

Ethical Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Nurses' Job Performance: The Moderating Role of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of ethical leadership on nurse performance by placing organizational citizenship behavior as a mediator variable and job satisfaction as a moderator variable. Using a quantitative approach with an explanatory design, this study involved nurses in Kendari City as respondents. Data was collected through a structured survey and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling technique based on Partial Least Squares. The results of the study revealed that ethical leadership is a significant driving factor in improving nurses' performance directly and through improving voluntary behavior in the work environment. In addition, organizational civic behavior has proven to be a crucial element that is independently able to increase the effectiveness of nurse performance. Important findings in this study suggest that job satisfaction plays a role as a catalyst that amplifies the positive impact of voluntary behavior on performance; This means that nurses who are willing to work beyond their formal duties will produce much more optimal performance if supported by a high level of job satisfaction. Overall, this study concludes that strengthening the integrity of leaders and creating a satisfactory work environment are key strategies in optimizing the professional contribution of nurses in Kendari City.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Nurses' Job Performance, Job Satisfaction

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kepemimpinan etis terhadap kinerja perawat dengan menempatkan perilaku kewarganegaraan organisasi sebagai variabel mediator dan kepuasan kerja sebagai variabel moderator. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain eksploratif, penelitian ini melibatkan perawat di Kota Kendari sebagai responden. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik Structural Equation Modeling berbasis Partial Least Squares. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan etis merupakan faktor pendorong yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan kinerja perawat secara langsung dan melalui peningkatan perilaku sukarela di lingkungan kerja. Selain itu, perilaku kewarganegaraan organisasi terbukti menjadi elemen penting yang secara independen mampu meningkatkan efektivitas kinerja perawat. Temuan penting dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kepuasan kerja berperan sebagai katalis yang memperkuat dampak positif perilaku sukarela terhadap kinerja; Ini berarti bahwa perawat yang bersedia bekerja di luar tugas formalnya akan menghasilkan kinerja yang jauh lebih optimal jika didukung oleh tingkat kepuasan kerja yang tinggi. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan integritas pemimpin dan penciptaan lingkungan kerja yang memuaskan merupakan strategi kunci dalam mengoptimalkan kontribusi profesional perawat di Kota Kendari.

Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan Etis, Perilaku Kewarganegaraan Organisasi, dan Kinerja Kerja Perawat, Kepuasan Kerja

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INTRODUCTION

Quality healthcare is highly dependent on the performance of nurses as they are at the forefront of caring for patients and executing service protocols (Kennedy et al., 2019). However, workload, emotional pressure, and ethical complexity in the nursing profession make the work environment and leadership style key factors in determining the quality of performance (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Ethical

leadership is very important because leaders who demonstrate integrity, justice, and moral behavior can create a supportive work climate, value professional values, and foster a sense of shared responsibility (Brigue and Orlu 2023).

Various studies show that ethical leadership is related to improving nurse performance. For example, research by Liu et al. (2025) shows that ethical leadership directly and indirectly (through self-compassion) predicts nurses' job performance. Ethical leadership affects nurses' motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction so that it correlates with increased job performance (Özden et al., 2019). These findings suggest that ethical leadership is not only a normative issue, but has significant practical implications for the quality of nursing services and the sustainability of healthcare organizations (Barkhordari-Sharifabad et al., 2018).

The ethical leadership variable is relevant in healthcare organizations because it is the foundation for the creation of trust, fairness, and psychological support among nurses (Zhang et al., 2019). Nurses view their leaders as ethical and fair figures, which can increase a sense of security, appreciation, and motivation to work professionally and responsibly (Salmela et al., 2017). In the hospital context, this can translate into more meticulous patient care, compliance with procedures, team collaboration, and commitment to ethical standards and quality of service.

The Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) variable is also very important because it describes the voluntary behavior of nurses such as helping colleagues, supporting teams, maintaining cooperation and harmony that are not always regulated in formal job descriptions (Khajoei et al., 2024). OCB can strengthen team coordination, reduce individual workloads, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare services (Feather et al., 2018). Thus, OCB can be an important mechanism through which the influence of ethical leadership translates into improving nurse performance and overall service quality (Ren and Chadee 2017).

While there are a number of studies that support a positive link between ethical leadership and nurse performance, many of these studies only look at direct relationships without exploring mediation or moderation mechanisms such as through OCB or job satisfaction. This is a gap because the effects of ethical leadership may not always be immediately visible, it can occur through intermediary variables (mediators) or be influenced by certain contextual conditions (moderators). In addition, literature in Indonesia, especially in areas outside Java or in regional hospitals, is relatively limited. Most studies use general population or non-health sectors, or are conducted in large urban centers; So that generalization of results to conditions in regional hospitals such as in Kendari City still requires empirical testing. Therefore, a research model that combines mediators (OCB) and moderators (job satisfaction), as well as carried out in local contexts such as Kendari, can fill this empirical and theoretical gap.

By using a research framework where ethical leadership is an independent variable, OCB as a mediator, and job satisfaction as a moderator, this study can explain the causal path in more detail. Ethical leadership is expected to encourage the emergence of extra-role behaviors (OCB) because

nurses feel valued, psychologically safe, and motivated to contribute more than just formal tasks. The emergence of OCB then contributed to improved nurse performance through better teamwork, collaboration, and commitment to service standards. Job satisfaction as a moderator allows to see if the effect of ethical leadership on performance and OCB differs depending on the extent to which nurses are satisfied with their work. If job satisfaction is high, the influence of ethical leadership on OCB and performance is likely to be stronger; conversely if job satisfaction is low, the effect may weaken (Kim and Brymer 2011). Thus, this model allows for a more contextual and realistic analysis of real conditions in hospitals, especially in Kendari.

Kendari City as the capital of Southeast Sulawesi province has public and private hospitals that serve the wider community, including from the surrounding inland areas. Many hospitals in the region face resource limitations, high workloads, and HR management challenges including nurses faced with large patient volumes, quality service demands, and workload pressures. In such conditions, an ethical leadership style and a supportive work environment are essential to maintain the enthusiasm, professionalism, and performance of nurses. Conducting research in Kendari allows us to review how the dynamics of ethical leadership, OCB, and job satisfaction interact in the local context and culture of health services in eastern Indonesia.

The purpose of this study is to test the influence of ethical leadership on the job performance of nurses in Kendari, with OCB as the mediator and job satisfaction as the moderator. In addition, this study aims to provide an empirical overview of the mechanisms by which ethical leadership translates into performance through extra-role behaviors and is influenced by job satisfaction. The theoretical contribution of this study is to expand the literature on ethical leadership, OCB, and performance in the context of health services in Indonesia, especially outside Java. Practical contributions are expected to assist hospital management and policymakers in Kendari to design leadership and HR management strategies that support service quality, nurse retention, and performance improvement.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory design that aims to test and analyze the causality relationship between variables in the research model, especially regarding the influence of ethical leadership on nurse performance with the role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as a mediator variable and job satisfaction as a moderator variable. The population in this study is nurses in Kendari City, with a sample of 170 respondents taken. Primary data were collected through surveys using structured questionnaires compiled based on variable indicators that have been validated in previous studies. Each statement item in the instrument was measured using a five-point Likert scale to capture respondents' perceptions precisely, ranging from a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The data analysis process in this study was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS software. The selection of SEM-PLS was based on its flexibility in handling complex research models simultaneously, as well as

its ability to work effectively on non-normally distributed data with moderate sample sizes. The analysis procedure is carried out through two main stages: first, evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) which includes testing for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Second, the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the significance of the relationship between constructs through the bootstrapping procedure, in order to provide accurate conclusions about the direct influence, indirect influence (mediation), and moderation influence hypothesized in the model.

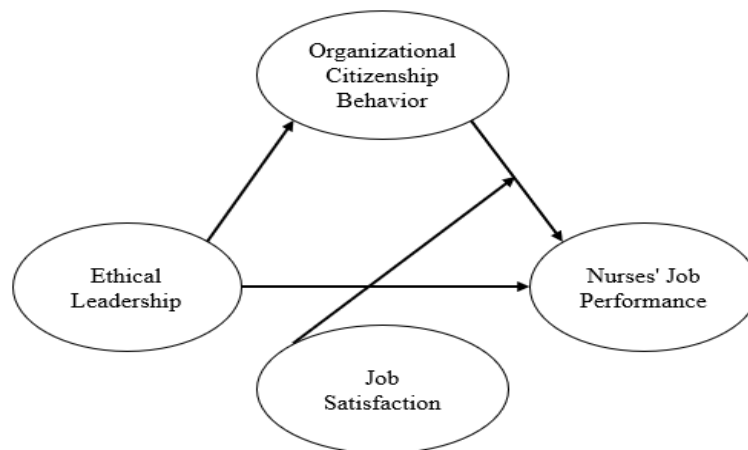


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample in this study consists of health and nurse workers who are actively serving in various health institutions in Kendari City, who collectively represent the profile of mature and competent human resources. Demographically, the majority of respondents were in the golden productive age range between 31 and 40 years, which comprised 42.4% of the total 170 participants involved in filling out the research instruments. When viewed from the characteristics of gender, the data show a significant dominance of women who make up 72.4% of the overall sample, while the rest are men; This phenomenon accurately reflects the demographic structure and natural characteristics of the nursing profession which is globally dominated by women. In terms of professional experience, the distribution of respondents showed strength in the aspects of seniority and flight hours, where most respondents had a very significant tenure between 6 to 15 years (48.2%). This provides a strong indication that the respondents have qualified clinical maturity and a deep understanding of work ethics in the hospital environment, so the answers given in the questionnaire are based on real empirical experience. The intellectual capacity of the respondents is also relatively high, considering that the majority are highly educated professionals with professional education qualifications as Nurses or Bachelor of Nursing (67.6%), which guarantees that their cognitive capacity and competence are very adequate to understand and respond to each item of this research instrument objectively. Overall, this profile describes the nursing workforce in Kendari City that has a combination of long work experience,

a strong educational background, and is in a stable career maturity phase, thus providing a very valid and relevant data foundation to analyze the relationship between ethical leadership, organizational civic behavior, and the effectiveness of health service performance.

Table 1. Validity and reliability test

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted
Job Satisfaction	M_1	0,921	0,946	0,955	0,821
	M_2	0,897			
	M_3	0,922			
	M_4	0,880			
	M_5	0,909			
Ethical Leadership	X_1	0,935	0,943	0,944	0,854
	X_2	0,920			
	X_3	0,916			
	X_5	0,925			
Nurses' Job Performance	Y_1	0,934	0,950	0,951	0,870
	Y_2	0,932			
	Y_3	0,920			
	Y_4	0,945			
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Z_1	0,951	0,965	0,967	0,905
	Z_2	0,954			
	Z_3	0,947			
	Z_4	0,954			

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the results of the evaluation of the measurement model show that all research constructs have very excellent instrument quality and meet the statistical criteria set in the PLS-SEM analysis. The Job Satisfaction variable shows strong convergent validity with a loading factor value between 0.880 to 0.921 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.821, which means that this construct is able to explain more than 80% of the variance of the indicators. In the Ethical Leadership variable, all items (X_1 to X_5) had a loading value above 0.916 with an AVE of 0.854, while Nurses' Job Performance recorded a loading value between 0.920 to 0.945 with an AVE of 0.870, which consistently proves that each statement item is very accurate in measuring nurse performance. The highest achievement was seen in the Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) variable with an AVE value of 0.905 and the entire loading factor indicator exceeded 0.947, indicating that this instrument has extraordinary precision in capturing the voluntary behavior of nurses. In addition to the validity aspect, the reliability of this model is strengthened by Cronbach's Alpha values which are in the range of 0.943 to 0.965 and Composite Reliability between 0.944 to 0.967, where these values are far beyond the ideal threshold of 0.70. Overall, these findings mean that the data collected from nurses in Kendari City have a very high internal consistency and are free from significant measurement errors, so this model has a very solid foundation to continue on structural model testing and intervariable relationship analysis.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of study variables

	1	2	3	4
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Job Satisfaction	0,906			
Ethical Leadership	0,384	0,924		
Nurses' Job Performance	0,354	0,762	0,933	
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0,411	0,779	0,774	0,952

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 2 regarding the correlation matrix between variables, this study evaluates the validity of the discriminant to ensure that each construct has clear differences and does not overlap empirically. The values listed on the main diagonal (the bolded number or the highest value in each column) are the square root values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which shows the relationship between the construct and its own indicator. The test results showed that the square root values of AVE for the variables Job Satisfaction (0.906), Ethical Leadership (0.924), Nurses' Job Performance (0.933), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (0.952) were all greater than the correlation values between other constructs in the same model. This means that each latent variable has a stronger loyalty of the indicator to itself compared to the other variables. Specifically, the correlation between Ethical Leadership and Nurses' Job Performance was recorded at 0.762, while the correlation between Organizational Citizenship Behavior and nurses' performance was at 0.774. Although there is a fairly strong correlation between Ethical Leadership and OCB (0.779), the value remains below the square root value of the AVE of each construct, which confirms that there is no serious multicollinearity problem. Overall, these results prove that the research model for nurses in Kendari City has met the criteria of excellent discriminant validity, so that each variable can be defined as a unique and valid conceptual entity to be used in subsequent hypothesis testing.

Table 3. R Square

	R-square
Nurses' Job Performance	0,689
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0,607

Based on the results of the structural model analysis listed in Table 3, the determination coefficient value (R2) is used to evaluate the predictive power of the model in explaining the variance of the endogenous variables studied. The test results showed that the Nurses' Job Performance variable had an R2 value of 0.689, which means that 68.9% of the variance in nurse performance in Kendari City can be explained by the contribution of the variables Ethical Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), and Job Satisfaction simultaneously. This value belongs to a strong category, indicating that the model built has high accuracy in predicting factors that affect the work performance of nurses in health institutions. Meanwhile, the Organizational Citizenship Behavior variable recorded an R2 value of 0.607, which means that 60.7% of the variance of the organization's citizenship behavior was influenced by independent variables in the model, while the remaining 39.3% was explained by other external factors beyond the scope of this study. Overall, the achievement of substantial R2 values on these two endogenous variables confirms that the integrity of this structural

model is highly relevant and has great practical significance in describing the dynamics of organizational behavior and the effectiveness of nurses' work in the field.

Table 4. Path coefficient and significant level

	Original sample	P values
Job Satisfaction -> Nurses' Job Performance	0,100	0,048
Ethical Leadership -> Nurses' Job Performance	0,363	0,002
Ethical Leadership -> Z ₁	0,779	0,000
Organizational Citizenship Behavior -> Nurses' Job Performance	0,403	0,000
Job Satisfaction x Organizational Citizenship Behavior -> Nurses' Job Performance	0,157	0,001

Hypothesis testing shows several significant relationships between the variables examined. Hypothesis testing in this research model shows that there are several statistically significant relationships between the variables analyzed in the nursing population in Kendari City. Ethical Leadership has been proven to have a positive and significant influence on Nurses' Job Performance ($\beta=0.363$, $p=0.002$), which indicates that the application of high ethical standards by leaders is directly able to trigger an improvement in the quality of service and work performance of nurses. The most dominant relationship was found in the influence of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) with a very strong coefficient value ($\beta=0.779$, $p=0.000$), suggesting that leadership with integrity is a major factor in fostering nurses' willingness to work beyond their formal job descriptions for organizational advancement. In addition, Organizational Citizenship Behavior independently has a positive and significant impact on Nurses' Job Performance ($\beta=0.403$, $p=0.000$), which confirms that cooperative and mutually helpful behavior among peers is a crucial element in achieving work efficiency. Job Satisfaction was also recorded to have a positive influence on nurse performance ($\beta=0.100$, $p=0.048$), although the strength was more moderate when compared to other variables in the model, this still shows that the emotional well-being of nurses still plays a role in supporting work productivity in health institutions.

Furthermore, the results of this study provide important insights into the role of interaction and mediation that occurs in the structural model. Testing on the moderation pathway showed that the interaction between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior had a positive and significant effect on Nurses' Job Performance ($\beta=0.157$, $p=0.001$), which means that the level of job satisfaction felt by nurses serves as a catalyst that amplifies the impact of OCB on performance improvement; In other words, the effectiveness of voluntary behavior will peak when nurses are also satisfied with the conditions of their work environment. Indirectly, Ethical Leadership also affects nurses' performance through the intermediary of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, which indicates that OCB acts as a mediating variable that connects the influence of the leader's ethical values to tangible actions that improve service performance. Overall, these findings show that to optimally improve the performance of nurses in Kendari City, hospital leaders not only need to act ethically to trigger OCB,

but also must ensure the creation of job satisfaction to maximize the positive contribution of the organization's civic behavior.

The results of the study show that all relationships in this research model are statistically significant. The first findings suggest that ethical leadership has a positive and significant direct influence on nurse performance. This means that the higher the perception of ethics in the leadership style of their superiors, the higher the level of performance displayed in daily nursing practice. These findings are in line with research by Liu et al. (2025) who found that ethical leaders encourage the formation of a climate of trust and moral responsibility that positively influences nurse performance. In addition, organizational citizenship behavior has been shown to mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and nurse performance. This shows that the influence of ethical leadership on performance improvement does not only occur directly, but also through the improvement of nurses' extra-role behavior. When nurses feel valued and led in a fair and moral manner, they are encouraged to contribute more, such as helping colleagues, maintaining team harmony, and paying more attention to patients outside of their formal duties. It is this behavior that strengthens the quality of service and the overall performance of nurses, as also stated by Su and Hahn (2025). Other findings show that job satisfaction strengthens the relationship between ethical leadership and nurse performance. In other words, the positive influence of ethical leadership on performance will be stronger when nurses feel satisfied with their work. Satisfied nurses tend to be more open to the values their leaders bring and are more motivated to perform at their best. These findings support the results of research by Kaffashpoor and Sadeghian (2020) who stated that job satisfaction is able to increase the influence of leadership style on the engagement and work performance of health workers.

The results of this study show that the combination of ethical leadership, positive organizational behavior, and job satisfaction can create a strong synergy in improving nurse performance. These findings provide empirical evidence that ethical leadership approaches not only impact the psychological and behavioral aspects of nurses, but also directly contribute to organizational output. Therefore, leadership development strategies within hospitals need to integrate ethical values as well as pay attention to the well-being and satisfaction of staff to achieve optimal organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Based on a series of analyses that have been conducted, this study concludes that ethical leadership plays a fundamental role as the main driver in improving the performance of nurses in Kendari City, both through direct and indirect influence through strengthening organizational citizenship behavior. The integrity and moral standards demonstrated by leaders have proven to be able to transform the work culture into a more professional one, which in turn triggers the willingness of nurses to contribute beyond their formal responsibilities. Furthermore, this study succeeded in proving that job satisfaction has a strategic role as a moderator variable that strengthens the effectiveness of ethical leadership on nurse performance. These findings confirm that leadership based on ethical values

will achieve its highest effectiveness in increasing organizational productivity if supported by a work environment that is able to meet the expectations and emotional well-being of health workers.

The implications of these findings provide strategic direction for hospital management and health institutions in Kendari City to start prioritizing the development of ethical leadership styles as a key pillar of managerial strategy. Management needs to design a leadership training program that focuses not only on technical-operational aspects, but also on character development and decision-making based on moral values. In addition, efforts to create a conducive work system must continue to be pursued to ensure high job satisfaction, considering its crucial role in converting nurses' voluntary behavior into superior service performance. As a direction for future science development, further research is expected to expand the scope of this model in the context of more diverse health organizations such as health centers or private clinics. Researchers are also advised to explore other contextual variables that have high urgency in the world of nursing, such as workload, work stress, or organizational support, in order to provide a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of human resource management in the health sector.

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