

The Impact of Ethical Behavior, Conscientiousness, and Religiosity on Job Engagement with Ethical Leadership as a Mediator



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ABSTRACT: Bureaucratic reform aims to achieve employee engagement to improve employee performance. The purpose of the research is to test the model and the influence of ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity on employee engagement, with ethical leadership as the mediator. A quantitative approach was used in this research, with a sample of 400 civil servants from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Java selected through convenience sampling. Employee engagement was measured using the UWES, Ethical Behavior was based on the employees' code of ethics at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Conscientiousness was measured using one dimension of the BFI, Religiosity was measured using the Centrality Religiosity Scale, and Ethical Leadership was measured using the Ethical Leadership Scale. The data was collected through a questionnaire using Google Forms, and the data analysis technique used was SEM. The results of the model testing were not fit, so they cannot be used to draw conclusions about the population. However, all the minor hypotheses were accepted. The higher the exogenous variable, the higher the endogenous variable, both directly and indirectly, with ethical leadership acting as a good mediator. Conscientiousness was found to be the most influential exogenous variable, while ethical behavior was the weakest.

KEYWORDS: job engagement; ethical behavior; conscientiousness; religiosity; ethical leadership

INTRODUCTION

Employees who are engaged are the desire of every organization. Bakker et al. (2008) argue that job engagement is a concept related to workplace well-being. Schaufeli et al. (2006) define job engagement as a positive and satisfying state of mind associated with work characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption. Engaged individuals possess high energy (vigor), enthusiasm for work (dedication), and fully immerse themselves in their work activities (absorption). Some studies indicate that there are differences in the level of job engagement among individuals based on work conditions, personal characteristics, and behavioral strategies (Bakker, 2017) Research has shown that engaged employees create pleasant working conditions for themselves. Hakanen et al. (2019) conducted a study on 190 employees in various organizations to examine the role of proactive personality in job engagement and performance. The findings indicate that as long as employees proactively adapt to create a comfortable work environment, they can remain engaged and perform well. Studies on job engagement aim to achieve a positive organization by focusing on the positive aspects of the organization/individual (Nelson & Cooper, 2007). The results show that job engagement is highly dynamic and can change at any moment depending on the individual. It can remain stable for up to a week, but it can also last only a day or even hour by hour, depending on the fluctuations in work conditions (Sonnentag, 2011).

Research conducted by the ADP Research Institute in 19 countries involving over 19,000 respondents from 2015-2018 shows that employee job engagement is relatively stable, with approximately 16% engaged and 84% not engaged. Hayes et al. (2018) reported that 84% of employees are just "coming to work." This highlights the importance of studying job engagement to assess the extent of employee involvement in their work. Job engagement research examines various important aspects. Firstly, the need to demonstrate job engagement due to the demands of the current workday. Secondly, the need for work to be completed quickly. Thirdly, the belief that what is done at the moment will influence future work processes (Sonnentag, 2011). Job engagement is a "positive" concept (Bakker et al., 2008). The positive direction of job engagement is not only a normative decision but is reflected in the increasing number of research findings that link job engagement to positive outcomes (Moliner et al., 2008; Salanova et al., 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). These studies demonstrate the positive role of job engagement in employee performance. Moreover, high job engagement can trigger increased job satisfaction, which in turn is associated with a better future (Sonnentag, 2011).

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Van den Broeck et al. (2008) argue that intrinsic resources motivate individuals to fulfill basic human needs, such as the need for job involvement, competence, and autonomy. Meanwhile, Bakker & Demerouti (2014) suggest that extrinsic resources motivate individuals to achieve work goals. Employees with job resources are able to cope with high job demands. Job resources can be physical, psychological, social, or organizational, including equipment, participation in decision-making, social support from colleagues, and flexible working hours. Research shows that engaged employees have higher personal resources. If job resources are not supportive, it can lead to burnout, but if the opposite is true, it can increase job involvement. Job involvement occurs when employees positively evaluate everything related to their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

From a psychological perspective, integrity is the internalization of ethical behavior as part of the super-ego, professionalism is the actualization of personality, and role modeling is the identification of religiosity. In this study, ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity are placed as predictor variables (exogenous) that influence job engagement. Sigmund Freud suggests that ethical behavior in adults is formed during childhood through a long process of upbringing. Ethical behavior becomes a social component. If one makes a mistake and receives punishment, it will be internalized as a conscience, whereas if one's behavior is rewarded, it becomes an ego-ideal. Ethical behavior is related to whether the behavior is right/good or wrong/bad. Therefore, ethical behavior functions as recognized moral norms in society. Ethical behavior is an ethical standard that ideally becomes part of one's identity. Employees of a company/institution have ethical resources gathered in a code of ethics. Eileen (2016) suggests that employees must implement and strive not to violate the code of ethics. The code of ethics serves as both a source of ethical behavior and a binding force for employees in their work.

Studies on ethical behavior have increased recently due to the need for employees with integrity. Ethical behavior is the expectation for good governance. Civil servants with high ethical behavior will avoid unethical behaviors such as corruption, collusion, nepotism, and gratification. Ethical behavior represents the actualization of ethical code values. Arens & Loebbecke (2016) state the principles of ethical behavior, including responsibility, prioritizing public interest, integrity, maintaining neutrality, commitment to professional ethics, and consistent adherence to the code of ethics. Research shows that the code of ethics influences ethical behavior, as it serves as a binding force for employees to behave ethically. However, other studies suggest that ethical behavior is not influenced by the code of ethics. Ethical behavior influences job engagement and has implications for job commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance (Archandar, 2010; Adhyke et. al., 2023)

The following exogenous variables of conscientiousness personality have become the focus of researchers. Employee conscientiousness is an important factor that receives greater attention from I/O psychologists (Barrick, 2005) in determining organizational success. Religiosity is the third exogenous variable that has caught the researchers' attention. Religiosity is important to consider because in the work environment, it becomes a value system that reinforces individual personality, especially among the respondents being studied, who are employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the past decade, research on religiosity has become an interesting study due to the increasing interest in the psychology of religion. Weaver & Agle (2002) stated that religion influences ethical behavior in business. Ethical leadership is used in this research as a mediator between exogenous and endogenous variables. (Buble, 2012) defines ethical leadership as the process of influencing subordinates through values, principles, and beliefs based on acceptable norms of organizational behavior. Ethical leadership has gained popularity in the past decade (Brown & Treviño, 2006) based on the influence of ethical behavior on ethical leadership (Mitchell et al., 2020). Studies on ethical leadership show its relevance to organizational practices (Chi et al., 2012).

Neubert et al. (2013) argue that organizations collapse due to the unethical behavior of leaders, which leads to a decline in employee morale. Neubert et al. (2013) suggest that the government should establish regulations regarding ethical leadership. Studies by Fu et al. (2020), Malik et al. (2016), and Alshammari et al. (2015) suggest that ethical leadership has a positive impact on organizational performance. Based on the above description, the researcher proposes several hypotheses: (1) Does the theoretical model of the influence of ethical behavior, conscientiousness personality, and religiosity on job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator fit the empirical data? (2) Does ethical behavior have a direct positive and significant influence on job engagement? Does ethical behavior have an indirect positive and significant influence on job engagement through ethical leadership? (4) Does conscientiousness personality have a direct positive and significant influence on job engagement? (5) Does conscientiousness personality have an indirect positive and significant influence on job engagement through ethical leadership? (6) Does religiosity have a direct positive and significant influence on job engagement? (7) Does religiosity have an indirect positive and significant influence on job engagement through ethical leadership? (8) Does ethical leadership have a direct positive and significant influence on job engagement? (9) Do ethical behavior, conscientiousness personality, and religiosity together, with ethical leadership as a mediator, have a direct and significant influence on job engagement?

RESEARCH METHOD

The research uses a quantitative approach. The selection of quantitative methods is in line with the research objective, which is to examine the influence of ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity on job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator. The quantitative research uses empirical data collected through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents. The distribution

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and completion of the questionnaires are done using Google Forms. This research is conducted on civil servants (ASN) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, totaling 235.918 people, making it the largest group of civil servants in the ministry in Indonesia. The sample selection will focus on ASN of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the island of Java because the majority of the population and ASN of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia are located on the island of Java, and to maintain population homogeneity. The research sample is set at 400 (rounded). In order to obtain a representative sample, the sample selection (sampling) must be done randomly using simple random sampling.

Job engagement is measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). This scale measures three aspects: vigor, dedication, and absorption across 17 items. Ethical behavior, as stated by Eileen (2016), requires employees to be aware, understand, and adhere to ethical codes of the organization. The ethical behavior scale refers to the core values of the Kemenag code of ethics (PMA Number 12 of 2019), which include: Faith and Devotion to God Almighty, Integrity, Professionalism, Responsibility, and Exemplary Conduct. The Ethical Behavior Scale consists of 15 statements. Conscientiousness is one of the variables added in this study, which is a dimension of the Big Five Inventory (BFI). The BFI consists of 44 items developed by John (1990), translated and standardized into Indonesian by Ramdhani (2015). This measurement tool consists of 5 dimensions: Extraversion (eight items), Agreeableness (nine items), Conscientiousness (nine items), Neuroticism (eight items), and Openness (ten items). The measurement tool for religiosity is sourced from Purnomo & Suryadi (2017). In this study, the validity and reliability of conscientiousness personality were not retested because the measurement tool refers to previous test results (Ramdhani, 2012). The Religiosity variable is measured using the Centrality Religiosity scale by Huber & Huber (2012), consisting of 5 dimensions: intellectual, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience, with a total of 15 questions. To measure Ethical Leadership, the researcher refers to the Ethical Leadership Scale proposed by Brown et al. (2005) and developed by Hassan et al. (2013), which includes 7 dimensions: Honesty, Integrity, Fairness, Altruism, Consistency of Behavior with Espoused Values, Communication of Ethical Values, and Providing Ethical Guidance. The Ethical Leadership Scale consists of 15 statements. The researcher will only present inferential statistics according to the research questions and test hypotheses. Inferential analysis uses path analysis. Path analysis is used to determine the direct influence, indirect influence, and total influence of the variables of ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity on job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator. Statistical analysis uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software. The respondents' answers from the questionnaire (raw data) are in ordinal scale. In order to be processed using path analysis, the raw data is transformed into interval scale using the Method of Successive Interval (MSI).

Table 1. Results of Factor Analysis of Measuring Instruments

Variable	Factor	Item Number	Sum of Item	Loading Factor Value
Ethic Behavior	Faith and Devotion to God Almighty (KK)	1, 2, 3	3	0,83; 0,840; 0,86
	Integrity (IT)	4, 5, 6	3	0,88; 0,86; 0,85
	Professionalism (PO)	7, 8, 9	3	0,87; 0,83; 0,86
	Responsibility (TA)	10, 11, 12	3	0,89; 0,87; 0,87
	Exemplary (KE)	13, 14, 15	3	0,84; 0,84; 0,86
Religiosity	<i>Intellectual</i> (IN)	1, 6, 11	3	0,87; 0,85; 0,86
	<i>Ideology</i> (ID)	2, 7, 12	3	0,86; 0,86; 0,86
	<i>Public Practice</i> (PU)	3, 8, 13	3	0,86; 0,88; 0,87
	<i>Private Practice</i> (PR)	4, 9, 14	3	0,87; 0,83; 0,85
	<i>Religious Experience</i> (RE)	5, 10, 15	3	0,86; 0,87; 0,83
Ethic Leadership	<i>Honesty</i> (HO)	4, 7	3	0,87; 0,84
	<i>Integrity</i> (IE)	9, 10	2	0,85; 0,85
	<i>Fairness</i> (FA)	6, 13	2	0,90; 0,88
	<i>Altruism</i> (AL)	1, 14	2	0,83; 0,86
	<i>Consistency of Behaviors with Espoused Values</i> (CB)	3, 5, 8	2	0,85; 0,85; 0,84
	<i>Communication of Ethical Values</i> (CO)	2, 15	2	0,83; 0,87
	<i>Providing Ethical Guidance</i> (PE)	11, 12	2	0,89; 0,91

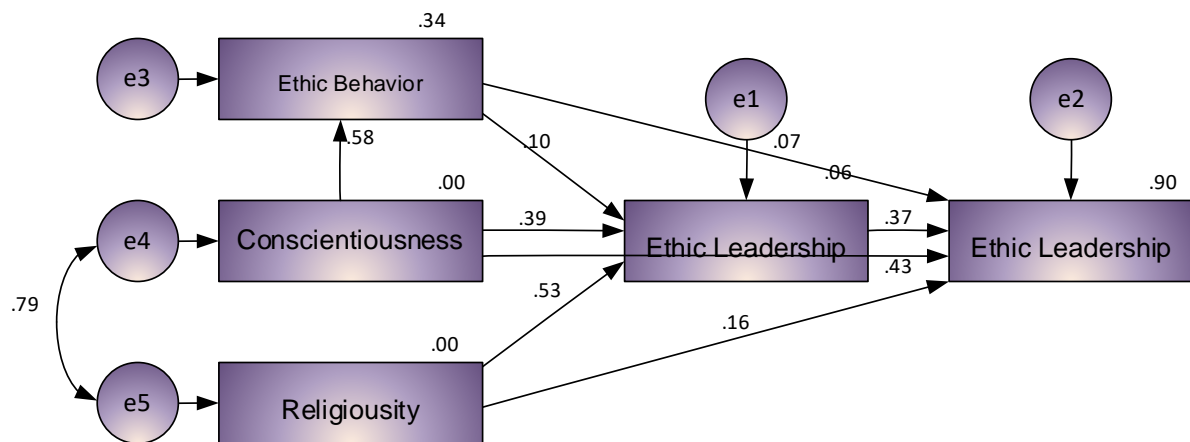
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Table 2. Research scale Reliability Test Value

Variable	Factor	CR Value	AVE Value
Ethic Behavior	Faith and Devotion to God Almighty (KK)	0,881	0,711
	Integrity (IT)	0,897	0,744
	Professionalism (PO)	0,889	0,727
	Responsibility (TA)	0,906	0,763
	Exemplary (KE)	0,885	0,720
Religiosity	Intellectual (IN)	0,896	0,741
	Ideology (ID)	0,896	0,742
	Public Practice (PU)	0,905	0,760
	Private Practice (PR)	0,888	0,726
	Religious Experience (RE)	0,889	0,727
Ethic Leadership	Honesty (HO)	0,846	0,734
	Integrity (IE)	0,839	0,723
	Fairness (FA)	0,885	0,794
	Altruism (AL)	0,830	0,709
	Consistency of Behaviors with Espoused Values (CB)	0,882	0,713
	Communication of Ethical Values (CO)	0,840	0,724
	Providing Ethical Guidance (PE)	0,891	0,803

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The final results of the major hypothesis test at this stage show that all indicators fit except for p-values smaller than 0.05. This means that there is an insignificant influence of ethical behavior, perseverance personality, and religiosity on job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator. The testing results indicating no significant influence mean that the model cannot be used as a reference for the population. Based on the final stage of the model test, it was found that perseverance personality has an influence on ethical behavior and is correlated with religiosity, resulting in the following final model presentation.



Goodness of Fit
 Chi Square = 6.468
 df = 1
 Prob. = .011
 GFI = .994
 AGFI = .904
 TLI = .976
 CFI = .998
 PCFI = .100

Figure 1. Research Model: The Influence of Ethical Behavior, Conscientiousness, and Religiosity on Job Engagement with Ethical Leadership as a Mediator (Phase Two).

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Meanwhile, the results of the minor hypothesis testing are as follows: (a) There is a significant influence of Ethical Behavior on Ethical Leadership. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 3.991, which is greater than 1.96. Ethical Behavior has a positive impact on Ethical Leadership, meaning that the higher the Ethical Behavior, the higher the Ethical Leadership, and vice versa. (b) There is a significant influence of Conscientiousness on Ethical Leadership. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 11.514, which is greater than 1.96. Conscientiousness has a positive impact on Ethical Leadership, meaning that the higher the Conscientiousness, the higher the Ethical Leadership, and vice versa. (c) There is a significant influence of Religiosity on Ethical Leadership. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 16.493, which is greater than 1.96. Religiosity has a positive impact on Ethical Leadership, meaning that the higher the Religiosity, the higher the Ethical Leadership, and vice versa. (d) There is a significant influence of Ethical Behavior on Job Engagement. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 3.458, which is greater than 1.96. Ethical Behavior has a positive impact on Job Engagement, meaning that the higher the Ethical Behavior, the higher the Job Engagement, and vice versa. (e) There is a significant influence of Conscientiousness on Job Engagement. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 13.806, which is greater than 1.96. Conscientiousness has a positive impact on Job Engagement, meaning that the higher the Conscientiousness, the higher the Job Engagement, and vice versa. (f) There is a significant influence of Religiosity on Job Engagement. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 4.844, which is greater than 1.96. Religiosity has a positive impact on Job Engagement, meaning that the higher the Religiosity, the higher the Job Engagement, and vice versa. (g) There is a significant influence of Conscientiousness on Ethical Behavior. H_0 is rejected because the critical ratio (C.R) value obtained is 14.250, which is greater than 1.96. Conscientiousness has a positive impact on Ethical Behavior, meaning that the higher the Conscientiousness, the higher the Ethical Behavior, and vice versa.

Ethical behavior has the least influence on job engagement and ethical leadership. This finding is interesting because high education and employment status do not support ethical behavior. Arens & Loebbecke (2016) suggest that individuals intentionally engage in unethical behavior for personal gain and self-interest, driven by subjective rationalizations of their personal needs. For example, when associated with low salary, employees seek justification to earn additional income. Arens & Loebbecke (2016) further add that individuals engage in unethical behavior, perceiving their actions as not violating ethics and considering their behavior insignificant if it is known by others. Another indicator of testing meets the goodness of fit criteria, which can be interpreted as ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity influencing job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator. The final model shows the development of the model (Figure 1.), where conscientiousness influences ethical behavior and conscientiousness correlates with religiosity. The development of the initial theoretical model is a new finding that was previously overlooked by researchers. The results of the minor hypothesis testing are all accepted (summary Table 1.1). The results are as follows: conscientiousness is the most prominent variable. Conscientiousness directly influences job engagement, ethical behavior, and ethical leadership with significant contributions. This means that the higher the conscientiousness, the higher the job engagement, ethical behavior, and ethical leadership.

The characteristics of conscientiousness include responsibility, wisdom, self-control, planning, and achievement orientation (Landy & Conte, 2010). These characteristics drive individuals to work diligently. The significant influence of conscientiousness on job engagement indicates that employees are willing and capable of working according to their roles and responsibilities. These results provide important information where conscientiousness can be used as a selection tool for new employees or for employee promotions. Conscientiousness is the best determinant of job performance (Dunn et al., 1995; Hough, 1992; Schaufeli et al., 2019); personal factors of the big five personality have an impact on job engagement. Conscientiousness is considered a predictor of job performance by big personality (Dunn et al., 1995; Hough, 1992; Moon, 2001; Mount et al., 1998), the most important personality type equivalent to the "g" factor in cognitive tests (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992), and has a significant impact on autonomous work behavior (Barrick & Mount, 1993). Conscientiousness indirectly influences job engagement through ethical leadership and correlates with religiosity. This means that higher conscientiousness will increase job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator. Conscientiousness has a close relationship with religiosity. These results are supported by Steel et al. (2008), stating that conscientiousness not only predicts general behavior and happiness but is specifically related to other work behaviors, the most interesting factor for I-O psychologists (Landy & Conte, 2010) according to Barrick & Mount (1993) because conscientiousness is positively linked to all aspects of work.

The contribution of ethical leadership as a mediator of the influence of conscientiousness on job engagement is quite good, meaning that ethical leadership can enhance the positive influence of conscientiousness on job engagement. The combined contribution of conscientiousness and ethical leadership further enhances job engagement. These results indicate that conscientiousness is supported by ethical leadership, which significantly affects employee job engagement. The influence of conscientiousness on ethical leadership through ethical behavior is relatively small, indicating that ethical behavior is not a strong variable in increasing the exogenous variable. Ethical behavior has the least significant direct and indirect influence on job engagement and ethical leadership. The indirect impact of ethical behavior on job engagement through ethical leadership is also small. Together, ethical behavior and ethical leadership have a 10% influence on job engagement. Although there is a positive influence, the contribution of ethical behavior as

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a predictor of job engagement and ethical leadership is relatively small, indicating that ethical behavior is not a strong predictor of job engagement or ethical leadership. This finding is interesting and requires further investigation.

Religiosity directly influences job engagement and ethical leadership, indicating that higher levels of religiosity enhance job engagement and ethical leadership. The influence on ethical leadership is greater than on job engagement, suggesting that respondents perceive religious leaders more favorably than they perceive their own religiosity. Religiosity indirectly affects job engagement through ethical leadership. The indirect influence through ethical leadership is greater than the direct influence on job engagement. The combined influence of religiosity and ethical leadership on job engagement is significant, indicating that ethical leadership serves as a good mediator for religiosity in job engagement. Religiosity has a lower direct influence on job engagement compared to conscientiousness but a higher influence compared to ethical behavior. This suggests that religiosity plays a significant role in enhancing job engagement. However, religiosity is not deeply embedded in ethical behavior as a value system. Religiosity is more connected to religious affiliation, worship practices, and beliefs about God. It can be exclusive and potentially lead to conflicts and wars in the name of religion and God. Religiosity, according to Huber & Huber (2012), refers to an individual's thoughts and beliefs that influence their experiences and behavior in everyday life. In the context of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, it is important for employees to understand and adhere to the ethical code outlined in the Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2019.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and hypothesis testing, the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) The major hypothesis, which is the influence of ethical behavior, conscientiousness, and religiosity on job engagement with ethical leadership as a mediator, is not a good fit. (2) The minor hypothesis, which is the direct and indirect influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables with ethical leadership as a mediator, is accepted. (3) Conscientiousness has a direct influence on ethical behavior and correlates with religiosity. (4) Exogenous variables and the mediator together have a significant impact on the endogenous variable. (5) Ethical behavior has the weakest contribution to job engagement. Based on these conclusions, the researchers make the following recommendations: (1) The sample should be representative of the population to support model testing. (2) Effective ethical leadership as a mediator enhances the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, which should be considered in leadership selection. (3) Conscientiousness is the most dominant exogenous variable and should be considered in employee selection and promotion. (4) Exogenous variables and the mediator should be maintained at a high level through training to sustain their contribution to job engagement. (5) Ethical behavior has the weakest contribution to job engagement and should be improved through employee code of conduct socialization and training. (6) Future researchers are encouraged to develop other research variables targeting other civil servant populations, improve sample representativeness, and address the weaknesses of Google Forms.

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