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Employees' trust in leadership and organizational commitment result from ethical leadership.

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

The study examined the influence of ethical leadership on employees' trust in leadership and organizational commitment. To better understand these concepts, the study reviewed relevant literature. The study employed a descriptive assessment and correlational research design. The study population included employees of Divine Word College of Laoag. Data were collected using validated questionnaires, and analysis used weighted mean and Pearson's r correlation. The findings revealed that ethical leadership, employees' trust, and organizational commitment were all high. Overall, ethical leadership was significantly correlated with both employees' trust and organizational commitment. However, the study found no correlation between ethical leadership and affective commitment.

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Introduction

Helping an organization achieve its short-term and long-term objectives requires careful attention to all aspects of leadership and management (Karadag, 2015; La Monica, 1994). Leadership and management do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they function within the relationships between leaders and their employees. Thus, leading or managing an organization involves guiding human behavior and maximizing individual potential (Machado & Dawim, 2018; Shearrow, 2023). The primary challenge for leadership and management is bringing out the best in people to ensure the organization's success (Qin et al., 2023; Amel et al., 2023). One crucial strategy is motivation. Motivating employees to perform at their best depends not only on financial compensation but also on other organizational factors that boost morale, such as ethical leadership, trust, and commitment.

Ethical leadership has been a key concern for researchers due to its significant impact on organizational performance. Studies have suggested a positive correlation between ethical leadership practices and organizational success (Bashir et al., 2023; AlShehhi et al., 2021; Lu & Lin, 2014; Li et al., 2023). Beyond

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performance, ethical leadership also influences employees' confidence in leadership (Tu & Lu, 2016). Effective leadership fosters organizational commitment among employees (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2014).

Leadership remains central to organizational studies. However, despite its recognized role in organizational success, limited attention has focused on its effects on employees' trust and commitment. While studies have examined the relationship between leadership and performance, research on the specific impact of ethical leadership on trust and commitment remains lacking. This study aims to address this gap by examining the critical influence of ethical leadership on employees' trust and commitment. Discussions on ethical leadership and organizational trust must be prioritized, as they play a crucial role in enhancing employee morale and performance. Given the prevalence of corruption in many organizations, ethical leadership should be central to public discourse. Similarly, organizational commitment must be a key concern, especially considering high turnover rates. Employee commitment is fundamental to organizational success, and these interrelated elements warrant serious discussion.

This study is structured into several sections. The first section introduces the study and explains its rationale. The second section reviews the literature and discusses key concepts based on existing studies. The third section outlines the research methodology, detailing the research design, population, study locale, instruments, ethical considerations, and statistical data analysis methods. The fourth section presents and analyzes the data based on the study's research questions. Finally, the fifth section discusses the findings and provides conclusions.

Literature review

A brief review of ethical leadership and its properties

Numerous studies have examined the impact of ethical leadership on various organizational outcomes. Bhatti et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and project success, highlighting the mediating roles of trust and knowledge sharing. Their findings suggest that ethical leadership fosters trust and encourages knowledge sharing, which, in turn, contributes to project success. Similarly, Ashfaq et al. (2021) and Chinwe et al. (2017) explored the influence of ethical leadership on employee work engagement and commitment. Their research indicates that ethical leadership enhances work engagement through the mediating effects of self-efficacy and organizational commitment, rather than directly.

These findings align with Malik et al. (2016) and Nauman & Qamar (2018), which suggest that ethical leadership positively influences employee performance and productivity. Qing et al. (2019) and Yozgat & Mesikiran (2016) further support this argument, identifying a strong positive correlation between ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Additionally, Kim & Brymer (2011) and Guo (2022) emphasized ethical leadership's role in shaping managerial job satisfaction, organizational commitment, behavioral outcomes, and overall firm performance. Their research underscores the positive association between ethical leadership and middle managers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and competitive business performance. Rantika & Yustina (2017) also examined the connection between ethical leadership and employee well-being, highlighting psychological empowerment as a key mediating factor.

These findings collectively suggest that the absence of ethical leadership may lead to job dissatisfaction and, ultimately, negative organizational outcomes. Several studies have examined the detrimental effects of poor leadership. Schyns & Schilling (2013) found a significant correlation between destructive leadership and counterproductive workplace behavior, showing that as leadership behaviors become more destructive, employees engage in increasingly counterproductive actions. The negative effects of such behavior have been widely documented. Research by Shen & Lei (2022), Sypniewska (2020), and Bagyo (2018) highlights its adverse impact on organizations, employees, and stakeholders. Specifically, Bagyo (2018) identified a decline in employee engagement and performance due to counterproductive behavior. Similarly, Kilic & Gunsel (2019) argued that ineffective leadership diminishes workplace performance and productivity, further emphasizing its detrimental effects on employees' behavior, psychological well-being, and overall job performance.

The concept of interpersonal trust and collective trust

To fully understand the topic, it is essential to define trust. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines trust as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Similarly, the Dictionary (n.d.) describes it as "a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something." In this study, trust refers specifically to assured reliance on another person rather than an object (de Fine Licht & Brulde, 2021). People trust others based on their perceived competence and reliability. McLeod (2020) echoes this idea, defining trust as "an attitude we have towards people whom we hope will be trustworthy," and distinguishing between trust as an attitude and trustworthiness as a quality possessed by the trusted individual. Trustworthiness is established when the person being trusted demonstrates competence in fulfilling expectations. For a relationship to be grounded, both parties must exhibit trustworthiness (McLeod, 2020). In this sense, trust refers to relying on someone who is both competent and willing to meet expectations (Goldberg, 2020). Mishra (1996, p. 2645) further defines trust as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter is competent, open, concerned, and reliable." The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) expands on this by suggesting that trust is not only based on competence but also on the expectation that the trusted party is honest and will not cause harm. Trust is thus confirmed when an individual is found to be capable, honest, and dependable.

These definitions highlight trust as a fundamental element in interpersonal relationships. According to McAllister (1995), trust comprises two dimensions: cognitive and affective. This distinction reflects rationality and emotion (Erdem & Ozen, 2003). Cognitive-based trust is grounded in logical reasoning and the expectation that another party will fulfill their role (Gill et al., 2024). This trust develops through consistent behavior and communication. Over time, as interactions deepen, emotional investment grows, giving rise to affective trust (Erdem & Ozen, 2003). In this progression, cognitive trust serves as a foundation for affective trust.

Interpersonal trust is critical for teamwork in professional settings. Six (2007) asserts that trust among team members enhances collaboration and cooperation. For teams to function effectively, trust must be a core value that fosters coordination and shared responsibility (Matzler & Renzl, 2007). A trusting environment enables individuals to accept constructive criticism and learn from mistakes (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999). Both cognitive and affective trust shape team dynamics. Jones and George (1998), as cited by Erdem and Ozen (2003), argue that cognitive trust alone is insufficient for strong team cohesion;

affective trust is necessary to build a unified, value-driven team that supports cooperation and collective motivation.

Beyond interpersonal relationships, trust operates at an organizational level. Collective trust differs from interpersonal trust because it is a shared social property rather than an individual trait (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rousseau et al., 1998). Forsyth et al. (2015) define collective trust as "a stable group property rooted in shared perceptions and affects about the trustworthiness of another group or individual that emerges over time out of multiple social exchanges." In the present study, the focus is on the trust that employees—both teaching and non-teaching staff—have in administrators. While some scholars conceptualize trust as a psychological state referring to individual or interpersonal trust (Jones & George, 1998; Rousseau et al., 1998), they also argue that trust should be examined at multiple levels of analysis (Rousseau et al., 1998). Lewis and Weigert (1985) further contend that trust should be understood as a property of groups or organizations rather than of individuals alone.

Collective trust is a crucial component of a positive organizational climate, as it fosters openness, honesty, and dependability (Bucero, 2012). One strategy for cultivating a workplace culture of trust is for leaders to provide credible evidence, including factual data, to support decision-making (Bucero, 2012). Holm and Nystedt (2010) found that trust within and between groups is strongly associated with collective trustworthiness and trust-related behaviors, both of which contribute to organizational effectiveness (Gray, 2016). In educational institutions, trust significantly impacts school performance. Tarter and Hoy (2004) found that teachers' trust strongly influences their perceptions of school effectiveness. Earlier research by Hoy et al. (1992) similarly established a significant correlation between faculty trust and school effectiveness.

The importance of interpersonal and collective trust on organizational outcomes

This section highlights the impact of both interpersonal and collective trust on organizational outcomes. While no universally accepted definition of trust exists, Gambetta (1988, p. 219) defines it as the belief that an individual or group will not act in ways that harm oneself or others. Interpersonal trust refers to the belief in another person and the willingness to be vulnerable to them (Ma et al., 2019). Over time, interpersonal trust evolves into collective trust when individuals within an organization share the same perception about another individual or group (Forsyth et al., 2015). Initially a psychological attribute of individuals, trust becomes an organizational and sociological property when employees widely share it (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Once established, collective trust functions as a social and organizational asset, influencing group dynamics and workplace relationships. Because both interpersonal and collective trust significantly affect an organization, scholars emphasize the need for management to foster trust to improve overall performance (Yuan et al., 2021).

Research has extensively examined the effect of interpersonal trust on group performance and its subsequent influence on organizational outcomes. Dirks (1999) found that trust affects motivation, which then translates into workgroup processes and performance. Although Dirks (1999) did not establish a direct relationship between interpersonal trust and workgroup performance, subsequent studies have confirmed this link. For example, Bakiev (2013) found a significant correlation between interpersonal

trust among employees and workgroup performance and recommended that managers cultivate a trusted work environment to enhance motivation. Similarly, Ugwu and Maduagwu (2018) identified interpersonal trust as a critical factor in improving workgroup performance. Moreover, interpersonal trust contributes to job satisfaction, participation in decision-making, openness to feedback, and employee empowerment (Guinot et al., 2014; Ul Hassan et al., 2012). To foster trust, organizations should implement trust-building practices that eliminate distrust (Six, 2007). Additionally, Bulinska-Stangrecka and Bagienska (2019) suggest that interpersonal trust can be strengthened through competency development, team interdependence, and group rewards, ultimately leading to effective cooperation, organizational innovation, and citizenship behavior (Asamani, 2015).

Beyond interpersonal trust, collective trust is a crucial factor in both individual and organizational performance. Deutsch-Salamon and Robinson (2011) found that collective felt trust among employees leads to high-responsibility norms and greater accountability for organizational performance, particularly in customer service. An earlier study by the same authors (2008) found that employees who perceive management as trusting them show improved sales performance and customer service. These findings align with Addison and Teixeira's (2019) assertion that workplace trust enhances performance. Research also indicates that collective trust influences organizational outcomes. Morrissette and Kisamore (2019) found that team trust positively affects team performance, emphasizing the importance of cultivating a trust-based organizational climate (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Gray (2016) investigated collective trust in schools and concluded that it significantly impacts institutional effectiveness. Likewise, Shagholi et al. (2010) identified collective trust as a key determinant of decision-making and teamwork in educational settings. Consequently, Buenaventura-Vera and Gudziol-Vidal (2020) recommend improving workplace trust to enhance organizational performance.

Employees' trust in leadership/management

Employees' trust in management, also called collective or organizational trust, reflects the shared perception that leaders are reliable, honest, and fair (Wang et al., 2018). It reflects employees' confidence in management, built through consistent behavior that prioritizes their welfare (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975, cited in Baird & St-Amand, 1995). Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as employees' willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations of management's actions. Similarly, Laschinger et al. (2001) argue that trust is rooted in employees' faith in leadership and their belief that organizational decisions will benefit them. Trust develops gradually through fairness, transparency, and genuine concern for employees' well-being (Taylor, 1989, in Baird & St-Amand, 1995; Asencio & Sun, 2023). Employers who communicate clearly and make equitable decisions cultivate a high-trust environment (Whitener, 1997).

Researchers have widely studied the impact of collective trust in management on organizational performance. While Deutsch-Salamon and Robinson (2008, 2011) and Dirks and Ferrin (2001) did not establish a direct link between collective trust and performance, their findings highlight its role in fostering accountability and responsibility, which, in turn, enhance sales and customer service. Amoah-Binfoh et al. (2016) similarly found that low trust in management weakens employee performance and overall organizational success. Their study underscores that trust deteriorates when managers fail to empower employees, implement fair evaluations, or involve employees in decision-making. Rahman et al. (2021)

further affirm that organizational trust significantly influences both individual and organizational performance.

Research by Seok et al. (2014) identified key factors that contribute to employees' trust in management, including status privileges, competence, benevolence, worker-leader relationships, and integrity. In a subsequent study, Seok et al. (2015) developed an employee trust scale based on three critical elements: competency, integrity, and work relationships. Competency reflects a leader's ability to perform tasks effectively and make sound decisions, while integrity is demonstrated through honesty and ethical behavior. Managers build strong worker-leader relationships when they understand their employees and involve them in problem-solving. Hill and Lineback (2019) argue that competency—comprising technical, operational, and strategic knowledge—is central to earning trust. Covey (2009) further emphasizes that trust is shaped not only by capability but also by character, as demonstrated through integrity and good intentions.

Organizational commitment

Commitment and organizational commitment vary in definition depending on the researcher and context (Mueller & Straatmann, 2014). Even dictionary definitions differ. The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines commitment as "willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in." At the same time, Dictionary.com, based on Oxford Languages, describes it as "the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, or an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action." Both definitions emphasize dedication to a cause but lack the psychological dimensions that are essential to commitment. Similarly, the Britannica Dictionary defines commitment as "a promise to do or give something or a promise to be loyal to someone or something," reinforcing the idea of dedication but still missing the psychological aspect.

In an organizational context, Leonard (2009) defines commitment as a state of mind that aligns individuals and organizations with consistent behavior. Commitment is not just about investing time and energy in an activity—it involves a psychological contract with the institution. Employees commit their time and effort because of their emotional attachment to the organization, which binds them to its mission and goals. Ajayi and Muraina (2016) further emphasize this emotional connection, defining commitment as the extent to which individuals identify with the organization in which they work. Similarly, Ceylan (2020) describes it as dedicating time and interest to an entity with which one is affiliated. These perspectives highlight three key characteristics of commitment: emotional attachment, self-identification with the organization, and willingness to invest time and effort (Afshari et al., 2019).

The emotional dimension of commitment is central to Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, which defines organizational commitment as a psychological state that (a) characterizes an employee's relationship with the organization and (b) influences the decision to remain or leave. This aligns with Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian's (1974) definition of organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 604). These definitions suggest a scholarly consensus on the psychological nature of organizational commitment. Similarly, Idris and Manganaro (2017) define organizational commitment as the degree to which employees psychologically identify with their work organization, echoing the views of Porter and Lawler (1965), as cited by Herrera and Heras-Rosas (2021). They describe commitment as employees' willingness to exert

effort for the institution and uphold its objectives and values. Greenberg and Baron (2008) also frame commitment as the extent to which employees identify with their organization and demonstrate dedication to it.

In essence, organizational commitment represents the psychological contract between employees and their institution. Rousseau (1995) describes a psychological contract as a set of individual beliefs about the reciprocal obligations and benefits within an exchange relationship. MacNeil (1985) categorizes this exchange into two dimensions: relational and transactional contracts. A relational contract involves an emotional exchange and loyalty based on expectations, such as promotions or permanent positions. Employees develop psychological contracts because they believe their loyalty will be rewarded. In contrast, a transactional contract is based on economic exchange—employees remain with an organization as long as salaries and benefits meet their expectations (Rousseau, 1995).

Research has extensively examined how organizational commitment affects individual behavior. Studies by Fischer and Mansell (2009), Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Meyer et al. (2002), and Solinger et al. (2008) consistently found that organizational commitment strongly correlates with occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement. Employees with high organizational commitment are less likely to leave, have lower absenteeism rates, and are more likely to demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior and enhanced well-being (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008).

Dimensions of organizational commitment: Affective, continuance, and normative commitment

Based on the definition of organizational commitment, scholars agree that it is not a single, unidimensional construct but a multidimensional one (Mueller et al., 2024). They assert that organizational commitment comprises multiple dimensions, including attitudinal, behavioral, and motivational aspects. Morrow (1993) identified two primary dimensions: attitude and behavior. Miller (2003) defined attitude as an evaluative judgment about a phenomenon, whether positive or negative. It reflects feelings of attachment, identification, and loyalty to the organization as the object of commitment (Morrow, 1993). Meyer, Allen, and Gellatly (1990) support this perspective, emphasizing that attitude is a cognitive and affective judgment about an organization. Attitude often shapes behavior, as Ajzen (1993) suggested, noting that attitude ultimately translates into action. What is in a person's mind is expressed through their actions. Best (1994) argued that organizational commitment is evident in individuals who demonstrate dedication to their tasks. Reicher (1985) noted that organizational commitment is visible when members actively engage with their organizational group. Members form a psychological bond, expressed through active participation in group programs and activities. O'Reilly (1989) further described organizational commitment as a psychological bond reflected in job involvement, loyalty, and belief in the organization's values. This bond is evident when employees accept organizational goals and willingly exert effort on behalf of the organization (Miller & Lee, 2001).

Building on organizational commitment, scholars have proposed multiple dimensions, though they often overlap. For instance, Meyer and Allen (1997) identified three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to an organization. This attachment develops when an employee finds alignment between their values,

priorities, and the organization's mission (Lowry, 1973). Such commitment plays a crucial role in sustaining employee engagement. According to Johnson and Chang (2006), employees with high affective commitment tend to exert greater effort for the organization's benefit. Studies by Becker et al. (1996) and Meyer et al. (2004) support this finding, suggesting that affective commitment enhances intrinsic motivation and fosters a strong personal desire to remain with the organization.

The second dimension, continuance commitment, arises when employees evaluate the costs and benefits of leaving the organization. Employees may choose to stay because they perceive greater advantages in remaining than in leaving. This type of commitment is driven by a cost-benefit analysis, including concerns about losing personal investments and the availability of alternative employment opportunities (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984). Becker (1960) noted that employees maintain their organizational relationships primarily for economic and practical reasons.

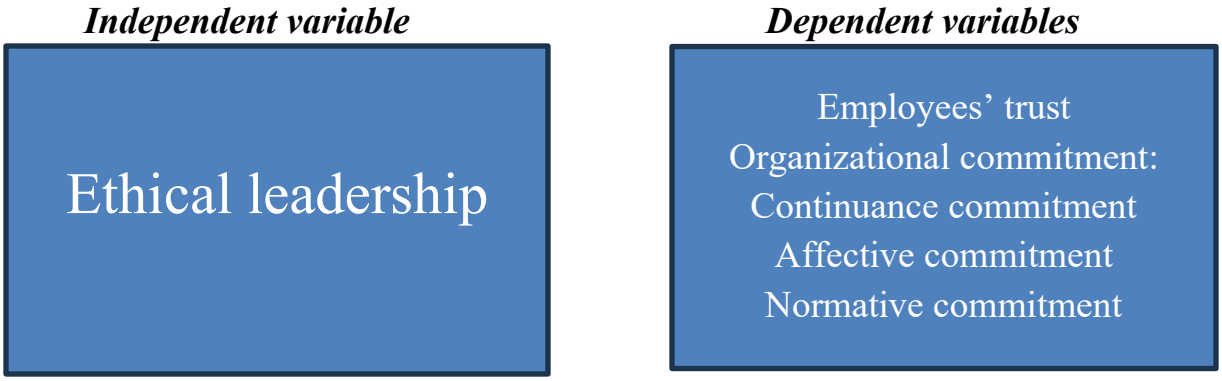
The third dimension, normative commitment, refers to an employee's sense of moral and legal obligation to stay with an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In this context, loyalty stems from contractual obligations or ethical considerations. Muhammad, Afridi, Ali, Shah, and Alasan (2021) highlighted that when employees believe it is morally and legally right to remain in an organization, they are more likely to do so.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) proposed three dimensions of commitment: compliance, identification, and internalization. Identification and internalization align with Meyer and Allen's (1997) concept of affective commitment, which reflects emotional attachment, a sense of belonging, and alignment with organizational goals. Compliance, by contrast, reflects the exchange between employee contributions and extrinsic rewards. This concept corresponds to continuance commitment, as outlined by Meyer and Allen (1997), in which employees stay because of economic considerations.

Similarly, Balfour and Wechsler (1996) identified three dimensions of organizational commitment: identification, affiliation, and exchange. Identification reflects an individual's pride in their organization and corresponds to the affective commitment dimension. Affiliation describes a sense of belonging and attachment to coworkers and the organization, reinforcing the affective commitment concept (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Exchange commitment occurs when employees feel that their efforts are acknowledged through tangible benefits, aligning with continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

The dimensions proposed by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and Balfour and Wechsler (1996) align closely with Meyer and Allen's (1997) framework. Therefore, this study adopts Meyer and Allen's (1997) three dimensions—affective, continuance, and normative commitment—as the foundation for investigating organizational commitment.

Conceptual framework



Source: Yukl et al. (2013) ***, Seok et al. (2015), Meyer and Allen (1997)***

Figure 1: The frameworks explain how ethical leadership affects employees' trust and organizational commitment. It indicates that improving ethical leadership can improve employees' trust and commitment.

Statement of the problems

The study examined the impact of ethical leadership on employees' trust and organizational commitment. It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What is the ethical leadership of the administrators of the institution?
2. What is the level of employees' trust in terms of:
   a. Trust in management competency
   b. Trust in management integrity
   c. Trust in work relationship
3. What is the organizational commitment of employees in terms of:
   a. Continuance commitment
   b. Affective commitment
   c. Normative commitment
4. Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and employees' trust in leadership?
5. Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment?

Hypothesis

Leadership plays an important role in organizational success. Good or ethical leadership consistently produces better outcomes (Amirudin & Nugroho, 2022; Abun et al., 2023). This research hypothesizes that ethical leadership positively affects employees' trust and commitment.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study limits its investigation to employees and administrators of Divine Word College of Laoag, measuring the effect of ethical leadership on trust and commitment.

Research methodology

In adherence to scientific research standards, the study follows established procedures and techniques to ensure a systematic and rigorous investigation. The research methodology plays a crucial role in determining the study's quality and reliability (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Accordingly, this study employed appropriate research methodologies, including research design, data collection instruments, population and study locale, data gathering procedures, and statistical data analysis.

Research design

Because this study uses a quantitative research approach, it employs a descriptive assessment and correlational research design to determine the level of administrators' ethical leadership and its impact on employees' trust and organizational commitment. Descriptive research analyzes data collected through questionnaires, which are then processed using statistical methods. It also describes profiles, frequency distributions, and the characteristics of people, situations, phenomena, or relationships between variables. In essence, it provides an overview of "what is" based on the data (Ariola, 2006, cited by Abun, 2019).

Aligned with this approach, the study employs both descriptive assessment and correlational methods to examine employees' level of trust in management and its effect on work engagement.

The locale of the study

The study was conducted at Divine Word College of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte.

Population

The study's population consisted of all employees and faculty members of Divine Word College of Laoag, Ilocos Norte. The study used a total enumeration sampling method, resulting in a sample of 276 employees.

Data gathering instruments

The study adopted validated questionnaires by Seok et al. (2015) on employees' trust, Meyer and Allen (1997) on organizational commitment, and Yukl et al. 2013) on ethical leadership.

Data gathering procedures

During data collection, the researcher formally requested permission from the College President to distribute the questionnaires within the institution. The researcher met personally with the President and employees to invite them to participate in the study.

The researcher facilitated questionnaire retrieval through coordination among the researcher, employee representatives, and faculty members, ensuring an organized and efficient data collection process.

Statistical treatment of data

In line with the descriptive assessment and correlational research design, the study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics. The weighted mean was used to assess employees' trust in management, commitment, and perceptions of ethical leadership. Meanwhile, Pearson's r correlation was

applied to examine the relationship between ethical leadership, employees' trust in management, and organizational commitment.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

Statistical Range	***Descriptive Interpretation (DI)***
4.21-5.00	*Strongly agree/Very high (A/H)*
3.41-4.20	*Agree/High (H).*
2.61-3.40	*Somewhat agree/Moderate (SWA/M)*
1.81-2.60	*Disagree/Low (D/L)*
1.00-1.80	*Strongly disagree/Very Low (SD/VL)*

Data presentation and analysis

The following statistical data were gathered through research questionnaires. The presentation and analysis follow the statement of the problem.

Problem 1: What is the ethical leadership of the institution's administrators?

Table 1: Ethical leadership

Indicator	***Mean***	***DI***
Shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values	3.70	A/H
Communicates clear ethical standards for members.	3.66	A/H
Sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions	3.57	A/H
Is honest and can be trusted to tell the truth	3.67	A/H
Insists on doing what is fair and ethical even when it is not easy	3.61	A/H
Talks about the importance of honesty and integrity	3.64	A/H
Can be trusted to carry out promises and commitments.	3.68	A/H
Holds members accountable for using ethical practices in their work	3.65	A/H
Overall Mean	**3.65**	**A/H**

Yukl et al. (2013)

Legend:

Statistical Range	***Descriptive Interpretation***
4.21-5.00	*strongly agree/Very high (SA/VH)*
3.41-4.20	*Agree/High (A/H)*
2.61-3.40	*Somewhat agree/Moderate (SWA/M)*
1.81-2.60	*Disagree/Low (D/L)*
1.00-1.80	*Strongly disagree/Very Low (SD/VL)*

The table shows that the overall mean rating for administrators' ethical leadership is 3.65, which corresponds to a "high" or "agree" assessment. This rating suggests that ethical leadership is neither extremely high nor low, moderate, or weak—it is consistently perceived as high. Even when examined individually, all indicators fall within the same high-level mean rating.

Employees agree that their administrators or managers demonstrate a commitment to moral values by communicating ethical standards and serving as role models of honesty and integrity. Gabriunas (2017)

emphasized that ethical leaders are guided by moral values in their actions, while Treviño et al. (2006) noted that leaders' ethical behavior is evaluated against widely accepted moral norms.

Problem 2: What is the level of employees' trust in terms of:

a. Trust in management competency
b. Trust in integrity
c. Trust in work relationship

Table 2: Employees' trust

Indicator	Mean	DI
Trust in management competency		
My head of department shows confidence in task performance and administration	3.89	A/H
The ability of the department head is undeniable	3.86	A/H
My department head brings development to the department	3.86	A/H
I have confidence in the ability of my department head	3.91	A/H
My department head is my source of reference	3.81	A/H
My department head can make quick decisions	3.87	A/H
My department head is good at administration	3.88	A/H
My department head has a convincing appearance.	3.89	A/H
My department head has great experience in performing his//her task.	3.88	A/H
My department head is capable of delegating tasks to his//her employees	3.90	A/H
Composite Mean	**3.88**	**A/H**
Trust in integrity		
My department head is very sincere in performing tasks and in making decisions for the department.	3.91	A/H
My department head is a disciplined person in task performance and administration	3.91	A/H
I like the ethical values of my department head	3.96	A/H
My department head has high integrity.	3.94	A/H
My department head always sets a good example for his/her employees	3.86	A/H
My department head is a person with high principles	3.94	A/H
The management department head is honest and truthful.	3.89	A/H
My department head respects his/her employees.	3.88	A/H
Composite Mean	**3.91**	**A/H**
Trust in work relationship		
My department head has good knowledge of my background	3.00	SWA/M
My department head spends time with his/her/her employees	3.66	A/H
My department head understands me well	3.61	A/H
My department head always discusses work-related issues with his/her employees.	3.31	SWA/M
Composite Mean	**3.39**	**SWA/M**
Overall Mean	**3.72**	**A/H**

Source: **Seok et al. (2015).**

The table indicates that employees' trust in management received an overall mean rating of 3.72, categorized as "agree/high." This suggests that employees' trust in management is not extremely high or low, moderate, or weak—it is consistently perceived as high. However, when examined by dimension,

trust in management regarding competency and integrity is rated high, whereas trust in work relationships is rated moderate.

Regarding competency, employees agree that their administrators or heads demonstrate confidence and capability in performing their tasks and serve as a reliable source of guidance when employees encounter work-related challenges. Singh and Lin (2023) emphasized that competency refers to an individual's ability and skills to perform tasks effectively, which in turn fosters trust and openness in workplace relationships (Ibrahim & Ribbers, 2009).

Regarding integrity, employees agree that their supervisors show sincerity, discipline, and strong moral values, upholding high ethical standards in their decision-making. This earns them trust and respect from employees (Samankova et al., 2018; Musschenga, 2002).

However, trust in work relationships is comparatively lower. While employees somewhat agree that their leaders know their backgrounds, spend time with them, understand them well, and discuss work-related concerns, this area still needs improvement. Strengthening work relationships is crucial because it significantly affects employees' job satisfaction, performance, and overall well-being (Costa, 2018).

Problem 3: What is the organizational commitment of employees in terms of:

a. Affective commitment
b. Continuance commitment
c. Normative commitment

Table 3: Organizational commitment

Indicator	Mean	DI
Affective commitment		
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization	3.89	A/H
I feel as if this organization's problems are my own	3.73	A/H
I feel like part of my family at this organization	3.65	A/H
I feel emotionally attached to this organization	3.73	A/H
This organization has great personal meaning for me.	3.86	A/H
I feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization	3.66	A/H
Composite Mean	**3.75**	**A/H**
Continuance commitment		
It would be very hard for me to leave my job at this organization right now, even if I wanted to	3.63	A/H
Too much of my life would be disrupted if I left my organization	3.38	SWA/M
Right now, staying with my job at this organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire	3.58	A/H
I believe I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	3.51	A/H
One of the few negative consequences of leaving my job at this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives elsewhere.	3.38	SWA/M
One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice	3.73	A/H
Composite Mean	**3.54**	**A/H**
Normative commitment		

I should remain with my organization.	3.58	A/H
Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave.	3.52	A/H
I would feel guilty if I left this organization now	3.61	A/H
This organization deserves my loyalty	3.68	A/H
I would not leave my organization right now because of my sense of obligation to it	3.70	A/H
I owe a great deal to this organization.	3.75	A/H
Composite Mean	**3.64**	**A/H**
Overall Mean	**3.64**	**A/H**

Allen (1997)

The employees' overall organizational commitment received a mean rating of 3.64, categorized as "agree/high." This suggests that while employees' commitment to the organization is not extremely high, nor is it low, moderate, or weak—it remains consistently high. Even when analyzed by dimension, all aspects of organizational commitment—affective (3.75), continuance (3.54), and normative (3.64)—fall within the same high level of composite mean ratings.

Regarding affective commitment, employees agree that they are happy to spend their careers with the organization, feel a strong sense of belonging, and are emotionally attached to the institution, as it holds great personal significance for them. Afandi (2019) explained that affective commitment reflects employees' dedication and loyalty to their organization. Those with high affective commitment identify closely with the institution, feel a deep sense of belonging, and are willing to work toward its goals.

Regarding continuance commitment, employees also agree that they stay primarily because of the potential disruptions associated with leaving. They see staying as necessary because alternatives are limited, and leaving would require personal sacrifices. Mueller and Straatmann (2014) described continuance commitment as a decision to remain with an organization based on economic factors rather than emotional attachment. This type of commitment is driven by the perception that the costs of leaving outweigh the potential benefits of seeking a new position (Mueller et al., 2024).

For normative commitment, employees agree that even if leaving would be advantageous, they feel a moral obligation to stay, as leaving now would cause them guilt. They believe loyalty to the organization is an ethical responsibility. Mueller and Straatmann (2014) stated that normative commitment reflects employees' sense of duty to remain with their organization, even when they are not fully satisfied with their situation.

Problem 4: Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and employees' trust in leadership?

Table 4: Correlation between ethical leadership and employees' trust

		Level of employees' trust in leadership			
		Trust in management competency	Trust in integrity	Trust in work relationship	Overall
Ethical leadership	Pearson correlation	.494**	.443**	.267**	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000

The table shows the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' trust in leadership. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and employees' trust in leadership, with varying strengths across trust dimensions. The strongest correlation was found between ethical leadership and trust in management competency (r = .494, p = .000), suggesting that employees who perceive their leaders as ethical also view them as competent decision-makers. Employees are more likely to trust leaders who make sound, ethical decisions, reinforcing their belief that management can guide the organization successfully.

Similarly, ethical leadership was moderately correlated with trust in integrity (r = .443, p = .000), indicating that employees tend to have greater confidence in leaders who uphold ethical principles and act with honesty and fairness. Employees are more likely to trust leaders who consistently exhibit ethical behavior, as this fosters stability and predictability in workplace interactions.

On the other hand, the correlation between ethical leadership and trust in work relationships was weaker (r = .267, p = .001), although still significant. This suggests that while ethical leadership positively influences employees' perceptions of interpersonal relationships with management, other factors—such as direct communication styles, team dynamics, and workplace culture—may play a larger role in shaping these relationships.

Overall, ethical leadership demonstrated a strong relationship with employees' trust in leadership (r = .481, p = .000), reinforcing the idea that leaders who exhibit ethical behavior are more likely to be trusted by their employees.

Problem 5: Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment?

Table 5: Correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment

		Organizational commitment			
		Continuance commitment	Affective commitment	Normative commitment	Overall
Ethical leadership	Pearson correlation	.215**	.127	.191*	.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.107	.015	.006

The table presents the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment.
The findings reveal a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment, particularly in continuance commitment (r = .215, p = .006) and normative commitment (r = .191, p = .015). The strongest relationship was between ethical leadership and cognitive commitment, reflecting employees' rational decision to remain with the organization based on perceived benefits, stability, and fairness. Employees who view their leaders as ethical are more likely to trust that their organization operates with integrity and fairness, reinforcing their commitment based on logical reasoning rather than emotional attachment.

Likewise, ethical leadership demonstrated a positive correlation with normative commitment (r = .191, p = .015), indicating that employees may feel a moral obligation to stay in an organization that upholds

ethical values and ensures fair treatment. This suggests that ethical leadership fosters a sense of duty and responsibility among employees, strengthening their commitment to the organization.

However, the correlation between ethical leadership and affective commitment ($r = .127$, $p = .107$) was not statistically significant. This implies that ethical leadership alone may not be sufficient to cultivate employees' emotional attachment or deep sense of belonging to the organization. Instead, factors such as workplace relationships, job satisfaction, recognition, and overall engagement may have a more substantial influence on employees' affective commitment.

Overall, the correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment ($r = .218$, $p = .006$) suggests that while ethical leadership helps shape employees' commitment, other workplace factors may have a stronger impact on long-term employee retention. To strengthen commitment, organizations should complement ethical leadership with employee engagement initiatives, career development opportunities, and a supportive work culture to foster both rational and emotional commitment.

Results and discussion

The findings indicate that ethical leadership among administrators, employees' trust in management, and organizational commitment are all high. Pearson's r correlation analysis further reveals a significant relationship between ethical leadership and both employees' trust in management and organizational commitment. These results underscore the importance of sustaining ethical leadership through example. Malik et al. (2022) argued that ethical leadership fosters trust and encourages employees' ethical behavior, which can minimize counterproductive work behaviors while gradually strengthening an ethical organizational culture. Moreover, ethical leadership positively influences employee commitment and engagement, which, in turn, supports achieving organizational objectives. When leaders model moral behavior, employees feel more fulfilled and loyal to the organization. In essence, ethical leaders cultivate a trustworthy work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered (Limpo & Junaidi, 2023; Guo, 2022).

Conversely, organizational failures are often linked to unethical leadership (Randal et al., 2020; Jung & Sharon, 2019). As El-Adaway and Jennings (2022) noted, when leaders violate moral standards, their unethical behavior influences employees, either leading them to adopt similar immoral behaviors or diminishing their motivation to work (Mitchell et al., 2022; Brown & Mitchell, 2010), ultimately harming organizational success. Beyond this, Javid et al. (2020) suggested that unethical leadership fosters a toxic organizational culture that hinders progress and drives the organization toward failure.

Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the impact of ethical leadership on employees' trust in management and organizational commitment. Findings revealed that ethical leadership, employees' trust, and organizational commitment were all at high levels. Pearson's r correlation analysis indicated a significant relationship between ethical leadership and both employees' trust and organizational commitment. This suggests that as ethical leadership strengthens, employees' trust in management and organizational commitment also increase. Therefore, strengthening ethical leadership among administrators can be an effective way to address challenges related to employees' trust and commitment.

However, the study acknowledges its limitations due to the relatively small population size. Future research should consider a larger sample and include multiple institutions to provide more comprehensive insights.

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