



THE LINKAGE BETWEEN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND LECTURER JOB SATISFACTION AT A PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The current study is intended to inspect the potential impact of ethical leadership practices (EL) of intermediate level administration (i.e., faculty deans, department heads) on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS) at a private higher education (HE) institution (UX) in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. A conceptual framework linking EL and LJS was developed grounded on the ethical leadership conceptualizations of Brown et al. (2005), Kalshoven et al. (2011), and Langlois et al. (2014). Accordingly, ethical leadership works as a multidimensional construct encompassing a set of five values or explicit behaviors, i.e., care, critique, integrity, fairness, and ethical guidance. Further, the constructs and effects of EL on LJS are primarily conceptualized in light of Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory. Primary quantitative data was collected through an anonymously self-administered survey of all 378 lecturers permanently employed at eight faculties at UX's main campus via a non-probability purposive sampling method. The totality of 256 valid questionnaires yielded a response rate of 68% for stepwise data analysis with inferential statistical methods (i.e., internal reliability test, factor scores, correlation, and multiple regression). The regression findings reveal that all five dimensions of EL significantly positively explained the variance in job satisfaction as perceived by UX lecturers ($p < .001$). These findings suggest both theoretical and practical implications. The present study expands our understanding on ethical leadership by verifying its predictive power on the job satisfaction levels as self-reported by HE lecturers. Therein lies a conclusion that well-established ethical conducts for HE administration may assist them in making key decisions with care, fairness, critique, integrity, and ethical guidance.

Keywords: Higher Education; Ethical Leadership; Job Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

Attention to ethical leadership has certainly grown as a preferred topic in the field of educational administration (Gardiner & Tenuto, 2015; Langlois et al., 2014). Why is ethical leadership essential for the education industry? First, the truth is that ethical virtues matter to enable educational leaders to grapple with work and life's uncertainties, complexities, and constant changes in this new millennium (Tran et al., 2020). Further, as educational institutions become even more demographically diverse (Parveen et al., 2021), each administrative decision is the resolution of real-life moral dilemmas frequently confronting educational leaders in their settings and communities (Starratt & Leeman, 2011). Also, given the growing number of moral incidents linked to key stakeholders in educational institutions recently go viral, ethical leadership is always tagged as a requisite for education professionals.

Ultimately, recent research has revealed ethical leadership paradigms (i.e., care, critique, integrity, fairness, and support) are closely associated with educational institutions' well-being and the achievement and satisfaction of educational personnel and students alike (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Grobler & Horne, 2017; Güçel et al., 2012; Langlois et al., 2014). In most instances, given the K-12 context, much research identifies ethical leadership as a remarkable facet of high performing schools, particularly ones in poverty-stricken areas (Fullan, 2003; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Likewise, as per Brown and Treviño (2014), Kalshoven et al. (2011, 2013), Kelidbari et al. (2016), Langlois (2011), and Langlois et al. (2014), ethical leaders promote the practices of ethical conducts in key decision making that greatly predict employees' job-related performance and outcome.

Though job satisfaction has been widely empirically investigated in relationship to numerous leadership models, the extent to which ethical leadership predicts job satisfaction is largely unexplored in the education industry (Kelidbari et al., 2016; Langlois et al., 2014). Further, the conceptualization and measurement approach to ethical leadership and its impact on employee attitude and performance are still in its infant stage in Vietnamese HE when compared to other developed markets such as China, US, UK, and Australia. The current study endeavors to fill the theoretical as

well as contextual void in the literature pertaining to ethical leadership and job satisfaction in Vietnam. The study has both theoretical and managerial contributions. The study model and findings may provide more valuable empirical evidence to theory-based empirical research with respect to the ethical domain of educational leadership. Further, the study findings may contribute to the participating HE institution and leaders alike in making key decisions germane to educational and administrative practices that greatly effectuate HE leadership and management.

The present study purposefully investigates and measures UX lecturers' perceptions towards their direct leaders' ethical leadership as a determinant of job satisfaction. Thus, the specific multi-fold objectives of the study are to:

1. Develop a conceptual framework and test its applicability in the HE industry by shifting the merely conceptual and prescriptive research focus towards empirical inquiries;
2. Measure lecturer perception of their immediate leaders' ethical leadership practices and their self-reported job satisfaction;
3. Compute the degree of single ethical dimension on the level of job satisfaction as perceived by UX lecturers;
4. Seek to address the dearth of empirical studies pertaining to the domain of ethical leadership and its linkage to employee attitude and behavior;
5. Expand the current understanding of this normative leadership domain as the antecedent of employee outcomes, namely here lecturer job satisfaction.

Given the purposes mentioned above and in light of the synthesis of literature review, the present study attempts to address the following research questions:

Overarching questions

1. How does UX faculty/department leaders' ethical leadership exert influence on lecturer job satisfaction?
2. How much unique variance in lecturer job satisfaction does the whole model explain in the proposed framework?
3. How much unique variance in lecturer job satisfaction does each significant ethical leadership dimension explain in the proposed framework?

Sub-questions

1. How does UX leaders' ethical leadership of care influence lecturer job satisfaction?
2. How does UX leaders' ethical leadership of critique influence lecturer job satisfaction?
3. How does UX leaders' ethical leadership of integrity influence lecturer job satisfaction?
4. How does UX leaders' ethical leadership of fairness influence lecturer job satisfaction?
5. How does UX leaders' ethical leadership of ethical guidance influence lecturer job satisfaction?

Given the structure of the paper remainder, the proceeding section briefly reviews how ethical leadership and job satisfaction are respectively conceptualized in the HE setting, and how prior studies empirically investigated the relationships between these two constructs. Based on the synthesis of literature review, a conceptual framework linking the five identified dimensions of ethical leadership to lecturer job satisfaction was developed, and hypotheses were drawn from the proposed model. Then we present the research methods and procedures that frame the study followed by empirical results analysis and discussion by comparing the results with the model hypothesized. Finally, the conclusion, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions are subsequently presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brown and colleagues' conceptualization of ethical leadership

Brown and colleagues (2005) conceptualize ethical leadership as 'the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making' (p. 120). They also posit the distinction of ethical leaders is genuinely reflected in the exhibition of ethical personalities and characteristics that are consistent with ethical conducts (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2014; Treviño, 2010). Derived from their earlier qualitative work conducted to generate the most essential attributes of ethical leaders, the descriptors yielded a set of widely cited ethical virtues or behaviors, namely honesty, integrity, a strong sense of justice and fairness, ethical values communication, ethical role modeling, incentive and reward for ethical behavior, and accountability for (un)ethical conducts, etc. (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Simply put, their investigation led to the notion that ethical leadership lends credence to not only ethical traits or personalities, i.e., distinctively as honesty and integrity, but their best continuous endeavours to direct employees to adhere to ethical conducts and standards (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño & Brown, 2007; Treviño & Nelson, 2011). Leadership then works with fairness and transparency in key decision-making process and simultaneously in the evaluation of the effect of their decisions in ethical outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2014; Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009). Ultimately, their reputation of ethical leadership is observed by their respective employees via the two major dimensions as a moral person and a moral manager or leader (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2000).

Kalshoven and colleagues' conceptualization of ethical leadership

Prompted by Brown et al.'s (2005) and De Hoogh and Den Hartog's (2008) ethical leadership conceptualization, Kalshoven and colleagues (2011, 2013) shifted the theoretical attention to their seven empirically validated behaviors capturing the expected practices of ethical leadership in business administration, namely 'fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, and concern for sustainability' (Kalshoven et al., 2011, p. 51). More specifically, they conceptualized an ethical leadership framework by addressing the following seven core dimensions: (1) fairness: established rules and being impartial, fair, and objective; (2) shared leadership: fostering empowerment and encouraging participation in key decision making; (3) role clarification: determining roles and responsibilities, and defining expectations; (4) solicitude: being respectful and caring and having an open mind; (5) wide perspective: envisaging the common good and encouraging improvement; (6) ethical direction: defining the ethical mission and values of the organization; and (7) integrity: developing trust and being transparent in your actions (Kalshoven et al., 2011, 2013). Significantly, Kalshoven et al.'s (2011, 2013) empirical study was conducted on the belief that the practice of ethical leadership is generally conducive to improved employee trust, which, in turn, likely optimizes the effectiveness of leadership and boost employee well-being (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012). As per Kalshoven et al. (2011, 2013), given organizations of any kind, ethical leadership provides the main impetus for the establishment, consolidation, and maintenance of the ethical culture within the organizational hierarchy. Accordingly, leadership must embrace the exhibition of ethical attitudes and behaviors in their everyday job performance, the encouragement of collaborative business relationship, and resolution of moral dilemmas (Kalshoven et al., 2013).

Langlois and colleagues' conceptualization of ethical leadership

Ethical leadership has gained an increasing popularity in the field of educational administration (Cranston et al., 2006; Langlois et al., 2014). In education, ethics advocate the smooth transition and organizational conduct of core ethical values, i.e., integrity, honesty, authenticity, accountability, transparency, and fairness, that educational institutions should uphold (Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2004; Starratt & Leeman, 2011). As per Sergiovanni (1992), a person's 'values play an important part in constructing an administrator's mindspace and in determining leadership practice' (p. 9). Accordingly, the absence of moral authority at the top will be inevitably pervasive throughout the institutions (Starratt, 1991; Starratt & Leeman, 2011). The possession of value systems in conjunction with management skills and leadership practices enables educational leaders to 'account for a new kind of leadership-one based on moral authority' (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 16). Ethical leadership lend credence to the significance of ethics in key educational and administrative decisions since ethical leaders primarily attribute better outcomes to the practice of ethical attitudes and behaviors (Langlois & Lapointe, 2010; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt & Leeman, 2011; Van Niekerk et al., 2017).

Yet, as per Langlois et al. (2014), therein lies a dearth of empirical investigation that addresses ethical leadership as the influential predictor of employee attitude and performance in the education industry. In an attempt to fill the void in the conceptualization and measurement of ethical leadership in education, Langlois et al. (2014) developed the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) for the assessment of ethical approach to leadership inspired by Starratt's (1991, 2004) conceptual framework of ethical school. ELQ constitutes an instrument with acceptable internal consistency and validity for the appraisal of ethical leadership presence related to three intertwined ethical conducts, i.e., justice, critique, and care. Accordingly, the ethic of justice relates to the demonstration of transparency and strategic resolution in administration (Langlois et al., 2014). While the ethic of critique addresses the presence of injustice in terms of human relations or organizational regulations within the organizational structure, the conduct of care strongly advocates the 'absolute respect' of interpersonal relations (Langlois et al., 2014). Their study results verified the presence and feasibility of the three ethical virtues in the process of moral dilemma resolutions (Langlois et al., 2014; Langlois & Lapointe, 2010). Since educational institutions become increasingly cognizant of the paramount importance of ethical leaders in the highly volatile and risky context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, education administration must direct their attention to the ethical conducts of leadership (Langlois et al., 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt & Leeman, 2011).

Ethical leadership and job satisfaction

Locke's (1976) definition of job satisfaction is widely cited as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (p. 1304), underlying both emotion and cognition processes derived from one's appreciation of perceived job characteristics, work conditions and environment, and interpersonal experiences in the workplace (Aziri, 2011; Spector, 1997). The popularity of this construct for academics and practitioners alike can be usually ascribed to the paramount significance of job satisfaction as essential predictors for numerous work-related employee attitude and behaviour (Aziri, 2011; Buitendach & Rothmann, 2009; Okan & Akyüz, 2015; Tu et al., 2017).

As a multi-dimensional psychological construct measured and assessed from multiple perspectives, job satisfaction perceptions are usually manipulated by numerous external factors in the workplace (Aziri, 2011). In many instances, job satisfaction is associated with leadership practices that exert great effect on employee feeling and attitude

towards the organization, the nature of job, and leadership itself (Dinc & Aydemir, 2014; Tu et al., 2017; Wallace & De Chernatony, 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Prior studies postulated that ethical leadership significantly positively explain additional variances in employee job attitude and behavior just as, equally significantly, other leadership practices (i.e., transformational leadership) (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015; Chen & Hou, 2016; Kalshoven et al., 2011, 2013; Walumbwa et al., 2011; Yang, 2014; Zhu et al., 2015)

Studies by Brown et al. (2005), Valentine et al. (2010), and Wang and Hsieh (2012) reveal ethical leadership strongly predicts the level of employee job satisfaction with immediate leaders. Accordingly, employees tend to engender higher degrees of job gratification and contentment toward leaders who, most likely, 'disciplines wrongdoers' and 'treats their followers fairly and considerately' (Brown et al., 2005, p. 122). Interestingly, Brown et al. (2005) also assert that ethical approach to leadership is linked to leader honesty, effective supervision, interactional fairness, better employee motivation and dedication, more positive work performance, and employee willingness to report ethical problems. Genuinely, the predictive power and influence of ethical leadership on employee attitude and job performance within the organization may be positively direct and/or indirect (Bello, 2012; Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Neubert et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Valentine et al., 2010; Vitell & Davis, 1990; Yozgat & Meşekiran, 2016; Zhang et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2015). Numerous researchers postulate that ethical conduct of leadership pays dividends in the appropriateness of their workplace behaviours, which, in turn, fosters employee pride, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty (Avey et al., 2011, 2012; Cheng et al., 2014; Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers 2016; Trevino et al., 2000; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Also, literature review discloses a higher level of organisational ethics has a potential to improve the leader-employee relationship and trust in leadership, progressively yielding an assortment of positive outcomes for the organizations and employees alike (Chughtai et al., 2015; Güçel et al., 2012; Eisenbeiss et al., 2014; Yozgat & Meşekiran, 2016). These rigorous findings extensively shed light on the literature regarding the predictive power of leadership ethics on an organization and confirm the significant role of ethical practices on employees' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and loyalty.

Given the educational proposition of ethical leadership theorization, Langlois and colleagues (2014) posit that ethical leadership adopted by school administration is greatly conducive to the promotion of school personnel's attitude and behavior. Inevitably, the ethical impact can be examined in relation to organizational effectiveness through faculty and student satisfaction (Kelidbari et al., 2016; Tai & Chuang, 2014). Simply put, ethical attributes towards school leadership are imperative for improved organizational and individual performance since ethical leadership directly and/or indirectly exerts greater effect on the overall performance (Cherkowski et al., 2015; Fullan, 2003; Kelidbari et al., 2016; Langlois et al., 2014; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Truly, highly committed and satisfied lecturers characterized by improved performance are usually attributed to leaders whose inspiration and ethical guidance provision enable them to see quality instructions and conformity of one's actions to an ethical code of conduct as a priority in the workplace for organizational goal achievement, advocating to organizational success and effectiveness (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt & Leeman, 2011). Additionally, ethical leaders directly and/or indirectly influence employees' behavioral and attitudinal outcomes by role modelling (Langlois & Lapointe, 2010; Langlois, 2011). Such influence then transforms employees into socially and educationally responsible practitioners. Thus, the introduction of ethical values to educational structure, mission, vision, and goals aims to inform all key stakeholders to adhere to socially acknowledged moral traits of integrity, honesty, authenticity, accountability, transparency, fairness, etc., (Fullan, 2003; Gardiner & Tenuto, 2015; Langlois et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). Educational institutions that genuinely embrace the practice of ethical leadership and advocate human-centered operation will, therefore, likely reap the rewards in overall performance with reputation, credibility, and morale (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2004), which will ultimately yield higher level of job satisfaction amongst school personnel. Grounded on extant literature and previous research, the conceptual framework and hypotheses are set forth in the proceeding sections.

Conceptual framework

Thus, considering the preceding literature review and the research purpose and questions, a framework linking ethical leadership and lecturer job satisfaction was conceptualized by outsourcing from the work of Brown et al. (2005), Kalshoven et al. (2011), and Langlois et al. (2014).

Before elaborating each hypothesis, a limitation germane to the proposed model need to be acknowledged. Accordingly, some external factors such as socio-economic factors and lecturer demographic background were not accounted for as the moderators in the conceptual framework and analysis process.

Research hypotheses

In light of the synthesis of extant literature and schematized in the conceptual model above, we hypothesized the directional influence of five dimensions of ethical leadership (EL) on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS) as follows.

H1: UX leaders' ethical leadership of care (ELC) significantly exerts a positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS).

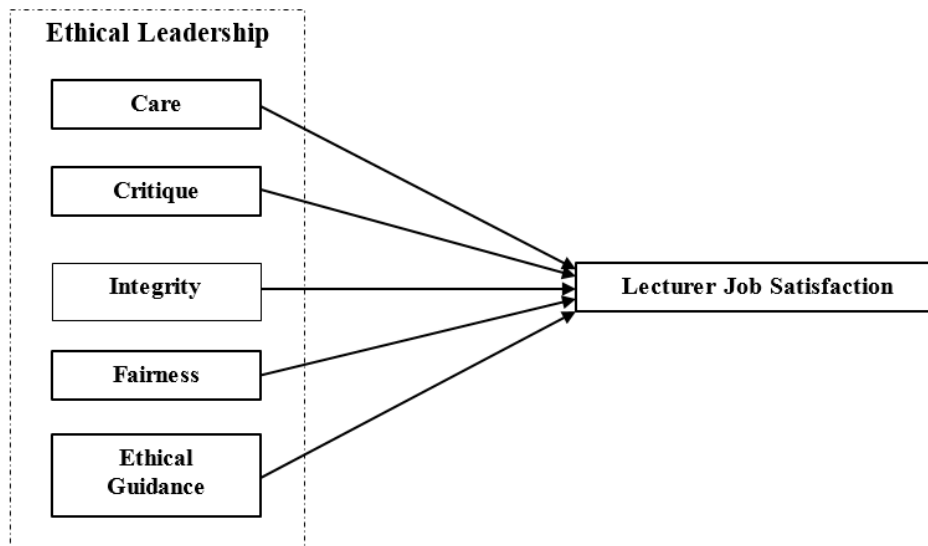


Figure 1. Hypothesized framework linking ethical leadership dimensions and lecturer job satisfaction

H2: UX leaders' ethical leadership of critique (ELCR) significantly exerts a positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS).

H3: UX leaders' ethical leadership of integrity (ELI) significantly exerts a positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS).

H4: UX leaders' ethical leadership of fairness (ELF) significantly exerts a positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS).

H5: UX leaders' ethical leadership of ethical guidance (ELEG) significantly exerts a positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction (LJS).

Accordingly, five hypotheses were proposed indicating the impact of independent variables (i.e., ELC, ELCR, ELI, ELF, and ELEG) on the dependent variable (LJS). The underlying assumptions would be that overall, UX leaders' dimensions of ethical leadership would significantly positively influence lecturer job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

An empirical cross-sectional case-study quantitative approach was primarily adopted to address and verify the linkage amongst variables of the research problem to 'develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon' (Creswell, 2012, p.16).

Instrument development

The measures for all constructs in the framework were an adaptation of various well-validated instruments derived from a review of existing measurement scales of previous studies. These scales have indicated excellent levels of internal consistency and discriminant validity and been tested in numerous earlier studies at different levels across industries (Buitendach & Rothmann, 2009; Okan & Akyüz, 2015; Yukl et al., 2013). Numerous items from several ethical leadership scales, i.e., Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) (Brown et al., 2005), Ethical Leadership at Work Questionnaire (Kalshoven et al., 2011), and Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) (Langlois et al., 2014) respectively, were extracted to assess the ethical leadership variables. These validated items were primarily developed to 'tap the full domain of ethical leadership that could apply to both formal and informal leaders' at all levels of any organization (Brown et al., 2005, pp.123). Further, several items from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short Form (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967) and Vitell and Davis' (1990) instrument were adopted for lecturer job satisfaction appraisal. All selected items were slightly modified to effect the cultural reflection of the corresponding higher institution. Given item purification, a panel of experts (i.e., faculty leaders (n=2) and lecturers (n=3)) in general agreed with the relevance of the proposed model and assessed the face and content validity of the factor scales to suit the UX current context.

All items are positively worded and anchored on a five-point Likert continuum with 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Further, given assuring the questionnaire accuracy, a standard back-translation technique was performed by two expert translators (Creswell, 2012; DeVellis, 2003). Also, a pilot test was purposefully conducted using Cronbach alpha for the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument (Hair et al., 2010). Reliability estimates from the current study's pilot test (n = 52) indicated the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .83 for lecture job satisfaction scale, further indicating high internal consistency. Likewise, ethical leadership dimensions demonstrated

adequate internal consistency of all Cronbach alpha indexes $\geq .7$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Accordingly, the final questionnaire form is composed of three sections. As a result, the first two sections comprise of EL and LJS respectively. Section 3 is about the background demographics of the respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1: Constructs Measured in the Questionnaire

Construct	Items	Questions	Literature adapted
Ethical Leadership of Care (ELC)	6	Section I, Q.1-6	Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Langlois et al., 2014;
Ethical Leadership of Critique (ELCR)	5	Section I, Q.7-11	Vitell & Davis, 1990; Weiss et al., 1967
Ethical Leadership of Fairness (ELF)	5	Section I, Q.12-16	
Ethical Leadership of Ethical Guidance (ELEG)	6	Section I, Q.17-22	
Ethical Leadership of Integrity (ELI)	6	Section I, Q.23-28	
Lecturer Job Satisfaction (LJS)	8	Section II, Q.29-36	

Source: Authors' own compilation

Main Quantitative Research

Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized for data collection. The target population comprises a body of approximately 378 permanently employed lecturers from eight faculties at UX's main campus. After the official approval was granted for field conduct of the proposed research, the surveys were then self-administered in person and electronically. The personally administered questionnaires were in the majority and circulated by two trained assistants in approximately one month's time. After the circulation of totality of 400 questionnaires, 256 valid surveys out of 279 completed questionnaires were utilized per response rate of 68%. The valid responses were deemed acceptable for exploratory factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

The SPSS software package was employed to code the collected data and generate statistics for a stepwise data analysis to test hypotheses. Firstly, the completeness of the data set was checked for accuracy of data entry, no evidence of systematic patterns of missing data, the normality of distribution of variables via the values for skewness and kurtosis and histogram graphs, and outliers (Creswell, 2012). Accordingly, no outliers were detected, no single case, therefore, was excluded from the analysis. Next, descriptive statistics were initially performed to present the mean, variance, and characteristics of data. Cronbach's reliability, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Pearson's correlation coefficient, and regression were subsequently subject to computation to verify the proposed hypotheses by assessing the predictive ability of the five constituting ethical leadership dimensions on lecturer job satisfaction.

FINDINGS

Demographic information

The demographic variables present the configuration of gender, age, qualification, and working experience. As shown in Table 2, the sample of respondents was characterized by the majority of female lecturers (55.5%) over their male counterparts (44.5%). Approximately half of sample (52.3%) fell into the 31-40 years of age range compared to a relatively small portion of over 50 group (9%). Given the qualification distribution, the dominant share (68.4%) was MA holders, followed by PhD (18%) and BA (13.6%). Further, regarding working experience, the prevalence group was within the 6-10 years bracket (39.5%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic attribute	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	114	44.5
Female	142	55.5
<i>Age</i>		
≥ 30	47	18.4
31-40	134	52.3
41-50	52	20.3
Over 50	23	9.0
<i>Qualification</i>		
BA	35	13.6
MA	175	68.4
PhD	46	18.0
<i>Working experience</i>		
≥ 5 years	38	14.8
6-10	101	39.5
11-15	76	29.7
Over 15	41	16.0
Total	256	100%

Note: n = 256

Means, standard deviations, and number of items in each scale

Table 3 uncovers the mean scores (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and number of items with their respective ranges. Accordingly, ELI's mean score constituted the highest value of the five ethical leadership dimensions (*M* = 3.76, *SD* = .73), followed by ELC (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = .71), ELCR (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = .73), ELF (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = .72), and ELEG (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = .66). Regarding the dependent variable, the mean score for LJS was 3.77 (*SD* = .62).

Scale reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Reliability and exploratory factor scores were computed as initial stages of analysis for the reliability examination of internal consistency regarding the respective items of each construct. The coefficient α can vary between 0 and 1, with cut-off values of $\geq .7$ being acceptable as a reliable construct (Hair et al., 2010; Nunnally & Burnstein 1994). Items with item-to-total correlation $r < .3$ will be eliminated (Nunnally & Burnstein 1994). The analyses of the psychometric properties of the constructs revealed that reliability coefficient alphas were consistently high for all six constructs, ranging from .786 to .836. Cronbach's α value for all variables were greater than .70, as the threshold value for composite reliability, so the reliability of all the variables was deemed acceptable. Further, no item violated the criteria of item-to-total correlation, indicating the retention for all items in the survey instrument. The Cronbach's α values are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation, and Reliability Information for each Variable

Variable	Items	Range	Midpoint	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's alpha
ELI	6	1-5	3	3.76	.73	.798
ELF	6	1-5	3	3.66	.72	.819
ELCR	5	1-5	3	3.68	.73	.822
ELEG	5	1-5	3	3.65	.66	.836
ELC	6	1-5	3	3.71	.71	.809
LJS	8	1-5	3	3.77	.62	.786

Source: Authors' own compilation

We then proceeded to perform factor analysis for all variables giving preference to principal axis rotation and an orthogonal solution to identify the communalities of the variables and adhering to criteria: (1) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) $\geq .5$; (2) Sig. coefficient of the KMO test $\leq .05$; (3) Eigenvalues ≥ 1 ; (4) Total (cumulative percentage of) variance explained $\geq 50\%$; (5) All observed variables' factor loadings $\geq .5$; and (6) Weight difference between the loadings of two factors $> .3$ (Hair et al., 2010). Clearly, given the loading of five scales of ethical leadership representing the independent variables, five clean factors corresponding to the independent variables, labelled as ELCR (Factor 1), ELI (Factor 2), ELF (Factor 3), ELC (Factor 4) and ELEG (Factor 5), were extracted without any cross-loaded items, collectively explaining approximately 63.34% to item variance (KMO = .780, significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 (210) = 1825.625, p < .001$) (see Table 4). Moreover, all the indicators of each factor were significant with factor loadings higher than the threshold value of .5. The individual items were distinctively loaded on their appropriate factors, confirming discriminant and convergent validity of measures.

Table 4: Rotated Factor Matrix of Five Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

Factors	Loadings				
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
ELCR	.685 - .797				
ELI		.663 - .814			
ELF			.626 - .916		
ELC				.643 - .831	
ELEG					.640 - .891
Eigenvalues	3.916	3.274	2.743	1.985	1.385
Total variance explained = 63.34%	18.64%	15.59%	13.06%	9.45%	6.59%
Cronbach's α	.822	.798	.819	.809	.836

Note. KMO = .780; $p < .001$; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

The 8-item scale assessing LJS as a single dependent construct was subjected to the same procedure to examine their unidimensionality. A single factor was extracted with an explanation of a total variance of 66.53% (KMO = .757, significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 (3) = 165.81, p < .001$), eigenvalue = 1.996). Accordingly, these statistical heuristics and judgment procedures yielded the retention of all five factors corresponding the ethical leadership as the independent construct and one unidimensional factor of LJS as the dependent construct. Further, no single item was subject to elimination via factor analysis. Factor variables and their respective loadings are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 5: Unidimensionality of Lecturer Job Satisfaction (LJS)

Variable	Items	Items Loadings	Variance	α
LJS	8	.668 - .882	66.535%	.786

Note. KMO = .757; $p < .001$; Eigenvalue = 1.996

Regression analysis

Prior to hypothesis testing, Pearson's correlation coefficient values were computed to verify the relationships amongst the independent variables, the five dimensions of ethical leadership construct, and the dependent variable, lecturer job satisfaction (LJS). Simply put, the Pearson's coefficient works as the initial indicator for strength and direction of the linearity relationship of these variables. All five dimensions were positively and significantly correlated with LJS ($p < .001$). Accordingly, ELF demonstrated the most considerable and robust correlation with LJS ($r = .638, p < .01$), followed by ELC ($r = .553$), ELI ($r = .450$), ELCR ($r = .337$), and ELEG ($r = .214$) respectively ($p < .01$). These correlation values also indicated preliminary support and acceptance of the proposed hypotheses, H1 to H5 (Table 6).

Table 6: Decision on the Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Decision
H1: UX leaders' ELC has a significant positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H2: UX leaders' ELCR has a significant positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H3: UX leaders' ELI has a significant positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H4: UX leaders' ELF has a significant positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H5: UX leaders' ELEG has a significant positive direct influence on lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Yet, the correlations could not present how much impact of all the independent variables had on LJS, regression attempt was made to explore the extent to which the whole model and particularly each ethical leadership dimension explained the variance in LJS. The estimated form of the regression model capturing the predictive value of ELC, ELCR, ELI, ELF, and ELEG on LJS is generally computed as follows:

$$Y (\text{LJS}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{ELC} + \beta_2\text{ELCR} + \beta_3\text{ELI} + \beta_4\text{ELF} + \beta_5\text{ELEG}$$

Table 7 demonstrated that overall, five independent variables statistically significantly predicted LJS ($R^2 = .732, R^2_{adj} = .725, F(5, 229) = 119.256, p < .001$) and the model was deemed goodness of fit. Ideally, the value of R^2 was relatively close to the value of R^2_{adj} . Accordingly, 72.5% of the total variability in LJS was jointly explained by all five ethical dimensions as determined by the adjusted coefficient of determination. Therein lies no multicollinearity and autocorrelation problem as Durbin-Watson = 1.986. Further, four out of these five independent variables had statistically significant beta coefficients ($p < .001$) and one dimension, namely, was statistically significant at $p < .05$ level. Given the beta weight pertaining to the contribution of each dimension in the model, ELI accounted for the most variation in LJS ($\beta = .396, p < .001$), followed by the predictive values of ELC ($\beta = .372, p < .001$), then ELF ($\beta = .365, p < .001$), ELCR ($\beta = .324, p < .001$), and finally ELEG ($\beta = .103, p < .05$). Ultimately, the estimates of the regression model featuring ethical leadership dimensions (ELC, ELCR, ELI, ELF, and ELEG) and the response variable, LJS, is formulated through the following equation:

$$\text{OBE} = .292 + .396\text{ELI} + .372\text{ELC} + .365\text{ELF} + .324\text{ELCR} + .103\text{ELEG}$$

Table 7: Regression Model Summary

Independent variables (factors)	Coefficient	SE	t-statistic	p-value
(Constant)	.292	.170	1.706	
ELI	.396	.026	10.112	.000
ELCR	.324	.025	8.730	.000
ELC	.372	.027	10.059	.000
ELEG	.103	.023	2.607	.010
ELF	.365	.028	9.126	.000

Note. $R^2 = .732$; Adjusted $R^2 = .725$; Durbin-Watson = 1.986; F-value = 119.256;

Sig. $F < .001$; dependent variable = LJS

Clearly, the correlation coefficients coupled with regression results demonstrated strong support for all tested hypotheses and ascertained the statistical significance of the proposed framework in a specific HE setting, indicating the positive and direct impact of ethical leadership on job satisfaction as perceived by UX lecturers.

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study is an attempt to develop a framework that links ethical leadership and employee outcomes and particularly verify the impact of ethical leadership of faculty leaders on lecturer job satisfaction within the context of Vietnam HE. Descriptive data analysis yielded normal distribution of the data with no identified outliers, enabling further investigation of the data via reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and Pearson's coefficient of correlation. Given the primary results of correlation computation, all five dimensions of perceived ethical leadership were significantly positively correlated with lecturer job satisfaction, although to differing degrees ($p < .001$), confirming the initial acceptance of all proposed hypotheses.

Further, regression results uncovered that all five dimensions explained 72.5% of the variation in LJS and therein lies significantly positive linear relationships ($p < .001$). Accordingly, variability in LJS was significantly predicted to a greater extent by ELI ($\beta = .396, p < .001$), ELC ($\beta = .372, p < .001$), and ELF ($\beta = .365, p < .001$) and to a lesser extent by ELCR ($\beta = .324, p < .001$) and ELEG ($\beta = .103, p < .05$). The study findings are entirely consistent with prior studies that the ethical practice of integrity, care, fairness, critique, and ethical guidance greatly explained the variance in lecturer job satisfaction (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2014; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Kelidbari et al., 2016; Neubert et al., 2009; Okan & Akyüz, 2015; Tu et al., 2017; Wang & Hsieh, 2012; Yozgat & Meşekiran, 2016).

The study has both theoretical and managerial contributions. Though these constructs have been empirically studied in numerous leadership models, the strength of ethical leadership on employee outcomes, i.e., job satisfaction, is largely unexplored in Vietnamese education industry. Presumably, the present study is acknowledged as the first of each kind that undertake a preliminary investigation of the relationships amongst these constructs in Vietnam. Thus, the current study attempts to fill the theoretical as well as contextual void in the literature pertaining to leadership and job satisfaction in Vietnam. The study may provide more valuable empirical evidence to theory-based verifiable research in the of field of HE leadership and management and work ethics culture. The study findings are genuinely intended to shed light on the on-going debate for and against the application and incorporation of foreign models or concepts into Vietnamese education industry in recent times and to make a greater contribution to the body of literature on these concepts in Vietnam.

Further, the study findings may contribute to the participating HE institution, leaders, and lecturers alike in making key decisions germane to educational and administrative practices that are of great importance to the ultimate effectiveness of leadership via the channel of the higher levels of employee job satisfaction. The satisfactory results are imperative to assist human resource management in embedding the ethical conduct of integrity, care, fairness, critique, and ethical guidance in key administrative and educational decision-making process. Such cultivation of these ethical virtues in daily operation, goal setting, initiatives, and training programs, etc., for employees and managers could be beneficial to organisations of any kind, likely yielding positive employee attitudes, namely job satisfaction and loyalty. Importantly, further insights into the nature of these relationships will enrich HE leaders with practical knowledge in the industry through their leadership and continuous alignment the organization ethical values with employees' values. Ultimately, given contributions to educational policy, the study findings are conducive to the development of HE leadership policies that enhance the ethical support behaviour of HE leaders and academic staff alike.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary study purpose is to develop a framework linking ethical leadership as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing five explicit values, namely care, critique, integrity, fairness, and ethical guidance, and lecturer job satisfaction. The framework was then subjected to empirical investigation within a private higher education institution. Accordingly, correlation and regression results revealed that all proposed hypotheses were accepted and five dimensions of UX leaders' perceived ethical leadership considerably predicted the variance in lecturer job satisfaction in order of significance as integrity, care, fairness, critique, and ethical guidance ($p < .001$). These findings mirror prior studies in addressing the significantly positive direct impact of ethical leadership practices of HE administration on lecturer attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

The study has several limitations. We conceded the proposed framework with limited variables failed to capture the richness in assessing ethical leadership as the predictor of employee job satisfaction. Given the complexities of HE nature, future research, thus, could address the hindrance by leveraging the addition of other ethical values or behaviors. The main quantitative methodology for data collection is considered as a limitation. Accordingly, quantitative data incorporated with subsequent qualitative assessment (e.g., face to face interviews, focus groups, open-ended questions) would provide further in-depth insights and triangulation of the findings. Given its nature as a cross sectional empirical study with the intent to set the parameters within a particular HE setting in Vietnam, the study scope is confined to the relationship between intermediate level leaders and lectures. Additionally, the study only gathered current UX lecturers as a source of data generation, thus, other key stakeholders (i.e., HE administration, administrative staff, students) will make up a more extensive sample size. Further, the study scope was limited to one sampling frame of exclusively Vietnamese lecturers at a single private HE in southern Vietnam. The relatively small sample size will pose generalizability questions of the results that will require further validation in a wider context or cross-cultural setting. Due to several reasons (i.e., time constraints, resources), the influential role of moderating variables were deliberately excluded from the conceptual framework and analysis procedure. Likewise, in future research, lecturer demographic variables should be subject to statistical computation when comparing results. These limitations prompt the need for closer future investigations into these constructs.

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