others, people develop similar behaviors, which may lead to social change. In this way, they learn which behaviors are socially acceptable or unacceptable.

Therefore, under such a perspective, employees' behavior is shaped by observing the behavior of the leaders and managers in the workplace since, according to the SLT, employees and leaders are closely entwined in such a way that the personality and ability of the leader may be transmitted to other employees, empowering them to share information and knowledge to attain organization goals [14].

Another critical theory related to ethical leadership is known as transformational leadership. [15] assert that "transformational leaders communicate a collective vision and inspire followers to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the group". Ethical leadership is a crucial component of transformational leadership since this style of leadership style tends to support morally and ethically centered values like honesty, fairness, and justice. Consequently, ethical leaders are transformational individuals with self-confidence and inner strength who fight for what is correct and try to raise the spirit of success in their colleagues, subordinates, or followers to inspire them through motivation to become committed to the shared vision in the organization where they are working.

Additionally, servant leadership theory also affects ethical leadership. As a leadership philosophy, the theory was built on the belief that the primary goal of influential leaders is to serve others. Robert K. Greenleaf coined the concept in his essay "The Servant as Leader," published in 1970. He believed that the servant first and the leader second gives a leader a conscious choice between absolute authoritarian power or the urgent need to satisfy other people's highest priorities. Therefore, a servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of the people and the communities to which they belong. Unlike traditional leadership, which generally involves accruing and exercising power, servant-leaders are willing to share power and place the needs of others first by helping them develop and perform as effectively as possible.

Servant-leaders are inspired to create opportunities within the organization to help followers grow [16]. Notably, willingness to take responsibility for actualizing organizational goals and place service before control and self-interest is crucial for creating solid interpersonal relationships [17]. As [18] rightly observes, servant leadership is a people-centered leadership style. As a result, it can be stated that ethical leadership is an inherent attribute of servant leadership since it assumes that leaders should act not only as caretakers but also as role models for others with integrity and compassion [19].

Likewise, authentic leadership theory is still another framework that is related to ethical leadership. This type of leadership is a management style where individuals act genuine, authentic, and sincere. Proponents of authentic leadership suggest that authentic leaders are more inclined

to inspire trust, loyalty, and work performance from employees. In other words, such leadership style is naturally performed by leaders who practice high standards of integrity, take responsibility for their actions, and make decisions based on principles. They use their inner moral values as a point of reference to act and earn the trust and loyalty of the employees by creating a pleasant environment where teamwork is of great importance.

In this way, authentic leaders strive to develop a meaningful relationship with their team as they work toward common goals associated with the organization's mission and purpose. Being one of the central tenets of authentic leadership, moral leadership is expected to demonstrate a true inwardly moral and ethical self. Ethical leaders must develop self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and interpersonal transparency to develop and maintain leadership authenticity. [20] maintains that to a manager, authenticity refers to the leader's knowledge and adherence to one's inner values, which is the foundation of a style of leadership that is both ethically appropriate and efficient.

Finally, ethical decision-making theory refers to a cognitive process in which leaders regard moral values, principles, or guidelines for making fair decisions. With the help of the ethical tenets, business leaders can approach the business topics on their daily agenda with fairness and care for others, assessing and reassessing all the alternatives to make the most moral decisions. Emphasizing the importance of considering the consequences of decision-making, these theories emphasize that complying with moral rules and appreciating different personality attributes is the basis of ethical leadership practices [21].

## 2. 2 Political behavior theories

Political behavior is the strategies and tactics individuals or groups employ to achieve dominance, influence decision-making, and attain personal goals. Such self-serving behaviors may be detrimental to organizational goals or the interests of others, rightly observes, political behavior embraces activities that people within an organization adopt to acquire, enhance, and utilize power to get their gains. Interventionist behaviors such as lobbying, manipulating information, engaging in power struggles, etc., may be illegitimate and often contravene formal authority and organization politics [22].

Thus, it can be stated that political behavior may lead to legitimate or illegitimate outcomes for individuals, groups, or organizations. When the tactics adopted by a manager or leader insist on the adoption of a specific strategy that would eventually ensure the organization's future success, the intervention is legitimate and functional; however, when political behavior is employed to prevent a change that can help the organization's economic status, it is illegitimate. Notably, a distinction must be made between legitimate and illegitimate political behaviors. While legitimate political behaviors refer to usual everyday tactics and rules to help the organization's goals, illegitimate political behaviors that are not common in organizations tend to ignore those rules and may resort to activities that are not common in an organization and may evoke a risk of losing organizational success and integrity. Disloyal employees and those with very little concern about the socioeconomic status of the organization are more likely to engage in illegitimate political behaviors [23].

Several fundamental theories explain how organizations may be influenced by political behavior. These theories include resource dependency theory, institutional theory, and social exchange theory, among others. Resource dependence theory deals with power relations. It analyzes how corporate managers and leaders interact with the parties that enjoy a dominating power over the enterprise since they control the external resources such as funding, information, and support resources the company needs to survive and operate efficiently [24].

Traditionally, organization managers and leaders employ acquisition, co-optation, or alliances to access the required resources. However, such tactics may result in misbehavior and abuse of power, which may adversely affect organizational outcomes [25]. In this sense, political behavior is considered a strategic solution to the uncertainty and competition in obtaining the resources to safeguard the organization's interests.

Alternatively, political behavior may be understood in terms of institutional theory. This theory assumes that organizational structures, norms, and practices greatly influence the broader sociocultural context, in which cultural understandings and shared expectations are paramount. The emergence of inconsistencies in decision-making can inversely affect our understanding of the link between sociocultural forces and organizational stance in the community [26].

Another influential theory related to political behavior, called resource dependency theory, concerns a company's transactions with other enterprises in the community to acquire its resources. Such connections, though useful, can result in dependencies and power relations that may harm the companies' operations, the resource operators may ignore the authorities so that their recalcitrant activities and control abuse can reduce transparency and honest transactions. Resource dependency theory differs from institutional theory in that the former argues that organizations need to obtain external resources to prosper or survive. At the same time, the latter suggests that actions leading to isomorphism are not helpful [24].

Last, social exchange theory is concerned with the notion that a relationship between two people may be created through cost-benefit analysis. In other words, it acts as a metric for determining the extent of the effort mustered by an individual in a bilateral relationship. In business environments, political behavior can be considered a kind of social exchange in which the parties may use influence or tactics to build alliances, gain support, and achieve their goals, even in unsavory ways. These critical theories can help analysts analyze and understand organizational political behavior. Leaders and managers can use strategies to make the most effective organizational decisions.

## 2.3 Job Satisfaction Theories

Job satisfaction refers to the way individuals perceive their jobs. In other words, it is how employees feel content and fulfilled in their work. The evaluation of job satisfaction involves various factors such as attitude about one, the work individuals have to do as part of their job, the amount of pay, opportunities for promotion, and an impression of one's supervision [27]. The work climate is a variable that can impact productivity and the employees' job satisfaction [28]. Some major theories related to job satisfaction include discrepancy theory, two-factor theory, job characteristics model, and equity theory.

Discrepancy theory assumes that job satisfaction is the byproduct of the gap between a person's expectations about their job and the actual rewards they receive. Consequently, job satisfaction diminishes when the gap between one's expectations and reality is high. Another theory

influencing job satisfaction is known as the two-factor theory. This theory suggests that two factors might affect job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The first set encompasses hygiene factors like salary, company policies, and working conditions. If these factors are adequate, the employees feel happy about their job; otherwise, they feel dissatisfied. The second set, by contrast, is related to factors including motivational factors such as responsibilities and opportunities for growth, which are more likely to lead to job satisfaction if they are sufficiently high.

Still, another theory related to job satisfaction is closely linked with job characteristics like skill development, task significance, and autonomy. Naturally, jobs with positive attributes make the work more meaningful and are more likely to lead to higher job satisfaction. Finally, equity theory suggests that outcomes like recognition, salary, and promotions must be compatible with individuals' capabilities or input, such as level of effort, skills, and work experiences. The perception of fairness has a direct bearing on job satisfaction. If employees see that they are not adequately rewarded relative to their inputs and in comparison with others, they will be more likely prone to lower levels of job satisfaction. Such theories can help organizations be wary of the factors that ensure employee well-being and satisfaction.

### 3. Empirical backgrounds

A representative sample was selected and analyzed from numerous kinds of research on the present study's critical variables. In 2017, [29] studied the ethical climate, political behavior, ethical leadership, and job satisfaction in a wholesale business company in the Bangkok Metropolitan region. The required data was collected by using a questionnaire divided into five sections. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that variables like ethical climate, political behavior, and ethical leadership influence job satisfaction to varying degrees.

In a different study in 2023, [30] investigated the moderating Role of ethical leadership in the relationship between organizational Politics and workplace envy in five-star hotel enterprises. Using PLS-SEM and Warp PLS 7.0 software for data analysis, the results demonstrated that ethical leadership was positively correlated with workplace envy.

In his doctoral dissertation, [31] examined the relationship between ethicality and political skills of leaders on job satisfaction. Using a sample of 539 accounting faculty members teaching in the United States and a correlational research design, he found that the variables under scrutiny were highly correlated. The results further indicated that most accounting faculty perceived their direct supervisor as ethical. The political skill findings, measured with the Political Skill Inventory (PSI), also indicated that most faculty members perceived their direct supervisor as politically skillful. The results also suggested that the close relationship between perceptions of ethicality and perceptions of political skill had a confounding impact on assessing ethicality.

In another study conducted in 2022, [32] attempted to investigate the interrelationships between organizational culture, ethical organizational climate, ethical leadership, decision-making, and workplace pressures from a macro-meso-micro perspective. Using a cross-sectional design and survey strategy and a sample of 526 participants of varying backgrounds working in "large" enterprises across diverse industries in Mauritius, they found out that the macro, meso, and micro jointly affected the dependent variables such as organizational citizenship behavior, employee ethical behavior and conduct, and perceived employee performance both directly and indirectly to varying degrees.

[33] explored the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' performance through variables such as counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior of employees. Drawing on social learning theory and social exchange theory, it was found that the top management ethical leadership behavior (EL) contributes to employee performance (EP) by enhancing organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and reducing counterproductive work behavior (CWB). The target sample comprised various participants such as principals, vice-principals, headmasters, and deputy headmasters of 107 educational institutions. The required data were collected through questionnaires. The results showed a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance. The findings also showed that counterproductive work behavior (CWB) partially mediated the relationship between ethical leadership behavior and employee performance.

In a different study, examined the impact of work ethics on job satisfaction among bank employees in Jordan. Using a quantitative method and a questionnaire, they addressed 89 employees working in Jordanian banks. The results showed that the variables under investigation were positively correlated [34].

In 2020, [35] attempted to examine the correlation between ethical climate and job satisfaction in selected manufacturing companies in Anambra state. Using a descriptive survey design and a target population of participants from three manufacturing companies in Nigeria, they selected 398 employees. After utilizing Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 200 respondents was finally selected. The descriptive statistics described the sample in terms of the responses to the questions using frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The results obtained from the regression analysis of the data demonstrated that the variables of ethical climate had a significant positive relationship with supervisor, job variety, and compensation.

As can be seen, the results obtained for the sample of studies described above reveal that some studies try to examine the mediating effect of ethical leadership and political behavior on employee behavior. In contrast, others independently measure the positive correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. However, the current study differs from other studies because it explores the mediating effect of ethical leadership and political behavior on the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction in a single research.

More specifically, this study aims to explore two research hypotheses:

- a) Ethical leadership does not play a mediating role in the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction at Middle Technical University,
- b) Political behavior does not mediate the interplay between work ethic climate and job satisfaction at Middle Technical University.

## 4 . Methodology

### 4.1 Research design

To examine and explore the mediating effect of ethical leadership and political behavior on the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction, a descriptive correlational research design was utilized to assess the intended predictions made by the study. This methodological approach is adopted when the objective of research is twofold. First, to describe a particular phenomenon and its characteristics. Second, to explore the correlation between two or more variables. In this approach, however, none of the variables are manipulated; instead, the required data are often gathered using observation and survey tools such as questionnaires [36].

### 4.2 Participants

From the general population of the participants (employees and professors ) working in the Middle Technical University, a target sample of 180 was randomly selected based on the  $5\sqrt{q} < n < 15\sqrt{q}$  formula and such criteria as age, gender, educational background, and professional record. Since the total number of items (q) on the questionnaire was 30, the ideal sample size (n) was estimated to be (6x30), which was 180 (Sideridis et al., 2014). Table 1 shows the sample size breakdown in terms of the prespecified criteria:

**Table 1. Sample breakdown based on prespecified demographic criteria**

Participants							
Age Range		Gender		Educational Background		Professional Record	
(20-30)	44	Male	95	Bachelor degree	113	(1-5)	38
(31-40)	82	Female	85	Master degree	59	(6-10)	92
(41-50)	35			Doctoral degree	8	(11-15)	29
(>50)	19					(>15)	21
<b>Total</b>							<b>= 180</b>

Table 1 provides the exact proportions of the sample size under scrutiny for the participants based on the selection criteria.

### 4.3 Procedure

The participants were given a 30-item questionnaire to assess the mediating effect of ethical leadership and political behavior on the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. The items related to perceptions of the variables under investigation were extracted from four questionnaires. While Items 1 through 8 were taken from a standard questionnaire on ethical climate developed by Victor and Cullen (1998), items 9 through 16 were copied from the moral leadership questionnaire by [37]. Items 17 through 24 on political behavior were taken from Dubrin (xxxx), and items 25 through 30 were borrowed from the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire by Weiss et al. (1967), respectively.

The validity and reliability provide evidence ensuring the integrity and quality of the questionnaire for collecting the required data. Where reliability reflects the extent to which the research results can be reproduced when repeated under the same conditions, validity demonstrates how the study's results measure what the study purports to measure. Since validity and reliability reflect how accurate the conclusions drawn from a study are, specific steps were taken to estimate them for the newly developed questionnaire.

In step one, the construct validity of the questionnaire was measured. To measure the construct validity, smart PLS was used. PLS is helpful here since we deal with many x and highly correlated x variables. The main reason is that PLS is a specialized SEM software designed explicitly for PLS based SEM. More specifically, it helps analyze correlations among latent variables in an extensive data set with a high degree of multicollinearity. As can be seen in Table 2, the operational load of all items is higher than 0.3, and significance levels are more than 1.98.

**Table 2. Operational load values and alpha levels related to items on the questionnaire**

Name of variable	question	operational load	alpha level
Ethical climate	Q1	0.713	9.923
	Q2	0.753	9.298
	Q3	0.770	9.869
	Q4	0.710	9.709
	Q5	0.759	9.858
	Q6	0.752	9.847
	Q7	0.762	9.846
	Q8	0.654	9.656
Ethical leadership	Q9	0.548	9.336
	Q10	0.654	9.116
	Q11	0.748	9.262
	Q12	0.852	9.136
	Q13	0.855	8.146
	Q14	0.695	8.268
	Q15	0.955	8.966

	<b>Q16</b>	<b>0.667</b>	<b>8.665</b>
	<b>Q17</b>	<b>0.767</b>	<b>8.354</b>
	<b>Q18</b>	<b>0.857</b>	<b>8.555</b>
	<b>Q19</b>	<b>0.967</b>	<b>8.585</b>
<b>Political behavior</b>	<b>Q20</b>	<b>0.898</b>	<b>8.615</b>
	<b>Q21</b>	<b>0.880</b>	<b>8.955</b>
	<b>Q22</b>	<b>0.808</b>	<b>8.953</b>
	<b>Q23</b>	<b>0.789</b>	<b>8.445</b>
	<b>Q24</b>	<b>0.798</b>	<b>8.526</b>
	<b>Q25</b>	<b>0.690</b>	<b>8.658</b>
	<b>Q26</b>	<b>0.659</b>	<b>8.754</b>
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	<b>Q27</b>	<b>0.939</b>	<b>9.478</b>
	<b>Q28</b>	<b>0.694</b>	<b>7.425</b>
	<b>Q29</b>	<b>0.739</b>	<b>7.954</b>
	<b>Q30</b>	<b>0.799</b>	<b>7.454</b>

For more assurance, the questionnaire's convergent or congruent validity was also estimated in the second step. Convergent Validity is a subtype of construct validity that indicates how closely a test is related to other tests that measure the same or similar constructs.

Table 3 demonstrates that the average variance values for each construct are higher than 0.5, attesting to the congruent validity of the new questionnaire used in this study.

**Table 3. Convergent validly average variance values**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Average Variance Estimate (AVE)</b>
<b>Ethical climate</b>	<b>0.591</b>
<b>Ethical leadership</b>	<b>0.612</b>
<b>Political behavior</b>	<b>0.633</b>
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>0.715</b>

In step three, the instrument's reliability was measured using two different methods: Cronbach's alpha coefficient and cumulative reliability. The idea of using Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula is to examine the reliability by observing if there is much covariance among the items relative to the variance. Table 4 indicates the results obtained from the Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula for all the items on the questionnaire:

**Table 4. Results obtained from the Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha level</b>
<b>Ethical climate</b>	<b>0.794</b>
<b>Ethical leadership</b>	<b>0.725</b>
<b>Political behavior</b>	<b>0.812</b>
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>0.766</b>

As can be seen, the alpha values are all above 0.7. This indicates that the questionnaire is reliable. Additionally, the cumulative reliability of the instrument was estimated in Table 5.

**Table 5. Cumulative reliability of the questionnaire.**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cumulative reliability (CR)</b>
<b>Ethical climate</b>	<b>0.802</b>
<b>Ethical leadership</b>	<b>0.913</b>
<b>Political behavior</b>	<b>0.766</b>
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>0.725</b>

Once again, all CR values are above 0.7, denoting that the questionnaire enjoys proper internal reliability.

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

SPSS ran a descriptive task to assess the hypotheses related to the study. Subsequently, other statistical tools, such as Smart PLS, Pearson product-moment, and relevant formulas, were used to infer whether the correlations between the four key variables were meaningful.

## 5. Results and Discussion

In the previous section, the procedure was used to examine the two main hypotheses of the study. In this section, an account of the results, along with their analyses, is provided. The obtained data were analyzed to answer the targeted hypotheses; namely, (1) Ethical leadership plays no mediating role in the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction, and (2) Political behavior does not have any mediating impact on the correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. Specific statistical tests were employed to explore the truth of such predictions. What follows contains the details of the analyses of the data performed in this regard:

A carefully planned statistical procedure consisting of several steps in attesting the hypotheses under investigation was chosen. First, a descriptive task was run to estimate the descriptive statistics on the number of items related to the four key variables and the items related to the four targeted variables, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Nondescriptive task on the items related to key variables**

Variable	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Min.	Max.
Ethical Climate	8	3.210	0.845	0.703	1	5
Ethical Leadership	8	3.641	0.757	0.570	1	5
Political Behavior	8	3.023	0.733	0.537	1	5
Job Satisfaction	6	3.156	0.847	0.718	1	5

For the 24 items (8 for each targeted variable), the total mean values at the minimum and maximum limits are 3.21, 3.641, 3.023, and 3.156, respectively.

Subsequently, a normality test was used to determine whether the target sample data had been drawn from a normally distributed population. This test is generally performed to verify whether the data involved in the research have a normal distribution because a wrong selection of the representative value of a data set and further calculation of the significance level using this representative value might give an incorrect interpretation. Table 7. demonstrates the results of a normality test for the target variables:

**Table 7. Results of a normality test for the target variables**

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis	Result
Ethical Climate	0.512	0.230	Normal
Ethical Leadership	0.636	0.385	Normal
Political Behavior	0.427	0.336	Unnormal
Job Satisfaction	0.521	0.012	

Table 7 shows that the normality test results indicate that the sample data sets for ethical climate are regular. However, they are non-normal in terms of political behavior and job satisfaction. Consequently, a non-parametric test such as partial least squares (PLS) analysis is required to examine the importance of political behavior and job satisfaction variables. The least squares method is a form of mathematical regression analysis used to specify the line of best fit, providing a pictorial representation of the correlation between data points.

Afterward, a Pearson product Moment analysis was used to show the degree of strength between the variables under scrutiny. As a statistical measurement of the relationship between two variables, the magnitude of r represents the strength of the interconnection between variables. When r is closer to 0, the correlation is weak, but when it approximates +/-1, the relationship is strong. Table 8 illustrates correlation coefficient values for the variables:

**Table 4.3 Matrix of Correlation Coefficient Magnitude and Significance for Variables**

Variable	Ethical Climate		Ethical Leadership		Political Behavior		Job Satisfaction	
	Magnitude	Significant	Magnitude	Significant	Magnitude	Significant	Magnitude	Significant
Ethical Climate	1	0						
Ethical Leadership	0.533	0.000	1	0				
Political Behavior	- 0.615	0.000	- 0.512	0.000	1	0		
Job Satisfaction	0.678	0.000	0.577	0.000	0.590	0.000	1	0

The table clearly shows that the correlation magnitudes between the targeted variables are meaningful, indicating that the correlation strength between all variables is significant.

Finally, SMART-PLS, a specialized structural equation modeling (SEM) software specifically designed for Partial Least Squares (PLS) based SEM, was employed to further analyze the relationships between variables. The software deals with path coefficients. Any standardized path coefficient measures the relative strength and sign of the effect from one variable to another. In other words, pathways reflect the strength of the influences evoked by variables. The influence of a pathway or structure on the system is either increased or decreased according to the magnitude difference.

More specifically, Q-square values above zero indicate that the target values are well-constructed and that the model has predictive relevance. For instance, a Q2 above 0 indicates that the model enjoys predictive relevance. The Run Blindfolding procedure is used in SMART-PLS to

estimate the Q square values. In addition, to interpret the four figures below, it is necessary to understand the meaning of determinant symbols. More specifically, the SEM model in this study is based on four important corollaries:

- a) Beta path coefficients and their interpretation are accomplished in terms of t-values,
- b) R2 indicates the coefficient of determination. An R2 correlation between the amount of variance explained by a latent variable is measured by the total amount of the variance,
- c) Q2 indicates predictive relevance, and
- d) The effect size index is symbolized as f2.

Figures 1 and 2 show standardized coefficient pathways for the variables in this study:

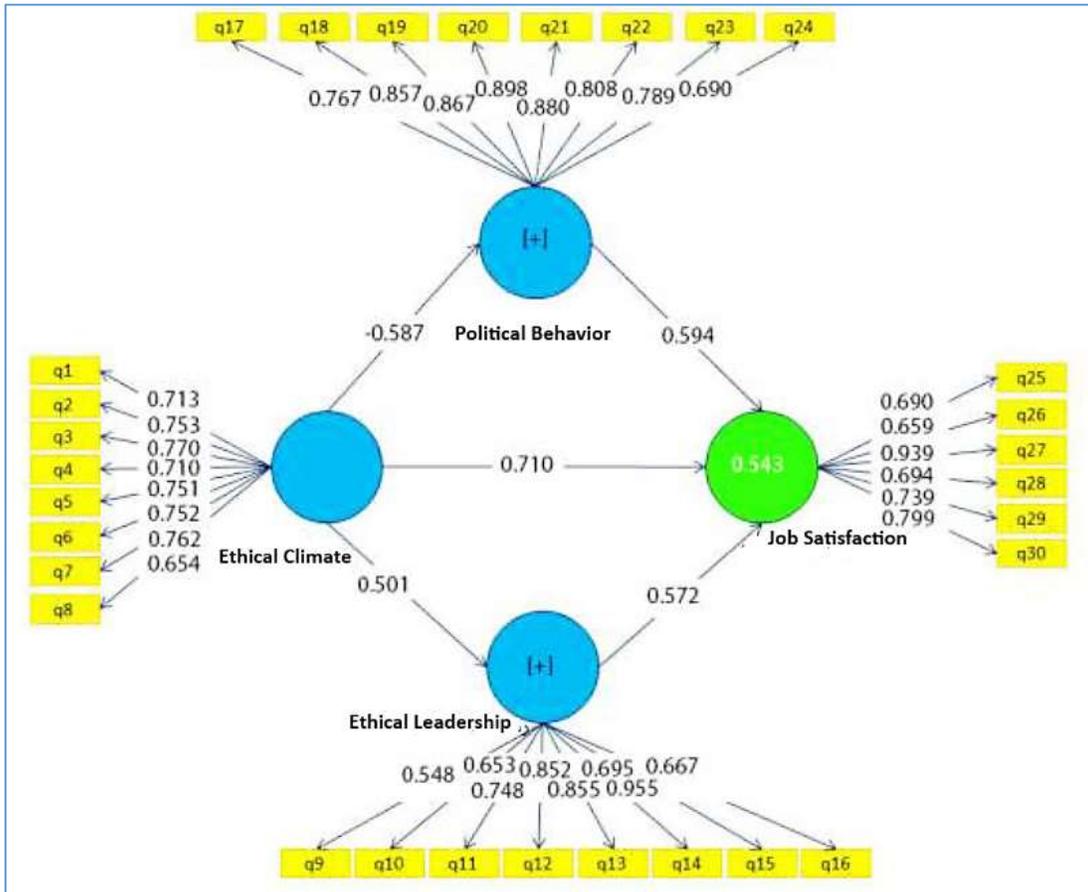


Figure 1. Standardized Coefficient Pathways for the variables of the study

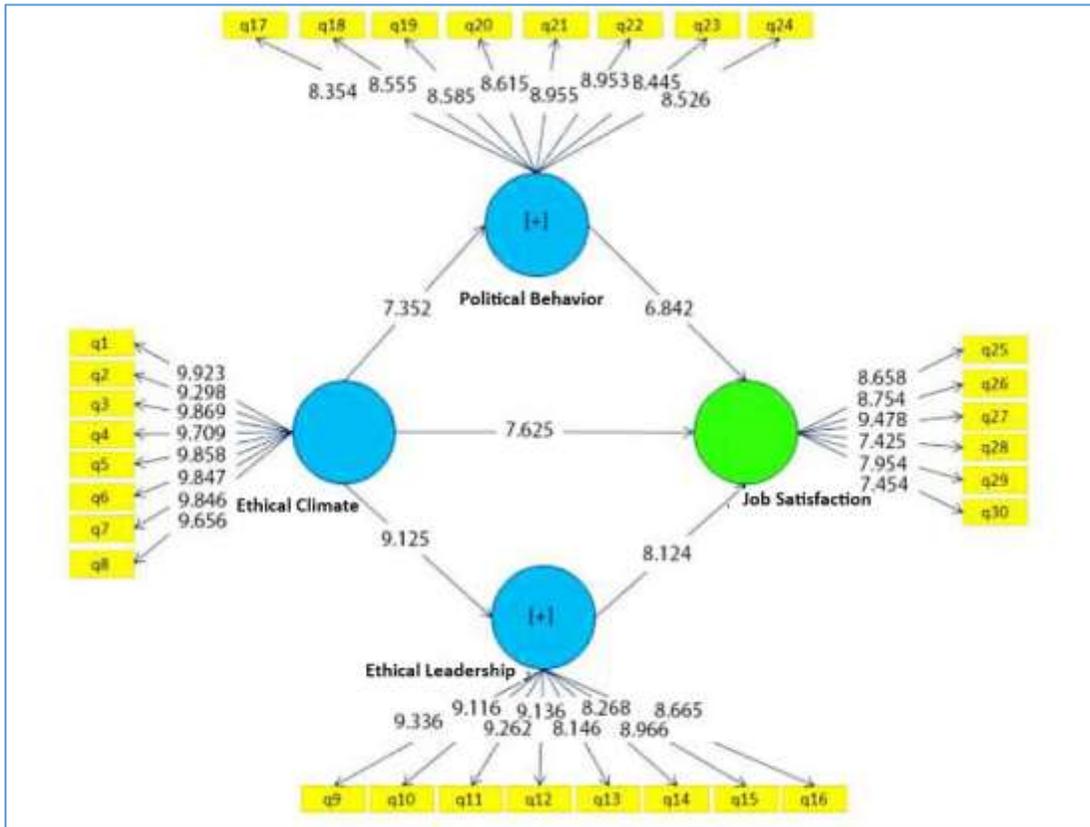


Figure 2. Standardized Coefficient Pathways for the variables of the study.

Interestingly, Figures 3. and 4. indicate coefficient pathway estimates for the standardized conditions:

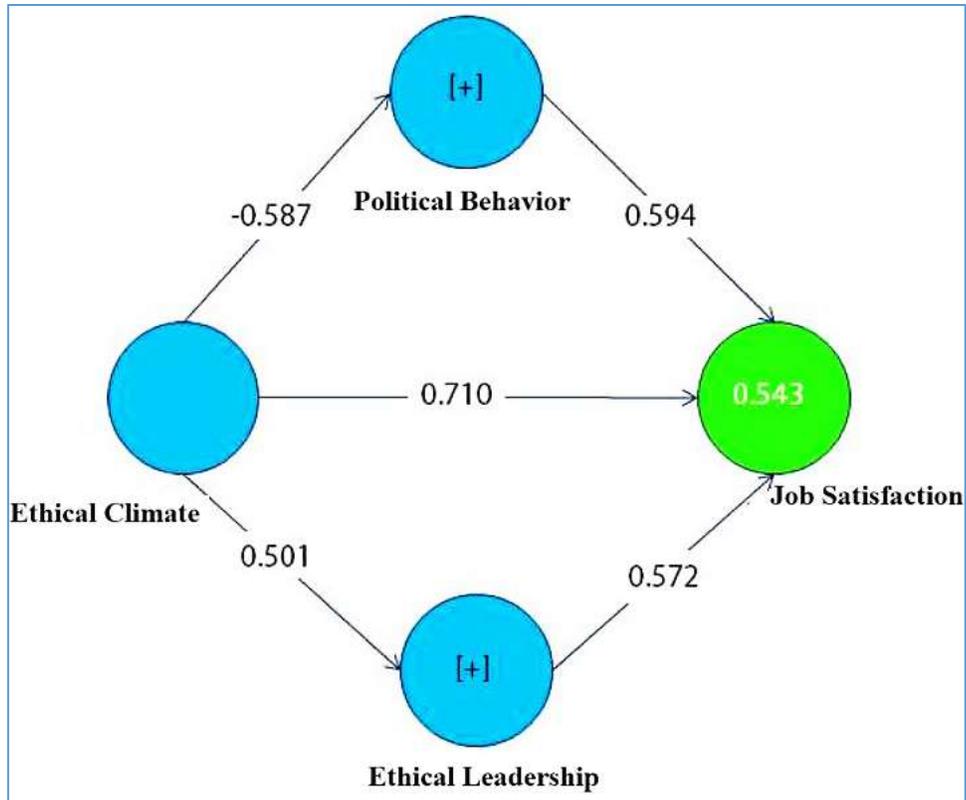


Figure 3. Structural modeling with standardized operational loads and coefficient pathways based on t- t-values.

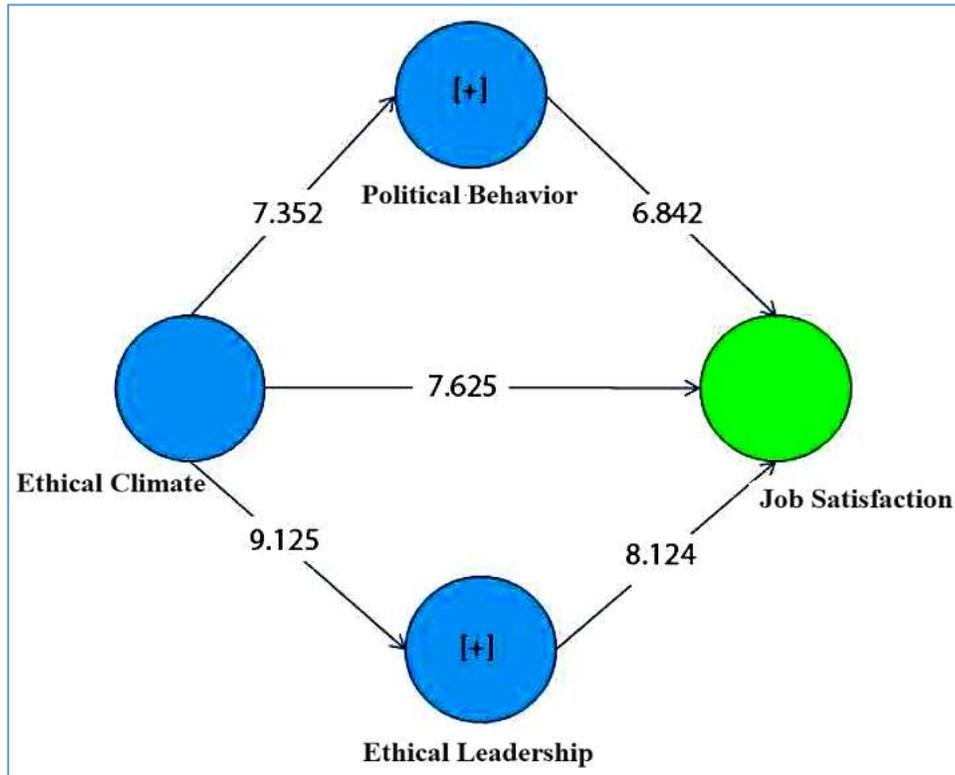


Figure 4. Structural modeling with t-values based on the variables of the study.

The interpretation of the results and indices related to the structural modeling used in this study, shown in Figures 1 through 4, is summed up in Table 8 below:

Table 8. Different variable pathways along with R2, Q2, and f2 indices

Independent variable	Pathway	dependent variable	R2	Q2	F2
Ethical climate	→	job satisfaction	0.638	0.332	0.14
Ethical climate	→	ethical leadership	0.533	0.101	0.65
Ethical climate	→	political behavior	0.315	0.332	0.70
Political behavior	→	job satisfaction	0.597	0.330	0.13
Ethical leadership	→	job satisfaction	0.544	0.214	0.26

Different interpretive levels were selected to interpret the indices in Table 8 regarding different variable pathways.

- a) Using criterion levels (0.19, 0.33, and 0.67) as a point of reference for interpreting R2 values,
- b) Using criterion levels (0.02, 0.15, and 0.35) for interpreting Q2 indices, and
- c) Using criterion levels (0.02, 0.15, and 0.35) as an interpretive baseline for f2 values.

It is clear that the R2, Q2, and f2 values in Table 4.4, compared to their respective criterion reference points, are all appropriate in terms of the independent /dependent pathways defined by the variables in the two hypotheses under investigation.

Given the above statistical procedures used to analyze and interpret the two main hypotheses in this study, it was found that the predictions made by the hypotheses are not tenable. As a result, they were both rejected. Notably, the manipulation of the sets of data obtained from the questionnaire by Pearson Product Correlation and Smart PLS software analyses proved that ethical leadership and political behavior influence the interplay between work climate ethics and job satisfaction.

It is interesting to note that the findings in this study agree with the results reported by researchers interested in the same territory. Many concerned practitioners have tried to investigate the correlation between work ethics climate and job satisfaction [34][35].

Some writers, however, were interested in exploring the mediatory impact of such variables as ethical leadership or political behavior on the correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction, focusing on specific contexts [32] among many others. Interestingly, the unique feature of the present study is that, unlike other studies, it attempted to estimate the mediating effect of ethical leadership and political behavior on the interplay between work ethic climate and job satisfaction cumulatively rather than independently.

## 6. Conclusion

In the final analysis, we have observed that the research on the mediating impact of ethical leadership and political behavior on the interplay between work ethic climate and job satisfaction in an academic setting like Middle Technical University has provided us with useful insights into complex dynamics affecting organizational behaviour. These key variables are pivotal in shaping work ethics and influencing employee job satisfaction.

Indubitably, this study contributes to the ongoing research by examining how ethical leadership and political behavior can optimize job satisfaction. Our findings provide empirical evidence that ethical leadership, ethical climate, and political behavior can significantly ensure job satisfaction, especially in academic settings. Therefore, the findings highlight that ethical leadership, characterized by managers and leaders who appreciate and value factors like integrity, fairness, and transparency, emanate political behaviors that lead to more intelligent decision-making processes and better organizational justice and trust.

Ethical factors allow leaders to adopt self-serving strategies and practical tactics that foster an appreciable sense of psychological safety and empowerment within the organization. These tactics ultimately evoke a more effective ethical climate and job satisfaction by eliminating conflict and mistrust. Consequently, moral leadership and political behaviour are sensitive factors that promote a culture of trust and accountability. However, they also adopt political tactics that support a collaborative environment where work ethics are valued and employee interactions are highly respected.

Our findings have important implications for the researchers interested in exploring the importance of ethical leadership and political behaviour as crucial predictors of job satisfaction and moral climate. Therefore, academic contexts like universities should emphasize ethical leadership practices and efficient political tactics to enhance the correlation between work ethic climate and job satisfaction. As such, by creating an atmosphere of trust and establishing appropriate rules, laws, and codes, educational institutions can significantly strengthen the relationship between work ethic climate and job satisfaction.

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