

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Empowering Nurses to Go the Extra Mile Through Ethical Leadership: A COVID-19 Context

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Abstract: This study attempts to investigate how ethical leadership enhances nurses' in-role and extra-role performances with the mediation of psychological empowerment. We used a cross-sectional time-lag design and collected data from 371 nurses and their immediate supervisors through a questionnaire-based survey. The data on ethical leadership and psychological empowerment were collected from nurses at T1, whereas data on in-role and extra-role performance were collected from their immediate supervisors at T2. The results revealed positive associations of ethical leadership with psychological empowerment, in-role, and extra-role performance. Further, hierarchical regression confirms the mediating role of psychological empowerment between the associations of ethical leadership with in-role and extra-role performance.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, In-role performance, Extra-role performance, COVID-19, healthcare

Researchers have been continuously highlighting quality issues in the health sector (Fasbender et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2019; Lotfi et al., 2018; Pasricha et al., 2018). These quality issues are adversely affecting patients' satisfaction, hospitals' image, and employees' well-being. Islam et al. (2019) shed light on the importance of nurses as they play a crucial role in improving the health sector's service quality, which ultimately affects patients' satisfaction. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare sectors are demanding extra from the nurses. At the end of 2019, the world noticed a life-threatening disease (i.e., COVID-19) that has imperiled millions of lives worldwide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a). Since October 2021, COVID-19

has infected approximately 244 million people worldwide, whereas 4.97 million deaths have been noticed (WHO, 2020b). The extreme rise in the number of COVID-19 cases has increased health workers' workload (especially nurses) as they have to work double shifts (Lucchini et al., 2020). In addition, several nurses have lost their lives fighting the disease of COVID-19 (Chirico et al., 2020). Therefore, nurses are anxious about themselves and their loved one's health in this pandemic situation (Huang et al., 2020). Due to this pandemic situation, nurses feel helpless and depressed, resulting in losing their mental health, ultimately affecting the workplace environment (Ranney et al., 2020; Shahrour & Dardas, 2020).

The situation is not different in Pakistan as the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination has reported 28,405 deaths and 1.27 million infectees till October, 2021. According to WHO (2006), there is a 4.3 million shortage of nurses across the globe, which may rise to 12.9 million by 2035 (Gulland, 2013). Particular to Pakistan, there are 103,777 registered nurses to serve the population of 212.2 million (WHO, 2018; Mokhtar et al., 2018). The shortage of nurses and COVID-19 have not only overburdened healthcare professionals (i.e., doctors and nurses) but also negatively affecting their behaviors (e.g., performance; Suifan et al., 2020). In contrast, the families of patients suffering from COVID-19 expect extra care from the hospital staff (Lucchini et al., 2020). In such situations, hospital management demands extra performance from the nurses (Suifan et al., 2020). Literature has emphasized two types of performances: in-role performance (IRP; based on the job description) and extra-role performance (ERP; tasks that individual performs beyond their formal job descriptions; William & Anderson, 1991; Organ, 1988).

Past studies have suggested that employees' performance (i.e., IRP and ERP) depends upon a healthy work environment (Islam, 2019; Peng & Lin, 2017), as a poor work environment could lower employees' performance (Dust et al., 2018; Garg & Dhar, 2016; Islam & Tariq, 2018). By working on the positive attitudes and behaviors of their employees, management can create a better work environment (Islam et al., 2013; Islam, 2019). Pousa et al.'s (2020) thought strikes that by working on their subordinates' attitudes and behaviors, leaders could create a better work environment that may positively affect their performance (Dust et al., 2018). Therefore, we argue that leaders with moral values (i.e., ethical leadership) may help improving nurses' in-role and extra-role performances. Ethical leadership is "the display of normative behavior through own conduct and interpersonal connections with each other, and the expansion of such lead to subordinates through mutual communication, fortification, and managerial policymaking" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Thus, ethical leadership intends to improve employees' performances through their moral and ethical conduct (Bouckenoghe et al., 2015; Yang & Wei, 2018).

Though researchers have discussed ethical leadership's positive impact on employee's attitudes and behaviors, there is still a dire need to discuss

how ethical leadership affects employees' several job-related behaviors (i.e., IRP and ERP). In addition, Shareef and Atan (2019) proposed that there is a need to understand the mechanism that helps employees to go the extra mile working with ethical leaders. Given that, we consider psychological empowerment (PE; an individual's inner feeling of self-efficacy towards his/her work) as a mediating mechanism between ethical leadership and employees' IRP and ERP. Spreitzer (1995) related psychological empowerment as "an active, rather than a passive, orientation to a work role...an orientation in which an individual wish and feels able to shape his or her work role and context" (p. 1444). Empowerment is considered an encouraging mechanism for organizational growth and success (Pradhan et al., 2017) because it develops an insight among employees to view their organizational tasks as meaningful. Therefore, they struggle to impact their assigned jobs by performing well (i.e., IRP and ERP) in the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995). These arguments can further be supported through Bandura's (1986) social learning theory (SLT) that employees observe and behave according to their leaders' behavior in the workplace. Given that, when employees perceive their supervisors performing their assigned as well as extra duties for the betterment of their organization, they would behave accordingly (i.e., IRP and ERP).

Hypotheses Development

Ethical Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment (PE) is an individual's inner feeling of self-efficacy towards his/her work (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1996), that is intangible but a powerful tool to develop positive attitudes and behavior among employees at the workplace (Akgunduz & Bardakoglu, 2017). Spreitzer (1995) divided PE into four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. These four dimensions give an employee a sense of empowerment and are highly acceptable in the literature world (Islam & Irfan, 2020). Empowered employees feel meaningful (a fit between an individuals' personal and work goal), competence (an individual believes in his/her ability to perform tasks, effort performance or personal mastery, and analogs to agency beliefs), impact (an

individuals' influence on operational, administrative or strategic activities, and outcomes in one's work), and self-determined (an individuals' sense of choice about regulation or initiation of an action) at the workplace. Therefore, they exert their full energy to accomplish the assigned tasks and tend to have great control over the organizational activities. Empowered employees also promote a listening and discussion culture in the organizations (Spreitzer, 1996). Therefore, they are allowed to participate in decision-making and enabled them to give feedback to their supervisors.

Ethical leaders are considered an enhancer of PE in subordinates (Dust et al., 2018). This is because employees under ethical leaders' supervision develop a sense of meaningfulness in their work as they demonstrate and communicate the importance and significance of work (Abuzaid, 2018). By building self-efficacy and providing proper feedback to their subordinates, ethical leaders also transform the feeling of competency (Suifan et al., 2020). In addition, ethical leaders are considered self-determinant as they are not afraid of providing autonomy (self-determination) to their employees. Finally, employees consider their conduct impactful as they receive appreciation and respect from their leaders (Piccolo et al., 2010). Literature is scant on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' PE (e.g., Suifan et al., 2020, Hu et al., 2018; Dust et al., 2018), especially in non-western countries like Pakistan. However, literature has suggested that ethical leadership positively affects PE, which can be justified through SLT. Drawing upon SLT (Bandura, 1986), ethical leaders consider their work as meaningful with self-determination and competence to have an impact; therefore, observing them, employees may also behave accordingly (i.e., may exert their full potential and mastery skills in the accomplishment of the organizational tasks). Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: Ethical leadership has a positive impact on PE.

Ethical Leadership, In-Role, and Extra-Role Performance

Ethical leadership has become an inspiring catch-all in management sciences literature (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006), as it positively shapes employees' workplace behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Brown et al. (2005) related ethical leaders as honest, trustworthy, ethical practice, communicators,

and fair decision-makers (p. 120). Ethical leaders are not only considered as strong individuals but also are considered as strong managers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). These characteristics expect high performance and ethical conduct from ethical leaders that hold subordinates accountable while treating them with respect and fairness (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015).

Previous researches have examined ethical leadership's impact on employee job-related outcomes, that is, deviant employee behaviors (Piccolo et al., 2010), organizational commitment (Abuzaid, 2018), turnover intention (Suifan et al., 2020), and moral voice (Afsar & Shahjahan, 2018). However, Mayer et al. (2009) suggested examining the association between ethical leadership and employees' performance (i.e., IRP and ERP). Through their ethical conduct, communication, and honesty, ethical leaders purify themselves as trustworthy role models and reliable sources of information (Islam et al., 2020b; Dust et al., 2018; Piccolo et al., 2010). This behavior motivates employees to emulate their leader's conduct, which enhances employees' task-related performance (i.e., IRP). On the other hand, ERP is an optional activity that employees perform to increase overall organizational effectiveness (Eisenberger et al., 2010). This may include making productive decisions, improving knowledge and skills, helping colleagues, and protecting the organization from external threats (Tu & Lu, 2016). Ethical leaders are considered to have a caring attitude towards their employees, expecting extra efforts from their employees for the organization's benefit that might go beyond the tasks specified in job descriptions (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Ethical leaders are viewed as legitimate, attractive, and credible role models as they appraise employees' performance and reward them accordingly (Babalola et al., 2018). Employees get ethically motivated through their leader's conduct at the workplace (Guillén et al., 2015), ultimately engaging them in ERP. Researchers such as Baker et al. (2006) revealed ethical leadership's positive impact on employee's OCB. Employees take on the role expectations by performing highly to achieve the organizational goals (Rai et al., 2018).

In the same lines, Bandura's (1986) social learning theory also helps justify the above discussion as subordinates observe their leaders by considering their work essential and exerting their full potential to accomplish tasks and perform optional tasks for the organization's good name. Thus, employees also try to

do the same by exerting their full potential and mastery skills in accomplishing the organizational tasks, trying to perform extra tasks for the organization's good sake, and saving the organization from destruction. Therefore, we hypothesize:

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

H3: Ethical leadership is positively related to employee's ERP.

Psychological Empowerment, In-Role, and Extra-Role Performance

Psychologically empowered employees feel great to control organizational tasks and the workplace environment (Tripathi et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2016) thereby starting to perform their assigned duties diligently and efficiently (Seibert et al., 2011). This positive development enhances task proficiency in employees (Tripathi et al., 2020). Prior work suggests that autonomy and decision-making freedom not only enable employees to deal with innumerable uncertainties but also make them proactive in handling and adapting to changes (Cherns, 1987). Autonomy plays a critical role in enabling employees to be adaptive at the workplace (Ones et al., 2017). Self-determination recognition in PE also helps employees in displaying adaptive behavior at the workplace (Spreitzer, 1996). In addition, the feeling of autonomy and self-determination motivates employees to be creative and proactive at the workplace (Javed et al., 2017). Furthermore, employees are determined even when faced with obstacles; therefore, they take appropriate actions to solve the obstacles (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012).

According to Rai et al. (2018), management sometimes expects employees to engage in extra-role behaviors (e.g., new ideas) that benefit the organization. Such behaviors motivate employees to perform challenging and distinguishing tasks at the workplace (Garg & Dhar, 2016). These extra-role behaviors demand the active orientation of employees towards their job. Active orientation is a characteristic of psychologically empowered employees (Dust et al., 2018). PE relates to employees who are self-conscious and do not require much-repeated instructions from managers (Choi, 2007; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Psychologically empowered

employees engage in extra-role behaviors because of their perception to become active contributors (Saira et al., 2021). In contrast, employees with a low level of psychological empowerment avoid taking any sort of risks by engaging in such behaviors (Raub & Robert, 2010). Thus, the organization could not expect these employees' participation in generating new ideas and in the decision-making process.

Empirical evidence also supports the relationship of psychological empowerment with employee's performance (IRP and ERP) by revealing a positive association between empowerment and employee performance (IRP and ERP; Agle et al., 2006; Choi, 2007; Dust et al., 2018). In the same lines, Bandura's (1986) SLT claimed that by observing their empowered managers engaging in extra-challenging tasks for the good sake of the organization. Employees also feel empowered, ultimately resulting in engaging themselves in extra-challenging tasks (not specified in the job description) that might be risky but are good for the organization. Considering the importance of the relationship and the need of the hour, we hypothesized:

H4: Psychological empowerment positively relates to employee's IRP.

H5: Psychological empowerment positively relates to employee's ERP.

Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator

Psychological empowerment is a positive mental resource comprising of four facets (Spreitzer, 1995). These facets include meaningful, competence, impact, and self-determined. Meaningful relates to alignment between organizational and employee's personal goals. Meaningful generates a sort of inner feeling in employees that the work they are doing is important for them as well as for the organization. Thus, exerting their full potential for the accomplishment of the goals could be beneficial for them as well as for the organization. Stander and Rothmann (2010) reported that employees who understand the importance of their work exert extra energy for the tasks that are not in the job description but are good for the organization's name.

Second, competence relates to employee's confidence in their abilities and skills to accomplish organizational tasks. Competence motivates employees that organizational work demands their mastery skills

and full ability to accomplish the tasks. Therefore, considering the importance of the task, the employee could likely perform the organizational tasks diligently by exerting their full potential and mastery skills (Islam & Irfan, 2020).

Third, impact relates to employee's effect on subordinates' work and administrative and strategic activities. Impact could help organizations to inspire the workers to shape up their work and their surroundings. Last, self-determined relates to an individuals' sense of choice about regulation or initiation of an action at the workplace. Therefore, enabling employees to make the right decisions at the right time ultimately fosters the performance of employees. In addition, these employees are considered to have strong determination and self-efficacy with no doubts (Javed et al., 2017). In conclusion, psychological empowerment is essential for developing positive attitudes and behaviors among employees (Spreitzer, 1995). Furthermore, ethical leaders transform psychological empowerment among employees that helps them in performing well at the workplace (Dust et al., 2018).

Past studies have suggested psychological empowerment as an explanatory variable between leadership and various job-related outcomes. For example, Lan and Chong (2015) identified the mediating role of psychological empowerment between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes. Specific to ethical leadership, Ahmad and Gao (2018) identified psychological empowerment explaining the association between ethical leadership and employee work engagement in the banking sector of Pakistan. In contrast, Qing et al. (2019) confirmed the mediating role of psychological empowerment between ethical leadership and employee's organizational commitment. Similarly, Javed et al. (2017) noted

psychological empowerment explaining the association between ethical leadership and employee creativity. However, how psychological empowerment explains the associations of ethical leadership with IRP and ERP is an area that still needs focus.

It is well discussed in the above sections that ethical leaders—through the feeling of autonomy, self-determination, and impact—not only motivate employees to feel psychologically empowered (Spreitzer, 1996; Javed et al., 2017; Dust et al., 2018) but also motivate them for better performance (Rai et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2018). Similarly, it is also discussed that psychologically empowered employees are more likely to perform better (Garg & Dhar, 2016; Turnipseed et al., 2020). Therefore, we argue that ethical leaders psychologically empower employees, and in turn, employees show both IRP and ERP. This argument can further be supported through SLT that, when subordinates observe their leaders performing ethically at the workplace (e.g., involving them in decision making, working on their self-efficacy), they feel psychologically empowered. As a result, they get motivated and start performing extra-ordinarily at the workplace by accomplishing the organizational tasks (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, they also observe their leaders performing optional tasks for the organization's good sake, which triggers them to perform extra tasks for the organization's good name. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H6: PE mediates the relation between ethical leadership and IRP.

H7: PE mediates the relation between ethical leadership and ERP.

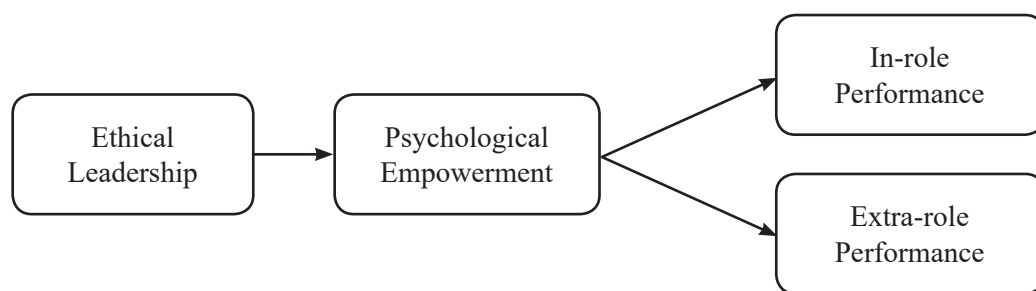


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Methods

We collected data from the nurses working in three big cities of Pakistan: Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore (as these cities represent the characteristics of the entire population). We distributed 700 questionnaires (based on item-response theory with the criteria of 20 responses $35 \times 20 = 700$; Islam et al., 2020c; Ahmad & Islam, 2019; Islam & Tariq, 2018). We used a cross-sectional time-lag survey (between November 2019 to May 2020) to avoid common method bias (CMB; Podsakoff et al., 2012; Islam et al., 2020b; Ahmad et al., 2020). At T1, data regarding nurses' perception about their supervisor's ethical style and their psychological empowerment was collected, whereas, at T2, supervisors were asked about the nurses' in-role and extra-role performances.

The data from the hospitals of Lahore (i.e., Doctors hospital, Iteffaq Hospital, Services Hospital, and Mayo Hospital) and Islamabad (i.e., CMH Hospital, and Bilal Hospital) were collected personally; however, the data from the hospitals of Karachi (e.g., Aga Khan Hospital, Liaquat National Hospital, and Abbassi Shaheed Hospital) were collected by a volunteer. The volunteer was well trained to collect data at T1 (coding the questionnaires) and contact their immediate supervisors (i.e., doctors) to collect data at T2. The respondents were assured about the anonymity of their responses.

Out of 700 questionnaires sent, we received 385 questionnaires (110 from Karachi (28.57%), 122 from Islamabad (31.69%), and 153 from Lahore (39.74%) with a response rate of 64.17%, which is acceptable (Ruane, 2005). The majority (i.e., 279 or 79.7%) of the respondents were female, with an average age between 22–35 (35%), and have a masters' degree (52%). On average, most of the staff had a minimum of 3–4 years (45%) experience.

Measures

We collected responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree."

Ethical Leadership

Brown et al.'s (2005) 10-item scale of ethical leadership was used. Suifan et al. (2020) and Dust et al. (2018) also have validated this scale. The scale's Cronbach value (i.e., 0.76) was greater than Nunnally's

(1978) suggested value (i.e., 0.70). A sample item includes, "My leader demonstrates a strong concern for ethical and moral values."

Psychological Empowerment

We measured psychological empowerment through Spreitzer's (1995) 12 items scale. This scale has been validated by Islam and Irfan (2020) in the Pakistani healthcare context. The Cronbach alpha value for this scale was noted as 0.74. A sample item includes, "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job."

In-Role Performance

In-role performance was measured using Williams and Anderson's (1991) five items scale, which has been validated by Bouckennooghe et al. (2015). The Cronbach's alpha value of this scale was noted as 0.83. A sample item includes, "This employee adequately completes assigned duties."

Extra-Role Performance

We used an eight-item scale of Eisenberger et al. (2010) to measure extra-role performance and noted 0.81 as its Cronbach alpha value. A sample item includes, "This employee looks for ways to make our organization more successful."

Control Variables

In this study, gender, experience, qualification, and age were controlled as previous researches suggested these variables needed to be controlled (Dust et al., 2018; Bouckennooghe et al., 2015; Lotfi et al., 2018).

Results

First, we performed a preliminary analysis of the data. Out of 385 responses, six were found to have missing values (Sekeran, 2003; Islam et al., 2020a); therefore, only 379 responses were included in the final analysis. We identified outliers using the stem-and-leaf method, and another eight responses were excluded from the final analysis (Islam & Tariq, 2018). Finally, 371 responses were evaluated for normal distribution, and the values of skewness (standard value of ± 1) and kurtosis (standard value of ± 1) were found within standard values (Byrne, 2010).

Table 1*Descriptive and Correlational Analytics*

Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD	α
1-Ethical leadership	1				3.62	0.57	0.76
2-Psychological empowerment	0.55**	1			3.72	0.63	0.74
3- In-role performance	0.61**	0.64**	1		3.53	0.76	0.83
4- Extra-role performance	0.49**	0.53**	0.63**	1	3.49	0.69	0.81

Note: ** $P < 0.01$, $N = 371$

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics. We noted that respondents were agreed about their supervisor's ethical leadership style ($M = 3.62$), and psychological empowerment ($M = 3.72$). On the other side, mean values of in-role and extra-role performances (which were evaluated by supervisors) were slightly under agree ($M = 3.53$ & 3.49 respectively). The Cronbach's alpha values were found between 0.74-0.83, well above Nunnally's (1978) suggested criteria of 0.70. Further, the values show that ethical leadership positively correlates to psychological empowerment ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), in-role performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), and extra-role performance ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, psychological empowerment also positively correlated to both in-role ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$) and extra-role performance ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$).

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses of the study were examined using regression through SPSS version 27. We noted ethical leadership positively associated with psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.59$, $P < 0.01$), in-role performance ($\beta = 0.48$, $P < 0.01$), and extra-role performance ($\beta = 0.39$, $P < 0.01$). In addition, psychological empowerment was found to be positively associated with in-role ($\beta = 0.63$, $P < 0.01$) and extra-role ($\beta = 0.53$, $P < 0.01$) performances (see Table 2). These results support first five hypotheses of the study.

We followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment between ethical leadership and in-role

and extra-role performance. We applied hierarchical regression in three steps. First, demographical variables were controlled and regressed with both in-role and extra-role performance. Second, we regressed ethical leadership with in-role ($\beta = 0.48$, $P < 0.01$) and extra-role ($\beta = 0.42$, $P < 0.01$) performance and noted their significant effects. Finally, we regressed psychological empowerment and noted its significant effect on in-role performance ($\beta = 0.34$, $P < 0.01$), and insignificant effect on extra-role performance ($\beta = 0.14$, $P > 0.05$). More specifically, by regressing psychological empowerment with in-role performance, the value of ethical leadership (in the third step) remained significant (which signifies partial mediation). For extra-role performance, the value of ethical leadership (in the third step) becomes insignificant (which signifies full mediation). These results support the sixth and seventh hypotheses of the study.

Table 2*Hypotheses Testing Through Regression*

Relations	β	SE	p-value
EL→PE	0.59	0.034	0.000
EL→IRP	0.48	0.053	0.000
EL→ERP	0.39	0.055	0.000
PE→IRP	0.63	0.038	0.000
PE→ERP	0.53	0.049	0.000

Note: "EL = ethical leadership, PE = psychological empowerment, IRP = in-role performance, ERP = extra-role performance"

Table 3*Hierarchical Regression for Mediation*

Variables	In-role Performance			Extra-role Performance		
	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)
<i>Control variables</i>						
Gender	-0.11	-0.08	-0.13	-0.09	-0.08	-0.10
Age	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	0.06	0.04	0.04
Qualification	0.17**	0.08	0.06	0.11*	0.10	0.06
Work-Experience	-0.02	-0.00	0.01	-0.05	-0.03	0.00
<i>Independent Variable</i>						
Ethical Leadership		0.48**	0.34**		0.42**	0.14
<i>Mediating Variable</i>						
Psychological empowerment			0.52**			0.49**
R^2	0.03	0.37	0.44	0.05	0.25	0.33
ΔR^2	–	0.34	0.07	–	0.20	0.08

Discussion

The findings suggest that employees who work under the supervision of ethical leaders have a strong belief in self-efficacy, understand the importance of their work, and have greater control over their duties. In addition, findings suggest that employees consider psychological empowerment as intrinsic motivation leading them to successfully perform their assigned and optional tasks. The study helps in understanding the ethical leadership impact on employee performance through psychological empowerment mediation. The results are aligned with the theoretical arguments of previous studies that ethical leaders positively impact the beliefs and practices of the employees (Dust et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Mayer et al., 2009; Kalshoven et al., 2011). As stated by Brown et al. (2005), people demand more ethical management and people-centered management in organizations. The current study presents a testable framework linking ethical leadership with employee performance, that is, in-role and extra-role performance through psychological empowerment, a relation not much examined before. The results revealed the positive effects of ethical leadership and psychological empowerment on employee performance.

Responding to the calls of Abuzaid (2018), Dust et al. (2018), and Bouckennooghe et al. (2015), our study contributes to ethical leadership literature by examining its impact on employee performance. First, the result revealed ethical leadership's effectiveness in improving employee performance (i.e., IRP and ERP). When employees observe the ethical conduct of their leaders, they feel empowered, which leads them to perform efficiently at the workplace. Ethical leaders develop their subordinates' self-determination and meaningfulness that develop a sense of intrinsic motivation to respond to any kind of challenging situation and obstacles faced in the organization. This finding suggests that employee motivation is not only the outcome of transformational-charismatic leadership (Spreitzer, 2008).

Second, we extend past studies (e.g., Dust et al., 2018) by enriching the literature on individual role factors between the relationship of focused constructs. So, we examined PE as an explaining variable between the associations of ethical leadership with employee performance. Ethical leaders, through their ethical values, become role models for their followers, which urge them to go the extra mile for their organization. Further, consistent with the findings of Dust et al. (2018), we noted that ethical leaders develop a sense of meaningfulness, self-determination, impact,

and competence among followers; hence they feel psychologically empowered. According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), PE can be a catalyst to motivate employees to perform for their organization (e.g., IRP and ERP). Thus, empowered employees are considered actively oriented to their work role, go the extra mile by performing more than the required tasks, and are proactive for any uncertain situation in the organization (Raub & Robert, 2010).

Finally, we contributed to the existing literature by examining psychological empowerment's impact on employee performance (IRP and ERP). Prior research suggests that ethical leadership helps in empowerment (Brown et al., 2005); however, it was not empirically tested in the health sector. For this, ethical leadership plays an important role by empowering employees to go the extra mile by performing diligently at the workplace. It also helps understand the importance of their work and their participation in achieving the organizational goals (Spreitzer, 1995).

The study findings have also shed light on various practical implications for the organizations. First, ethical leadership, a less explored leadership style, plays a crucial role in improving employee's performances. In the current study, ethical leadership empowers and develops positive attitudes and behaviors among employees, which are beneficial for the organization and society. Under the supervision of ethical leaders, employees feel committed, empowered, and extra-engaged at the workplace, fulfilling the dynamic needs of the organization (Dust et al., 2018). For this reason, organizations should hire ethical leaders and promote ethical leaderships attributed through training and development.

Second, it is difficult to predetermine duties for every work role as the work demands keep on changing; the study suggests revisiting their performance management systems. Therefore, enabling employees to develop proficient behavior at the workplace, that is, adaptability and productivity that are considered essential in evaluating one's performance. In conjunction, leaders should also be trained to handle any kind of uncertainties and different performance behaviors.

Third, during pandemic (COVID-19), the healthcare sector demands more from the nurses. Particularly in Pakistan, the situation is even worse as there is already a shortage of nurses. Both issues have overburdened the nurses; hence they are unable to perform their

tasks effectively. Our study suggests that management empowers nurses through ethical leadership, which may improve their performance. In addition, organizations should adopt the mechanism by hiring ethical leaders and transforming ethical leader's attributes in their managers by building trust and moral support in employees, ultimately resulting in an enhancement in the employee's performances (Bouckennooghe et al., 2015). In addition, an organization should promote an environment that allows employees to access information and resources, encouraging a participative work environment (Spreitzer, 1996).

The first limitation is that the study highlighted the benefits of controlling profounding organizational variables. The study data was collected from three big cities, ignoring the rural population of the country. There is a huge difference in the culture of rural and urban regions. In addition, the generalizability of results in other organization's context is not possible as the organization's culture and employee perception vary from culture to culture (Islam & Irfan, 2020).

The second limitation was that the data was collected in time-lagged cross-sectional from supervisors (T2), that is, doctors and subordinates or nursing staff (T1), to reduce common method variance (CMB) with an interval of 15 days. Future research could extend the interval period to two months to measure their perception over a specific period as employee perception changes over time (Islam et al., 2020a). Finally, we only examined ethical leadership's impact on employees' in-role and extra-role performance. However, there are several other problems from which the Pakistani health sector is suffering, such as bullying (Islam et al., 2019) and turnover intention (Irshad et al., 2020). Future research could address the ethical leadership impact on these adverse constructs.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate ethical leadership's impact on employee's in-role and extra-role performance. The study revealed a positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee performances at the workplace. The findings confirmed that ethical leadership implementation could positively enhance nursing staff performances at the workplace, which is undoubtedly beneficial for improving the hospital's service quality and patient satisfaction.

Psychological empowerment provides meaning to the employee's job, and ethical leadership can trigger empowerment in employees. The results revealed that ethical leaders tend to empower the employees through their leadership style and provide a sense of meaningfulness in their work. According to Dust et al. (2018), ethical leaders empower subordinates to perform well at the workplace, which is also supported by the current study. In addition, Islam and Irfan (2020) revealed that psychological empowerment allows employees to perform extra-ordinarily at the workplace because they feel themselves a citizen of the organization. A workable model was presented for the nursing staff of public and private hospitals to enhance their performances. The study assured that through ethical leadership and psychological empowerment, positive job-related outcomes could be achieved.

Acknowledgment

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Declaration of Ownership

This report is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by NCBA&E.

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