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THE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP & SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE: ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Ethical Leadership, Organizational Culture, Sustainable Performance & Higher Education Institutions	The ethical leadership is responsible for confirming the ethical standards overwhelmed at desired norms and shared values, that results in workforces' effective attitudes and behaviors, culminates at sustainable performance. In order to examine role of organizational culture in linking ethical leadership and sustainable performance, the data was collected from teachers (sample from population) hailing from higher education institutions in the southern region, KP, Pakistan, to investigate hypothesized relationship (association & mediation), among variables, to extract desired information in reaching the conclusion and making suitable decisions. The results of study confirmed the existence of association and partial mediation through the correlation and mediation procedures wherein findings can be used as guiding principles in managing research issues more artistically in attaining desired outcomes. Thus, it is suggested from results that ethical leadership can play significant role in higher institutions by ensuring ethical values and standards that are essential parameters for the behavioral transformation overwhelmed at the sustainable performance and culminates at sustainable development and anticipated success.
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INTRODUCTION

The main responsibility upon higher educational institutions is to ensure the teaching and learning conducive environment to students that helps in determining successful academic career. These institutions are responsible for provision of effective working environment to employees for chasing the institutional strategic objectives along with provision of opportunities for career developments (Khan, Gerald, Islam & Saif, 2023). In order to ensure the academic standard, cultural values and

sustainable performance, main role is always performed by leadership in institutions (Mohammad, Nader, Okaily, Abdallah & Ahmad, 2024). In this linking, ethical leadership is vital for shaping academic standards and moral environments by fostering culture of ethical behaviors and ensure the integrity and veracity among students and workforces (Ahmad, Majeed & Ullah, 2023). The ethical leadership is vital for ensuring the academic integrity, fairness, respect, and transparencies in institutional efforts towards sustainable development (Ahmad, Majeed, Ullah & Zainab, 2023). The sustainable performance means effective efforts toward prolonged success thereby balancing social, economic and environmental aspects required for comprehending the strategic outcomes (Hinduja, Mohammad, Siddiqui, Noor & Hussain, 2023). Thus, ethical leaders instill a culture that values transparency, integrity & liability, that are crucial parameters for sustainable performance in higher institutions.

In higher institutions, the consideration of cultural values and associated norms are important for the leadership in order to inspire the students towards academic activities and motivate workforces towards desired outcomes (Khan, Mughal & Khan, 2023). In this linking, main role is performed by teachers who are playing important role in students' behavioral transformation while leadership role is critical in ensuring employees undaunted efforts and potentials overwhelmed at sustainable performances (Khan, Rooh & Naveed, 2022). The leadership is responsible for inspiring teachers and employees towards a culture wherein moral values, and ethical standards are acknowledged through diverse activities and actions (McCann & Sweet, 2014). The leaders are responsible for assurance of sustainable performance by using motivation and commitment as an effective gadget towards sustainable development (Khan & Saqib, Rehan & Hamid, 2020). The ethical leadership is more effective in providing supportive and conducive environment where cultural values and institutional norms are honored for realizing sustainable developments (Iqbal & Piwowar, 2022). In this regard, the ethical leadership serves as role model for shaping ethical behaviors in institutions wherein diverse actions and allied decisions reflect the institutional commitment towards ethical values, and performance thereby influencing the faculties and workforces towards desired leading outcomes for success.

The ethical leaders are effective in developing integrity & confidence wherein academic morality and ethical behaviors are emphasized, wherein fairness and accountability are ensured in actions and institutional governance (Mouri, Swadip, Mahmood & Biswas, 2022). The ethical leaders are effective in implementing the ethical values by holding individuals responsible and accountable for their actions and related eventualities (Liu & Yin, 2020). These leaders are more effective by empowering the teachers to take and implement their own decisions suitable for the institutional sustainable development (Toytok & Kapusuzoğlu, 2016). The organizational strong culture attracts and retains talented teachers, employees, and students, contributing towards the institutional long-term success (Khan, Idris & Mehmud, 2021). The ethical leaders inspire a culture of accountability and integrity and ensure that all actions and decisions are aligned with the ethical principles, that further helps in building transparent and a trustworthy conducing environment (Ahmad, Majeed, Ullah & Zainab, 2023). In this drive, by ensuring ethical leadership, higher education institutional leaders build trustworthiness and confidence among students, teachers, and external stakeholders (Mohammad et al., 2024). The culture is helpful for building leadership capabilities and confidence

and so becomes vital for the effective governance and institutional reputation overwhelmed at the sustainable development.

Objective & Hypothesis

1. To examine the association among ethical leadership, organizational culture and sustainable performance in higher educational context.
2. To examine the mediator (organizational culture) in relationship between ethical leadership and sustainable performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ethical leadership is widely researched in different contexts including higher education with diverse significant outcomes for organizations, employees and stakeholders (Mohammad, Nader, Okaily, Abdallah & Ahmad, 2024). In education context, ethical leadership has been considered as activist for integrating sustainability into the curriculum (Mouri, Swadip, Mahmood & Biswas, 2022). By implanting economic, social and environmental sustainability into academic curriculum, the higher education institutions can make students as responsible professionals and leaders who can contribute to sustainable development in the future endeavors (Hinduja, Mohammad, Siddiqui, Noor & Hussain, 2023). The ethical leadership emphasizes the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as leaders who prioritizes these defining parameters can create inclusive environment where all individuals have equal chances to succeed (Hassan, Khazraje & Ibrahim, 2023). Thus, it can not only enhance the institutional performance but also reflects its commitment towards social and academic required sustainability (Chavez, Yu, Song & Nakara, 2022). Ethical leaders address proactively the ethical challenges and issues within the higher institution by establishing strong mechanisms for highlighting and resolving ethical concerns through transparent and fair processes in order to meet demands of competitive learning environments (Moore, Mayer, Chiang, Karlesky & Birtch, 2019), that pays the ways towards desired sustainable performance overwhelmed at the sustainable developments.

Ethical Leadership

The ethical leadership is vital for developing environment that supportive for achieving academic and administrative excellence in order to ensure long-term viability and positive societal impact over different measures for developments (Qaisar & Piwowar, 2022). In this regard, when leaders act with the transparent, and fair manner by promoting integrity and produce reliable environment then it will ultimately enhance institutional reputation and sustainability (Pasricha & Rao, 2018). The ethical leadership is active in promoting academic integrity as it prioritizes ethical behaviors, set standards for fairness, honesty, and responsibility in academic activities to improve standards (Charoen, Virakul, Senasu & Ayman, 2019). The ethical leaders encourage positive institutional culture where ethical behaviors are practiced and valued and influences the behaviors of faculties and students in positive manner, creating environment where ethical considerations are integrated into diverse activities and decision-making processes (Jia, Zhu, Zhang, Faiz, Asghar & Chin, 2022). The ethical leaders make decisions that balances the short-term needs with long-term objectives, ensuring the sustainability from different dimensions (Ahmad, Majeed, Ullah & Zainab, 2023). The leader manages resources responsibly, avoid unethical practices, and invest in initiatives that offer

long-term reimbursements, thereby securing institutional survival and ultimate development in competitive environments.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture through effective leadership practices plays a decisive role in fostering the sustainability within the higher education institutions. The strong culture can drive sustainable practices, motivate workforces towards shared objectives, and ensure long-term success (Rizwan, Zeeshan & Mahmood, 2017). The culture that prioritizes sustainability from different perspectives inspires acceptance of sustainable practices across the institution (Khan, Idris & Mehmud, 2021). A strong culture promotes ethical behavior over ethical foundation that supports practices towards long-term impacts on society & environment, thereby contributing to sustainability (Khan, Farhat, Minas & Munir, 2020). The organizational culture that values sustainability fosters research and innovation focused on sustainable solutions over adaptation of new methodologies & technologies to address the social, environmental and academic challenges (Khan, Mughal & Khan, 2023). The sustainable culture always focuses upon the social sustainability, which includes diversity and inclusion as inclusive culture ensures that all the members of institution feel valued and have equal opportunities to contribute to institutional sustainability (Zahari, Said, Muhamad & Suhaily, 2024). The strong and sustainable culture influences the curriculum, thereby ensuring that sustainability concepts are integrated into academic programs by addressing the sustainability challenges from diverse perspectives.

Sustainable Performance

The sustainable performance in higher education is indispensable for confirming that institutions are effective not only to realize academic excellence & administrative stability but also contribute positively towards society and environment (Huo, Arslan & Ahmed, 2023). The ethical leaders are more effective in driving this sustainable performance as leaders knows about the critical role of performance in determining institutional credibility and success (Dey, Mahmood, Uddin & Biswas, 2022). Teachers and employees are direly needed to show their utmost commitment & motivation through decent performance to bring the standards at par toward international values (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021). In this linking, the sustainable performance ensures that all available resources are managed ethically and reliably in accordance with the cultural norms and values to achieve the desired outcomes culminates at the sustainable development (Iqbal & Piwowar, 2022). Thus, the sustainable performance in higher institutions through ethical leadership practices is dynamic for warranting that institution is not only thrive academically and administratively but also make meaningful contributions towards the societies (Blind & HeB, 2023). With respect to sustainable performance, ethical leadership creates a basis of integrity, trust, and responsibility that supports the long-term success and positive impact to fulfill their mission of educating future leaders for sustainable developments.

Ethical Leadership, Culture & Sustainable Performance

In higher education institutions, the ethical leadership inspires workforces to engage in academic, social and managerial activities to address different challenges along with possible solutions that leads towards desired sustainable practices (Khan, Gerald, Islam & Saif, 2023). The academic and

social engagements enhance institutional role in contributing toward broader goals for sustainable development aligned with the stakeholders' diverse interests (Jawaad & Zafar, 2020). The ethical leadership drives academic sustainability efforts in higher institutions as leaders prioritizes ethical sustainable practices in teaching and learning processes to ensure that knowledge being imparted is updated and up-to the mark (Bavik, Tang, Shao & Lam, 2018). The institutions lead by ethical leaders are likely to attract and retain the talented teachers and students wherein knowledge and potentials are recognized and respected (Moore et al., 2019). The ethical leadership is important for effective governance as leaders who follow ethical values and principles are operative to ensure that governance structures and processes are accountable, transparent, and inclusive (Dey et al., 2022). This increases sense of ownership, ethical culture and fosters decision-making in framework of sustainable development (Zahari, Said, Muhamad & Suhaily, 2024). Thus, literature provide sufficient information about effective linkages amid ethical leadership, organizational culture and sustainable performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to examine statistical relationships among research variables like ethical leadership, organizational culture and sustainable performance. As, current study was based upon the exploration of existing realities by using survey as an approach to collect the primary data and to analyze the data through statistical procedures to attain the objectives and reaching conclusion, thus, positivism is best suitable philosophical approach (Creswell, 2014). This study used the survey approach as it enables research that how to access and assess the respondents of study for collecting their views about research issues under considerations (Mark & Janina, 2007). The current study was quantitative in nature therefore the existence of population and justification for sampling are important for conducting research in a systematic manner (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The population of interest in this study comprised the teachers from selected higher institutions from southern region, KP, Pakistan. There were five public sector universities in region with population (1944), wherein sample (331) was selected for study. Thus, 300 questionnaires were recollected and used for analysis. Moreover, data collection and analysis tools were used as per the requirements of study wherein instruments were adapted from the previous research studies. The correlation and mediation procedures were used to chase the objectives, reaching conclusion, making decision and contributing knowledge.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The results of study have been presented in this section in order to provide the main outcomes of the study based upon the information obtained from statistical procedures about relationships amid research variables in order to make the decisions about acceptance and rejection of hypotheses and reaching conclusion.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ethical Leadership	300	1.30	4.80	3.2492	.74274
Organizational Culture	300	1.70	4.70	3.3730	.67510
Sustainable Performance	300	1.63	4.70	3.3699	.61043

The descriptive statistics provides information about the description of research issues in terms of sample, minimum and maximum responses' rate, mean and standard deviation. The results of study revealed information about research variables where sample (300), ethical readership (minimum = 1.30, maximum = 4.80, mean = 3.2492, and standard deviation = .74274), organizational culture (minimum = 1.70, maximum = 4.70, mean = 3.3730, standard deviation = .67510), and sustainable performance (minimum = 1.63, maximum = 4.70, mean = 3.3699, and SD = .61043), that significantly described variables.

Table 2 Reliability Statistics

Research Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Ethical Leadership	10	.902
Organizational Culture	10	.874
Sustainable Performance	10	.880
Questionnaire	30	.906

The reliability statistics revealed the information about internal consistency among the measured of research in order to confirm applicability and usability of questionnaire used in current study. In thus drive, all the variables have shown significant internal consistency likewise, ethical leadership (items = 10, CA = .902), organizational culture (items = 10, CA = .874), and sustainable performance (items = 10, CA = .880), and overall questionnaire (items = 30, CA = .906). The results of current study confirmed that all variables have significant alpha values that are above threshold values and thus accepted reliability.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

		[1]	[2]	[3]
Ethical Leadership [1]	Pearson Correlation	1	.463**	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
Organizational Culture [2]	Pearson Correlation	.463**	1	.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
Sustainable Performance [3]	Pearson Correlation	.645**	.509**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The association among the ethical leadership, organizational culture and sustainable performance was hypothesized over first hypothesis. The results of correlation confirmed existence of association amid research variables. Ethical leadership is significantly & positively associated with sustainable performance (R = .645 & P = .000), ethical leadership and organizational culture (R = .463 & P = .000), organizational culture and sustainable performance (R = .509 & P = .000), and thus hypothesis was accepted from results about the association regarding strength and direction among research variables of study.

Table 4 Mediation Analysis

Criterion	Predictors	R	R-Square	Coefficient	P-Value
	Path a				
Organizational Culture	Constant	.4631	.2145		
	Ethical Leadership			.4209	.0000
	Path b & ċ				
Sustainable Performance	Constant	.6868	.4717		
	Ethical Leadership			.2418	.0000
	Organizational Culture			.4280	.0000
	Path c				
Sustainable Performance	Constant	.6446	.4156		
	Ethical Leadership			.5298	.0000

Mediating role of organizational culture in linking ethical leadership and sustainable performance was hypothesized through second hypothesis. The results from all four paths of mediation revealed that organizational culture significantly mediated the connection between ethical leadership and sustainable performance through partial mediation. The firth path revealed that 21.46% variance is occurred in the organizational culture due to ethical leadership with significance level (β = .4209 & P-value = .0000). The second and third paths revealed that there is 47.17% variance is evident in sustainable performance is due to ethical leadership and organizational culture with significant impact (β = .2418 & P-value = .0000), and (β = .4280 & P-value = .0000). The fourth path revealed that there is 41.56% variance occurred in sustainable performance over ethical leadership with significant impact (β = .5298 & P-value = .0000). The partial mediation is evident due to decrease in coefficient values from (.5298) in direct relations to coefficient value (.4280) in indirect relations with p-values remained significant and unchanged. Consequently, from results, hypothesis about mediation was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Leadership in higher education is phenomenal due to its crucial role in attitudinal and behavioral transformation of the students, teachers and employees to attain the desired leading outcomes over academic and administrative capabilities (Khan, Khan & Asad, 2023). Ethical leadership promotes equity, diversity, ethical values and inclusion within institution by creating an environment where all the employees feel valued and have equal opportunities to succeed (Khan, Jianguo, Ali, Saleem & Usman, 2019). This inclusiveness drives the innovation and creativity to some extent thereby enhancing the performance within framework of diverse institutional norms and values (Hassan, Khazraje & Ibrahim, 2023). The ethical leader behaviors and decisions reproduces commitment to ethical standards thereby serving as role models for the teachers and employees with an inspiration that how to realize the assigned responsibilities (Toytok & Kapusuzoğlu, 2016). Similarly, culture shapes way, employees interact, approach their work and make decisions as strong organizational culture aligned with ethical values can reinforce the behaviors promoted by ethical leaders (Khan, Idris & Mehmud, 2021). In this linking, the entire phenomenon leads to employees' motivation and commitment towards assigned tasks, thereby using required knowledge, capabilities and skills,

overwhelmed at sustainable performance, culminates at desirability towards realization of desired leading outcomes.

Ethical leaders articulate clear expectations and ethical standards, promoting culture of integrity and fairness within institutions that are used as motivational tools for inspiring employees toward different strategic tasks (Pasricha & Rao, 2018). Organizational culture serves as bridge between ethical leadership and sustainable performance as leaders always uses their skills and capabilities to ensure the performance within framework of institutional values (Khan, Saqib & Idris, 2020). Thus, by nurturing an environment, aligns with ethical practices and values, institutions can ensure that principles supported by ethical leaders are rooted throughout the institution (Mouri, Swadip, Mahmood & Biswas, 2022). This alignment not only boosts decision-making and ethical behavior but also drives sustainable performance by building accountability, trust & long-term orientation (Hassan, Khazraje & Ibrahim, 2023). The institutional strong culture promotes ethical treatment and social responsibility of employees and teachers, contributing towards the workforces' loyalty, commitment, performance and long-term sustainability (Zahari, Said, Muhamad & Suhaily, 2024). In this linking, the ethical leadership is responsible for ensuring the ethical values and standards thereby motivating the teachers and employees that how to use the different skills and knowledge to realize the institutional required strategic objectives through sustainable performance leads to anticipated sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Present study aimed to examine organizational culture as mediator in linking ethical leadership and sustainable performance in higher educational institutions. The ethical leadership sets the tone for the institutional behaviors and values, but it is culture that implants these ethical values into routine practices and attitudes of employees. An aligned and strong culture ensures that the ethical standards encouraged by leaders are upheld consistently throughout the institution, nurturing an environment of accountability, trust, long-term thinking and sustainable performance. In this drive, by inspiring teamwork, strengthening ethical norms, promoting fairness, developing institutional reputation, positive organization culture supports the impact of ethical leadership. The integration of ethical leadership and a supportive organizational culture creates strong basis for sustainable success, enabling institution to thrive while sustaining their commitment to ethical practices along with social responsibility. The outcomes of study revealed the positive and significant association among research variables in addition to partial mediation role of organizational culture in linking the ethical leadership and sustainable performance in context of higher institutions in developing countries like Pakistan.

Recommendation

1. The higher institutions are required to ensure ethical leadership in letters and spirit in order to promote ethical behaviors and standards in institutions. These standards then ultimately will help in improving the performance standards overwhelmed at sustainability along with excellence to success.
2. The strong culture pays the ways towards sustainable development from different aspects and thus acts as gadget for improving the ethical norms and behaviors. The institutions are

thus required to ensure the strong culture of trust and confidence to improve the performance of teachers and employees.

3. The sustainable performance is importance phenomenon that ensures the sustainability from every possible dimension towards success. The institutions are required to take every possible measure to improve the performance of teachers and employees to ensure the sustainability and desired success.

4. The present study used organizational culture as mediator in linking the ethical leadership and sustainable performance in higher education. The future researchers are required to use some other mediators like organizational justice and loyalty to extract new information and contribute the knowledge.

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