

Ethical Leadership, Ethical Organizational Culture, and Their Impact on Organizational Effectiveness in Modern Online Platform Businesses

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 15 Nov 2024	The research aimed to 1) examine ethical leadership, ethical organizational culture, and organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses; 2) analyze the impact of ethical leadership and ethical organizational culture on organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses. A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. The target population comprised 758 private organizations using online platforms, with a sample of 294 organizations. Statistical analyses included percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis. The research findings revealed that 1) the ethical leadership, ethical organizational culture, and organizational effectiveness were at a high level across all dimensions; 2) the components of ethical leadership and ethical organizational culture significantly affect organizational effectiveness, explaining 71.30% of the variance (Adjusted R² = 0.713) at a statistically significant level (p < 0.05). Based on the research findings, it is recommended that leadership at all levels should be encouraged to develop ethical competencies and foster trust through ongoing training and development programs. These efforts will contribute to creating a collaborative and positive work environment, which is essential for the overall growth and long-term success of the organization.
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INTRODUCTION

Technology has increasingly become a tool that facilitates people's daily lives and responds to the changing lifestyles of the current modern society. The number of online platform providers has grown, covering a wide range of business types and models. As a result, online platforms have become more significant to both the economic and social systems. In today's society, many people conduct business through online platforms, which serve as intermediaries allowing two or more parties—such as online entrepreneurs to perform electronic transactions and connect via computer networks. Examples of platforms are renting accommodations, where property owners register their properties online. The platforms allow potential renters to browse, or search engines like Google. Moving into the digital age, many countries have successfully leveraged innovation, products, and services that align with online usage under the digital world concept, characterized by new ways of connectivity. Online platforms have profoundly transformed how we work and live. It is crucial to consider the volatility and efficiency of these platforms in all aspects of our lives. One of the most significant advantages of online platforms is the convenience. The owner offers—from online shopping to doing business. They allow people to get things done without spending time traveling or searching for information, making them powerful tools for managing time and resources efficiently.

However, Thailand is still inadequately prepared to transition into the future economy and keep pace with global changes and future competition. The country requires foundational knowledge, awareness of change, access to information, talent development, research, infrastructure, and enabling factors which remain underdeveloped. Changing population structures also indicate future transformations, making it essential to find suitable human resource development strategies for sustainability. Linking to business transformations in the 21st century, characterized by rapid evolution in information technology—it becomes clear that IT is now widely used to improve service efficiency. Learning management using IT effectively in today's world is now faster, more systematic, convenient and diverse (Channuwong et al., 2023; Thienthong, 2018). Moreover, the use of online platforms creates new opportunities for business and income generation, such as product sales, services, and content creation. These platforms open doors for creative and skilled individuals to generate new income and become future investors.

Online platforms also play an essential role in communication and relationship building. Social media and other platforms serve as vital channels for interpersonal communication and connectivity (Kenikasahmanworakhun et al., 2025; Wongmajarapinya et al., 2024). Moreover, they provide spaces for exchanging opinions and new experiences, which contribute to personal development and lifelong learning. Online platform businesses often involve software development, computer systems, and full-scale digital marketing services that emphasize strategic planning before execution—such as increasing target audience reach and website traffic via SEO, boosting website sales through SEM, and building brand awareness through targeted social media marketing (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), including popular new media like Line@. Leadership is crucial for ethical organizational culture. The fast-paced digital age demands a shift in leadership paradigms. Unlike the past, where leaders mainly planned and managed to achieve goals, today's environment—especially with the significant role of digital technology. This requires leaders to adapt and evolve. Ethical leadership under these changing conditions is essential. Leaders must possess the knowledge and capability to embrace the digital transformation of society. This is what defines leadership in the digital era.

Therefore, online platform businesses must align with digital-age development. They need to manage in all dimensions by building database systems and utilizing computers and network. The technologies appropriate for the era—efficient, cost-effective, and aligned with future business

directions. Forward-thinking vision, modern policies, and adaptability to global trends are essential. Businesses must be able to plan operations, forecast, and make decisions using digital technology to its fullest potential. Ethical leadership is a key element and a factor in ethical organizational culture. It builds trust, faith, acceptance, and cooperation from both internal and external personnel. Ethical leadership can guide and influence positive future change. It also involves developing individuals, staff, and operational directions through support, encouragement, and assistance to achieve quality outcomes.

Research Objectives

- 1.To study ethical leadership, organizational culture, and organizational effectiveness in modern online platform businesses
- 2.To examine how ethical leadership and organizational culture affect the organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses

Research Hypotheses

1. Ethical leadership and ethical organizational culture are positively related to organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses
- 2.Ethical leadership and ethical organizational culture have an influence on the organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses

Conceptual Framework

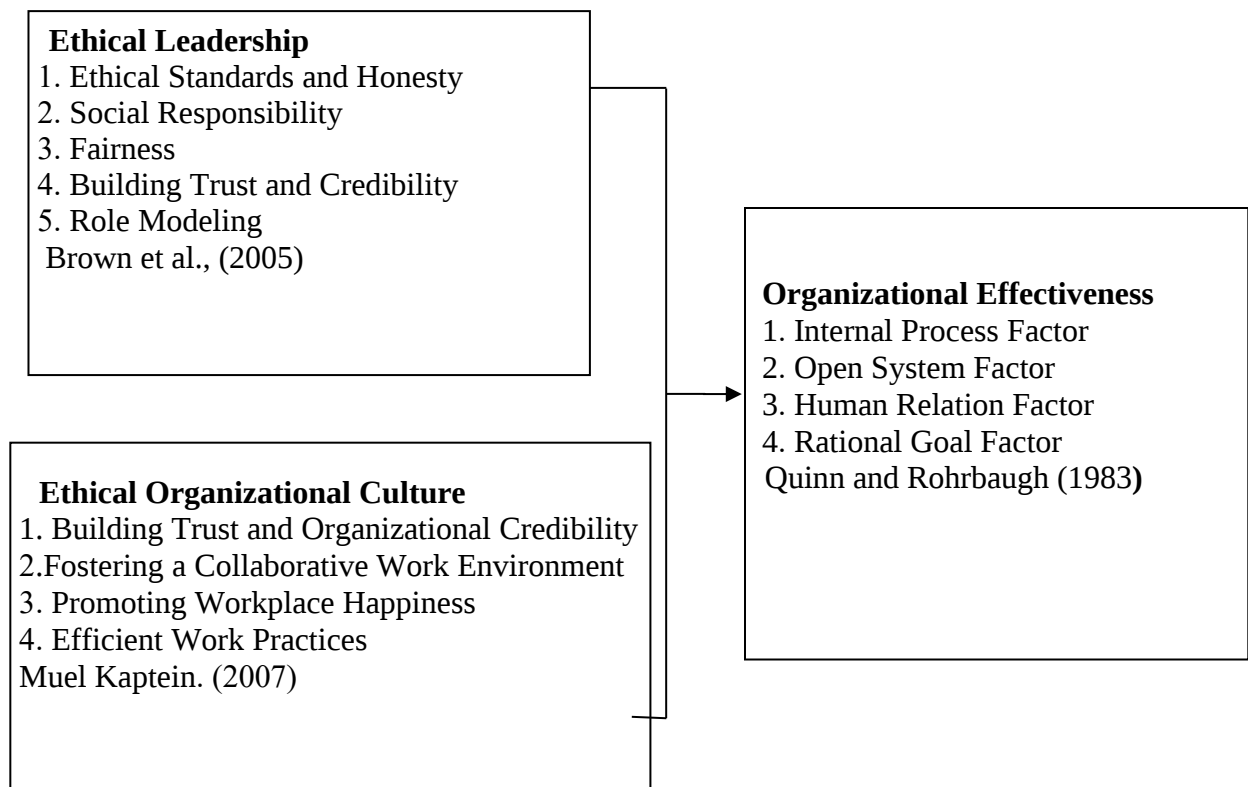


Figure1 Conceptual framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of ethical leadership, Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005) introduced the concept of ethical leadership, which has garnered significant attention in management and business research. This concept focuses on the traits and behaviors of leaders who possess and demonstrate high ethical standards, especially in organizations facing complex legal or ethical challenges. Key principles of ethical leadership include:

1. **Ethics and Integrity:** Ethical leadership emphasizes conducting business with honesty and in alignment with organizational codes of ethics. This includes complying with laws, protecting employee rights, and adhering to professional standards. Leaders who model ethical behavior, such as safeguarding employee rights, build employee trust and confidence, reinforcing the organization's commitment to values and integrity. This, in turn, helps foster an ethical organizational culture. Ethical leaders also contribute to a positive public image, making ethics and integrity essential for legal compliance and cultivating a trustworthy and sustainable business culture in the long term.

2. **Social Responsibility:** Ethical leaders often demonstrate a strong sense of social responsibility, taking action to address social issues or support beneficial initiatives within communities. By actively engaging in socially responsible projects, such as community outreach or educational programs, these leaders serve as role models who inspire others within the organization. Their awareness of the broader impact of their decisions reinforces ethical conduct at both organizational and societal levels.

3. **Fairness:** Fairness in decision-making is a key trait of ethical leadership. Ethical leaders aim to make unbiased, just decisions based on complete and accurate information. They listen to diverse viewpoints and rely on values and ethical principles to guide their actions. This fosters a fair, peaceful, and cooperative working environment, strengthening trust in leadership and enhancing the overall moral standards of the organization.

4. **Trust Building and Credibility:** Channuwong (2018), Ruksat et al. (2025) and Brown et al. (2005) stated that ethical leadership emphasizes and prioritizes cultivating trust and credibility within the organization. Leaders with strong ethical foundations are able to gain the trust of employees and team members, leading to better collaboration and greater job satisfaction. By demonstrating consistent, trustworthy behavior, ethical leaders create a psychologically healthy workplace and a culture of mutual respect and confidence. This enhances not only team performance but also employee happiness and organizational loyalty.

5. **Role Model:** Ethical leaders serve as positive role models and inspiration within the organization. They emphasize the importance of acting with morality and integrity, setting a clear example through their adherence to ethical principles and transparency in decision-making. Their conduct fosters respect, motivates ethical behavior, and contributes to an environment where ethical standards are deeply embedded in organizational practices.

Furthermore, ethical organizational culture proposed by Phoengurn (2025) and Muel Kaptein (2007) focused on building an organizational culture prioritizing on morality and ethics within the organization to support correct and virtuous behavior in daily operations. This theory emphasizes the creation of sustainable and strong responsibility toward morality and ethics. It does not merely rely on specific practices but pays close attention to values and ethical principles that are recognized as right and worthy of being upheld in all aspects of the organization. Kaptein's concept highlights the importance of virtue and ethics within organizations, which are essential for building trust and credibility. The development of an ethical organizational culture begins with upholding values and

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ethical principles across all parts of the organization, and by placing importance on fairness and ethical values in decision-making and actions. Channuwong et al. (2018) stated that the development of policies and processes of the organizations should support and correct and ethical behavior, including the creation of systems that promote and support adherence to organizational values and ethical principles. The aim is to foster confidence and understanding of proper values and ethical standards throughout the organization. According to Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), organizations that run business with efficiency and effectiveness must consist of four key components: 1) Rational-goal Aspect focuses on the quality of outcomes to achieve the best possible results. Emphasizes working toward clearly defined goals and performing tasks as effectively as possible. 2) Internal process aspect involves setting clear and structured work procedures, following systematic and regulated steps without violating the organization's established rules and regulations. 3) Open system aspect encourages innovative work approaches, creative problem-solving, and decentralization of decision-making. 4) Human relation aspect allows for open expression of opinions and discussions, promotes teamwork and positive relationships within the organization, and upholds moral and ethical standards in the workplace.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative research, which includes the following research processes:

Population and Sample

The populations and samples used in this research consist of 758 private organizations in Thailand that utilize modern online platforms. A sample group of 262 organizations was selected (based on Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table). The respondents to the questionnaire are senior executives, including Chief Executive Officers, Deputy Chief Executive Officers, Assistant Chief Executive Officers, or middle-level executives, such as Deputy Heads of Departments, Directors, Managers, or individuals assigned by the private organizations that use online platforms.

Variables Used in the Study

The variables shown in the study include independent variables. Ethical leadership was proposed by Brown et al. (2005), which includes five aspects namely: ethics and integrity, social responsibility, fairness, building trust and Credibility and being a Role Model. 2) Ethical organizational culture proposed by Muel Kaptein (2007) includes four aspects: building trust and credibility within the organization, creating a collaborative work atmosphere, promoting happiness at work and enhancing work efficiency. Dependent variable is organizational effectiveness proposed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), which includes four aspects namely: rational-goal, internal process, open system and human relations.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument employed for data collection is a structured questionnaire, which serves as a tool for collecting quantitative data. To develop the questionnaire, the researchers studied various concepts and theories from documents and related research to construct a closed-ended questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire is divided into three parts, as follows:

Part 1: A checklist format, consisting of questions related to ethical leadership factors. It includes five dimensions: ethics and integrity, social responsibility, fairness, building trust and credibility, and being a role model with a total of 20 items.

Part 2: A rating scale format, consisting of questions related to ethical organizational culture. It includes four dimensions: building trust and credibility within the organization, creating a collaborative work environment, promoting happiness at work, and enhancing work efficiency with a total of 20 items.

Part 3: A rating scale format, consisting of questions related to organizational effectiveness based on Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), which includes four dimensions: rational-goal, internal process, open system, and human relation with a total of 12 items.

Development and Validation of the Research Instrument

The researcher verified the content validity and reliability of the questionnaire. For content validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by 10 experts, who assessed the alignment between the questions and the research objectives. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated, yielding an S-CVI score of 0.89. For reliability, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 employees who were not part of the actual study sample. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.91.

Data Collection

1.The researcher distributed the structured questionnaire to the sample group between October 2023 and August 2024, using convenience sampling. A total of 294 samples completed questionnaires and returned to the researchers.

2.The structured questionnaire was checked for accuracy and completeness before being used for data analysis.

Statistical Methods for Data Analysis

The researcher employed descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The details are as follows:1. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyze human resource management and organizational justice within Thai state enterprises. 2.Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis was used to examine which human resource management variables influence organizational justice in Thai state enterprises.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis of ethical leadership factors, consisting of five items, revealed the following: Respondents' opinions on the overall level of ethical leadership were found to be high ($M = 4.86$, $S.D. = 0.15$). In particular, the highest-rated factor was social responsibility ($M = 4.89$, $S.D. = 0.16$), ethics and honesty ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 0.16$), building trust and credibility ($M = 4.87$, $S.D. = 0.167$), role modeling ($M = 4.86$, $S.D. = 0.18$), and fairness ($M = 4.85$, $S.D. = 0.17$) (Table 1).

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Ethical Leadership Factors in Overall and Each Aspect

Ethical Leadership	M	SD	Level	Rank
1.Ethics and Honesty	4.88	0.16	Highest	2
2.Social Responsibility	4.89	0.16	Highest	1
3.Fairness	4.85	0.17	Highest	5
4.Building Trust and Credibility	4.87	0.16	Highest	3
5.Role Modeling	4.86	0.18	Highest	4
Total	4.86	0.155	Highest	

The Results of Analysis on Ethical Organizational Culture Factors

The overall level of respondents' opinions about ethical organizational culture factors were revealed to be at the highest level ($M = 4.85$, $S.D. = 0.15$). In particular, the highest-rated factor was creating happiness at work ($M = 4.89$, $S.D. = 0.17$), followed by creating a collaborative working atmosphere ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 0.17$), building trust and organizational credibility ($M = 4.87$, $S.D. = 0.16$), and creating effective work performance ($M = 4.86$, $S.D. = 0.16$) (Table 2).

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Ethical Organizational Leadership in Overall and Each Aspect

Ethical Organizational Leadership	M	SD	Level	Rank
1. Building trust and organizational credibility	4.87	0.16	Highest	3
2. Creating a collaborative working atmosphere	4.88	0.17	Highest	2
3. Creating happiness at work	4.89	0.17	Highest	1
4. Creating effective work performance	4.86	0.16	Highest	4
Total	4.85	0.15	Highest	

The Results of Analysis on Organizational Effectiveness of Modern Online Platform Businesses

The overall respondents' opinions on organizational effectiveness (OE) factors were found to be high ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.17$). In particular, the highest-rated factor was the Rational Goal aspect ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 0.16$), followed by the Human Relations aspect ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.19$), and the Open Systems aspect ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.20$). The lowest-rated factor was the Internal Process aspect ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.19$) (Table 3).

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Organizational Effectiveness Factors in Overall and Each Aspect.

Organizational Effectiveness	M	SD	Level	Rank
1. Rational Goal Perspective	4.91	0.16	High	1
2. Internal Process Perspective	4.87	0.19	High	4
3. Open Systems Perspective	4.88	0.20	High	3
4. Human Relations Perspective	4.88	0.19	High	2
Total	4.88	0.17	High	

The Results of Analysis on Ethical Leadership and Organizational Culture Influencing Organizational Effectiveness

The results of data analysis using Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis revealed the factors influencing Organizational Effectiveness (OE) with details as follows:

The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis show an R^2 value of 0.686, indicating that the independent variables can explain 68.6% of the variance in the dependent variable (organizational effectiveness). The Adjusted R^2 is 0.682, reflecting the model's suitability when accounting for the complexity of the variables involved. The independent variables that significantly influence organizational effectiveness are as follows: Efficient Work Practices ($\beta = 0.432$, $p < 0.01$). This means that a one-unit increase in creating efficient work practices results in a 0.432-unit increase in organizational effectiveness. Building Trust and Organizational Credibility ($\beta = 0.266$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that improvements in trust and credibility within the organization contribute positively to organizational effectiveness, at a similar level to Ethical Standards and Honesty ($\beta = 0.200$, $p < 0.01$). Although this factor has a relatively smaller impact compared to the others, it remains a statistically significant and important factor.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis can be concluded that the three independent variables consisting of creating efficient work practices, building trust and credibility, and ethical standards and honesty had a positive relationship and an impact on organizational effectiveness of modern online platform businesses. Among them, creating efficient work practices is the most influential predictor with statistical significance (Table 4).

Table 4: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Organizational Effectiveness of Modern Online Platform Businesses

Variables	Organizational Effectiveness (OE)				p
	b	SE	β	T	
Constant	.35	.18		1.969*	.050
Creating Efficient Work Practices	.44	.06	.43	7.309**	.000
Building Trust and Organizational Credibility	.27	.06	.26	4.446**	.000
Ethical Standards and Honesty	.20	.05	.20	3.968**	.000
$R^2 =$	.68			F =	210.937**
Adjust $R^2 =$	.68			P =	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: OE * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

With regard to ethical leadership, the results of statistical analysis revealed that, in overall, ethical leadership was perceived at a high level ($M = 4.885$, $S.D. = 0.155$). This aligns with the concept proposed by Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005), who described ethical leaders as those who demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct and promote such behavior systematically within the

organization. Ethical leadership builds trust among subordinates and contributes to positive workplace behaviors. Among the components of ethical leadership, the highest mean scores were found in Social Responsibility and Ethics and Honesty, both at $M = 4.887$, suggesting that executives are highly aware of their role in contributing to society and committed to moral principles. These elements play a crucial role in fostering employee confidence (Brown et al., 2005). Conversely, the lowest mean score was in fairness ($M = 4.882$, $S.D. = 0.172$). Although still rated high, the relatively lower average may indicate uncertainty among staff about the fairness of their leaders' actions. This reflects Yukl's (2013) view that fairness is fundamental to effective leadership, as perceived bias or discrimination can undermine motivation and engagement.

With regard to ethical organization culture: Ethical organizational culture was also perceived at a high level overall ($M = 4.887$, $S.D. = 0.15$), indicating strong awareness and application of ethical principles in organizational management. The highest-rated dimensions were creating workplace happiness ($M = 4.89$, $S.D. = 0.17$) and Promoting Collaborative Work Environment ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 0.17$), emphasizing the organization's focus on cultivating a positive, cooperative atmosphere—an essential foundation for sustainable success (Cameron, 2011). This supports George's (2003) notion that ethical leadership fosters a transparent and compassionate culture rooted in moral values, which strengthens trust between leaders and employees. Specifically, building trust and organizational credibility also received a high score ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 0.169$). The lowest-rated dimension was creating efficient work practices ($M = 4.88$). While still high, the similar standard deviation suggests a potential challenge for leaders in balancing ethical principles with practical performance, which is an important consideration for long-term strategic development.

With regard to organizational effectiveness, the overall perception of organizational effectiveness was also rated high ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 0.17$). The highest-rated dimension was the Rational Goal Perspective ($M = 4.91$, $S.D. = 0.16$), indicating that the organization operates with clear goals and systematic execution. This supports the Competing Values Framework by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), which identifies strategic goal-setting and performance as key indicators of effective organizations. The next highest ratings were for the Human Relations Perspective and the Open Systems Perspective, reflecting the importance placed on interpersonal dynamics and adaptability to external environments. The lowest score was found in the Internal Process Perspective ($M = 4.874$, $S.D. = 0.193$), which, despite being high, may highlight areas for improvement in internal efficiency and operational procedures.

With regard to the three core factors: Ethical leadership, ethical organizational culture, and organizational effectiveness, the results show consistently high levels of perceptions across all dimensions. This underscores a strong structural relationship between ethical leadership and organizational effectiveness. In essence, ethical leaders help cultivate an ethical culture that promotes collaboration, workplace happiness, and trust, all of which contribute to overall organizational performance. This finding aligns with the work of Zhu, May, and Avolio (2004), who found that ethical leadership positively influences organizational commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Channuwong et al. (2023) who suggested that organizations grounded in ethical leadership and culture are more likely to achieve effectiveness across all dimensions. However, special attention should be paid to the areas of fairness and internal processes, which received the lowest ratings, though still high. Strengthening these aspects is vital to prevent potential weaknesses that may impact future performance.

Ethical Leadership and Ethical Organizational Culture Influencing Organizational Effectiveness

Based on the findings presented in this research, three independent variables were found to significantly influence organizational effectiveness. These are: (1) Creating Efficient Work Practices, (2) Building Trust and Organizational Credibility, (3) Ethical Standards and Honesty of Leadership. Together, these three variables explain 68.6% of the variance in organizational effectiveness, which is considered a relatively high level according to quantitative research standards (Hair et al., 2010)

With regard to the importance of efficient work practices, this variable demonstrated the highest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.432$) with a t-value of 7.309 ($p < 0.01$). This is identified as the most influential predictor in the stepwise multiple regression model. This suggests that leadership focused on organizational efficiency such as clear task structuring, defined objectives, and consistent monitoring and evaluation directly. The data contributes to higher organizational performance.

These findings are consistent with the Transactional Leadership Theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Wongmajarapinya et al. (2024) which posits that leaders who emphasize structure, communication, and task control are more likely to generate significant positive outcomes in organizational effectiveness. Operational efficiency is closely tied to an organization's ability to deliver high-quality outcomes aligned with its goals, a critical factor for sustaining competitive advantage.

In terms of building trust and organizational credibility, this variable revealed a β coefficient of 0.266 and a t-value of 4.446 ($p < 0.01$), highlighting trust as another key determinant of organizational effectiveness. Although its impact was low, trust remains an indispensable element in any organization striving for sustainable development. Trust is fundamental to collaboration (Mayer et al., 1995). When employees have confidence in their leaders and the organization's systems, it fosters greater commitment, accountability, and loyalty—all of which significantly enhance performance outcomes. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) also found that trust in leadership is directly linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment—core components of organizational effectiveness.

With regard to ethical standards and honesty of leadership, although this variable showed the lowest impact among the three ($\beta = 0.200$, $t = 3.968$, $p < 0.01$), it remains statistically significant. This highlights the importance of ethical characteristics in leadership such as fairness, transparency, and integrity—which contribute to organizational effectiveness to a meaningful extent. This supports the framework by Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005), who described ethical leadership as steering the organization with integrity, accountability, fostering a healthy work environment while minimizing unethical behaviors. Additionally, Rugchoochip et al. (2022) found that ethical leadership boosts positive work attitudes, motivation, creativity, sound decision-making, enthusiasm, task completion, and effective teamwork within a given timeframe.

The overall of Model Effectiveness, the regression model yielded an R^2 value of 0.68 and an Adjusted R^2 of 0.68. The data indicates extremely strong model fit, with the predictors explaining nearly 70% of the variance in organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the F-statistic was 210.937 ($p < 0.01$), signifying high statistical validity. No issues of multicollinearity were detected, as the stepwise selection method effectively filtered the most relevant predictors—enhancing the reliability of the findings.

These results align with the research of Yukl (2012), who argued that effective leadership must integrate efficient management systems with ethical relationship-building. Similarly, Kalshoven et al. (2011) found that leaders who consistently exhibit honesty and fairness foster organizational trust—a critical success factor for long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that organizational leaders prioritize the design of clear work structures and management systems to enhance operational efficiency. In addition, leadership at all levels should be encouraged to develop ethical competencies and foster trust through ongoing training and development programs. These efforts will contribute to creating a collaborative and positive work environment, which is essential for the overall growth and long-term success of the organization.

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