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Ethical Leadership and Work Engagement, Job-related Affective Well-being in the COVID-19: The Role of Organizational Trust

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ABSTRACT

Based on Social Learning Theory (SLT), followers reciprocate the behaviours of their leaders and followers imitate the behaviours of their leaders and try to do the same. Following the tenet, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of ethical leadership on organizational trust, work engagement, and job-related affective wellbeing in the COVID-19 context. Data was collected from the nursing staff of three big Pakistani cities hospitals i.e., Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad (as these cities represent the entire population). Out of 700, 376 survey questionnaires were finalized for data analysis. The results revealed that ethical leadership is positively associated with organizational trust, work engagement, and job-related affective wellbeing. Moreover, results revealed that organizational trust is positively associated with work engagement and Job-related effective wellbeing. The hierarchical regression for mediation showed that organizational trust mediates between ethical leadership and (work engagement, Job-related affective wellbeing).

Keywords: Ethical Leadership; Organizational trust; Social learning theory; Nursing staff; Pakistani health sector.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has evolved organizations to think about work engagement and the well-being of their employees across the globe (Kamal *et al.*, 2022; Mehta, 2021). COVID-19 was a severe public disaster that took the lives of 5.5 million people worldwide, and there are 318 million confirmed cases until now (WHO, 2022). Not even people but organizations are also becoming the victim of this life-taking disease as it has badly affected organizational performance (Yunus *et al.*, 2021; Eluwole *et al.*, 2022; Irfan & Islam, 2021). Employees are pillars of every organization and organizational performance is based on its employee's efforts (Dust *et al.*, 2018). In the health care sector, employees i.e., nursing staff play a vital role in the improvement of the service quality (Irfan & Islam, 2021; Islam & Irfan, 2020). COVID-19 cases are increasing daily which has increased the workload and mental stress for the nursing staff as they have to work double shifts due to the shortage of nurses across the

globe (Kamal *et al.*, 2022; Yunus *et al.*, 2021; Lucchini *et al.*, 2020). Studies reveal that due to coronavirus approximately 37 % of the nurses have been a victim of anxiety, 35% of depression, and 26% of stress (Al Maqbali *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, the fear of death and salary delays are stressing the employees, due to which they are losing their focus on their work, ultimately enhancing the need for work engagement (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Employee engagement is a workplace behavior that ensures employees excellent performance in the daily tasks, and commitment towards their organizational goals and values. Because of rising, covid cases health care professionals are getting stressed and as a result, they are losing their work engagement as they have an overwhelming workload and shortage of the staff (Lai *et al.*, 2020). The other factors which are leading the nursing staff towards stress and anxiety could be being young and inexperienced females working as front-line

workers in the pandemic COVID-19 situation (Lai *et al.*, 2020; Kisely *et al.*, 2020). In addition, front-line workers are worried about their loved ones, Therefore, frequent deaths and illness of their loved ones are negatively impacting their mental health (Islam & Irfan, 2020).

Considering the tempting COVID-19 scenario, it is the responsibility of organizations to look after their employees' well-being and engage them properly at the workplace (Mehta, 2021; Yunus *et al.*, 2021). Employees that are engaged properly can lead a failing organization toward success (Khan *et al.*, 2020). In this case, organizations require leaders to play a role in engaging the workplace environment that is beneficial for organizational prosperity. Ethical leaders are considered to be building a positive work environment at the workplace as it transforms positive attitudes and behaviors among employees (Dust *et al.*, 2018). Ethical leaders are considered to be demonstrators of appropriate workplace behaviors through their conduct, communication, and managerial practices (Brown *et al.*, 2005: 20). Studies reveal that ethical leaders not only create a positive work environment for their employees but also boost their performances (Dust *et al.*, 2018). Social Learning Theory (SLT) also support the above discussion by stating that followers reciprocate the behaviors of their leaders and followers imitate the behaviors of their leaders and try to do the same (Blau, 1964; Bandura, 1977). Therefore, when employees i.e., nursing staff observes that their leaders are caring towards them as they are worried about their employees' wellbeing. In return they will also engage properly at the workplace and will deliver their best possible performance in the workplace, leading the organization towards success. Similarly, employees observe and imitate the behaviors of their leaders. Therefore, when employees observe positive work engagement of their employees and have a positive attitude at the workplace. They try to do the same at the workplace.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Ethical Leadership and Organizational Trust

Organizational trust is a psychological state that entails positive attitudes towards the intentions and behaviors of other individuals in an organization. It inspires strength and satisfaction among the employees, helps to cope with undesirable conflicts, and enhances problem-solving (Olander *et al.*, 2016). Organizational trust is classified into different components; individual

psychological state, perceived experiences, positive expectation, confidence, and intention to actively undertake risks in an organization as well as an organizational trust which changes with overall situations (Anderson *et al.*, 2012). Trust in the organization can persuade positive attitudes and cooperative behaviors among the individuals (Hansen *et al.*, 2011). If employees have trust in their organization, they join more constructive behaviors and exert efforts to support their organization to meet organizational success (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Parallel findings have been discussed that organizational trust can decrease turnover tendency, and improves effective communication, innovative behaviors, job satisfaction, motivation, and work performance among employees (Rahayuningsih, 2019).

Social learning theory (SLT) well illustrates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee trust (Yu *et al.*, 2018). The theory affirms, that employees' trust in an organization fosters goal-oriented efforts, hard work, and enthusiasm of employees for the organization as they observe and imitate the behavior of their leaders (Bandura, 1977). In addition to that, due to organizational trust, the employees feel safer in the organization and are willing to take risks (Ustun & Kilic, 2017). Perception about the organization predicts employees' innovative behaviors, they exhibit concern to share new, creative ideas and knowledge with their colleagues for the benefit of their organization (Demir, 2021).

Ethical leaders are observed with numerous moral values; trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, fairness, and thoughtful in employing principled standards (Yukl *et al.*, 2013). In an organization, leadership with desired values and morality contributes an important role in defining fair and ethical conduct of employees (Halbusi *et al.*, 2021). This is because employees under ethical leaders' supervision acquire a sense of significance in their work (Abuzaid, 2018).

Previous findings endorse the impact of ethical leadership on organizational trust, the results of various studies define that ethical leadership has a positive and significant impact on organizational trust. In link with this, Johnson *et al.* (2012) elaborate that perceived ethical leadership is positively related to the overall trust level of employees in an organization, those employees who believe they are working under the supervision of ethical and moral leadership, show strong identification

with their employers, rate their organization more proficient, open, concerned for employees, and reliable. A similar study led by Güçel *et al.*, (2012) maintains that perceived fair treatment of employees leads to greater trust in the leaders and direct supervisors. Furthermore, it explains that organizational trust increases job satisfaction and the performance of individuals.

Above all Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) narrates that, ethical leadership motivates individuals to learn and imitate the positive organizational attitudes and behaviors by providing them a role model of values, trust, care, and treating others fairly. As a result of that learning, the employees show up organizational trust and exercise behaviors in the favor of the organization.

Based on previous literature, we can make the prediction:

H1: Ethical leadership has a positive impact on Organizational Trust

Ethical Leadership, Employee Well-being, and Work Engagement

The well-being of the employees is a thought, perception, positive and negative emotions related to work satisfaction and psychological experience at work (Zheng *et al.*, 2015). Well-being is presented in different components, high self-acceptance, strong personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989). If an employee's well-being is affected, the employees have negative experiences and emotions related to their work, poor self-esteem, and depressive and anxiety symptoms like sadness, nervousness, and irritability (Guillaume, 2018). Literature on ethical leadership highlights the contribution of ethical supervision to employees' well-being. Researchers demonstrate that ethical leadership and the psychological well-being of employees are positively linked with each other (Yousaf *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the results propose that organizations should produce an environment of positive verbal communication that will enhance their well-being and makes them satisfied with their jobs. Ethical leaders show concern about the well-being of their subordinates and if the leaders perform according to the ethical conduct, it enhances the well-being of the employees (Brown *et al.*, 2005) and the psychological well-being enables the individual to improve their work performance and engage themselves more in organizational tasks (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

Sarwar *et al.* (2020) also expresses the impact of ethical leadership on the state of well-being of the individuals in an organization. Similar findings by Yang, (2014) elaborate ethical leadership influences work performance as well as the well-being of the nurses. As the leaders observe the fair code of conduct, listen to the concerns, and try to find the solutions to their concerns, it strengthens the attitudes of satisfaction in the nurses and their wellbeing would be increased. Having a higher level of well-being enhances the work engagement of the employees in the organization (Kaffashpoo & Sadeghian, 2020).

Employee's work engagement is a positive and satisfactory state of mind which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Employees with vigor characteristics have elevated energy, patience, and an accommodating mind while working. The dedication includes a sense of significance, pride, inspiration, and challenge. Absorption includes the characteristics of being fully focused and happily engaged in work. Work engagement is a characteristic of the employees that enable them to show commitment and take extra trouble for their work and enjoy working (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Ethical leadership has a positive influence on employees' work engagement. While ethical leaders focus on delivering social assistance, continuous response on performances, sovereignty, and learning opportunities, it boosts the internal motivation of the individuals which directly influences the work engagement of the employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Moreover, an ethical attitude of the leaders influences the employee's experience regarding their work satisfaction that impacts the well-being of the individuals, which will affect their involvement in the work (Benevene, 2018).

Ethical leadership combines both transformational and transactional leadership styles to impact the standardized organizational processes, task-based evaluations, rewards, penalties, and overall institutional rules and principles (Trevino *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, the overall perception and the valuable ethical leadership's conduct stimulate employees' well-being, and they prefer to engage themselves in work with more responsibility, expertise, inspiration, and freedom to work (Hartog & Belschak, 2012).

Based on the finding of previous studies, we can make the prediction:

H2: Ethical leadership is positively related to employee's wellbeing.

H3: Ethical leadership is positively related to employee work engagement

Organizational Trust, Well-being, and Work Engagement

Organizational trust is an emotional response the employees show towards their supervisors. This response develops through a conscious, psychological process, and is based on managers initiating organizational trust among employees (Asif *et al.*, 2020). Social learning theory elaborates that the employee imitates the behavior of their leader, therefore, when they see the work engagement and trust of their leaders towards their organization, they try to do the same and mold their behavior as per the requirement of the organization (Dust *et al.*, 2018). The justice and fair treatment and confidence from supervisors, the employee inspires more trust in the organization. Because of this, employees hold optimistic thoughts and take part in activities that are useful to the organization (Beugre, 1998).

In the efficient practice of human resource management, an extensive interest is put on the organizational trust of managers as well as the employees. As organizational trust substantially induces interaction among the employees, it impacts the overall performance, success, and well-being of the employees (Alfes *et al.*, 2012). The literature analysis uncovered, organizational practices and principles create organizational trust among employees, which has a significant relationship with the well-being of the employees, and employee well-being is directly or indirectly related to organizational trust (Jaškevičiūtė *et al.*, 2021).

Another study carried out by Ullah *et al.*, (2019) unveiled that greater trust between leaders and employees leads to improved employee well-being. However, diminished interpersonal trust results decline in employees' well-being. Organizational trust is a basic feature of strong employer-employee relationships which is associated with employee well-being. This strong relationship between employees and employers can be affected when employees consider that an employer neglects to disclose data and avoids safeguarding security. Likewise, when the employee does not trust the organization it reduces the degree of commitment, confidence in the job, and poor psychological well-being (Richter & Näswall, 2019). Furthermore, Anand *et al.* (2012) discussed that, in those institutions where employees trust their

executives, employee well-being level is higher in contrast to workers who do not show trust in their managers.

Keyko *et al.* (2016) stated that work engagement is interpreted as an optimistic and satisfactory psychological state related to work in the organization. Several factors like; ethical leadership, empowerment, job demands, workload, interpersonal and social relations, personal and professional resources, and various others contribute to attaining this state of mind. Organizational trust is a vital aspect that can engage the employees in greater work-related efforts in any setting. A supporting study led in a school setting organization revealed that trust the teachers establish with the management can support them to work more efficiently and develop the feelings and perception to engage themselves in organizational goals (Gülbahar, 2017). An environment of trust in an organization leads to wide-ranging advantages for the organization and its employees. Trust in organization results directly or indirectly in more positive workplace behaviors and attitudes like organizational commitment and employee work engagement (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

So, we can make a prediction:

H4: Organizational Trust positively relates to employee's well being

H5: Organizational Trust positively relates to employee work engagement

Organizational Trust as a Mediator

Consistent with the above-cited literature, organizational trust is likely to mediate between ethical leadership and the well-being of the employees and mediates between ethical leadership and work engagement. Even though, no direct research has linked the role of organizational trust between ethical leadership, wellbeing, and work engagement of the employees. The study conducted by Chughtai *et al.* (2015) resulted that trust in supervisors fully mediates the effects of ethical leadership on the wellbeing and work engagement of the subordinates. According to Karapinar *et al.* (2016) organizational trust mediates the link between work-life and emotional exhaustion. Work-life includes components like employee's workload, fairness, reward, and values induced by the authorities which are the main aspects of ethical leadership.

Nembhard & Edmondson (2006) also acknowledged

that the approaches and attitudes of the leaders add to the feeling of psychological well-being of the workers. Moreover, psychological wellbeing partially mediates the link between ethical leadership and work engagement. These findings instigate the value of ethical leadership in corporations by explaining that employees' psychological state of well-being makes them more enthusiastic about their work (Chughtai *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, the review literature elaborates that trust in leadership moderately mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment (Yanik, 2018). Organizational commitment and work engagement have a strong positive association, organizational

commitment gives rise to work engagement among the employees, as they feel responsible for official obligations and engage themselves with the work (Trofimova *et al.*, 2017). The perspective of social learning theory also supports employees' observance of the leaders' actions and behaviours and trying to imitate sets up trust in the organization and leadership, which modify job attitudes (Ozyilmaz *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, we can make a prediction that:

H6: Organizational Trust mediates the relation between ethical leadership and wellbeing

H7: Organizational Trust mediates the relation between ethical leadership and work engagement

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Theoretical Framework drawn by the literature review.

METHODS

Data was collected from the nursing staff of three big Pakistani cities hospitals i.e., Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad (as these cities represent the entire population). 700 questionnaires were distributed on the criteria of 1:20 items to response ratio as suggested by relevant studies i.e., 35*70= 700 (Islam & Tariq, 2018). In addition, data was gathered in a cross-sectional timeframe (between September 2021 to January 2022). We collected the data from Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi Public and private Hospitals (i.e., Sheikh Zaid Hospital, Ganga Ram Hospital and Ittefaq Hospital, Al-Shifa Hospital, CMH Hospital, Aga Khan Hospital, Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, and Liaquat National Hospital). We received a total of 390 questionnaires of which 200 were from Lahore 100 questionnaires were from Islamabad and 90 questionnaires were from Karachi's selected hospitals, which is a 55 % acceptable response rate (Ruane, 2005). The Majority of responses were received from female employees (i.e., 62%) with an age between 25-30 (27%),

having an M.Phil. degree (45%) and a minimum of 5 years' experience (35%), hence understanding the importance of their work and research.

Measures

Data were collected on a 5- and 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1-Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree and for JAWS (1- Never to 6- all the time).

Ethical Leadership

We used a 10-item scale of ethical leadership suggested by Brown *et al.* (2005). Recent studies have validated the scale (Eluwole *et al.*, 2022; Suifan *et al.*, 2020). The Cronbach value (0.82) passed the criteria of Nunnally's (1978) suggested value i.e., 0.70. A sample item included "My Leader Discusses business ethics or values with employees"

Organizational Trust

We used a 7-items scale for measuring organizational

trust as suggested by Robinson and Rousseau (1994). In addition, it contained three adverse worded questions. A sample item was “I believe my employer has high integrity”. The respondents recorded their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree. Cronbach’s coefficient value of 0.83, passed the criteria suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Work Engagement

We used Schaufeli *et al.*'s (2002) 6- items dedication scale for measuring work engagement. A sample item was “To me, my job is challenging.”. The respondents recorded their responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree. Cronbach’s coefficient value of 0.74, passed the criteria suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Job-related Affective Well-being

We used a 12-items scale for measuring Job-related affective well-being as suggested by Warr (1990). In

addition, it contained three adverse worded questions. Participants were asked to record their response on a 6- point Likert scale ranging from (1- Never to 6- all the time) on the question that for how long in the past few weeks they have felt the feelings listed below. Cronbach’s coefficient value of 0.79, passed the criteria suggested by Nunnally (1978).

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis was performed on the data, which helped us to identify those 10 questionnaires out of 390 had missing values, we followed the replacing missing value with mean value procedure suggested by (Irfan & Islam, 2021). Moreover, we found by using the stem-and-leaf method that 4 questionnaires had outliers, Therefore, four more questionnaires were dropped (Islam & Tariq, 2018). Finally, 376 were evaluated for normal distribution, and the values of skewness and kurtosis lay in the acceptable range (Bryne, 2010).

Table 1. Descriptive and Correlation Analysis.

SR	Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD	α
1	Ethical Leadership	1				3.71	0.43	0.82
2	Organizational Trust	0.56**	1			3.64	0.69	0.83
3	Work Engagement	0.62**	0.64**	1		3.52	0.65	0.74
4	Job-related affective well-being	0.58**	0.53**	0.63**	1	3.67	0.54	0.79

Note: ** P < 0.01, N = 376

Source: Table is drawn from the data.

Table 1 above shows the descriptive and correlation analytics. The tables reveal that (M= 3.71) Respondents agreed about their immediate supervisor’s ethical behavior. In addition, respondents agreed on their perception of organizational trust (M= 3.64). Similarly, respondents agreed on their perception of work engagement (M= 3.56) and Job-related affective well-being (M= 3.67). Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha values were found greater than Nunnally’s (1978) suggested value. The correlation values between Ethical leadership and Organizational trust (r = 0.56, p < 0.01), work engagement (r = 0.62, p < 0.01) and job-related affective well (r = 0.58, p < 0.01) revealed positive association among them. In the same way, there was found positive

associations between organizational trust and work engagement (r = 0.64, p < 0.01) and organizational trust and job-related affective wellbeing (r = 0.53, p < 0.01).

Hypotheses Results

We used regression through SPSS 27 version to examine the hypotheses of the study. It was noted that ethical leadership positively associated with organizational trust (β = 0.58, P < 0.01), work engagement (β = 0.47, P < 0.01) and job-related affective wellbeing (β = 0.36, P < 0.01). Moreover, results revealed that organizational trust positively associated with work engagement (β = 0.61, P < 0.01) and Job-related affective wellbeing (β = 0.54, P < 0.01). Hence all five hypotheses were supported.

Table 2. Hypotheses testing through regression.

Associations	β Value	SE	p-value
EL→OT	0.58	0.035	0.00
EL→WE	0.47	0.054	0.00
EL→JRAW	0.36	0.056	0.00
OT→WE	0.61	0.037	0.00
OT→JRAW	0.54	0.048	0.00

Note: “EL = ethical leadership, OT = Organizational trust, WE = Work engagement, JRAW = Job-related affective wellbeing”

Source: Table is drawn from the data.

Table 3. displaying Hierarchical Regression for Mediation.

Variables	Work Engagement			Job-related Affective wellbeing		
	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)
Control variables						
Gender	-0.12	-0.07	-0.14	-0.16	-0.13	-0.17
Age	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04	0.03	0.05	0.04
Qualification	0.16**	0.07	0.08	0.12*	0.11	0.07
Work-Experience	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.03	-0.00	0.04
Independent Variable						
Ethical Leadership		0.42**	0.36**		0.43**	0.52**
Mediating Variable						
Organizational Trust			0.56**			0.57**
R ²	0.01	0.33	0.46	0.05	0.26	0.32
Δ R ²	--	--	0.31	0.09	0.31	0.09

Source: Table is drawn from the data.

Table 3 displays the Hierarchical Regression for Mediation for the mediating role of organizational trust between ethical leadership and (work engagement, Job-related affective wellbeing). Further, by regressing psychological empowerment with work engagement, the value of ethical leadership (in the third step) remained significant (which signifies partial mediation). For job-related affective wellbeing, the value of ethical leadership (in the third step) becomes insignificant (which signifies full mediation). Therefore, the results of the sixth and seventh hypotheses of the study are supported.

DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal that ethical leaders help their followers to positive workplace environment at the workplace as they tend to understand the importance of their work. The study findings suggest that ethical leaders develop a positive environment for the workers,

as a result, it helps employees to fully engage in their work, ultimately reducing workplace stresses. In addition, the study helps us to understand the mediating role of organizational trust between ethical leadership and job-related outcomes. The findings reveal that ethical leaders develop organizational trust in their subordinates and as a result, they get highly engaged in their work and which reduces their mental stress and positively influences their job-related effective wellbeing. The results of the current study are aligned with some of the previous studies stating that ethical leaders build a positive work environment for their employees and as a result, there is the development of positive job-related outcomes among employees (Eluwole *et al.*, 2022; Irfan & Islam, 2021). People demand more ethical practitioners and caring people in the organization (Brown *et al.*, 2005).

The present study presents a testable framework linking ethical leadership with work engagement and job-

related affective wellbeing through the mediation of organizational trust. The study reveals the positive influence of ethical leadership and organizational trust on employee wellbeing and works engagement. Therefore, the applicability of the current framework in the health sector might bring several positive changes in the performance and well-being of the nursing staff. Moreover, it can improve the overall service quality of the Pakistani health sector which might enhance patients' satisfaction and their trust in the Pakistani health care system.

Theoretical Implication

The current study contributes to the existing literature of ethical leadership in numerous ways. First, the findings exemplify the motivational effect of ethical leadership (EL) on employee job-related outcomes, i.e., Organizational trust, work engagement and job-related affective wellbeing. Through heightened effect of organizational trust, ethical leaders inspire employees to perform their core responsibilities and work engagement successfully.

Second, the findings contribute to the social learning theory by indicating the importance of psychological resources that help employees understand the ethical leader's indications and narratives (Brown et al., 2005; Bandura, 1977; Davis & Luthans, 1980). The current study extends the literature by highlighting the mediating role of organizational trust between ethical leadership and job-related outcomes.

Practical Implication

First, Human Resource (HR) department should carefully select the candidate for the leadership positions by assessing the candidates' ethicality. The selection procedures must be based on the ethical context (Schaubroeck et al., 2012). Second, Pakistan is among the developing countries facing socioeconomic issues, i.e., poor health sector, low GDP, poverty, and energy shortage. Therefore, ethical leadership could resolve the quality issues of the health sector. Most ethical leadership research are done in developed countries. This study attempts to discuss the quality issues of the health sector in developing countries such as Pakistan. The study's findings are the hospital management guidelines to improve nursing staff performance by implementing ethical leadership. Third, the study findings suggested refining nursing staff behaviors to

improve their performances, especially in the Pakistani hospital context. In Pakistan, Hospitals are reflected as an essential driver for ethical conduct through which ethical leaders could enhance employees' job-related outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary focus of the study was to fill theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature. Though there were numerous boundaries of the study that needs to be addressed as guidance for future research. There is likelihood that some further aspects might impact the dependent variables of the study. There may also be some other mediators that might influence the relationships of the current study. Further research could include various other mediators and dependent variables.

We have used cross-sectional data in the current study as the data is collected at one point time. In addition, direct assessment of causality is difficult in cross-sectional data, which might be done easily through longitudinal data. The cultural and social characteristics precise to Pakistan were not discussed in the study that can be addressed further. Further research could be done in longitudinal time frame to assess the changing attitudes and behaviors of employees over time.

The data collection was made from the public, and private hospitals of big cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, and these areas do not represent the population of the rural regions. The culture of rural and regions is very different from each other, so they need to look at hospitals in rural areas of underdeveloped countries such as Pakistan. Further data could be collected from rural areas of Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Based on SET and SLT, literature shows that followers reciprocate the behaviors of their leaders and followers imitate the behaviors of their leaders and try to do the same. Following the tenet, it is found that ethical leadership significantly influences organizational trust, work engagement, and job-related affective wellbeing. Moreover, results also revealed that organizational trust is positively associated with work engagement and Job-related affective wellbeing. The hierarchical regression for mediation showed that organizational trust mediates between ethical leadership and (work engagement, Job-related affective wellbeing). Therefore, our study suggests that to improve the health quality there is a dire need for ethical leadership in Pakistani hospitals.

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