

The Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Quality of Work Life of Public University Employees with the Moderating Role of Professional Ethics

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the effect of managers' ethical leadership on the quality of work life of employees with the mediating role of professional ethics. The research method is correlation and based on structural equation modeling. The statistical population of this study includes all staff of the Islamic Azad University of Ardabil province with 443 people in the academic year 2018-2019. A sample of 205 people was selected based on the Krejcie-Morgan table and the relative classification method. Data collection tools include three questionnaires "Ethical Leadership of Kalashon et al, Quality of Work Life of Teachers Ilgan et al and Kadozir Professional Ethics" whose validity and reliability were assessed and were approved. The results showed that the ethical leadership of managers has a direct effect on the quality of work life of employees and in addition, the ethical leadership of managers through professional ethics has an indirect effect on the quality of work life of employees. According to the research findings and also the importance of quality of work life, it can be concluded that university administrators can greatly improve the quality of ethical leadership and professional ethics by providing the context of participatory programs, training and staff awareness, strengthening the working life of employees.

Key Word: Ethical Leadership, Quality of Work Life, Professional Ethics, University, Staff.

Introduction

Today, human resources in organizations play an effective role in development. Therefore, in the new approach of management science, contrary to the traditional view, much importance is given to employees and their role. The employees of an organization, as the main sources of development, should be considered and planned.

One of the main components that should be considered by managers of various organizations is the quality of work life of employees (Shahbazy; 2014). Quality of work life can be considered as the mental perceptions, perceptions and perceptions of employees of an organization of the physical and mental desirability of their work environment; Therefore, the quality

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of work life can help advance the goals of the organization by establishing a suitable environment for its human resources (Mirsepasi; 2018). Quality of work life is a kind of attitude of people towards their job; That is, the extent to which managers provide employees with mutual trust, attention, appreciation, rewarding work, and appropriate material and spiritual opportunities in the workplace. The quality of work life in an organization can be measured by various criteria such as satisfaction, low absenteeism and high employee motivation (Cole; Rabson; Lynda; McGuire; 2015). Research by Li and Yeo (2011) showed that the field of quality of work life not only affects the working life of employees but also their life outside the workplace such as family, leisure and social needs. When employees' needs are not met, they are likely to experience life pressures that may adversely affect their job performance outcomes. The university of any country is the cornerstone of the progress and development of that country in the fields of science, economy, culture, etc., and considering that the process of education and upbringing is aimed at human beings and the output of this organization is trained manpower, the university is among the organization are of particular importance. The most important leverage for the best fulfillment of this task and function, i.e. training efficient and worthy people, is human resources, which has a special place among other resources

and facilities, and the success of education and training depends on desirable and efficient human resources (Farahbakhsh; 2013). Staff as the main force influencing the quality of university performance, play a role and improve the quality of work life of staff will have a direct impact on their performance and the success of the university in achieving the goals of education and training (Yazdani; 2015). Therefore, examining the variable of quality of working life in the university, especially from the perspective of employees, can solve many problems of the educational system. According to the researchers, many factors can affect the quality of work life of employees, including the ethical leadership of managers.

Leadership is the most important factor in the survival and continuity of organizational success and plays a key role in the growth, development and progress of the organization. Leadership and management can be achieved not only with general and specialized awareness and acquisition of human, perceptual and technical skills, but also the practice of management is a category that has an ethical dimension for doing any work. Ethical managers can influence the ethical atmosphere of the organization by establishing ethical communication, playing a role model for employees and being serious about paying attention to ethics in the organization. Ethical leadership of managers can achieve consistent, fair and reliable tasks by modeling appropriate behavior for

employees, clarity of work tasks and security (Jabbari; Moradi; Kazemi; 2015). Ethical leadership displays appropriate, worthy and normal behavior in Personal actions and interpersonal relationships and encouraging and strengthening employees through reciprocal relationships to decision making (Men, 2015). An ethical leader is a person who does not seek to pursue his personal interests at the expense of the interests of others, but thinks of the interests of the group and also involves his employees in decision-making within the organization. Ethical leadership is also able to influence its employees at all levels through the modeling process (Ponnu; Tennakoon; 2009).

Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2012) have stated that the presence of ethical leaders in organizations is one of the needs that the organization can benefit from the field of cultivating committed and conscientious human resources and seeks to reduce human resources' behaviors outside the norm or acceptance of the organization. The existence of such leaders can pave the way for positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors, collaboration and knowledge sharing and thus appropriate behaviors. On the other hand, increasing the role of such leaders can reduce destructive behaviors such as absenteeism, avoidance of work, avoidance of work, and so on.

In moral leadership, the accepted values for all, such as justice, fairness, honesty, integrity, and righteousness, are the focus of

attention; Ethical leadership therefore provides the basis for employee commitment and loyalty, and when employees trust their leaders, work stress among them will be reduced and they will not make a serious decision to leave (Delvi and Ganjy; 2014).

Ethical leadership of managers has five components which are: fairness, individual orientation, ethical guidelines, power-sharing and role transparency (Kalshoven; Den Hartog; De Hoogh; 2011). Ethical leadership affects employees behaviorally and cognitively, so ethical leadership in organizations has a serious impact on the quality of life of employees (Ahmadi; et al; 2017).

Islamic research and Shafizadeh (2017) and May and Evilio (2004) showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the components of ethical leadership and quality of work life of employees.

Professional ethics is another variable that affects the quality of work life of employees. Universities, like other professional organizations and institutions of society, in addition to removing professional science, must also have the desired ethics, because professional ethics reduces moral and behavioral violations and tensions and provides ways to improve and develop progress and innovation in the light of ethical principles (Pourmehdi; 2012). Professional ethics is a set of ethical actions and reactions accepted in an organization that are set by organizations or professional

associations to provide the most desirable social relationships possible for their members provided in the performance of professional duties (Neshat; 2012).

The characteristics of professional ethics in its modern meaning are: having the identity of science and knowledge, having a practical role, presenting professional, indigenous and cultural aspects, dependence on a moral system, provide human knowledge with a clear motivational language, and provide interdisciplinary approach (Garamaleki; 2015).

Therefore, optimistic professional ethics can be effective in increasing and improving the quality of working life. Given the importance of professional ethics in the development of the organization and improving working life, it is necessary to determine the effectiveness (organizational goals) and resource management (including human resources) to the extent of professional ethics in the organization (Garamaleki; 2015).

The researches of Hassani and Abbaskhani (2017), Samari and Poronchi Salavat (2017) and Koonmee and Virakul (2017) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the components of professional ethics and quality of work life.

In addition, research has shown that managers' ethical leadership influences the professional ethics of employees, and leaders gain the trust and loyalty of their followers through ethical behavior, and transmit the importance of ethics to

their subordinates as role models; to act for followers (Derakhshanmehr; et al; 2017).

The researches by Majdzadeh, Hoveida and Rajaipour (2017), Karami, Qalavandi and Qalei (2016) and Werang (2014) showed that the ethical leadership of managers has a positive and significant effect on the professional ethics of employees. Ethical leadership and professional ethics also have a very profound effect on the performance and improvement of organizational behavior and should be considered in organizations.

The relationship between ethical leadership and quality of work life and the mediating role of professional ethics is one of the basic needs in today's organizations, especially Azad University, which are directly related to human beings and provide basic services in relation to their education; Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between ethical leadership and quality of life and work with the mediating role of professional ethics.

Research Method

The research method is descriptive-correlation in terms of type of method and has been done by structural equation modeling method. The statistical population of this study includes all employees of Mohaghegh Ardabili University who were serving in the academic year 2018-2019. According to the official announcement of the university, the statistical population

was 443 people. In this study, to determine the sample size, Krejcie Morgan table was used and 205 people were selected as the sample. The sampling method is stratified random. Data collection tools included three questionnaires as follows:

A) Questionnaire of quality of work life of teachers Ilgan; Ata; Zepwda and Ozo cengiz (2014): The questionnaire of quality of work life of teachers of Ilgan and colleagues consists of 24 items which has five components which include: "Opportunity at work, fair wages "Benefits are a healthy work environment, relationships with colleagues and acceptance, administrative support and professional development." Job opportunities include questions 4-1, fair pay and benefits including questions 5-8, healthy work environment including questions 9-12, relationships with colleagues and acceptance including questions 13-16, administrative support and professional development including questions 24-17). This questionnaire has been set on a 5-point Likert scale (very low = 1, low = 2, medium = 3, high = 4 and very high = 5) in order to assess the quality of teachers' working life. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated well using the opinions of supervisors and consultants. In this study, using the Cronbach's alpha method, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.86.

B) Kalshon, Denhartog and Deehog (2011) Ethical Leadership

Questionnaire: Kalshon et al.'s Ethical Leadership Questionnaire consists of 24 items that have five components that include: "fairness, personal orientation, ethical guidelines, sharing." "Power is the transparency of the role." (Fairness includes questions 1-5, individual orientation includes questions 6-9, ethical guidelines include questions 13-13, power sharing includes questions 19-19, role transparency includes questions 24-24). This questionnaire was set on a 5-point Likert scale (very low = 1, low = 2, medium = 3, high = 4 and very high = 5) in order to measure the level of moral leadership. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated well using the opinions of supervisors and consultants. In this study, using Cronbach's alpha method, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.81

C) Kadozir Professional Ethics Questionnaire (2002): Kadozir Professional Ethics Questionnaire consists of 16 items that have eight components that include: "Responsibility, honesty, justice and fairness, loyalty, excellence and competitiveness" "Respect for others, empathy for others, and respect for social values and norms" (responsibility includes questions 1-2, honesty questions 3-4, justice and fairness including questions 6-5, loyalty including Questions 8-7, Superiority and Competitiveness include questions 9-10, respect for others include questions 11-12, empathy with others questions 14-13, respect for social values and norms include questions 15-16).

This questionnaire was set on a 5-point Likert scale (very low = 1, low = 2, medium = 3, high = 4 and very high = 5) in order to measure the level of professional ethics. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated well using the opinions of supervisors and consultants. In this study, using Cronbach's alpha method, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.78.

In this study, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to evaluate the normality of research variables. Based on the results of this test (Table 1), the significance level for all variables is greater than the error level of 0.05; therefore, the distribution of variables and their components has a normal situation in the society. Therefore, parametric tests can be used to examine the relationships between research variables.

Findings

Table 1 - Results of Kalmogorov- Smirnov test Research variables

Variable	Significance Level	Error Rate	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistics	Conclusion
Ethics	0.645	0.05	4.42	It is normal
Quality of Work Life	0.625	0.05	4.69	It is normal
Ethical Leadership	0.676	0.05	3.99	It is normal

In general, there are several fitness characteristics to evaluate the model fit. In this research, to evaluate the model, the ratio of chi-square to freedom ratio, mean square index, root square of residues index, softened fit index, unbalanced fit index, adaptive fit index, additional fit index, relative fit index, the fit index and the

modified fit index are used, the results of which are given in Table 2.

Table 2 - Model fit results

Model fit criteria	Indicator	Numbers obtained	Allowed amount	Result
the Ratio of Chi-square to the Degree of Freedom	K^2/df	2.35	Less than 3	Proper fit
The Root of the Mean Squares	RMSEA	0.04	Less than 1	Proper fit
The Root of the Squares	RMR	0.008	Near zero	Proper fit
Normalized Fit	NFI	0.97	Above 0.9	Proper

Index					fit
Soft Fit Index		NNFI	0.98	Above 0.9	Proper fit
Adaptive Index	Fit	CFI	0.91	Above 0.9	Proper fit
Additional Index	Fit	IFI	0.91	Above 0.9	Proper fit
Relative Index	Fit	RFI	0.94	Above 0.9	Proper fit
Fitness Index		GFI	0.94	Above 0.9	Proper fit
Modified Fitness Index		AGFI	0.90	Above 0.9	Proper fit

Ideally, the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom should be less than 3. As the findings in Table (2) show the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom is 2.35, which indicates that the model has a good fit. The GFI and AGFI criteria represent measures of the relative amounts of variance and covariance that the model explains. The value of these criteria is between zero and one variable, and the closer the obtained numbers are to one, the better the fit of the model with the observed data. The data in Table 2- show that the reported values for these two indicators are 0.94 and 0.90, respectively, which confirms the suitability of the model. To compare how well a model, especially compared to other models, performs in terms of explaining a set of observed data, from the values of the softened fit index, the non-softened fit index, the incremental fit index, and the

adaptive fit index. Used. The obtained value for all 4 indicators is higher than 0.9, which indicates the confirmation of the model fit. Finally, the RMSEA index is used to examine how the model combines fit and economy. The value obtained for this index is 0.04, which indicates the suitability of the model; therefore, according to the results of the structural equation model of the main hypothesis, it can be said that all research tools have a suitable and acceptable fit.

After examining how the overall model fits with the collected data and ensuring the fit, in the second stage, the factor loads and path coefficients in the structural model were examined. To determine the significance of these effects, the model of significance is used and the model of structural equations in the case of significance is given in Figure 1.

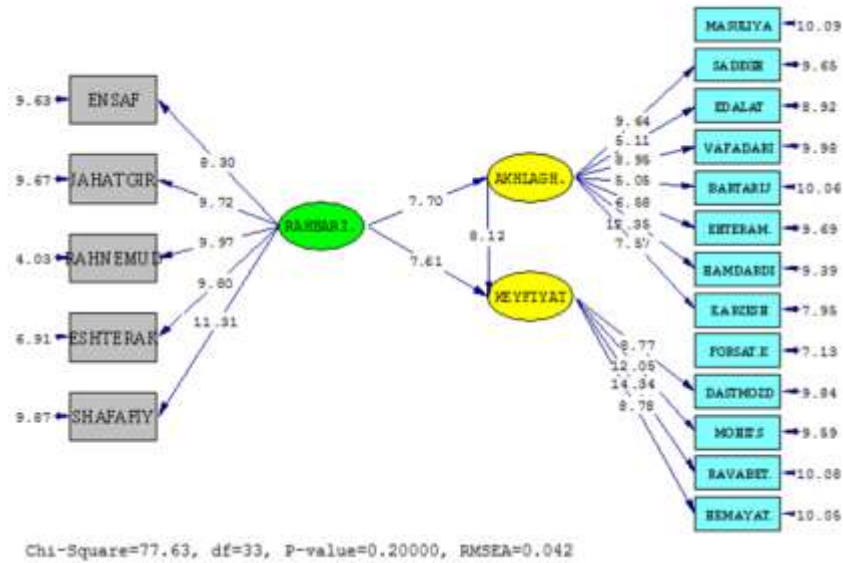


Fig 1- Structural model of research based on significance values

The t-test was used to test the significance of the relationships between the variables. If the absolute value of t-statistic is greater than the critical value (2.58), the existence of a significant relationship between the variables is confirmed; therefore, considering the values of t and larger test statistics than the critical value, at the level of 99%, a significant relationship between the research variables is accepted. As Figure (1) shows, all the main relationships of the model are significant, because

all the numbers obtained are higher than 2.58; therefore, the relationship between the observed variables and the hidden variables in the measurement model and the effect of ethical leadership on professional ethics and the effect of professional ethics on the quality of work life in the structural model is significant. The standard model specifies how and to what extent these effects are. Figure 2 shows the structural model in standard mode.

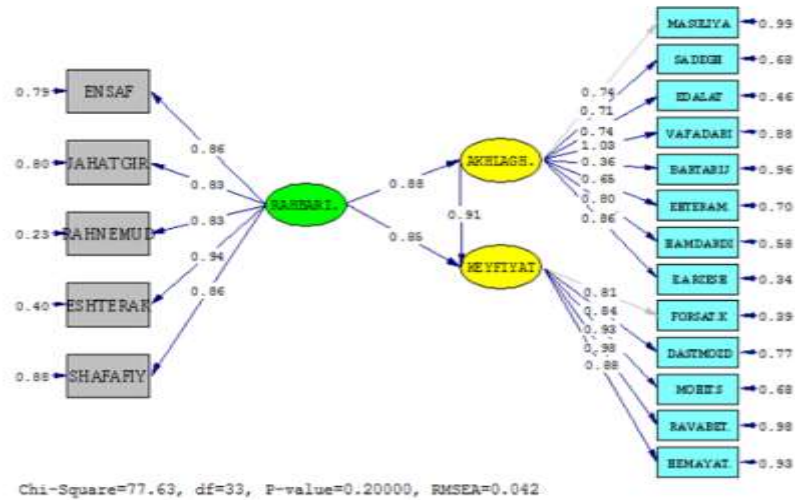


Fig 2- Structural model of research based on path coefficients

Figure (2) shows that the factor load of all explicit variables (components) is higher than 0.30, so it can well measure hidden variables (ethical leadership, professional ethics and quality of working life). The standardized direct path coefficients also show that ethical leadership explains 0.88 of ethical and professional changes and 0.85 of quality of life, work, and ethics of 0.91 of quality changes explains working life. According to the standard coefficient, it can be said that the degree of indirect relationship between ethical leadership and quality of working life is equal to the product of the two paths ($0.88 = 0.91 = 0.80$). Based on this, all research hypotheses are confirmed; because in all of them, the value of t is more than 2.58 (Figure 1) and the effect factor in each case is greater than the minimum value of the effect factor, i.e. 0.12 for direct paths and 0.18 for indirect paths. These findings show that the relationship between the two

variables of ethical leadership of managers and the quality of work life of teachers is intensified by the variable of professional ethics, and if professional ethics increases, this effect becomes stronger and professional ethics weakens naturally. This relationship will be weakened. This issue can be inferred based on the significance and direction of the mediating effect of professional ethics.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of managers' ethical leadership on the quality of work life of employees with the mediating role of professional ethics among the staff of Mohagheh Ardabili University in the academic year of 2018-2019. According to the obtained data and analysis, the results showed that the ethical leadership of managers has a positive and significant effect on the quality of work life of employees.

This result is consistent with the

findings of Islami and Shafizadeh (2017). In their research, they have stated that employees' attitudes toward the ethics of their manager's leadership style have a positive and significant relationship with their quality of work and life. The findings of the present study show that leaders can improve the quality of work life among employees to create new ideas, collaborative learning, increase understanding, improve professional knowledge, improve science and ultimately the progress of the university.

This result is consistent with the findings of Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2012). In their research, they stated that the presence of ethical leaders in organizations is one of the needs that the organization can benefit from the field of cultivating committed and conscientious human resources and seek to ensure that human resources are less affected by outside behaviors, custom or acceptance of the organization. The presence of such leaders can reduce destructive behaviors such as absenteeism, dodging work, organizational silence, and so on. Explaining this finding, we can say that leaders have responsibility, so they need ethics. People in positions of leadership can be the source of many behavioral changes. Through moral behavior, leaders gain the trust and loyalty of their followers, pass on the importance of morality to their subordinates, use rewards and punishment to encourage good behavior, and act as role models for followers. Thus, moral leadership

can affect professional ethics. For this reason, one of the most important tasks of any manager is to form and guide the basic values of professional ethics and behavior (Derakhshanmehr; et al; 2018).

The results showed that the ethical leadership of managers has a positive and significant effect on the professional ethics of employees. These results are consistent with findings of Derakhshanmehr, Jabbarzadeh Kongerloui and Bahri Sales (2017) who have stated that the ethical leadership of managers affects the professional ethics of employees and improves employee performance. This result is also consistent with the findings of Warang (2014) who stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the principles of ethical leadership of principals and the job performance of public school teachers. Explaining this finding, we can say that leaders have responsibility, so they need ethics. People in positions of leadership can be the source of many behavioral changes. Leaders gain the trust and loyalty of their followers through moral behavior, pass on the importance of morality to their subordinates, use rewards and punishment to encourage good behavior, and act as role models for followers. Thus, moral leadership can affect professional ethics. For this reason, one of the most important tasks of any manager is to form and guide the basic values of professional ethics and behavior (Derakhshanmehr; et al; 2017).

Another finding of this study is

that professional ethics has a positive and significant effect on the quality of work life of employees. These results are consistent with the findings of Konmi and Virakol (2017) who stated that professional ethics and quality of work life are two intertwined factors and there is a positive and significant relationship between them. These results are consistent with the findings of Hassani and Abbaskhani (2017) who have stated that there is a significant relationship between professional ethics and quality of work life. Considering the consequences of employees' working life and the effect that professional ethics can have on it, it is necessary to analyze all aspects of professional ethics and the factors affecting it in order to achieve a higher quality in employees' working life. In explaining these findings, it can be said that in an organization with a higher quality of working life, that organization provides freedom of expression, fairness and justice and the rule of law in relation to human domination, as well as racial, gender, ethnic, religious and there is no belief in that organization; Therefore, an organization that has a higher quality of working life also has people with higher professional ethics because this organization is pro-right, does not have prejudice in judging, does not discriminate between people in terms of culture, social and economic class, race and ethnicity, i.e. generally has justice and fairness and it is precisely the component that plays an important

role in professional ethics.

The main finding and general purpose of the present study is that the ethical leadership of managers and quality of life, work are related to the mediating role of professional ethics; therefore, the moral leadership of managers, in addition to having a direct effect on the quality of work life, also has an indirect effect on this variable through professional ethics. Explaining these findings, we can say that moral leadership by creating values, moral awareness, giving authority and responsibility to individuals, adopting participatory and democratic management and creating the right atmosphere in order to achieve organizational health, honesty and reliability, acting on values. In behaviors, it strengthens the performance of employees and leads them to observing ethical principles in the organization. Also, by adhering to ethics and creative values by employees, an atmosphere and work environment based on peace, security and confidence is provided. Therefore, with the increase of ethics in the workplace, the quality of work life also increases, and the existence of ethical leadership and professional ethics can improve the dimensions of quality of work life and ensure the effectiveness of the organization. According to the research findings, it can be said that today organizations are not mechanical tools that can be used as a tool to manage quality assurance in them. It can be said that quality without precise focus is not

attainable on moral values. Today's managers have come to the conclusion that organizations cannot be run by rules and regulations alone, and a different approach to quality is needed, so it is necessary and inevitable to incorporate ethics into quality of work life issues and pay attention to ethical leadership and ethics. Professionalism in organizations can lead them to improve the quality of work life and ultimately the work and effectiveness of the organization.

According to the research results that the ethical leadership of managers has a significant effect on the quality of work life of employees with the mediating role of professional ethics, the following is suggested:

* Providing appropriate facilities and facilities, securing the work environment, financial incentives, upgrading the level and rank based on the ability of employees can be effective in improving the quality of their working life.

* Trying to reduce the negative and influential factors in the mental and physical health of employees and identify strategies to reduce and eliminate them can be effective in increasing the quality of their working life because not recognizing these factors can cause discouragement, dissatisfaction and lack of commitment and loyalty to the job and ultimately motivation to do things.

* Managers and officials increase, maintain and expand relationships based on positive emotions with employees and seek

to promote positive attitudes towards the organization and their colleagues, in order to promote their conscientiousness and loyalty to the organization.

Because the design model for the quality of work life in the university was not obtained through direct observation or description of behavioral events but through surveys; therefore, the validity of this research is limited to the methods and tools used in the research and quantity of data provided by the respondents.

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