The impact of ethical leadership on employees' innovative behavior: The mediating role of organizational commitment

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to explore the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative behavior. The study relied on the analytical-descriptive approach through a review of the theoretical subjects related to previous studies and the analytical-practical aspect through preparing a questionnaire and distributing it to the targeted population of the study, while relying on the SPSS and Amos programs to test the hypotheses of the study and achieve its objectives. The results showed that there was an impact for ethical leadership on the employees' innovative behavior and the organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and the employee's innovative behavior.

1. Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, innovation has emerged as a crucial factor for organizational success and sustainability (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Armstrong, 2000). Innovative behavior among employees is necessary to keep pace with changing trends and market demands and forms the basis for organizational innovation (Hau & Kang, 2016; Liu, 2017; Al-Bashayreh et al.,2022). Innovative behavior among employees is characterized by several dimensions, including originality, flexibility, idea fluency and problem sensitivity. As employees usually work in teams, innovation is widely used in the service industry since team members share customer knowledge and design the service market (Cheung & Wong, 2011). Therefore, organizations increasingly recognize the importance of promoting innovative behavior at work to improve service/product quality and overall performance (Luoh et al., 2014). The importance of encouraging individual innovation for businesses is essential to staying competitive and prospering. As such, companies are always looking for ways to encourage their staff to be creative and come up with original ideas (Gu et al., 2015). Therefore, many studies have investigated the dynamics of employee creativity, in particular, to identify the factors that promote or limit innovation in their organizations (Chaubey & Sahoo, 2022; Zhou & Shalley, 2008). Among the factors that influence employees' innovative behavior and organizational innovation is leadership. According to Prasad and Junni (2016), leadership is a major force behind organizational innovation, whereby leaders can influence their employees by motivating them to be creative and by providing resources for them to use to work on their ideas. In particular, ethical leadership is characterized by several dimensions, including fairness, power sharing, people orientation and integrity (Kalshoven et al., 2011) and has been identified as an important factor for fostering creativity in organizations (Liu et al., 2021). Ethical leaders provide direction and guidance to teams, recognize employees' potential and build commitment to organizational vision and collective goals (Metwally et al., 2019). According to the existing literature, ethical leadership encourages people to be innovative (Dhar, 2016; Javed et al., 2018) and it is important to understand how leaders may foster employee innovation through ethical practices as well as the

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effects of ethical leadership style on organizational outcomes given the growing concerns about corporate ethics (Tu et al., 2019). Therefore, the current study aims to investigate how ethical leadership affects employee innovation.

Kim and Vandenberghe (2021) pointed out, however, that ethical leadership may have varying impacts depending on the context in which it is applied. In essence, ethical leadership is rooted in a social relationship with the organization (Loi et al., 2015), meaning that organizational commitment may serve as a situational mediator. Organizational commitment has been identified as another crucial construct facilitating employees' innovative behavior by offering guidance, providing resources and creating an enabling environment (Hou et al., 2022; Çelik et al., 2015). Organizational commitment can mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative behavior by influencing employees' affective, normative and continuance commitment. Ethical leadership can create a positive and supportive work environment that fosters employees' innovation by increasing their motivation, loyalty and engagement with the organization, promoting their identification with the organization and its values and reducing their fear of negative consequences for taking risks and being innovative (Bahadori et al., 2021). Feng et al. (2018) found that morality, supporting conduct and fostering work environments where employees receive adequate feedback and watch fair decision-making can stimulate employee innovation. By engaging in these behaviors, they become more committed and engaged in their company (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015), which results in an increase in innovation (Asif et al., 2019). Given the banking sector's significant share in the global economy, the impact of ethical leadership on employees' innovative behavior in this sector is crucial. However, prior research has primarily focused on Western countries, indicating a need for further research in non-Western settings (Abu-Salih et al., 2022; Lutfi et al., 2022; Alfarajat & Emeagwali, 2021). Furthermore, there has been a growing amount of research on the importance of innovative behavior at work (Kim & Lee, 2011; Liu & Huang, 2020; Strickland & Towler, 2011). Although research has investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and employee innovation (Javed et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2022), there is limited empirical evidence suggesting how organizational commitment mediates this relationship. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand the relationship between ethical leadership and innovation. In this study, we aim to address this gap in the literature by examining the impact of ethical leadership style on employee innovative a in Jordanian context. In addition, Eisenbeiss (2012) argued that Eastern cultures value ethical leadership differently than Western countries. Hence, organizational commitment was used as the mediating variable to investigate this relationship in Jordan. The current study investigates the impact of ethical leadership on bank employees' innovative behavior in Jordanian banks and how organizational commitment mediates this relationship. The study will provide empirical evidence to fill gaps in the literature and help to better understand bank employees' creative behavior in Jordan, as well as other non-western contexts. By exploring the influences of these two constructs, the findings of this study can provide guidelines and solutions that can help managers to promote and support creativity-friendly environments and foster innovative behavior among bank employees.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Ethical leadership

The behavior of ethical leaders is characterized by their moral beliefs, values, and visions, which are represented in their decision-making process, performance standards and the rewards or punishment that promote ethics in the organization. Communication between leaders and their employees is built on trust, openness, and sincerity regarding ethical norms. Ethical leaders display a people-oriented and loving attitude toward their employees. They also attempt to improve their followers' objective job features by enhancing job significance and autonomy (De Jong, Den Hartog, 2008). According to Brown et al. (2005), ethical leadership is demonstrated through proper behavior and interpersonal interactions, while promoting such behavior to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. Ethical leaders are objective and unbiased, demonstrate ethical conduct, consider people's wishes and defend their employees' rights equitably (Zhu, et al., 2004). Leaders' ability to influence their employees' mood, motivation, performance, and behavior underscores the importance of ethical behavior and clear communication in leadership (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Ethical leadership is also an essential component in developing an ethical organizational culture and environment (Brown & Trevino, 2006). The six common characteristics of ethical leaders include character and honesty, ethical awareness, focus on society and the ability to motivate, encourage, empower others and take ethical responsibility (Resick et al., 2006).

2.2 Organizational commitment

Mowday et al. (1979) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and participation in a specific organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) identified three organizational commitment dimensions: affective, continuance and normative commitment. An employee's emotional attachment to the organization is referred to as affective commitment. Continuance commitment relates to the perceived cost of quitting the organization, whereas normative commitment refers to an employee's sense of obligation to his organization. Employees who are more committed to their organization tend to be more satisfied, perform better and exhibit increased citizenship behavior, while their intention to leave decreases (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). To foster organizational commitment, it is important for employees to accept the values and aims of their organization, voluntarily try in the interests of the business and have a desire to stay with the organization. (Mowday et al., 1979; Naqvi et al., 2012). Furthermore, Buchanan (1974) stated that factors such as business identification, involvement and loyalty are crucial for organizational commitment. Mowday et al. (1979) developed an organizational commitment scale to measure attitudinal and behavioral aspects of commitment. The attitudinal perspective involves

employee identification with the values and aims of the organization, while the behavioral perspective relates to their approach toward problems in the organization and their continued tenure.

2.3 Employee Innovative behavior

Employee creative behavior refers to the capacity of employees to produce new and unique ideas in order to solve problems, achieve their tasks efficiently and enhance organizational performance (Al-Okaily & Al-Okaily, 2022; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Creativity entails thinking outside the box, pursuing risky strategies and confronting authority figures (Baucus et al., 2008). To create a supportive environment for organizational creativity, the organization must offer several factors, such as allocating time and resources, offering training opportunities to enhance competencies and problem-solving skills, establishing clear objectives and vision and developing a reward and recognition system to recognize employees who have exerted innovative efforts (Cheung & Wong, 2011). Creative employees provide a competitive advantage to organizations by creating added value and contributing extra effort in a vigorous work environment (Amabile, 1983; George, 2009). De Jong and Den Hartog (2007) identified three contextual elements acting as motivators for individual employee creativity and innovation in organizations: leadership, the work environment and organizational support.

2.4 Ethical leadership, organizational commitment and employees' innovative behavior relationships

Ethical leadership has the potential to not only influence individuals' perceptions of their work but also their beliefs and attitudes towards the work environment through their ethical leadership behavior and personal characteristics, leading to increased motivation and innovative behavior among their followers (Amabile, 1983; George, 2009). Research has shown that ethical leadership positively impacts the innovative behavior of employees; when employees perceive their leaders to be ethical, they are more likely to participate in innovative behavior (Cheng et al., 2014). This effect is even stronger when employees have a better relationship with their leaders (Javed, 2018). Ethical leaders can promote creativity among their subordinates through reinforcement and role modeling, according to Chen and Hou (2016) and Gu et al. (2015). Additionally, ethical leaders can encourage employee creativity by rewarding positive behaviors, assuring their participation in decision-making processes, demonstrating fairness and justice and making unbiased decisions (Al-Okaily et al., 2021; Al-Okaily et al., 2022; Al-Okaily et al., 2022; Amabile, 1983; Brown et al., 2005; Poff, 2010). Leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior can contribute significantly to enhancing organizational commitment among employees. According to Brown et al. (2005), leaders who exhibit high levels of morality can positively impact the commitment of their followers to a specific organization. When leaders display ethical conduct, it tends to increase the commitment of employees to the organization. Therefore, it is important for leaders to demonstrate ethical behavior and foster a positive organizational culture in order to enhance employee commitment. Organizational commitment plays a critical role in promoting employee innovation. Research shows that there is a positive association between innovative behavior and affective commitment, which refers to emotional attachment and identification with the organization and employee innovative behavior (Demirtas and Akdogan, 2015). Therefore, it is important for employers to focus on creating a positive work environment that fosters emotional attachment and loyalty among employees, thereby encouraging innovative behavior. According to Feng et al. (2018), ethical leadership is also a significant factor that enhances employee creativity. Ethical leaders always encourage their followers, which raises their level of morality and results in extra effort being exerted to accomplish organizational objectives with complete dedication. Feng et al. (2018) argue that creativity can be further enhanced if the leader exhibits morality, shows supportive behavior and builds an environment where employees can receive proper feedback, experience a leader's trustworthiness and justice and observe fair decision making. Such practices enable employees to be more committed to the organization (Demirtas and Akdogan, 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2014), leading to greater creativity (George, 2009). Many empirical studies have examined the relationship between ethical leadership and employee creative behavior thru various mediator variables, for example, employee voice behavior (Chen and Hou, 2016), psychological empowerment (Zhu et al., 2004; Javed et al., 2017; Qing, 2020), leader-member exchange and job autonomy (Dhar, 2016; Karabey and Aliogullari, 2018), trust in the leader (Javed et al., 2018), affective commitment and work engagement (Asif et al., 2019), individual employee characteristics such as work prosperity and attitudes towards work (Iqbal et al., 2020) and psychological capital (Hussain and NIU, 2019), intrinsic motivation (Feng et al., 2018 & Yidong, Xinxin, 2013; Tu & Lu, 2016), employee resilience and work engagement (Uppathampracha, 2022), Psychological Safety, Work Engagement and Openness to Experience (Liu et al., 2023). Based on the above, the hypotheses of this study were developed as follows:

H₁: *There is a significant impact of ethical leadership on employees' innovative behavior.*

H₂: *There is a significant impact of ethical leadership on organizational commitment.*

H₃: *There is a significant impact of organizational commitment on employees' innovative behavior.*

H₄: *Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative behavior.*

3. Study Methodology

The current study relied on the analytical-descriptive approach through a review of the theoretical subjects related to previous studies and the analytical-practical aspect by preparing a questionnaire and distributing it to the target population of the study while relying on the SPSS and Amos programs to test the hypotheses of the study and achieve its objectives.

3.1 The study population and sample

The study population consisted of all Jordanian banks listed on the Amman Stock Exchange, which equates to 16 banks with 21003 employees according to the statistics of the Association of Banks in Jordan (2023). After examining the retrieved questionnaires, 8 were deleted due to a lack of information, so that the randomly selected sample was 381 employees, which is a representative sample according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table; this was used to collect and analyze the data of the study and test its hypotheses.

3.2 Study Instrument

The study instrument consisted of two parts. The first part covered the demographic characteristics of the study sample (gender, age, job description and experience years). The second part covered the variables of the study, which were divided into three main variables: the independent variable is ethical leadership and included 12 items that were built based on previous studies, the dependent variable is innovative behavior, including 12 items, while the mediating variable is organizational commitment and included 16 items. To measure the variables of the study, the five-point Likert scale was relied upon (strongly agree, agree, moderate degree, disagree, strongly disagree) and expresses the following values (5, 4, 3, 2, 1), respectively.

3.3 Statistical Methods

The study relied on appropriate statistical methods so that the validity and reliability of the study instrument were evaluated, and the measurement model was verified. The study also relied on one Kolmogorov-Smirnov sample to test the normality of distribution of the study items and statistical frequencies to identify the demographic characteristics of the study sample. One sample T-test was used to determine the differences of the mean and standard deviation of the study sample from the test value (3) according to a Likert scale and finally path method analysis to test the study hypotheses.

3.4 Measurements Model

The measurements model was evaluated by the stability of the study's instrument, convergent and discriminant validity and the stability of the questionnaire's items in order to achieve a sufficient degree of internal reliability that the study instruments seek by following several methods, including factor loading to measure the validity of the instrument items and a structural matrix that includes Pearson correlations between the instrument items. Hair et al. (2014) believed that the load coefficient should be greater than 0.50 and the P-value for the load coefficients for each item should be less than 0.05. Convergent validity refers to the extent to which items that measure a perspective or variable converge or can be loaded together on one perspective or variable; this is measured by means of the average variance extracted (AVE), the value of which must be more than 0.50 for each perspective or variable being measured. As for the composite construct reliability (CCR) and the Cronbach alpha coefficient, they were relied upon to measure the reliability of the study's instrument, which is statistically acceptable if it is increased by 0.70 according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Table 1 shows the coefficients of loading factor, convergent validity, composite construct reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the model of the study.

It is clear from Table 1 that all of the values of the loading factors are greater than 0.50, which indicates a high validity of the instrument items. The results of the statistical analysis, which are presented in Table 1, showed that all (AVE) values were greater than 0.50, which indicates high convergent validity for all study perspectives. In order to determine the reliability of the study's instrument, the results of the statistical analysis, which are shown in Table 1, showed that all (CR) values were greater than 0.70. Also, to reinforce the previous result, the values of Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.91, 0.92 and 0.93, respectively. This indicates that the reliability is statistically acceptable and more than the estimated acceptable value of 0.70, which indicates that the instrument has a high degree of reliability that meets the purposes of the current study. Referring to the indicators of the measurement model based on the factor analysis of the study model, the value of the relative chi-square was less than 5 and reached 2.75, which is an indication of a good fit for the model; the values of the fit quality of the model were: the goodness of fit index (GFI) by 0.921, the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) by 0.901, the normed fit index (NFI) by 0.973, the comparative fit index (CFI) by 0.963 and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) by 0.951; all previous indicators show a high fitness model, which exceeded the accepted statistical value of 0.90. The root mean square error of approximation (Rmsea) was 0.044 and the root mean square of average residuals (RMR) was 0.038, which are important indicators for the fit quality of the model; both are less than the accepted statistical value of 0.08. It was shown from Table 1 that the values of the factor analysis indicate a good fit to the model within the indicators of fitness quality that are statistically acceptable.

Table 1
Measurement model - validity and reliability

Perspectives	Items	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Ethical Leadership	EL1	0.85	0.74	0.83	0.91
	EL2	0.81			
	EL3	0.79			
	EL4	0.88			
	EL5	0.87			
	EL6	0.85			
	EL7	0.78			
	EL8	0.89			
	EL9	0.91			
	EL10	0.75			
	EL11	0.84			
	EL12	0.89			
Organizational Commitment	OC1	0.75	0.69	0.85	0.92
	OC2	0.77			
	OC3	0.81			
	OC4	0.80			
	OC5	0.84			
	OC6	0.86			
	OC7	0.79			
	OC8	0.78			
	OC9	0.77			
	OC10	0.77			
	OC11	0.82			
	OC12	0.78			
	OC13	0.86			
	OC14	0.86			
	OC15	0.88			
	OC16	0.81			
Innovative Behavior	IB1	0.91	0.71	0.89	0.93
	IB2	0.89			
	IB3	0.84			
	IB4	0.88			
	IB5	0.89			
	IB6	0.84			
	IB7	0.91			
	IB8	0.90			
	IB9	0.87			
	IB10	0.89			
	IB11	0.85			
	IB12	0.90			
Goodness of fit model	Chi-square /df=2.75, GFI = 0.921, AGFI = 0.901, NFI = 0.973, CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.044, RMR = 0.038				

Source: prepared by the researchers based on the statistical results.

3.5 Normal distribution of the Study Data

The study depended on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check whether the data followed a normal distribution. Table 2 shows these results.

Table 2
One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov-Test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient	Sig
Ethical Leadership	0.70	0.28
Organizational Commitment	0.78	0.23
Innovative Behavior	0.65	0.35

Source: prepared by the researchers based on the statistical results.

The value of the statistical significance of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for all variables was greater than the statistical significance level of 0.05, as shown in Table 2, which indicates that these variables follow a normal distribution. Also, according to the theory of central tendency, if the sample size is greater than 30 and has an arithmetic mean (μ) and a variance (σ), the sample data follows a normal distribution.

4. Data Analysis

This section deals with the statistical analysis of the study data, which included the following:

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

It was found that a large percentage of the study sample was male, at a rate of 77.5%, which is an indication that the majority of employees in Jordanian commercial banks are male. It became clear from the answers of the study sample that the majority of the study members were between 30 and less than 45 years old at a rate of 60%, which is an indicator that the employees of the Jordanian commercial banks are of the mature age group. Most of the sample members were holders of a bachelor's degree, at a rate of 77.5%. The experience of the study sample members was concentrated in more than 10 years and less than 15 years, at a rate of 33%, which constitutes a third of the study sample, followed by the group that has experience of more than 15 years, at a rate of 31%. By reviewing the demographic characteristics of the study sample, the researchers concluded that the study sample members have experience with and knowledge of the study variables, increasing the reliability of the data collected and enhancing the results of the study.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The study relied on a one-sample t-test to analyze the data related to the agreement level of the instrument items and it was applied to all variables of the study. The overall results were as follows.

Table 3
One-sample T-test- results of perspectives of the study

perspectives of the study	mean	Standard deviation	T	Sig
Ethical Leadership	3.56	0.89	5.69	0.000
Organizational Commitment	3.43	0.88	4.31	0.000
Innovative Behavior	3.93	0.71	11.69	0.000

Source: prepared by the researchers based on the statistical results.

Referring to Table 3, the mean of ethical leadership was 3.56, with a standard deviation of 0.89, the mean of organizational commitment of 4.43, with a standard deviation of 0.88 and the mean of innovative behavior of 3.93, with a standard deviation of 0.71. All perspectives were statistically significant (0.000) and an indicator of the existence of a statistically significant positive difference was considered for the average responses of the sample from the test value (3) according to the Likert scale. The overall mean of the answers of the study sample agreed for the items related to ethical leadership, organizational commitment and innovative behavior perspectives in Jordanian commercial banks.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The study relied on the path analysis method to test study hypotheses and reached the most important statistical results shown in Table 4 as follows.

Table 4
Path analysis of the structural model of the study

Path	Standardized Estimate Beta	Critical Ration CR	P- value	Hypothesis Result
Direct Effect				
Ethical Leadership → Employees' Innovative Behavior	0.473	7.74	0.000	Accept
Ethical Leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.566	6.063	0.000	Accept
Organizational Commitment → Employees' Innovative Behavior	0.660	7.753	0.000	Accept
Indirect Effect				
Ethical Leadership → Organizational Commitment → Employees' Innovative Behavior	0.374	6.45	0.000	Accept

Source: prepared by the researchers based on the statistical results.

Table 4 shows the different paths that link the study variables; the results of testing its hypotheses were as follows: the value of the direct path coefficient (standardized estimate beta) between ethical leadership and employees 'innovative behavior was 0.473, with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates the existence of a significant positive impact of ethical leadership on employees 'innovative behavior, which supports hypothesis H1. The value of the direct path coefficient (standardized estimate beta) between ethical leadership and organizational commitment was 0.566, with a significant value of 0.000. This indicates the existence of a significant positive impact of ethical leadership on organizational commitment, which supports hypothesis H2. The value of the direct path coefficient (standardized estimate beta) between organizational commitment and innovative behavior was 0.660, with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates the existence of a significant positive impact of organizational commitment on innovative behavior, which supports hypothesis H3.

The value of the indirect path coefficient (standardized estimate beta) between ethical leadership and innovative behavior by mediating organizational commitment was 0.374, with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates the existence of a significant positive impact for organizational commitment on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees'

innovative behavior. In this sense, organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative behavior, which supports the H4 hypothesis.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The study aimed to explore the impact of ethical leadership on the innovative behavior of employees. The study focused on ethical leadership since leadership is considered one of the factors which significantly affects the innovative behavior of the employee. The results concluded that there was an impact of ethical leadership on the employees' innovative behavior. This is consistent with Scott and Bruce (1994), with their model of the main factors affecting employee innovation. Their model showed that the most important factor affecting the individuals' ability for innovation is leadership. This result is also consistent with Brown and Trevino (2006) and Jin et al. (2022). Also, ethical leadership is one of the most important leadership styles, encouraging subordinates to show positive behaviors, including innovation. Through honest relations between the leaders and their subordinates, it creates an impression among the subordinates that their leaders are ethical in their decisions and support, which makes them feel their importance and value for their organizations, leading them to work hard towards innovative achievement for the success of their organizations (Ilyas et al., 2020; Wen et al., 2021). Other causes that lead to making ethical leadership among the most important factors affecting the increase in innovation among the subordinates is the attention of the ethical leaders in giving a sense of the role played by the employees and encouraging them to make decisions by themselves and think independently (Walumbwa et al., 2011; Den Hartog, 2015). Social exchange theory, which started in the early 1960s supports the existence of a positive relationship between ethical leadership and the employees' innovative behavior; it provides the basis for this relation (Blau, 1964). Brown and Trevino (2006) and Avey et al. (2011) stated that recognition of the social exchange relationship by the members of the organization increases through the ethical leader's balance between the decisions and integrity. Such conduct by leaders will lead to positive reciprocal behaviors by subordinates, most important of which is innovative behavior (Zahra et al., 2017). The study result is also consistent with Liden et al. (1997) who stated that the theory of social exchange suggested that the subordinates achieve their work better when they have a healthy relationship with their leaders. If ethical leaders present a meaning to the roles played by their subordinates and if they make the job of their subordinates more valuable, this will make the subordinates realize such good treatment, which will motivate them to find affective relations with their leaders and be more committed towards them (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015; Iqbal 2020). As a result, this will encourage them to be more innovative and accept change. Thus, ethical leadership improves the employees' positive behaviors including innovative behavior (Chen & Kanfer, 2006; Dhar, 2016; Brown & Mitchell, 2010).

The study also examined the impact of ethical leadership on organizational commitment. The results showed that ethical leadership positively affects the employees' organizational commitment. This was asserted by previous studies which showed that one of the benefits achieved by ethical leadership of the organization decreases the employees' desire to leave the job since ethical leadership contributes to spread equality, show loyalty and respect for others, improve personal relationships and encourage participation and make decisions under democracy. This significantly contributes to increasing the affective commitment among employees leading to their increased organizational commitment (Zhang et al., 2013; Neves & Story, 2015; Lin & Liu, 2017; Bavik et al., 2018). Furthermore, Bahadori et al. (2021) confirmed that if an organization wants to create commitment among its employees, it should adopt the strategies of ethical leadership. If the leaders behave with equality and fairness, this will make the employees believe that the organization's objectives and values are the same as theirs. On the other hand, the leaders' commitment to the ethical behaviors that appear in their attention to the employees' needs and interests will contribute to developing organizational commitment in the form of affective bias by the employees towards the organization's objectives and values. This is consistent with previous studies (Saeed et al., 2013; Hassan et al., 2014; Ismail & Yaakob, 2014; Khasawneh et al., 2016; Agha et al., 2017), who showed that there was a positive relation between ethical leadership and the employees' organizational commitment.

The study also examined the relationship between organizational commitment and the employees' innovative behavior. The results showed that organizational commitment had a positive impact on increasing the employees' inclination towards practicing innovative behavior. This can be explained by the fact that innovation requires a high degree of involvement and participation from employees but cannot be achieved without a high level of organizational commitment by the employees. Marrow (1993) argued that heading towards achievement and innovation with a high desire towards conducting improvements in performance is one of the characteristics of committed employees. This is asserted by many studies which reported that committed individuals show a high degree of a sense of belonging and loyalty to their organizations (Meyer and Allen, 1991). These characteristics encourage employees to stay at the organization, embrace its objectives and immerse themselves in the organization's activities, including continuous research and development to produce innovative ideas with the aim of improving the performance of their organizations (Amstrong, 2000; Nehmeh, 2009; Khan et al., 2010).

Among the objectives the study sought to achieve was making sure if the organizational commitment has an impact on the relationship between ethical leadership and the organizational commitment. The results of the study showed that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and the employee's innovative behavior. This might be attributed to the fact that ethical leadership leads to increasing civility at the workplace which means respect, politeness and taking care of others. Laschinger (2012) stated that the workplace where civility is found encourages

the appearance of positive behavioral outcomes, the most important of which is organizational commitment. Given that organizational commitment increases the engagement of employees, they will work harder and be more responsive to any challenges they might face at the job with a better level of energy. Such energy makes individuals more joined in emotions driving them towards doing roles that exceed the required roles and they will also think more creatively and achieve their objectives. Organizational commitment also makes the individuals more responsible and committed towards their jobs. This will eventually lead to increasing their participation in innovative behaviors, which might be beneficial to the organization. They are represented in linking their personal objectives with the objectives of the organization and striving to achieve the healthy development of the organization by taking risks as well as trial and error to reach to new ideas contributing to developing the performance of their organizations and increasing their ability to compete (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Rank et al., 2009; Wu, 2019; Wen et al., 2021; AL-Sous et al.,2023). Thus, we can conclude that ethical leadership indirectly supports the innovative behavior of employees through organizational commitment.

6. Managerial Implications

According to the results of the study, ethical leadership plays a major role in increasing the organizational commitment of employees; this makes employees work harder and become more responsive to the different challenges they face at work. They will also be involved in innovative behaviors that would improve the performance of their organizations. Accordingly, the organizations must look to ethical leadership as an attractive, trustworthy and legitimate model in which the leader practices appropriate and standard behavior. Through such a model, the leader can send an ethical message to his subordinates which could contribute to supporting the spread of ethical behaviors among employees. The managers' ethical values and behaviors significantly affect the organizational climate since leaders are represented as role models for their subordinates and also affect the employees' behavioral outcomes, most important of which is organizational commitment and innovative behavior. As a result, the organizations need to take concrete steps to support this kind of leadership behavior. Perhaps one of the most important steps that organizations take to enhance ethical leadership and contribute to the appearance of positive behavioral outcomes among the employees like organizational commitment and innovative behavior is focusing on HR practices and policies. In terms of the recruitment process, the management of any organization must focus on attracting individuals holding respectful behaviors and standards which can be spread at the workplace through decent treatment of their subordinates and giving them more independence at work, which leads to spreading an ethical, cultural atmosphere, the basis of the employees' ethical behavior. Also, the training processes can be one of the tools enhancing the appearance of an ethical leadership behavior at organizations. The training programs whose content focuses on the values and behaviors of the ethical leadership contributes in enhancing this type of values at the workplace. Such models of ethical leadership can be used where young leaders can be integrated with older leaders to develop ethical leaders. Other tools through which organizations can support the appearance of ethical leadership behaviors among its employees and leaders is making such behaviors some of the most important criteria in the performance appraisal process of employees and their career development. Furthermore, the leaders at the organizations must provide ethical proof by creating a consistency between what they say and what they do.

Among the crucial tools which organizations can use to enhance the application of ethical leadership by managers is making the ethical criteria part of the strategic plan by developing policies and practices that clarify or send a full image of the organization according to ethical criteria. To increase organizational commitment and innovative behavior, organizations can also use socialization tactics as one of the tools contributing to finding and preserving high levels of commitment, leading to more innovative behavior among employees.

Other tools used by organizations to increase organizational commitment is focusing on recruiting competencies and putting the right man in the right place. Activities and programs can be also used to develop personal relations and provide an appropriate social environment; this will contribute to an increase in employee organizational commitment, thus increasing their motivation towards working hard and practicing innovative behavior. Employees can also be encouraged to participate in the processes of making decisions and focusing on creating a competitive climate for stimulating innovative behaviors.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

The current study includes limitations based on which some suggestions for future studies can be presented. Such limitations are represented in the method of collecting data, which was the questionnaire, whose items were answered through self-evaluation. This leads to a bias in data, especially in the part related to the employees' innovative behavior. Thus, more accurate research design can be adopted in future studies to reach more accurate suggestions. Also, more than one source can be adopted to collect data, such as interviews or observations, through which qualitative data can be adopted to contribute to getting rid of the bias which resulted from using a single source. The study was conducted in only one sector, the banking sector, which limits the possibility of generalizing the results; thus, the same study can be conducted in other service sectors such as education, health and production. The data of the current study were collected in the Jordanian context, which is affected by the Jordanian culture, while there may be different perspectives on ethical leadership in other contexts. Accordingly, future studies should be conducted on ethical leadership in other countries so that the results of the current study can be confirmed. The current study aimed to examine the impact of organizational commitment on the relationship between ethical leadership and the employees' innovative behavior. Future studies can also include other antecedes in the theorized model. The current study also investigated organizational commitment as a mediating variable. In future studies, the mediating

impact of other variables such as person- job fit, person-organization fit, organizational climate, organizational support or leader-member exchange can be examined.

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