

# Can Ethical Leadership Reduce Workplace Deviant Behavior?-- An Analysis Based on Localization Scale

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## ABSTRACT

Workplace Deviant Behavior of employees is harmful to the interests of other members and the organization. In order to reduce such behavior, the study aims to explore the influence mechanism of ethical leadership on Workplace Deviant Behavior by introducing the organizational ethical climate as a mediator variable and examine the role of its each dimension. Based on the Chinese context, researchers revised the three scales of ethical leadership, organizational ethical climate and Workplace Deviant Behavior to form the localized analysis tools. A sample survey including 528 employees from different types of enterprises and subsequent empirical analysis was conducted according to these localized scales. The results indicate that: Ethical leadership can significantly inhibit the occurrence of Workplace Deviant Behavior; Two dimensions of ethical climate of self-interest and rules completely mediate the inhibitory effect of ethical leadership on the interpersonal deviance; However, between the ethical leadership and organizational deviance, all the three dimensions of the organizational ethical climate play a partly intermediary role.

**Keywords:** *Ethical Leadership, Organizational Ethical Climate, Workplace Deviant Behavior, Organization Performance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The frequent scandals of enterprises and entrepreneurs' personal morality make the management ethics of enterprises continue to be the focus of attention from all walks of life [1]. According to the theory of social learning, observing the behavior of others and its consequences is one of the main ways of human learning [2]. Because of their unique status, leaders in the organization have become the main object of their subordinates to learn and imitate, and their attitudes towards ethical norms have a great impact on the ethical construction of the whole organization. Based on this, the concept of ethical leadership has attracted more attention in recent years. The practical significance of this concept is particularly prominent in the current social context of China's anti-corruption and government work style transformation.

Workplace Deviant Behavior, as a typical negative extra-role behavior, is a deliberate action taken by employees against other employees or organizations themselves in their workplaces. Violation or even confrontation with important organizational norms is their main form of manifestation. The consequence is to damage

other members of the organization and the overall interests of the organization [3]. Existing studies have fully demonstrated the significant impact of different leadership types on employees and organizational performance [4-7]. However, the current research on the mechanism for the generation of workplace deviant behavior, especially the relationship between ethical leadership, an important leadership type, remains an issue to be discussed in depth. Specific to China, since Zhou Zucheng and others introduced the concept of ethical leadership [8], relevant researches have been carried out successively, including the concept, measurement and influence of ethical leadership [9-11]. However, there are different degrees of differences between China and Europe and the United States in many aspects, such as political system, cultural values, traditional habits and so on. There are still some differences and inconsistencies in the definition and measurement of the concept connotation of ethical leadership and its related outcome variables. Therefore, in the relevant empirical research, the localization revision of each variable scale becomes an indispensable work.

The organizational ethical climate is the consensus reached by the members of the organization on the moral related issues, which involves the judgment of the organization members on the moral behavior and the solutions

to the moral issues. It can not only be affected by the leadership style in the organization as a dependent variable, but also affect the individual behavior of each member in the organization as an independent variable [12]. Therefore, organizational ethical climate is an appropriate research entry point between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behavior [13]. In the existing research, it is common to measure the organizational ethical climate or employee behavior as a whole, and the result is that when a concept contains multiple dimensions, the role of each dimension is not clear, thus it cannot provide accurate support for subsequent policy recommendations. This leads to the second research topic of this paper, which is to explore the role of each dimension of the organizational ethical climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behavior.

Therefore, based on social learning theory and social exchange theory, this paper constructs a theoretical model in which ethical leaders influence the occurrence of workplace deviant behavior through the organizational ethical climate. This paper empirically studies the impact mechanism of ethical leadership on employee behavior in Chinese context through localization revised scale.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

### ***2.1. Ethical Leadership and Workplace Deviant Behavior***

The theoretical community usually uses social learning and social exchange theory to explain the influence of leadership on subordinate behavior. Specific to this study, according to the social learning theory, ethical leadership, on the one hand, can be emulated by subordinates as a moral model by virtue of its unique identity, status and achievements. On the other hand, the social exchange theory holds that when ethical leaders are trustworthy and can treat their subordinates in a fair manner, employees will also make more beneficial behaviors in return, both to the leaders themselves and to the organization, so as to reduce the occurrence of workplace deviant behavior. Through the literature study on the structural dimension of workplace deviant behavior, it is found that the two-dimensional structure of Robison and Bennett, which includes interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance, can not only fully express the concept connotation of workplace deviant behavior [14], but also be further verified in China. Therefore, this paper will continue to use these two-factor structure as the definition of workplace deviant behavior .

Based on the above analysis, we make the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of interpersonal deviant behavior in the workplace.

Hypothesis 2a: Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of organizational deviant behavior in the workplace.

### ***2.2. Ethical Leadership and Organizational Climate***

Pritchard et al defined organizational climate as "the stable internal environmental characteristics that a particular organization possesses and distinguishes it from other organizations. [15] " Since the 1980s, the research focus of the theoretical community on the organizational atmosphere has shifted to the specific atmosphere within the organization. Innovation, ethics, security and other unique organizational climate have become a research hotspot. Victor and Cullen believe that the organizational ethical climate should not only reflect the characteristics of the organization's behavior on ethical issues, but also reflect the judgment and specific treatment of each employee on ethical issues [16].

It is the responsibility of leaders to cultivate positive moral space and environment within the organization, and to lead by example to make subordinates become people who conform to good moral norms. Through interviews with senior management and ethics specialists, Trevino et al. argued that individuals as ethical leaders should not only be moral people, but also be moral managers of the organization [17]. As a moral manager, it is necessary to create a unique ethical climate within the organization to arouse employees' concern about ethical issues and consequently improve their thinking and behavior. From Brown's definition of ethical leadership, we can also see that the concept of ethical leadership itself contains the mission of creating a good organizational ethical climate [18].

Therefore, we make the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of self-interest-oriented ethical climate within the organization.

Hypothesis 2b: Ethical leadership can promote the emergence of rule-oriented ethical climate within the organization.

Hypothesis 2c: Ethical leadership can promote the emergence of caring-oriented ethical climate within the organization.

### ***2.3. Organizational Ethical Climate and Workplace Deviant Behavior***

From the perspective of the context of an organization, scholars represented by Trevino have formed a consensus: among all elements contained in the value system of an organization, organizational culture occupies the core position and exerts a profound impact on the behavior of each individual in the organization [19].Robinson

and Greenberg further pointed out that organizational culture can predict the occurrence of workplace deviant behaviors [20]. However, the organizational ethical climate is similar to and different from the organizational culture. Compared with the organizational culture, the organizational climate is easier to experience and more operable, because the climate usually involves the way and method of dealing with specific problems. In terms of measurement, Victor and Cullen have been repeatedly studied and revised, and the validity and reliability of the organizational ethical climate scale developed by them have been tested by a large number of high quality studies. Up to now, hundreds of studies have used their scale in different ways. Based on the research of Victor and Cullen as well as domestic scholars Chao Gang et al. [21], this study chooses to explore the organizational ethical climate from three dimensions: self-interest, caring and rules.

In the self-interest oriented organizational ethical climate, the dominant thought of organization members to make moral judgments is egoism, that is, to maximize their own interests. Individuals tend to take their own interests as the basis for decision-making, ignoring the impact of their own decisions on others, and even sacrifice the interests of others, teams and even the whole organization to meet their own interests. In this case, the ability of organizational members to restrain their own behaviors will be greatly weakened, which directly creates conditions for the occurrence of various deviant behaviors.

Based on the above analysis, we make the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Self-interest-oriented organizational ethical climate can promote the emergence of workplace deviant behavior in two dimensions.

In the rule-oriented organizational ethical climate, members of an organization tend to think that their individual behavior must be guided by the principles and systems of the organization, which shows the characteristics of strictly abiding by the existing rules and regulations of the organization and resolutely implementing the organizational orders. Therefore, it is not easy to lead to deviant behavior.

Based on the above analysis, we make the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3b:** Rule-oriented organizational ethical climate can inhibit the emergence of workplace deviance behavior in two dimensions.

In a caring-oriented organizational ethical climate, each organization member tends to have the following cognition: In addition to pursuing their own interests, individuals should fully consider the possible impact of their own decisions on other interest subjects, and strive to pursue the equalization of interests of all parties [22]. The focus of determining the behavior decision

of each member in the organization will be obviously different from that of the self-interest-oriented individual and tend to pursue the balance between himself and others as well as the overall interests. Working in an organization brimming with caring climate, the good feelings formed by the members of the organization in the work can be enhanced and consolidated, and the spiritual satisfaction obtained therefrom replaces the spiritual satisfaction formed in the past through the implementation of deviant behavior.

**Hypothesis 3c:** Caring-oriented organizational ethical climate can inhibit the emergence of workplace deviance behavior in two dimensions.

## ***2.4. The Intermediary role of each Dimension of Organizational Ethical Climate***

We can see that although formal management systems such as ethical systems and standardized processes play an important role in forming a good ethical climate of an organization, the role played by the leaders of the organization is still indispensable. Especially in a country with high power distance tradition like China, the determination and shaping of ethical climate depends to a large extent on the leader himself. On the one hand, due to cultural background, specific situation and other factors, organizational members in reality form a differentiated understanding of the concept and norms of ethics and morality, so the realistic ethical environment in organizations is often ambiguous. Ethical leaders can set up role models for their employees through convincing ethical thinking and behavior.

On the other hand, there is often a tendency in organizations: the ideas, attitudes and behaviors of individuals tend to spread from a single individual to other individuals, and eventually evolve into the common norms of the organization, which can also be consolidated with the help of surrounding social networks [23]. Relying on the diffusion effect of leaders' special status, leaders' behaviors conforming to ethical norms can be quickly and widely copied within the organization and among members, so as to achieve the influence of ethical leadership on the organizational ethical climate. When organizational members clearly perceive the unique strong ethical organizational climate, it will inevitably lead to changes in their thinking and behavior [24].

Through the above analysis of ethical leadership, the dimensions of organizational ethical climate and workplace deviant behavior, and the relationship between them, it is reasonable to conclude that the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behavior is, to some extent, the inference that the organizational ethical atmosphere acts as an intermediary.

Based on the above analysis, we make the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: The self-interest climate in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behavior.

Hypothesis 4b: The rule dimension in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behavior.

Hypothesis 4c: The caring climate in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behavior

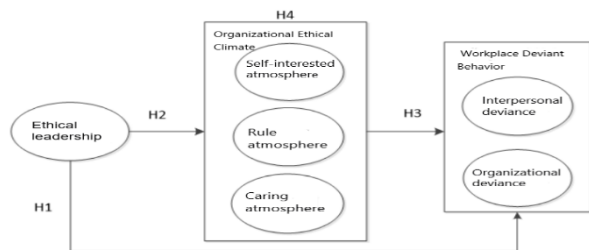


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of this Study

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Samples

The study distributed questionnaires twice: First, the purpose of the initial questionnaire was to pre-test and adjust the three scales to form a formal questionnaire. Taking a convenient sampling method, mainly selected MBA students from a finance and economics university in Shandong Province and some employees of state-owned enterprises and commercial Banks who are familiar with the researcher were selected as the subjects. 170 questionnaires were sent out through on-site distribution and transmission with friends, and 162 questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 95.3%. Secondly, the formal survey was conducted through the formal questionnaire formed after the first stage pre-test and the adjustment of the items. The questionnaire was distributed by relatives, friends and students in combination with the online survey platform "questionnaire star" (www.wjx.cn). Statistical data show that the sample covers various types of enterprises in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Chengdu, Daqing, Taiyuan, Haikou, Guiyang, Zhuzhou, Jinan, Weifang and other provinces and cities across the country.

A total of 587 questionnaires were issued in the formal survey, and 528 questionnaires were returned, with a recovery rate of 89.95%. After the research and judgment of all paper and electronic questionnaires, a total of 473 pieces of effective data were generated, and the effective questionnaire recovery rate reached 89.58%. The sample details are as follows: 246 male employees and 227 female employees; 122 employees below bachelor degree, 303 employees with bachelor's degree, 48 employees

with master's degree or above; 123 employees with working experience of 2 years or less, 163 employees with 3-5 years, 61 employees with 6-10 years, 126 employees with more than 10 years; 283 ordinary employees and technicians, 113 managers at the grassroots level, 77 middle and senior management personnel; 5 employees in wholly foreign-owned enterprises, 98 employees in joint-stock and joint-venture enterprises, 113 employees in private enterprises, 254 employees in state-owned enterprises; 288 married employees and 185 unmarried employees.

#### 3.2. Variable Determination

The research firstly forms a pre-test questionnaire and a formal questionnaire according to the development procedure of the scale, which is briefly summarized as follows: Before the formation and distribution of the pre-test questionnaire, through repeatedly reading the literature to lay a solid theoretical foundation, and then repeatedly compare the mature and authoritative scales in domestic and foreign research, strictly follow the standard translation and back translation procedures, invite three experts and enterprises to review the sentences of the pre-test questionnaire, and finally form the pre-test questionnaire. Finally, the questionnaire is revised according to the pre-test samples, and finally a formal questionnaire is formed.

The measurement of Ethical Leadership (EL) is based on the classical one-dimensional scale developed by Brown et al. in 2005 [18], contains 10 items.

The measurement of Organizational Ethical Climate (EC) is based on the scale developed by Victor and Cullen in 1987 and revised in combination with the research of other scholars [25]. There are 15 items in three dimensions: self-interest (6 items), caring (5 items) and rules (4 items).

The scale of Workplace Deviant Behavior (WDB) was developed by Robinson and Bennett in 2000 [14]. There are 19 items in two dimensions: interpersonal deviance (10 items) and organizational deviance (9 items).

Except for demographic variables, all scales were scored by Likert 5 points.

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, SPSS22.0 and AMOS22.0 software were selected as tools for questionnaire data processing and variable relationship analysis.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Revision of the scale Based on the Chinese Context

Based on pretest samples, the three scales were revised through the whole process of item analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability test, validity test and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The specific analysis process is briefly described as follows:

Revision of organizational ethical climate scale. First, item analysis was carried out on pretest samples. The analysis of scale items was carried out by combining the f-value test and homogeneity test of Levene method. The results showed that one item was deleted from the three subscales of self-interest, caring and rules, and the three subscales after deletion all showed good reliability level (0.806, 0.717, 0.780). Then, exploratory factor analysis was used to calculate KMO (0.771) and Bartlett spherical test ( $p < 0.001$ ) on the scale after deleting the item. There were three common factors whose eigenvalues were greater than 1. The total variance explained by the three common factors was 59.888%, which was close to the ideal level of 60%, indicating that the scale we have chosen, translated and revised has a very high construct validity and rationality. Finally, the confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the scale, and all the fitting indexes met the requirements ( $X^2/df=4.51$ ,

RMSEA=0.086, CFI=0.896, NFI=0.872), indicating that the revised organizational ethics climate scale had good convergence validity and laid a research foundation for path analysis among variables.

The same process was used for the revision of ethical leadership scale and workplace deviant behavior scale. In the item analysis, all items of ethical leadership scale were retained with a reliability of 0.912. One item was deleted from each of the dimensions of interpersonal deviant behavior and organizational deviant behavior in the workplace deviant behavior scale, and the reliability of the two subscales after deleting the item was 0.897 and 0.913 respectively. The KMO (0.903, 0.895) and Bartlett spherical test ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the two scales both indicated that they were suitable for factor analysis, one and two common factors were extracted respectively. The total variance that could be explained was 55.739% and 63.633%, indicating that the two revised scales showed good construction validity and rationality. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the two scales, and all fitting indexes reached a good level: EL scale ( $X^2/df=3.287$ , RMSEA=0.076, CFI=0.928, NFI=0.917), WDB scale ( $X^2/df=3.751$ , RMSEA=0.100, CFI=0.884, NFI=0.864) reached an acceptable level for the model. It shows that the revised organizational ethics climate scale and the workplace deviant behavior scale have good convergence validity and can be used as the basis for the next path analysis.

**Table 1.** Summary of the main indicators of the revised scale

variable	construction	Number of questions	A value	X <sup>2</sup> /df	RMSEA	CFI	NFI
EL	one-dimensional	10	0.912	3.287	0.076	0.928	0.917
EC	self-interest	5	0.806	4.51	0.086	0.896	0.872
	Caring	4	0.713				
	rules	3	0.780				
WDB	interpersonal deviance	6	0.897	3.751	0.100	0.884	0.864
	Organizational deviance	11	0.913				

In the revision process of the above scales, we used the development procedure of the scales for reference, and repeatedly carried out processes of item analysis, factor analysis and reliability test. After deleting each item, we re-executed factor analysis and reliability test. Due to the limitation of length, this paper simplifies the introduction of the repetitive process.

To sum up, after screening the scale, issuing of pre-test questionnaires and revising procedures of the scale, a formal questionnaire suitable for the next step of path analysis is finally formed.

### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The variables involved in this paper, their mean value and standard deviations are shown in table 2. It can be seen that ethical leadership, interpersonal deviant behavior and organizational deviant behavior in the workplace, and self-interest and rule dimension of organizational ethical climate all show significant correlation and show different characteristics.

**Table 2.** mean value, standard deviations and correlation coefficient matrix of each variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.ethical leadership	3.59	0.72	1					

2.interpersonnal deviant	1.97	0.79	-.102*	1				
3.organizational deviant	1.90	0.77	-.271**	.732**	1			
4.self-interest climate	2.71	0.77	-.317**	.357**	.401**	1		
5.caring climate	3.31	0.65	.567**	-.014	-.101	-.192**	1	
6.rules climate	4.00	0.72	.434**	-.169**	-.197**	-.198**	.483**	1

Note: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01 (double-tail test)

**4.3. Hypothesis Test**

In this study, the relationship between variables was analyzed by constructing a structural equation model (SEM), and the formal sample data was estimated using AMOS22.0 software and maximum likelihood method. The estimation results show that the theoretical model diagram fits well with the actual data and can well reflect

the relationship between the latent variables (CMIN/DF=1.967, GFI=0.897, CFI=0.877, RMSEA=0.049, PRATIO=0.923).

First of all, as shown in Table 3, ethical leadership significantly negatively related to interpersonal deviant behavior and organizational deviant behavior in the workplace ( $\beta = -.607, -.784; p < 0.001$ ), thus verifying assumptions 1a and 1b.

**Table 3.** Regression Coefficient of Main Effect Path

Variable relation	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Ethical leadership → interpersonal deviant behavior	-.607	.184	-3.297	***
Ethical leadership → organizational deviant behavior	-.784	.198	-3.956	***

Secondly, ethical leadership has a significant effect on the three dimensions of organizational ethical atmosphere. Among them, ethical leadership is negatively correlated with self-interest orientation of organizational ethical climate ( $\beta = -.453; P < 0.01$ ), while ethical leadership

is positively correlated with rules orientation ( $\beta = .484; P < 0.001$ ) and caring orientation ( $\beta = .452; P < 0.001$ ), hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c are verified.

**Table 4.** Summary of effects among standardized variables

Impact effect	variable	Ethical leadership	leader-self-interest climate	variable	Ethical leadership	Rule climate
Total effect	self-interest climate	-.453	.000	Rule climate	.484	.000
	organizational deviant	-.467	.440	organizational deviant	-.311	-.224
	interpersonal deviant	-.360	.405	interpersonal deviant	-.157	-.255
Direct effect	self-interest climate	-.453	.000	Rule climate	.484	.000
	organizational deviant	-.267	.440	organizational deviant	-.202	-.224
	interpersonal deviant	-.176	.405	interpersonal deviant	-.033	-.255
Indirect effect	self-interest climate	.000	.000	Rule climate	.000	.000
	organizational deviant	-.199	.000	organizational deviant	-.108	.000
	interpersonal deviant	-.184	.000	interpersonal deviant	-.123	.000

Thirdly, there is a significant positive correlation between self-interest-oriented organizational ethical climate and interpersonal deviant behavior ( $\beta = .405; P <$

$0.01$ ) and organizational deviant behavior ( $\beta = .440; P < 0.001$ ), hypothesis 3a is verified. Similarly, the negative correlation between rules climate and two dimensions of

deviant behavior confirms hypothesis 3b. There is a significant negative correlation between caring-oriented organizational ethical climate and workplace deviant behavior at the organizational level ( $\beta = -.308$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), but

there is no significant negative correlation between caring-oriented organizational ethical climate and interpersonal deviant behavior ( $\beta = -.152$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis is not supported by empirical evidence.

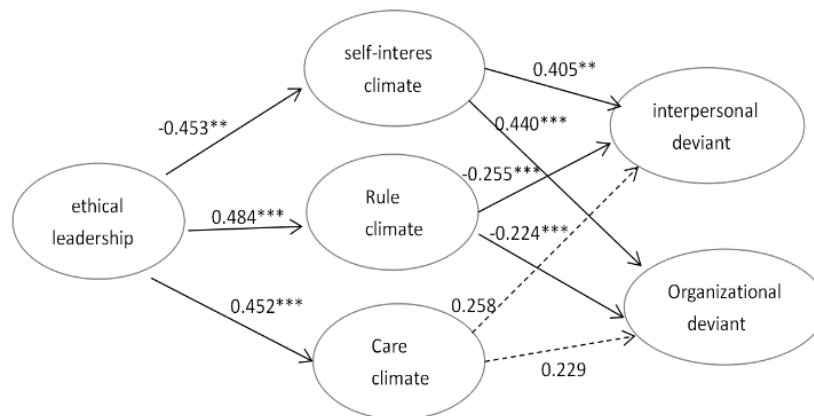


Figure 2. SEM test results of mediating effects

Finally, we adopted Baron and Kenny combined with Wen Zhonglin's proposed method to test the mediating effect of the three dimensions of organizational ethical climate on the ethical leadership and two dimensions of workplace deviant behavior [26]. The results show that the organizational ethical climate of self-interest and rules climate play a significant mediating role between

ethical leadership and two types of workplace deviant behaviors. Hypothesis 4a and 4b are supported by empirical evidence. Moreover, the self-interest and rules climate fully mediates the prediction effect of ethical leadership on interpersonal deviant behavior, and partially mediates the prediction effect of organizational deviant behavior.

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	content	conclusion
1a	Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of interpersonal deviant behaviors in the workplace	support
1b	Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of organizational deviant behaviors in the workplace	support
2a	Ethical leadership can inhibit the emergence of self-interest-oriented ethical climate within the organization	support
2b	Ethical leadership can promote the emergence of rules-oriented ethical climate within the organization	support
2c	Ethical leadership can promote the emergence of caring-oriented ethical climate within the organization	support
3a	Self-interest-oriented organizational ethical climate can promote the emergence of workplace deviant behavior in two dimensions.	support
3b	Rules-oriented organizational ethical climate can inhibit the emergence of workplace deviant behaviors of two dimensions	support
3c	Caring-oriented organizational ethical climate can inhibit the emergence of workplace deviant behaviors of two dimensions	Without Support
4a	Self-interest climate in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behaviors.	support
4b	Rules climate in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behaviors.	support
4c	Caring climate in the organization mediates the influence of ethical leadership on workplace deviant behaviors.	Partial support

As shown in Table 4, we further calculated that the indirect predictive effects of self-interest and rule-oriented ethical climate as intermediary variables accounted for  $(-0.199)/(-0.467)=0.426$  and  $(-0.108)/(-0.311)=0.347$ , respectively. In other words, in the total inhibitory effect

of ethical leadership on the deviant behavior of organizational dimensions, the contribution values of self-interest and rules ethical climate are: 42.6% and 34.7%, respectively. The caring organizational ethical climate partially mediates the predictive effect of ethical leadership on the

deviant behavior at the organizational level, and the mediating role between ethical leadership and interpersonal deviant behavior has not been verified, that is, hypothesis 4c is partially verified.

#### **4.4. Common Method Error Test**

The data in this study are homologous data, and there is a possibility of homology error. We used Harman's single factor test to test the effect of homology error on the study. All the items of all questionnaires were included in an exploratory factor analysis (KMO=0.887,  $p < 0.001$ ). A total of 15 common factors were obtained by exploratory factor analysis before the rotation axis. The factors with the largest explanatory variance accounted for 15.277% of the total variance. The results show that the homologous error in this study is not a serious problem.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1. Scale revision based on Chinese situation**

It is one of the basic tasks to determine the measurement instrument and scale of the variables involved in the empirical research. Since the concepts of the three main objects involved in this research are all from the west, the earliest research and measurement of them are mostly from western scholars. Therefore, we made an in-depth study of foreign literature before determining the scale, and finally selected the three scales of this study. The three scales have been repeatedly tested and demonstrated in the relevant studies in the west, and have high reliability and validity. However, even so, because the measurement tool itself may be inevitably biased due to the longitudinal time lapse and the horizontal cultural differences between the East and the West, we did not completely copy the existing scale in the study. The scale development program has been determined from the translation of the original scale statement, the on-site consultation feedback from experts and enterprises, the pre-test, the addition and deletion of the items, the test of reliability and validity, and so on, until finally we determined the measurement tools suitable for Chinese scenarios used in this study. The revised scale not only provides a reliable measurement basis for this study, but also provides a reference for China's related research.

#### **5.2. Ethical leadership inhibit the workplace deviant behavior**

In this study, the empirical results support the inhibition of ethical leadership to workplace deviant in two dimensions. The negative correlation shown by empirical research is consistent with our previous theoretical hypothesis promoted by literature research. The results of this study show that ethical leadership, as a new type of leadership, has been paid attention to by Chinese academic circles for a short period of time, but as a specific

type of leadership, it has a significant impact on the performance of Chinese corporate organizations, especially behavioral performance. The ethical performance of enterprise leaders can effectively curb the deviant behaviors of organization members in the workplace and improve the level of organizational performance. Moreover, compared with interpersonal deviant behavior, ethical leadership has a more significant inhibitory effect on organizational deviant behavior.

#### **5.3. Mediating Role of Organizational Ethical Climate in Different Dimensions**

Although in our research conceptual model, organizational ethical climate emerges as a whole mediating variable. However, since the organizational ethical climate is divided into three different dimensions, it is not appropriate to simply sum up the three parts in the study of the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Therefore, we decompose and study the intermediary role of each aspect of organizational ethical climate. First of all, the organizational ethical climate of self-interest, caring and rules all play different mediating roles between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behaviors. Specifically, the effect of ethical leadership on interpersonal deviance in the workplace is fully exerted through the self-interest and rules ethical climate. The self-interest and rules ethical climate partly mediates the prediction effect of ethical leadership on organizational deviant behavior in the workplace. Additionally, we also calculated the specific contribution of this mediation effect (42.6%, 34.7%).

For the reason why this result deviates from the theoretical hypothesis, we choose to speculate from the perspective of humanity and psychology: when a person can get the caring and help from the leaders and colleagues in the surrounding environment, to a certain extent, it can stimulate their positive psychological state and thus trigger positive behavior accordingly. However, once this kind of caring and help persists, people are often inspired by these psychological tendencies which are supposed to be, so that the caring and help given by leaders and colleagues become indifferent, and the positive behavior caused by them also disappears with the decline of positive emotions. Therefore, we can infer that there is a non-linear relationship between caring-oriented organizational ethical climate and workplace deviant behaviors: when caring climate is below a threshold, they are negatively correlated; When this threshold is exceeded, the negative correlation changes. Therefore, the correlation between ethical climate of caring organization and workplace deviant behavior at the interpersonal level shows diversified characteristics, which may show either significant negative correlation or insignificant correlation. The specific performance may depend on factors such as sample selection and so on. The average value of the sample of caring-oriented organizational ethical climate analyzed



by SPSS software is 3.34. The results show that the participants have a higher perception of the organizational ethical climate of the caring dimension, maybe for such samples, the caring climate and workplace deviant behaviors are in an interval with no significant correlation.

#### **5.4. Management Implications**

Our research clearly shows that the ethical performance of business leaders directly affects the performance of organizational members and thus affects the performance level of the organization. This puts forward new requirements for enterprise leaders: First, leaders themselves should take the lead in demonstrating a higher level of ethics in their work and life, setting a good moral example for organizational members, and directly influencing employees' performance in the workplace through social learning process and leader-member exchange relationship. Secondly, leaders should attach importance to the guidance and cultivation of the ethical climate of the organization by virtue of their unique position in the organization, so that employees can think and work in an organization full of caring and rules and consciously resist the climate of self-interest, which can also affect the performance of employees.

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