Research Article

Exploring the Moderating Effect of Employee Autonomy on Moral Traits and Ethical Behaviour in the Logistics Sector

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This work explores the moderating role of employee autonomy on moral traits with a view of learning their impact on ethical behaviour in the logistical industry. Accordingly, for the purpose of the current study a quantitative research design was adopted and data was collected from one hundred respondents with the use of a structured questionnaire. The following Employee variables were measured: Employee Empowerment, Autonomy & Ethical Practice. Descriptive statistics showed no relationship between}'", age, position, and work experience as well as the tested variables in the ANOVA analysis. Studies underscore the importance of the implementation of the organizational solutions regarding the strengthening of ethical behaviour and the optimum level of the employee's autonomy. Future work should to further reveal external factors affecting ethical plans to enhance organizational environment. **Keywords:** : Employee Autonomy, Moral Traits, Ethical Behaviour, Logistics Sector, Employee Empowerment, Organizational Support

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and demanding industries like logistics, ethical behaviour in the workplace is especially important for maintaining organizational integrity and performance. With its intricate supply chains and operational complexities, the logistics industry frequently encounters moral conundrums that put its employee's moral fibre to the test. In this regard moral qualities worker autonomy and organizational support stand out as important determinants of ethical behaviour.

Unlike other industries, logistics often involves managing critical aspects like safety, compliance, and transparency, where unethical practices can lead to significant operational risks, legal consequences, and damage to brand reputation. The impact of moral qualities, employee autonomy, and organizational support in fostering ethical behaviour is especially vital in logistics, as it directly influences efficiency, trust, and long-term business sustainability in an environment where accountability and ethical decisions are paramount.

Employee Autonomy is the degree of freedom, independence, and discretion an employee has in performing their work. Highlight its potential benefits, such as increased job satisfaction, motivation, and decision-making power.

Moral Traits include personal characteristics like integrity, honesty, fairness, and responsibility. These traits influence how individuals make decisions, especially in moral dilemmas.

Ethical Behaviour refers to actions that are consistent with established moral principles, including fairness, honesty, and compliance with rules and regulations.

The logistics sector, including major players like Amazon, faces significant ethical challenges that affect workers, governance, and safety. Amazon, as one of the largest logistics companies globally, has been widely criticized for its

treatment of warehouse labour. Workers in Amazon fulfilment centres are often subjected to high-pressure environments where they must meet unrealistic performance targets. A 2020 study by *The Guardian* revealed that workers were penalized for taking bathroom breaks, and many sustained physical injuries due to intense workloads (*The Guardian*, 2020). This unethical treatment led to labour strikes in Spain and Italy in 2018, where workers protested poor conditions, long hours, and unfair pay (*BBC News*, 2018). Corruption is another major concern within the logistics industry, particularly in developing countries. The World Bank's report on corruption in logistics highlights that bribery and manipulation of logistics contracts are common, especially during customs clearance and border-crossing procedures (World Bank, 2017). This unethical behaviour undermines legal frameworks and hinders global trade. The sector is also marred by safety violations, particularly among truck drivers who often work long hours, contributing to fatigue-related accidents, accounting for 15% of all crashes in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2019). Similarly, warehouse workers face high injury rates due to poor ergonomics and unsafe working conditions, as highlighted by a 2019 National Employment Law Project study (National Employment Law Project, 2019). Data from Transparency International (2018) reveals that nearly 1 in 5 companies report bribery-related issues in their logistics supply chains, and OSHA reports over 20,000 workplace injuries in the U.S. warehouse sector in 2020 (OSHA, 2020). As the logistics industry continues to grow, these ethical concerns, including fraud, exploitation, and corruption, will remain significant unless addressed through stronger regulations and policies (Masianoga and Govender 2023).

A key organizational construct that promotes intrinsic motivation creativity and moral decision-making is employee autonomy which is becoming more widely acknowledged (Styhre 2001). Employees with autonomy are better able to act morally because they are empowered to take responsibility for their jobs. Moral qualities like justice empathy and honesty are fundamental characteristics that impact moral behaviour in the workplace. Contextual elements like employee autonomy and the larger organizational environment however can have a big impact on how much these qualities show up in moral behaviour

Studies highlight the significance of organizational support and leadership in fostering an ethical culture. According to Havarangsi (2021) transformational and ethical leadership styles have been linked to favourable results in a number of industries including logistics by encouraging ethical behaviour and employee empowerment. By providing a moral example and cultivating an atmosphere that values ethical standards ethical leadership in particular affects employee behaviour (Suifan et al. in 2020). Furthermore, better ethical behaviour and business performance have been associated with organizational initiatives like corporate social responsibility and psychological empowerment (Saha et al. (2020).

Investigating Danish et al. (2020) emphasizes the necessity of a supportive and empowering workplace culture and the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in connecting moral leadership to favourable organizational outcomes.

As mentioned by Saha et al. (2020) the incorporation of corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership into organizational strategies can result in observable advantages for the company and its workers. The moderating role of employee autonomy in the logistics industry a context that has not gotten much attention in prior research is the focus of this study which expands on the body of existing literature. The study attempts to offer insightful information to organizational leaders who want to improve ethical practices in their teams by investigating the relationship between autonomy and moral qualities and how these factors affect ethical behaviour. There are particular ethical issues in the logistics industry that call for a sophisticated comprehension of the variables affecting moral conduct. Organizational support moral character and employee autonomy are interconnected elements that significantly influence ethical behaviour. Leaders in the logistics industry can promote moral behaviour and produce favourable results by giving workers autonomy and creating a positive work atmosphere. By stressing the importance of autonomy as a moderating factor and providing practical advice for enhancing ethical workplace practices this study adds to the expanding corpus of research on ethical behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the moderating role of employee autonomy on moral traits
2. To assess the impact of employee   autonomy in logistic sectors on ethical behaviour

LITERATURE REVIEW

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the UN Bulmer et al. (2021) investigates gender equality and sustainable leadership in Spain's largely male-dominated logistics sector. According to interviews with 24 female managers the logistics industry's leadership practices combine the locust and bee leadership styles of Avery and Berg Steiner. Knowledge sharing is still scarce which is noteworthy and emphasizes the need for better leadership techniques. With its unique integration of gender equality and sustainable leadership the study provides insightful information on how to build inclusive workplaces and promote sustainable leadership development. However, the study's limited scope makes it difficult to extrapolate outside of Spain's logistics industry.

Caha et al. (2022) looks at 21 codes of ethics for quality and effectiveness in the Czech Republic's transportation and logistics sector. Significant differences in the calibre and content of these codes are discovered by the study exposing weaknesses in moral management procedures. Numerous codes are devoid of crucial clauses necessary for their effectiveness indicating the need for extensive revisions to satisfy operational and ethical requirements. According to the study strong ethical codes are crucial for directing business conduct especially in high-stakes sectors like logistics. Although its conclusions offer practical advice they might profit from the opinions of more stakeholders.

The factors influencing the adoption of ethical management systems in South Korean logistics companies and their effects on organizational performance are examined by Jungwoo and Hyuksoo (2022). Results show that while transparency and regulatory environments have little impact on ethical systems internal elements like openness and external elements like normative environments have a positive impact. The study provides empirical evidence of the advantages of ethical management and highlights its crucial role in enhancing organizational outcomes. Acar et al. (2018) investigates how organizational identification and an ethical work environment relate to one another among logistics workers in Turkey. Employee identification with their company is positively impacted by ethical work climate dimensions according to an analysis of survey data from 122 employees. The results highlight the significance of cultivating moral environments to enhance worker dedication and organizational results. The study successfully links moral workplaces to employee sentiments but longitudinal data would be helpful in determining how long these associations will last.

Athota et al. (2020) investigates the relationship between moral principles and personality traits and employee performance resilience and well-being in Australia and India. Using the theory of moral foundations the study finds important connections between resilience mechanisms extroversion and values like benevolence and universalism. It shows that moral principles and deeds of compassion improve psychological health and resilience. By providing practical advice for cross-cultural organizational strategies the study makes a substantial contribution to the literature on resilience and well-being. On the other hand, its dependence on self-reported data may introduce bias necessitating additional experimental validation.

The effect of organizational settings on moral autonomy in decision-making is examined by Tsahuridu (2003). Based on organizational influences it uses an exploratory model to classify decisions into three categories: anomy heteronomy and moral autonomy. According to the findings clan organizations encourage autonomous decision-making while bureaucratic organizations encourage more heteronomous and anomous decisions. The study emphasizes how crucial organizational structures and ethical environments are in forming moral agency. Although it presents a fresh viewpoint on moral autonomy the study's findings are only applicable to the Australian organizations that were sampled so more extensive research is required to confirm its claims in other contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between employee autonomy, moral traits, and ethical behaviour in the logistics sector. The research utilized a survey-based approach with a structured questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents sampled based on age, current organizational positions, and work experience. The following variables were analysed:

1. Independent Variables: Employee Empowerment.

2. Dependent Variable: Ethical Practice

3. Moderating Variable: Autonomy

Data Collection

The data was collected using validated scales. Respondents provided their demographic details (age, academic qualifications, position, and experience) to ensure proportional representation. The data was analysed statistically using ANOVA.
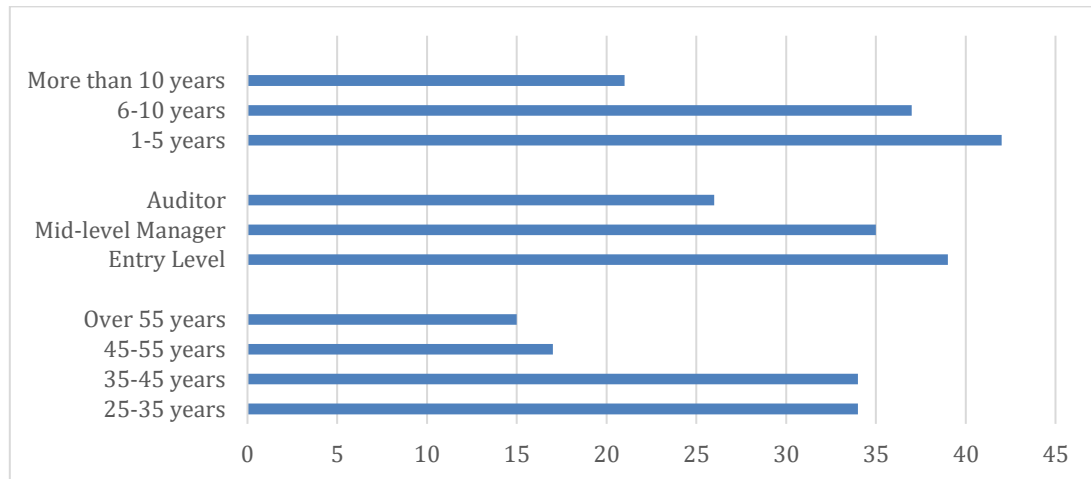
Data Analysis

Figure 1. Graphical Representation of the Data

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Category	Response Options	Frequency	Percent
Age	25-35 years	34	34.0
	35-45 years	34	34.0
	45-55 years	17	16.9
	Over 55 years	15	15.1
Total		100	100.0
Current Position	Entry Level	39	39.1
	Mid-level Manager	35	35.4
	Auditor	26	25.4
Total		100	100.0
Work Experience	1-5 years	42	41.7
	6-10 years	37	37.4
	More than 10 years	21	20.9
	Total	100	100.0

Age: The age distribution of respondents indicates a balanced representation across various age groups. Participants aged 25-35 and 35-45 years each accounted for 34% of the total sample, making them the largest age cohorts. Respondents aged 45-55 years comprised 16.9%, while those over 55 years made up 15.1%. This distribution ensures insights are gathered from employees across different stages of their professional lives, offering a comprehensive perspective on age-related dynamics in the logistics sector.

Current Position: Respondents were categorized based on their current roles within the organization. A significant portion (39.1%) held entry-level positions, followed by 35.4% at the mid-level managerial level, and 25.4% serving as auditors. This proportional distribution highlights input from employees across various hierarchical levels, ensuring that the study captures a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives on autonomy, moral traits, and ethical behaviour.

Work Experience: The work experience of respondents ranged from early-career professionals to seasoned employees. The majority (41.7%) had 1-5 years of experience, followed by 37.4% with 6-10 years, and 20.9% with

more than 10 years. This spread demonstrates the inclusion of individuals at different stages of their career trajectories, providing a nuanced understanding of how professional experience may influence perceptions of employee autonomy and ethical behaviour.

ANOVA Results

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were calculated for the variables. ANOVA tests were conducted to identify differences across demographic groups. The p-values (>0.05) indicate non-significant relationships between demographic factors (age, position, and experience) and the key variables, suggesting a lack of substantial influence of these demographics on ethical behaviour, moral traits, and autonomy.

The F-test value of ANOVA for the age group across variables showed p-values >0.05, indicating no significant effect of age on the variables

Table 2. ANOVA teston Age group

Variable	Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Test	p-value
Employee Empowerment	25-35 years	34	3.77	0.83	1.153	0.328
	35-45 years	34	3.61	0.92		
	45-55 years	17	3.75	0.87		
	Over 55 years	15	3.84	0.82		
Total		100	3.72	0.87		
Moral Traits	25-35 years	34	3.85	0.88	0.951	0.416
	35-45 years	34	3.68	0.98		
	45-55 years	17	3.81	0.93		
	Over 55 years	15	3.88	0.78		
Total		100	3.79	0.91		
Autonomy	25-35 years	34	3.70	0.89	0.616	0.605
	35-45 years	34	3.59	0.92		
	45-55 years	17	3.75	0.87		
	Over 55 years	15	3.74	0.83		
Total		100	3.68	0.88		

The ANOVA results showed no significant impact of age on Employee Empowerment, Moral Traits, or Autonomy. The means across different age groups were consistent, indicating that perceptions of autonomy and ethical behaviour are not age-dependent in the logistics sector.

The F-test value of ANOVA for current position showed p-values >0.05, indicating no significant effect on the variables.

Table.3 ANOVA Test on Current Position in Organization

Variable	Position	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Test	p-value
Employee Empowerment	Entry Level	39	3.73	0.89	0.269	0.764
	Mid-level Manager	35	3.75	0.83		
	Auditor	26	3.66	0.89		
Total		100	3.72	0.87		
Moral Traits	Entry Level	39	3.82	0.91	0.142	0.868
	Mid-level Manager	35	3.77	0.93		
	Auditor	26	3.77	0.88		
Total		100	3.79	0.91		
Autonomy	Entry Level	39	3.70	0.88	0.119	0.887
	Mid-level Manager	35	3.67	0.88		
	Auditor	26	3.65	0.91		
Total		100	3.68	0.88		

The results revealed no significant differences in Employee Empowerment, Moral Traits, or Autonomy based on organizational position. Entry-level, mid-level, and auditor-level employees exhibited similar perceptions of ethical behaviour and autonomy.

Table.4 ANOVA Test on Work Experience

The F-test value of ANOVA for work experience showed p-values >0.05, indicating no significant effect on the variables.

Variable	Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Test	p-value
Employee Empowerment	1-5 years	42	3.68	0.87	0.363	0.696
	6-10 years	37	3.77	0.86		
	More than 10 years	21	3.73	0.89		
Total		100	3.72	0.87		
Moral Traits	1-5 years	42	3.74	0.92	0.356	0.701
	6-10 years	37	3.82	0.90		
	More than 10 years	21	3.84	0.90		
Total		100	3.79	0.91		
Autonomy	1-5 years	42	3.65	0.92	0.232	0.793
	6-10 years	37	3.72	0.84		
	More than 10 years	21	3.67	0.89		
Total		100	3.68	0.88		

ANOVA results suggested no significant differences in perceptions of Employee Empowerment, Moral Traits, or Autonomy among employees with varying levels of experience. This indicates that ethical perceptions and autonomy are consistent across experience levels.

DISCUSSION

According to the results perceptions of autonomy moral qualities and ethical behaviour in the logistics industry are not significantly impacted by demographic factors like age position and work experience. Organizational policies that support consistent moral behaviour and employee empowerment at all levels may be responsible for this consistency. Furthermore, the lack of notable variations emphasizes the possibility of developing inclusive frameworks that accommodate a range of employee demographics without sacrificing moral principles. The findings do however also imply that external elements—such as leadership style organizational culture and industry-specific difficulties—may be more important in determining moral characteristics and ethical behaviour than inherent demographics. These outside variables could be investigated in future studies to create more specialized treatments.

From the above analysis, it could be suggested that employee autonomy plays a crucial role in fostering ethical behavior within the logistics industry. The research proposes that greater autonomy enables employees to align their actions with personal values, promoting the development of moral traits such as fairness, honesty, and integrity. These moral traits, in turn, facilitate ethical decision-making and behavior. Additionally, organizational support, including ethical training and a supportive culture, strengthens employees' adherence to ethical norms. The framework further suggests that autonomy moderates the relationship between moral traits and ethical behavior, allowing employees to act in alignment with their values.

CONCLUSION

According to this study employee autonomy moral qualities and ethical behaviour in the logistics industry are not significantly impacted by demographic factors like age organizational position and work experience. These results cast doubt on the idea that moral behaviour is primarily influenced by personal traits underscoring the possibility of developing universally applicable rules and procedures that encourage moral behaviour among a wide range of worker demographics.

The findings highlight the necessity for businesses to foster a work environment that values moral behaviour and employee empowerment. Notwithstanding differences in demographics such an atmosphere can promote employee

autonomy and match personal moral qualities with corporate objectives. Through the establishment of ethical and inclusive frameworks organizations can effectively tackle issues like employee disengagement a lack of accountability and moral quandaries.

Furthermore, it appears that external factors like organizational culture leadership style industry norms and regulatory pressures may have a greater influence on employee behaviour than demographics. This realization emphasizes how crucial it is to approach ethics management from a systems-oriented perspective emphasizing situational and structural interventions over demographic profiling. These situational and external factors should be investigated in future studies to give a more thorough understanding of the dynamics influencing moral behaviour. Such research could look into how peer pressure leadership ethics organizational training programs and situational stressors can either encourage or discourage moral and ethical behaviour.

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