

IMPACT OF THE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ON TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22891778>

Keywords

Ethical, Leadership, Teacher Performance, Gender.

Article History

Received: 14 June 2026

Accepted: 05 September 2026

Published: 21 September 2026

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Abstract

The goal of this paper was to explore the impact of ethical leadership styles on the performance of teachers at the school level in Punjab. Data were collected and assembled by drawing a sample of 59 heads and 251 teachers using two self-administered questionnaires titled as, "Data were analyzed using SPSS software applying measures, Pearson correlation r , t -test, and Regression Analysis. The results deduced that ethical leadership style and teachers' performance were positively correlated. Teacher performance was different on a gender basis, but there was no evidence of differences in ethical leadership style on a gender basis. The study results recommended that heads should follow an ethical leadership style. Furthermore, a study should be carried out to explore other factors associated with ethical leadership.

Introduction

Leadership is the art or quality of any individual that influences and motivates people, any group, or an organization. A leader must possess many qualities i.e., commitment to work, good communication skills, honesty, integrity, and making meaningful decisions. Diverse values, standards, demeanors, convictions, forms, conduct, and practices recognize leaders and are typically affected a little by the hierarchical, proficient, or regulation culture (Mihelic et al. 2010). A leader is someone who understands and changes the situation. According to Selznick (1957), the function of leadership is to instill cultural and ethical values. A creative point of view approaches two aspects of leadership (negotiation and bargaining) with vigor. The ethical leadership style is the rightness and goodness of behavior adopted by a leader with their workers or team. Leaders are believed to have a meaningful effect on ethical behaviors and their followers consider them an inspiration for them and the institution (Mayer et al. 2012). Leaders have many styles of leading and influencing people: transactional, transformational, situational, and ethical. Among these styles, ethical leadership is the most powerful. Ethical leader empath with vision, autocracy, and self-esteem securing their self-interest. Trust and belief are major determinants of organizational success. Ethical leaders give their workers a

sense of purpose in their work and ensure that organizational decisions are made following ethical guidelines. An ethical leader follows the rules of conduct that are vital to him. Driving morally is thought to be the handle of an examination; one must learn about satisfactory and unsatisfactory behavior. Leadership can be considered as a corresponding relationship with the devotees, with the corrective and reviving impacts of devotion and affirmation. It is starting to be taken into consideration and is picking up notoriety in today's world (Mihelic et al. 2010).

Ethical leaders are committed to higher reason, judiciousness, pride, persistence, and tirelessness (Berghofer & Schwartz, 2007). A "moral person" is a person of high character who is honest and dependable, shows consideration for the welfare of his or her employees, and is seen as receptive. So, an "ethical leader" is someone who leads others in a moral calculation, lets representatives know what is required of them, and keeps them accountable. Ethical leaders are those who are attentive to the needs of all employees without fear of contradiction. Ethical leadership impacts worker execution, intrinsic motivation, job responses, and the ability of workers to report problems (Tu, Lu and Yu, 2017).

Ethical leaders are thought to have strong moral consciousness as well as respect for all stakeholders, including lawmakers (Lee et al. 2017). Leaders with ethical motives are not uncommon, yet their insufficiency leads to immoral outcomes. Ethical leaders do not tolerate unethical behavior and instead punish their followers for it. To be perceived as an ethical leader, one must be truthful, dependable, solid, and sincere. Ethics should pervade every aspect of organizational activity. Leadership conduct is considered a leader's dealings with his/her followers. Successive leadership behaviors can provide a motivating and encouraging environment for employees (Wang et al. 2019).

The main focus of this paper is to explore the ethical leadership style followed by the heads and the perceptions of teachers concerning this. It also addresses the performance of teachers working under the leadership using an ethical style. The first objective of this paper is to determine the relationship between ethical leadership style followed by the heads and perceptions of teachers concerning this. It also aims to determine gender impact on ethical leadership and teachers' performance. The final aim of this study is to evaluate the level of impact posed by the ethical leadership style on teachers' performance.

Literature Review

Educational institutions are the source of producing educated and beneficial citizens. School leaders are held responsible for this task. Educational leaders have to face the challenges of accomplishing goals as many other leaders face in other organizations (Northouse 2010). Ethical leadership behavior and practices play a crucial role in upgrading the standard of education at any level of education. The head teacher's role is to supervise the assigned tasks in a good manner. A headteacher can fulfill his duty both inside and outside the school. He plays a pivotal role in raising awareness about the importance of education within society. According to Wallace (2007), a good leader must be smart, honest, compassionate, and a follower of principles of logic and ethics. A high-quality leader simply observes the situation and immediately recognizes the truth of it. A leader perceives things in a very comprehensive way. A headteacher should have a creative personality. He overcomes the problems courageously and achieves the goal despite everything.

The teacher is the most valuable element in schools, the goals and objectives of schools cannot be achieved without the teacher's active participation of teachers. Teachers are the source of inspiration for the students and influence their results and achievement. Quality schooling can only be achieved through committed, dedicated, and lively teachers. Ethical leadership works as a fundamental factor in connecting institutional culture and the performance of teachers (Toor and Ofori 2009). Ethical leadership is fundamental to producing effective leaders, pulling teachers to produce extra effort, job satisfaction, and a conducive work environment (Ruiz et al. 2011).

Ethical leaders are those who do not entertain unethical acts and instead punish followers for bad conduct. Simply writing an ethics code is not enough to implement ethical behavior in organizations. Ethical leadership impacts the performance and behavior of workers and team members (Demetriou and Ducette 2018). Ethical leaders exhibit ethical conduct impact individuals, and build positive attitudes within work organizations (Presbitero and Teng-Calleja 2019). According to Kalshoven et al. (2011), ethical leaders' behaviors respect, support, and care to fulfill employees' needs. Furthermore, they reported that ethical leadership is a multidimensional aspect including seven dimensions such as fairness, role clarification, power sharing, orientation, ethical guidance, integrity, and concern for sustainability.

Fairness

Fairness refers to the leaders treating their subordinates fairly, avoiding favoritism, dealing with teacher's matters with work obligations, handling matters like misconduct, misunderstanding, and challenges, and going for negotiations (Brown et al. 2005). Employees feel good if the leadership compensates or rewards their efforts and contributions. Teachers disappointed with their work or job cannot produce good results, have less job satisfaction, and lack motivation (Dugguh and Dennis, 2014). Fairness is associated with the perceptions of teachers about their institutions. If the teacher perceives that they are treated well concerning duties and efforts, they remain satisfied and happy and perform their work more positively and efficiently.

Fairness is considered an individual general perception of fair treatment (Barclay and Kiefer 2014). Building trust and fairness between heads and teachers is the major focus of ethical leadership. It is more likely that teachers produce ethical behavior as they perceive that they are fairly treated by their heads. It has a positive impact on organizational success (Trevino et al. 2014). Fairness is a situational factor that includes fairness concerning distributions, processes, and procedures that regulate decisions. Fairness literature is consistent which shows that school heads are considered fair as they equally distribute school resources, consult in decision-making, apply rules without any distinction, acknowledge mistakes, and take evidence-based actions (Burns and DiPaola 2013; Khaola and Coldwell 2017b; Al Halbusi et al. 2020b).

Concern for sustainability

Sustainability is a multi-dimensional term that has different meanings. It is normally used by government and business. It is an approach that builds trust among customers and creates long-term value by practicing opportunities and dealing with risks involved in environmental, social, and economic development. Sustainability is also defined as maintaining goodwill over a longer period (Galpin and Whittington 2012). Leadership is a micro-component that drives sustainability and produces engagement (Sroufe 2017). Norton et al. (2015) suggested that a

leader's supporting behavior pushes employees to work effectively and take initiative. A leader's positive behavior becomes instrumental and produces a desirable attitude among employees (Kim and Park, 2017). Leaders motivate teachers to display positive social behavior and impact attitudes (Daily et al. 2009). Leadership is an important factor that moves the organization in the right direction.

Ethical guidance

Ethical guidance is the way a leader mentors his/her subordinates about ethics and rules of ethics and promotes ethical conduct. Ethical guidance promotes followers' attention to practice ethical actions. The reinforcement function of ethical guidance enhances ethical actions among the followers (Brown et al. 2005). Ethical guidance is considered an important aspect of the ethical leadership model. It is defined as patronized communication and explanation of ethical standards and a system of punishment and reward to enhance ethical behavior among followers (Kalshoven et al. 2011). Ethical leaders conduct several verbal discussions with followers to make imitable and observable ethical decision-making. Moreover, ethical leaders maintain ethical standards through a reward and punishment system. The basic objective of this discussion with followers is not only to give a silent message but also to create open communication between leaders and followers (Brown et al. 2005).

Top-level managers play a fundamental role in developing strategies, utilizing resources, and molding employees' behavior in a positive direction to accomplish goals and objectives of better performance (Iqbal and Ahmad, 2021). Leaders of institutions should demonstrate ethical conduct to improve the behavioral intentions of the employees who display ethical behavior (Rubel et al. 2021). Successful leadership can promote learning, values, and voluntary behavior that reinforce the capacity of the institution to achieve excellent performance (Liao and Zhang 2020).

Role clarification

Clear assignment of roles for teachers is the mandate of positive and successful leadership. Role clarification should be transparent, and communicate responsibilities, and performance expectations (Brown et al. 2005). Role clarification is an integral element of ethical leadership for the determination of expectations and performance goals (Resick et al. 2006). Role clarification for each teacher plays an important role in determining and sharing expectations in an institution. Assigned roles enable teachers to perform according to expectations. Vikaraman et al. (2021) reported that some principals mentioned in interviews, convey during meetings expectations set for their teachers.

Integrity

Integrity is demonstrated by leaders fulfilling their promises and being consistent in their behavior (Vikaraman et al. 2021). Collaboration and trust among the stakeholders are the key factors contributing to the solution of sustainability issues (Resick et al. 2006). Positive attitude, cooperation, and better performance can be achieved through a higher level of trust (Dirks and Ferrin 2002). Trust plays a fundamental role in promoting collaboration among teachers. According to McAllister (1995), interpersonal trust is "the extent to which a person is confident in and willing to act based on the words, actions, and decisions of another." Earlier

research shows that leadership is an ascendent of trust between leader and team members (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002).

Ethical leaders put efforts into impacting the workers' behavior (Liu et al. 2019). Through communication with their subordinates, leaders can affect employees' behavior. Leaders' guidance, fairness, and standards can change the behavior of teachers (Neves et al. 2018; Moore et al. 2019). Ethical leadership reduces the tendency to display unethical behavior (Moore et al. 2019). Furthermore, according to (Al Halbusi et al. 2020b), ethical leadership impacts employees' ethical behavior. The more focus on ethical leadership style, the more its employees behave ethically.

Statement of Problem

Leadership is a critical component of educational institutions. A great leader's attitude, values, and beliefs influence teachers and engage them to adopt favorable behavior. Ethics is the primal quality of a leader due to its distinct nature. Ethical leadership style proves helpful in building a conducive working environment (Crosswell 2006) and improving the teachers' performance. Literature shows that ethical leadership is positively associated with organizational performance (Kim and Thapa 2018) and employees' effectiveness (Kalshoven and Boon 2012., Kalshoven et al. 2011). Secondary schools secure an important position in the education system of Punjab. The focus of the present study is to unfold the ethical leadership behavior of heads and its impact on the performance of teachers working in secondary schools in Punjab. The objectives of the study were to explore:

1. The relationship between head teachers' ethical leadership and teachers' performance.
2. The difference between ethical leadership styles of heads on a gender basis.
3. The impact of head teachers' ethical leadership style on teachers' performance.

Method and Materials

The study was conducted to investigate the ethical leadership styles of head teachers. The study was quantitative in nature and a survey method was utilized. The study population consisted of teachers and heads of public sector schools in Punjab. The sample was selected randomly using a simple random sampling technique. Questionnaires were distributed among elementary and high school teachers and heads. Two instruments were used to collect data. Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) developed by Kalshoven et al. (2011) and The Teacher's Performance Evaluation Scale (TPES) self-developed by the researcher (Shahzad, Khan and Akhtar, 2016) was used. The reliability of the scales, Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) and Teacher's Performance Scale (TPES) measured as .763 and .876 respectively.

Analyses and Interpretation

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Data were analyzed using measures, Pearson correlation r , t -test, and Regression Analysis.

H01: Ethical leadership and teachers' performance are not correlated at the school level in Punjab.

Table 1 Relationship between Ethical Leadership (EL) and Teacher Performance (TP).

Variable	Mean	SD	Correlation r	Sig. (2Tailed)	Decision
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EL	3.291	.491	.416**	.000	Rejected
TP	3.621	.622			

Table 1 shows that a positive significant relationship between ethical leadership and teacher performance was found as the values $r = .416^{**}$, $p < .000$. So, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H02: There is no significant difference in ethical leadership between male and female school heads.

Table 2 Gender-based comparison of Ethical Leadership (EL)

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	Mean Diff.	df	T	Sig.
EL	Male	208	3.288	0.48663	-.0063	457	-.137	.891
	Female	251	3.295	0.49675				

Table 2 indicates the study found no difference in ethical leadership of males ($M = 3.288$, $SD = 0.486$) and females ($M = 3.295$, $SD = 0.75230$) EL; $df (457) = -.137$, $P = .891$. These results suggested that gender does not influence ethical leadership. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

H03: There is no significant difference in teachers' performance between males and females.

Table 3 Gender-based comparison of Teacher Performance (TP)

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	Mean Diff.	df	T	Sig.
TP	Male	208	3.5388	.64392	-.147	458	-2.55	.011
	Female	251	3.6868	.59654				

Table 3 reveals a significant difference in performance on gender basis as male ($M = 3.5388$, $SD = 0.64392$) and female ($M = 3.6868$, $SD = 0.59654$) EG; $df (458) = -2.55$, $p = .011$. These results suggested that gender does influence teacher performance. Results show that females show more focus on teacher performance (Table 3).

Regression Analysis

Regression Model $Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \mu_i$

Estimated Model $Y_i = 1.889 + 0.526 X_i$

H04: Ethical leadership style does not impact the performance of teachers at the secondary level in Punjab.

Table 4 Regression Analysis of Ethical Leadership and Teachers' Performance

Model	Parameters	Standard Error	t-ratio	Sig	R ²
Constant	1.889	0.179	10.540	0.000	0.173
EL	0.526	0.526	9.763	0.000	

Note: IV=Ethical Leadership, DV= Teachers' Performance

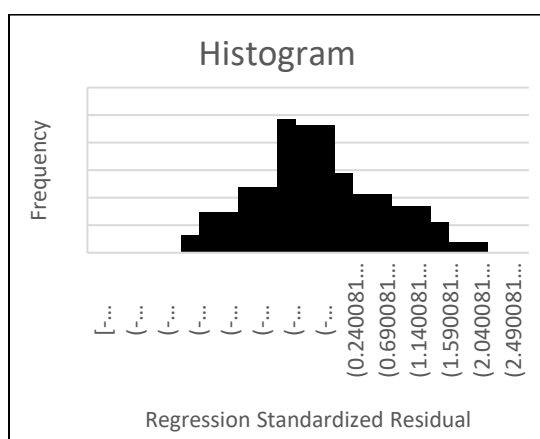


Figure 1: Histogram of Regression analysis

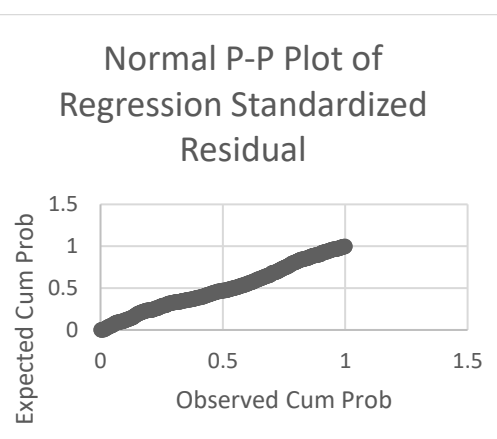


Figure 2: P-P Plot of Regression analysis

Table 5 shows that both parameters intercept and slope are significant because the t-ratio is greater than or equal to 2 and in the table, both t-ratio is greater than 2. Also, it has been seen that both the parameters of the model are significant and the coefficient of determination is very low i.e., .00 which shows that there should some other variable should be included in the model as an independent variable. It shows that ethical leadership style impacts teachers' performance.

Discussions

The study concluded that a positive significant relationship between heads' ethical leadership style and teachers' performance exists. The results of the present study are in line with the study conducted by Adeyemi (2010). It appears that in the case of ethical leadership, no differences were found on a gender basis. The results of the study added to the body of existing literature. Moreover, the study of a significant difference in the performance of teachers on a gender basis, the study of Shenaz et al. (2022) supports the results. The study conducted showed the significant impact of head teachers' ethical leadership on teachers' performance. The results deduced from the present study support the results deduced by Toor and Ofori (2009) who stated that ethical leadership is a contributing factor in teachers' performance. This present study also provides support to the study of Ruiz et al (2011), which stated that leaders with strong ethical values can influence the performance of the staff. The study corroborates the results of Trevino et al (2003) to explore the significant impact of sub-constructs of ethical leadership on the performance of teachers.

The present study aimed to investigate the influence of ethical leadership on teachers' performance, with a particular focus on potential gender differences among both head teachers

and teachers. The findings offer several significant insights that contribute to the broader understanding of leadership dynamics within educational settings.

Impact of Ethical Leadership on Teachers' Performance

The study unequivocally demonstrates that ethical leadership positively affects teachers' performance. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of ethical leadership in fostering a supportive and motivating work environment (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Gardner et al., 2005). Ethical leaders, characterized by fairness, integrity, and transparency, are likely to cultivate trust and respect among their subordinates. In the context of education, when head teachers exhibit ethical behavior, teachers feel valued and supported, which in turn enhances their commitment and effectiveness in their roles. This positive relationship underscores the importance of ethical leadership as a critical factor in improving educational outcomes and overall school performance.

Gender Neutrality in Ethical Leadership Styles

Interestingly, the study found no significant differences in the ethical leadership styles between male and female head teachers. This finding challenges traditional gender stereotypes that often associate certain leadership styles with specific genders (Eagly & Carli, 2003). It suggests that ethical leadership traits are not inherently linked to gender, and both male and female head teachers can equally embody and practice ethical leadership. This parity is encouraging, as it implies that leadership training and development programs focusing on ethical principles can be effectively implemented across all genders without the need for gender-specific approaches. It also promotes a more inclusive view of leadership within educational institutions, emphasizing that ethical behavior transcends gender boundaries.

Gender Differences in Teachers' Performance

Contrary to the uniformity observed in leadership styles, the study identified significant differences in teachers' performance based on gender. This discrepancy raises important questions about the underlying factors contributing to these differences. Possible explanations could include varying societal expectations, differing motivational factors, or distinct interpersonal dynamics experienced by teachers of different genders. For instance, female teachers might receive more support or face different challenges compared to their male counterparts, influencing their performance outcomes. Additionally, gender biases in performance evaluations could also play a role, potentially skewing the perceived performance levels. Understanding these nuanced factors is essential for developing targeted strategies to support all teachers effectively and ensure equitable performance outcomes.

Interplay Between Leadership and Gender Dynamics

The interaction between ethical leadership and gender dynamics presents a complex but critical area for further exploration. While ethical leadership uniformly influences teacher performance regardless of the head teacher's gender, the observed performance differences among teachers themselves suggest that leadership alone may not address all underlying issues related to gender disparities. It may be necessary to complement ethical leadership with other supportive measures, such as mentorship programs, professional development tailored to

diverse needs, and policies that actively promote gender equity within schools. By addressing both leadership practices and gender-specific challenges, educational institutions can create a more balanced and effective teaching environment.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

The findings of this study have several practical implications. Firstly, educational leaders should prioritize ethical leadership development as a means to enhance teacher performance and, by extension, student outcomes. Professional development programs that focus on ethical decision-making, integrity, and fairness can equip head teachers with the necessary skills to lead effectively. Secondly, the recognition of gender differences in teacher performance calls for a more nuanced approach to teacher support and evaluation. Schools may need to implement gender-sensitive policies and practices that acknowledge and address the unique challenges faced by teachers of different genders. Lastly, fostering an inclusive and equitable school culture, where ethical leadership and gender diversity are valued, can contribute to a more harmonious and productive educational environment.

Conclusion

In summary, this study highlights the significant role of ethical leadership in enhancing teachers' performance while revealing the complex interplay between leadership styles and gender dynamics. The lack of gender differences in ethical leadership styles among head teachers is a positive indication of the universal applicability of ethical principles in leadership. However, the presence of gender-based performance differences among teachers underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address both leadership practices and gender-specific factors. Future research should delve deeper into the causes of these performance disparities and explore effective interventions to support all teachers, thereby fostering a more effective and equitable educational system.

Educational Implications

Promotion of Ethical Leadership Training: Schools and educational institutions should consider incorporating ethical leadership training for head teachers. This can help develop a leadership style that positively influences teachers' performance.

2. Focus on Teacher Development: Since the study found that ethical leadership enhances teacher performance, professional development programs could focus on building ethical leadership capacities in school heads to create a positive work environment and boost teacher morale and effectiveness.

3. Gender-Sensitive Performance Measures: With the significant difference in teacher performance based on gender, educational stakeholders might consider revising performance evaluation systems to ensure that they account for these differences. It could also prompt the development of targeted strategies to support teachers of different genders in their professional growth.

4. Collaborative School Environment: Encouraging ethical leadership in schools can foster a more collaborative and respectful school culture. This would likely benefit not only teacher performance but also the overall learning environment for students.

5. Policy Recommendations: Educational policymakers could use the findings to establish guidelines and frameworks that promote ethical leadership in school systems, helping to maintain fairness and support high teacher performance regardless of gender.

Limitations:

1. Sample Size and Generalizability: The findings might be limited by the size or geographical scope of the sample. The results may not be generalizable to all schools, especially those in different regions or with different cultural backgrounds.
2. Focus on Gender-Based Differences: While the study highlighted gender-based differences in teacher performance, it may not have fully explored other important variables (e.g., years of experience, education level) that could also impact performance.
3. Ethical Leadership Definition: The study may have used a specific definition or interpretation of ethical leadership that may not be universally applicable or fully comprehensive. Other leadership styles or variables might also influence teacher performance.
4. Subjective Measurement of Performance: If teacher performance was measured subjectively (e.g., self-reports or subjective evaluations), this might limit the objectivity and reliability of the findings. Objective performance metrics could offer a clearer picture.
5. Temporal Limitation: The study might be cross-sectional, limiting the ability to assess long-term impacts of ethical leadership on teacher performance. Longitudinal studies could offer more insight into the lasting effects of this leadership style.
6. Lack of In-Depth Gender Analysis: While gender differences in performance were noted, the study may not have fully explained the reasons behind these differences. A deeper investigation into the causes of these differences would provide more actionable insights. Conclusions and

Conclusion

The study concluded that ethical leadership impacts the performance of teachers and no difference was found in the ethical leadership styles of male and female heads. Whereas, a significant difference was found in teachers' performance on a gender basis. The study recommended that head teachers should use an ethical leadership style to enhance the performance of teachers.

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