

Ethical Leadership Practices and Staff Organizational Commitment: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in Public Universities in Eastern Ethiopia

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate the status of ethical leadership practices and their impact on academic staff organizational commitment. A survey design was employed in this study. A sample size of 351 academic staff and 242 university leaders was selected. The Ethical Leadership Survey, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, and three commitment models were used to collect data. Both descriptive and inferential data analyses were conducted. The study revealed notable differences in perceptions between university leaders and academic staff about ethical leadership practices. The study revealed that Ethical leadership predicts the organizational commitment of academic staff. Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and academic staff affective commitment. However, it fully mediates between ethical leadership, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

Keywords: Ethical leadership; higher education; job satisfaction; mediating role; organizational behaviour; public university; staff commitment.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical leadership (EL) has become a key area of research because of the widespread unethical practices of leaders, which have caused organizational failures worldwide (Saha et al., 2020). "Unethical practices have become an important paradigm among other negative aspects of leadership because it has taken exploitation and violation of the interests of employees and organizations" (Shafqat et al., 2025). These concerns span various sectors, including the government, nongovernmental Organizations, and religious institutions, and nonprofit organizations, such as Oxfam, Save the Children, and UNICEF, related to sexual assault (Scurlock et al., 2020). Additionally, toxic workplace behaviors, such as bullying, harassment, racism, and sexism, are prevalent global issues (Vijfeijken, 2019).

Ishak, Haron, and Ismail (2019) _revealed that unethical practices are a universal characteristic within the university system and are driven by the self-serving interests of certain individuals. These practices often involve violations of academic integrity, such as corruption, bribery, and fraud, thereby undermining academic integrity standards. In higher institutions, "institutional corruption" is becoming a critical issue, although it has been less studied (Sommersguter-Reichmann & Reichmann, 2025)

Moreover, EL has attracted researchers' attention for its positive effects on employees' job attitudes, such as job satisfaction (JS) and organizational commitment (OC). According to Malik, Sarfraz, and Seemal (2021) Iqbal & Imran (2025), "many organizations have shown that when leaders focus on doing the right things, it leads to positive results for both the organization and the society." These studies confirmed that EL enables organizational profitability, attracts top talent, and increases productivity by fostering positive employee performance. Additionally, Olarewaju Adeoye (2021) reported that EL promotes positive employee attitudes and behaviors, ultimately leading to increased OC, JS, and motivation. Ethical leadership ensures open communication between employees and leaders, creating a conducive environment for expressing feelings, admitting mistakes, receiving feedback on ethical dilemmas, and reporting ethical failures (Khair Ishak et al., 2019). In

support of this, Aunin et al. (2019) Quynh et al. (2025) reported that "ethical leadership is crucial in management as it mitigates moral disengagement among employees, a precursor to unethical behaviors."

Studies by Thiagaraj and Thangaswamy (2017) have established a positive relationship between EL practices and employees' JS and OC, contributing to effective organizational performance. Ethical leadership significantly influences employee JS through leader honesty, effective supervision, fair interactions, improved employee motivation, dedication, and a positive work environment. Guo, (2022) also reported that the ethical practices of organizational leaders enhance employee attributes, cognition, and satisfaction. Studies by Shafique et al. (2018) have confirmed the positive impact of EL on employee behavior, JS, and performance. Ethical leaders foster a moral workplace culture that maximizes employees' work attitudes and organizational effectiveness. The relationship between EL and OC has been found to reduce turnover intention, increase workplace performance, and promote organizational citizenship behavior (Qing et al., 2020).

In contrast, unethical behaviors in higher education institutions (HEIs) pose challenges, such as illegal procurement and misuse of university resources, undermining ethical values, and resulting in negative consequences (Ishak et al. 2019b). Academic dishonesty, abuse of power, and declining academic integrity standards are prevalent in HIEs. The lack of ethical codes and practices in colleges and universities exacerbates unethical behaviors, leading to corruption, mismanagement, and fraud (Mwanzia Mulili, 2014). In HEIs in Africa, unethical leadership practices, such as nepotism, corruption, and favoritism have become obstacles to development, increased staff commitment, and staff retention. Coffie et al. (2023) revealed that corruption was perceived as the most prevalent behavior. Ethiopian HEIs also face similar challenges, with educational leaders failing to meet ethical standards, resulting in declining employee job attitudes (Amsale et al. 2016 Dibaba, 2020). Academic dishonesty, corruption, and governance issues plague Ethiopian HEIs because of the absence of strong ethical codes and practices.

A research gap exists regarding the status of EL practices and their impact on staff JS and OC at public universities in Eastern Ethiopia (PUEE). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the status of EL practices and their impact on AS JS and OC in PUEE. _Moreover, this study aims to examine the mediating role that JS plays in the relationship between EL practices and AS OC.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What is the current status of ethical leadership practiced in the public universities of Eastern Ethiopia?
- Are there significant relationships among ethical leadership practices, staff job satisfaction, and organizational commitment at public universities in Eastern Ethiopia?

- To what extent does staff JS mediate the relationship between ethical leadership practices and staff organizational commitment at public universities in Eastern Ethiopia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and staff organizational commitment

The ethical personalities and characteristics associated with ethical leaders are honesty, integrity, a strong sense of justice and fairness, ethical values, communication, ethical role modeling, incentives and rewards for ethical behavior, accountability for ethical conduct, etc. (Brown et al. 2005; Brown and Mitchell, 2010). Ethical leadership is also characterized by fairness and transparency in key decision-making processes (Den Hartog & de Hoogh, 2009). As managers, ethical leaders demonstrate trustworthiness, have their followers' best interests in mind, and conduct their lives in an ethical and normative manner (Brown et al. 2005; Resick et al. 2006), cited in Brown and Treviño (2006). Moral managers actively promote followers' normative conduct by modeling appropriate behaviors, communicating with followers about the standards, making fair management decisions, and disciplining inappropriate behaviors (Brown et al. 2005; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, and de Hoogh, 2011).

Studies have revealed seven empirically validated characteristics of EL in business administration, namely, fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, and concern for sustainability. When employees perceive that their leaders have such characteristics, they feel happy at their job. Happy employees are productive. Han et al. (2023) revealed that happy employees have good JS, which leads to better employee performance. Similarly, (Cumar et al., 2025), supportive leadership, which is one of the characteristics of EL, positively influences employee job satisfaction. According to Ibrahim (2025), JS and employee happiness are highly interrelated. When employees are happy, they are more satisfied, which, in turn, increases their OC. Job satisfaction is considered the driver of employee retention and productivity, and satisfying employees is a precondition for increasing productivity, responsiveness, quality, and recognition of service. Lima and Allida (2021) also reported that JS plays a crucial role in employee emotional engagement in an organization's well-being, provided that employees see their job as fulfilling and enjoyable.

Hakimi & City (2025), revealed that ethical leadership plays a crucial role to enhance organizational commitment. Studies by Thabo et al. (2018) revealed that OC is a crucial component of creating accountability. Highly committed employees specify their organization's objectives and values; they have a great desire to become members and be ready to express positive organizational citizenship behaviors. Moreover, committed employees are willing to do more work outside of their duties and responsibilities and make the

best effort in the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). Organizational commitment has been recognized as a significant human factor that determines the effectiveness of organizations in general and academic institutions in particular (Alsiewia and Agil, 2014), as cited in (Baskaran, 2020).

Theories of Ethical Leadership

Social Learning Theory

Studies have confirmed that social learning theory and social exchange theory provide theoretical explanations for the relationship between EL and employee behavior. Social learning theory has been frequently used to explain the influence of EL on employees' behavior. Social learning theory posits that behavior change is shaped by environmental influences, personal factors, and the attitudes associated with the behavior. This theory states that leaders influence the ethical conduct of followers by modeling. Values, attitudes, and behaviors are transferred at the workplace through modeling.

The Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory indicates that employees reciprocate fair treatment from their ethical leaders (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Because of the ethical treatment they receive and the trust they feel, employees of ethical leaders are more likely to perceive themselves as being in a social exchange relationship with their leaders (Brown et al., 2005). Studies that address the relationship between EL and social exchange theory have revealed that ethical leaders at all levels of management can influence employees through social exchange processes and that the nature of this influence process differs depending on the level of leadership and types of exchange.

Ethical Leadership Practices in Higher Education

Despite the fact that EL practices are important for the effective performance of organizations, Sharma, Agrawal, and Khandelwal (2019) revealed the existence of doubts about the implementation of true values and ethical standards in the working environment of organizations. Research findings revealed that many organizations, including HEIs, suffer from ethical misconduct because of the negligence of ethical organizational values and a lack of ethical leaders (Martin and Cullen, 2006), as cited in (Ishak, Haron, and Ismail, 2019). Studies by Saha et al., (2020) have revealed that because of the lack of ethical practices of leaders, many organizations have failed, which has raised ethical questions in government, nongovernment, and even religious institutions (Piazza and Jourdan, 2018; Clemente and Gabbioneta, 2017; Zona, Minoja, and Coda, 2013).

In Ethiopia, studies by Amsale, Bekele, and Tafesse (2016) have shown that leaders fail to demonstrate EL practices at the expected level. Dibaba (2020), in his study, divulged that there is significant unethical behavior in most Ethiopian public universities originating from ethical lapses, including greed, inadequate ethics training, lax ethics laws, and lenient disciplinary actions.

RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. This design enables the researcher to collect quantitative data at a snapshot, and to gain insights into opinions, behaviors, and characteristics of populations.

Both primary and secondary data sources were used for this study. The primary data sources were the academic staff and ULs of the five EEPUs. The secondary data sources included publications on higher education policies, guidelines, rules, and regulations. This study was limited to public universities in Eastern Ethiopia. The study population comprised 4105 academic staff and 620 academic leaders. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) [66] sample size table, with a precision level of $\pm 5\%$, a confidence level of 95%, and $p = .5$ (Cohen et al., 2007). Accordingly, 351 academic staff and 242 university leaders were selected proportionally.

Table 1 Sample size and sampling technique

University	Academic staff		University leaders		Sampling
	N	n	N	n	
Haramaya University	1230	105	162	63	Stratified random Sampling
Dire Dawa University	1033	88	116	45	
Jigjiga University	1072	92	130	51	
Oda Bultum University	460	40	108	42	
Kebridar University	302	26	104	41	
Total	4105	351	620	242	

Note. N = Population size; n = Sample size

Questionnaires, such as the ELS, MSQ, and TCM, were used to collect quantitative data. To ensure the validity of the tools, comments from the advisory committee, experts in the area of leadership, and related departments from HU were taken and incorporated. It was also pilot tested and confirmed to be valid. To gather data for this study, structured surveys were administered to 351 academic staff and 242 university leaders. The surveys consisted of 10 ELS, 20 MSQ, and 18 TCM items, with permission to examine the impact of EL practices on staff JS and OC. The participants were recruited via the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table. The surveys were distributed via representatives, and participants were given two hours to complete them. To increase response rates, incentives were given to data collectors.

Because the obtained data were quantitative, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Basic research question 1 was analyzed via descriptive statistics. For basic research question 2, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between EL practices, staff JS, and OC. Moreover, regression analysis was conducted to investigate which EL practices predict staff JS and OC. Mediation analysis was conducted for basic research question 3 to examine the mediating role that JS plays in the relationships between EL and OC.

RESULTS

Ethical leadership practices of university leaders

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Ethical leadership, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical leadership practices	220	1	5	3.80	0.60
Job satisfaction	314	1	5	2.10	0.70
Affective commitment	314	1	5	2.40	0.70
Continuance commitment	314	1	5	2.30	0.60
Normative commitment	314	1	5	2.30	0.60

Note. All variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale

Concerning EL practices of university leaders at public universities in Eastern Ethiopia (PUEE), the ULs agreed that they practice ethical leadership (*M* = 3.8, *SD* = 0.6). However, AS revealed that they were dissatisfied with the unethical practices of the university leaders (*M* = 2.1, *SD* = 0.7). They disagreed that university leaders practice ethically to foster staff OC (AC, *M* = 2.4, *SD* = 0.7, CC = 2.3, *SD* = 0.6, and NC, *M* = 2.3, *SD* = 0.6), which were below the average value (2.5).

Relationships between Ethical Leadership and Staff Job Satisfaction

Table 3 Correlation between Ethical Leadership and Staff Job Satisfaction

Measure	EL	JS
Ethical leadership	-	
Job satisfaction	.32**	-
<i>p</i>	.000	
<i>n</i>	220	314

Note. EL = Ethical leadership; JS = Job satisfaction; ** *p* < 0.1(2-tailed)

Academic staff job satisfaction was weakly but positively related to the ethical leadership practices of university leaders, *r* (220) = .32. The effect size for ethical leadership practice was found to be (*r*² = 0.101).

Relationships between Ethical Leadership Practices and Staff Commitment

The analysis revealed that AS AC was weakly but positively related to EL practice, $r(220) = .30, P < 0.01$. The effect size for EL practices ($R^2 = .092$). However, a relationship was not found between the EL practices of ULs and the AS CC, where $r(220) = .13, P > 0.05$. Similarly, AS NC was also weakly but positively related to the EL practices of ULs, $r(220) = .21, P < 0.05$. The effect size for EL practices ($R^2 = 0.045$).

Table 4 Correlation for Ethical Leadership and Academic Staff Commitment Sub-Scale

Variable	EL	AS AC	AS CC	AS NC
Ethical leadership	-			
Affective commitment	.30**	-		
Continuance commitment	.13	.61**	-	
Normative commitment	.21**	.72**	.66**	-

Note. $N = 220$ for correlations involving Ethical Leadership; $N =$ for correlations between Commitment sub-scales; ** $p < .01$.

Relationships between Job Satisfaction and Staff Commitment

The analysis revealed that academic staff AC was strongly and positively related to academic staff job satisfaction, $r(314) = .64, P < 0.01$. An effect size for academic staff JS was found ($R^2 = 0.41$). Moreover, academic staff CC was moderately and positively related to academic staff JS, $r(314) = .54, P < 0.01$. The effect size for academic staff JS ($R^2 = 0.296$). Finally, the analysis revealed that academic staff NC was also strongly and positively related to academic staff JS, $r(314) = .66, P < 0.01$. The effect size for academic staff JS ($R^2 = 0.433$).

Table 5 Correlation between Academic Staff, Job Satisfaction and Commitment

Variable	AS JS	AS AC	AS CC	AS NC
Job satisfaction	-			
Affective commitment	.64 **	-		
Continuance commitment	.54 **	.61**	-	
Normative commitment	.66**	.72**	.66**	-

Note. $N = 314$. ** $P < .01$.

Table 6 Regression Results between Ethical Leadership, Job Satisfaction and commitment

Model	R	R^2	$Adj.R^2$	SE	F	$Df1$	$Df2$	p
JS	.318	.101	.097	9.014	24.447	1	218	< .001
AC	.304	.093	.088	2.816	22.234	1	218	< .001

CC	.132	.017	.013	2.289	3.853	1	218	.051
NC	.212	.045	.041	2.172	10.302	1	218	.002

Note. SE = Standard error of the estimate. $Adj.R^2$ = Adjusted R-square.

A significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 218) = 24.447$, $P < 0.001$, indicating that ethical leadership practices play a significant role in academic staff JS ($b = .318$, $p < .001$). Moreover, $R^2 = .101$. The analysis revealed that a significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 218) = 22.234$, $P < 0.001$, which indicates that ethical leadership practices contribute to academic staff AC ($b = .304$, $P < 0.001$). Moreover, $R^2 = .093$.

However, the regression analysis of ethical leadership practices and academic staff CC revealed that $F(1, 218) = 3.853$, $P > 0.05$; a p -value greater than 0.05 indicates that the predictor (EL practices of ULs) variable does not have a statistically significant effect on academic staff continuance commitment.

Finally, the regression analysis of ethical leadership practices and academic staff NC revealed that a significant regression equation was found: $.045$. The evidence points to the positive effect of ethical leadership practices on academic staff at NC. Moreover, $R^2 = .045$.

Regression Analysis of Job Satisfaction and Academic Staff Commitment

Table 7: Regression Results between Job Satisfaction and Academic Staff Commitment

Model	R	R^2	$Adj.R^2$	SE	F	$df1$	$df2$	p
AC	.639	.408	.406	2.513	215.140	1	312	<.001
CC	.539	.291	.289	2.500	127.946	1	312	<.001
NC	.658	.433	.431	2.038	237.987	1	312	<.001

Note. $N = 314$. $Adj.R^2$ = Adjusted R-squared; SE = Standard error of the estimate.

The analysis revealed that $F(1, 312) = 215.134$, $P < 0.001$, which indicates that staff JS can influence AS AC ($b = .639$, $p < .001$). The $R^2 = 0.408$. In addition, the regression analysis revealed a valid regression equation, $F(1, 312) = 127.946$, $P < 0.001$, which indicates that staff JS can play a role in influencing academic staff continuance commitment ($b = .544$, $P < 0.05$). The $R^2 = 0.296$. Finally, regression analysis was also carried out between staff JS and AS NC. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 312) = 237.987$, $P < 0.001$, which indicates that AS JS plays a significant role in AS NC ($b = .658$, $p < .001$). $R^2 = 0.433$.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

The results revealed a significant indirect effect of EL on AS AC ($\beta = .169$, $t = 2.29$, $P < 0.001$). The total effect of EL practices on AS AC was also significant ($\beta = .295$, $t = 4.715$, $P < .001$). With respect to the mediating role of

JS between EL and AS CC, the total effect was not statistically significant ($\beta = .100, t = 1.963, P > 0.05$). However, the results revealed a significant indirect effect of EL practices on AS CC via the intermediary variable of AS JS ($\beta = .083, t = 5.099, P < 0.001$).

Finally, the mediating effect of JS on the relationship between EL practices and AS NC revealed that the total effect between the EL practices of ULs and AS NC was not statistically significant on the basis of the simple regression results ($\beta = .155, t = 7.130, P > 0.05$). However, there is a significant indirect effect of the EL practices of ULs on AS NC via the intermediary variable of AS JS ($\beta = .133, t = 9.879, P < 0.001$).

Table 8 Mediation Results between Ethical Leadership and Academic Staff Commitment

Effect and Path	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
UL and AS AC					
Total Effect: EL→AS AC	.295	.063		4.715	.001
Direct Effect: EL→AS JS	.992	.201		4.944	.001
Indirect Effect: EL→AS JS→AS AC	.169	.018	4.369	2.290	.001
UL and AS CC					
Total Effect: EL→AS CC	.100	.051		1.963	.051
Direct Effect: EL→AS JS	.992	.201		4.944	.001
Indirect Effect: EL→ AS JS → AS CC	.083	.016	3.576	5.099	.001
UL and AS NC					
Total Effect: EL→AS NC	.155	.048	4.387	7.130	.600
Direct Effect: EL→AS JS	.992	.201		4.944	.020
Indirect Effect: EL→AS JS→AS NC	.133	.014		9.879	.001

Note. *B* = Standardized coefficient.

DISCUSSIONS

Ethical Leadership Practices of University Leaders

The study results revealed that university leaders perceived that they practiced EL in accomplishing their responsibilities. However, AS disagreed that the impact of EL practices on staff JS and OC was insignificant. These findings were inconsistent with studies by Mayer et al. (2009), who reported that employees who perceived their leaders as more ethical reported higher levels of JS and OC. The possible reason for this difference in perception could be that the EL practices of ULs were not effectively communicated to the staff; there may be a lack of enhancing open dialogue, or providing feedback, which restricts ASs from expressing their opinions about the EL practices of ULs. The results obtained indicate that this may affect organizational culture and institutional performance.

Relationships between ethical leadership and job satisfaction

The results revealed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between EL and JS. The relatively low correlation coefficient ($r = .318$) indicates that this relationship, while present, is not particularly strong. This indicated that as ULs demonstrate more EL behaviors, there is a slight tendency for ASs to report a high level of JS. Effect size ($R^2 = 0.101$). These results support those of studies by Guchait, Lei, and Tews, (2016) who revealed that there is a positive relationship between EL and employee JS.

Relationships between Ethical Leadership and Staff Commitment

The result revealed a weak but positive relationship between the EL practices of ULs and the AS AC. There is a relatively low correlation coefficient ($R^2 = .304$). This indicated that as ULs demonstrate more EL behaviors, there is a slight tendency for ASs to report a high level of AC. The effect size ($R^2 = 0.092$). These results, although small, are similar to the results obtained by Qing et al. (2020), who revealed that ethical leaders establish better relationships in organizations that enhance loyalty and commitment among employees.

With respect to the relationships between the EL and AS CCs, the statistical result was $r(220) = .132, P > 0.05$. These findings indicate that there is no relationship between the EL practices of ULs and the AS CCs. With respect to the relationship between EL and AS NC, a correlation coefficient of 0.212, a weak to moderate positive association, is found. The effect size is 0.045. This finding is in support of studies by _Brown & Mitchell, 2010; _Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Philipp and Lopez, 2013) _who reported that leaders with high ethical conduct have the potential to act as role models and are fair, honest, trustworthy and principled; promote ethics, and set, communicate and reinforce high ethical standards.

Relationships between Job Satisfaction and Staff Commitment

The analysis revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between AS JS and AS AC. Moreover, the effect size indicated that 41% of the variance in the AS AC was explained by JS. The AS CC was found to be moderately and positively related to the JS. The effect size revealed that the level of JS that the respondents experienced accounted for 29.6% of the variability in the AS CC. The analysis revealed that AS NC was also strongly and positively related to JS. The effect size indicated that the level of JS experienced by respondents accounted for 29.6% of the variability in AS NC. These results support the findings of Malik et al.(2010), who reported that JS has a substantial positive effect on the organizational engagement of university teachers.

The results indicated that JS has a strong positive effect on AS OCs in that it increases their emotional connection to the organization, which makes

them feel that leaving would be costly and disadvantageous, and it enhances their sense of duty to stay with the organization.

Regression analysis of ethical leadership and staff job satisfaction

The results indicated that the model is statistically significant in predicting JS. The F values indicate that there is a strong relationship between EL practices and JS. The model explains 10.1% of the variance in JS. These results align with the previous findings of Guchait, Lei, and Tews (2016), who reported that there is a strong relationship between EL and employee JS. These results suggest that EL practices are related to AS JS. The R-squared value suggests that a large portion (89.9%) of the variance in JS is due to other factors not included in the model.

Regression Analysis of Ethical Leadership and Staff Commitment

The F statistic is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. This finding indicates that the regression model significantly improves the prediction of AS AC. EL practices are a statistically significant predictor of AS AC. The R^2 value of 0.093 indicates that EL practices explain approximately 9.3% of the variance in AS AC. These results align with the previous findings of Qing et al. (2020) who revealed that EL has a positive and significant relationship with many dimensions of leadership effectiveness.

The results imply that EL appears to have a positive and statistically significant effect on AS AC. Despite the modest R^2 this insight could be practically meaningful, especially in an educational setting where leadership styles may influence staff commitment and organizational culture. With respect to the regression analysis results of EL practices and the AS CC, $F(1, 218) = 3.853$, $P > 0.05$, with a p value greater than 0.05, indicating that the predictor, EL, variable does not have a statistically significant effect on the AS CC. The regression model including EL significantly predicts NC. A p value less than 0.05 ensures that EL has a statistically significant effect on AS NC. These results support the findings of Nelson and Daniels (2014) cited in (Mitonga-monga, 2016), who revealed that ethical leaders, by inspiring moral values and ethical standards among their employees and serving as role models, promote ethical behaviors and good morals, lead their employees to be emotionally attached to their organization and promote their organizational commitment. The R^2 value of 0.045 implies that EL accounts for approximately 4.5% of the variance in NC among AS. This is a small effect size, suggesting that although EL is a statistically significant factor influencing normative commitment, it accounts for only a limited portion of this commitment type.

Regression Analysis of Staff Job Satisfaction and Staff Commitment

The F statistic with such a high F value and a p value less than 0.001 is statistically significant, which indicates that JS significantly predicts AC in AS.

The value of R^2 indicates that approximately 40.8% of the variance in AC among ASs is explained by JS. These results support the findings of Mannheim et al.(1997); Lock and Crawford, (1999); Lambert et al.(2007), as cited in Huang and Hsiao (2007), who revealed that JS is a significant predictor and is positively related to OC. The R^2 value indicates a moderately strong relationship between JS and AC. This finding also indicates that JS is an important factor influencing AC (40.8%). These findings imply that if JS levels increase, AC is likely to increase, which encourages institutions to focus on factors that contribute to job satisfaction.

With respect to the AS CC, high F statistic and the p_value less than 0.001 indicate that the model is statistically significant, which means that JS is a significant predictor of CC in AS. The R^2 value shows that JS explains approximately 29.6% of the variance in CC among AS. These results support the findings of Aydogdu (2011), who revealed that an employee's decision to stay in or quit the organization is influenced by his or her JS.

The moderate R^2 value implies that JS influences CC but not as strongly as it might influence other types of commitment, such as AC. Concerning the NC of AS, the F_statistic of 237.987, together with a p_value less than 0.001, indicates that the model is statistically significant. These results support the findings of Turinawe (2011), cited in Mwesigwa, Tusiime, and Sekiziyyu (2020), who indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between JS and OC in public higher institutions. The results imply that higher levels of JS are likely associated with increases in the NC. A strong relationship between JS and NC suggests that when ASs are more satisfied with their jobs, they demonstrate greater levels of NC.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction between Ethical Leadership and Staff Affective Commitment

The results revealed that there is a significant indirect effect of EL practices on AS AC through JS. The z-value also revealed that JS significantly mediates the relationship between EL and AS AC. The direct total effect of EL practices on AS AC was also significant ($\beta = .295$, $t = 4.715$, $P < .001$). The point estimate of the indirect effect between EL and AS AC through JS is 0.16765, suggesting that it is statistically significant, $p < 0.001$. The direct effect of EL on AS AC suggests that ASs are more likely to feel committed to their institution when they perceive EL from their ULs. EL directly enhances AC among staff, which implies that ethical behavior and support from leaders can foster strong emotional ties and dedication to the organization.

The point estimate of the indirect effect is 0.16765, with a p_value of less than 0.001, indicating that this effect is statistically significant, and that JS significantly mediates the relationship between EL and AC. This finding implies that JS serves as an important mechanism through which EL influences the emotional commitment of AS. The total effect indicates the comprehensive role

of EL in fostering a committed workforce by both directly enhancing commitment and indirectly improving satisfaction. The z -value of 4.369, with a p -value less than 0.001, indicates that the mediation effect is statistically significant; reinforcing that JS meaningfully mediates the relationship between EL practices and AC.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction between Ethical Leadership and Academic Staff Continuance Commitment

The total effect revealed that the direct effect of EL on the AS CC was not statistically significant. However, the results revealed a significant indirect effect of EL on AS CCs via the intermediary variable of AS JS. The z -value also revealed that the AS JS significantly mediated EL and AS CC. The point estimate of the indirect effect between EL and the AS CC through JS is 0.08234, suggesting that it is statistically significant, $P < 0.001$.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction between Ethical Leadership and Academic Staff Normative Commitment

The mediation effect of JS between EL and AS NC revealed that the total direct effect was not statistically significant ($\beta = .022$, $t = .519$, $P > 0.05$). However, there is a significant indirect effect of the EL practices of ULs on AS NC via the intermediary variable JS ($\beta = .134$, $t = 9.879$, $P < 0.001$). The z -value of 4.387 also revealed that JS significantly mediates EL and AS NC. The point estimate of the indirect effect between EL and AS NC through JS is 0.13293, indicating that it is statistically significant, $p < 0.001$. The results indicate that NC is not significantly affected by EL practices when JS is not considered. However, EL indirectly fosters a sense of obligation among ASs to remain at the institution by improving JS. JS fully mediates the relationship between EL and NC, indicating that EL indirectly promotes a sense of obligation to the institution by increasing staff JS.

CONCLUSIONS

The results indicate a notable difference in perceptions of EL practices between UL and AS. University leaders reported a higher mean score ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.6$) for EL practices, suggesting a generally positive self-assessment of their ethical behaviors and standards. In contrast, AS rated EL practices significantly lower, with a mean score of 2.1 ($SD = 0.7$). This discrepancy indicates that, compared with leaders' assessments, AS may perceive EL practices among ULs as less robust or satisfactory. The standard deviations indicate a slight variation in responses within each group, with academic staff showing marginally greater variability ($SD = 0.7$) than university leaders ($SD = 0.6$). This could imply that perceptions of EL among staff are slightly more

varied, potentially reflecting differing experiences or opinions about leadership practices.

The obtained results revealed that EL is one of the important factors in predicting AS JS. Higher education institutions should consider fostering EL while also exploring other dimensions that contribute to JS for a comprehensive approach. EL is an important contributor to AS AC, although it is only part of a larger set of influences. Ethical leadership practices significantly predict NC. This finding suggests that when leaders exhibit ethical behavior, such as honesty, fairness, and integrity, staff feel a stronger sense of duty and obligation to remain with the institution. The R^2 value of 0.045 indicates that EL explains only approximately 4.5% of the variance in NC. While the relationship is statistically significant, EL alone accounts for a limited portion of the staff's sense of obligation to stay with the institution.

The regression analysis reveals a significant and positive relationship between JS and AC among ASs, with JS explaining approximately 40.8% of the variance in AC. This moderately strong association indicates that JS is a critical factor influencing AC. High AC, in turn, can contribute to positive organizational outcomes, such as reduced turnover, increased motivation, and enhanced job performance among AS.

The regression analysis indicates that JS is a significant predictor of CC among AS, explaining approximately 29.6% of the variation in CC. The moderate R^2 value implies that other factors, such as financial incentives, job security, and career advancement opportunities, likely play a substantial role in staff members' decisions to stay. In practical terms, these findings suggest that while fostering JS can enhance CC, institutions should adopt a comprehensive retention strategy.

The regression analysis reveals a strong and significant relationship between AS JS and NC. With an R^2 value of 0.433, JS explains approximately 43.3% of the variation in NC, indicating that JS is a substantial predictor. This finding suggests that when ASs experience higher levels of JS, they are more likely to exhibit desirable attitudes and behaviors associated with NC. These results imply that academic institutions can enhance important organizational outcomes by prioritizing factors that boost JS, such as supportive leadership, recognition, professional growth opportunities, and a positive work environment.

The mediation analysis reveals that EL significantly enhances AS AC, both directly and indirectly, through increased JS. The strong direct effect ($\beta = 0.295$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that EL fosters a greater sense of emotional commitment among staff. Additionally, the significant indirect effect (0.16765, $p < 0.001$) underscores JS as a critical mediator, amplifying the influence of EL on AC. The findings suggest that EL not only has a direct positive effect on commitment but also fosters a supportive work environment that increases JS, which in turn strengthens staff commitment.

Mediation analysis revealed that EL had no direct impact on the AS CC. However, it directly increases CC by a considerable amount through improved JS, as evidenced by a statistically significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.083$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that JS is completely in charge of EL and CC relationships and that EL influences continuance commitment only through positive influences on JS. The mediation analysis shows that UL's EL practices do not directly affect AS NC's activities in the institution. However, these practices have important indirect impacts on NC through JS, with JS completely managing this relationship. Ethical leadership practices fully mediate AS CC and AS NC via JS.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the analysis of the study have several implications. The difference in the perceptions of EL practices between ULs and staff members implies a need for targeted training on leadership. University leaders must consider receiving feedback from staff members, which may align their self-assessment with the opinions of staff members. The differences in perceptions between ULs and staff members reveal that there is a gap in perception. University leaders are expected to enhance dialog with staff members. The lower mean score the AS on EL implies that ULs are concerned with ethical behaviors that they are expected to investigate and correct. Ethical leadership is the main factor influencing JS and staff OC. Therefore, HEIs must focus on how to foster EL by prioritizing to it through training programs. Staff JS and OC are not the only factors affecting EL. Therefore, ULs should focus on other factors affecting staff members' JS and OC to adopt a comprehensive approach. Higher education institutions should design strategies that foster staff JS, which, in turn, leads to OC, increases productivity, reduces staff turnover rates, and enhances motivation. Job satisfaction is found to be a predictor of staff OC. This finding indicates that enhancing JS fosters staff OC.

In addition to JS, HEIs should consider other factors that influence OC and design strategies to minimize the impact on staff morale. Job satisfaction is a predictor of AS NC. This implies that providing a supportive environment for staff members fosters desirable behavior, where staff feel valued and engaged, contributing not only to staff well-being but also to organizational objectives. The direct effect of EL on AS AC implies that effective leadership fosters emotional relationships among staff members. Improved leadership practices result in higher JS, which, in turn, fosters OC. Ethical leadership indirectly influences staff CC through JS. Therefore, higher-level institutions should focus on factors that foster staff JS, which, in turn, foster staff OC.

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