Ethical Leadership and Public Sector Integrity: Examining the Mediating Effects of Organizational Culture and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract. This study examines the role of ethical leadership (EL) in enhancing civil servant integrity through the mediating effects of organizational culture (OC) and organizational commitment (OrCom). Although EL has been widely recognized as a critical factor in promoting ethical behavior within public organizations, limited research has investigated the organizational mechanisms through which it influences integrity. This study develops and tests the structural model of EL, organisational culture, organisational commitment and civil servant integrity based on EL and organisational behaviour theories. Data were obtained from civil servants through a quantitative explanatory approach. The data were analysed to explore the direct and indirect relationships among the proposed variables. The findings reveal that ELpositively and significantly influences civil servant integrity, OC, and organizational commitment. In addition, OC and OrCom have significant positive effects on civil servant integrity and act as important mediating mechanisms in the relationship between ELand integrity. These results indicate that the promotion of integrity in public organisations depends not only on the ethical behaviour of leaders, but also on the capacity of the organisation to create a value-driven culture and to improve employees' commitment towards organisational goals and principles. This study contributes to the public administration and EL literature by offering an integrated framework that explains how EL fosters integrity through OC and OrCom. The findings also provide practical implications for public organizations seeking to strengthen integrity through leadership development, cultural transformation, and commitment-building initiatives.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Integrity, Organizational Culture, Organizational Commitment, Public Sector.

1 Introduction

The integrity of civil servants is a fundamental aspect in realizing good, transparent, and accountable governance. Corruption and low integrity are persistent challenges in public administration. Corrupt behavior and failures in institutional integrity not only

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cause economic losses but also erode public trust and distort resource allocation. [1]. Ethics-based leadership is seen as a strategic element in creating a transparent, honest, and integrity-based work environment in the public sector. Numerous studies have shown that ethical leadership (EC), Organizational culture (OC), and a holistic approach are vital in fostering ethics in public service, and comprehensive initiatives are needed to address systemic and individual barriers to ethical behavior and integrity. [2]. Ideally, every government agency can provide excellent service, where every employee upholds the values of integrity, honesty, compliance, and professionalism, thereby creating an OC that consistently rejects all forms of deviation.

However, this condition has not been fully realized in various institutions in Indonesia. Frequent ethical violations, abuse of authority, corrupt practices, low compliance with service standards, and weak integrity are still found, indicating a gap between ideal conditions and the reality of behavior. This situation raises questions about the factors influencing the formation of a work environment with integrity, including the role of EL in building a healthy organizational climate and encouraging employee behavior that aligns with moral values and applicable regulations. Research shows that EL has an influence on the creation of a climate of organizational integrity and can reduce integrity violations in the public sector. [3].

Several studies also emphasize the importance of regulations and internal control systems. Internal control systems have a significant influence on strengthening an organization's integrity system [4]. Effective internal control, together with leadership practices, is able to form a culture of transparency, accountability and orientation towards the value of integrity in the public sector. Meanwhile, a strong OC (values of compliance, ethics and responsibility) can increase individual integrity, which ultimately has an impact on performance and accountability [5]. Dalam praktiknya, masih ditemukan budaya kerja yang bersifat formalitas, toleransi terhadap pelanggaran, lemahnya pengawasan di lingkungan kerja, serta inkonsistensi penerapan nilai-nilai integritas. Kondisi ini menyebabkan internalisasi nilai organisasi belum berjalan optimal sehingga perilaku etis pegawai sering kali lebih dipengaruhi oleh kepentingan situasional dibandingkan komitmen dari organisasi. Budaya organisasi dan komitmen organisasi memainkan peran strategis sebagai variabel yang dapat memediasi hubungan antara kepemimpinan dan hasil yang dicapai organisasi. There is a positive correlation between EL and OrCom, where the correlation coefficient reaches 0.814 which indicates a strong direct relationship [6]. In this context, the researcher proposes OC and OrCom as mediating variables that bridge the influence of EL on the integrity of civil servants..

Based on the existing gap, researchers are interested in examining more deeply the mediating role of OC and OrCom in the relationship between EL and civil servant integrity. Previous research in the public sector of developing countries shows that job satisfaction and public service motivation can mediate the relationship between EL and various organizational outcomes [7]. However, how OC and OrCom mediate the link between EL and civil servant integrity still requires further exploration. Organizational culture can bridge the influence of EL on civil servant integrity, as the ethical values exemplified by leaders should be internalized into the OC, thereby shaping civil servant behavior with integrity. Furthermore, OrComs such as through the signing of an Integrity Pact, the development of an Integrity Zone, and the implementation of an No-Bribery Management System are expected to strengthen the bond and sense of responsibility

of civil servants towards the organization, thereby encouraging the formation of behavior with integrity.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Leadership

The definition of EL is the encouragement of moral behavior to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making, as well as the demonstration of moral behavior through one's own activities and interpersonal interactions [1]. Other research shows that EL is a crucial element in building organizational integrity and preventing corruption at the organizational and public policy levels [8].

The concept of EL is essential for building trust, fostering a positive OC, and motivating employees or staff. EL is not simply about complying with regulations, but about creating a culture where moral values and integrity become fundamental organizational norms. [9]. This indicates that EL differs from other leadership styles because it emphasizes the moral side of decision-making and the norms for interacting with subordinates. The dimensions of EL encompass normative behavior reflected in adherence to organizational values and work standards, fair and transparent communication, justice in decision-making processes, and integrity demonstrated through consistent ethical actions [10].

Empirical research shows that ethical leaders have a significant impact on reducing employee unethical behavior and increasing OrCom [11]. Furthermore, EL shapes employees' ethical behavior through internalization of ethical values and formation of integrity identity [12]. By setting a good example through concrete actions, ethical leaders can inspire trust and confidence among employees, leading to increased commitment to organizational goals.

2.2 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a system of shared values, norms, and beliefs that shape the behavior of organizational members and influence the effectiveness of the institution's performance. In the context of public administration, OC serves as a foundation for building the behavior and performance of civil servants in providing public services [13]. Contemporary research shows that OC depends not only on administrative and procedural systems, but also on the strength of the values that underlie behavior [14]. Organizational culture has an influence on how employees interact, make decisions, and contribute to organizational goals.

Edgar Schein developed three levels of OC, consisting of artifacts, values embraced, and basic assumptions. This model shows how different levels of OC interact with each other and shape organizational behavior [15].

Table 1. Levels of Organizational Culture according to Edgar Schein

Level	Name	Characteristics	Examples in the Public Sector
Level 1	Artifact	Visible and observable elements	Organizational structure, work procedures, uniforms, agency logos

Level	Name	Characteristics	Examples in the Public Sector
Level 2	Values Embraced	Stated norms, rules, and philosophies	Organizational vision and mission, Core Value of Morality "BerAKHLAK"
Level 3	Basic Assumptions	Fundamental beliefs that are considered true	Perceptions of integrity, hierarchical relationships, service orientation

Sources of previous research

Application of basic ideals or virtues "BerAKHLAK" (Service-Oriented, Accountable, Competent, Harmonious, Loyal, Adaptive, and Collaborative) in Indonesia aims to improve professionalism, accountability, and quality of service in public administration [16]. The OC in public administration differs from that of the private sector. Institutional complexity, procedural pressures, ethical ambiguity, and increased expectations regarding transparency, accountability, and innovation characterize the public sector environment [17]. Organizational culture has an important role in building the integrity of the apparatus through internalizing the values of ethics, discipline, transparency and responsibility in carrying out their respective duties and functions.

2.3 Organizational Commitment

The theory of OrCom, developed by Meyer and Allen, identifies three main components: affective commitment (emotional connection), continuation commitment (the costs associated with departing the organization), and normative commitment (the ethical need to stay) [18]. It can be said that OrCom is a psychological state that indicates an individual's level of attachment, loyalty, and dedication to their organization. In the context of behavior with integrity, OrCom acts as a bridge connecting EL values with the existing OC.

Research in the banking sector shows that promoting EL and creating a positive ethical climate can increase OrCom and mitigate aberrant conduct [18]. Organizational commitment can directly and indirectly influence various dimensions of passive and opportunistic employee silence. More importantly, OrCom mediates the relationship between trust in leaders and all dimensions of employee silence [19].

Studies in the public sector have shown that leadership and integrity have a positive and significant impact on organisational performance[20]. Leadership also enhances organisational commitment, which, in turn, leads to improved performance. Crucially, organisational commitment fully mediates the relationship between integrity and performance, signifying its important role in transforming ethical behaviour into effective performance. These results suggest that public organisations should focus on designing EL and creating a culture of integrity and commitment to improve the overall performance.

2.4 Integrity

Integrity is the alignment between thoughts, words, and actions, based on honesty, moral values, and strong commitment. A person is said to have integrity if they

consistently adhere to the principles of truth, responsibility, and trustworthiness, even when no one else is watching. Integrity is a complex category that combines the moral, ethical, legal and organizational aspects of civil servants' activities and determines the direction of their actions to protect the public interest [21].

Integrity in the context of the State Civil Service refers to adherence to the principles of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and consistency between words and actions. Both in the workplace and in social life, integrity is crucial because it is the primary foundation for building public trust, creating a positive, productive, and ethical work environment, and can serve as a primary defense against fraudulent or corrupt actions.

In relation to the basic principles of anti-corruption, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has formulated 9 (nine) integrity values which are the moral and behavioral foundations for civil servants to prevent all forms of corrupt practices, including: (1) Honest: a straight heart, not lying, not cheating, and speaking and acting according to the truth; (2) Caring: an attitude of paying attention and being willing to involve oneself in difficulties in the surrounding environment; (3) Independent: able to stand alone and complete tasks without depending on others; (4) Discipline: obeying regulations, respecting time, and doing things consistently according to schedule; (5) Responsibility: carrying out tasks well and being ready to bear the risks of actions taken; (6) Hard work: persistent and serious in completing tasks; (7) Simple: living a normal life without excess, and focusing on basic needs; (8) Courageous: steadfastness and rejecting all forms of deviation; (9) Fair: being impartial, proportional, and free from discrimination.

3 Methodology

Based on the background above, the main problems in this research are as follows: (1) Does EL have a positive influence on the integrity of civil servants, OC and OrCom? (2) Do OC and OrCom have a positive influence on the integrity of civil servants? (3) Do OC and OrCom mediate the positive influence of EL on the integrity of civil servants?

4 Results & Discussion

4.1 The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Civil Service Integrity

Ethical leadership is a leadership concept that is based on the values of honesty, integrity, justice and respect in guiding and influencing the behavior of organizational members [22]. Other research has shown that EL is most effective in promoting integrity through the formation of OC compared to relying solely on compliance mechanisms [1]. It turns out that a climate of integrity can also act as a mediator in the relationship between EL and integrity violations, where leaders who demonstrate their role model through ethical behavior are able to build a climate of integrity that reduces the level of violations in the public sector [3]. Based on social learning theory, leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior will become role models for their subordinates, so that employees tend to adopt and internalize the ethical norms demonstrated by their superiors [23]. The same thing was also expressed that EL is able to encourage the formation of work

behavior that is in accordance with the moral values and ethical standards of the organization [24]. In the administration of government in the public sector, EL that demonstrates honesty, fairness, and consistency in decision-making will be a role model for its ranks, thereby forming behavior with integrity.

4.2 The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Culture

Ethical leadership plays a crucial role in shaping an ethical OC through the leader's role model approach. Ethical leaders not only set standards of behavior but also create organizational norms and practices that support behavior with integrity. [25]. Other research shows that EL can increase operational transparency and shape an OC oriented towards integrity values [26]. In implementation in the public sector, EL is a crucial component in forming a culture of integrity in government institutions, where the ethical values and virtues of leaders are able to increase justice, trust and institutional integrity [27]. Leaders who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and accountability create a ripple effect throughout the organization that shapes employee behavior and attitudes, thereby fostering a culture that prioritizes ethical behavior [8]. Anti-corruption strategies that focus on building a values-based culture have proven to be more effective in the long term than approaches that only emphasize punitive action [1].

4.3 The Influence of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Commitment

EL has a strong link to OrCom, as explained by social exchange theory and self-determination theory. When employees perceive the presence of honest, fair, and honest leaders, they tend to develop stronger emotional bonds and commitment to the organization [6]. Research in the public sector in Vietnam and the Asia-Pacific region shows that EL has a large and positive influence on organizational affective commitment, with the ethical environment partially mediating the relationship [28]. On the other hand, for example in the accounting profession, EL dimensions such as honesty, fairness, integrity and responsibility are positively related to OrCom [29]. In state-owned enterprises in Indonesia, EL has also been proven to indirectly influence employee productivity through OrCom [30].

4.4 The Influence of Organizational Culture on Civil Service Integrity

Organizational culture, which encompasses attitudes and behaviors that justify habits, plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical behavior and integrity of employees in the public sector. The habits that become part of the culture within an organization are not necessarily ethical. An OC that prioritizes ethical values, transparency, and accountability will create a conducive environment for employees to behave with integrity [25]. Compliance with ethical standards is not merely a matter of enforcing regulations, but rather a product of the internalization of morals, professional competence, and EL embedded in the OC [31]. Other research results show that a strong and ethical OC, characterized by ethical awareness, integrity, and responsibility, is able to attract and retain talent and improve the organization's reputation [8]. In line with this, a strong OC

(values of compliance, ethics, and responsibility) can increase individual integrity, which ultimately impacts performance and accountability [5].

4.5 The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Civil Servant Integrity

Organizational commitment is a determining factor in the internalization of ethical values into behavior with integrity within the organization. Employees who are highly committed to the organization tend to internalize the organization's values and norms, including standards of integrity and ethical behavior [20]. The affective commitment of employees to the organization has an important role in encouraging their involvement in organizational behavior (OCB), where the higher the level of affective commitment, the greater the possibility of employees showing positive behavior including integrity [32]. Organizational commitment also strengthens the impact of EL on employee engagement, creating a positive cycle that supports behavior with integrity [33].

4.6 The Influence of Organizational Commitment on Organizational Culture

Organizational commitment is a crucial factor driving the development of an innovative culture. Highly committed employees are more likely to support the implementation of organizational values and participate in developing a positive work culture [34]. Organizational commitment has an important role in translating organizational cultural values into real behavior, furthermore an ethics-oriented culture encourages the internalization of integrity values through commitment mechanisms [32]. The results of other studies also show a close relationship between OC and OrCom, where both reinforce each other in creating positive organizational behavior [35]. With a strong OrCom, it can ultimately influence OC through the internalization of shared values, norms and goals, thereby encouraging the growth of employee behavior with integrity in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

4.7 Organizational Culture Mediates Ethical Leadership towards Civil Servant Integrity

Leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior will undoubtedly serve as role models for their staff, ensuring that the values of honesty, accountability, transparency, and responsibility are properly internalized into the OC. Ethical leadership can shape an OC, which in turn influences individual behavior and integrity [1]. Ethical leadership is the most effective leadership model for instilling values of integrity through the formation of OC. Ethical leadership can create a green psychological climate and shared commitment through OC, demonstrating the importance of cultural mediation in linking leadership to employee behavior [36]. Other research shows that EL has a positive influence on the formation of OC, and OC plays a role as a mediator in increasing various positive employee behaviors [37]. This shows that EL has a positive influence on the integrity of civil servants through OC. The higher the implementation of EC, the stronger the OC that supports ethical values, thus increasing civil servant integrity.

4.8 Organizational Commitment Mediates Ethical Leadership towards Civil Servant Integrity

Organizational commitment serves as a key mediator linking EL with employees' behavior with integrity. This refers to social exchange theory, which explains that when leaders demonstrate ethical behavior, employees respond by developing a stronger commitment to the organization, which is then reflected in work behavior with integrity [20]. From longitudinal studies that have been conducted, it shows that affective or self-confidence and OrCom fully mediate the relationship between EL and employee engagement, where ethical leaders enable workers to direct their efforts towards beneficial results [33]. In another country, namely Vietnam, organizational affective commitment was identified as a mediator in the relationship between socially responsible human resource management and employee moral behavior [38].

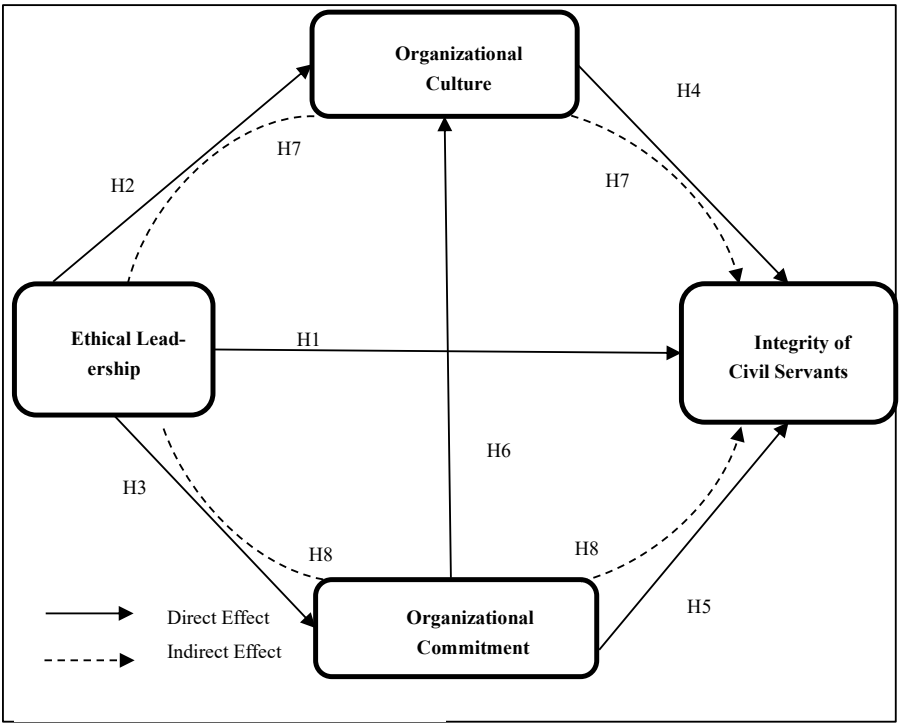


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

This research framework illustrates that integrity is not only shaped by the exemplary behavior of ethical leaders, but is also influenced by OC that internalizes ethical values and OrCom by strengthening employee engagement with the organization.

Furthermore, OC and OrCom serve as intermediary variables that influence EL on employee integrity. The stronger the implementation of ethical values in the OC and the higher the employee's commitment to the organization, the higher the level of integrity of the employee in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

5 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study explains that EL plays a crucial role in enhancing the integrity of civil servants, both directly and indirectly through OC and commitment. Ethical leaders who demonstrate honest, fair, transparent, responsible, and consistent behavior in decision-making are able to serve as role models for their subordinates, thereby encouraging the internalization of ethical values in the workplace. An OC that instills ethical values, transparency, discipline, and responsibility can serve as a means of internalizing behavior with integrity. Meanwhile, OrCom encourages and even compels civil servants to prioritize the interests of the organization by complying with established ethical standards or guidelines. Therefore, the higher the implementation of EC, the higher the level of civil servant integrity that can be achieved.

The results of this study suggest that for public sector organizations and other sectors, strengthening the integrity of the apparatus needs to start with the commitment of leaders in consistently applying EL principles. In addition, organizations need to build a strong OC through the internalization of ethical values, strengthening internal control systems, and OrCom through various strategic programs, such as the development of an Integrity Zone, the implementation of the Anti-Bribery Management System, strengthening the values of BerAKHLAK, and the consistent implementation of integrity pacts. The synergy between EC, OC, and OrCom can create more accountable, transparent, and integrity-based governance.

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