



Understanding Ethical Performance through Ethical Competence, Organizational Justice, and Ethical Climate

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Article History:

Submitted:
2026-03-14

Accepted:
2026-06-03

Published:
2026-06-18

Abstract

Ethical performance has become increasingly important in legislative institutions where integrity and accountability are essential for maintaining public trust. This study examines the mediating role of ethical climate in the relationship between ethical competence, organizational justice, and ethical performance. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 120 members of five Regional Houses of Representatives (DPRD) in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, through proportionate stratified sampling. The proposed model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that ethical competence and organizational justice positively influence ethical performance and ethical climate. Ethical climate emerged as the strongest predictor of ethical performance, while organizational justice had the greatest effect on ethical climate. In addition, ethical climate significantly mediates the effects of ethical competence and organizational justice on ethical performance. These findings indicate that the interaction between individual ethical capability, perceptions of fairness, and organizational conditions shapes ethical behavior in legislative institutions. The study enriches the ethical performance literature by integrating individual and organizational factors within a single framework.

Keywords: *Ethical Climate, Ethical Competence, Ethical Performance, Organizational Justice*

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations are challenged to improve operational performance while being ethical in a broad spectrum of organizational activities. The importance of integrity, transparency, accountability, and professionalism in providing organizational legitimacy, credibility, and long-term sustainability is increasing, as is the importance of ethical behavior in the functioning of modern

organizations.¹ Ethical misconduct that erodes public trust in certain organizational sectors includes information manipulation, workplace discrimination, misuse of authority, and unprofessional behavior. Unethical behavior and a decline in trust diminish organizational integrity, stakeholder trust, and public legitimacy.² This implies that the organization's ability to foster and maintain ethical behavior in the workplace is now as critical to the organization's success as its financial performance or productivity. Therefore, the implementation of ethical values has become a strategic necessity for maintaining organizational reputation, credibility, and long-term sustainability by strengthening stakeholder trust and organizational legitimacy.³

Ethical performance is employees' ability to perform their jobs with integrity, professionalism, and responsibility, and in compliance with the organization's ethical standards and moral principles.⁴ Today, organizations are increasingly facing competition and transparency, and ethical performance has become a crucial component in building organizational credibility, professionalism, and trust amongst stakeholders. Ethical behavior and organizational compliance practices have been proven to reduce misconduct and reinforce responsible organizational behavior.⁵ Employees who demonstrate high ethical performance are likely to be honest, avoid unethical behavior, and contribute to the organization's sustainability. Conversely, Low ethical performance may trigger various forms of workplace misconduct, including unethical decision-making, abuse of authority, and violations of organizational norms, which can undermine organizational integrity, increase organizational misconduct, and ultimately weaken public trust and organizational legitimacy.⁶ Therefore, identifying the factors that influence ethical performance has become an important concern for both researchers and organizational practitioners.

Among the factors influencing ethical performance, ethical competence has gained increasing attention in organizational research due to its role in shaping employees' ethical behavior and decision-making. Ethical competence refers to an individual's ability to demonstrate ethical awareness, moral judgment, and responsible action, grounded in moral principles, professional standards, and a commitment to upholding ethical behavior in organizational and professional

¹ David C. Jacobs, "A Pragmatist Approach to Integrity in Business Ethics," *Journal of Management Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 215–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492604268203>; Elina Riivari and Anna-Maija Lämsä, "Organizational Ethical Virtues of Innovativeness," *Journal of Business Ethics* 155, no. 1 (March 3, 2019): 223–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3486-6>; Maximilian Heimstädt and Leonhard Dobusch, "Transparency and Accountability: Causal, Critical and Constructive Perspectives," *Organization Theory* 1, no. 4 (October 10, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2631787720964216>.

² Nicole Gillespie et al., "How Do Sector Level Factors Influence Trust Violations in Not-for-Profit Organizations? A Multilevel Model," *Journal of Business Ethics* 191, no. 2 (May 31, 2024): 373–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05429-6>; Karin Lasthuizen, Leo Huberts, and Leonie Heres, "How to Measure Integrity Violations," *Public Management Review* 13, no. 3 (March 2011): 383–408, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2011.553267>.

³ Liviu Florea, Yu Ha Cheung, and Neil C. Herndon, "For All Good Reasons: Role of Values in Organizational Sustainability," *Journal of Business Ethics* 114, no. 3 (May 27, 2013): 393–408, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1355-x>; Yiwen Jenny Gu et al., "Commitment to Values: Examining the Role of Ethical and Responsible Business Practices on Short and Long-term Value," *Business and Society Review* 129, no. 1 (March 28, 2024): 96–129, <https://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12344>.

⁴ Robert D. Gatewood and Archie B. Carroll, "Assessment of Ethical Performance of Organization Members: A Conceptual Framework," *The Academy of Management Review* 16, no. 4 (October 1991): 667–90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/258976>; Wenqi Li et al., "Ethical Performance of Construction Project Management Team: Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Measure," *International Journal of Project Management* 43, no. 8 (November 2025): 102784, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2025.102784>; T. T. Selvarajan and Ron Sardesai, "Appraisal Of Ethical Performance: A Theoretical Model," *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)* 26, no. 3 (November 16, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v26i3.289>.

⁵ Nicole Andreoli and Joel Lefkowitz, "Individual and Organizational Antecedents of Misconduct in Organizations," *Journal of Business Ethics* 85, no. 3 (March 8, 2009): 309–32, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9772-6>; Sebastian Goebel and Barbara E. Weißenberger, "The Relationship Between Informal Controls, Ethical Work Climates, and Organizational Performance," *Journal of Business Ethics* 141, no. 3 (March 4, 2017): 505–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2700-7>.

⁶ Andreoli and Lefkowitz, "Individual and Organizational Antecedents of Misconduct in Organizations."

contexts.⁷ Ethical awareness, moral reasoning, and ethical responsibility enable employees with high ethical competence to maintain their integrity, respond responsibly to ethical dilemmas, and avoid actions that are contrary to organizational norms and professional values.⁸ In addition, ethical awareness, ethical decision-making, honesty, and responsible professional behavior help individuals align their activities with organizational standards and professional duties.⁹ Thus, ethical competency is considered a major factor for enhancing ethical performance in organizations.

Apart from organizational and personal factors, ethical performance may also be influenced by the ethical environment within the organization. Organizational justice is defined as the fairness of employees' perceptions of organizational procedures, decision-making processes, resource distribution, and interpersonal treatment in the workplace.¹⁰ Employees tend to develop trust, positive work attitudes, and responsible workplace behavior when they perceive fairness.¹¹ Positive attitudes, organizational citizenship behavior, and supportive work relationships can promote compliance with organizational norms and enhance employees' commitment to ethical standards when fair organizational practices are in place.¹² On the other hand, perceptions of injustice may lead to dissatisfaction, reduced trust, and various forms of unethical behavior that can undermine organizational integrity and increase workplace misconduct.¹³ Therefore, ethical climate is considered an important organizational mechanism for enhancing ethical performance.

Research on ethical performance has continued to grow alongside increasing organizational concern regarding ethical behavior in the workplace. Previous studies have found that organizational fairness, ethical context, and ethical competence positively affect ethical performance. Dynamic ethical capacities improve sustainable and ethical organizational performance by enabling organizations to manage ethical issues more effectively.¹⁴ Workers' perceptions of social justice can

⁷ Kati Kulju et al., "Ethical Competence: A Concept Analysis," *Nursing Ethics* 23, no. 4 (June 9, 2016): 401–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733014567025>; Rico Pohling et al., "What Is Ethical Competence? The Role of Empathy, Personal Values, and the Five-Factor Model of Personality in Ethical Decision-Making," *Journal of Business Ethics* 137, no. 3 (September 12, 2016): 449–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2569-5>.

⁸ Glorian Stevani Hallo and Caecilia Tri Wahyanti, "The Effect of Non-Physical Work Environment and Work Stress on Employees' Performance at Bank BNI Jailolo Unit, West Halmahera," *International Journal of Social Science and Business* 6, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 232–38, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ijssb.v6i2.45092>; Amèlia Tey-Teijón, Juan Llanes-Ordóñez, and Laura Martínez-Rodríguez, "Ethical Competence in Master's Degrees: Definition and Shaping Factors," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 11 (November 14, 2023): 1137, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13111137>; Emi Yoshioka and Sayuri Kaneko, "The Acquisition of Ethical Competence in Basic Education and the Present State of Ethics Education," *Open Journal of Nursing* 09, no. 07 (2019): 676–86, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojn.2019.97052>.

⁹ Jessica Hemberg and Håkan Hemberg, "Ethical Competence in a Profession: Healthcare Professionals' Views," *Nursing Open* 7, no. 4 (July 18, 2020): 1249–59, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.501>.

¹⁰ Jason A. Colquitt, "On the Dimensionality of Organizational Justice: A Construct Validation of a Measure.," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, no. 3 (June 2001): 386–400, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.386>; Jennifer Wiseman and Amelia Stillwell, "Organizational Justice: Typology, Antecedents and Consequences," *Encyclopedia* 2, no. 3 (July 6, 2022): 1287–95, <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia2030086>.

¹¹ Hajer Mousa Alriyami et al., "Employees Trust, Perceived Justice, on Task Performance: Mediating and Moderating Role of Autonomy and Organizational Culture," *International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics* 104 (November 2024): 103647, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ergon.2024.103647>; Russell Cropanzano, David E. Bowen, and Stephen W. Gilliland, "The Management of Organizational Justice," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (November 2007): 34–48, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2007.27895338>.

¹² Besfat Engdaw and Melaku Kebede, "The Impact of Organizational Justices on Organizational Success: The Mediating Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (December 31, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2401207>.

¹³ Andreoli and Lefkowitz, "Individual and Organizational Antecedents of Misconduct in Organizations"; Kelly Raz, Alison R. Fragale, and Liat Levontin, "Who Do I (Dis)Trust and Monitor for Ethical Misconduct? Status, Power, and the Structural Paradox," *Journal of Business Ethics* 182, no. 2 (January 30, 2023): 443–64, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04991-1>.

¹⁴ Joshua R. Knapp, Juliana M. Namada, and William Dougan, "Dynamic Ethical Capabilities in Place and in Time," *Journal of Management and Organization* 31, no. 2 (March 1, 2025): 511–32, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2025.1>.

increase motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization, and these can improve worker performance.¹⁵ Ethical competence can be embedded within organizational competency frameworks to cultivate ethical conduct and reinforce moral standards in the workplace.¹⁶ In a similar vein, organizational justice is closely associated with the formation of an ethical climate.¹⁷ Ethical climate may function as a mediating mechanism through which ethical-related factors are translated into employees' ethical behavior and performance.¹⁸

However, previous studies have also yielded inconsistent findings, suggesting research gaps. Individuals' moral misconduct may reduce perceptions of professional competence and work achievement, suggesting that ethical competence does not always lead to higher ethical performance.¹⁹ Moreover, not all dimensions of organizational justice significantly influence job performance: only procedural and interactional justice showed significant effects, whereas distributive justice did not.²⁰ Similarly, low ethical attitudes among employees weaken ethical competence in fostering an ethical climate, particularly under high workloads and complex work-related pressures.²¹ These contradictory findings indicate that the relationships among ethical competence, organizational justice, ethical climate, and ethical performance remain inconclusive and require further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to re-examine these relationships by positioning ethical climate as a mediating variable in understanding the development of ethical performance within organizations.

To address these gaps, this study proposes an integrative model examining the influence of ethical competence and organizational justice on ethical performance, with ethical climate as a mediating variable. This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating individual and organizational perspectives in explaining ethical performance within organizations. Furthermore, including ethical climate as a mediating mechanism provides a more comprehensive understanding of how ethical behavior is developed and strengthened in the workplace. The findings of this study are also expected to offer practical insights for organizations in fostering ethical environments, strengthening employees' ethical competence, and promoting fair organizational practices to enhance ethical performance and organizational sustainability.

¹⁵ Zubair Azimi et al., "Examining the Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Administrative Staff Performance: A Case Study of Kabul University," *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (January 31, 2026): 15–31, <https://doi.org/10.62810/jssh.v3i1.215>.

¹⁶ Debolina Dutta, Sushanta Kumar Mishra, and Pawan Budhwar, "Ethics in Competency Models: A Framework towards Developing Ethical Behaviour in Organisations," *IIMB Management Review* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2022): 208–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2022.10.002>.

¹⁷ Januário José Monteiro et al., "The Influence of the Ethical Climate on Procedural Justice and Organizational Commitment: The Interaction of Budgetary Participation," *Revista de Contabilidade e Organizações* 15 (February 10, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-6486.rco.2021.174754>. procedural justice, and budgetary participation in organizational commitment. To achieve the objective, a questionnaire was applied with managers from 150 companies listed in Brazil, Bolsa, Balcão (B3

¹⁸ Hussam Al Halbusi and Mohammad Alshallaqi, "Fostering Justice and Ethical Climate in the Workplace: Leader-Follower Value Congruence Perspectives," *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 52, no. 6 (May 5, 2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.13091>.

¹⁹ Junho Lee et al., "Disgraced Professionals: Revelation of Immorality Decreases Evaluations of Professional Competence and Accomplishment," in *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Cognitive Science Society, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.48448/aa6r-ge74>.

²⁰ Suk-Kyu Kim and Yunduk Jeong, "Developing the Healthy and Competitive Organization in the Sports Environment: Focused on the Relationships between Organizational Justice, Empowerment and Job Performance," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 17 (August 30, 2021): 9142, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179142>.

²¹ Nihal Taşkıran and Gulengun Turk, "The Relationship between the Ethical Attitudes and Holistic Competence Levels of Intensive Care Nurses: A Cross-Sectional Study," *PLOS ONE* 18, no. 7 (July 13, 2023): e0287648, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0287648>.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of ethical competence and organizational justice on ethical performance, with ethical climate as a mediating variable. Specifically, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how individual capabilities and organizational conditions interact in shaping ethical behavior within organizations. By investigating these relationships, this study is expected to contribute to the development of ethical performance literature and provide practical implications for organizations in promoting sustainable ethical practices in the workplace.

2. Literature Review

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

SCT advances the view that individual behavior is shaped through reciprocal interactions among personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioral processes that continuously influence one another.²² SCT that employees' actions are not solely determined by internal capabilities, but are also shaped by social environments and organizational conditions through reciprocal interactions among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors.²³ In organizational contexts, SCT is widely used to explain how ethical behavior develops through the interaction between individual competencies and workplace environments.

In this study, ethical competence is a personal factor that influences employees' ability to recognize and respond to ethical issues through ethical awareness and moral judgment. At the same time, organizational justice reflects an environmental factor that shapes employees' perceptions of fairness within the organization.²⁴ Ethical climate serves as the organizational social environment that reinforces ethical norms and expected standards of behavior.²⁵ Through the interaction of these factors, employees are more likely to demonstrate ethical performance in carrying out their professional responsibilities and organizational duties.

Ethical Competence and Ethical Performance

Ethical competence refers to an individual's ability to apply moral principles, integrity, honesty, and responsibility in organizational decision-making and behavior. In organizational settings, ethical competence plays a crucial role in shaping employees' work attitudes and performance outcomes. Leaders with high moral competence demonstrate honesty, sincerity, and concern for employees through supportive behavior and clear feedback regarding work expectations.²⁶ Such ethical conduct encourages employees to understand organizational goals better and improve their task performance. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, ethically competent leaders foster reciprocal relationships in which employees feel obligated to respond positively, leading to enhanced work performance and

²² Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, no. 2 (December 1991): 248–87, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90022-L](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90022-L).

²³ Robert Wood and Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Organizational Management," *Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 3 (July 1989): 361–84, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4279067>.

²⁴ Colquitt, "On the Dimensionality of Organizational Justice: A Construct Validation of a Measure."

²⁵ Laurent Auzoult and Crisanta-Alina Mazilescu, "Ethical Climate as Social Norm: Impact on Judgements and Behavioral Intentions in the Workplace," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 11 (June 3, 2021): 6006, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18116006>.

²⁶ Tae-Yeol Kim and Minsoo Kim, "Leaders' Moral Competence and Employee Outcomes: The Effects of Psychological Empowerment and Person–Supervisor Fit," *Journal of Business Ethics* 112, no. 1 (January 15, 2013): 155–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1238-1>.

discretionary behaviors beneficial to the organization. Conversely, leaders who lack integrity and ethical consistency may create uncertainty and psychological strain among subordinates, ultimately reducing employees' focus and performance effectiveness.

Furthermore, ethical competence has increasingly become an essential organizational capability that contributes to sustainable performance outcomes. Ethical knowledge, behaviors, and competencies can be developed through education and organizational practices to support responsible business conduct.²⁷ Employees who demonstrate ethical behavior tend to contribute more effectively to organizational objectives because ethical conduct encourages responsibility, integrity, and positive workplace relationships.²⁸ Additionally, ethical capabilities enable organizations to strengthen stakeholder relationships and achieve sustainable organizational outcomes.²⁹ These findings indicate that ethical competence not only reinforces ethical values and responsible behavior within organizations but also enhances overall ethical performance.

H1: Ethical Competence positively influences Ethical Performance

Organizational Justice and Ethical Performance

Organizational justice reflects employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational policies, procedures, interactions, and decision-making processes within the workplace. Fair treatment by organizations can shape employees' attitudes and behaviors, as they tend to evaluate whether organizational actions are conducted fairly and respectfully. Employees who perceive justice within the organization are less likely to engage in deviant workplace behavior, as fairness fosters trust and reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations.³⁰ Likewise, distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice positively affect employees' ethical behavior because fair organizational practices encourage employees to respond with positive and responsible conduct.³¹ These findings indicate that organizational justice plays an important role in strengthening ethical behavior within organizations.

In addition, perceptions of fairness within organizations can influence employees' motivation, commitment, and behavioral outcomes. Employees working in fair organizational environments tend to show higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment, which ultimately lead to better performance outcomes.³² Similarly, employees' justice perceptions affect their emotional responses, sense of organizational support, and subsequent ethical or unethical behavior.³³ Therefore,

²⁷ Musaddag Elrayah, "Can Business Ethics-Based Education Improve HR Graduates' Employability, Knowledge, Skills, and Competence?," *Journal of Education for Business* 96, no. 8 (November 17, 2021): 522–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2021.1874255>.

²⁸ Courage Simon Kofi Dogbe et al., "Inducing Employee Performance among State-Owned Enterprises, through Employee Ethical Behaviour and Ethical Leadership," *Social Responsibility Journal* 20, no. 7 (July 4, 2024): 1378–97, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-11-2023-0650>.

²⁹ Knapp, Namada, and Dougan, "Dynamic Ethical Capabilities in Place and in Time."

³⁰ Cenk Tufan et al., "The Mediating Effect of Organizational Justice Perception on the Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Workplace Deviant Behaviors," *Sustainability* 15, no. 2 (January 10, 2023): 1342, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021342>. organizational justice perception (OJP)

³¹ Homoud Alhaidani et al., "Navigating Organizational Justice and Ethical Leadership: Empirical Evidence from Saudi Arabia," *Sage Open* 14, no. 2 (April 7, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241257378>.

³² Azimi et al., "Examining the Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Administrative Staff Performance: A Case Study of Kabul University."

³³ Gabriele Jacobs, Frank D. Belschak, and Deanne N. Den Hartog, "(Un)Ethical Behavior and Performance Appraisal: The Role of Affect, Support, and Organizational Justice," *Journal of Business Ethics*, March 27, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1687-1>.

when employees perceive higher levels of organizational justice, they are more likely to demonstrate positive ethical behavior and contribute effectively to organizational goals.

H2: Organizational Justice positively influences Ethical Performance

Ethical Competence and Ethical Climate

The development of ethical competence within organizations plays an important role in shaping workplace ethical values, norms, and standards of behavior. Individuals with high ethical competence are more likely to demonstrate responsibility, integrity, and ethical awareness in organizational activities. Integrating ethical competence into organizational competency frameworks can help establish appropriate workplace behavior and strengthen the ethical climate within organizations.³⁴ This suggests that ethical competence not only reflects individual moral capability but also contributes to the formation of ethical expectations and behavioral standards throughout the organization. In addition, moral competence within organizations can foster a sustainable ethical climate by embedding ethical values in the workplace.³⁵

Moreover, ethical competence contributes to improving individuals' moral awareness, ethical evaluation, and decision-making abilities, thereby supporting the creation of a more responsible organizational environment. Individuals with higher ethical competence are more likely to exhibit behaviors that support the establishment of a positive and ethical work environment.³⁶ Furthermore, ethics education enhances ethical knowledge and decision-making skills, which are important factors in strengthening the ethical climate within organizations.³⁷ These findings indicate that ethical competence contributes to the development of ethical values and responsible behavior across the organization.

H3: Ethical Competence positively influences Ethical Climate

Organizational Justice and Ethical Climate

Organizational justice plays an important role in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness, respect, and dignity in the workplace, thereby influencing the development of an ethical climate in organizations. Employees who perceive fair treatment from supervisors and organizations are more likely to develop trust, satisfaction, and positive attitudes toward organizational values and practices. Organizational environments grounded in ethics, fairness, and recognition can strengthen employees' trust, engagement, and sense of belonging.³⁸ Similarly, interpersonal justice reflects the extent to which supervisors treat employees fairly, respectfully, and with dignity, which contributes

³⁴ Dutta, Mishra, and Budhwar, "Ethics in Competency Models: A Framework towards Developing Ethical Behaviour in Organisations."

³⁵ Juntong Meng and Xiaoling Guo, "The Relationship between Ethical Leadership, Moral Sensitivity, and Moral Courage among Head Nurses," *BMC Nursing* 24, no. 1 (May 15, 2025): 538, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-025-03170-1>.

³⁶ Qiang Yu et al., "Head Nurse Ethical Competence and Transformational Leadership: A Cross-Sectional Study," *BMC Nursing* 23, no. 1 (November 12, 2024): 821, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02484-w>.

³⁷ Marzieh Momennasab, Marjan Ghanbari, and Mozghan Rivaz, "Improving Nurses' Knowledge, Attitude, and Performance in Relation to Ethical Codes through Group Reflection Strategy," *BMC Nursing* 20, no. 1 (December 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-021-00749-2>.

³⁸ Ana Poeira and Lucília Nunes, "Retaining Those Who Care: Ethical Climate, Leadership, and Workforce Sustainability in Healthcare," *Healthcare* 13, no. 23 (November 21, 2025): 3014, <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13233014>.

to the formation of a principled ethical climate.³⁹ These findings suggest that organizational justice helps create a workplace environment that supports ethical values and responsible behavior.

Fair organizational practices can also strengthen employees' perceptions of ethical norms and collective responsibility. Ethical climate is positively associated with procedural justice because organizational moral and ethical principles shape employees' perceptions of fairness in organizational procedures and decision-making.⁴⁰ In addition, positive perceptions of the ethical climate are associated with employees' positive responses toward the organization, underscoring the importance of a fair and ethical work environment.⁴¹ These findings indicate that organizational justice contributes to establishing a positive ethical climate by fostering fairness, trust, and ethical values throughout the organization.

H4: Organizational Justice positively influences Ethical Climate

Ethical Climate and Ethical Performance

Ethical climate reflects the shared perceptions of ethical values, norms, and practices that guide employees' behavior within organizations. A positive ethical climate encourages employees to act responsibly, comply with organizational rules, and maintain ethical standards in their work activities. Ethical climate influences organizational systems and performance by reducing unethical conduct and strengthening ethical behavior among organizational members.⁴² This indicates that organizations with a strong ethical climate are better able to minimize ethical problems and foster ethical work practices. Similarly, ethical climate creates a reinforcing system of organizational norms and practices that continuously support employees in making ethical decisions, particularly in dynamic and technology-driven work environments.⁴³ These findings suggest that ethical climate plays an important role in guiding employees toward ethical conduct and responsible performance.

In addition, ethical climate contributes to the establishment of supportive organizational conditions that encourage employees to maintain ethical behavior in the workplace. The development of a sound ethical climate within organizations enables the dissemination of moral standards and ethical values across different organizational levels.⁴⁴ Moreover, ethical climate creates enabling conditions such as psychological safety, institutional support, and organizational legitimacy that strengthen employees' willingness to engage in ethical actions and responsible decision-making.⁴⁵

³⁹ Safira Dwi Tyas Putri, Alice Salendu, and Aditya Wira Pahlawan, "Understanding Turnover Intention in Gen Z: Servant Leadership and Ethical Climate in Organization," *Asian Management and Business Review*, February 27, 2025, 216–30, <https://doi.org/10.20885/AMBR.vol5.iss1.art14>.

⁴⁰ Monteiro et al., "The Influence of the Ethical Climate on Procedural Justice and Organizational Commitment: The Interaction of Budgetary Participation." procedural justice, and budgetary participation in organizational commitment. To achieve the objective, a questionnaire was applied with managers from 150 companies listed in Brazil, Bolsa, Balcão (B3

⁴¹ Kelly D. Martin and John B. Cullen, "Continuities and Extensions of Ethical Climate Theory: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Journal of Business Ethics* 69, no. 2 (November 7, 2006): 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9084-7>.

⁴² Noman Ahmad Khan et al., "Ethical Climate And Employees' Competencies As Mediators In Connecting Hrm Practices And Organizational Performance," *Elementary Education Online* 20, no. 1 (2021): 7578–7600, <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.01.783>.

⁴³ Xiangyu Bian et al., "Navigating Ethical Decision-Making in Digital Transformation: Ethical Climate, Digital Competence, and Person-Organization Fit in China's Banking Sector," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (December 1, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05184-1>.

⁴⁴ Meng and Guo, "The Relationship between Ethical Leadership, Moral Sensitivity, and Moral Courage among Head Nurses."

⁴⁵ Mirfat Mohamed Labib Elkashif et al., "Moral Courage Mediates the Relationship Between Ethical Climate and Sustainable Environmental Health Literacy Among Nurses," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 23, no. 5 (May 1, 2026): 597, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph23050597>.

These findings indicate that ethical climate not only shapes ethical awareness but also enhances ethical performance within organizations.

H5: Ethical Climate positively influences Ethical Performance

The Mediating Role of Ethical Climate

Ethical competence plays an important role in shaping an organizational environment that supports ethical values, integrity, and responsible behavior. Individuals who demonstrate high ethical competence are more likely to uphold ethical standards and foster a workplace culture of trust, transparency, and accountability. Ethical competence, reflected in ethical behavior, integrity, and accountability, can foster psychological safety and support ethical decision-making within organizations.⁴⁶ Similarly, ethical behavior within organizations positively influences employees' ethical behavior through employees' perceptions of ethical climate.⁴⁷ These findings indicate that ethical competence contributes to the development of an ethical climate that guides employees toward ethical conduct within organizations.

The presence of a positive ethical climate also strengthens the relationship between ethical competence and ethical performance by encouraging employees to apply ethical values and responsible behavior in their work. Ethical climate mediates the relationship between organizations' ethical values and employees' ethical behavior, indicating that it serves as an important mechanism linking ethical values to ethical outcomes.⁴⁸ In addition, ethical climate positively shapes employees' attitudes and behavioral responses, as they tend to emulate the ethical standards established within the organization.⁴⁹ These findings suggest that ethical climate serves as an important mediating factor through which ethical competence enhances ethical performance.

Perceptions of justice in organizational policies and decision-making processes can influence employees' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions in the workplace, thereby contributing to the development of an ethical climate within organizations. Employees who receive fair treatment from their organizations are more likely to develop trust, positive interpersonal relationships, and work attitudes that support ethical behavior. Fair and ethically appropriate behavior within organizations fosters reciprocal relationships, employee well-being, and supportive work environments.⁵⁰ Similarly, supportive organizational environments grounded in ethical values can foster positive employee

⁴⁶ Wandile Vilakazi and Andriisha Beharry-Ramraj, "Ethical Work Climate and Its Influence on Employee Well-Being, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, and Leadership," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 12 (November 28, 2025): 3423, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202561238>.

⁴⁷ Hussam Al Halbusi et al., "Managerial Ethical Leadership, Ethical Climate and Employee Ethical Behavior: Does Moral Attentiveness Matter?," *Ethics & Behavior* 31, no. 8 (November 17, 2021): 604–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2021.1937628>.

⁴⁸ Harpreet Mehra and Mahabir Narwal, "Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employees' Ethical Behavior: Mediation of Ethical Climate Using PLS-SEM," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* 41, no. 3 (August 15, 2025): 761–79, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-08-2024-0267>.

⁴⁹ Tajneen Affnaan Saleh et al., "Effects of Leader Conscientiousness and Ethical Leadership on Employee Turnover Intention: The Mediating Role of Individual Ethical Climate and Emotional Exhaustion," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 15 (July 23, 2022): 8959, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19158959>.

⁵⁰ Carla Freire and Claudia Bettencourt, "Impact of Ethical Leadership on Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Effect of Work–Family Conflict," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 41, no. 2 (March 30, 2020): 319–30, <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-07-2019-0338>.

responses.⁵¹ These findings indicate that organizational justice contributes to the establishment of an ethical climate that promotes responsible and ethical conduct among employees.

Ethical climate also strengthens the relationship between organizational justice and ethical performance through its influence on employees' trust, moral judgments, and workplace behavior. Ethical climate functions as a social norm that shapes employees' trust, sociomoral judgments, and intentions to maintain positive organizational relationships while reducing unethical tendencies.⁵² In addition, the characteristics of ethical climate can affect the effectiveness of ethical organizational practices and employees' behavioral outcomes.⁵³ These findings suggest that ethical climate serves as an important mediating mechanism through which organizational justice enhances ethical performance.

H6: Ethical Climate mediates the relationship between Ethical Competence and Ethical Performance

H7: Ethical Climate mediates the relationship between Organizational Justice and Ethical Performance

3. Method

Understanding the factors that promote ethical performance has become increasingly important in public sector organizations, particularly within legislative institutions where ethical conduct serves as a foundation for public trust and accountability. This study examines the roles of ethical competence and organizational justice in shaping ethical performance, while also considering the mediating role of ethical climate. The investigation focuses on members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) serving during the 2024–2029 legislative period in Banjarmasin City, Banjarbaru City, Banjar Regency, Barito Kuala Regency, and Tanah Laut Regency. A quantitative approach was adopted to capture legislators' perceptions of the proposed constructs and to test their relationships empirically.

The population of this study comprised 190 members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) serving during the 2024–2029 legislative period in Banjarmasin City, Banjarbaru City, Banjar Regency, Barito Kuala Regency, and Tanah Laut Regency. Given that the population was distributed across five legislative institutions with varying numbers of legislators, proportionate stratified sampling was employed. This technique was selected to ensure that each DPRD was represented in proportion to its population share, thereby enhancing the sample's representativeness. Respondents were selected proportionally from each legislative institution, ensuring the sample reflected the actual distribution of legislators across the five DPRDs. Subsequent empirical observations were derived from responses furnished by the sampled legislators using a structured measurement instrument designed to operationalize the constructs of the proposed framework.

⁵¹ Xiaoqin Liu et al., "The Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employee Creative Deviance: The Mediating Role of Job Autonomy," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 42, no. 2 (December 23, 2020): 219–32, <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-01-2020-0026>.

⁵² Auzoult and Mazilescu, "Ethical Climate as Social Norm: Impact on Judgements and Behavioral Intentions in the Workplace."

⁵³ Carlos Santiago-Torner et al., "Impact of Ethical Leadership on Autonomy and Self-Efficacy in Virtual Work Environments: The Disintegrating Effect of an Egoistic Climate," *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 1 (January 20, 2025): 95, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15010095>.

The sample size was determined using the Isaac and Michael sampling table at a 5% significance level. For a population of 190 legislators, the recommended sample size was 123 respondents. Accordingly, questionnaires were distributed proportionally across the five legislative institutions. During data collection, three selected respondents declined to participate, leaving 120 valid responses for subsequent analysis.⁵⁴

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from established scales in the literature. The instrument measured four constructs, namely ethical competence, organizational justice, ethical climate, and ethical performance. Ethical competence and organizational justice were specified as exogenous constructs, ethical climate as a mediating construct, and ethical performance as the endogenous construct. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaires were administered directly to legislators across the five DPRD institutions during the data collection period.

The proposed framework was estimated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) implemented in SmartPLS. The analytical procedure began with an examination of the measurement properties of the constructs, encompassing indicator performance, construct consistency, collinearity diagnostics, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Standardized loading estimates, variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) values were employed to establish the adequacy of the measurement framework. Following confirmation of the measurement properties, the structural relationships embedded in the conceptual model were investigated using path estimates, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect-size statistics (f^2), predictive relevance indicators (Q^2), and hypothesis testing. Consistent with established recommendations, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 correspond to weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively, whereas positive Q^2 estimates indicate satisfactory predictive relevance.⁵⁵

4. Result and Discussion

Results

Measurement Model

The psychometric properties of the measurement framework were scrutinized through an assessment of indicator performance, construct consistency, and the extent to which the latent dimensions exhibited convergent and discriminant validity. Standardized loading coefficients were employed to ascertain the representational adequacy of the observed measures with respect to their underlying constructs. Evidence concerning construct consistency was derived from Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability estimates. Furthermore, the amount of variance shared among indicators was evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE), while the distinctiveness of the latent dimensions was established through heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) statistics.

⁵⁴ Stephen Isaac and William Burton Michael, *Handbook in Research and Evaluation : A Collection of Principles, Methods, and Strategies Useful in the Planning, Design, and Evaluation of Studies in Education and the Behavioral Sciences* (EdITS, 1995).

⁵⁵ Joseph F. Hair et al., *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Using R: A Workbook* (Cham: Springer, 2021).

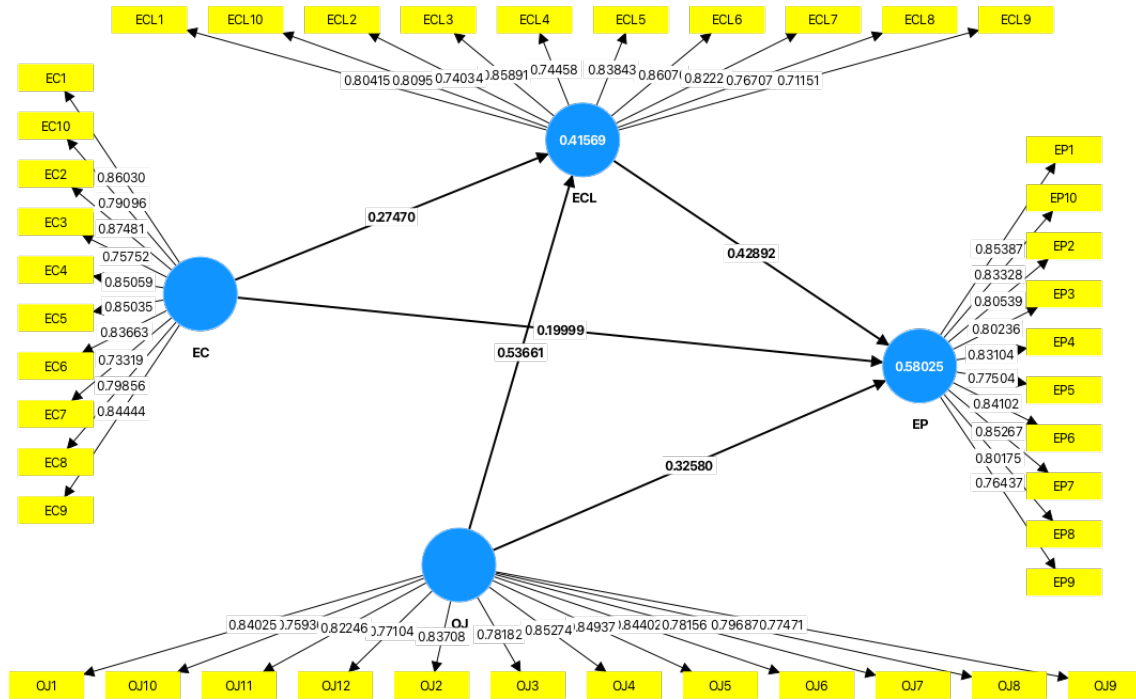


Figure 1. Measurement Model

Table 1. Indicator Reliability, Internal Consistency Reliability, and Convergent Validity Assessment

Variables	VIF	OL	α	CR	AVE
Ethical Performance (EP)			0.944	0.954	0.674
EP1. I perform my responsibilities honestly	3.046	0.854			
EP2. I provide accurate information in organizational matters	2.598	0.805			
EP3. I comply with organizational rules in performing my duties	2.668	0.802			
EP4. I avoid actions violating organizational policies	2.745	0.831			
EP5. I treat others fairly in organizational interactions	2.552	0.775			
EP6. I avoid giving unfair advantages to certain individuals	2.852	0.841			
EP7. I maintain respectful behavior in interactions	3.193	0.853			
EP8. I avoid actions harming the dignity of others	2.409	0.802			
EP9. I report unethical behavior through appropriate procedures	2.134	0.764			

EP10. I prioritize organizational interests in decision-making	2.945	0.833		
Ethical Competence (EC)			0.946	0.954 0.674
EC1. I recognize ethical issues in complex situations	3.212	0.860		
EC2. I identify situations involving ethical concerns	2.891	0.875		
EC3. I understand ethical principles relevant to my responsibilities	2.137	0.757		
EC4. I understand legal consequences in organizational decisions	3.118	0.851		
EC5. I consider ethical consequences before making decisions	2.323	0.850		
EC6. I evaluate whether my actions are morally appropriate	2.991	0.837		
EC7. I consider the interests of others when handling issues	2.058	0.733		
EC8. I make decisions based on ethical considerations	2.455	0.799		
EC9. I determine appropriate actions in ethical dilemmas	2.865	0.844		
EC10. I consistently apply ethical principles in my responsibilities	2.468	0.791		
Organizational Justice (OJ)			0.952	0.958 0.656
OJ1. Procedures are applied consistently in handling cases	3.062	0.840		
OJ2. Decisions are based on accurate information	3.066	0.837		
OJ3. Individuals are allowed to express their views during decision-making	2.391	0.782		
OJ4. Decisions reflect actual contributions	3.129	0.853		
OJ5. Outcomes are appropriate to case conditions	3.162	0.849		
OJ6. Decisions are proportional to evaluated actions	3.174	0.844		
OJ7. Individuals are treated with dignity throughout the process	2.305	0.782		

OJ8. Communication is delivered respectfully	2.424	0.797
OJ9. Decision-makers avoid inappropriate remarks	2.405	0.775
OJ10. Explanations regarding decisions are communicated clearly	2.179	0.759
OJ11. Relevant information is delivered in a timely manner	2.751	0.822
OJ12. Reasons behind decisions are explained transparently	2.330	0.771
Ethical Climate (ECL)		0.936 0.946 0.636
ECL1. Individuals are expected to follow organizational rules	2.479	0.804
ECL2. Compliance with organizational policies is emphasized	2.023	0.740
ECL3. Decisions are made based on formal procedures	3.241	0.859
ECL 4. Individuals are expected to follow professional ethical standards	2.001	0.745
ECL5. Legal considerations are prioritized in decision-making	2.911	0.838
ECL6. Organizational members follow professional codes of conduct	3.268	0.861
ECL7. People consider the impact of their actions on others	2.736	0.822
ECL8. Concern for fairness is emphasized	2.313	0.767
ECL9. Decisions reflect public responsibility	1.794	0.711
ECL10. Ethical considerations for stakeholders are important	2.836	0.809

The evaluation of the measurement framework substantiated its psychometric adequacy. Loading estimates for all observed indicators consistently exceeded 0.70, underscoring the strong correspondence between the manifest measures and their underlying latent dimensions.⁵⁶ The full collinearity assessment yielded VIF values ranging from 1.794 to 3.268, all of which remained below the critical threshold of 3.3, thereby alleviating concerns about multicollinearity.⁵⁷ Moreover, average variance extracted values, ranging from 0.636 to 0.674, indicated that the latent constructs

⁵⁶ Hair et al.

⁵⁷ Ned Kock, "Common Method Bias in PLS-SEM," *International Journal of E-Collaboration* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 2015): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijec.2015100101>.

accounted for a substantial share of the variance in their associated indicators, thereby corroborating convergent validity.⁵⁸

Table 2. HTMT

Construct	HTMT
ECL <-> EC	0.383
EP <-> EC	0.431
EP <-> ECL	0.734
OJ <-> EC	0.191
OJ <-> ECL	0.616
OJ <-> EP	0.642

The HTMT values ranged from 0.191 to 0.734, all of which were below the recommended threshold of 0.90.⁵⁹ These findings confirm adequate discriminant validity, indicating that the study constructs are conceptually distinct.

Structural Model

The structural model was evaluated by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and path coefficients to assess the explanatory power and predictive capability of the proposed model.⁶⁰

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Variables	R^2	Q^2
Ethical Climate (ECL)	0.406	0.393
Ethical Performance (EP)	0.569	0.450

The model explains a large portion of variance in both endogenous constructs. Specifically, Ethical Competence and Organizational Justice explain 40.6% of the variance in Ethical Climate, and Ethical Competence, Organizational Justice, and Ethical Climate explain 56.9% of the variance in Ethical Performance. Additionally, the positive Q^2 values obtained for both constructs indicate that the model is predictive, supporting its capacity to predict ethical outcomes in the organizational context.⁶¹

Table 4. Effect Size Assessment

Relationships	f^2
EC -> ECL	0.125
EC -> EP	0.082

⁵⁸ Hair et al., *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Using R: A Workbook*.

⁵⁹ Hair et al.

⁶⁰ Hair et al.

⁶¹ Hair et al.

ECL -> EP	0.256
OJ -> ECL	0.477
OJ -> EP	0.1658

Effect size (f^2) estimates were evaluated to assess the explanatory power of individual antecedent constructs in accounting for the variance captured by the endogenous variables. The findings revealed that Organizational Justice exerted a substantial influence on Ethical Climate ($f^2 = 0.477$), whereas Ethical Climate exerted a moderate effect on Ethical Performance ($f^2 = 0.256$). Likewise, Organizational Justice exhibited a moderate effect on Ethical Performance ($f^2 = 0.166$). By contrast, the contributions of Ethical Competence to both Ethical Climate ($f^2 = 0.125$) and Ethical Performance ($f^2 = 0.082$) were comparatively modest. Collectively, these results underscore the dominant role of Organizational Justice within the proposed framework, particularly in accounting for variations in Ethical Climate.⁶²

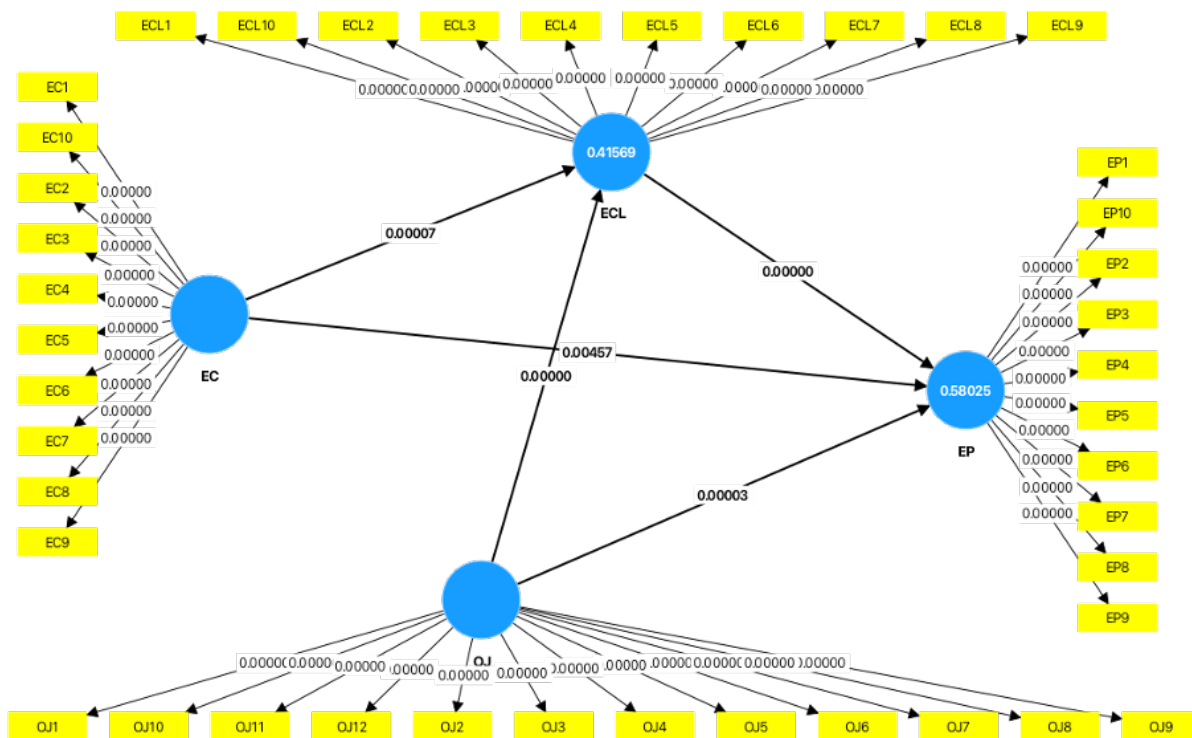


Figure 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Ethical competence -> Ethical Performance	0.199	2.837	0.005	Supported
Organizational justice -> Ethical Performance	0.326	4.204	<0.001	Supported
Ethical competence -> Ethical Climate	0.275	3.979	<0.001	Supported

⁶² Hair et al.

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Organizational justice -> Ethical Climate	0.537	8.944	<0.001	Supported
Ethical climate -> Ethical Performance	0.429	8.944	<0.001	Supported
Ethical competence -> Ethical Climate -> Ethical Performance	0.118	3.07977	0.002	Supported
Organizational justice -> Ethical Climate -> Ethical Performance	0.230	4.915	<0.001	Supported

The inferential results obtained from the structural assessment corroborated the viability of the proposed framework, with all posited interrelationships exhibiting statistically meaningful effects. Ethical competence positively influences Ethical Performance ($\beta = 0.199$, $t = 2.837$, $p = 0.005$), suggesting that individuals with higher ethical competence tend to demonstrate stronger ethical performance. Organizational justice also positively affects Ethical Performance ($\beta = 0.326$, $t = 4.204$, $p < 0.001$), with a stronger effect than Ethical Competence.

Regarding the antecedents of Ethical Climate, both Ethical Competence ($\beta = 0.275$, $t = 3.979$, $p < 0.001$) and Organizational Justice ($\beta = 0.537$, $t = 8.944$, $p < 0.001$) exhibit significant positive effects. Among these predictors, Organizational Justice demonstrates the strongest influence on Ethical Climate, indicating that perceptions of fairness play a critical role in fostering an ethical organizational environment. Ethical climate, in turn, positively affects Ethical Performance ($\beta = 0.429$, $t = 8.944$, $p < 0.001$), representing the strongest direct effect on ethical performance within the model. This finding underscores the importance of a supportive ethical environment in promoting ethical behavior among organizational members.

The mediation analysis further reveals significant indirect effects of Ethical Competence on Ethical Performance through Ethical Climate ($\beta = 0.118$, $t = 3.080$, $p = 0.002$) and Organizational Justice on Ethical Performance through Ethical Climate ($\beta = 0.230$, $t = 4.915$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that Ethical Climate serves as an important mechanism through which both Ethical Competence and Organizational Justice enhance Ethical Performance.

Discussion

Ethical competence emerged as a significant predictor of ethical performance. This result suggests that individuals with strong ethical competence are better able to recognize ethical issues, apply moral judgment, and fulfill their responsibilities in accordance with institutional values, codes of conduct, and professional standards. Ethical competence involves ethical awareness, reflective decision-making, honesty, responsibility, and professional conduct in responding to ethical issues within professional practice,⁶³ thereby strengthening ethical performance in institutional oversight and governance processes. This result is consistent with previous findings emphasizing the role of ethical competence in shaping ethical decision-making, integrity, and professional conduct in organizational settings.⁶⁴ Furthermore, ethical competence enables individuals to align their

⁶³ Hemberg and Hemberg, "Ethical Competence in a Profession: Healthcare Professionals' Views."

⁶⁴ Dogbe et al., "Inducing Employee Performance among State-Owned Enterprises, through Employee Ethical Behaviour and Ethical Leadership"; Elrayah, "Can Business Ethics-Based Education Improve HR Graduates' Employability, Knowledge, Skills, and Competence?"

behavior with institutional ethical expectations, uphold accountability and impartiality, and reduce the likelihood of unethical conduct, thereby reinforcing ethical performance through responsible and morally guided actions, as also highlighted in recent evidence.⁶⁵

Empirical evidence indicates that organizational justice positively and significantly influences ethical performance. This finding implies that perceptions of procedural fairness, equitable decision-making practices, and respectful interpersonal interactions foster greater adherence to ethical principles in the execution of organizational responsibilities. Fair institutional practices strengthen trust, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards, thereby encouraging more responsible, impartial, and integrity-driven conduct in professional oversight and governance activities.⁶⁶ The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies showing that organizational justice plays an important role in promoting ethical behavior and ethical outcomes within institutional and organizational settings.⁶⁷ Prior research also indicates that distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice positively influence ethical behavior, as perceptions of fairness encourage positive behavioral responses and reduce the likelihood of unethical conduct.⁶⁸ Furthermore, organizational justice has been recognized as an important institutional mechanism that strengthens ethical practices, organizational integrity, and sustainable ethical behavior within professional environments.⁶⁹

The results of this study indicate that ethical competence has a positive and significant effect on ethical climate, suggesting that individuals with strong ethical capabilities are more likely to contribute to the development of a positive ethical environment within institutional settings. Individuals who possess high ethical competence tend to demonstrate greater awareness of ethical issues, apply moral reasoning in decision-making, and consistently behave in accordance with institutional ethical standards and professional codes of conduct.⁷⁰ Such behaviors gradually shape shared ethical values, integrity, and accountability among institutional members, thereby strengthening the ethical climate within professional governance and oversight environments. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research showing that ethical competence plays an important role in fostering ethical behavior and reinforcing ethical standards within organizations and professional institutions.⁷¹ Furthermore, prior studies have emphasized that integrating ethical competence into institutional competency frameworks can help develop coherent ethical practices and foster ethical environments that support responsible, impartial, and ethically guided professional behavior.⁷²

⁶⁵ Knapp, Namada, and Dougan, "Dynamic Ethical Capabilities in Place and in Time."

⁶⁶ Cropanzano, Bowen, and Gilliland, "The Management of Organizational Justice."

⁶⁷ Alhaidani et al., "Navigating Organizational Justice and Ethical Leadership: Empirical Evidence from Saudi Arabia"; Azimi et al., "Examining the Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Administrative Staff Performance: A Case Study of Kabul University."

⁶⁸ Alhaidani et al., "Navigating Organizational Justice and Ethical Leadership: Empirical Evidence from Saudi Arabia."

⁶⁹ Tufan et al., "The Mediating Effect of Organizational Justice Perception on the Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Workplace Deviant Behaviors." organizational justice perception (OJP

⁷⁰ Hemberg and Hemberg, "Ethical Competence in a Profession: Healthcare Professionals' Views."

⁷¹ Pohling et al., "What Is Ethical Competence? The Role of Empathy, Personal Values, and the Five-Factor Model of Personality in Ethical Decision-Making"; Manuel Teresi et al., "Ethical Climate(s), Organizational Identification, and Employees' Behavior," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (June 19, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01356>; Yu et al., "Head Nurse Ethical Competence and Transformational Leadership: A Cross-Sectional Study."

⁷² Dutta, Mishra, and Budhwar, "Ethics in Competency Models: A Framework towards Developing Ethical Behaviour in Organisations."

The results of this study indicate that organizational justice has a positive and significant effect on ethical climate, suggesting that individuals who perceive fairness in institutional procedures, decision-making processes, and interpersonal treatment are more likely to develop positive perceptions regarding ethical values and norms within the institution. Fair institutional practices encourage trust, mutual respect, accountability, and transparency among institutional members, thereby strengthening the development of an ethical professional environment and positive organizational behavior.⁷³ When individuals perceive fairness in institutional interactions, policies, and governance processes, they tend to internalize institutional ethical values and contribute to a stronger ethical climate. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies showing that organizational justice plays an important role in fostering ethical organizational environments and strengthening ethical behavior within professional institutions.⁷⁴ Prior studies also emphasize that fair institutional treatment can improve perceptions of ethical standards, institutional trust, and ethical organizational culture, thereby contributing to a more positive ethical climate within organizational settings.⁷⁵

The results of this study indicate that ethical climate has a positive and significant effect on ethical performance, suggesting that individuals who perceive a strong ethical environment are more likely to demonstrate ethical behavior in carrying out their professional responsibilities and institutional duties. A positive ethical climate provides clear guidance regarding acceptable ethical standards, reinforces accountability, integrity, and professionalism, and encourages individuals to align their behavior with organizational ethical values and expected ethical conduct through shared ethical expectations and workplace norms.⁷⁶ In professional oversight and governance environments characterized by strong ethical norms, individuals tend to develop greater moral awareness, responsibility, and commitment to ethical behavior, thereby strengthening ethical performance in the execution of institutional functions and responsibilities. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that ethical climate plays an important role in shaping ethical decision-making, professional conduct, and ethical outcomes within organizational and institutional environments.⁷⁷ Prior research also highlights that a supportive ethical climate can reduce unethical behavior, strengthen institutional integrity, and encourage responsible and ethically guided conduct by fostering shared ethical values and ethical decision-making among institutional members.⁷⁸

The results of this study demonstrate that ethical climate plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between ethical competence and ethical performance. This finding indicates that individuals with strong ethical competence are more likely to contribute to the development of a

⁷³ Cropanzano, Bowen, and Gilliland, "The Management of Organizational Justice."

⁷⁴ Al Halbusi and Alshallaqi, "Fostering Justice and Ethical Climate in the Workplace: Leader-Follower Value Congruence Perspectives"; Poeira and Nunes, "Retaining Those Who Care: Ethical Climate, Leadership, and Workforce Sustainability in Healthcare."

⁷⁵ Putri, Salendu, and Pahlawan, "Understanding Turnover Intention in Gen Z: Servant Leadership and Ethical Climate in Organization."

⁷⁶ K. Praveen Parboteeah, Matthias Weiss, and Martin Hoegl, "Ethical Climates Across National Contexts: A Meta-Analytical Investigation," *Journal of Business Ethics* 189, no. 3 (January 15, 2024): 573–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05387-z>; Jay Bates, Jeremy M. Beus, and Shaun Parkinson, "Contextualizing Ethical Climate: Examining Contextual Moderators of the Connection Between Ethical Climate Perceptions and Ethical Behavior," *Journal of Business Ethics* 196, no. 1 (January 16, 2025): 129–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-024-05698-9>.

⁷⁷ Bian et al., "Navigating Ethical Decision-Making in Digital Transformation: Ethical Climate, Digital Competence, and Person-Organization Fit in China's Banking Sector"; Elkashif et al., "Moral Courage Mediates the Relationship Between Ethical Climate and Sustainable Environmental Health Literacy Among Nurses."

⁷⁸ Khan et al., "Ethical Climate And Employees' Competencies As Mediators In Connecting Hrm Practices And Organizational Performance."

positive ethical environment, which, in turn, strengthens ethical behavior in fulfilling professional responsibilities and institutional duties. Ethical competence enables individuals to recognize ethical issues, apply moral reasoning, and consistently uphold integrity and professional standards in decision-making processes.⁷⁹ When these ethical capabilities are collectively reflected in institutional practices and interactions, they contribute to a stronger ethical climate characterized by shared ethical values, accountability, and professionalism.⁸⁰ In turn, a positive ethical climate reinforces ethical behavior by providing clear ethical guidance and strengthening commitment to institutional ethical standards,⁸¹ thereby enhancing ethical performance within professional governance environments.

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that ethical climate significantly mediates the relationship between organizational justice and ethical performance. This result suggests that fair institutional procedures, transparent decision-making processes, and respectful interpersonal treatment contribute to the establishment of a positive ethical climate,⁸² which subsequently encourages ethical conduct and responsible professional behavior.⁸³ Perceptions of fairness strengthen trust, mutual respect, and adherence to institutional ethical values among members, fostering an environment that supports integrity and accountability in fulfilling institutional responsibilities.⁸⁴ In such ethical environments, individuals are more likely to internalize organizational ethical norms and translate them into ethical actions and professional conduct through shared ethical guidance, collective moral expectations, and responsible workplace behavior.⁸⁵ Therefore, ethical climate serves as an important organizational mechanism through which ethical competence and organizational justice are transformed into stronger ethical performance within institutional and professional contexts.

Conclusion

Increasingly apparent is the importance of organizational justice and ethical climate in promoting ethical performance in institutional and professional contexts. The results suggest that the higher the level of ethical competence, the better the individual can make moral judgements, retain integrity, and perform their duties in accordance with professional norms and institutional ethical standards. Perceptions of organizational justice foster trust, accountability, and fairness, thereby promoting ethical behavior among organizational members. Results show that ethical climate is a relevant organizational condition to transform ethical competence and organizational justice into higher ethical performance. The ethical climate contributes to the development of ethical practices in organizations by fostering shared ethical values, professional responsibility, and

⁷⁹ Pohling et al., "What Is Ethical Competence? The Role of Empathy, Personal Values, and the Five-Factor Model of Personality in Ethical Decision-Making."

⁸⁰ Teresi et al., "Ethical Climate(s), Organizational Identification, and Employees' Behavior."

⁸¹ Anke Arnaud and Marshall Schminke, "The Ethical Climate and Context of Organizations: A Comprehensive Model," *Organization Science* 23, no. 6 (December 2012): 1767–80, <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1110.0698>.

⁸² Colquitt, "On the Dimensionality of Organizational Justice: A Construct Validation of a Measure.," Teresi et al., "Ethical Climate(s), Organizational Identification, and Employees' Behavior."

⁸³ Al Halbusi and Alshallaqi, "Fostering Justice and Ethical Climate in the Workplace: Leader-Follower Value Congruence Perspectives."

⁸⁴ Cropanzano, Bowen, and Gilliland, "The Management of Organizational Justice."

⁸⁵ Han Cai, Lingfeng Zhu, and Xiu Jin, "Construed Organizational Ethical Climate and Whistleblowing Behavior: The Moderated Mediation Effect of Person-Organization Value Congruence and Ethical Leader Behavior," *Behavioral Sciences* 14, no. 4 (April 1, 2024): 293, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14040293>; Bates, Beus, and Parkinson, "Contextualizing Ethical Climate: Examining Contextual Moderators of the Connection Between Ethical Climate Perceptions and Ethical Behavior."

integrity-oriented conduct. Furthermore, the mediating analysis shows a significant link between ethical competence and organizational justice and ethical performance, indicating that ethical competence and fair institutional practices are more likely to lead to desirable ethical outcomes when the ethical environment is favorable.

The empirical relations studied are not the only relevant aspects of these findings, and they provide a wider understanding of how individual ethical capabilities interact with institutional fairness and organizational ethical conditions to shape ethical behavior. From a practical point of view, the results have implications for organizations seeking to enhance ethical behavior by developing programs to build ethical competencies, reinforcing transparent and fair governance processes, and fostering cultures that support ethical decision-making. Such efforts may help protect institutional integrity, improve public confidence, and uphold ethical standards in organizational activities.

Several limitations, however, are to be noted. First, the investigation was conducted within a specific institutional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other organizational contexts. Additionally, it is impossible to track changes in ethical behavior over time due to the data's cross-sectional nature. Moreover, self-reported responses may introduce response bias and subjective judgement. Future research is encouraged to explore a broader range of organizational settings and to adopt longitudinal approaches to develop a more comprehensive understanding of ethical performance. The explanatory framework may also include additional concepts such as psychological safety, organizational commitment, ethical leadership, and public service motivation. Moreover, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods can lead to a greater understanding of ethical behavior and the dynamics of ethical practices in organizations.

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