

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND JOB ATTITUDES IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF NEED FOR AUTONOMY ON JOB SATISFACTION AND AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The changing ethical demands in modern organizations have driven the importance of ethical leadership as a foundation for creating a healthy and quality work environment. This study aims to analyze the influence of perceived ethical leadership on job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment among employees of an Islamic educational institution in Cilacap Regency, as well as to test the role of need for autonomy as a moderating variable and direct predictor. A quantitative approach was used involving 225 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using SEM-PLS. The results of the study show that ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction and affective commitment. However, need for autonomy weakened this relationship, indicating that the level of need for autonomy does not change the strength of the influence of leaders' ethical behavior. Nevertheless, the need for autonomy has been shown to have a positive effect on job satisfaction and affective commitment, indicating that the fulfillment of autonomy remains an important factor for employee psychological well-being. These findings provide practical implications for Islamic Education to strengthen the moral role models of leaders and provide proportional autonomy to improve the quality of work and emotional ties of employees to the organization.

Keywords: *Ethical Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Affective Organizational Commitment, Need for Autonomy, Self-Determination Theory (SDT).*

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations across sectors are facing major changes that demand increased ethical standards in leadership. Public demands for transparency, morality, and accountability are growing stronger as the complexity of work and public expectations increase (Saleem et al., 2024). In general, many organizations experience a decline in internal trust due to leadership behavior inconsistent with moral values, leading to dissatisfaction, decreased motivation, and increased employee intention to leave (Liu et al., 2023). Recent research also reports that leaders' failure to maintain ethical standards directly impacts organizational stability, particularly in public service-based work environments (Aunin et al., 2024). This condition makes ethical leadership one of the strategic issues in human resource development in the modern era (Haznil Zainal et al., 2023). In addition to structural and psychological aspects, ethical behavior in modern organizations is also influenced by the spiritual dimension which provides meaning and moral direction for individuals in working, especially in organizations based on religious values (Bagis et al., 2025).

Educational and social institutions as value-based organizations are now faced with demands to simultaneously improve integrity and quality of service. In various surveys of educational institutions, employees have expressed a misalignment of values between individuals and leaders, impacting their job satisfaction and affective commitment (Bagis, Darmawan, Ikhsani, et al., 2021). The Islamic education foundation in Cilacap Regency has 11 different work units, thus facing greater challenges because public expectations of the moral example of leaders are very high and are attached to the identity of the institution. When leadership behavior is perceived as unfair, inconsistent, or lacking in caring, employees often experience value confusion, work stress, and reduced intrinsic motivation (Bagis et al., 2020). If this condition persists for a long time, the quality of service and professionalism of the institution may decline, thus urging a scientific analysis of the factors that influence employee attitudes and behavior.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are basic psychological needs that must be met for individuals to perform optimally (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Ethical leaders serve as facilitators who help employees meet these needs through fair, supportive, transparent, and morally consistent behavior (Nawaz et al., 2022). When leaders provide space for employees to voice their opinions, value their contributions, and build trust, intrinsic motivation increases, reflecting higher job satisfaction and emotional commitment (Santiago-Torner, 2023). Conversely, when the leader's behavior does not support these needs, job satisfaction can decrease and affective commitment can weaken.

Ethical leadership is known to create a psychologically safe work environment, reduce value conflicts, and foster a sense of appreciation so that employees feel satisfied with their work (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). Job satisfaction then serves as a psychological state that strengthens affective commitment, a form of emotional attachment that encourages individuals to remain and contribute more to the organization (Bagis et al., 2021). Various studies also show that when leaders demonstrate moral exemplary behavior and behavioral consistency, employees will more easily internalize organizational values within themselves (Santiago-Torner, 2024). Thus, the interrelationship between these variables suggests that ethical leadership has a strategic impact on employee psychological well-being and loyalty, particularly in social service and education-based organizations.

Although the relationship between variables has been extensively studied, previous research still leaves a number of scientific gaps that need to be addressed. Empirically, ethical leadership has been shown to have a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction, as shown by Bagis et al., (2021); Nawaz et al., (2022); Schwepker & Dimitriou, (2021) found that fair, transparent, and integrity-based leader behavior can create a supportive work environment and increase job satisfaction. In addition, ethical leadership is also reported to have a positive influence on affective commitment, where employees show stronger emotional attachment when leaders are able to be moral role models and uphold the values of justice (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Bagi set al., 2021; Santiago-Torner, 2024). Furthermore, the relationship between job satisfaction and affective commitment is also supported by consistent empirical findings, which show that employees who feel satisfied with their jobs tend to have higher emotional loyalty to the organization (Anh et al., 2022; Santiago-Torner, 2023; Suroya et al., 2023). However, most of these studies still focus on the corporate sector, service industries, and government, so the context of Islamic education-based non-profit organizations has not received much attention in the current literature. In

addition, although many studies report significant effects, some studies show variations in the strength of the relationship when the cultural values and moral orientation of the organization are not fully aligned (Haznil Zainal et al., 2023; Nawaz et al., 2022). The need for autonomy variable, which has the potential to moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and employee work attitudes, is also more frequently tested in individualistic cultural contexts, thus raising the question of whether its role is different in collectivistic cultures such as in Islamic educational institutions (Aunin et al., 2024).

This study applies the ethical leadership model in the context of Islamic educational institutions, thus different from previous research. Ethical leadership has religious values, collectivistic culture, and leadership patterns based on moral examples, thus providing a new understanding regarding the application of ethical values in non-profit educational organizations (Bagis et al., 2024). Novelty is also evident in the use of need for autonomy as a moderating variable in collectivistic cultures, considering that previous research has mostly examined it in individualistic cultures. Thus, this study offers new insights into how the need for autonomy works in a work environment that emphasizes togetherness (Aunin et al., 2024). Furthermore, this study integrates ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and affective commitment into one comprehensive model, providing a clearer picture of the psychological mechanisms linking leaders' ethical behavior to employees' emotional attachment to Islamic educational organizations.

The urgency of this research is further heightened in the context of Islamic education in Cilacap Regency, a multi-unit institution with diverse teaching and staff, and high demands on moral exemplars from its leaders. Differences in employee backgrounds and the characteristics of each work unit often lead to differing views on fairness, openness, and support provided by leaders. If this condition is not managed well and based on ethical values, employees can experience job dissatisfaction, stress, and decreased emotional attachment to the institution (Bagis et al., 2020). Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed to understand how ethical leadership plays a role in meeting employees' psychological needs, particularly the need for autonomy, in a work environment that upholds the values of togetherness and religiosity.

Furthermore, the limitations of previous research, which has predominantly focused on the corporate sector and individualistic cultures, make this study urgently needed to address the gap in the literature. Without a proper understanding of the context of Islamic educational institutions, decision-making related to leadership development and human resource management risks being based on inadequate evidence (Aunin et al., 2024; Nawaz et al., 2022). Therefore, this research is important practically as a basis for formulating more ethical and employee-friendly leadership policies, as well as theoretically to enrich the application of Self-Determination Theory in the context of non-profit Islamic educational organizations.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is one of the most influential theories of human motivation in explaining work behavior and psychological well-being. This theory was developed by Deci & Ryan, (1985, 2000) and emphasizes that every individual has three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs are considered universal components that, when met, will result in intrinsic motivation,

psychological well-being, and high commitment to the organization. In an organizational context, autonomy describes the extent to which employees feel they have control and freedom in carrying out their work; competence relates to feelings of being able and effective in completing tasks; while relatedness reflects feelings of connection and acceptance in the work environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

When these three needs are met, employees tend to have higher engagement, job satisfaction, and loyalty to the organization. Ethical leadership plays a crucial role in fulfilling these three needs. Ethical leaders demonstrate honest, fair behavior and care about employee welfare (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Through these behaviors, leaders help employees feel supported, trusted, and valued, which ultimately increases their intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being (Tavares et al., 2021). Self-Determination Theory provides a conceptual basis for understanding how ethical leadership can influence affective outcomes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment to the organization. This study positions subordinates' need for autonomy as a moderating variable that can strengthen or weaken the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. If subordinates' need for autonomy is met, the influence of ethical leadership will be stronger (Aunin et al., 2024).

The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Job Satisfaction

Ethical leadership is seen as one of the main factors in shaping the quality of employee work experience, (Robbins & Judge, 2024).. Because leaders who uphold honesty, justice, and moral responsibility are able to create trusting social relationships in the work environment (Liu et al., 2023). Leaders who behave ethically not only set moral standards, but also demonstrate concern and dignified treatment of subordinates, thereby increasing the perception that the organization values individual contributions (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2022). This positive perception is crucial because job satisfaction essentially reflects the extent to which employees feel satisfied with their tasks, work environment, and the emotional experiences they experience during their work, including a sense of comfort, pride, and meaning in their daily roles (Haznil Zainal et al., 2023). When leaders act ethically, employees more easily experience appreciation, fairness, and role certainty, all of which are crucial elements in shaping job satisfaction (Mohi Ud Din et al., 2025).

Self-Determination Theory suggests that ethical leadership plays a role in fulfilling employees' basic psychological needs, particularly the need for security, respect, and fair treatment. Fulfillment of these needs increases intrinsic motivation and positive work experiences, which are then reflected in high job satisfaction. Leaders who demonstrate honesty, fairness, and moral integrity exemplify exemplary behavior, thus creating a safe and trusting work environment. This condition encourages the emergence of positive evaluations of the work being carried out. Nawaz et al., (2022) found that ethical leadership positively influences job satisfaction through the creation of fair and respectful working relationships. Similar results were also reported by Schwepker & Dimitriou, (2021) who showed that ethical leadership is able to reduce work stress levels and improve the quality of work experience, thus having an impact on increasing employee job satisfaction. Recent research by (Santiago-Torner, 2024) strengthens these findings by showing that moral consistency and exemplary leadership increase perceptions of fairness and rewards, which are key factors in shaping job satisfaction. Based on the consistency of these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Affective Commitment

Affective organizational commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, which makes individuals want to remain part of the organization because of feelings of pride, trust, and value congruence (Santiago-Torner, 2024). Within the SDT framework, fulfilling employees' psychological needs through ethical leader behavior creates a sense of belonging and positive identification with the organization. When leaders treat employees fairly and with integrity, employees feel valued and are motivated to reciprocate this treatment through stronger emotional commitment (Robbins & Judge, 2024).

According to Self-Determination Theory, ethical leaders also fulfill the need for relatedness and esteem, so employees feel like an important part of the organization. This condition encourages the emergence of a sense of pride and emotional loyalty towards the organization. Affective commitment describes an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, which is reflected in a sense of pride, trust, and a desire to remain part of the organization. Ethical leadership plays a crucial role in building this attachment by instilling moral values, fairness, and consistent behavior. Ashfaq et al., (2021) showed that ethical leadership increases employee affective commitment by strengthening trust and emotional engagement. In line with this, Santiago-Torner, (2024) found that leaders who uphold ethical values encourage the internalization of organizational values, thereby strengthening employees' emotional attachment. In value-based organizations, Bagis et al., (2021) also demonstrated that ethical leadership significantly influences affective commitment due to the creation of value alignment between employees and the organization. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Ethical leadership has a positive effect on affective organizational commitment.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy as a Moderator between Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Self-Determination Theory explains that employee responses to leadership behavior are influenced by the level of fulfillment of basic psychological needs, particularly the need for autonomy. Recent research suggests that the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction may differ depending on the level of employee autonomy needs. Aunin et al., (2024) found that the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction was stronger in employees with a high need for autonomy. This finding is supported by Anh et al., (2022), who showed that individuals with a high need for autonomy were better able to internalize the ethical values of their leaders, resulting in higher levels of job satisfaction. In addition, Liu et al., (2023) revealed that ethical leadership is more effective in increasing positive work attitudes when employees are given space to make decisions and carry out their work independently. Based on these research results, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Need for autonomy moderates the relationship between perceived ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy as a Moderator between Ethical Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

In addition to job satisfaction, the need for autonomy also plays a role in strengthening the influence of ethical leadership on affective commitment. Ethical leaders

who support autonomy provide employees with a sense of trust and appreciation, thereby increasing emotional attachment to the organization. Aunin et al., (2024) showed that employees with a high need for autonomy have a stronger affective commitment when led by ethical leaders. Ashfaq et al., (2021) also found that leader moral support is more effective in building emotional commitment when employees feel they are given freedom and trust. In addition, Santiago-Torner, (2024) emphasized that autonomy support strengthens employee identification with organizational values, which has an impact on increasing affective commitment. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Need for autonomy moderates the relationship between perceived ethical leadership and affective organizational commitment.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy on Job Satisfaction

The need for autonomy is an important component in SDT which relates to the extent to which employees feel they have freedom, choice, and control in carrying out their tasks (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Contemporary research shows that when employees have high levels of autonomy, they tend to experience greater job satisfaction because they feel free to determine the best way to complete their work (McAnally & Hagger, 2024). Employees with a high need for autonomy typically demonstrate stronger motivation, perceive their roles as meaningful, and are better able to manage job demands independently (Nawaz et al., 2022).

Employees who feel autonomous tend to perceive their work as more meaningful and satisfying. The need for autonomy is one of the main determinants of employee job satisfaction. McAnally & Hagger, (2024) found that fulfilling the need for autonomy increases intrinsic motivation and meaningfulness of work, which ultimately increases job satisfaction. This finding is supported by Nawaz et al., (2022), who showed that employees with high levels of autonomy tend to report greater job satisfaction. Furthermore, Aunin et al., (2024) also demonstrated that job autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction, particularly in public and educational sector organizations. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Need for autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy on Affective Organizational Commitment

According to Robbins & Judge, (2024), the higher the level of autonomy employees perceive in their work, the greater the likelihood of job satisfaction. Fulfilling the need for autonomy helps strengthen employees' sense of ownership and pride in the organization (McAnally & Hagger, 2024). Autonomy support also increases emotional loyalty because employees feel trusted and given the space to make decisions (Twaissi & Aldehayyat, 2021). In addition, research shows that job autonomy strengthens employee identification with organizational values, thus having a positive effect on affective commitment (Lee & Park, 2025).

Self-Determination Theory has the perception that fulfilling the need for autonomy encourages deeper internalization of organizational values, thereby strengthening employee identification and emotional attachment. Employees who feel trusted and given freedom in their work tend to develop a stronger sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the organization. Twaissi & Aldehayyat, (2021) found that autonomy support increases employees' emotional loyalty to the organization. Furthermore, McAnally & Hagger, (2024) demonstrated that fulfilling the need for autonomy has a positive impact on the organization

and increases affective commitment. Recent research by Lee & Park, (2025) also confirms that autonomy support facilitates the internalization of organizational values, which results in increased employee affective commitment. Therefore, the final hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H6: Need for autonomy has a positive effect on affective organizational commitment.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a quantitative study with a replica design that adopts the conceptual model from Aunin et al., (2024) research regarding the influence of perceived ethical leadership on job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. With the aim of re-testing the model in a different context, while expanding it by including the need for autonomy variable as a moderating variable, in the Islamic educational organization environment.

The research population includes all employees at one of the Islamic educational institutions in Cilacap Regency, consisting of elementary, middle, high school and university education, with a total of 444 employees. The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%, so that a minimum number of 210 samples was obtained. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely active employees with a minimum work period of more than one year and a total of 225 respondents who met the criteria and were eligible for further analysis.

Data collection was conducted using a Google Form, arranged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The research instrument items were adapted from sources whose validity has been tested internationally. The ethical leadership variable was measured using ten items from (Brown et al., 2005). The job satisfaction variable used eight items adapted from (Judge et al., 2017) and (Weiss et al., 2012). The affective organizational commitment variable used eight items developed by (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meanwhile, the need for autonomy variable uses twelve items based on the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory developed by (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the help of SmartPLS software. This technique was chosen because it can simultaneously test relationships between latent variables, in accordance with recommendations (Hair et al., 2021) for research involving complex models and moderating variables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study used Partial Least Squares (PLS) to reduce variable variance when estimating model parameters (Hair et al., 2021). All questionnaire data was prepared for analysis and collected with a 100% return rate.

Tabel 1. Responden Demographics

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Man | 97 | 43.1 |
| | Women | 128 | 56.9 |
| Age (Years) | 18 – 25 | 12 | 5.3 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| | 25 – 30 | 21 | 9.3 |
| | 30 – 35 | 27 | 12.0 |
| | 35 – 40 | 39 | 17.3 |
| | 40 – 50 | 85 | 37.8 |
| | >50 | 41 | 18.2 |
| Status | Not Married | 20 | 8.9 |
| | Married | 205 | 91.1 |
| Education | Junior High School/Equivalent | 1 | 0.4 |
| | High School/Equivalent | 36 | 16.0 |
| | Diploma | 10 | 4.4 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 141 | 62.7 |
| | Postgraduate Degree | 37 | 16.4 |
| Employment Status | Permanent | 145 | 64.4 |
| | not fixed | 80 | 35.6 |
| Years of service | 1–3 | 33 | 14.7 |
| | >4–6 | 22 | 9.8 |
| | >7–9 | 23 | 10.2 |
| | >9 | 147 | 65.3 |

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study. Based on gender, female respondents dominated with 128 people (56.9%), reflecting the large number of administrative and educational service positions which are generally filled by female workers. In terms of age, the majority were in the 40–50 age group 85 people (37.8%), indicating that most employees were in a mature career stage with extensive work experience. Most respondents were married 205 people (91.1%), indicating social stability and a tendency to work long-term.

In terms of education level, respondents were dominated by bachelor's degree graduates, amounting to 141 people (62.7%), illustrating the high standards of academic competence in modern Islamic educational institutions. Based on employment status, there are 145 permanent employees (64.4%), indicating a relatively stable employment structure. Meanwhile, the length of service is dominated by employees with more than 9 years of experience, amounting to 147 people (65.3%), which indicates a high level of employee retention and loyalty.

This study uses the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method through SmartPLS because it is able to estimate complex structural models with latent variables and reduce measurement variance (Hair et al., 2021). This method allows testing of direct relationships, moderation, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between variables in the research model.

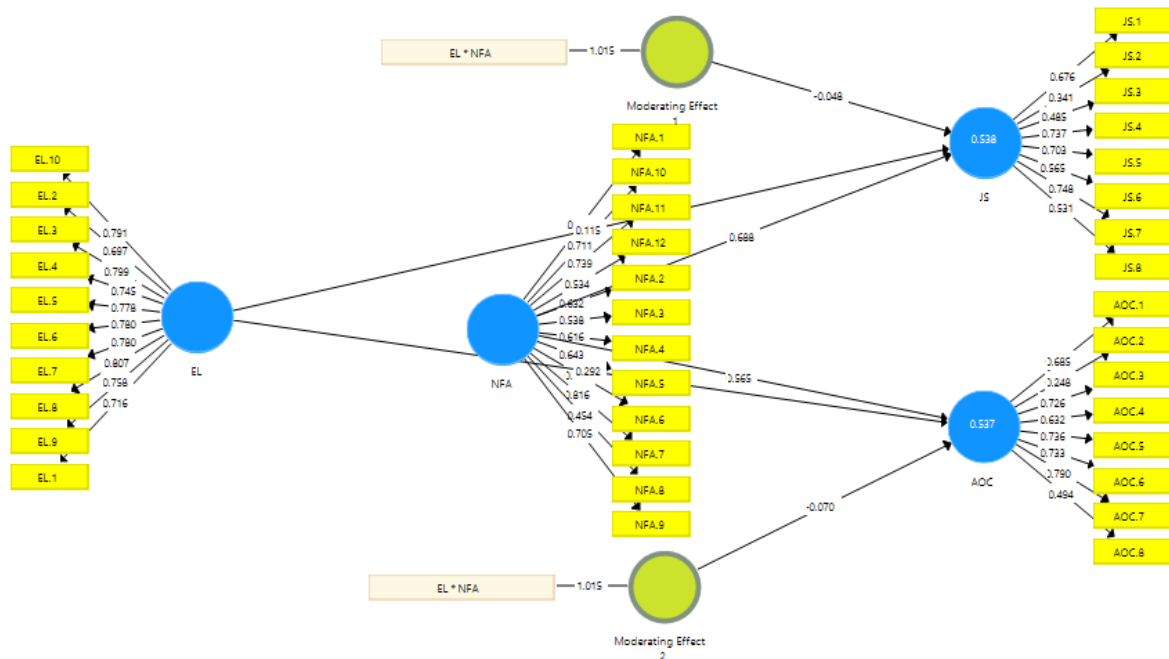


Figure 1. SEM - PLS Model Analysis

Referring to Figure 1, the outer loading results for each variable studied. The data were analyzed in two rounds and eliminated nine indicators, such as NFA.12, NFA.3, NFA.8, and the dependent variable JS.2, JS.3, JS.6, JS.8, AOC.2, and AOC.8. Because the indicator has an outer loading value below 0.5. Meanwhile, if the outer loading result is above 0.5, the indicator is considered appropriate (Hair et al., 2021).

Tabel 2. Outer Loading

| | Statement Items | Outer loading 1 |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| EL.1 | My leader demonstrates professional and ethical behavior in carrying out his work. | 0,716 |
| EL.2 | My leader emphasizes the importance of honesty and the right way to achieve success. | 0,697 |
| EL.3 | My leader values and listens to every employee's opinion. | 0,799 |
| EL.4 | My leader takes strict action against unethical actions in the workplace. | 0,745 |
| EL.5 | My leader makes decisions fairly and balanced. | 0,778 |
| EL.6 | My leader can be trusted to do the right thing. | 0,780 |
| EL.7 | My leader explains ethical values in decision making. | 0,780 |
| EL.8 | My leader sets a role model for ethical behavior in the workplace. | 0,807 |
| EL.9 | My leader shows concern for the welfare and interests of employees. | 0,758 |
| EL.10 | My leaders consider what is the right thing to do when making decisions. | 0,791 |

| | | |
|--------|--|--------------|
| JS.1 | I feel that the salary I currently receive is commensurate with my job responsibilities. | 0,676 |
| JS.2 | I can complete my work tasks without feeling overly burdened. | 0,341 |
| JS.3 | I have a clear opportunity to get a promotion in this agency. | 0,485 |
| JS.4 | I feel that the available work facilities and resources help me complete my work well. | 0,737 |
| JS.5 | I feel proud of the work I have achieved. | 0,703 |
| JS.6 | I can use my abilities and skills to the maximum in this job. | 0,568 |
| JS.7 | I feel my position in this agency is safe as long as I do my job well. | 0,747 |
| JS.8 | I have the freedom to make decisions in carrying out my duties. | 0,533 |
| AOC.1 | I would love to spend the rest of my career with this organization. | 0,685 |
| AOC.2 | I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it. | 0,248 |
| AOC.3 | I feel as if this organization's problems are my own. | 0,726 |
| AOC.4 | I think I can easily get attached to another organization as I am attached to this one. | 0,632 |
| AOC.5 | I don't feel like 'part of the family' in my organization | 0,736 |
| AOC.6 | I don't feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization. | 0,733 |
| AOC.7 | This organization has a lot of personal meaning for me. | 0,790 |
| AOC.8 | I don't feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. | 0,494 |
| NFA.1 | I took the initiative to discuss with my boss about my job expectations. | 0,702 |
| NFA.2 | I organize my own work according to my understanding of my boss's expectations. | 0,627 |
| NFA.3 | I choose the way of working that best suits my abilities to achieve the best results. | 0,550 |
| NFA.4 | I try various ways when I face difficulties in completing assignments. | 0,622 |
| NFA.5 | I explore various methods to achieve my work goals. | 0,636 |
| NFA.6 | I determine for myself the best way to carry out my duties. | 0,803 |
| NFA.7 | I make my own decisions about how I get my work done. | 0,815 |
| NFA.8 | I find out the reasons behind every task given to me. | 0,464 |
| NFA.9 | I link my work to contributions to organizational goals. | 0,699 |
| NFA.10 | I adapt my way of working when work rules change. | 0,709 |
| NFA.11 | I reject ways of working that overly limit my freedom in making decisions. | 0,739 |
| NFA.12 | I look for explanations when I don't understand the reasoning behind a particular task. | 0,545 |

Regarding the results of table 2, the outer loading in the second round shows that all indicators retained in each variable have a value above 0.5. This value indicates that these indicators have a strong contribution in explaining the measured reflective construct. As stated by (Hair et al., 2021), an outer loading value ≥ 0.5 is a general criterion indicating that

an indicator is considered reliable in reflecting its latent variables. Therefore, the results of the remaining indicators have met the requirements for convergent validity and are suitable for use in further structural model testing.

Tabel 3. Construct Reliability dan Validity

| | Cronbach's Alpha | Rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|---|
| AOC | 0,824 | 0,830 | 0,873 | 0,535 |
| EL | 0,922 | 0,923 | 0,934 | 0,587 |
| JS | 0,758 | 0,767 | 0,845 | 0,578 |
| Moderating Effect 1 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Moderating Effect 2 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| NFA | 0,884 | 0,890 | 0,907 | 0,523 |

The Construct Reliability table shows that the Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values for the Ethical Leadership, Affective Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Need for Autonomy variables each have values greater than 0.7. This indicates that all variables have excellent internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021). Thus, the measurement instrument used in this study is declared reliable.

Tabel 3. Model Fit

| | Saturated Model | Estimated Model |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| SRMR | 0,069 | 0,072 |
| d_ ULS | 2,043 | 2,282 |
| d_ G | 0,705 | 0,737 |
| Chi-Square | 852,109 | 879,974 |
| NFI | 0,775 | 0,768 |

Based on Table 4, the SRMR value for the Saturated Model is 0.069 and for the Estimated Model is 0.072, both of which are below the 0.08 threshold, indicating a good level of model fit. The d_ ULS and d_ G values for the Estimated Model are 2.282 and 0.737, respectively, which are still acceptable because they reflect relatively low residuals. Meanwhile, the NFI value of 0.768 indicates a moderate level of fit, which is still acceptable for a complex PLS-SEM model. Overall, the results of this test indicate that the research model has an adequate level of suitability and is suitable for further structural analysis (Hair et al., 2021).

Next, an evaluation of the quality of the structural model was carried out through an analysis of the Adjusted R-Square value, which was used to determine the extent to which the independent variables were able to explain variations in the dependent variables studied.

The adjusted R-square value for job satisfaction is 0.521, meaning that ethical leadership and need for autonomy can explain 52.1% of job satisfaction, while the remaining 47.9% is influenced by other variables. Furthermore, the adjusted R-square value for affective organizational commitment is 0.496, indicating that ethical leadership and need for

autonomy explain 49.6% of the variation in affective commitment, while the other 50.4% is influenced by external factors not covered in the study.

Overall, the Adjusted R-Square value confirms that the ethical leadership and need for autonomy variables have a significant contribution in shaping employee job satisfaction and affective commitment. The research model was also deemed adequate in explaining the relationships between the variables studied.

Tabel 5. Discriminant Validity

| | AOC | EL | JS | Moderating Effect 1 | Moderating Effect 2 | NFA |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|
| AOC | 0,731 | | | | | |
| EL | 0,584 | 0,766 | | | | |
| JS | 0,688 | 0,520 | 0,760 | | | |
| Moderating Effect 1 | 0,294 | 0,303 | 0,375 | 1,000 | | |
| Moderating Effect 2 | 0,294 | 0,303 | 0,375 | 1,000 | 1,000 | |
| NFA | 0,657 | 0,562 | 0,712 | 0,532 | 0,532 | 0,723 |

The results of the discriminant validity test indicate that all constructs in the model meet the Fornell-Larcker criteria. The square root value of AVE for each variable is higher than its correlation with other constructs, so that each variable is proven to be able to clearly differentiate itself from one another (Hair et al., 2021). The constructs of Affective Organizational Commitment, Ethical Leadership, Job Satisfaction, and Need for Autonomy show strong conceptual separation. Likewise, Moderating Effect 1 and Moderating Effect 2 do not show any overlap with the core variable. Overall, these results confirm that all constructs have good discriminant validity and are suitable for use in further analysis.

Tabel 6. Path Coefficients

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics ((O/STDEV)) | P Values | Result |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| EL → JS | 0,175 | 0,171 | 0,065 | 2,670 | 0,008 | Accepted |
| EL → AOC | 0,314 | 0,313 | 0,072 | 4,337 | 0,000 | Accepted |
| Moderating Effect 1 → JS | -0,006 | -0,001 | 0,061 | 0,098 | 0,922 | Rejected |
| Moderating Effect 2 → AOC | -0,079 | -0,077 | 0,056 | 1,408 | 0,160 | Rejected |
| NFA → JS | 0,617 | 0,624 | 0,066 | 9,414 | 0,000 | Accepted |
| NFA → AOC | 0,522 | 0,526 | 0,065 | 8,026 | 0,000 | Accepted |

The results of the analysis in Table 6, the first hypothesis shows a positive influence between ethical leadership and job satisfaction, because the p-value is 0.008 and the original sample is 0.175 so the first hypothesis is accepted. The second hypothesis shows a positive influence between ethical leadership and affective organizational commitment, which is indicated by the p-value of 0.000 for the original sample of 0.314, so the second hypothesis is accepted. The results of the analysis show the moderating effect of need for autonomy weakens the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction, this is evidenced by

the p-value of 0.922 and the original sample -0.006. A similar thing was also found, the moderating effect of need for autonomy weakened the relationship between ethical leadership and affective commitment, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.160 and an original sample of -0.079, so that the moderation hypothesis in this study was rejected.

The fifth hypothesis shows that there is an influence between the need for autonomy and job satisfaction with a p-value of 0.000 and an original sample of 0.617, so the fifth hypothesis is accepted. The sixth hypothesis shows that there is an influence between the need for autonomy and affective organizational commitment, with a p-value of 0.000 and an original sample of 0.522, so the sixth hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Job Satisfaction

The results of this study indicate that ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction, which indicates that leaders are role models in behaving ethically in the workplace so that I feel that my position in this institution is safe as long as I work well at an Islamic educational institution. This finding confirms that employees do not only assess their work from material aspects, but also from the moral qualities and exemplary behavior shown by leaders. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) states that leaders who behave ethically contribute to the fulfillment of employees' basic psychological needs, especially a sense of security and esteem. A fair and transparent work environment creates psychological conditions that are conducive to the emergence of intrinsic motivation, which is then reflected in positive evaluations of work. In Islamic educational institutions, ethical leadership strengthens the meaning of work, thereby increasing emotional and moral job satisfaction.

This finding is consistent with research by Nawaz et al., (2022); Santiago-Torner, (2024); Schwepker & Dimitriou, (2021) where ethical leadership has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction, this shows that ethical leadership increases job satisfaction through mechanisms of fairness, trust, and healthy work relationships. Thus, the results of this study expand the empirical validity of the influence of ethical leadership in the context of non-profit Islamic educational organizations.

The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Affective Organizational Commitment

This study also found that ethical leadership has a positive influence on affective organizational commitment. These findings show that leaders who are consistent in implementing ethical values in the workplace are able to foster employees' emotional attachment to the organization. Employees who describe their leaders as ethical tend to feel proud, trusted, and have value alignment with the organization. Self-Determination Theory explains that ethical leadership fulfills the need for relatedness, a feeling of connection and belonging to the organization. Just and moral leaders encourage the internalization of organizational values, so that the resulting commitment is affective, not merely instrumental. This is very relevant in Islamic educational institutions that uphold the values of togetherness and moral example.

This result is in line with the findings of Ashfaq et al., (2021); Bagis et al., (2021); Santiago-Torner, (2024) which show that ethical leadership has a positive influence on affective commitment through trust and value identification. Thus, ethical leadership plays a strategic role in maintaining employee emotional loyalty in the long term.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy as a Moderator between Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction

This result is in line with the findings of Ashfaq et al., (2021); Bagis et al., (2021); Santiago-Torner, (2024) which show that ethical leadership has a positive influence on affective commitment through trust and value identification. Thus, ethical leadership plays a strategic role in maintaining employee emotional loyalty in the long term. In Islamic educational institutions characterized by a collectivist culture, job satisfaction is determined more by fairness, moral example, and certainty of direction provided by the leader than by the level of individual freedom. Although SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, these results indicate that values of togetherness and moral leadership have a more dominant influence on shaping job satisfaction.

This finding is inconsistent with Anh et al., (2022); Aunin et al., (2024) who found a significant moderating effect in individualistic cultures, but supported the findings of Liu et al., (2023) who stated that ethical leadership can have a direct impact without depending on certain individual characteristics.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy as a Moderator between Ethical Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

Similar results to previous findings, need for autonomy weakens the relationship between ethical leadership and affective organizational commitment. This suggests that employees' emotional attachment to the organization is more influenced by perceptions of the leader's moral values and fairness than by the need for individual autonomy. In Islamic educational organizations, affective commitment develops primarily through alignment of values, beliefs, and moral identification with the leader and the organization. Therefore, although autonomy plays a role in work well-being, the ethical factor of leadership remains the main determinant of emotional engagement.

This finding differs from Ashfaq et al., (2021); Aunin et al., (2024), but in line with Santiago-Torner, (2024) who emphasized that ethical leadership has a strong direct influence on affective commitment, especially in value-based organizations.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy on Job Satisfaction

This study found that the need for autonomy has a positive effect on job satisfaction. This finding confirms that fulfilling the need for autonomy remains a significant factor in increasing job satisfaction, although it does not act as a moderator. Employees who have the freedom to organize their work methods and make decisions tend to feel their work is more meaningful and satisfying as long as they do a good job.

These results are in line with SDT which states that autonomy is the main source of intrinsic motivation and work well-being. This finding is also consistent with Aunin et al., (2024); McAnally & Hagger, (2024); Nawaz et al., (2022), which found that need for autonomy positively influences job satisfaction, indicating that job autonomy contributes significantly to job satisfaction, including in the context of educational organizations.

The Influence of Need for Autonomy on Affective Organizational Commitment

The results of the study show that the need for autonomy has a positive effect on affective organizational commitment. Fulfilling the need for autonomy encourages employees to make their own decisions when completing their work and develops a stronger sense of

belonging. Employees who feel trusted and given the space to act independently tend to show higher emotional engagement.

Self-Determination Theory explains that autonomy facilitates a deeper process of internalization of values, so that the commitment formed is affective and sustainable. This finding is in line with research by Lee & Park, (2025); McAnally & Hagger, (2024); Twaissi & Aldehayyat, (2021) where Need for autonomy has a positive effect on Affective Organizational Commitment, which confirms that autonomy support strengthens affective commitment through identification and a sense of belonging.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that perceived ethical leadership influences job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Ethical leaders are able to create a comfortable work environment, a sense of pride, and an emotional bond between employees and the organization. However, the need for autonomy does not moderate either relationship, which is caused by the character of the work environment in organizations which tends to value leadership direction and togetherness more than individual freedom. Nevertheless, the need for autonomy directly influences job satisfaction and affective commitment because the fulfillment of autonomy makes employees feel more trusted and have control over their work. Organizations must strengthen ethical leadership practices by increasing the integrity, transparency, and moral exemplarity of unit leaders and organizations also need to provide proportional autonomy to teachers and education personnel, such as flexibility in teaching methods, classroom management, or decision-making in administrative tasks. In addition, it is recommended to create a more supportive work environment for self-development so that employees feel valued, supported, and increasingly committed to the institution.

Suggestions

This study provides an empirical contribution regarding the role of ethical leadership and the need for autonomy in shaping job satisfaction and affective commitment of employees in Islamic educational institutions. However, this study still has a number of limitations that open up opportunities for further research. Future research can be conducted in different organizational contexts, including Islamic educational institutions in other regions, non-religious educational institutions, and public and private sector organizations that have different cultural characteristics, organizational structures, and levels of complexity. In addition, further research is recommended to add other relevant variables, such as psychological safety, trust in leaders, perceived organizational support, or organizational justice, which in various studies have been shown to play a role in explaining employee work attitudes and behavior more comprehensively. The use of a longitudinal approach is also recommended to be able to capture the dynamics of changes in work attitudes and employee emotional attachment along with the development of leadership and organizational policies. Thus, further research is expected to enrich the development of theory, especially Self-Determination Theory in the context of value-based organizations, as well as provide broader practical implications for human resource management and strengthening sustainable ethical leadership.

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