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Employee Perceived Justice as Mediator Between Ethical Leadership and Employee Turnover Intention

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Abstract

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MBA, The University of Akron, 2008

BSc, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, 2003

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Abstract

The means by which business leaders implement human resources management strategies to improve employee retention during crisis is currently not well understood. This indicates that theoretical understanding of the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, perceptions of justice, and employee turnover in the context of crises is deficient. The purpose of this study was to examine the mediating effect, if any, of perceived overall justice on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention during a moment of crisis, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social learning theory and the categorical framework of context provided a theoretical foundation for the nonexperimental quantitative research design. Study participants ($N = 199$) were randomly selected frontline workers of big-box general merchandise retail and wholesale stores in the United States who had reported to work during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants completed an online survey. Linear regression and analysis of variance tests were used to evaluate responses to an online survey. Results revealed ethical leadership behaviors positively influenced perceived overall justice, but overall justice did not mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intentions. The study furthers understanding of the impact of contextual leadership on organizational justice and employee turnover which can help organizational leaders to maximize retention rates and reduce human resource management costs, while also contributing to job market stability.

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Dedication

I wholeheartedly dedicate the completion of this dissertation to my loving parents, Salman and Ma'asomah, who have provided me with relentless love, unconditional sacrifice, and endless prayers throughout my life to be who I am today. I am eternally grateful!

I am thankful to my beloved brothers and other family members, friends, and everyone else I overlooked mentioning but who contributed, in some fashion, to the successful completion of this dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

High employee turnover is a significant challenge that business leaders continually encounter. Surveys show that 1 in 2 employees leave their job to end the relationship with their managers (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This challenge is consequential for a complex or predominantly labor-intensive industry and can lead to more prevalent consequences. High employee turnover rates, turbulence in turnover across time, and employees' perceptions of injustice negatively affect the congruence and productivity of organizations (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Bahrami et al., 2014; De Winne et al., 2019). Leadership behaviors can affect employee turnover intentions.

Research shows that employees are likely to voluntarily and enthusiastically follow leaders who are ethical, truthful, and forward looking (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Trusting leaders and organizations may have a positive impact on organizational outcomes. Employees who work under ethical leaders have more trust in their leadership, have high perceptions of fair treatment, and demonstrate more ethical behaviors and commitment to their organizations (Gim & Desa, 2014; Ng & Feldman, 2015) Although prior researchers have addressed the impact of styles and behaviors of leadership on employees' outcomes (Hiller et al., 2011; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Zhang et al., 2014), the current literature does not underline the extent to which ethical leadership influences employees' behavioral outcomes. In this study, I examined the impact of ethical leadership behaviors on employees' perceptions of justice and turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis. The study findings supplement the literature on ethical leadership

and organizational justice and give insights to leaders to improve employee retention and ethics-oriented work environments. The study findings may also contribute to job market stability and the common good in societies. In this chapter, I describe the background and problem addressed by the study, its purpose, research questions (RQs) and hypotheses, and theoretical foundation. This content is followed by an outline of the nature of the study; definitions of the research constructs; and discussion of the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background of the Study

In the era of globalization and the increasing interdependence of world economies, business organizations around the globe face unique opportunities for growth, increased mobility, and technological advancement (Alagaraja et al., 2015; Piscicelli et al., 2018). However, in tandem with the opportunities, the interdependence of markets, consumers, and suppliers has created a complex value chain for organizations within which unique challenges also exist (Alagaraja et al., 2015). To address these complex challenges, business leaders continuously seek more effective ways to create business value and improve the success of the organizations they lead (Piscicelli et al., 2018). Well-managed and successful employee relationships are central to these objectives; organizations achieve higher levels of success when they have an effective strategy for improving employees' well-being and long-term retention (Chou & Lopez-Rodriguez, 2013). Accordingly, organizational processes and procedures for evaluating employee relationships continue to be an important area of study.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been an unprecedented global emergency that mandates a cohesive global response and symbolizes one of the most significant challenges that the world has encountered since the Great Depression (Bartik et al., 2020). A pandemic outbreak occurs when it becomes clear that a severe illness is spreading quickly over a wide area. The coronavirus outbreak has had a crippling impact on the global economy, in addition to its public health and psychological ramifications. During 2020 and 2021, many U.S. businesses shut down entirely while others, such as Walmart and Costco, opted for reduced hours of operations. Restaurants and beauty shops were open only for drive-thru or pick-up services (Wahba, 2020). Around 43% of small businesses in the U.S. retail sector temporarily closed, while employment slumped by 40% (Bartik et al., 2020). Nonessential workers lost their jobs temporarily or permanently due to economic meltdown, weak cash flow, and mass business closures (Bartik et al., 2020).

Many business leaders reinforced different practices and policies to cope with the pandemic and maximize organizational commitment. In response to the pandemic, some organizations demonstrated a balance between ethical values, social responsibility, and economic goals. For instance, many companies, including Nike, Apple, Urban Outfitters, and Lush Cosmetics, continued to provide regular wages to their employees during business closure (Duffy, 2020). Other entities, such as customer support centers, introduced remote work options for the staff. On the other hand, some retailers introduce new rewards and incentives for frontline employees. For example, Amazon, Whole

Foods, Walmart, Kroger, and Albertsons granted a $2 temporary hourly pay increase as a token of appreciation for their workers (Danziger, 2020).

By contrast, many other firms chose to pursue downsizing or mass layoff to reduce costs. For example, the ride-hailing company—Uber Technologies—considered a mass workforce layoff of about 20% (exceeding 5,000 workers), during the COVID-19 outbreak (de León & Geller, 2020). Company leaders also considered a temporary shutdown in California if an appeal regarding a state government ruling requiring immediate reclassification of their drivers as full time employees failed. Such corporate positions would have further compounded the hardships generated by the pandemic motivating both drivers and customers to deal with Uber (de León & Geller, 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varied for different business sectors, especially in 2020. General merchandisers, in particular, enjoyed a rapid revenue increase along with the start of the pandemic. Walmart's press releases showed a steady growth of U.S. sales by around 10% in the first and second quarters, while its e-commerce sales boosted by 74% in the first quarter and 97% in the second quarter (Walmart, 2020). Similarly, on August 19, Target Corporation announced their strongest ever reported comparable sales growth of 24.3%, which encompassed similar store sales growth of 10.9% and e-commerce comparable sales growth of 195% (PR Newswire, 2020).

Organizations faced proliferating challenges to effectively managing their operations and human resources during COVID-19. The pandemic created a unique condition in which organizations had to operate in a survival mode mandating the

adoption of effective practices of flexibility, adaptability, and crisis management (Foy, 2019). In health care industries where a direct impact of the pandemic occurred, Kramer et al. (2020) observed that organizations reconfigured their decision-making routines and organizational protocols directly resulting from the response to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic also brought several ethical and social dilemmas to the forefront of numerous sectors, other than health care, involving a dearth of fairness and power sharing (Kramer et al., 2020). The pandemic not only created a growing need for leaders who are adept in crisis management but has also called for a form of leadership that engages rigorous practices of ethics and organizational justice.

Influential leaders put considerable emphasis on social justice, which includes qualities of equity, integrity, and participation in decision-making. Such leadership attributes lead to desirable outcomes, such as inclusiveness and perceived organizational justice (Joshi & Roh, 2009). Ethical leadership is based on a framework of ethics by which leaders hold to moral values and execute leadership practices in congruence with values that promote what is acceptable and suitable for all stakeholders (Foy, 2019). This leadership style effectively addresses unique challenges from leaders' unethical practices. Ethical leadership has become increasingly popular in society and among business organizations following several leadership scandals that led to the bankruptcy of several leading corporations, including Enron, Lehman Bros, and WorldCom (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Foy, 2019; Yukl et al., 2013). Recent decades have witnessed increasing research attention on the predictors, dynamics, and consequences of ethical leadership. While

research has contributed to expanding the understanding of the factors pertinent to the emergence and outcomes of ethical leadership, the literature still lacks theoretical coherence on the extent to which these factors affect followers (Seymour, 2015). To date, the leadership and organizational behavior literature on the mediating influence of followers' perceived justice on ethical leadership and leadership behavioral outcomes appears to be nonexistent. Therefore, the aim of this study was to address this gap in the literature by investigating the influence of leaders' ethical behaviors on employees' perceived organizational justice and employee turnover in the context of crisis.

Problem Statement

Leaders have a pivotal impact on employees' performance, work experience, and decisions to stay with or leave their employers (Bake, 2019; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Employee turnover costs the U.S. economy trillions of dollars annually, while employee retention lowers turnover costs and increase organizational performance, including productivity and profitability (Cerutti et al., 2020; Franke et al., 2012). The COVID-19 pandemic has made the employee turnover dilemma even more multifaceted.

The pandemic has created scenarios where employees either do not wish to continue working with their employers or are not eager to return to the workplace. High employee turnover has become a big concern for organizations, whereas the decline in workers creates stressful conditions in which workers are overworked and exposed to work burnout (Ahmad & Gao, 2018; Jameel et al., 2020). Employers can be perceived as exploitative and unfair if they focus more on protecting their bottom-line without

showing concern for their workers' well-being. Therefore, workers may become less motivated to commit to their job duties and more likely leave their jobs. Many U.S. workers either chose to be unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce their exposure or worked in industries hit particularly hard by the pandemic, such as the travel industry, and many service industries (Kochhar, 2020). To address unprecedented levels of unemployment—more than 14 million individuals filed for unemployment in the first 3 months—the government quickly enacted the CARES Act (an emergency assistance and economic stimulus bill enacted in March 2020 in response to the pandemic [Cares Act, 2020]; Kochhar, 2020). The general business problem was that ethical behaviors of business leaders influence their employees' perceptions and behaviors, including their intention to stay or leave the organization.

The specific research problem addressed in this study pertains to the mediating effect of employees' perceptions of justice on a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention. Insufficient knowledge of this vital issue translates into adverse business outcomes, such as difficulties with designing effective organizational policies and maintaining a nurturing corporate culture that would leverage employees' perceptions of justice into reduced turnover intention. The lack of knowledge of this mediating variable creates evident problems for understanding the degree to which leadership-related and organization-related constructs influence employees' turnover intention (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Hiller et al., 2011). Therefore, a better understanding of the mediating influence of employees' perceived justice on the relationship between

ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention in today's complex business environment is critical. Such insights may help business leaders implement effective leadership mechanisms and employee retention strategies, specifically during pandemics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental, survey research design study was to examine the mediating effect, if any, of justice perceptions on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention—during a moment of crisis, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic—of frontline workers of big-box general merchandise retail and wholesale stores in the United States. The study may also yield a better understanding of the direct and indirect influence of ethical leadership behaviors on workforce perceptions (perceived overall justice) and leadership behavioral outcomes (turnover intention) in the context of a pandemic crisis. I investigated these direct and indirect associations based on responses from frontline retail and wholesale workforce who reported to work amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings bridge the gap in the literature on the influence of ethical leadership behaviors and perceived justice on employee turnover intention and may provide information on ways to reduce employee turnover in the U.S. workforce. The findings may also contribute knowledge for the development of a leadership-training curriculum on ethical leadership to stimulate higher levels of perceived justice and retention of employees.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In the current study, I sought to answer the following RQs and examine the corresponding hypotheses, which are aligned with the purpose of the study and inform the research design:

RQ1: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, which ethical behaviors of first-line direct supervisors have the most influence on the employees' perceived overall justice amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0 1$: There is no relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

$H_a 1$: There is a positive relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

RQ2: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, does employees' perceived overall justice mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0 2$: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of Ambrose and Schminke (2009), does not mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b), and employee turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

$H_a 2$: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of Ambrose and Schminke (2009), mediates the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b), and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

Theoretical Foundation

I used social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and the categorical framework of context (Johns, 2006) as a theoretical basis for understanding contextual leadership. Use of these theories was instrumental in investigating a link between the constructs of leadership, organizational behavior, and employees' performance. Social learning theory clarifies why and how human learning occurs either deliberately or by observing the actual behavior of others (Bandura, 1977, 1999). The theory is grounded on the notion that followers learn by being attentive to and imitating values, attitudes, and behaviors of credible models, such as managers and business leaders (Bandura, 1999). The theory also suggests that people model their behaviors on those they trust and respect. As applied to this study, followers replicate the perceived ethical behaviors of leaders. Social learning theory explains the relationship between a leader's character traits observed by followers and their attitudes and behaviors. Some researchers have noted that followers' attitudes, perceptions, and actions are influenced by their leaders' actions and behaviors (Avey et al., 2011; Bandura, 1977; Zhu et al., 2016). Therefore, in the current study the social learning theory clarifies why and how ethical leaders' behaviors influence the behaviors and perceptions of their followers. The categorical framework of context (Johns, 2006) provides another theoretical perspective. The framework defines context as situational

opportunities and constraints that affect organizational behavior and the functional

relationships between work context and leadership variables (Oc, 2018; see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Oc's (2018) Context-Leadership Integrative Framework
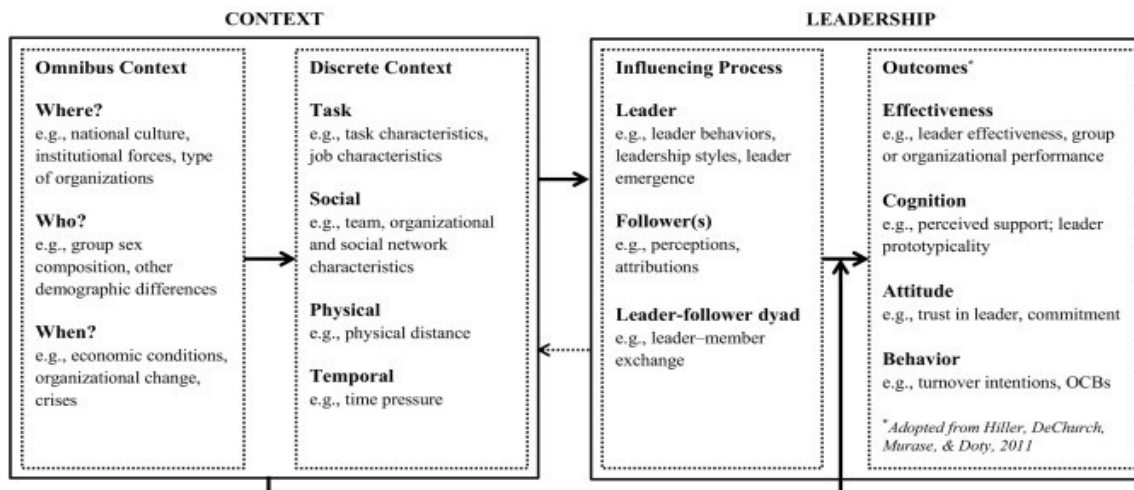
Note. From "Contextual Leadership: A Systematic Review of How Contextual Factors

Shape Leadership and Its Outcomes," by B. Oc, 2018, *The Leadership Quarterly*, *29*(1),

p. 220 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.12.004). Copyright 2017 by Elsevier.

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Oc (2018) conducted a holistic review of contextual leadership literature and

developed an integrative framework linking context to leadership through analyzing

numerous studies. The framework outlines contextual influence as omnibus and discrete

factors that affect leadership. Omnibus factors are associated with (a) where the leader is

placed (i.e., situational factors, such as cultural and organizational conditions), (b) who is

being led (e.g., followers' demographics and traits), and (c) when a leader is leading (e.g.,

organizational change, economic conditions, and crises). On the other hand, discrete factors are linked to characteristics related to the workplace, social network, and organizational climate or culture. Oc's integrative framework postulates that leaders' behaviors and followers' perceptions are both leadership influencing process factors, whereas followers' turnover intention is a leadership behavioral outcome. According to Oc, leadership behaviors may predict followers' perceptions, such as justice perceptions, which may influence followers' attitudes and behaviors. The author also suggested that contextual factors moderate the relationship between leadership influencing process, including leader behaviors, and leadership outcomes, including followers' attitudes and behaviors.

Using Oc's (2018) integrative framework, I examined the relationships between ethical leadership behaviors and followers' perceptions and behaviors. I focused on the influence of the COVID-19 outbreak as a crisis omnibus contextual factor. Chapter 2 includes details of related theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings in the existing literature.

Nature of the Study

I selected a nonexperimental, correlational quantitative design to answer the study's RQs. A quantitative research design was appropriate to examine the relationship and mediating effect between variables. The specific statistical tests chosen for the study were linear regression and analysis of variance because they identified and estimated the strength of the relationship between behavioral dimensions of ethical leadership,

employee perceptions of justice, and turnover intention. A correlational design was also used and included measurements of associations among the study variables to explain and support their relationships without an active intervention and to replicate the design in future studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Schoonenboom, 2017). Thus, the correlational design was appropriate because the focus of the study was on examining the strength of the relationship between its variables.

For the current study, I used a survey method featuring a web-based questionnaire that combined three instruments. Each instrument measured one of the study variables (ethical leadership behaviors, perceived overall justice, or employee turnover intention). I used simple linear regression to perform the statistical analysis of the survey results, answer the RQs, and test the hypotheses. This data analysis technique was the most appropriate test methodology for the study because (a) ordinal data were collected to analyze a single mediating variable with one independent and one dependent variable, and (b) the instrument helped account for the mediating effect of the perceived overall justice (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013).

Possible Types and Sources of Data

I used a random sampling technique to recruit a representative sample using the algorithms of SurveyMonkey Audience (SurveyMonkey., n.d.-b). The sample comprised employees of big-box general merchandise retailers and wholesalers in the United States, such as Walmart, Kroger, and Costco. Participants were limited to frontline retail and wholesale workers who had worked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were

requested to voluntarily participate in a web-based survey. The population sample was accessed through a SurveyMonkey Audience pool of panelists. The survey included an electronic consent form. Statistical power analysis was performed to derive a scientifically estimated optimal target sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Faul et al., 2007), which is dependent on data type and survey questions. The survey instrument incorporated constructs and measurement scales validated in the literature.

Definitions

The fundamental terms used in this study and their definitions are the following:

Concern for sustainability: A quality characterized by care for the environment (Brown et al., 2005).

Employee turnover: The ratio of the number of workers replaced during a specific time frame in an organization or industry to the average number of workers in that organization or industry (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). In the context of this study, employee turnover refers to the ratio of the number of workers replaced at the organization during a specific time frame to the average number of workers in the organization. The focus of the study is on voluntary turnover as against involuntary turnover.

Employee turnover intention: The conscious willingness of the employee to leave an organization (Babalola et al., 2016; Elçi et al., 2012). It refers to the initial process of employee decision-making when an employee considers the possibility of leaving an organization, plans to search for another job, or aims to stay with the company (Wang et al., 2020).

Ethical guidance: An ethical leadership behavior that involves explaining values to followers, ensuring that ethical standards are maintained, and holding followers accountable for unethical behaviors (Kalshoven et al., 2011a; Steinmann et al., 2016).

Ethical leadership: "The demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120; Metwally et al., 2019).

Ethical leadership behaviors: The various behavioral dimensions of ethical leadership or the behaviors observed in ethical leaders (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011a).

Fairness: An ethical leadership behavior characterized by the absence of favoritism, equal treatment of every person, and principled and fair choices (Kalshoven et al., 2011a).

Integrity: A leadership behavior that involves the demonstration of the consistency of words and acts and keeping promises (Kalshoven et al., 2011a).

Organizational justice: A judgment made by employees regarding the fairness of outcome distribution, processes used in allocating outcomes, and fairness within interpersonal relationships within the workplace (Mengstie, 2020).

People orientation: A leadership quality characterized by caring about, respecting, and supporting followers; high people orientation involves incorporating the

ideas and concerns of followers into decisions, providing followers a voice, and involving

followers in developing performance goals (Brown et al., 2005; Steinmann et al., 2016).

Perceived overall justice: Employees' personal justice experiences and feelings

about decisions and decision makers in organizational settings and involves perceptions

regarding all four components or types of organizational justice—procedural,

distributive, informational, and interactional (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Babic et al.,

2015; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004).

Power sharing: An ethical leadership behavior characterized by the leader

allowing followers a say in decision-making and listening to their ideas and concerns

(Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011a).

Role clarification: An ethical leadership behavior in which the leader clarifies

responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et

al., 2011a).

Assumptions

Research assumptions are recognized, unverified beliefs that are pertinent to a

study. They are things that are accepted as plausible or true given the research design,

study population, statistical test, or other research delimitations (K. Martin & Parmar,

2012). Identifying and understanding underlying assumptions of a research study elevate

its validity and reliability (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). In conducting the current study, I

had four critical assumptions. The first assumption was that a relationship exists between

leadership styles and actions, perceived justice, and employee turnover intention. The

second assumption was that the participating employees' experiences in a research setting

would reflect the experiences of frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The

third assumption was that participants would honestly respond to all survey questions

without a motive to bias results. Participants were anticipated to be honest in sharing their

knowledge and perceptions and genuinely interested in the outcomes of the study.

Participants were expected to be accurate and open while participating. The fourth

assumption was that the study would provide information that would help researchers,

managers, and organizations better understand justice perceptions and turnover intention.

I expected that these assumptions would be supported by the findings of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries imposed by the researcher that limit the scope of the

study; they represent the scope of interest for the study in relation to the research design

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The focus of the current study was on how employee

perceptions of justice affect the relationship between ethical leadership and employee

turnover intention. In the event of a crisis, employees need to trust their leaders and

organizations; ethical leadership represents a style of leadership that can promote mutual

trust between employees and their leaders (Sharma et al., 2019; Yukl et al., 2013). Ethical

leadership was the focus of the current study because it is the type of leadership that

emphasizes ethics as a primary leadership characteristic.

The target population selected for the study was frontline workers who reported to

work and had maintained any type of employment relationship with their employers

during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 and 2021, especially during the first year of the pandemic. I excluded employees who did not report to their physical workplace during this period because their responses would be extraneous to the study variables and study context. The study focused on the workforce of general merchandise retailers and wholesalers. Organizations in this sector were affected by COVID-19 and needed to balance an ethical response with the pursuit of economic goals during a crisis. For this reason, this sector provided a representative sample to study how employee perceptions of justice interact with ethical leadership and employee turnover intention.

I included closed-ended Likert scale responses, which I obtained from the validated measurement scales, in the survey instrument. No open-ended responses were used. Using scales validated in the literature strengthened their reliability and increased the generalizability of the findings of the study to appertain to organizations that operate in the same industry.

Limitations

Limitations may occur related to the study design and methodology for this study. Although I used SurveyMonkey Audience's crowdsourcing service to recruit participants, I anticipated challenges in finding an appropriate pool of participants. In web-based surveys, low response rates have been a major concern (Anseel et al., 2010; Rindfuss et al., 2015). So, one limitation that can be associated with the study is a low response rate. Also, fewer employees were working in the target population after the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, respondents might have been hesitant to participate in the study

because no financial incentives were offered. Using SurveyMonkey's recruitment service alleviated many of these challenges and provided ready access to a wider pool of potential participants (SurveyMonkey, n.d.-c).

The likelihood of high fees associated with crowdsourcing services was a probable limitation. One viable alternative to overcome this challenge was using a personal fund to assist with data collection associated expenses. Another limitation was that the restricted time line of this study (August, 2020–December, 2022) might have affected the response rate. Such restrictions might have led to inadequate analytical power because an inadequate sample typically leads to Type II error, or the failure to reject a null hypothesis that is actually false (Faul et al., 2007; Ioannidis et al., 2013). SurveyMonkey, which is relatively cheaper than other crowdsourcing services, is known to be efficient, reliable, and has a population representative of the U.S. population (Chen, 2019). To facilitate the recruitment of participants who met the inclusion criteria and improve the response rate, I used SurveyMonkey Audience.

Because this study involved human participants and the use of a survey method to measure social concepts, subjective biases may have arisen that affected the internal validity. To alleviate bias related to the research instrument, I used appropriate measurement scales that were validated and used in previous studies. Using validated instruments from the literature improved the reliability and validity of the study results (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Schoonenboom, 2017). Likewise, adopting multiple

validated instruments to measure different variables reduced mono-bias and mono-method threats (Petursdottir & Carr, 2018; Roe & Just, 2009).

Significance of the Study

Significance to Theory

The current study drew its posited relationships on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Johns's (2006) categorical framework, and extended the work of Oc (2018). The study contributes to ethical leadership and organizational justice literature in several ways. First, a central aim of the study was to investigate the degree to which ethical leadership behaviors affect followers' perceived overall justice. Second, the study examined the mediating role of perceived overall justice on the relationship between ethical leadership and leadership behavioral outcomes, namely employee turnover intention, particularly at a moment of crisis, the first year of the pandemic. Finally, the study identified perception of overall justice as a contextual variable that weakens or strengthens the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover. Examining these relationships in the study could assist leaders in understanding the possible outcomes of their ethically related behaviors on the intention of their employees to leave the organization. The study findings also guided the development of effective employee loyalty and retention programs which help in mitigating adverse consequences of high employee turnover.

Significance to Practice

The current study was an attempt to make some contribution to practice in terms of effective leadership and turnover management. Investigating the impact and effectiveness of the leadership of general merchandise retailers and wholesalers in the United States was encouraging because the industry comprises around 5.5% of the country's gross domestic product (Duffy, 2020). Given the study population size and context, another motivation was the relatively high feasibility and likelihood of publishing the research (Ségol, 2014). Furthermore, the significance of the current study's findings is foreseeable to practitioners from a practical perspective.

For retailers to survive, their leaders should foster business sustainability and adaptability through vigilant and proactive planning. Leaders should utilize what they have learned from past business decision flaws and shortcomings to predict how the industry will perform before and after crises. Therefore, leaders should invest more in resources and training that improve organizational performance and leadership outcomes. Such investments could positively affect the perceptions of justice, job satisfaction, and loyalty of the employees (Christensen et al., 2014; Cowden et al., 2011; Ogunfowora, 2014; Podsakoff et al., 1996). The research results could inform leaders on which investments should be prioritized amid pandemic crises. The study is unique because it addressed an under-researched area of ethical leadership and leadership behavioral outcomes (Seymour, 2015), especially when leading workforce strained to perform and adapt to unpredictable changes during pandemic outbreaks.

Significance to Social Change

Societal justice has long been a force for social change by addressing inequities in communities. Similarly, this is postulated to apply to the connection between perceived justice and organizational change in the business world. Essential workers in general merchandise retail and wholesale industries comprise an integral part of current economies (Duffy, 2020). Cultivating positive perceptions of ethical leadership allows for higher followers' loyalty, engagement, motivation, job satisfaction and dedication, and organizational commitment (Brown et al., 2005; Hiller et al., 2011; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Ogunfowora, 2014; Tu & Lu, 2016; Yidong & Xinxin, 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). These leadership consequences are relevant and vital to stabilize the business ecosystems and job markets during extraordinary public health catastrophes.

The current study was an attempt to investigate the influence of ethical leadership behaviors on enhancing specific perceptions and behaviors of employees. The results provide imperative insights on the ethical dimensions in which business leaders are advised to capitalize on lowering perceptions of injustice and turnover intention of their employees. The results of the study also guide the foundations for developing a leadership-training curriculum that inspires leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their ethical behaviors while planning for or fighting a crisis. So, the study findings contribute to job market stability, value-added efficacy, and the common good in societies.

Summary and Transition

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge and accentuated the need for ethics-based solid leadership (Zhu et al., 2016). Organizations are confronted by the unethical behaviors of their leaders and militating against employee negative perceptions and high turnover, especially during pandemic emergencies. The purpose of the quantitative study was to examine the degree to which ethical leadership affects organizational justice and the mediating role of the latter on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover. The study addressed the influence of direct supervisors' ethical behaviors on employees' perceptions of overall justice and turnover intention. The study was based on data collected from frontline workers of retail and wholesale stores who reported to work amid the outbreak of COVID-19. The study findings provide a better understanding of the direct and indirect impact of ethical leadership behaviors on employees' behaviors and perceptions in the context of a pandemic. In addition, the findings contribute to the groundwork for developing an effective leadership-training curriculum on ethical leadership to improve the levels of employee perceived justice and turnover intention.

In this chapter, I presented the background and problem the study addressed and described its purpose, RQs and hypotheses, theoretical foundations, and research framework. The chapter includes the definitions and conceptualization of the study constructs and an outline of the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and potential significance of the study. Chapter 2 includes a detailed review of the current

literature related to the variables and theoretical framework of the study. A detailed

description of the research method follows in Chapter 3 and a presentation and analysis

of study results in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I discuss and interpret the results, consider the

study's implications, offer recommendations, and provide a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

General merchandise retailers and wholesalers in the United States have experienced an unprecedented boom in sales since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus have reinforced practices and policies to maximize employees' commitment to work. However, numerous perplexing ethical behaviors of decision-makers and business leaders have emerged in response to the coronavirus outbreak, causing employees to perceive their employers as unjust and fostering employees' intention to leave their jobs. The purpose of this nonexperimental, quantitative study was to examine the mediating influence of justice perceptions of essential frontline workers on the relationship between their turnover intention and the ethical behaviors of their direct supervisors. The study provides a better understanding of the direct influence of ethical leadership behaviors on employees' perceptions and leadership behavioral outcomes. The findings of the study advance the current scholarly understating of the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership.

Given that information is lacking on the extent to which leaders' ethical behaviors influence workers' perceptions of justice and intention to stay in or leave a business, the aim of this study was to advance scientific knowledge in the field of leadership and business management. I sought to identify the most critical ethical leadership behaviors in influencing employees' perceptions of justice and job turnover. It contributes to the literature by providing new perspectives on the training and development of leaders by

highlighting the elemental ethical leadership behaviors to improve perceptions of justice and reduce employee turnover.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of scholarly literature pertinent to ethical leadership and organizational justice. I used theoretical and empirical literature and employed social learning theory, ethical leadership theory, and the integrative context-leadership framework as the study's theoretical foundation. These underpinnings substantiate the influence of omnibus context on the link between leadership behaviors and followers' attitudinal and behavioral leadership outcomes. I reviewed the literature on the connection between role models, virtue ethics, and the development of ethical leadership behaviors. The literature review provides background and context to undergird the study.

This chapter is divided into five sections addressing the literature search strategy, theoretical foundations, conceptual framework, literature review, and summary and conclusions. In the Literature Search Strategy section, I highlight the library databases, search engines, and key search terms and combinations used to access relevant sources. The section also provides the scope of the literature review. The Theoretical Foundation section comprises a discussion and an analysis of the theories and theoretical propositions that will guide the study. This section also provides the rationale for selecting the theories, models, and data collection instruments relating to the study's problem statement, RQs, and constructs. I also define key constructs inherent in the study framework and synthesis of the primary and seminal body of research. This section also

addresses how the study benefits from the framework and how the study constructs were articulated and applied in previous research. This section also illustrates the ways in which the research utilizes the framework and reviews the use of the key constructs in previous research. Other related topics, such as ethical dilemmas, are also addressed to explain the imperative role of leaders' ethical behaviors in developing attitudes and behaviors by workers in the retail industry. The last section includes a summary of the major themes and research gaps in the literature, a synthesis of key points addressed in Chapter 2, and a description of how the study extended the knowledge in leadership and organizational justice.

Literature Search Strategy

For this chapter's review of academic and professional literature, I performed an extensive search for the most recent articles and studies that addressed the variables of the study. I focused on sources published within a 5–year time frame from 2017 to 2021. Although the search focus was on the most recent peer-reviewed scholarly research, the review includes some older articles to ensure thorough and integrative coverage of relevant literature.

I conducted the literature search using several online research databases accessible through the Walden University Library (e.g., Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost research databases, SAGE Journal, and PsycTests) as well as search engines (e.g., Google Scholar). I also searched the websites of top-tier peer-reviewed journals (e.g., *The Leadership Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of*

Management Journal, *Human Resource Management*, and *Journal of Business Ethics*).
The keywords and databases included *leader* style*, *ethic* leader**, *leader* behavior*,
leader* ethic*, *virtue ethic**, *leaders* attitude*, *employ*/work commitment*, *employ**
perceptions, *employ*/work engage**, *organization* fairness/justice*, *employ* perceptions*,
employ* retention, *employ*/work turnover*, and *employ*/work satisfaction*.

  The review search was representative of the research within each domain rather than exhaustive. Although I found doctoral dissertations, textbooks, and conference proceedings to be very useful in conceptualizing the literature, I focused on scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last 5 years. The search was prioritized according to the subject area and date as research material was reviewed and collected.

  In the following sections, I further discuss the study's theoretical research foundation and then review key literature related to the study topic. The review contains sections on (a) ethical leadership, (b) perceived organizational justice, (c) organizational justice and its relationship to ethical leadership, and (d) employee turnover intention. After discussing the theoretical framework, I analyze how ethical leadership behaviors affect organizations, how employees' turnover intention affects organizations, and what the relationship is between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention. The review continues with a discussion of the three research variables and their measurement.

Theoretical Foundation

Both social learning theory and Johns's categorical framework of context establish solid ground to enrich understanding of the interaction between context, leadership, and followers' behaviors and attitudes. This interaction can be further supported by empirically investigating a model that integrates the leadership influencing process and behavioral outcomes. For instance, leadership influencing factors include leadership behaviors, and leadership styles while leadership behavioral outcomes include factors such as turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior) within a specific context.

A theoretical framework depicts a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, and theories to support and inform a study and its design elements (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). For the study's conceptual framework, I drew from Oc's (2018) context-leadership integrative framework (see Figure 2). I examined the direct association between leadership behaviors and followers' perceptions of justice. I also assessed followers' perceptions, manifested by followers' perceptions of justice, as a mediating factor to explicate an indirect relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and followers' behaviors (i.e., turnover intention). I investigated the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as an omnibus context, on leadership influencing process and leadership outcomes. I adjusted Oc's context-leadership framework by selecting only the constructs relevant to the present study to portray the conceptual framework within

the context of a pandemic crisis (see Figure 3). The study framework also comprised

some control variables (e.g., employee demographics).

Figure 2

Adapted Context-Leadership Framework
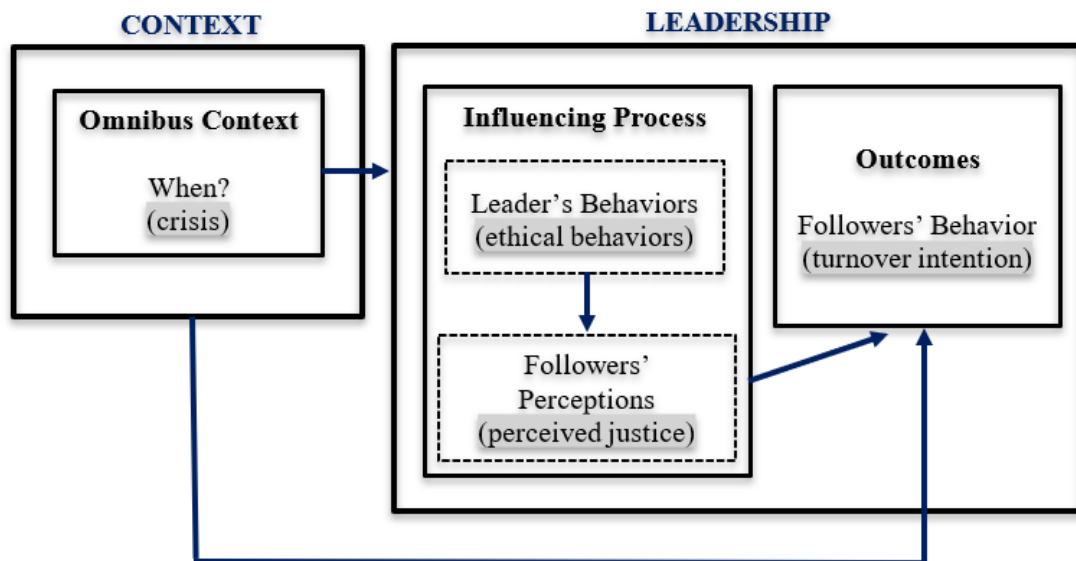
Note. Adapted with permission from "Contextual leadership: A systematic review of how contextual factors shape leadership and its outcomes" (Oc, 2018, p. 220; see Appendix A).

Figure 3

Study Conceptual Framework

Employee's Demographics (Control Variables)
Job Tenure, Income, Age, Education Level, Gender, Employment Status, Unemployment Benefit Eligibility during Covid-19 pandemic

Behavioral Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

- Fairness
- Power sharing
- Role clarification
- Ethical guidance
- People orientation
- Concern for sustainability
- Integrity

Leadership Influencing Process

Employees' perceived overall justice

Leadership Behavioral Outcomes

Employees' turnover intention

Omnibus Context

Pandemic crisis

Literature Review

Leaders in modern business environments are required to foster resilient organizational strategies, sustainable competitive advantages, loyal stakeholders, and effective corporate cultures, all within an ethics-oriented framework (Cote, 2017). Ethical leadership has recently emerged as a distinctive style of leadership that enables the attainment of organizational goals (Elçi et al., 2012; Kalshoven & den Hartog, 2009). Successful leaders relentlessly strive to leverage organizational resources to achieve organizational goals while mitigating factors that hinder these goals (Ahmad et al., 2017). Unfavorable employees' attitudes and behaviors, high staff turnover, and the loss of

talented employees to rivals concern business leaders and expose their organizations' future success and sustainability to risk. The study examined the influence of leaders' ethical behaviors on the other underlying constructs—employees' perception of organizational justice and turnover intention. A thorough review of relevant, current literature serves as a theoretical basis to better conceptualize the constructs of the study, furnish plausible analysis, and offer a better interpretation of the empirical results. The review is divided into the following sections: ethical leadership, contextual leadership, ethical leader responsibility, ethical leadership behaviors, perceived overall justice, and employee turnover intention. The literature review concludes with two sections: a review and synthesis of empirical research and a summary and conclusions.

Ethical Leadership

Historical Development and Definition

Organizational management is a wide-ranging area of study that focuses on numerous salient factors that affect organizational performance and economic prosperity. In the last few decades, researchers in leadership and organizational behavior have focused more on conceptualizing and analyzing the antecedents, outcomes, and the influence of ethical leadership. The fundamental premise for the study is that ethical leadership is assumed to have a unique impact on the conduct of the organization and its performance (Elçi et al., 2012). Classic groundworks on ethics were primarily formed by ancient philosophers of Greek like Aristotle and Plato. The prominence of ethics was often emphasized within themes in Hellenistic philosophy as a divine principle with

significant implications for humanity and social good. While such traditions played an essential role in developing the Western philosophy, many of them were overlooked or underemphasized. However, contemporary challenges, such as diversity management, cultural competence, and ethical conduct of business leaders, have endured in global businesses that such philosophies are now more relevant to social science research.

The principles of business ethics have become a central focus to researchers and business leaders. Ethics are closely related to moral principles and describe attributes, standards, or behaviors that are good and right (Ciulla et al., 2018; Neely & Mosley, 2018). Ethical behavior is judged according to generally accepted moral norms of behavior (Treviño et al., 2006), and thus it represents the defining characteristics of ethical leaders. Kanungo (2001) is one of the first researchers to conceptualize and define ethical leadership. The author described ethical leaders as those who engage in acts and behaviors that benefit others while simultaneously refraining from behaviors that may cause harm to others. Although there has long been an interest in leadership theories within the framework of organizational research, studies on ethical leadership have increased exponentially after Brown et al. (2005) developed their seminal theory on ethical leadership and validated scale to measure the construct statistically (Constandt & Willem, 2019; Kaptein, 2019).

Various leadership styles, including servant, authentic, and transformational leadership, involve attributes of ethical behaviors (Ahmad et al., 2017; den Hartog, 2015). However, these leadership styles are primarily recognized through other

predominant characteristics, such as the desire to serve in servant leadership; the quality

of authenticity, self-awareness, and relational transparency in authentic leadership;

transformational result orientation, and communicating and encouraging ethical conduct

in transformational leadership (Babalola et al., 2016). In ethical leadership, the concept of

ethics represents the central and overarching attribute of leadership. Leadership

researchers extend the emphasis of the ethical components of leaders to distinguish this

form of leadership with distinctive behavioral dimensions of ethics (Brown et al., 2005;

Hoogh & den Hartog, 2008).

Ethical leadership has been described in various ways amidst an extensive body of

research that has contributed to the understanding of leaders' ethical behaviors and how

they affect organizations and communities. The notion of ethical leadership has been

described using different terms, such as responsible leadership, leadership ethics,

moralized leadership, ethical managerial leadership, and ethical leadership behavior

(Kaptein, 2019). These terms demonstrate the emphasis on ethics and morality of the

leader in research.

Guillén and González (2001) defined ethical behavior in leadership as signifying

leaders' behaviors that motivate followers to act responsibly toward others by protecting

the dignity and rights of each other. This definition has not fully captured the concept of

ethical leadership because it does not emphasize the leaders' personal components; an

ethical leader can demonstrate ethical characteristics in both their personal and

professional lives (Ahmad & Gao, 2018). Building on the abstract meaning of leadership

as a process through which leaders influence followers to achieve the organization's goals, Ahmad et al. (2017) defined ethical leadership as a process in which a leader influences followers or a group to achieve their target goals in socially responsible ways. This definition is criticized for limiting because the underlying ethical traits, such as goodness and morality, are not emphasized.

Elçi et al. (2012) described ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions, interpersonal relationships, and promoting such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Metwally et al., 2019). Building on the work of Elçi et al. (2012)., Ahmad and Gao (2018) identified three elements that characterize ethical leadership: (a) an ethical leader is a moral person who possesses distinctive qualities, such as sincerity, honesty, and trustworthiness; (b) an ethical leader functions as a moral manager who can transfer ethical behavior to others through disseminating fair practices, and communicating ethical behavior, and reinforcement of ethical conduct; and (c) an ethical leader functions as a moral entrepreneur by creating and promoting ethical norms (Ahmad & Gao, 2018; Kaptein, 2019).

Empirical evidence indicates that ethical leadership behaviors and practices are associated with numerous positive outcomes for employees and organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Some examples of ethical leadership behaviors include giving support when employees face challenges, distributing rewards and benefits fairly, showing an attitude of honesty, communicating openly with employees and other stakeholders,

setting and explaining ethical work standards, and supporting ethical behaviors objectively (Yukl et al., 2013). Ethical leaders reduce counterproductive and deviant behavior among employees while fostering ethical conduct through moral management. Ethical leadership positively influences employee performance through improving their engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction (Bedi et al., 2016; Steinmann et al., 2016). The behaviors of ethical leaders have a positive impact on the follower's pro-social behavior, ethical decision-making, job satisfaction, and motivation (Bedi et al., 2016).

However, some researchers acknowledge that ethical leadership can adversely affect employees; Stouten et al. (2013) found that organizational citizenship behavior decreases with high levels of ethical leadership. Within the context of this study, a positive influence of ethical leadership behaviors on employee outcomes, including organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and motivation, would suggest that a leader's ethical behavior improves the perceptions of organizational justice and employees' behavioral outcomes such as turnover intention. Therefore, analyzing the mediating role of perceived justice in this relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and perceived justice becomes germane.

Contextual Leadership

Understanding context and types of contexts is essential to conceptualize leadership better and recognize the relevance of contextual leadership. Context is described as "the surroundings associated with phenomena which help to illuminate that phenomena, typically factors associated with units of analysis above those expressly

under investigation" (Johns, 2006, p. 386). Organizational characteristics provide the context within which activities, processes, and systems within which organizational activities such as leadership and followership take place. The context of an organization can make for elements such as constraints or opportunities for behavior, similarity or dissimilarity among the members of the organization, and proximal or distal stimuli for phenomena (Johns, 2006).

To expound on the impact of context on organizations, Johns (2006) posited that context contains many facets and can be seen as situational features that affect organizations. However, environmental or situational salience is insufficient to ensure the contextual impact on behavior, nor is it required in some cases. For example, in the context of this study, there may be some features in the organization that would have insignificant effects of perceived justice on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover. Such factors may be identified as outliers in the study. The second facet of context described is a cross-level effect in which situational variables at one level may affect variables at another level during an analysis (Johns, 2006).

In the context of the study, the cross-level effect may succinctly capture the study model as the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' turnover is examined along with the mediating influence of perceived organizational justice on this relationship. Therefore, perceived organizational justice is an important component of the context within which ethical leadership and employee turnover intention are interrelated. Context is also described in the literature as (a) a configuration of stimuli; (b) a shaper of

meaning; (c) a constant; or (d) an event, including practices and procedures that promote justice within the organization (Johns, 2006). Perceived organizational justice and ethical leadership behaviors are stimuli, and context may influence how employees attribute meanings to ethical leadership behaviors. In addition, certain elements may be ingrained in the organization such as competitive pay denoting distributive justice.

Leadership literature has previously focused on leadership traits, nature, behaviors, and outcomes. The effects of context, in which leadership occurs, on the disposition and effectiveness of leadership have not received similar attention from researchers (Moir, 2017). The literature of contextual leadership emphasizes the interplay between context, leader influence, and leadership outcomes. Leadership behaviors are influenced by the demands, choices, and constraints that develop from the organizational context (Osborn & Marion, 2009). Contextual leadership research examines if the impact of leadership practices can be strengthened or reduced by situational or contextual factors; the literature explores how leadership occurs in specific contextual settings such as educational or military (Oc, 2018). Moir (2017) observed that the context of leadership might provide a framework for understanding how individuals influence one another in both socially-constructed and process-oriented relationships.

Context can be conceptualized at two levels: omnibus and discrete context. The omnibus context provides information on the elements of a given context and denotes environmental influences to answer questions of what, who, why, where, and when (Oc, 2018). The omnibus context operates uniformly. To illustrate, macrolevel factors, such as

national culture and environmental influences, operate uniformly for organizations. The discrete context refers to specific situational factors, elements, or variables that directly influence behavior and may moderate the relationships between variables. It involves narrower contextual influences such as social, task, and physical subcontexts and can sometimes be nested within omnibus contexts. Discrete contextual factors may mediate the effects of omnibus contextual factors, or else both types of contexts will interact to predict the outcome variables (Oc, 2018).

In the context of the study, this conceptualization of context was reflected in contextual leadership, which forms an essential framework for understanding the mediating effect of perceived justice on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover. Perceived justice represents a discrete contextual factor when considering ethical leadership outcomes and one that mediates the effect of ethical leadership as it is nested within the environment or omnibus context in which ethical leadership behaviors transpire.

Ethical Leaders' Responsibility

An essential component in ethical leadership research is the subjects of the ethical responsibility of leaders. Interest in the literature of ethical leadership was propelled by a spate of corporate scandals that involved unethical or corrupt acts performed by top executives (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2016). This widespread interest in ethical leadership research shaped a framework for accountability and improved transparency in for-profit and nonprofit organizations (Newman et al., 2019). The focus on accountability

and transparency is reflected so that ethical leadership promotes ethical conduct by enforcing and managing ethical practices while holding all stakeholders accountable (Trevinio & Brown, 2004).

The increasing research interest in ethical leadership and vigorous movement towards hiring ethically responsible business leaders have grown prominently within the past two decades. This intense focus is demonstrated by the plethora of research studies discussing this topic in social justice and business ethics. In the context of leadership characteristics and practices, there is a "renewed commitment to an ethic of personal responsibility, directed primarily towards business leaders." As observed by Koo and Park (2018), "CEO personalities and behaviors create a cascading effect, influencing top management teams, middle managers, and employees of the entire firm" (p. 697). Ethical leaders in organizations are responsible for creating and implementing formal ethics programs to promote positive, appropriate behaviors in the workplace. Leaders who engage in ethical behaviors serve as role models for the group and develop an ethically oriented corporate culture and business environment.

Given the conspicuous challenges in today's global business world, ethical approaches to resolving complex organizational problems have become increasingly crucial. Zhu et al. (2016) asserted that social responsibility ethics have become imperative for business leaders and societies. Ethics, social justice, employee relations, and meaningful workplace development are some variables that outline corporate social responsibility, which falls under the realm of ethical corporate social responsibility. From

a business perspective, ethics are linked with engaging in good and fair practices and the reputation of being an ethical organization (Ciulla et al., 2018). Organizations utilize codes of ethics and statements of values to guide morality and establish an environment of good faith and fairness within the organization and across its ecosystem (Neamțu & Bejinaru, 2018; Neely & Mosley, 2018). Practices of ethical business and social responsibility are critical to sustaining success because customers reward businesses with ethical reputations with loyalty (Neely & Mosley, 2018). Thus, numerous corporations explicitly promote ethics programs and designate ethics officers or independent consultants (Kheirandish et al., 2017) to cultivate ethical behaviors and resolve ethical dilemmas.

Ethical Leadership Behaviors

Analyzing the characteristics of ethical leadership, Brown et al. (2005) indicated that ethical leaders have distinguishing qualities fairness, honesty, caringness, and trustworthiness. According to the authors, such leaders structure work environments justly, make principled and fair decisions, engage in open and transparent communication, and promote and reward ethical behavior among followers. Other researchers identify the attributes of ethical leadership in terms of leader behaviors: integrity, fairness, ethical guidance, people orientation, role clarification, power sharing, and concern for sustainability (Elçi et al., 2012; Kalshoven & den Hartog, 2009; Kalshoven et al., 2011a; Metwally et al., 2019). Other qualities like morals, empathy, honesty, fairness and justice are ascribed to ethical leaders more than the other leadership

styles (Sharma et al., 2019; Yukl et al., 2013). Ahmad and Gao (2018) asserted that these attributes play three distinct roles: moral person, moral manager, and moral entrepreneur. These roles make ethical leaders distinctively recognized as positive role models—the group prototype that promotes trust and leadership effectiveness. These attributes were outlined in the literature as dimensions or elements of ethical leadership.

There are several criticisms of Brown et al.'s (2005) scale based on a critique of the concept of ethical leadership as proposed by Kalshoven et al. (2011a). First, Brown et al.'s approach to ethical leadership is primarily descriptive; it only describes prevailing moral norms and does not justify ethically acceptable behaviors critically. Second, the definition and scale of both moral person and moral manager are incomplete; the scale is lacking in some aspects of ethical leadership such as distributive justice and honest communication. Third, items in the scale are not characteristic of ethics, such as listening to employees and having the best interests of workers in mind. Fourth, multidimensionality is lacking in the Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) when ethical leadership is a multidimensional construct (Kaptein, 2019). The ELS was not used in the study because evidence in the literature showed that the scale is positively correlated with positive employee outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, work engagement, affective organizational commitment, and general mental health). Nevertheless, the scale correlates weakly and negatively with adverse employee outcomes, such as burnout (Filho et al., 2019), , employee turnover, and negative perceptions (Ko et al., 2017; Oc, 2018; Shakeel et al., 2019).

Kalshoven et al. (2011b) and Kalshoven et al. (2013) described seven constituent dimensions of ethical leadership: power sharing, fairness, people orientation, role clarification, ethical guidance, integrity, and concern for sustainability. Fairness, integrity, and ethical guidance seem most pertinent to ethical leadership while the other subscales, except concern for sustainability, are not inherently ethical and can be used for unethical purposes (Yukl et al., 2013).

High people orientation involves followers in decision making and idea sharing, providing followers a voice, and involving followers in developing performance goals. Power sharing involves developing followers' authority and fostering their self-efficacy. Fairness signifies the objective and balanced interactions and fairness in the process of decision-making. Role clarification involves clear articulation of expectations to followers, explanation of responsibilities, and sharing of information that is critical to facilitate task completion (Kalshoven et al., 2011a; Steinmann et al., 2016; Yukl et al., 2013). Integrity involves acting under espoused moral principles, aligning words and behavior, and fulfilling promises. Concern for sustainability demonstrates the awareness of issues beyond the organization and exhibits sincere concern for the environment and societal development. Ethical guidance involves explaining values to followers, ensuring that ethical standards are maintained, and holding followers accountable for unethical behaviors (Kalshoven et al., 2011a; Steinmann et al., 2016; Yukl et al., 2013). People orientation, integrity, and fairness constitute the moral-person dimension of ethical

leadership, while ethical guidance, concern for sustainability, power sharing, and role clarification constitute the moral-management dimension (Steinmann et al., 2016).

A large body of evidence in the leadership literature supports the disintegration of ethical leadership into behavioral dimensions. An imperative outcome of empirical research in ethical leadership is the development of validated tools for measuring various behaviors identified for ethical leadership. Brown et al. (2005) developed the 10–item ELS, one of the most widely used scales for measuring ethical leadership. The ELS assesses various ethical leader behaviors, including open communication, ethical role modeling, principled decision-making, and disciplining unethical behavior (Lawton & Páez, 2015). In this study, ethical leadership behaviors were measured using Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) 38–item scale, the Ethical Leadership at Work questionnaire (ELW). The scale comprises seven subscales, each of which measures a behavioral dimension. Items are rated along a 5–point Likert scale. The scale is based on seven dimensions that make up ethical leadership as identified by Kalshoven et al. (2011b) and Kalshoven et al. (2013): power sharing, fairness, people orientation, role clarification, ethical guidance, integrity, and concern for sustainability. The relationship between these constructs and turnover intention were assessed cumulatively and individually under the current study, with the mediating effect of perceived justice identified across all relationships.

Sharma et al. (2019) developed a conceptual model for the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership. The scholars sought to analyze the construct of ethical leadership and other concepts related to the moral aspect of leadership. The

review paper was based on an extensive review and synthesis of the leadership literature.

A key finding suggests that ethical leaders strongly believe in following a set of values

and ideals in their behavior, actions, and decisions. Ethical leaders believe in honesty,

high integrity, people orientation, and assertive communication. Other attributes of

ethical leaders identified in the literature include taking full responsibility for biased and

unjust decisions to reinforce positive perceptions of organizational justice and reap

benefits to the organization and its stakeholders.

Perceived Overall Justice

While the broad topic of organizational justice is now not as prominent in

organizational studies as leadership, it is a growing area of interest for researchers and

practitioners. Organizational justice is a critical virtue in social institutions and one of the

predictors for the effective use of human resources and organizational success (Mengstie,

2020). However, the literature defines and conceptualizes organizational justice in many

ways based on the research's purpose, methodology, and context.

Organizational justice is defined as the people's perception of fairness in the

organization or their perspective regarding disseminating available resources (Greenberg,

1987, 2001), including organizational support, training, and information. Organizational

justice is defined as the judgment made by employees regarding the fairness of outcome

distribution, processes used in allocating outcomes, and fairness within interpersonal

relationships within the workplace (Mengstie, 2020). On the other hand, perceived

organizational justice is the perception that reflects feelings employees have about business decisions, decision makers, and managers (Bahrami et al., 2014).

In scientific research, organizational justice is viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing diverse aspects of employees' experiences concerning fairness within the organization. There are four distinctive, interrelated types of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, interactive, and informational (McDowall & Fletcher, 2004). Distributive justice refers to employees' perceived fairness of management decision outcomes, such as financial rewards, promotions, and training (Babic et al., 2015; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004). Distributive justice reflects the perceived fairness of the distribution of decision outcomes based on employees' work responsibilities, skill proficiencies, and job performance. In distributive justice, employees perceive fairness in the distribution of decision outcomes by comparing their input-output ratio with their coworkers (Mengstie, 2020). Procedural justice refers to employees' perception of fairness regarding the procedures through which management decision outcomes are determined or allocated (Babic et al., 2015; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004). It involves fairness in terms of decision-making processes and who receives the management decision outcomes (Mengstie, 2020). Interpersonal justice refers to the quality of interpersonal treatment between leaders and their subordinates (Babic et al., 2015; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004); it is assessed by the level of respect at which employees are treated by their leaders (Mengstie, 2020). Lastly, informational justice refers to the perceptions of fairness in terms of communicating decision information to employees in

the process of decision-making (Babic et al., 2015). Employees' perceptions of informational justice are based on the clarity, amount, and authenticity of information communicated in the procedures, determination, and distribution of the decision outcomes (Mengstie, 2020).

Employees who perceive fairness in their workplace are more likely to have high levels of job satisfaction and have less propensity to leave the organization (Mengstie, 2020). Organizational justice has implications in reducing employees' turnover through various effects, such as increasing employees' satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust. These outcome variables of organizational justice are negatively associated with the employee's intention to leave the organization (Ajlouni et al., 2018; Mengstie, 2020). The empirical literature confirms that these variables contribute to higher levels of employee satisfaction and ultimately on employee retention rates. Ajlouni et al. (2018) conducted a study on 184 nurses of Jordanian public hospitals and concluded that nurse job satisfaction increased significantly when distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice were existent in the workplace. This relationship was particularly pronounced in distributive justice because procedural and interactional justice had a significant effect on job satisfaction only in some contexts.

Empirical evidence shows that organizational justice positively affects employees' job performance (Ajlouni et al., 2018). Perceptions of organizational justice make the employees feel that they are treated fairly, which positively influences their level of organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Colquitt, 2001; Jameel et al.,

2020). A study by Gim and Desa (2014) concluded that employee commitment is positively associated with both distributive and procedural justice; employees with high perceptions of fair treatment and economic compensation are more committed to their employers and have less intention to leave them. However, employees with perceptions of injustice, in terms of their interactions with their leaders and the distribution of rewards, have adverse reactions and lower job performance. Perceived injustice negatively influences the employees' motivation and job performance (Mengstie, 2020).

Organizational Justice and Ethical Leadership Relationship

The recognized tie between leadership and organizational justice stimulates the interest of ethical leaders in constantly embracing ethical approaches to plan and conduct effective business strategies. Implementing ethical leadership practices means that elements of trust and transparency will be palpable in the organizational environment and culture. When employees develop trust towards an organization and its leaders, perceptions of justice among employees will be higher (Bahrami et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2016). Leaders' ethical behaviors promote higher levels of trust among employees and strengthen perceptions of justice towards the organization and its leadership.

The literature has examined divergent predictors and associations of organizational justice, which are essential to investigate the mediating effect, if any, of this construct on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover. As discussed previously, distributive justice refers to how employees perceive fairness in the management decision outcomes they receive, such as pay, promotion, rewards, and

access to organizational resources (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Colquitt, 2001). According to Al Halbusi et al. (2017), self-serving leaders set their interests and goals differently from those of their followers and organization, leading to adverse organizational outcomes. Distributive justice practiced by ethical leaders guards their organizations against these outcomes and improves their employees' perceptions of organizational justice (Al Halbusi et al., 2017).

Procedural justice describes fairness in the procedures and processes adopted in the decision-making (Babic et al., 2015; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004). The literature indicates that leadership practices nurture procedural justice in different ways, including taking and considering employee input in decision-making, implementing policies and procedures consistently and accurately, representativeness, and suppression of decision bias (Al Halbusi et al., 2017). Numerous scholars have established that when employees trust the planning and implementation of organizational processes and practices will positively affect their evaluation of procedural justice in the workplace. Other recent empirical studies showed a significant negative correlation between procedural justice and ethical climate (Al Halbusi et al., 2017; Gim & Desa, 2014). These studies also confirmed a strong relationship between procedural justice and ethical leadership since ethical leadership promotes organizational trust and ethical climate. Linking procedural justice and ethical leadership, empirical evidence established that procedural justice, perceptions of justice, and ethical leadership reduce employee turnover intention (Al

Halbusi et al., 2017). Such conclusions were significant to the study because they provide solid rationalizations to examine its posited relationships.

Interactional justice reflects ethical behaviors and interactions between the stakeholders in the organization; it refers to employee perceptions of being respected and dignified by other members of the organization (Mengstie, 2020). Employees' perceptions of interactional justice are manifested in their perceptions of being treated fairly in the workplace. Prevailing research and theory indicate that interactional justice has more influence on leaders and subordinates than the other types of organizational justice (Al Halbusi et al., 2017). The literature also establishes the connection between interactional justice and ethical leadership based on the personal characteristics and qualities of the leader. These qualities include honesty, fairness, caring, and trustworthiness. Leaders who demonstrate behaviors based on such qualities during interpersonal exchanges with their subordinates can inculcate positive perceptions of equality, respect, and honor in their employees (Al Halbusi et al., 2017). These perceptions substantiate the subsistence of interactional justice among stakeholders of the organization.

Ethical leadership creates a sense of trusting the leaders and positive perceptions of organizational justice among employees (Bahrami et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2016). When employees have positive perceptions of organizational justice, they are less likely to quit their job (Mengstie, 2020). Therefore, organizational justice was identified as a latent mediating variable to explain further the relationship between ethical leadership and

employee turnover intention. The mediator of perceived justice was treated as a cumulative variable within the context of the four dimensions of justice – distributive, informational, procedural, and interactional.

Employee Turnover Intention

Employee turnover in organizations has been a significant concern for decades because human resources and their tacit knowledge are vital assets that contribute to the sustainability of a business and its long-term success. Prosperous organizations strive to develop their value-adding talents and minimize the spillover of their pools of valuable skills and knowledge to extant competitors (Bothma & Roodt, 2013; Jung et al., 2021). The following subsections comprise discussions of the eminent definitions and types of employee turnover and fundamental factors influencing employee turnover intention.

Definitions and Types

Researchers define employee turnover in many ways. The standard definition of employee turnover is the employee's termination of the employment relationship (Haider et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021). In most cases, employee turnover or actual turnover is preceded by turnover intention (Jung et al., 2021). Employee turnover intention is described as the initial process of the employee decision-making process and seriously considering the possibility of leaving an organization, planning to look for another job, or questioning whether or not to stay with the employer (Wang et al., 2020). Bothma and Roodt (2013) defined turnover intention as the intent of an employee to stay with or leave the organization. Employee turnover intention is also defined as an employee's conscious

willingness to leave an organization (Elçi et al., 2012). Haider et al. (2020) defined turnover intentions as the perceived probability of an individual to stay with or leave the organization.

Conceptualizing the definitions of turnover intention suggests that it comprises three dimensions:

- The employee is thinking of leaving the organization,

- The employee is searching for alternatives, and

- The employee has a desire to leave the organization.

The presence of one or more of these dimensions embodies employees' turnover intention (Novitasari, 2020). High employees' turnover intention is an indication that the employees are not satisfied with their current work assignments or with parts of the organization. Turnover intention depicts warning signals that employees are about to leave the organization and indicates unfavorable changes in employees' work responsibilities (Jung et al., 2021).

For the purpose and context of the current study, employee turnover was resented by a conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the employer. There are various types of employee turnover. Employee turnover emerges when an employee leaves an organization, moves to another unit or department within the organization, or terminates the employment relationship (Novitasari, 2020). Employees leave their organizations for many reasons, and hence employee turnover can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary employee turnover refers to the event in which the employee willingly terminates their

work relationship with the organization (Elçi et al., 2012). Employee turnover can also be permanent if the employee leaves the employer or is transferred to another unit or department within the organization (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

The voluntary and permanent type of employee turnover troubles organizations because it negatively affects their operations, sustainability, and financial performance. This type of employee turnover refers to the employee's voluntary termination of the employment relationship (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). Employee turnover is associated with several adverse consequences. First, high employee turnover is associated with considerable operational costs embedded in loss of talents, hiring and training of replacement, and other associated administrative costs (Elçi et al., 2012). The loss of competent employees usually accompanies some disruption or impairment in business operations, service delivery, or administration until a satisfactory employee replacement is hired (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

It is critical to distinguish between employee turnover and turnover intention to effectively manage organizational resources and change. The literature shows a strong and positive correlation between employee turnover intention and actual turnover rate. Therefore, employee turnover intention is a strong predictor of actual voluntary turnover (Jung et al., 2021). For the objective of this study, employee turnover intention was used and evaluated to counteract any rates of employee actual turnover rates atypical to the standards of the industry.

Factors of Employee Turnover Intention

Employee turnover intention develops with social and individual factors of varying complexity that can be work-related or personal, or outside of the organizational contexts. The factors attributed to employee turnover may not always be mutually exclusive, highlighting the complexity of the phenomena. Therefore, in this study I underlined only some institutional and personal factors theorized to have an impact on employee turnover intention.

Work-Related Stress. Work-related stress can primarily constitute a factor that affects the intention of the employees to leave the organization. When employees experience excessive stress levels, there is more propensity for considering voluntary resignation in the future (Elçi et al., 2012; Novitasari, 2020; Novitasari et al., 2020). Researchers suggested some predictors for employee turnover intention, including exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy, which eventually signal employee burnout (Wang et al., 2020). When employees constantly experience work-related stress, they feel overwhelmingly stressed, which typically provokes their intention to leave the organization, especially if this type of stress is ignored and tenaciously persists in the workplace.

Job Dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is another work-related factor that affects employee voluntary turnover intentions or decisions. When employees are dissatisfied and unhappy with some parts of their work or the organization, there is more prospect for voluntary employee turnover. Dissatisfaction can be attributed to numerous factors, such

as poor treatment by supervisors, unsatisfactory pay, unhealthy work environments, or any form of work-related stress or anxiety (Elçi et al., 2012). Conversely, the literature shows that job satisfaction consistently predicts employee retention, and is negatively correlated with employee intentions to leave the organization (Benton, 2016). Although job dissatisfaction increases employee turnover intention, job satisfaction improves worker retention rates.

Employee Personal Factors. Employee turnover intention can be influenced by many factors external to the workplace. Personal or family-related issues sometimes, directly and indirectly, interfere with the employees' work responsibilities and turnover decisions. At the personal level, the high self-esteem or ego of the employee can influence their decisions to stay with or leave the organization; if the self-actualization needs of the employee are not established, there is a more likelihood that they will seek other job opportunities (Elçi et al., 2012). Individual characteristics, such as race, age, and gender, are commonly examined in the organizational turnover literature. Several studies, such as Benton (2016), have mixed results regarding the effect of employees' age and gender on their turnover intention. In other words, the literature does not support that age or gender influences the employees' intention to stay with or leave the organization.

Marketplace-Related Factors. Broader contextual environmental or economic factors, such as climate change, labor market, and economic downturns, can influence the employability of the employees and their turnover intention or decisions. Availability of alternative employment opportunities strongly influences turnover behaviors of the

employee, including employee turnover intention (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). So, employment opportunities and employee turnover intention can be affected by other marketplace-related factors, such as job market competitiveness, work accessibility, and labor laws, which influence the likelihood of securing an alternative job.

Leadership

Despite the myriads of reasons of employee turnover intention, leadership styles and leadership practices have lately emerged in the literature as factors that guide the turnover behaviors of the employees. Ethical leadership behaviors (e.g., leaders' fairness, power sharing, and affect) can have an effect on employees' commitment and job satisfaction. This correlation positively affects employee turnover intention or actual turnover decision (Elçi et al., 2012). The positive relationship between employee turnover intention and ethical leadership behaviors suggests that ethical leadership also directly or indirectly improves employee actual turnover rates.

Perceptions of Justice

Perception of organizational justice can be an influential factor that affects the turnover decision of the employee. Employees turnover decisions may develop due to challenging social interaction at the workplace, job performance wrangles, and work-related stress (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). The relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention has been analyzed through the lens of social exchange theory, which suggests that relationships occur between two social members. The theory proposes that social exchange is realized through mutual exchanges that lead to reciprocal

obligations. The social exchange is realized through mutual exchanges that lead to reciprocal obligations. This reciprocity norm dictates that parties in the relationship maintain exchange to sustain the relationship. Accordingly, employees who perceive fair treatment and justice at the workplace will become loyal and feel obligated to repay the organization by serving the organization and its contributions to its triumph. This social exchange relationship between the two members is weakened when a member terminates the relationship. In the case of voluntary turnover, the employee decides to terminate the employment relationship (Ekmekcioglu & Aydogan, 2019). Evidence from the literature confirms that positive perceptions of organizational justice play a role in reducing employee turnover intention and thus lower actual turnover rates. Perceived distributive justice is a significant predictor of employee turnover intention (Ekmekcioglu & Aydogan, 2019).

Review and Synthesis of Empirical Literature

Perceived Justice and Employee Turnover Relationship

Organizational justice research has focused on the impact of different types of justice—procedural, distributive, and interactional – on organizational outcomes. Later, researchers began to aggregate organizational justice types into one construct—overall justice. Ambrose and Schminke (2009) conducted a study on the role of overall justice judgments in organizational outcomes. The authors hypothesized that overall justice judgments mediated the relationship between specific justice facets and outcomes (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). They found that overall justice mediated the relationship

between the specific justice judgments and employees' attitudes. The study also found

the mediating relationship held for supervisor ratings of worker behavior. The study's

findings are relevant to the current study because Ambrose and Schminke (2009)

suggested that perceptions of justice (i.e., overall justice) affected worker attitudes and

behaviors. Perceptions of overall justice may affect employee behaviors, such as

employee turnover, if there are negative perceptions of overall justice (Ekmekcioglu &

Aydogan, 2019).

Wu et al. (2016) developed a mediation model that explained the relationship

between counterproductive work behavior and perceived organizational justice among

public servants. The researchers assumed in their model that the relationship between

counterproductive work behavior and perceived organizational justice is mediated by job

burnout. They also suggested that moral identity moderates the relationship between

counterproductive work behavior and job burnout. The study's findings showed that job

burnout, perceived organizational justice, and moral identity influenced

counterproductive work behavior. The researchers concluded that improving

organizational justice perceptions and managing job burnout reduced counterproductive

work behaviors. While this study did not examine the relationship between perceived

organizational justice and employee turnover intention, the findings are relevant to this

study because the results confirmed that unfavorable employee outcomes are derived

from perceived organizational justice. The literature confirms that perceived

organizational justice and job burnout are predictors for voluntary employee turnover

(Ekmekcioglu & Aydogan, 2019). Hence, there is more likelihood that employee turnover intention will increase if perceived organizational justice and job burnout are high in the workplace.

Moreover, organizational justice significantly affects organizational and employee outcomes, making the variable a focal point of interest in research and practice. Organizational justice generally refers to employees' perceived level of fairness in terms of equitable distribution of rewards and allocation of resources. Based on this premise, Ekmekcioglu and Aydogan (2019) conducted a study to examine the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention based on a moderated mediation model. The researchers also examined organizational identification as a mediator between the organizational justice and turnover intention relationship and the moderating role of psychological contract fulfillment on these relationships. The study results showed that the relationship between organizational justice and turnover was partially mediated by organizational identification. The psychological contract fulfillment moderated the indirect effect of organizational justice on employee turnover intention through organizational identification. The researchers concluded that organizations should pay attention to fulfilling psychological contract obligations by meeting employees' expectations and fulfilling the promises made to them to reduce employee turnover intention.

Ekmekcioglu and Aydogan's (2019) findings are relevant to this study in testing the mediating influence of perceived justice on the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors and employee turnover for two reasons. First, Ekmekcioglu and Aydogan confirmed the relationship between the two variables central to this study – perceived organizational justice and turnover intention, demonstrating the direct relationship between perceptions of justice and employee turnover intention. Second, the researchers used regression analysis to test the mediation model, reflecting the appropriateness of the design used in the current study. This methodology also guided the empirical testing and analysis of the study following a methodology recently used in a peer-reviewed research article.

Ethical Leadership and Turnover Intention Relationship

Gaither (2017) conducted an explanatory mixed-methods study to examine the influence of ethical leadership on role modeling, job satisfaction, and openness. A correlation approach was used in the study to analyze the quantitative strand, and a case study approach to analyze the qualitative strand. Gaither analyzed the collected data using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, Cronbach's alpha test, Bartlett test, factor analysis, alpha test, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, and Tucker-Lewis index. The researcher found a significant relationship between ethical leadership, leadership characteristics, and job satisfaction. The test results also indicated that ethical leadership behaviors positively influence job satisfaction. Although Gaither's study did not focus on the effect of ethical leadership on employee turnover, its findings are relevant to scrutinize context in the current study. Furthermore, the literature shows that job satisfaction improves employee retention rates, reducing employee turnover (Benton,

2016). Comparably, Gaither's (2017) study findings served this study by providing a better understanding of ethical leadership's influence on employee turnover through the mediation of perceived justice.

The leadership construct underlines the significance of the qualities and traits of moral leaders to succeed in today's competitive markets and global economies. Contemporary leadership focuses more on followers, tasks, and results, whereas traditional leaders focus on tasks and outcomes. Kerdngern and Thanitbenjasith (2019) examined the effect of contemporary leadership on turnover intention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The researchers used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design using a validated measurement scale for data collection and a structural equation model for data analysis. Kerdngern and Thanitbenjasith conducted interviews to obtain qualitative data that contributed to a better understanding and analysis of the study results. The study results were supported by empirical data confirming that monetary components improved organizational commitment. The study results also showed that contemporary leadership directly influenced job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while the latter had a direct negative influence on employee turnover intention.

Kerdngern and Thanitbenjasith's (2019) findings showed that contemporary leadership reduces employee turnover by promoting organizational commitment. Therefore, these findings were relevant to the current study to examine further the interaction between ethical leadership behaviors and employee outcomes (e.g., employee

turnover). In addition, the finding of the study provided evidence that ethical leadership behaviors influenced employees' commitment to the organization, and hence they may affect employee turnover intention or turnover decision.

Babalola et al. (2016) conducted a study to examine the moderating role of ethical leadership on frequent change and turnover intention. The study's premise was that frequent change negatively affects employees' turnover intention to explore more variables that predict this variable. The study's hypotheses were tested using a multisource field study on employee-coworker-supervisor triads. The study results showed that ethical leadership moderated the relationship between employee turnover intention and frequent change (Babalola et al., 2016). This relationship was only positive when indicators of ethical leadership were low. The researchers concluded that ethical leadership could reduce detrimental effects such as employee turnover. The authors recommend that organizations provide training programs tailored to advance ethical behaviors in leaders, hire ethical leaders that can achieve ethically-based outcomes, communicate ethical standards effectively, and promote ethical conduct across all levels of the organization. These recommendations will improve employee commitment and increase employee retention. Babalola et al.'s (2016) study is imperative because frequent change is one of the variables that define existent contexts of ethical leadership and employee turnover in global and dynamic business environments. The researchers confirmed that turnover intention is positively associated with frequent change, an outlier

that affects employee turnover intention if the organization operates in an environment with high frequent change.

Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) conducted a study that examined the effect of ethical leadership behaviors on turnover intention, ethical climate, and affective commitment. The study addressed the mediation effect of ethical leadership on the three variables: perceptions of ethical climate, affective commitment, and employee turnover. The central premise of the study was that managers are role models who can influence perceptions of ethical climate through the demonstration of ethical leadership behaviors. Perceptions of ethical climate positively influence affective commitment and reduce turnover intention among employees. The study findings showed that ethical leadership, directly and indirectly, affected affective commitment and employee turnover intention. The study results confirmed that the indirect influence of ethical leadership predicts positive perceptions of ethical climate, more significant affective commitment, and reduced employee turnover. Demirtas and Akdogan's (2015) findings are relevant to this study's model in testing the mediating role of perceived justice on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention. Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) indicated that ethical leadership influenced employee turnover intention through ethical climate and affective commitment. Accordingly, it can be extrapolated that ethical leadership behaviors indirectly affect employee turnover intention through employees' perceptions of organizational justice.

Research evidence shows that ethical leadership is positively associated with employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and high job performance, while negatively associated with undesirable outcomes, such as work conflict and unethical behaviors. Ogunfowora (2014) conducted a study to examine the relationships between ethical leadership, organizational citizenship behaviors, and individual-level job satisfaction. The study suggested that the influence of ethical leadership on the relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors and job satisfaction is moderated by the strength of leader role modeling. Leader role modeling is a construct that captures group consensus of the extent to which the leader serves as a role model for ethical behaviors in the workplace. The study findings showed that ethical leadership was strongly associated with organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction in work units with robust leader role modeling. The results also indicated that ethical leadership was positively correlated with leader role modeling, while perceptions of leader role modeling mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction (Ogunfowora, 2014). The study's findings also indicated that the multilevel conceptualization of role modeling was essential to analyze the influence of leaders' ethical behaviors on the attitudes and behaviors of subordinates. Furthermore, the study findings supported the proposition that ethical leadership behaviors are positively associated with job satisfaction, a variable that reduces employee turnover intention.

In analyzing the moderating role of leader-member exchange (LMX), Nishii and Mayer (2009) examined whether inclusive leaders contribute to the reduction of

employee turnover in groups with diverse characteristics. The authors employed LMX at a group level to moderate the relationships between turnover demographics (e.g., age, race, and gender), tenure diversity, and group turnover. The researchers found a weaker positive relationship between tenure diversity and employee turnover when the group LMX was high and when group differentiation of LMX was low. The study indicated a three-way interaction existed involving demographic diversity, LMX, and LMX differentiation; significant interaction between demographic diversity and LMX differentiation only existed when LMX was high. The researchers concluded that inclusive leadership reduces employee turnover in diverse groups. While not focused on ethical leadership behaviors, these findings are relevant to the current study because they contribute to the understanding of how ethical leadership influences employee attitudes and behaviors in the context of group diversity. The findings also indicated that employee retention improved by inclusiveness, an element of ethical leadership behaviors that influences perceptions of organizational justice, two variables of the current study.

Kalshoven and den Hartog (2009) examined the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and a leader's effectiveness. The researchers hypothesized that trust and prototypicality sequentially mediated the relationship between ethical leader behaviors and perceived leader effectiveness. The researchers investigated if both overall and specific ethical leadership behaviors (power sharing, fairness, and role clarification) influence trust, prototypicality, and leader effectiveness. The findings indicated that prototypicality and trust mediated the relationship between leader effectiveness and

overall ethical leader behavior. In specific ethical leadership behaviors, the relationship between leader effectiveness and fairness was fully mediated by prototypicality and trust, while the relationship between role clarification and leader effectiveness was partially mediated by prototypicality and trust. The relationship between leader effectiveness and power sharing was not significant. The study findings are relevant to the current study because they are critical to establishing the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and leader effectiveness. Assuring that employees are productive, satisfied, and happy signifies higher levels of leadership effectiveness and suggests that ethical leadership behaviors—fairness and role clarification—positively influence employee turnover intention and actual employee turnover.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review provided an overview of the constructs of leadership and ethical leadership behaviors, contextual leadership, and how context applies to the framework of this study. The review also discussed organizational justice and dimensions of perceived overall justice and how they relate to ethical leadership. Definitions, types, and factors of employee turnover decisions and intention were also reviewed. Finally, the review of existing empirical literature provided additional support and synthesis regarding the hypothesized mediation influence of employees' perceptions of justice on ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention.

Numerous factors, such as poor work conditions, low opportunities for employee development, and perceptions of bias or inequality, affect the perceptions of injustice and

discrimination among employees. By contrast, ethical leadership behaviors can manifest ethically-based work environments and develop positive employee attitudes and behaviors. Ethical leadership behaviors manifest fairness in developing business policies and practices, decision making, and supporting and interacting with employees. Ethical leaders strive to continuously address concerns by their employees and mitigate work-related stress by creating an ethically-based work environment and developing stress management training programs. The current quantitative study explored the influence of perceived justice on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention. The study contributes to the body of literature by guiding the leaders on the development of effective, ethical practices and policies that minimize employees' perceptions of injustice and mitigate employee turnover intention. The next chapter presents a detailed description of the design and methodology of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the influence of organizational justice on the relationship between leadership behaviors and leadership behavioral outcomes. Specifically, I examined the mediating effect, if any, of employees' perceptions of justice on the relationship between direct supervisors' ethical behaviors and their followers' turnover intention. The study might be helpful to leaders to develop a better understanding of the direct and indirect impact of ethical leadership on employees' perceptions and behaviors in the context of crises. The study findings might also provide a foundation for leadership-training curriculums to help leaders adopt the most compelling ethical behaviors that stimulate higher levels of perceived justice amongst workers and reduce their intention to leave an organization. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale for this study, the data collection methods, the data analysis plan, and threats to validity.

Research Design and Rationale

In the current study, I used a nonexperimental, explanatory design. This research design was appropriate because selecting survey participants and validated scales would assist with categorizing and quantifying variables, whereas the explanatory design could help measure a correlational relationship between them (Saunders et al., 2020). Explanatory designs, which delve into under-researched areas, and descriptive designs, which allow for the discussion of many relevant aspects of research objects are unlike experimental designs which involve conducting controlled experiments. Explanatory

designs are optimal for examining a correlational relationship between variables of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Koo & Park, 2018; Trujillo, 2020). An explanatory research design was aligned with the RQs articulated in the introduction chapter. The first RQ examined the relationship between reported ethical leadership behaviors and employees' perceived overall justice. In contrast, the second question underlined the mediating effect of perceived overall justice on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and the employees' turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis. Both RQs required checking corresponding null hypotheses by evaluating a correlational relationship between variables of interest. Accordingly, only an explanatory research design could be used in this study because it is the most effective option for examining interrelations between variables (Saunders et al., 2020). Other research designs were not suitable for the objectives of the study.

In addition, the quantitative methodology was appropriate for the study because of its potential to report the strength of the relationships between ethical leadership behaviors, employee perceived justice, and employee turnover intention. In contrast to the quantitative methodology, qualitative methods could not be used because they do not address the strength of relationships among variables, and they heavily rely on the experience of a researcher or observer (Froman & Owen, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The use of quantitative methods in a study with an explanatory design is a common methodological choice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Koo & Park, 2018). The

use of quantitative methods allows for the quantification of variables, a mandatory step for examining causal relationships.

I analyzed three variables: ethical leadership behaviors, perceived overall justice, and turnover intention. When checking the first research hypothesis, the reported ethical leadership behaviors were utilized as an independent variable, and the perceived overall justice was used as the dependent variable. In turn, when checking the second research hypothesis, employees' turnover intention, reported ethical leadership behaviors, and perceived overall justice were used as the dependent, independent, and mediating variables, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1

The Study Variables Associated With Each Research Hypothesis

Research hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Mediating variable
A relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' perceived overall justice	Ethical leadership behaviors	Perceived overall justice	
The mediating effect of employees' perceived overall justice on a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention	Ethical leadership behaviors	Employees' turnover intention	Perceived overall justice

In this study, I examined the degree to which the employees' perceived justice mediates the relationship between the ethical behaviors of direct supervisors and employees' turnover intention. The variable of ethical behavior was quantified in the study using Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) ELW 38–item scale. The turnover intention of

employees, at the same time, was measured using Bothma and Roodt's (2013) theory of planned behavior on a 5–point Likert scale. Employee perceived overall justice was measured based on the six-item scale developed by Ambrose and Schminke (2009). I examined specific control variables, including the leader's job tenure, income, education level, gender identity, and eligibility to CARES Act unemployment relief benefits during the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

The current study was not subject to any specific resource constraints. Because the survey was web-based and self-administered, the administration of the survey was not expected to become a challenging process. In addition to the costs of collecting responses through SurveyMonkey crowdsourcing and the software required for data analysis, the data collection process was expected to be relatively reasonable. Data collection and analysis were not likely to take more than 2 weeks in normal circumstances. Low time and resource constraints are typical for survey research studies (Ruel et al., 2015). The relevance of such constraints was insignificant because responses were collected online using SurveyMonkey, instead of face-to-face interaction.

I used web-based questionnaires combining three instruments to measure the study variables. A detailed description of the questionnaires and specific data collection techniques is provided in the subsequent subsections of this chapter. I used linear regression to analyze the survey results, answer the RQs, and test the hypotheses. This data analysis technique was the most appropriate statistical test for this study because ordinal data were collected to analyze a single mediating variable with one independent

and one dependent variable (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013).
Linear regression analysis was also cost-effective because it did not require substantial
resources compared to other resource-intensive research approaches (Seber & Lee, 2012).
A detailed justification of the use of this method is provided in the following subsections.

Methodology

I accessed potential participants through SurveyMonkey, one of the most
prevalent and reliable crowdsourcing platforms for administering surveys and collecting
responses (Waclawski, 2012). SurveyMonkey identified and approached a pool of
panelists who met the eligibility criteria of the study. Before completing the self-
administered survey, prospective participants were requested to carefully read the consent
form, which described the study's inclusion criteria, objectives, and expected outcomes.

Population

The target population of survey participants was frontline supervised workers in
the United States who reported to work during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.
To recruit participants, I used SurveyMonkey Audience, which systematically fine-tuned
the target population with balancing and custom screeners to match panelist profiles that
met the eligibility criteria. I recruited individuals who

- were over 18 years old,

- were frontline workers who reported to a physical workplace in a big-box
  general merchandise retailer or wholesaler store located in the United States,
  and

- had reported to a direct supervisor during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020–
  2021.

I also used SurveyMonkey to design and develop the online questionnaires. I chose to conduct an online survey to minimize health risks to participants and the researcher (Hlatshwako et al., 2021). Prospective participants were asked to complete the online survey.

Potential participants were SurveyMonkey panelists. A large group of people in the United States have joined SurveyMonkey to participate in web-based surveys (SurveyMonkey, 2022a). Prospect respondents were primarily among the millions of members of the SurveyMonkey Contribute and SurveyMonkey Rewards Panels who take surveys every month to donate earnings to charity, receive financial rewards, or win sweepstake prizes (SurveyMonkey, 2022a, 2022c). SurveyMonkey regularly gives self-profiling surveys to the panelists to keep their demographic information current (SurveyMonkey, 2022b). I did not need to create awareness about the study through social media and professional networks as planned to safeguard meeting the minimum sample size because SurveyMonkey collected sufficient and complete responses within a day.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

A representative sample included frontline workers who met the inclusion criteria of the study. Probability methods provided elements of a population with an equal includability level and enhanced generalizability (Kandola et al., 2014). SurveyMonkey's

crowdsourcing system searched for participants who were qualified to participate and matched the eligibility criteria. As such, probability sampling was used in the study (see Henn et al., 2009). SurveyMonkey randomly sent an invitation to participate to eligible panelists. This random sampling procedure was conducted through a random assignment system algorithm (SurveyMonkey, 2022b). Though, the ability of this sampling technique to ensure statistical representativeness of the sample strongly depended on the sample size (Arnab, 2017). Therefore, the researcher ensured that the sample size is statistically representative of the population using effective power analysis.

Statistical power analysis was performed to derive a scientifically estimated optimal target sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Faul et al., 2007), principally dependent on data type and survey questions. The researcher used MedPower online power calculator to conduct sample size analysis and compute the sample size needed for this study's mediation model (D'astous et al., 2020). The desired level of statistical power was set at 0.80 because it is a standard value of power in social science research to generate the sample size (D'astous et al., 2020). The researcher also set the effect size measure as partial correlation (r). Path a, the effect of X (the independent variable) on M (the mediating variable), was estimated at 0.30. At the same time, Path b, the effect of M on Y (the dependent variable), was 0.30. Path c, the effect of X on Y, was 0.10. Alpha level (α) was predetermined as the value of 0.05, which expands the rejection region and conventionally results in a higher power. The results of the MedPower computation showed that the sample size for the indirect mediation model of the current study was 109

(see Table 2). Accordingly, I targeted the recruitment of at least 109 respondents to participate in the survey to meet the optimal sample size.

Table 2

Power and N *Computations for Mediation Model*

Effect	Beta	Partial r	Power	N
c (total)	.191	.191	.801	211
A	.300	.300	.801	84
B	.309	.300	.801	85
c'	.099	.100	.800	782
Ab	.093		.802	**109**

Note. c' = direct effect; ab = indirect effect.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

SurveyMonkey offers a recruitment service, SurveyMonkey Audience, which invites prospective participants that meet the inclusion criteria designed for a study. Participants have to disclose their age, gender, and income; hence, SurveyMonkey automatically provides these demographics with the responses. Therefore, the three control variables were removed from the demographical questions in the survey.

SurveyMonkey Audience recruited participants for the study in a secure and encrypted space. The respondents who participated in the study were anonymous to me. SurveyMonkey sent an email invitation to prospective participants in their target panelist profiles that fit the inclusion criteria. When participants agreed to participate, they were

provided with an electronic consent form and asked whether they wanted to proceed with the study before starting the survey. The consent form was provided to participants upon opening the electronic invitation to take the survey.

I chose to conduct an online survey to minimize health risks to participants and the researcher (Hlatshwako et al., 2021). Prospective participants were asked to complete a self-administered survey. The online questionnaires were developed, and data were collected using SurveyMonkey.

The use of consent forms is compulsory in studies that imply interacting with human respondents (Panter & Sterba, 2021). Consent forms ensure that participants decide to participate in the study based on complete information about the research. Participants who opted to proceed with the survey were directed to a screen to answer demographical questions, and then started answering the questionnaires. Participants had the right to voluntarily participate in the study or exit the survey at any point in time by clicking on the exit button at the top right corner of the survey screen or closing the survey's web page.

Given the data validation functions in SurveyMonkey survey design, it was unlikely that responses would have duplicate, missing, or incomplete answers to required questions. However, there were 10 responses with missing values or anomalous data (e.g., self-contradictory, straight-lining [virtually no variation in responses], Christmas-trees [predictable systematic variation in responses], or unreasonably fast responses).

These were identified using chi-square tests, as suggested by Franke et al. (2012). Odd and missing responses were documented in the data collection log before elimination.

Through the data collection process, records of recruitment and data collection log were maintained to track all the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis steps. Following the academic guidelines, the log included the description and date of each recruitment, cleaning data, and sharing cleaned data sets with the dissertation committee (Ruel et al., 2015). My committee chair and I specified the content, time frame, and frequency of log updates.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The survey instrument incorporated measurement scales and survey questions conceptualized and validated in the literature (see Appendix B). The variable of ethical leadership behaviors was measured using Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) ELW 38–item scale. Permission to use the ELW scale was acquired from secondary authors, Hoogh and den Hartog (2008; see Appendix C). Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) research includes the development and validation of the multidimensional ELW questionnaire. The measurement scale comprises seven subscales to measure the behavioral dimensions of ethical leadership: fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, and concern for sustainability (Metwally et al., 2019), as shown in Figure 3. Scale items were rated along a 5–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) work played an important role in this research because it references a validated and reliable multidimensional instrument that assisted in further exploring and understanding the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership. To examine the validity of ELW's ethical leader behaviors, the authors incorporated variables investigated concerning the existing ethical leadership literature. The authors included variables from Brown et al.'s (2005) ELS, which is often used as a one-dimensional measure of ethical leadership behavior but could be utilized as an instrument of assessing multiple ethical leader behaviors. Studying specific ethical leader behaviors is useful to understand further the associations between leaders' ethical behaviors with employees and organizational variables (Kalshoven et al., 2011a). To investigate convergent validity, the authors included measures of related leadership styles, including overall ethical, transformational, and transactional leadership (Saunders et al., 2020). Control variables, such as gender and age, were employed to test discriminant validity. The authors performed principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation (Di Franco & Marradi, 2013) on the 46 ethical leadership items. The matrix of factor correlation showed correlations above 0.32, which indicates that all factors are correlated, and the Oblimin rotation is confirmed. The ELW scale presented in the study by Kalshoven et al. (2011b) displays sufficient reliability and variability. Using online and email surveys, Kalshoven et al. (2011b) conducted their study using a broad sample of employees from diverse industries in the Netherlands.

Employee perceived overall justice variable was measured using Ambrose and Schminke's (2009) 6–item scale, which comprises two subscales, individuals' personal justice experiences and general fairness of the organization. Scale items were rated along a 7–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). I obtained permission to use the Perceived Overall Justice Scale from the first author, Ambrose (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; see Appendix D). The Perceived Overall Justice Scale assesses individuals' personal justice experiences and the general fairness of the organization. Cronbach's alpha was .88. Using overall justice judgments instead of specific justice types is suitable for considering questions related to positive employee outcomes, such as organizational commitment (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Paolillo et al., 2015). This consideration is likely applicable to other positive employee outcomes, such as the intention to stay with the organization.

A four-item scale to measure turnover Intention was developed, based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2012), by Bothma and Roodt (2013) using a 5–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The data type for the three scales will be nonparametric (ordinal). I obtained permission to use the scale from the secondary author, Roodt (see Appendix E). The validity of the turnover intention scale has already been established in the literature (Kelloway et al., 1999). However, Bothma and Roodt (2013) conducted a quantitative study to validate a shortened turnover intention instrument (TIS-6). The study sample involved 2,429 employees working in the information, communication, and technology sector. The TIS-6

comprised one of the criterion variables of this study, which is employee turnover intention. The study of Bothma and Roodt confirmed that the TIS-6 was reliable at measuring employee turnover intention. The scale measured and established statistically significant differences between those who left the company (leavers) and those who stayed with the company (stayers), confirming differential validity. The scale could also measure actual turnover by significantly distinguishing between leavers and stayers, which confirms the criterion-predictive validity of the scale.

The researcher of the current study used the managerial level of the leader (job tenure) to control for any biasing impact of the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers. Other control variables are nonparametric (nominal or categorical), relevant to the subjects and context of the study. These control variables are mainly employees' demographics: job tenure, income, age, education level, gender, employment status, and eligibility to CARES Act unemployment relief benefits during the outbreak of COVID-19. The use of control variables to consider biasing effects is a standard procedure in quantitative research (Allen, 2017). This technique ensures sufficient validity of the research findings.

A simple linear regression analysis was used in this study to examine the correlational relationships between variables. This instrument is one of the most popular statistical tests widely utilized to examine a linear relationship between specific predictors and a target factor (Seber & Lee, 2012). After confirming that the data were normally distributed, the researcher ran a linear regression analysis to examine the extent

ethical leadership behaviors and employees' perceived overall justice drive turnover intention of the employees.

Data Analysis Plan

The current study is aligned with the research philosophy of positivism because it generally focuses on identifying explanatory associations through quantitative methods to empirically form generalizable inferences from the findings (Ruel et al., 2015). Measurement scales were acquired from published peer-reviewed studies to facilitate the research process, confirm construct validity, and improve survey reliability (Saunders et al., 2020). According to the seventh edition of the American Psychological Association standards, the researcher of this study acquired and referenced authorization to use the instruments from their authors.

Statistical Analysis Software

SurveyMonkey enabled me to transfer the instruments into an online format. I also used the platform to administer the survey and collect survey responses. This online survey solution offered survey response data sets compatible with Microsoft Excel (Nagalakhmi & Trivedi, 2015). I used 16.61 version of Microsoft Excel and Real Statistics Data Analysis Tool for statistical analysis.

Statistical Methods

Identification of Model

I used the robust likelihood method of structural equation modeling to validate the study's conceptual framework. I did so because structural equation modeling supports

simultaneous testing of multiple predictive relationships (Choi, 2012). The model for the study is diagramed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Model Identification

Model Testing

The researcher of the current study performed confirmatory factor analysis to examine the correlation between the latent variable and the observed variable. A second-order factor analysis was performed for the latent variable (ethical leadership behaviors) and the observed variable (employee turnover intention). The objective was to assess the measurement model's fit indices and check if the model suggests a good fit to the research data (Taylor, 2013). A confidence level of 95% was used for this test. To evaluate the measurement model, I performed the following procedures: (a) linear regression to measure the highest degree of correlation between ethical leadership behaviors and perceived overall justice, (b) a chi-square test to analyze the significant variances of ethical behaviors on perceived overall justice between workers and supervisors, and (c) a linear regression and Sobel test to evaluate the effect of the mediating variable (see Frazier et al., 2004; Sobel, 1982), employee perceived overall

justice which is theorized to account for and explain the indirect relationship between the independent variable (ethical leadership behaviors) and dependent variable (employee turnover intention). Similarly, to examine the interaction effects of the control variables on the relationships of the model, a regression approach was used, giving the flexibility it provides for coding categorical variables (Frazier et al., 2004).

Interpretation of Results

Construct reliability for the measurement items were estimated based on the internal consistency method using Cronbach's alpha values; a cut-off value was selected based on Cronbach's alpha values for each scale. The convergent validity of a construct was recognized where the items related significantly to the factor (Taylor, 2013). A standardized factor loading of 0.50 and above represented evidence of strong convergent validity. Factor loading was assessed at a significance level of 0.05. The results from the regression analysis were examined to test the study hypotheses, examining whether ethical leadership behaviors had a significantly positive or negative relationship with employee turnover intention and if employee perceived overall justice influenced this relationship.

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Threats to Validity

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External Validity

External validity is described as the extent to which the study results can be generalized to a broader context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The generalizability of study results is a principal objective in quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018;

Mertler, 2018). There were several threats to the external validity of this study. Sampling

bias occurs where a sample is not representative of the study population (Arnab, 2017;

Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The threat of sampling bias was low for this study because

the participants were selected from a sampling frame within SurveyMonkey Audience

comprising randomly selected frontline workers. Controversies related to the selection

and treatment of respondents constituted another threat from this perspective (Saunders et

al., 2020). This threat to external validity occurs where the sample is unique, and the

results cannot be generalized (Ruel et al., 2015). Since the sample was generated by the

SurveyMonkey system, an assumption was made that the participants possessed all the

diverse attributes inherent among the frontline workforce rather than any single dominant

group. Selection bias was nonexistent in conducting this study because participants were

unknown to the researcher of this study.

Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to the confidence that a cause-effect relationship found

through the study cannot be explained by any other factors. In other words, a research is

internally valid if there were no confounds and the effects found are only caused by the

independent variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertler, 2018). There were several

threats to validity in this study. Reactive arrangements may cause bias and threaten the

internal validity of the research (Salkind, 2013). This type of bias occurs where people

change their behavior because they are being studied. The phenomenon is described as

the Hawthorne effect, which allows for inaccuracy in measurement results (Sallese &

Vannest, 2020). While this study did not involve observation of human subjects, it was still relevant because respondents might have changed their responses while participating in the study. Participants might be more critical of the leadership and score their perceptions of justice, turnover intention, and leaders' ethical behaviors in the wrong or less accurate ways. If such bias occurs, the empirical findings will not accurately reflect the actual relationships of the study constructs (Salkind, 2013). To minimize this threat, the research information fact sheet explicitly acknowledged that the information of participants was confidential and would not be shared with anyone, and thus, the participants were expected to complete the survey with utmost honesty and sincerity.

Confounds within the data set may occur and cannot be detected or controlled. The statistical tests employed in this study served to address threats to internal validity. Linear regression analysis controlled for potential confounds (Seber & Lee, 2012), while Chi-square test helped in detecting potential confounds by showing whether the distribution of an extraneous variable existed across different levels of the independent variable (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). Statistical methods were essential in controlling and eliminating potential threats to internal validity.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is a research quality measure that evaluates whether the measurement instrument truly captures the constructs of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Schoonenboom, 2017). Construct validity represents the extent to which the research measures behave invariably with the study's theoretical hypotheses and how

well the scores are indicative of the theoretical constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertler, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013). Threats to construct validity were minimal for this study because all empirical data were collected using scales validated in the literature. Employee turnover intention was measured with the six-item scale (TIS-6) of Bothma and Roodt (2013), while perceived overall justice was measured with Ambrose and Schminke's (2009) six-item scale, and the variable of ethical leadership behaviors was measured with Kalshoven et al.'s (2011b) ELW 38–item scale. Data analysis was conducted using statistical tests, including measurement of errors.

Construct validity might have been affected by hypothesis guessing when participants guessed what the purpose of the study is, and thus they based their responses on what they guessed. Respondents may also were nervous or anxious while participating in a study and preferred to give only positive feedback about their leadership to avoid adverse consequences (Allen, 2017). These prospects reduce the quality of the study participants' well-informed responses and defeat the purpose of scientific-based research. An effective way to limit such threats to construct validity was by accentuating the confidentiality of the identity and information of the participants and stressing that participants were expected to provide answers that were best reflective of their experiences about the research variables.

Ethical Procedures

I commenced data collection upon obtaining approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval no. 03-30-22-1012211). All necessary

information regarding this research project were explicitly and clearly provided to the study participants during the recruitment process. The research factsheet included the role of the researcher, the role of participants, and potential risks and benefits associated with the study (Henn et al., 2009). The factsheet also referenced that the study was for educational purposes only, the researcher of the current study had no personal incentives, and participation was entirely voluntary. Prospective participants were allowed to communicate with the researcher if they had any questions before the survey commences. Prospective participants were also assured that there was no harm associated with their participation in the survey (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). Participants were assured that they had the total freedom to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalties for withdrawing (Allen, 2017). Personal identifying information were not collected during the data collection to maintain the participants' right to privacy and confidentiality. However, participants were given the option on the last section of the survey to email the researcher if they needed an electronic copy of the consent form and/or a summary of the study results.

I will store data generated from the empirical study in Microsoft OneDrive for 5 years. Data are password protected and accessible only to me, the dissertation committee, and the university reviewer. All data will be discarded following the policy of my institution. There is no conflict of interest in conducting this study because participants were unknown to me, participants did not receive any financial incentives from me, and there were no external research funds. No power differentials were present, and there

were no burdens or time constraints imposed on respondents during data collection. I assumed full responsibility for conducting the study and maintaining ethical standards throughout the project.

Summary

The study scrutinized the mediating influence of overall justice perceptions on the relationship between direct supervisors' ethical behaviors and followers' turnover intention. The quantitative technique adopted for the study was structural equation modeling. The latent variable in the study was ethical leadership behaviors, while the predictor variable was employee turnover intention. Validated scales were used in collecting data on these variables. Statistical analysis incorporated several tests, including confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis, and chi-square. Statistical tests were conducted at the 95% confidence level. Threats to internal, external, and construct validity were inevitable. Therefore, threats to research validity were controlled for or eliminated using various statistical analysis and confirmation techniques. Data collection and statistical analysis are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

In this quantitative correlational research study, I aimed to determine to what extent a relationship existed between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention. The study was based on Bandura's social learning theory (1977) and Johns's (2006) categorical framework of context. I used this theoretical foundation to better conceptualize the connections between categories of work context, leadership, and organizational behavior. This chapter includes information about primary data collection and statistical testing and analysis. The statistical findings are also presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points and a transition to Chapter 5.

The RQs were as follows: (a) based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, which ethical behaviors of first-line direct supervisors have the most influence on the employees' perceived overall justice amid a pandemic crisis? (RQ1), and (b) based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, does employees' perceived overall justice mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis? (RQ2).The null and alternative hypotheses for this study were

> $H_0$1: There is no relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.
>
> H_a1: There is a positive relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

$H_0$2: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of

Ambrose and Schminke (2009), does not mediate the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b),

and employee turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and

Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

H_a2: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of

Ambrose and Schminke (2009), mediates the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b),

and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and

Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

Ethical leadership behaviors (a composite variable) served as the independent

variable. I computed scores for the variable by combining responses to questions about its

seven dimensions: (a) people orientation, (b) fairness, (c) power sharing, (d) concern for

sustainability, (e) ethical guidance, (f) role clarification, and (g) integrity (Kalshoven et

al., 2011b). Turnover intention (a single variable) functioned as the dependent variable.

Turnover intention was gauged by participants' response to a single question about

whether they had any plans to leave the organization. Finally, perceived overall justice

(another composite variable) acted as the mediating variable. Perceived overall justice

was computed by combining responses to questions about its two dimensions: (a)

individual's personal justice experiences and (b) their perceptions regarding the general

fairness of the organization. Appendix G contains details on the coding of these questions. The relationships explored in this research project are diagramed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Relationship Between the Independent, Mediating, and Dependent Variables
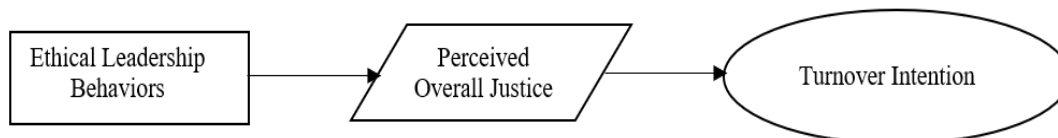
To control for possible confounding influences individually associated with the survey participants, I considered additional control variables: job tenure, income, age, education level, gender, employment status, and eligibility for CARES Act unemployment relief benefits during the outbreak of COVID-19. These seven control variables all represent demographic information on respondents; all study variables (independent, dependent, and mediator) were measured using scales established and validated in the literature (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Bothma & Roodt, 2013; Kalshoven et al., 2011b). I used SurveyMonkey Audience to randomly sample and collect data from an online Likert-type survey.

In this chapter, I present the data collection process, preparation steps, and data analysis I performed to obtain the study findings. The chapter also includes the results and discussion of the statistical tests to substantiate whether to reject the null hypotheses for the study RQs. The summary includes an overview of the study, key findings, and conclusions.

Data Collection

Use of SurveyMonkey

Before receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I completed the survey design in SurveyMonkey. Following official IRB approval (approval no. 03-30-22-1012211), SurveyMonkey Audience accepted the survey design and content and data collection commenced. The sample size was set at 120 based on design constructs; SurveyMonkey Audience recruited 209 randomly sampled participants from its contribute and rewards panels to allow for incomplete responses and anomalous data.

For inclusion, the study's targeted participants had to meet these criteria: (a) be 18 years or older, (b) reside in the United States, and (c) had reported to their physical workplace during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). Participants included employees supervised by other staff as well as those who simultaneously held a supervisory role. These inclusion criteria were explicitly outlined in the informed consent form so prospective participants could read it before starting the survey.

Participant Consent and Qualifying Questions

Before the prospective participants started the survey, a consent form, approved by Walden University's IRB, was displayed to participants. Respondents consented by clicking on "Continue." The participant pool consisted of all adults within the study inclusion criteria, allowing for generalizability and addressing the research gap.

After participants agreed to the informed consent, they were directed to the demographic questions. The survey did not include age, gender, or household income

questions because they were automatically provided by SurveyMonkey. Following the demographic questions, participants selected ratings from a 5–point Likert scale for 38 items regarding their perceptions related to the ethical behaviors of their direct leader. Next, participants selected ratings from a 7–point Likert scale for six items regarding their perceptions related to the perceived overall justice. Finally, participants selected ratings from a 5–point Likert scale for six items regarding their perceptions related to their intention to leave the organization voluntarily.

Survey Design

The survey was divided into sections for legibility purposes. Following demographic questions, the second section included the ELW instrument, the third section covered perceptions of overall justice, and the last section asked about turnover intentions. The ELW section was based on a 5–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*, *never*, or *very satisfying*, depending on the question) to 5 (*strongly agree*, *always*, or *totally dissatisfying*, depending on the question). The midpoint rating was 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*, *sometimes*, or *neutral*). The Perceived Overall Justice section was based on a 7–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*); the midpoint rating was 4 (*neither agree nor disagree*).

Collection of Responses

The online survey was available for SurveyMonkey Audience panelists to participate over a 24–hour window but closed once 209 responses were collected. After the survey closed, I downloaded the data set into Microsoft Excel in preparation for data

scrubbing. Ten responses had missing data resulting in a completion rate of 95.21%. After excluding the 10 incomplete responses, 199 responses remained, which were used for the statistical analysis. As a point of interest, the abandon rate was 25%.

Data Scrubbing and Preparation

After downloading the data set, I recoded the SurveyMonkey's system-generated variable names to match the design codes (see Appendix G). Irrelevant data fields, such as the internet protocol address and collector identifier were eliminated. New codes were created for the respondent's region and device type because they were additional variables generated by SurveyMonkey. Next, I conducted chi-square tests to identify missing or anomalous data. This test identified the 10 incomplete responses noted earlier which were deleted. Hence, the final data set contained 199 complete responses. Table 3 summarizes descriptive statistics for the sample.

<div align="center">

Study Results

</div>

After scrubbing the survey results, I used the demographic questions to assess the participant age ranges, gender, income, education level, employment status, job tenure, pandemic unemployment benefits eligibility, supervision role, region, and method to take the survey.

Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

Microsoft Excel (version 16.62, 2022) and RealStats were used to conduct data analysis. The frequency statistics of the participants' demographic characteristics are

presented in Table 3. Participants were from diverse regions in the United States,

represented by all age groups, education levels, employment status, and income levels.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Variable		N	%
Age (years)			
< 18		0	0.00
18 to 29		52	26.13
30 to 44		70	35.18
45 to 60		41	20.60
> 60		36	18.09
	Totals	199	100.00
Gender			
Male		47	23.62
Female		152	76.38
	Totals	199	100.00
Income			
$0 to $9,999		14	7.04
$10,000 to $24,999		19	9.55
$25,000 to $49,999		30	15.08
$50,000 to $74,999		47	23.62
$75,000 to $99,999		25	12.56
$100,000 to $124,999		25	12.56
$125,000 to $149,999		10	5.03
$150,000 to $174,999		4	2.00
$175,000 to $199,999		2	1.00
$200,000+		5	2.51
Prefer not to answer		18	9.05
	Totals	199	100.00
Education			
Some high school		4	2.01
High school diploma		62	31.15
Bachelor's degree		79	39.70
Master's degree		30	15.08
PhD or higher		8	4.02
Trade school		12	6.03

(table continues)

Variable		N	%
Apprenticeship		0	0.00
Prefer not to answer		4	2.01
	Totals	199	100.00
Employment status			
Employed full time		110	55.28
Employed part-time		39	19.60
Contractor		7	3.52
Self-employed		10	5.03
Unemployed		18	9.05
Retired		15	7.55
	Totals	199	100.00
Job tenure			
Less than 1 year		26	13.07
1 to less than 3 years		50	25.13
3–5 years		34	17.09
More than 5 years		73	36.68
Prefer not to answer		16	8.04
	Totals	199	
Pandemic unemployment benefits eligibility			
Yes		71	35.68
No		52	26.13
Not applicable		67	33.67
Prefer not to answer		9	4.52
	Totals	199	100.00

Several demographic components in the characteristics of the respondents should be noted specifically to provide guidance and caution about extrapolating the results of this project to other groups, populations, or samples. First, distribution of these participants by age should not be compared to the overall population because age acted as a selection criterion. Second, females are over-represented in this sample group at a participation rate of 76% while only representing just over 50% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). As far as income is concerned, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the median income for 2016–2020 was $64,994. The largest percentage of

respondents fell within the $50,000–$74,999 category, but no other comparisons based on income should be made to the general population. In fact, with an additional 30% of respondents reporting income between $75,000 and $174,999 this sample likely benefits from higher-than-normal income levels. In fact, that tracks with the educational levels of this group. While 59% of these respondents reported completing either a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree, only 32.9% of the U.S. population, between 2016 and 2020, had completed a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

The data illustrate that respondents' supervisors had high levels of people orientation. In particular, the percentage of participants who disagreed with the seven statements was between 16.58% (PO1) and 28.64% (PO4 and PO5). Per 51.26% and 49.75% of the study's respondents, their supervisors are interested in how they feel and how they are doing and sympathize with them when they have problems, respectively. The numbers presented in Table 4 are consistent, as responses to all the seven questions display similar patterns concerning the frequency of specific answers. In general, the respondents' supervisors reportedly display a high level of people orientation, even though some of them might sometimes struggle with taking time to talk about work-related emotions and expressing their genuine concern about employees' personal development.

Table 4

Frequency Statistics for People Orientation

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Is interested in how I feel and how I am doing" (PO1)	17	16	64	**70**	32
"Takes time for personal contact" (PO2)	16	30	56	**66**	31
"Pays attention to my personal needs" (PO3)	15	27	**68**	**68**	21
"Takes time to talk about work-related emotions" (PO4)	23	34	55	**63**	24
"Is genuinely concerned about my personal development" (PO5)	19	38	**62**	50	30
"Sympathizes with me when I have problems" (PO6)	15	26	59	**69**	30
"Cares about his/her followers" (PO7)	13	22	**67**	66	31

Note: highest values are bold

The data illustrate that respondents' supervisors reportedly have high levels of people orientation. In particular, the percentage of participants who disagreed with the seven statements above is between 16.58% (PO1) and 28.64% (PO4 and PO5). Per 51.26% and 49.75% of the study's respondents, their supervisors are interested in how they feel and how they are doing and sympathize with them when they have problems, respectively. The numbers presented in Table 4 are consistent, as responses to all the seven questions display similar patterns concerning the frequency of specific answers. In

general, the respondents' supervisors reportedly display a high level of people orientation, even though some of them might sometimes struggle with taking time to talk about work-related emotions and expressing their genuine concern about employees' personal development.

The dimension of fairness illustrates the absence of evident contradictions between the leadership practices of most supervisors and the principles of ethical leadership. Most respondents disagree that their supervisors manipulate subordinates, hold employees responsible for things that are not their fault, and hold them accountable for those problems over which respondents have no control. The number of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with the proposed statements (see Table 5) is similar to those who earlier agreed or strongly agreed with the seven questions related to the domain of people orientation. Similarly, more than a third of participants (35.68%) are under the impression that their supervisors mainly focus on reaching their own goals, which seems to be a relatively high figure. It is much higher than the percentage of respondents who disagreed with this statement (29.65%).

Table 5

Frequency Statistics for Fairness

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Holds me accountable for problems over which I have no control" (F1)	28	**58**	**58**	42	13
"Holds me responsible for work that I gave no control over" (F2)	30	54	**68**	36	11
"Holds me responsible for things that are not my fault" (F3)	35	60	**62**	32	10
"Pursues his/her own success at the expense of others" (F4)	29	52	**57**	45	16
"Is focused mainly on reaching his/her own goals" (F5)	26	33	**69**	53	18
"Manipulates subordinates" (F6)	47	56	**56**	26	14

Note: highest values are in bold type

Contrary to the previous two dimensions, the concern for power sharing indicates the absence of a consistent pattern that would characterize participants' responses (see Table 6). Approximately 43% of the sample believe that their supervisor seeks advice from subordinates regarding an organizational strategy and is ready to consider decisions based on the recommendations of subordinates. Nevertheless, only 35.68% of the sample admitted that their supervisors allow subordinates to affect critical decisions. In general, it seems that whereas supervisors certainly use the instrument of power delegation, they

utilize it to address situational issues while keeping the right to make strategic decisions by themselves.

Table 6

Frequency Statistics for Power Sharing

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Allows subordinates to influence critical decisions" (PS1)	14	37	**77**	58	13
"Does not allow others to participate in decision making" (PS2)	26	59	**61**	43	10
"Seeks advice from subordinates concerning organizational strategy" (PS3)	12	36	67	**72**	12
"Will reconsider decisions on the basis of recommendations by those who report to him/her" (PS4)	15	31	68	**76**	9
"Delegates challenging responsibilities to subordinates" (PS5)	10	23	72	**76**	18
"Permits me to play a key role in setting my own performance goals" (PS6)	9	28	63	**69**	30

Note: highest values are in bold type

Table 7

Frequency Statistics for Concern for Sustainability

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Would like to work in an environmentally friendly manner" (CS1)	7	21	67	**74**	30
"Shows concern for sustainability issues" (CS2)	13	19	**95**	57	15
"Stimulates recycling of items and materials in our department" (CS3)	22	31	**77**	53	16

Note: highest values are in bold type

Respondents' answers to questions related to the supervisors' concern for sustainability (see Table 7) portray a typical picture for many managers. Even though 52.26% of supervisors express their willingness to work in an environmentally friendly manner, only 36.18% and 34.67% of the sample note that their supervisors show practical concern for sustainability issues and engage in practical actions concerning stimulating recycling of items and materials, respectively. Therefore, theoretical appreciation for sustainability does not always translate into practical actions among supervisors.

The numbers presented in Table 8 demonstrate the consistency of participants' responses to questions about the ethical guidance provided by supervisors. The percentage of respondents disagreeing with the given statements ranges from 12.06% (EG1) to 21.61% (EG5). The table contains no extreme values, and the distribution of positive and negative responses is similar for all the questions. It seems justified to state

that respondents' supervisors provide sufficient and explicit ethical guidance, a critical

issue from the perspective of the problem under investigation.

Table 8

Frequency Statistics for Ethical Guidance

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Clearly explains integrity related codes of conduct" (EG1)	10	14	67	**76**	32
"Explains what is expected from employees in terms of behaving with integrity" (EG2)	10	22	46	**84**	37
"Clarifies integrity guidelines" (EG3)	11	18	56	**86**	28
"Ensures that employees follow codes of integrity" (EG4)	10	14	58	**82**	35
"Clarifies the likely consequences of possible unethical behavior by myself and my colleagues" (EG5)	16	27	56	**74**	26
"Stimulates the discussion of integrity issues among employees" (EG6)	14	25	**78**	70	12
"Compliments employees who behave according to the integrity guidelines" (EG7)	14	22	64	**76**	23

Note: highest values are in bold type

Table 9

Frequency Statistics for Role Clarification

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Indicates what the performance expectations of each group member are" (RC1)	7	17	54	**93**	28
"Explains what is expected of each group member" (RC2)	7	18	46	**100**	28
"Explains what is expected of me and my colleagues" (RC3)	7	23	44	**91**	34
"Clarifies priorities" (RC4)	16	22	61	**72**	28
"Clarifies who is responsible for what" (RC5)	12	11	64	**79**	33

Note: highest values are in bold type

Table 9 illustrates consistent trends concerning the percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with given statements. Whereas a few supervisors perform worse than others in clarifying priorities, all of them are highly effective in explaining what is expected from employees, clarifying the zones of responsibilities, and indicating specific performance expectations. Simultaneously, it should be noted that only a few people chose to "fully agree" with the statements. Therefore, it seems that the overwhelming majority of supervisors could benefit from putting even more effort into clarifying employees' roles.

Table 10

Frequency Statistics for Integrity

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor….					
"Keeps his/her promises" (I1)	15	22	63	**78**	21
"Can be trusted to do the things he/she says" (I2)	18	13	56	**78**	34
"Can be relied on to honor his/her commitments" (I3)	17	21	47	**81**	33
"Always keeps his/her words" (I4)	16	20	61	**66**	36

Note: highest values are in bold type

Respondents report high integrity of their supervisors (see Table 10). Only 15–19% of the sample do not agree with the proposed statements. In particular, 19.10% of participants complained that their supervisors do not honor their commitments. Simultaneously, this number is small compared to 57.19% of respondents who point out that their supervisors do not experience significant problems in this domain.

In general, respondents report positive personal justice experiences. Only 8.54% of the sample disagree that the treatment they receive at an organization is fair, while only 10.55% state that an organization where they work is not perceived to be fair. Simultaneously, Table 11 includes high numbers of respondents who have chosen the options to "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," or "somewhat agree." Such a pattern indicates that the organizations where respondents work sometimes display both positive and negative signs of justice, making it hard for the staff to hold a holistic opinion of their organization.

Table 11

Frequency Statistics for Individuals' Personal Justice Experience

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Some-what Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
"Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization" (POJ1)	7	20	17	33	37	**64**	21
"In general, I can count on this organization to be fair" (POJ3)	10	11	16	34	42	**65**	21
"In general, the treatment I receive around here is fair" (POJ4)	9	8	16	33	40	**62**	31

Note: highest values are in bold type

Respondents' answers to the questions related to general fairness of the organization seem inconsistent. While 40.70% of the respondents agree that for the most part the organization treats its employees fairly, 32.66% of them believe that most of the people who work at the firm would say that they are often treated unfairly. One might assume that some respondents could have been confused by the wording of the questions. A contradiction in Table 12 is disturbing from the perspective of the Perceived Overall Justice Scale's validity.

Table 12

Frequency Statistics for General Fairness of the Organization

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Some-what Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Some-what Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
"Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair" (POJ2_RC)	11	18	29	**43**	28	**43**	27
"For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly" (POJ5)	8	13	10	42	45	**56**	25
"Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly" (POJ6_RC)	10	29	23	**50**	22	39	26

Note: highest values are in bold type

Table 13

Frequency Statistics for Employee Turnover Intention

Variable	Never or Very Satisfying	Seldom or Satisfying	Sometimes or Neutral	Frequently or Dissatisfying	Always or Totally Dis-satisfying
"How often have you considered leaving your job?" (TIS1)	40	63	**66**	23	7
"How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?" (TIS2)	24	**85**	65	20	5
"How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?" (TIS3)	29	48	**86**	25	11

(*table continues*)

Variable	Never or Very Satisfying	Seldom or Satisfying	Sometimes or Neutral	Frequently or Dissatisfying	Always or Totally Dis-satisfying
"How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?" (TIS4)	26	49	**74**	36	14
"How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?" (TIS5)	36	34	**67**	40	22
"How often do you look forward to another day at work?" (TIS6)	23	44	**76**	37	19

Note: highest values are in bold type

Research participants generally have a moderate turnover intention (see Table 13). Only 15.08% of them have considered leaving their job. Simultaneously, it is crucial to emphasize that 25.13% of them sometimes dream about getting another job, and 31.16% of the sample even believe they are likely to accept another job at the same compensation level. While 25.13% of respondents dream of another job, 28.14% look forward to another day at work. It seems justified to state that there is no consistency in regard to the turnover intention of participants. Most respondents evidently are somewhat satisfied with their current job, but around a fourth of them display varied signs of work dissatisfaction, which could eventually increase their intention to leave their current organization.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Median	Mean	SD
Ethical Leadership Behaviors	3.32	3.26	0.26
People Orientation	3.32	3.29	0.11
Fairness	2.74	2.75	0.17
Power Sharing	3.16	3.15	0.23
Concern for Sustainability	3.21	3.25	0.22
Ethical Guidance	3.51	3.44	0.15
Role Clarification	3.58	3.54	0.11
Integrity	3.44	3.43	0.06
Perceived Overall Justice	4.24	4.42	0.58
Individuals' Personal Justice Experiences	4.81	4.84	0.12
General Fairness of the Organization	3.67	4.01	0.72
Turnover Intention	2.75	2.71	0.20

Note: N = 199 survey participants

The variables related to ethical leadership behaviors have relatively high mean values (see Table 14). It might seem that the dimensions of fairness and power sharing are struggling as compared to other domains of ethical leadership. However, a close analysis of the data reveals that the only reason behind a difference between the variables' mean values is that these two variables included questions in which the options to "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were indicative of ethical leadership behaviors. In addition to the ethical leadership behaviors, the research also points at the high perceived overall justice. In this situation, it seems natural that most employees have a low turnover intention.

Assumptions

It is necessary to evaluate the regression assumptions, specifically the absence of multicollinearity in the predictors, outliers, normality of residuals, and homoscedasticity (Seber & Lee, 2012). Highly correlated relationships between independent variables would indicate multicollinearity. Outliers refer to deviations from the remainder of the data set and predict abnormal values that may skew results. Normality refers to a normal data distribution assumption, while homoscedasticity is a constant variance in residuals (Seber & Lee, 2012).

To evaluate these considerations, I used normal probability and scatterplots for standardized residuals for each RQ (see Figures 6 to 8, which were created using the regression feature in the Microsoft Excel Data ToolPak). As there were no outliers, no multicollinearity was observed. Further testing was conducted using variance inflation factor and tolerance. For all study variables, the respective variance inflation factor did not exceed 2.5, and tolerance did not fall below 0.4 (see Table 15). This indicates that none of the linear regression assumptions were violated.

Multicollinearity has several expected theoretical consequences. Even in near collinearity $r_{12}^2 \cong one$ the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimators are unbiased, though the absence of bias is repeated in the sampling process. However, practically there are no replicating samples no matter how close they might look the same. The near collinearity does not destroy a minimum variance property of the OLS estimators. Ironically the minimum variance is not an indication that the value of the variance will be small. The

multicollinearity is a fundamental sample issue because the explanatory variable is not

linearly related in the population; they can be so related in a particular sample. The

practical significance of multicollinearity includes

- large variances and standard errors of the OLS estimators

- wide ranges in confidence intervals

- insignificant t-ratios (t values)

- high coefficient of determination values but few significant t ratios

Also, the OLS estimators and their standard error become more sensitive to minute

changes in the data. In addition, multicollinearity might result from wringing signs for

regression coefficient concerning the economic theory. Last, multicollinearity makes it

challenging to explain assessing the individual contribution of the independent variables

to the dependent variable sum of squares or the coefficient of determination r^2.

Goodness-of-fit for the regression model is tested by R2. Thus, R2 value conveys

how well or not the regression complies with the predicted and estimated expectations of

the linear model. However, in multiple linear regression, the fundamental idea is that

more than one independent variable can predict the dependent variable.

The classical linear regression model assumes that the error term has the same

variance, or heteroscedasticity. In this case, since the variance differs from one

observation to another, it demonstrates evidence of heteroscedasticity. Heteroscedasticity

is found in cross-sectional data, not time series data. Some of the consequences of the

heteroscedasticity include: the OLS estimator is linear, the OLS estimators are unbiased,

and the absence of minimum variance in OLS estimator in the user to estimate the variance of OLS estimators is biased (Seber & Lee, 2012). The bias comes from the fact that the variance is no longer an unbiased estimator of the population variance. Lastly, as a result, the usual confidence interval and hypothesis based on the *t*-distribution are unreliable.

Figure 6

Normal Probability Plot of Ethical Leadership Behaviors
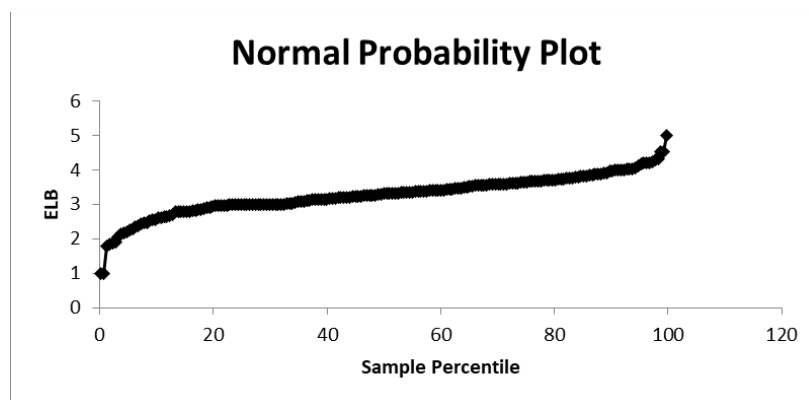
Figure 7

Standardized Residual Plot of Perceived Overall Justice
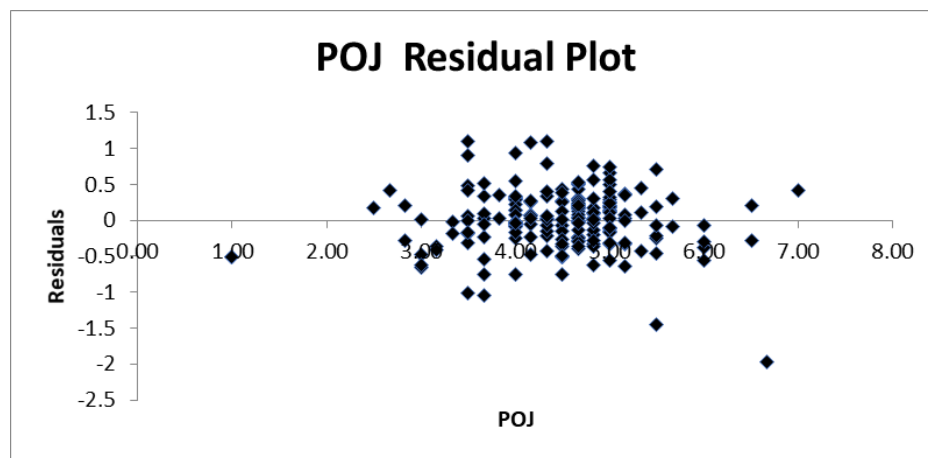
Figure 8

Standardized Residual Plot of Turnover Intention
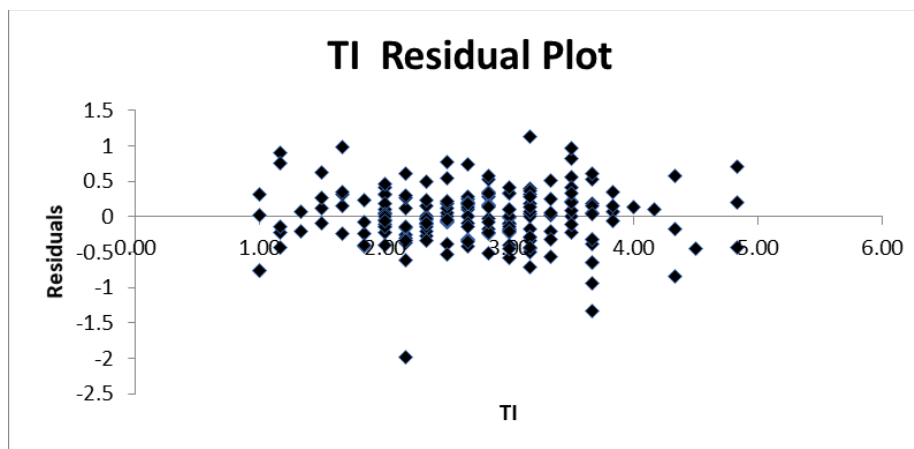
Table 15

Variance Inflation Factor-Tolerance Comparison

Variable	VIF	Tolerance
Ethical Leadership Behaviors (ELBs)	2.15	0.46
Perceptions of Overall Justice (POJ)	2.06	0.49
Turnover Intention (TI)	1.08	0.93

Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1

RQ1: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, which ethical behaviors of first-line direct supervisors have the most influence on the employees' perceived overall justice amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0 1$: There is no relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

H_a1: There is a positive relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as

defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

To test this first hypothesis, I used linear regression. The test was conducted

twice. The first test (Model 1) compared the overall ethical leadership behavior scale and

employees' perceived overall justice (see Table 16). The second test (Model 2) compared

the individual leadership behavior scale dimensions and employees' perceived overall

justice (see Table 17). The individual dimensions are identified clearly. A summary of

the test results is shown in the following table.

Table 16

Model Summary of Hypothesis 1

Model	Slope (beta)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	p-value for F
1	0.561	0.538	0.521	31.82	< 0.001*

Note. * p < .05; linear predictors: (Constant), People Orientation, Fairness, Power Sharing, Concern for Sustainability, Ethical Guidance, Role Clarification, Integrity; Dependent variable: Perceived Overall Justice.

The R^2-values indicated a moderately good fit. More than half (52–53%) of the

variation in Perceived Overall Justice was explained by the dimensions of People

Orientation, Fairness, Power Sharing, Concern for Sustainability, Ethical Guidance, Role

Clarification, and Integrity. The regression model was highly significant at p < 0.001,

hence the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Table 17

Model 2 Coefficients for Individual Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice

Variable	R	SE
People Orientation	0.124	0.0863
Fairness	0.155***	0.0539
Power Sharing	0.148	0.0917
Concern for Sustainability	–0.0515	0.0826
Ethical Guidance	0.161*	0.0919
Role Clarification	0.192**	0.0863
Integrity	0.264***	0.0646
Constant	1.164***	0.0286
Observations	199	
R^2	0.538	

Note. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

People Orientation = 0.124: if People Orientation is increased by one, Perceived Overall Justice will increase by 0.124 (all other variables held constant). This variable is not significant, $p > 0.05$.

Fairness = 0.155***: if Fairness is increased by one, Perceived Overall Justice will increase by 0.155 (all other variables held constant). This variable is significant, $p < 0.05$.

Power Sharing = 0.148: if Power Sharing is increased by one, Perceived Overall Justice will increase by 0.148 (all other variables held constant). This variable is not significant, $p > 0.05$.

Concern for Sustainability = -0.0515: if Concern for Sustainability is increased by one, Perceived Overall Justice will decrease by 0.0515 (all other variables held constant). This variable is not significant, $p > 0.05$.

Ethical Guidance = 0.161*: if Ethical Guidance is increased by one, Perceived

Overall Justice will increase by 0.161 (all other variables held constant). This variable is

significant, $p < 0.05$.

Role Clarification = 0.192**: if Role Clarification is increased by one, Perceived

Overall Justice will increase by 0.192 (all other variables held constant). This variable is

significant, $p < 0.05$.

Integrity = 0.264***: if Integrity is increased by one, Perceived Overall Justice

will increase by 0.264 (all other variables held constant). This variable is significant, $p <$

0.05. All variables are ranked in Table 18.

Ranking of the Independent Variables

Table 18

Variable Ranking

Rank	Beta	Name
1	0.26	Integrity
2	0.19	Role Clarification
3	0.16	Ethical Guidance
4	0.16	Fairness
5	0.15	Power Sharing
6	0.12	People Orientation
7	**(0.05)**	Concern for Sustainability

Table 19 shows that the *p*-value for the averaged dimensions to create the ethical

leadership behavior scale was 0.00. The same finding was seen for the same test but

based on scores for the individual dimensions as predictors ($p = 0.00$). Therefore, the null

hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating a

positive correlation between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7,

and employees' perceived overall justice. However, the p-value was not significant for

each individual dimension. The variables Concern for Sustainability, People Orientation,

Power Sharing, and Ethical Guidance were not significant. Thus, it can be concluded that

the most significant ethical leadership behaviors are fairness, integrity, and role

clarification.

Table 19

Hypothesis 1 Test (Including Insignificant Variables)

Variable	R	R^2	T-stat	p-value
Model 1	0.72	0.51	6.19	0.00
Model 2	0.73	0.54	4.07	0.00
People Orientation	0.12	0.02	1.44	0.15
Fairness	0.16	0.02	2.88	0.00
Power Sharing	0.15	0.02	1.61	0.11
Concern for Sustainability	−0.05	0.00	−0.62	0.53
Ethical Guidance	0.16	0.03	1.75	0.08
Role Clarification	0.19	0.04	2.22	0.03
Integrity	0.26	0.07	4.08	0.00

Once the significant variables were identified, I reran the regression model,

omitting insignificant variables. Table 20 includes results of the regression analysis for a

new model involving only the significant variables. Upon including all the variables in a

new regression model, the p-values became even lower. The null hypothesis regarding all

the three variables could be rejected, as Table 20 demonstrates that variation in the

fairness, role clarification, and integrity scores of supervisors strongly affects the

employees' perceived overall justice. These three variables, therefore, should be

prioritized when nurturing ethical leadership behaviors in the organizational environment.

The variance (S2) is approximately 0.50 for the model, indicating that the variables

explain around 50% of variation in the variable of perceived overall justice. An increase

of one point in the variables of fairness, role clarification, and integrity is associated with

a corresponding augmentation in the overall justice score by 1.45, 0.17, and 0.37,

respectively.

Table 20

Hypothesis 1 Test (Excluding Insignificant Variables)

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	T-stat	p-value
Fairness	1.447793	0.274684	3.405762	0.000801129
Role Clarification	0.169747	0.049841	5.554522	9.0379E-08
Integrity	0.372094	0.066989	5.916889	1.45136E-08

Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 2

RQ2: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees,

does employees' perceived overall justice mediate the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0$2: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of

Ambrose and Schminke (2009), does not mediate the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b),

and employee turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and

Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

H_a2: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of

Ambrose and Schminke (2009), mediates the relationship between ethical

leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b),

and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and

Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

To test mediation, I relied on two statistical methods.

Method 1

I tested this hypothesis three times using linear regression and analysis of variance

(ANOVA) tests. The first linear regression test compared the overall ethical leadership

behavior scale as a function of employees' perceived overall justice and turnover

intention (labeled as Model 1). The second linear regression test compared the individual

leadership behavior scale dimensions for predicting turnover intention (labeled as Model

2). Individual dimensions are clearly identified. The third test compared the overall

ethical leadership behavior scale, employees' perceived overall justice, and turnover

intention using ANOVA (labeled as Model 3). A summary of the results is shown in

Table 21.

Table 21

Hypothesis 2 Test (Including Insignificant Variables)

Variable	R	R^2	T-value (regression) F-value (ANOVA)	p-value
Model 1	0.73	0.54	6.87	< 0.01
Perceived Overall Justice	0.50	0.25	14.03	< 0.01
Turnover Intention	–0.11	0.01	–3.10	< 0.01
Model 2	0.57	0.33	6.67	< 0.01
People Orientation	–0.11	0.01	–1.09	0.28
Fairness	0.36	0.13	5.78	< 0.01
Power Sharing	0.18	0.03	1.68	0.09
Concern for Sustainability	–0.14	0.02	–1.50	0.14
Ethical Guidance	–0.16	0.02	–1.48	0.14
Role Clarification	0.07	0.00	0.69	0.49
Integrity	0.03	0.00	0.39	0.70
Model 3			290.00	< 0.01

Table 21 shows that the *p*-value < 0.01 for Models 1, 2, and 3. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This indicates that employee perceived overall justice mediates the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intentions in a statistical test of mediation. When considering the individual scales, ethical leadership behaviors impacted both perceived overall justice and turnover intentions, evidenced by $p < 0.01$ for both scales, which was also confirmed in Model 3 ($p < 0.01$). However, when considering the individual ethical leadership dimensions with turnover intentions, there were several instances where the *p*-value was not significant. In this model, there were no significance effects of People

Orientation, Power Sharing, Concern for Sustainability, Ethical Guidance, Role

Clarification, or Integrity, which pointed to Fairness as the mitigating dimension.

It is important to emphasize that the overall ethical leadership scale used in the

tests excluding insignificant variables to ensure that the value of fitted models is not

diluted. Table 22 depicts the test conducted with only the significant variables (fairness,

role clarification, and integrity).

Table 22

Hypothesis 2 Test (Excluding Insignificant Variables)

Variable	R	R^2	Beta	p-value
Model 1	0.67	0.46		0.00
Perceived Overall Justice			0.44	2.91
Turnover Intention			0.01	0.84
Model 2	0.71	0.50		0.00
Fairness			0.17	0.00
Role Clarification			0.37	0.00
Integrity			0.35	0.00
Model 3			613.88	0.00

Table 22 shows that the *p*-value is around 0.00 for Models 1, 2, and 3. Individual

dimensions of ethical leaderships strongly affect the turnover intention, which is evident

in low *p*-values. At the same time, the impact of role clarification and integrity on this

independent variable seems to be more significant. At the same time, it should be noted

that the *p*-value for turnover intention in Model 1 is 0.84, which is significantly higher

than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is rejected, and the null hypothesis is

accepted.

Method 2

The objective was to determine the significance of the indirect effect (A * B) using the Sobel (1982) test, used to determine the statistical significance of the indirect influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator variable. In this mediation model (Figure 9), Ethical Leadership Behaviors was the independent variable (X), Turnover Intention was the dependent variable (Y), and Perceived Overall Justice was the mediator (M).

Figure 9

Mediation Model
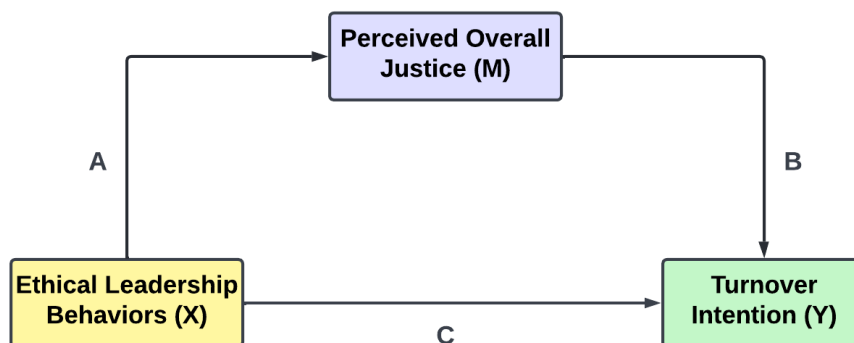
Total Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Turnover Intention

Table 23

Mediation Model Summary (Using the Second Method)

Model	Slope (beta)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	p-value for F
1	0.747	0.070	0.065	14.77	< 0.001*

Note. * = $p < .05$; Predictors: (Constant), Ethical Leadership Behaviors; Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention; Mediator: Overall Justice

Table 24

Mediation Model Coefficients (Using the Second Method)

Variable	Model 1	SE
Ethical Leadership Behaviors	–0.351***	0.0913
Constant	3.861***	0.303
Observations	199	
R^2	0.070	

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

 The *p*-value of the model is < 0.001 is significant at an alpha level of 0.05; hence, the slope differs from zero.

Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Perceived Overall Justice

 This regression aimed to determine the direct impact of Ethical Leadership Behavior on Perceived Overall Justice (see Figures 10 and 11) to generate the Beta coefficient and SE for the relationship between Ethical Leadership Behavior and Perceived Overall Justice, which is an important requirement for determining the indirect impact.

Figure 10

Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Perceived Overall Justice
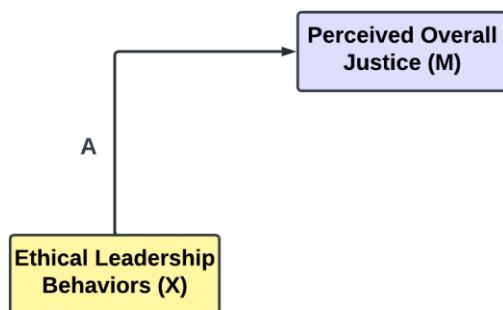
Table 25

Model Summary of Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Perceived Overall Justice

Model	Slope (beta)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	p-value for F
1	0.568	0.513	0.510	207.71	< 0.001*

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 26

Model Coefficients for Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Perceived Overall Justice

Variables	Model 2	SE
Ethical Leadership Behaviors	1.001***	0.0694
Constant	1.166***	0.231
Observations	199	
R-squared	0.513	

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

According to the regression results, the impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors on Perceived Overall Justice is significant ($p < 0.001$). The coefficient and SE are used to calculate the indirect impact since they are values that represent path A.

Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice on Turnover Intention

This regression analysis determined the direct impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice on Turnover Intention. The coefficients and SEs generated from the regression analysis are used to define B and C path values.

Figure 11

Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice on Turnover Intention
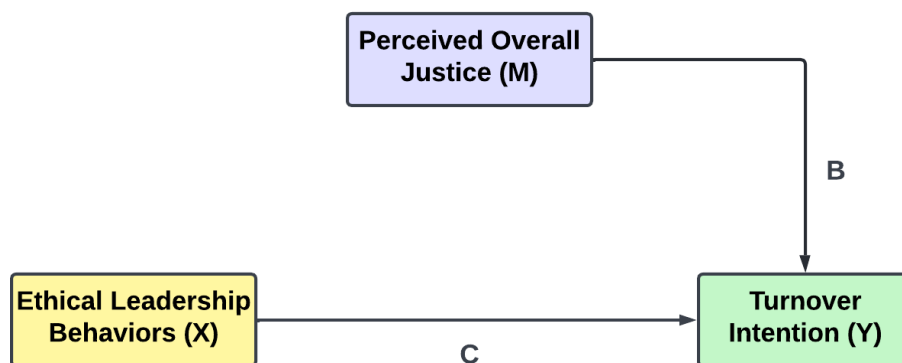
Table 27

Model Summary of Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice on Turnover Intention

Model	Slope (beta)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-value	p-value for F
1	0.748	.071	0.061	7.53	< 0.001*

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 28

Model Coefficients for Direct Impact of Ethical Leadership Behaviors and Perceived Overall Justice on Turnover Intention

Variables	Model 3	SE
Perceived Overall Justice	0.0550	0.0938
Ethical Leadership Behaviors	–0.406***	0.131
Constant	3.797***	0.323
Observations	199	
R^2	0.071	

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

With the coefficient and SEs generated from the regression analysis, it is possible to conduct the mediation analysis. The regression coefficients are: Path A = 1.001 (0.069), Path B = 0.055 (0.094), and Path C = –0.406 (.131).

Figure 12

Regression Coefficients for Mediation Analysis
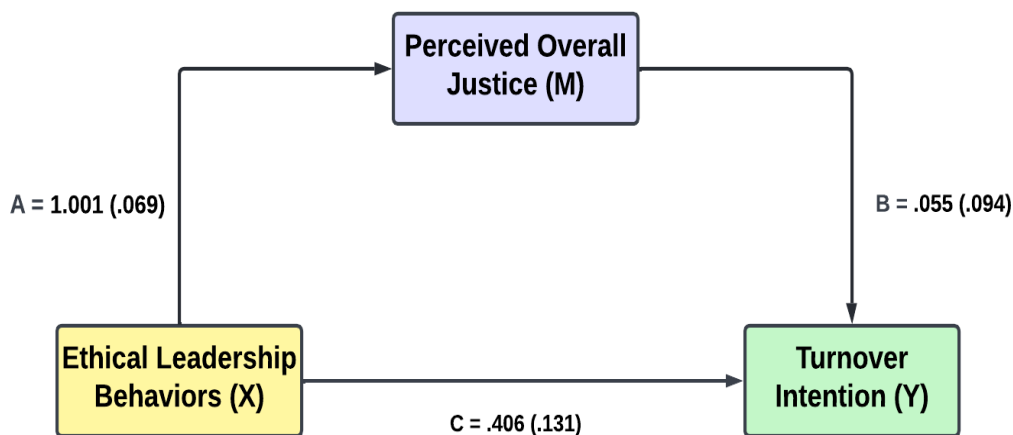
Indirect Effect for Statistical Significance

I used a Sobel test to determine whether the indirect impact is statistically significant. The indirect effect analysis results for Ethical Leadership Behaviors → Perceived Overall Justice → Turnover Intention utilizing Sobel test were Test statistic = 0.58463108, SE = 0.0941705, and p = 0.5587958. The most significant output of the Sobel test is the *p*-value. In this case, the *p*-value was 0.558, greater than 0.05. Hence, the indirect impact between ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention was not statistically significant.

ANOVA Analysis for Supervisory Role

Tables 29 through 31 show the one-way ANOVA results comparing the

participants' responses based on their supervisory role. The comparisons are based on the

scales of ethical leadership behaviors, perceived overall justice, and turnover intention,

and the groups are supervisors and nonsupervisors.

Table 29

Analysis of Variance for Ethical Leadership Behaviors Based on Supervisory Role

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
SUP	75	254.32	3.39	0.35	25.90	0.07
NON-SUP	124	394.58	3.18	0.30	36.65	0.05

ANOVA Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	2.04	1	2.04	6.42	0.01	0.03
Within Groups	62.55	197	0.32			
Total	64.59	198	0.33			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

Table 30

Analysis of Variance for Perceived Overall Justice Based on Supervisory Role

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
SUP	75	341.17	4.55	0.70	51.88	0.09
NON-SUP	124	542.00	4.37	0.63	77.27	0.07

ANOVA Sources	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	1.48	1	1.48	2.26	0.13	0.01
Within Groups	129.15	197	0.66			
Total	130.62	198	0.66			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

Table 28 was based on the effect of holding a supervisory role on the ethical leadership behavior scale. The table shows that there was an effect with a *p*-value of 0.01, suggesting significance. Table 29 was based on the effect of holding a supervisory role on the perceptions of overall justice scale. The test shows that the *p*-value was not significant at 0.13. Table 30 was based on assessing the effect of holding a supervisory role on the employee turnover intention scale. The table shows that the *p*-value was not significant at 0.47. Therefore, the ANOVA results show that having a supervisory role impacts certain ethical leadership behaviors undertaken by the participants. It is likely that supervisors have different perceptions of what constitutes ethical leadership behaviors.

Table 31

Analysis of Variance for Turnover Intention Based on Supervisory Role

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
SUP	75	207.33	2.76	0.66	48.78	0.09
NON-SUP	124	332.67	2.68	0.56	69.08	0.07
ANOVA						
Sources	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	0.31	1	0.31	0.52	0.47	0.00
Within Groups	117.86	197	0.60			
Total	118.17	198	0.60			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

ANOVA Analysis for Pandemic Unemployment Benefits Eligibility

Tables 32 to 34 show one-way ANOVA test results comparing the participants' responses based on their eligibility to the pandemic unemployment benefits during

COVID-19. The comparisons were based on the scales of ethical leadership behaviors, perceived overall justice, and turnover intention, and the groups are workers who were eligible to the pandemic unemployment benefits versus those who were not.

Table 30 considered the eligibility to obtain unemployment benefits on the ethical leadership behavior scale. The *p*-value was significant at 0.01. For considering the perceptions of overall justice in relation to the ability to obtain unemployment benefits (see Table 31), the *p*-value was not significant at 0.06. Table 32, which was in relation to employee turnover intention in consideration to the eligibility to obtain unemployment benefits, showed a *p*-value of 0.22, which was not significant. So, the eligibility to obtain unemployment benefits was significant only for the ethical leadership behavior scale. This suggests that eligibility for unemployment benefits has an impact on what is perceived as being ethical behaviors but does not affect perceived overall justice or turnover intention.

Table 32

ANOVA for Ethical Leadership Behaviors Based on Pandemic Unemployment Eligibility

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
BENEFITS	71	244.16	3.44	0.27	18.97	0.07
NONE	52	168.03	3.23	0.22	11.29	0.08
NA	67	209.26	3.12	0.36	24.07	0.07
NA*	9	27.45	3.05	0.79	6.29	0.19

ANOVA Sources	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	3.96	3	1.32	4.25	0.01	0.06
Within Groups	60.63	195	0.31			
Total	64.59	198	0.33			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

Table 33

ANOVA for Perceived Overall Justice Based on Pandemic Unemployment Eligibility

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
BENEFITS	71	329.50	4.64	0.63	43.76	0.10
NONE	52	227.00	4.37	0.42	21.45	0.11
NA	67	289.50	4.32	0.68	44.57	0.10
NA*	9	37.17	4.13	1.98	15.88	0.27

ANOVA Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	4.97	3	1.66	2.57	0.06	0.04
Within Groups	125.65	195	0.64			
Total	130.62	198	0.66			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

Table 34

ANOVA for Employee Turnover Intention Based on Pandemic Unemployment Eligibility

Group	Count	Sum	Mean	Variance	SS	Std Err
BENEFITS	71	190.17	2.68	0.63	44.41	0.09
NONE	52	148.17	2.85	0.48	24.57	0.11
NA	67	181.00	2.70	0.66	43.86	0.09
NA*	9	20.67	2.30	0.34	2.71	0.26

ANOVA Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Eta-sq
Between Groups	2.62	3	0.87	1.48	0.22	0.02
Within Groups	115.55	195	0.59			
Total	118.17	198	0.60			

Note: Alpha set to 0.05

Summary

In Chapter 4, data collection, analysis, and findings were described. Data analysis for 199 usable responses was conducted and expounded. For the first part, a regression model involving the dimensions of fairness, role clarification, and integrity was found to predict variation in the employees' perceived overall justice. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by the dimensions of role clarification, integrity, and fairness, and employees' perceived overall justice.

For the second part, linear regression was used to determine the mediation impact of Overall Perceived Justice. The statistical analysis indicates that employee perceived overall justice does not mediate the relationship between Ethical Leadership Behavior and Employee Turnover Intention. Hence, the alternative hypothesis is rejected, and the null hypothesis is accepted, which states that employee Perceived Overall Justice, as measured by the instrument of Ambrose and Schminke (2009), does not mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b), and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation. The final chapter provides details of the study conclusions and recommendations. Information is provided regarding how the results support the theoretical foundation and existing literature. Finally, implications for social change and future research are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this chapter, I further analyze the findings and offer conclusions and recommendations obtained from the data analysis in relation to the purpose, questions, and hypotheses. Additional information is also provided regarding how the context of the study's theoretical framework supports the research and how this project adds to the current body of literature. The chapter concludes with discussion regarding the study's potential impact for social change.

As globalization has increased, the interdependence of world economies has also increased, resulting in organizations having to face unique growth, mobility, and technological advancement opportunities (Alagaraja et al., 2015; Piscicelli et al., 2018). Further, market, consumer, and supplier interdependence has also resulted in a complex value chain with unique challenges (Alagaraja et al., 2015). These challenges are being addressed by seeking effective ways to create organizational success and business value (Piscicelli et al., 2018). To meet these objectives, employee relationships must be well managed and successful and strategies must be based on the improvement of employee well-being, potentially leading to long-term retention (Chou & Lopez-Rodriguez, 2013).

However, much has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as it was an unprecedented crisis that required a global response and is notably the most significant challenge faced since the Great Depression (Bartik et al., 2020). In fact, the pandemic temporarily crippled the global economy creating significant public health and psychological ramifications. During the first year of the pandemic, many U.S. businesses

completely shut down, while others drastically reduced operating hours. Many businesses, such as restaurants, only allowed for carryout services (Wahba, 2020). Overall, about 43% of small retail businesses temporarily closed and employment decreased by 40% (Bartik et al., 2020). Many businesses coped with the pandemic by reinforcing policies and maximized organizational commitment, striking a balance between ethical values, social responsibility, and economic goals.

Corporate leaders focused on reducing shocks to their bottom line through mass layoffs. This led to further hardships for many people. Thus, the impact of COVID-19 has varied across business sectors. For instance, general merchandisers and drug stores have experienced a boom in sales in the United States. Nonetheless, challenges impacting effective operational and human resources management during the pandemic were trying. Moreover, the pandemic represents a unique condition where organizations had to operate in a survival mode, which in turn led to the adoption of practices that allow for flexibility, adaptability, and crisis management (Foy, 2019). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ethical and social dilemmas have been brought to the forefront in many sectors (Kramer et al., 2020). The pandemic created a need for leaders who could manage crises and engage in ethical behaviors in relation to organizational justice, especially as employees are more likely to follow these leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This unanticipated new focus on ethical behaviors and organizational justice may lead to a long-term positive impact on organizational outcomes.

In the present study, I investigated the influence of leaders' ethical behaviors on employees' perceived organizational justice and employee turnover in the context of crisis. A specific research problem addressed in this study pertains to the absence of the mediating effect of employees' perceptions of justice on a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover intention. Insufficient knowledge of this vital issue may translate into adverse business outcomes, such as difficulties with designing effective organizational policies and maintaining a nurturing corporate culture that would leverage employees' perceptions of justice into reduced turnover intention.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental, survey research design study was to examine the mediating effect, if any, of justice perceptions on the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention—during a moment of crisis, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic—of frontline workers of big-box general merchandise retail and wholesale stores in the United States. Information is lacking as to the extent to which the ethical behaviors of leaders influence the perceptions of justice and turnover intentions in employees. This study addressed those issues in hopes of contributing to and advancing scientific knowledge in leadership and business management. To this end, I identified the most critical ethical leadership behaviors that influence the perceptions of justice and turnover intentions by employees, which may contribute to changes in leadership training and development by highlighting the behaviors that will improve perceptions of justice and reduce employee turnover rates.

Specifically, the present study addressed the influence of direct supervisors' ethical behaviors on employees' perceptions of overall justice and turnover intention. The sample included frontline workers of retailers and wholesalers who worked in-person during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The statistical analysis of the data supported the arguments presented in Chapter 2.

Research Question 1

The first RQ and corresponding hypotheses were

RQ1: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, which ethical behaviors of first-line direct supervisors have the most influence on the employees' perceived overall justice amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0 1$: There is no relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

$H_a 1$: There is a positive relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as defined by Dimensions 1–7, and employees' perceived overall justice.

I analyzed how ethical leadership behavior impacts perceived overall justice. Specifically, the study findings indicate a relationship between ethical leadership behavior and perceived overall justice. Xu et al. (2016) conducted a study utilizing information from two phases to evaluate the impact of ethical leadership on organization-focused justice. According to their results, ethical leadership behavior influences the trust of staff members, which promotes perceived justice towards the firm.

As reported by Bake (2019) and Kouzes and Posner (2017), leaders impact employee performance, experience, and intention to stay. In particular, as Kouzes and Posner reported, 1 in 2 employees leave their job to end the relationship with managers. In fact, if leaders are perceived as caring more about their bottom line than the well-being of their employees, they are often viewed as being exploitative. These findings align with the literature because they support the need for ethical leadership (Zhu et al., 2016). Results of the current research conform to the literature review's findings pertaining to the existence of a relationship between ethical behaviors of first-line direct supervisors and front-line employees' perceived overall justice. The critical importance of ethical leaderships was discussed in a number of studies, including those by den Hartog (2015), Babalola et al. (2016), Ahmad et al. (2017), and many others. Therefore, the results of this research are not surprising from this perspective.

Research Question 2

The second RQ and corresponding hypotheses were

RQ2: Based on objective ratings by retail and wholesale frontline employees, does employees' perceived overall justice mediate the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention amid a pandemic crisis?

$H_0 2$: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of Ambrose and Schminke (2009), mediates the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b),

and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

H_a2: Employee perceived overall justice, as measured by the instrument of Ambrose and Schminke (2009), mediates the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors, as measured by the instrument of Kalshoven et al. (2011b), and employees' turnover intention, as measured by the instrument of Bothma and Roodt (2013), in a statistical test of mediation.

I analyzed how ethical leadership behaviors influence employee turnover intention and the role of overall perceived justice. Specifically, the study findings indicate that overall perceived justice does not mediate the relationship between turnover intention and ethical leadership behaviors. It could be inferred from the study findings that perceived organizational justice is an important variable that affects the turnover intention (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). However, its effect on this dependent variable is not in any way connected with the construct of ethical leadership behaviors. A firm could have a low level of organizational justice, but a particular supervisor could still display ethical leadership behaviors. Similarly, an organization with the generally high levels of justice could have ineffective supervisors in some departments. These examples illustrate that although both organizational justice and ethical leadership behaviors exert an impact on employees' turnover intention, the ways in which they influence this variable could be different, thus explaining the absence of a mediation effect in this study.

Findings in Relation to the Literature

I drew from Bandura's social learning theory (1977) and Johns's (2006) categorical framework of context for understanding leadership behaviors. The use of these theories allowed for theory building in conceptualization of the connections between work context, leadership, and organizational behavior categories. For example, Bandura based social learning theory on the context of how and why learning occurs, such as whether it is deliberate learning or second-hand, as from observing others. Social learning theory is grounded on the context that followers learn by observing and imitating values, attitudes, and behaviors of role models. This refers, in this context, to supervisors. Avey et al. (2011) and Zhu et al. (2016) suggested that the actions and behaviors taken by leaders influence those taken by followers. This finding is confirmed by the findings of the present study.

The categorical framework of context by Johns (2006) notes that situational opportunities and constraints affect behaviors and the relationship between work and leadership. Although this study found that perceived organizational justice affects turnover intention, it did not yield evidence of the mediation of the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention. This unexpected finding could be explained by the fact that the leadership behaviors of particular supervisors do not always harmonize with overall trends related to organizational justice. Therefore, the findings of the present study partially confirm those of the literature, which indicate management and leaders have an impact on the attitudes and behaviors of employees.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitations of the study are as follows; the sample size was relatively small and the primary methods of data collection were accomplished through online surveys. The investigation relied on responses from 199 participants, which did not lead to the generation of comprehensive observations and findings on the study topic. An increase in sample size could facilitate the inclusion of more comprehensive insights. The research only identified individuals eligible for the study through SurveyMonkey Audience.

Other limitations ensued from the context of the study design and methodology. Survey participants were recruited using SurveyMonkey Audience's crowdsourcing service, and challenges were encountered in finding an appropriate participant pool. This is a common and major concern related to low response rates in online surveys (Anseel et al., 2010; Rindfuss et al., 2015). This known problem was exacerbated because fewer people were employed in the target population following the outbreak of COVID-19. Further, even when they were employed in the target population, participants were likely more hesitant to participate in the study without incentives. These challenges were alleviated to a significant extent through the use of the recruitment service by SurveyMonkey. This counteracted many of the problems relating to the response rate, especially considering the study's short time frame.

The study relied on online questionnaires, which perhaps adversely influenced the effectiveness of the approach. Even though online methods are widely used to collect

data in different social sciences, they could increase bias risks. In particular, there is a possibility that those individuals who were motivated to share insights into their workplace situation were much more likely to take part in the research, while others chose not to click on a link to the survey. The research included extensive secondary sources to discuss and evaluate the aspects of ethical behaviors and perceived justice.

While reasonable efforts were made to address and overcome these limitations, they have been described in the discussion and literature review sections.

Recommendations

The study is based on frameworks related to the influence of leaders' behavior on employees' turnover intentions and perceived justice. The study focused on ethical leadership and behavior on perceived justice toward policies, practices, and decisions in an omnibus context. Other elements correlating to ethical leadership which could not be analyzed due to time limitations, such as working conditions, injustices, job satisfaction, and rewards, may offer diverse insights into employee turnover intentions and decisions. Comparing such aspects can help determine the most causative element initiating turnover intentions.

The study findings indicated a positive correlation between ethical leadership behaviors and how employees perceived justice using linear regression and ANOVA. The existence of a positive relationship between these two variables could be inferred from a number of studies. In particular, Nishii and Mayer (2009) found that employee retention that is stimulated by ethical leadership behaviors affects employees' perceptions of

organizational justice, whereas Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) discovered that ethical leadership strongly affects employee turnover intention via the intermediary variables of affective commitment and ethical climate, while also using the construct of organizational justice as a relevant factor that contributes to staff retention. In a similar manner, Gaither (2017) also confirmed the existence of a relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover through the mediation of perceived justice. The study also indicated that eligibility for unemployment benefits significantly impacted the organization's perception of justice. Thus, a qualitative study focusing on a population of employees who lost employment during the pandemic could offer insights that can be compared with those working during the pandemic. The perception of justice in the team can explain in depth how the selection was made and the impacts of ethical leadership on employee perception of justice.

Ethical leadership behaviors are demonstrated by a leader's personal quality and behavior, as indicated by the statistical findings relating to fairness, integrity, and role clarification that affect the perception of fairness. This finding does not contradict the existing knowledge of ethical leadership behaviors. The importance of fair behaviors for ethical leaders was outlined by Kanungo (2001), Brown et al. (2005), and Treviño et al. (2006), while both integrity and fairness are described as critical features of ethical leadership in numerous scientific papers (Elçi et al., 2012; Kalshoven & den Hartog, 2009; Kalshoven et al., 2011a; Metwally et al., 2019). Organizations are advised to keep the leaders aware of the impacts of the leadership traits through continual training can

ultimately improve employees' perceptions. The ANOVA results focused on employee

perception of justice concerning supervisory roles and employee unemployment benefits

eligibility. Leaders need to demonstrate an interest in all the employees in the

organization and fairness when delegating duties. Periodical organizational surveys can

be vital in assessing employee satisfaction and morale within the organization.

Researchers should conduct a similar study with more than 300 participants to

generate more in-depth analyses and inclusive findings. Future researchers should include

more than one tool when selecting the participants, such as LinkedIn® to identify people

who could enhance the generalizability of the results. Researchers should include both in-

person interviews and questionnaires when evaluating the study topic to mitigate the

chances of bias and miscommunication. The approach could ensure the generation of

findings with minimal bias also the reduction in the resources. In-person interviewing

does not require a huge budget since it is a resourceful technique. Face-to-face interviews

could allow the interviewers to create an environment of professionalism by using office

space and in proper dressing. It could be conducted within a week whereby the

participants could avail themselves on any day by 5 PM. It could reduce delays in

completing the project due to the restriction policies, ensuring the completion of the

project on time.

Researchers should conduct similar research that includes a comprehensive

evaluation of secondary sources in the literature review and discussion section. There

should be a description of the findings with support or rejection from specific articles that

cover the study topic. The investigation should retrieve the scholarly articles from effective playrooms, such as Google Scholar. Future studies should include other aspects that affect the rate of employee turnover in an organization.

While the current study found mixed support for assessing the mediating impact of perceived overall justice, future research needs to respond to a call for more integration of moderating and mediating variables on the model of this study. Some of the suggested variables that could mediate the relationships posited in the study are ethic-related organizational culture, follower job-related ethical attitudes, dimensions of employee well-being (job satisfaction, perceived work stress, and stress symptoms), burnout, trust in leader, and workplace conditions (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Ko et al., 2017; Novitasari, 2020; Sharma et al., 2019). In addition, future research could also investigate the influence of perceived support, leader characteristics, follower characteristics, organizational characteristics, follower moral identity, moral awareness, and leader-follower relationships (Al Halbusi et al., 2017; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2017) as moderating variables.

It is recommended that future studies be qualitative or mixed methods in nature in order to gather more in-depth information regarding the research topic. Current organizations can use this study as a foundation for the development of ethics programs that can be used to facilitate a better workplace for employees and management.

Implications

The study findings could render a positive societal impact on every level within the community. Individuals can learn about the importance of equipping themselves with appropriate ethical behavior, such as integrity and fairness. Moral values could allow people to become successful and increase their chances of gaining a leadership position within their workplaces. The study findings could be advantageous to the society since they could lead to the incorporation of policies that encourage people to maintain high ethical values. Political and religious leaders could incorporate the teachings when overseeing individuals within the community. Such implications of the study are aligned with the conclusions of Kalshoven et al. (2011b), Kalshoven et al. (2013), Yukl et al. (2013), and Steinmann et al. (2016), who all advocated for the incorporation of ethical standards into leadership behaviors.

The existing empirical literature provided support for the hypothesized mediation influence of the perceptions of justice held by employees on ethical leadership behaviors and turnover intention. Perceptions of justice are influenced by different factors, such as poor working conditions, few opportunities for employee development, and perceptions of inequality. In accordance with Bahrami et al. (2014), Babic et al. (2015), Ajlouni et al. (2018), and Mengstie (2020), perceived organizational justice has a critical impact on a number of positive organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it has a direct impact on their turnover intentions (Benton, 2016; Gaither, 2017). Ethical leadership behaviors are seen to manifest positive employee attitudes and behaviors. This leads to the manifestation of

fairness when developing policies and practices. Fairness was found in this study to be one of the most important dimensions for ethical leadership behaviors. At the same time, it should be noted that ethical leadership behaviors of particular managers do not always harmonize with the general trends in relation to an organization's justice and leadership. Therefore, it is important to create customized training sessions for each manager within an organization to promote ethical leadership behaviors.

The study contributed to ethical leadership and organizational justice literature in several ways. First, a central aim of the study is to investigate the degree that ethical leadership behaviors affect followers' perceived overall justice. Second, the study examined the mediating role of perceived overall justice on the relationship between ethical leadership and leadership behavioral outcomes, namely employee turnover intention. Finally, the study identified perception of overall justice as a contextual variable that weakens or strengthens the relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employee turnover. From this perspective, the current research could be viewed as an important study that not only supports, but also expands the findings of Nishii and Mayer (2009), Demirtas and Akdogan (2015), Gaither (2017), and other scholars. Examining these relationships in the study could assist leaders in understanding the possible outcomes of their ethically related behaviors on the intention of their employees to leave the organization. The current study was an attempt to investigate the influence of ethical leadership behaviors on enhancing specific perceptions and behaviors of employees. The results provide imperative insights on the ethical dimensions in which business leaders

are advised to capitalize on lowering perceptions of injustice and turnover intention of their employees. The results of the study also guide the foundations for developing a leadership-training curriculum that inspires leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their ethical behaviors while planning for or fighting a crisis. So, the study findings contribute to job market stability and the common good in societies.

This study could educate researchers and doctoral students on the advantages of SurveyMonkey Audience and how it facilitates the process of targeting respondents and data collection. The recommendations for the investigation include the use of effective tactics during data collection and identification of participants. There is also the need for a huge sample size and the incorporation of extensive secondary sources. The information and insights could be helpful for research and academic institutions since it encourages further exploration of the topic of this study, generating more comprehensive findings, and rendering more recommendations.

Conclusions

The literature review in this research was analyzed to determine any pattern between ethical leadership behavior, overall perceived justice, and turnover intention. To examine this relationship, the research utilized a quantitative correlational study. After analyzing the feedback from 199 respondents, the study's results revealed a relationship between ethical leadership behavior and perceived overall justice. According to the results, the most important factors of ethical leadership behaviors are integrity, role

clarification, ethical guidance, and fairness. These factors were significant and had the highest coefficients.

Role clarification is an important factor since it adds clarity relative to responsibilities and authority in situations which minimizes uncertainty. It has a positive impact on the overall perception of justice; hence, it should be optimized by organizations. Ethical guidance is crucial to an organization since it ensures employees are more productive, utilize company property accordingly, value time, and generate better organizational output.

Organizations with high integrity experience stability, maximized workplace satisfaction, optimized workflow, and consistent growth. These factors enable an organization to have a solid brand and attain a competitive advantage over its competitors. Due to this, organizations need to optimize the level of integrity through various means such as informing employees and shareholders importance of integrity, and transparency, integrating employee engagement programs, discouraging favoritism, and abiding by fair compensation techniques.

Fairness in an organization causes employees to feel safe and engaged in the work activities they perform. Also, fairness ensures that management selects the most appropriate consequence for employees in necessary scenarios. Fairness can be maximized by promoting mutual respect, policies that favor fairness, proper communication, and transparency. Also, the findings indicated that overall perceived

justice does not mediate the relationship between turnover intention and ethical leadership behaviors.

To reduce employees' perceptions of overall injustice and turnover intention, top management and human resource managers are advised to enforce organizational policies and unceasingly foster leadership training pertinent to ethical behaviors, namely integrity, role clarification, ethical guidance, and fairness. Such organizational investment will improve ethical leadership behaviors and employee retention, especially during crises when employees collide with anxiety and stressful workplace conditions. Leaders should participate in intensive leadership training on how to employ integrity, role clarification, ethical guidance, and fairness behaviors and continuously invest in building a workplace environment structured around them. These practices will help leaders curtail the followers' unfavorable perceptions and intentions, thus improving organizational performance and alleviating the adverse outcomes of employee turnover.

The findings of the current research demonstrate that there is a significant relationship between ethical leadership behaviors of first-line direct supervisors and retail and wholesale frontline employees. Furthermore, it was also discovered that the perceived overall justice as reported by employees does not mediate a relationship between ethical leadership behaviors and employees' turnover intention amid the pandemic crisis. It was found that supervisors whose subordinates took part in the research often practice ethical leadership. In other words, the leadership behaviors of supervisors met the criteria for ethical leadership across the dimensions of fairness,

power sharing, people orientation, sustainability concern, ethical guidance, role clarification, and integrity. Results of statistical tests illustrate that there is a strong positive relationship between the overall ethical behaviors of supervisors and employees' perceived overall justice. It was found, however, that the concern for sustainability turned out to be the key driver of ethical leadership behaviors from the perspective of their impact on employee retention. The study also discovered that the dimensions of fairness, role clarification, and integrity had a crucial impact both on perceived overall justice and on turnover intention. In general, findings of the current research provide a compelling reason to believe that the phenomenon of ethical leadership plays a crucial role in the organizational environment since it is capable of increasing the perceived organizational justice and affect employee turnover retention directly. Such findings indicate that organizations should prioritize the promotion of ethical leadership behaviors to maximize organizational performance.

In general, findings of the current study provide a compelling reason to believe that the phenomenon of ethical leadership plays a crucial role in the organizational environment since it is capable of increasing perceived organizational justice and minimizes employee turnover retention directly. Leaders should invest in diverse organizational resources processes, and communications specifically germane to the three statistically significant ethical behavioral dimensions (fairness, role clarification, and integrity). This focus is especially advantageous during a pandemic crisis, to improve perceived overall justice and reduce employee turnover intention. The study findings also

indicate that organizations should prioritize the promotion of ethical leadership behaviors

to maximize organizational performance in the long run.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Context-Leadership Integrative Framework

Re: Context-Leadership Integrative Framework

Burak Oc

Sun 8/16/2020 10:11 PM

To: Moaiad Almousa <░░░░░░░░░░░░░░░>

Dear Moaiad,

That is very nice and kind of you. Sure thing, be my guest.

Best,

Burak

From: Moaiad Almousa <░░░░░░░░░░░░░░░░>
Date: Sunday, 16 August 2020 at 3:40 am
To: Burak Oc <░░░░░░░░░░>
Subject: Context-Leadership Integrative Framework

Hi Dr. Oc,

I am a PhD candidate at University of Toledo and Walden University. I am currently working on my disseration and would kindly request your permission to adopt the Integrative framework of (Oc, 2019). Please let me know if this is possible!

Thank you in advance. Your time and assistance are highly appreciated!

Regards,
Moaiad Almousa

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Appendix B: Survey Instrument

I. **<u>Demographics</u>**

1. **Age:** What is your age? (included automatically with SurveyMonkey responses, so it will not be in the online survey)

   A. Under 18

   B. 18 – 29

   C. 30 – 45

   D. 46 – 60

   E. Over 60

2. **Gender:** What gender do you identify as? (included automatically with SurveyMonkey responses, so it will not be in the online survey)

   A. Male

   B. Female

   C. Other

3. **Income:** What is your annual household income? (included automatically with SurveyMonkey responses, so it will not be in the online survey)

   A. Under $25,000

   B. $25,000 – $49,999

C. $50,000 – $74,999

D. $75,000 – $100,000

E.   Over $100,000

4. **Education:** What is the highest degree or level of education you have
    completed?

    A.   Some High School

    B.   High School Diploma

    C.   Bachelor's Degree

    D.   Master's Degree

    E.   Ph.D. or higher

    F.   Trade School

    G.   Apprenticeship

    H.   Prefer not to answer

5. **Employment Status:** What is your employment status during the COVID-19
    pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?

    A.   Employed Full time

    B.   Employed Part-Time

    C.   Contractor

    D.   Self-Employed

E.   Unemployed

F.   Retired

G.   Prefer not to answer

6. **Job Tenure:** How long have you been working with the company for which you worked during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?

A.   Less than 1 year

B.   1 – less than 3 years

C.   3 – 5 years

D.   More than 5 years

E.   Prefer not to answer

7. **Pandemic Unemployment Benefits Eligibility:** If you happen to be unemployed during the Coronavirus outbreak in 2020-2021, would you be eligible to receive any Pandemic Unemployment benefits or compensations?

A.   Yes

B.   No

C.   Not applicable

D.   Prefer not to answer

8. **Supervision:** Have you held a supervision role during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?

    A.   Yes

    B.   No

II.   <u>Ethical Leadership Behaviors</u>

Instructions: This Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire, reproduced with permission from <u>Kalshoven et al. (2011b)</u>, measures the ethical behaviors of your direct supervisor *during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021*. Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes your direct supervisor by selecting one of the following response choices.

Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 - 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree".

(a) My supervisor….

"Is interested in how I feel and how I am doing";

"Takes time for personal contact";

"Pays attention to my personal needs";

"Takes time to talk about work-related emotions";

"Is genuinely concerned about my personal development";

"Sympathizes with me when I have problems";

"Cares about his/her followers".

(b) My supervisor….

"Holds me accountable for problems over which I have no control";

"Holds me responsible for work that I gave no control over";

"Holds me responsible for things that are not my fault";

"Pursues his/her own success at the expense of others";

"Is focused mainly on reaching his/her own goals";

"Manipulates subordinates".

(c) My supervisor….

"Allows subordinates to influence critical decisions";

"Does not allow others to participate in decision making";

"Seeks advice from subordinates concerning organizational strategy";

"Will reconsider decisions on the basis of recommendations by those who report to him/her";

"Delegates challenging responsibilities to subordinates";

"Permits me to play a key role in setting my own performance goals".

(d) My supervisor….

"Would like to work in an environmentally friendly manner";

"Shows concern for sustainability issues";

"Stimulates recycling of items and materials in our department".

(e) My supervisor….

"Clearly explains integrity related codes of conduct";

"Explains what is expected from employees in terms of behaving with integrity";

"Clarifies integrity guidelines";

"Ensures that employees follow codes of integrity";

"Clarifies the likely consequences of possible unethical behavior by myself and my colleagues";

"Stimulates the discussion of integrity issues among employees";

"Compliments employees who behave according to the integrity guidelines".

(f) My supervisor….

"Indicates what the performance expectations of each group member are";

"Explains what is expected of each group member";

"Explains what is expected of me and my colleagues";

"Clarifies priorities";

"Clarifies who is responsible for what".

(g) My supervisor….

"Keeps his/her promises";

"Can be trusted to do the things he/she says";

"Can be relied on to honor his/her commitments";

"Always keeps his/her words".

III. Perceived Overall Justice

Instructions: This Employee Perceived Overall Justice (POJ) questionnaire, reproduced with permission from Ambrose and Schminke (2009), measures your perceptions of justice at your organization *during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021*. Please indicate how well each of the following statements describes your perceptions by selecting one of the following response choices.

Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 - 7, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 7 being "Strongly Agree".

"Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization";

"In general, I can count on this organization to be fair";

"In general, the treatment I receive around here is fair".

"Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair";

"For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly";

"Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly".

IV. Turnover Intention

Instructions: This Turnover Intention (TIS-6) questionnaire, reproduced with permission from Bothma and Roodt (2013), measures your turnover intention to stay with or leave your organization *during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021*. Please indicate how well each of the following questions describes how you feel about your job by selecting one of the response choices provided for each question.

How often have you considered leaving your job?	**Never**	1------2------3------4------5	**Always**
How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?	**Very Satisfying**	1------2------3------4------5	**Totally Dissatisfying**
How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?	**Never**	1------2------3------4------5	**Always**
How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?	**Never**	1------2------3------4------5	**Always**
How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?	**Highly Unlikely**	1------2------3------4------5	**Highly Likely**
How often do you look forward to another day at work?	**Always**	1------2------3------4------5	**Never**

V.   **<u>Access to Study Findings</u>**

If you are interested in the final study results, they can be found in ScholarWorks once published on the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies webpage. To access the document, please visit the following link and search for the dissertation under the researcher's name (Moaiad Almousa):

http://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C: Permissions to Use Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) Scale

Re: Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) Scale

Deanne den Hartog <███████████████>
Tue 10/20/2020 2:50 PM
To: Moaiad Almousa <██████████████>
Of course you can! We want it freely available for scientific research.
Very best,
Deanne

Verstuurd vanaf mijn iPhone

> Op 20 okt. 2020 om 19:53 heeft Moaiad Almousa <████████████████████>
> het volgende geschreven:
>
>
> Hello Dr. Deanne,
>
> I am a doctoral student at Walden University, an educator, and a managing director of an
> educational company in Ohio, United States. I am currently working on my dissertation
> and very much fascinated by your considerable contribution in the leadership literature
> and practical coaching!
>
> My dissertation research topic is the about ethical leadership behaviors in big-box
> retailers. I hereby seek your approval to use your ELW scale of Kalshoven et al. (2011) in
> my research. I have contacted Dr. Kalshoven several times during the last three weeks,
> but unfortunately did not receive any response. So, I would appreciate if you can give me
> an approval to use the ELW in my research.
>
> Thank you in advance. Your time and assistance are highly admired!
>
> Regards,
> Moaiad (Moe) Almousa

RE: Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) Scale

Annebel de Hoogh <▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓>
Wed 10/21/2020 10:15 AM

To: Moaiad Almousa <▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓>

Hi Moe,
All validation information and the full set of items etc can be found in the LQ article. Citing that as per usual you can freely use the instrument for your scientific research.
Best, Annebel

Dr. Annebel H.B. De Hoogh| *Associate Professor* | Leadership & Management | **Amsterdam Business School** | **University of Amsterdam** | Postal address: Postbus 15953, 1001 NL Amsterdam | Visiting address: Plantage Muidergracht 12, 1018 TV Amsterdam | Room REC-M 1.22 | T: +31 20 525 5474 ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
Amsterdam Business School
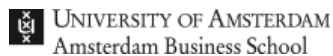
From: Moaiad Almousa ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓>
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 7:56 PM
To: Annebel de Hoogh <▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Subject: Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) Scale

Hello Professor Hoogh,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, an educator, and a managing director of an educational company in Ohio, United States. I am currently working on my dissertation and very much fascinated by your considerable contribution in the leadership literature and practical coaching!

My dissertation research topic is the about ethical leadership behaviors in big-box retailers. I hereby seek your approval to use your ELW scale of Kalshoven et al. (2011) in my research. I have contacted Dr. Kalshoven several times during the last three weeks, but unfortunately did not receive any response. So, I would appreciate if you can give me an approval to use the ELW in my research.

Thank you in advance. Your time and assistance are highly admired!

Regards,
Moaiad (Moe) Almousa

Appendix D: Permission to Use Perceived Overall Justice Scale

Re: Overall Justice Scale (2nd follow-up email): Urgent!

Maureen Ambrose <​ ​ ​>

Mon 10/5/2020 9:16 PM

To: Moaiad Almousa <​ ​ ​>

Hi Moe.

You can find the items for the scale in the original article, but I am also including them here.

Perceived Overall Justice (POJ) scale (7-point scale; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization
Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair (reverse scored)
In general, I can count on this organization to be fair
In general, the treatment I receive around here is fair
For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly
Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly (reverse scored).

Good luck with your research.

Maureen L. Ambrose
Gordon J. Barnett Professor of Business Ethics
  & Pegasus Professor
Management Department
UCF

From: Moaiad Almousa
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 6:13 PM
To: Maureen Ambrose
Subject: Overall Justice Scale (2nd follow-up email): Urgent!

Hello Professor Ambrose,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, an educator, and a managing director of an educational company in Ohio, United States. I am currently working on my dissertation and very much fascinated by your contribution in the organizational fairness and ethics literatures!

My dissertation research topic is the about ethical leadership and workforce justice perceptions in big-box retailers. I hereby seek your approval to use your Overall Justice scale of Ambrose and Schminke (2009) in my research. I would also appreciate if you can share a copy of the questionnaire!

Thank you in advance. Your time and assistance are highly admired!

Regards,
Moaiad (Moe) Almousa

Appendix E: Permission to Use Turnover Intention Scale

RE: Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6)

Tue 9/29/2020 8:14 AM
To: Moaiad Almousa

📎 1 attachments (59 KB)
Turnover intentions questionnaire - v4.doc;

Dear Moaiad

You are welcome to use the TIS for your research. For this purpose please find the TIS-15 attached for your convenience. This TIS-6 (version 4) consists of the first six items high-lighted in yellow. You may use any one of these two versions. The TIS is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The only two conditions for using the TIS are that it may not be used for commercial purposes and second that it should be properly referenced as (Roodt, 2004) as in the article by Bothma & Roodt (2013) in the **SA Journal of Human Resource Management** (open access).

It is easy to score the TIS-6. Merely add the item scores to get a total score. The midpoint of the scale is 18 (3 x 6). If the total score is below 18 then the it indicates a desire to stay. If the scores are above 18 it indicates a desire to leave the organisation. The minimum a person can get is 6 (6 x 1) and the maximum is 30 (5 x 6). No item scores need to be reflected (reverse scored).

It is recommended that you conduct a CFA on the item scores to assess the dimensionality of the scale. We found that respondents with a matric (grade12) tertiary school qualification tend to understand the items better and consequently an uni-dimensional factor structure is obtained.

If you wish to translate the TIS in a local language, you are welcome to do so. It is recommended that a language expert is used in the translate - back translate method.

I wish you all the best with your research!

Best regards

Prof Gert Roodt

Appendix F: Survey Questions With Coding

I. Demographics:

The demographics are measured using standard questions. Data is categorical (nominal).

1) **Age:** "What is your age?" (CV1);

2) **Gender:** "What gender do you identify as?" (CV2);

3) **Income:** "What is your annual household income?" (CV3);

4) **Education:** "What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?" (CV4);

5) **Employment Status:** "What is your employment status during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?" (CV5);

6) **Job Tenure:** "How long have you been working with the company for which you worked during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?" (CV6);

7) **Pandemic Unemployment Benefits Eligibility:** "If you happen to be unemployed during the Coronavirus outbreak in 2020-2021, would you be eligible to receive any Pandemic Unemployment benefits or compensations?" (CV7);

8) **Supervision: "**Have you held a supervision role during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020-2021?" (CV8).

II. Ethical Leadership Behaviors:

Ethical Leadership Behaviors are measured using a 38-item scale with 7 subscales, each subscale measures a behavioral dimension. Items are rated along a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data is nonparametric (ordinal).

(a) People Orientation (7 items):

My supervisor….

"Is interested in how I feel and how I am doing" (PO1);

"Takes time for personal contact" (PO2);

"Pays attention to my personal needs" (PO3);

"Takes time to talk about work-related emotions" (PO4);

"Is genuinely concerned about my personal development" (PO5);

"Sympathizes with me when I have problems" (PO6);

"Cares about his/her followers" (PO7).

(b) Fairness (6 items):

My supervisor….

"Holds me accountable for problems over which I have no control" (F1);

"Holds me responsible for work that I gave no control over" (F2);

"Holds me responsible for things that are not my fault" (F3);

"Pursues his/her own success at the expense of others" (F4);

"Is focused mainly on reaching his/her own goals" (F5);

"Manipulates subordinates" (F6).

(c) Power Sharing (6 items):

My supervisor….

"Allows subordinates to influence critical decisions" (PS1);

"Does not allow others to participate in decision making" (PS2);

"Seeks advice from subordinates concerning organizational strategy"

(PS3);

"Will reconsider decisions on the basis of recommendations by those who

report to him/her" (PS4);

"Delegates challenging responsibilities to subordinates" (PS5);

"Permits me to play a key role in setting my own performance goals"

(PS6).

(d) Concern for Sustainability (3 items):

My supervisor….

"Would like to work in an environmentally friendly manner" (CS1);

"Shows concern for sustainability issues" (CS2);

"Stimulates recycling of items and materials in our department" (CS3).

(e) Ethical Guidance (7 items):

My supervisor….

"Clearly explains integrity related codes of conduct" (EG1);

"Explains what is expected from employees in terms of behaving with integrity" (EG2);

"Clarifies integrity guidelines" (EG3);

"Ensures that employees follow codes of integrity" (EG4);

"Clarifies the likely consequences of possible unethical behavior by myself and my colleagues" (EG5);

"Stimulates the discussion of integrity issues among employees" (EG6);

"Compliments employees who behave according to the integrity guidelines" (EG7).

(f) Role Clarification (5 items):

My supervisor….

"Indicates what the performance expectations of each group member are" (RC1);

"Explains what is expected of each group member" (RC2);

"Explains what is expected of me and my colleagues" (RC3);

"Clarifies priorities" (RC4);

"Clarifies who is responsible for what" (RC5).

(g) Integrity (4 items):

My supervisor….

"Keeps his/her promises" (I1);

"Can be trusted to do the things he/she says" (I2);

"Can be relied on to honor his/her commitments" (I3);

"Always keeps his/her words" (I4).

III. Perceived Overall Justice:

Perceived Overall Justice (POJ) is measured using 2 subscales (individuals' personal justice experiences, and general fairness of the organization). Items are rated along a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Data is nonparametric (ordinal).

(a) Individuals' personal justice experiences:

"Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization" (POJ1);

"In general, I can count on this organization to be fair" (POJ3);

"In general, the treatment I receive around here is fair" (POJ4).

(b) General fairness of the organization:

"Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair" (POJ2_RC reverse scored);

"For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly" (POJ5);

"Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly" (POJ6_RC) reverse scored.

IV. Turnover Intention:

Employee Turnover Intention is measured using a 6-item scale (TIS-6). Items are rated along a 5-point Likert scale. Data is nonparametric (ordinal).

"How often have you considered leaving your job?" (TIS1);

"How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?" (TIS2);

"How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?" (TIS3);

"How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?" (TIS4);

"How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?" (TIS5);

"How often do you look forward to another day at work?" (TIS6).