



The Effect of School Principals' Ethical Leadership on Teacher Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of School Ethical Climate

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the mediating role of ethical climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. A cross-sectional survey was conducted for the study. Questionnaires were distributed to 641 teachers in Turkey. Regression analysis was conducted to determine the mediating effect of ethical climate. Bootstrapping technique was used to test the hypotheses and the effects of mediation. Our results show that there is a positive relationship between principals' ethical leadership and teachers' job satisfaction and a positive relationship between ethical leadership and ethical climate. In addition, ethical climate partially mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. Schools should focus on ethical leadership practices in the workplace. The study enriched the understanding of the factors that influence the relationship between ethical leadership, ethical climate and job satisfaction.

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Keywords:

Ethical leadership, ethical school climate, job satisfaction, ethical climate

1. Introduction

Issues such as corruption, favoritism, and nepotism have long been mostly criticized as unethical (Balci et al., 2012; Erdem, Aytac & Goenuel, 2020; Shekhawat, 2019), and especially in developing countries, these issues have revealed the need for ethical leaders in educational organizations (Shareef & Atan, 2019). Ethical leaders, as moral managers (Treviño, Brown & Hartman, 2003), have a reputation for being fair and principled, and they promote ethical behaviour at work. They also set and communicate ethical standards (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Recent literature has shown that ethical leadership influences employee attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Chughtai, Byrne & Flood, 2015; Ren & Chadee, 2017), suggesting that ethical leaders play a significant role in ensuring job satisfaction (Kim & Brymer, 2011). Job satisfaction is seen as a practical way to encourage employees to work for the organisation's success (Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018).

In some studies conducted in the last 20 years, it is stated that the main reason for the crisis in education is the low job satisfaction of teachers (Crisci, Sepe, & Malafronte, 2019; Crossman & Harris, 2006). With the gradually decreasing job satisfaction, many teachers are leaving the profession (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Whaley, 1994). There are several reasons for low job satisfaction. It is argued that rather than focusing on the problems that arise from the school environment, one should focus on the problems that arise in the school itself (Crisci et al., 2019).

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We have some justifications for this research. Firstly, ethical leadership plays an important role in terms of work outcomes (Freire & Bettencourt, 2020). Secondly, there are few quantitative research on the mediating effect of ethical climate (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2016; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Lu & Lin, 2014; Newman et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2015). Moreover, ethical leadership has been discussed intensely for the last 10 years may be the emergence of leadership behaviors that prevent trust, commitment, and solidarity in many organizations (Şişman, 2011). In this context, ethical leadership cannot be isolated from these behaviors in schools. However, the research on the ethical climate as a mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction are limited (Ahmad & Umrani Waheed, 2019; Freire & Bettencourt, 2020). Thirdly, "Distributed leadership, instructional leadership, teacher leadership, and transformational leadership" is one of the most studied leadership models in the field of EDLM (Gumus et al., 2018, p.1). Therefore, identifying the variables that affect the practices of an ethical leadership model in schools can expand knowledge for practitioners and EDLM researchers. Fourthly, revealing through which mediators the leadership influences the behaviors of the employees may contribute to the strengthening of the theoretical framework (Simkins, 2005). Lastly, researchers in the field of educational administration have stated for many years that the context of the school has an impact on leadership and its results and that this issue should be examined (Dimmock and Walker, 2000; Hallinger, 2018). In addition, in recent years, many researchers have focused on research in this area, especially with the thought that leadership will have different applications in different cultures (eg., Gümüş et al., 2021; Qian et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to (i) what extent is school principals' ethical leadership related to teacher job satisfaction?, (ii) what extent does school ethical climate mediate the effects of school principals' ethical leadership on teacher job satisfaction?

1.1. Theoretical Foundation

1.1.1. Job satisfaction

Managers need employees who will make a critical difference in their organizations. Similarly, organizations expect their employees to be dedicated. So, what makes employees engaged in their job emerges as a significant question in organizations (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Leaders and employees who make up the human capital are crucial for the effectiveness of an organization. Thus, one reason for employee outcomes that has drawn the attention of organizational researchers is job satisfaction (Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018, p. 525).

Job satisfaction can be defined as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal that one's work achieves or promotes one's vocational values" (Locke, 1969, p. 317) or an emotional response to one's work associated with the employee's comparison of significant outcomes with expected outcomes (Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992). Job satisfaction is seen as a practical way to encourage employees to work for the organization's success (Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018). Many factors affect employees' job satisfaction (Crossman & Harris, 2006), involving both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Intrinsic satisfaction elements such as the job's content, autonomy, responsibility and achievement come from the job itself. On the other hand, extrinsic satisfaction elements such as the salary, company policies, job security, and the relationship with other employees and managers refer to the organizational environment (Herzberg, Snyderman & Mausner, 1966; Misener et al., 1996).

Research on job satisfaction stems from Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (Bogler, 2001; Dinham & Scott, 1998). According to the traditional understanding, individuals in an organization are either satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs. In an organization where hygiene factors (extrinsic satisfaction elements) are present, employees do not experience dissatisfaction, i.e., there is no dissatisfaction. However, this does not create satisfaction among employees. Therefore, other motivational factors (intrinsic satisfaction elements) should be provided to achieve job satisfaction (Griffin & Moorhead, 2014; Kinicki et al., 2010).

1.1.2. Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making." (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). The leader's character and virtue ethics are indicative in ethical leadership (Knights & O'Leary, 2006). Ethical leadership is characterized by different attributes that refer to character integrity, ethical accountability, ethical

awareness, motivating others and making ethical decisions to influence others (Resick et al., 2006). The attributes of a moral person (e.g., integrity, honesty, trustworthiness) and a moral manager (e.g., being a role model through visible actions) are pillars of ethical leadership. Thus, ethical leaders influence employees by displaying these attributes (Treviño, Hartman & Brown, 2000).

Social learning theory explains the influence of ethical leadership on employees. When ethical leaders become role models, employees learn behaviors that are expected. Reward and punishment perceptions cause a vicarious experience by observing others' behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005; Treviño, Hartman & Brown, 2000). Ethical leaders influence their followers by using transactional efforts (e.g., punishing, rewarding or focusing on ethical rules and standards) (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Mayer et al., 2009). On the other hand, ethical leaders may affect the employees through socioemotional exchange. This exchange focuses on mutual support and friendship due to ethical behaviors (Mayer et al., 2009).

1.1.3. Ethical climate

The work climate of an organization is a psychological environment in which common practices and procedures are shared. An organization has different work climates, such as leadership, creativity and the display of individual differences (Schneider, 1975). The ethical climate is a constituent of organizational work climate (Simha & Cullen, 2012). The ethical climate is defined as follows: "The prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures that have ethical content constitute the ethical work climate" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 101). This definition focuses on ethical implications and organizational norms that affect the organizational practices of employees. Although there are various ethical climate frameworks (e.g., Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum, 2010; Olson, 1995; Schwepker, 2013), Victor & Cullen (1988)'s framework has been widely used to measure ethical climate (Newman et al., 2017).

The types of Ethical climate originate from the intersections of theoretical dimensions that include individual, local and cosmopolitan, egoism, benevolence and principle. The ethical climate framework consists of five sub-types including instrumental, caring, independence, law and code, and rules (Newman et al., 2017; Simha & Cullen, 2012; Victor & Cullen, 1988). A caring climate highlights the best for everyone in an organization and concerns for the good of others, certain interest in others' well-being and working efficiently. An instrumental climate encourages decision making by considering organizational and individual interests. An independence climate is associated with personal moral beliefs, making all decisions, and acting on personal convictions. A law and code climate is related to compliance with laws, rules, and policies established by organizations. The legal and professional standards are expected to be followed by employees. A rules climate is associated with an organization's specific rules and procedures that employees must obey strictly.

Research has shown that ethical climate may be a mediator between leadership and management practices (e.g., leader behaviors, leadership styles, management practices) and work attitudes (e.g., organizational commitment, turnover intention, job satisfaction, etc.) (Newman et al., 2017; Simha & Cullen, 2012). Most researchers have explained ethical climate development and influence on work outcomes with social learning and identity theories. On the other hand, institutional theory, trait-activation theory and situational strength theory have been studied to understand ethical climates in depth (Newman et al., 2017).

1.1.4. School principals' ethical leadership, school ethical organizational climate and job satisfaction

Leaders may impact the organizational climate by using ethical values, setting examples, establishing ethical conducts, communicating ethical behaviors and rewarding ethical behaviour (Grojean et al., 2004). Ethical leaders shape organizational culture by being a role model based on their assigned role (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Employees usually accept ethical leaders' behaviors, policies and practices since they are legitimate authorities. A legitimate authority figure justifies ethical or unethical actions (Brief et al., 2000). Therefore, justification may be espoused or suppressed by leaders' behaviors. Employees can learn desired or undesired behaviors and behave in an ethical or unethical fashion (Dickson et al., 2001). Thereby, ethical leaders' behaviors are likely to be perceived as an antecedent of ethical climate.

Ethical leadership particularly involves consistent ethical conduct. Consideration for others, fair treatment, honesty, equity and justice are basic ethical conducts (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005). These basic conducts may affect employees' well-being and attitudes. Also, applying procedural, interpersonal and distributive fairness behaviors of ethical leadership may ensure employees' satisfaction

(Stouten, van Dijke & De Cremer, 2012). Moreover, ethical leaders balance work design, workload and authoritarian behaviors (Stouten et al., 2010). If employees think that their managers protect their rights, they may be satisfied with their jobs (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). As a result, ethical communication standards, accountability, decision-making, and justice in an organization may provide mutual respect and trust. Given that ethical leaders focus on ethical work environments, employees are satisfied with their work.

Organizations should ensure legitimacy by adhering to rules and norms which provide that the organization is based on desirable institutional frameworks (Suchman, 1995). Employees shape their behaviors according to the rules in the workplace. As a result of their social learning in the work environment, employees make some inferences and display attitudes suitable for the social environment (Boekhorst, 2015). On the other hand, a person shows their traits when they face situational cues related to their traits which might originate from the organization. Therefore, these cues may activate a person's traits (Dawkins et al., 2017). The mentioned explanations give us significant clues on how these underlying processes in an ethical climate can directly and indirectly lead to job satisfaction.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

Based on our theoretical foundation, we developed our conceptual model (see Fig.1). We proposed that: (i) there is a significant relationship between school principals' ethical leadership and teacher job satisfaction, and (ii) the effect of ethical leadership on job satisfaction is mediated by ethical climate. We tried to understand the effect of ethical leadership on different organizational outcomes due to a lack of new studies (e.g., Brown & Treviño, 2006; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Freire & Bettencourt, 2020; Ren & Chadee, 2017; Stouten, van Dijke & De Cremer, 2012). On the other hand, ethical leadership's crucial role in employees' core job characteristics has been revealed in different studies (Hartog, 2015; Piccolo et al., 2010).

In our study, we proposed a partial mediation model. Therefore, we included ethical climate, which is a contextual moderator in the model. There is support in the literature for the mediating role of the ethical climate (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Kalshoven, Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2013; Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum, 2010; Newman et al., 2017). For example, a review study by Newman et al. (2017) found that ethical climate is a mediating variable. Based on our conceptual framework, the ethical climate is a mediator between ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

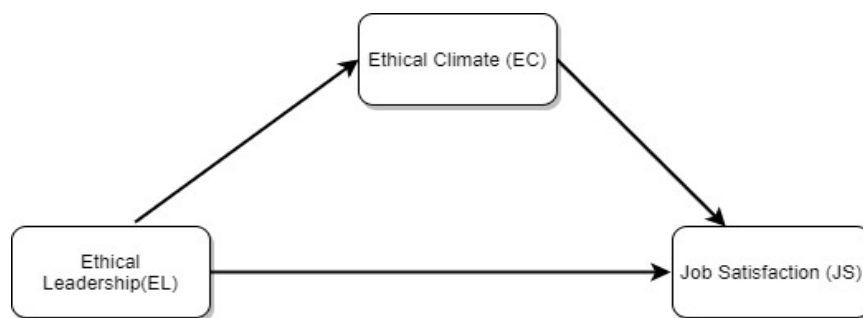


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Relationship among School Principals' Ethical Leadership, School Ethical Climate and Teachers' Job Satisfaction.*

2. Methodology

We conducted a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among school principals' ethical leadership, school ethical climate and teachers' job satisfaction.

2.1. Research Sample

This questionnaire was applied to 641 volunteer teachers in different primary, secondary and high schools in Istanbul by convenient sampling from Çekmeköy, İstanbul. There are 198165 teachers in İstanbul and 1806 teachers in Çekmeköy. One thousand questionnaires were delivered to schools and there was a response rate of 64.1%. Of those who responded, 67% of teachers were females, and 33% of teachers were males. Further statistics show that 26% of these teachers work in elementary schools, 33% work in secondary schools and 41% work in high schools. 38% of these teachers have professional seniority of 2 to 9 years. 5% of teachers have less than 1 year of seniority, 11% have 2-4 years, 27% have 5-9 years, 27% have 10-15 years, and 30% have 15 years.

2.2. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

We used three survey scales in our study. These are the Ethical Leadership scale, the Ethical Climate scale and the Job Satisfaction scale. We have explained the scales in the following sections.

Measurement of Ethical Leadership. The Ethical Leadership scale was developed by Yılmaz (2006) to evaluate teachers' perceptions regarding the ethical behaviour of school principals. The scale consists of 44 items and 4 dimensions. The dimensions are *communicative ethic (fair, caring, compassionate and compassionate in communication with people)*, *climatic ethic (encouraging teachers and applying school rules fairly)*, *ethical decision making (Being objective in your decisions and valuing the opinions of others)* and *behavioral ethic (being righteous and protecting the public interest)* (Yılmaz, 2006). The scale uses a 6-point Likert-type rating. It ranges from (1) "Strongly disagree" to (6) "Strongly agree". Some researchers argue that the scale could be used in a different Likert type instead of the original Likert rating (Turan, Şimşek & Aslan, 2015).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to test the fit of this scale structure with the data in the present study. The five-factor structure with 44 items could not be confirmed in the analysis, although we modified the model and removed items ($\chi^2/df = 6.10$; RMSEA = .09; GFI = .66; CFI = .85). Then, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to evaluate structural validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .98 and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 30375.50$ $p < 0.00$). The EFA revealed a single factor. Three items were removed since they decreased the reliability of the scale. Some items had the same factor loading in the sub-dimensions, and the scale consisted of 41 items with a single dimension in the research sample. The ethical leadership scale explained 64.28% of variance by Varimax rotation. The factor loadings of the items were between .70 and .85. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .99. With the change of the sample, the number of dimensions in the scales may change because of cultural change. Many examples of this can be seen in the literature (Erkuş and Selvi, 2019; Maslowski, 2006).

Measurement of Ethical Climate. The Ethical Climate scale was developed by Cullen, Parboteeah & Victor (2003) and adapted to Turkish by Özen and Durkan (2016) for education organizations. The scale refers to the values, practices, behaviours and moral attitudes in an organization. The adapted scale consisted of 22 items and five sub-dimensions, and the scale was rated using a 5-point Likert-type rating, ranging from (1) "Strongly disagree" to (5) "Strongly agree". The sub-dimensions of the scale are *caring, law and code, instrumental, independence, and rules* (Özen & Durkan, 2016).

CFA was performed to test the fit of this scale with the current data. However, the fit indices did not confirm the five-dimensional structure of the data of the present study, although we modified the model and removed items ($\chi^2/df = 5.20$; RMSEA = .08; GFI = .85; CFI = .90). Four items were removed since the reliability of all items in the *instrumental* factor was smaller than .70. Thus, the fit indices confirmed a four-dimensional structure of the data of the present study ($\chi^2/df = 4.15$; RMSEA = .07; GFI = .91; CFI = .95). The sub-dimensions are *caring, law and code, independence, and rules*. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was .92. The sub-dimension reliabilities were as follows: caring .91, law and code .85, independence .82, and rules .82. The factor loadings of the items were between .66 and .82.

Measurement of Job Satisfaction. The Job Diagnostic Survey was developed by Hackman & Oldham (1975) and adapted to Turkish by Silah (2002) for educational organizations. The adapted scale consisted of 14 items and one dimension and it was rated in a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "Strongly disagree" to (5) "Strongly agree". CFA was performed to test the fit of the scale with the current data. The fit indices did not confirm the five-dimensional structure of the data of the present study, although we modified the model and removed items ($\chi^2/df = 19.62$; RMSEA = .17; GFI = .70; CFI = .59). Then, EFA was carried out to evaluate structural validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .92 and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 3509.50$, $p < 0.00$). The EFA revealed a single factor. Five items were removed since they decreased the reliability of the scale and had low factor loadings. The scale consisted of 9 items and only one dimension in the research sample. The job satisfaction scale explained 60.03% of variance by Varimax rotation. The factor loadings of the items were between .70 and .83. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .91.

2.3. Data Analysis

We tested the hypotheses and the effects of mediation by using PROCESS 3.3 for SPSS. PROCESS allows analyzing the statistical significance of direct and indirect effects by bootstrapping with a confidence interval (CI) (Hayes, 2017). Bootstrapping uses a random sampling method with replacement. This analysis can correct bias or skewness. It is assigned to measure accuracy (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). If the bootstrapping results are significant in the indirect effect, in other words, if a confidence interval of 95% does not include zero (0), it shows the significance of the indirect effect among the variables (Hayes, 2017). On the other hand, we used the Sobel test to see the partial mediator role of ethical climate.

The data showed skewness values between -1.52 and -.83 and kurtosis values between 2.54 and -.57. The Q-Q plot, mean and median were checked for normality. Mean and median values were close to each other. The Q-Q plot showed that a few values showed deviation. Based on these results, the data were normally distributed. Skewness and kurtosis values ranged between +2 and -2 and showed normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013)

3. Findings

We showed means, standard deviations and relationships between ethical leadership, school ethical climate and teachers' job satisfaction. Table 1 shows the relationships between school principals' ethical leadership, school ethical climate and teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 1. Relationships between School Principals' Ethical Leadership, School Ethical Climate and Teachers' Job Satisfaction

	\bar{X}	SD	1	2a	2b	2c	2d	3	4
1-Ethical Leadership	5.15	.86	1	.54**	.33**	.47**	.54**	.65**	.53**
2a-Caring	4.10	.75		1	.72**	.58**	.66**	.87**	.55**
2-Ethical climate types	4.38	.67			1	.44**	.60**	.79**	.46**
2c-Independence	3.63	.94				1	.64**	.82**	.41**
2d-Rules	4.16	.74					1	.86**	.51**
3-Ethical Climate (overall)	4.07	.65						1	.57**
4-Job satisfaction	3.91	.82							1

** $p < .01$

The mean of school principals' ethical leadership was relatively high on the 6-point Likert-type scale (5.15). Overall school ethical climate was relatively high on the 5-point Likert-type scale (4.07), and teachers' job satisfaction was (3.91). The means of three sub-dimensions of ethical climate were high on the 5-point Likert-type scale: caring (4.10), law and codes (4.38), and rules (4.16), but independence was relatively low (3.63), and the means are all above the midpoint of the Likert scale.

The correlations between principals' ethical leadership and teachers' job satisfaction ($r=.53$) and between overall ethical climate and teachers' job satisfaction ($r=.57$, $p < .01$) were lower than the correlation between ethical leadership and ethical climate ($r=.65$). The correlation between the variables was positive and significant at the .01 level. The sub-dimensions of ethical climate correlated with ethical leadership and job satisfaction at a moderate level ($r=.33$ and $r=.55$, respectively, $p < .01$). After the correlation analysis, regression testing was conducted to find the mediation of ethical climate (Table 2). While testing the mediation effect of the Ethical Climate, it was evaluated over the total score because the high correlation of the sub-dimensions with the total ethical climate score was considered a clue that it measures a single construct (see table 1).

Ethical leadership predicted job satisfaction positively and significantly ($\beta = .618$, $p < .05$), and explained 43% of the variance in job satisfaction (Step 1). Ethical leadership predicted ethical climate positively and significantly ($\beta = .413$, $p < .05$), and explained 30% of the variance in ethical climate (Step 2). Ethical climate predicted job satisfaction positively and significantly ($\beta = .389$, $p < .05$) (Step 3). This suggests that when principals use more ethical leadership practices, the ethical climate is better perceived and teachers are likely to have higher job satisfaction. Ethical leadership and ethical climate explained together 50% of the variance in job satisfaction. The analysis revealed that when controlling for the mediator (ethical climate), ethical leadership predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = .457$, $p < .05$) (Step 4). In other words, the variance value of 43% which

directly explained teachers' job satisfaction in the model went up to 50% with an ethical climate included in the model.

Table 2. Results for Mediation Model

Step	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Coefficients		t-test	p	CI 95% LLCI	CI 95% ULCI	R ²
			B	Standard Error					
Step 1 (Total) (c)	Ethical leadership	Job satisfaction	.618	.028	21.83	.000	.563	.674	.43
Step 2 (a)	Ethical leadership	Ethical climate	.413	.025	16.55	.000	.364	.462	.30
Step 3 (b)	Ethical climate	Job satisfaction	.389	.042	9.25	.000	.307	.472	.50
Step 4 (c')	Ethical leadership	Job satisfaction	.457	.031	14.37	.000	.394	.519	-

The total effect of ethical leadership on teachers' job satisfaction was .618 (c). If the ethical climate was added to the model this effect decreased to .457 (c') and the regression coefficient was significant (Figure 2).

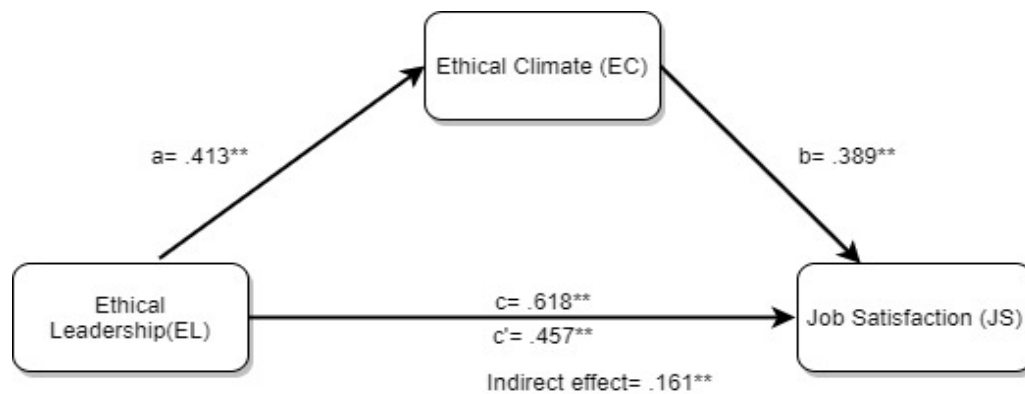


Figure 2. Model Results

We examined the indirect mediator role of ethical climate by the bootstrapping test that considers the 95% confidence interval. 5000 bootstrapped samples were applied to the sampling. Thus, the effect of school principals' ethical leadership on teachers' job satisfaction was complementary and partially mediated by the ethical climate ($\beta = .161$, 95% CI [.1142, .2179], $p < .01$). Also, the Sobel test was conducted. This test confirmed the mediator role of ethical climate ($z = 8.07$, $p < .05$). This means that more ethical leadership practices increase ethical climate moderately, and consequently, ethical climate increases job satisfaction.

Table 3. Bootstrapping Results for Mediation Models of Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI/BootULCI	Mediator role
Direct effect	.457	.0318	.3949 - .5199	
Indirect effect	.161	.0268	.1126 - .2164	Partial mediator
Total effect	.618	.0283	.5631 - .6743	

4. Conclusion and Discussion

4.1. Limitations of the Study and Future Research

The findings of our study have several limitations. First, we note that our scales were based on self-assessment and subjective perceptions of participants. For future studies, we want to emphasize the need to collect data from participating teachers and school principals. Second, as far as we know, our study is one of the few studies to examine the relationships between ethical leadership, ethical climate and job satisfaction. Our

findings need further research analyzing ethical leadership and ethical climate in other contexts to provide substantial implications. Third, our findings reveal the mediation of ethical climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. We think it is important to consider the possibility that there may be different mediators in this relationship.

For this reason, future research should focus on hidden mediators in the direct effect between ethical leadership and job satisfaction (Freire & Bettencourt, 2020). Besides, to understand the effect of ethical climate on work outcomes, we recommend new empirical studies. Fourth, our population in the study included 641 volunteer teachers from different primary, secondary and high schools in Istanbul. Finally, our findings cannot be generalized because they were analyzed in the Turkish context and culture.

4.2. Interpretation of Findings

In our study, we examined the antecedent factors that might increase teacher job satisfaction. This study illustrated how ethical leadership affected teacher job satisfaction directly and indirectly by ethical climate as a mediator.

First, the findings of this study revealed that ethical leadership was compelling for strengthening teachers' job satisfaction. This means that teachers experience more satisfaction in their schools when they perceive higher ethical leadership. It can be stated that school principals being reliable people, treating teachers fairly and accepting them without prejudice positively affect teachers' perceptions of their own work. Second, the results confirmed that ethical leadership positively affected the ethical climate. This suggests that ethical leadership has a significant and determining role in shaping school ethical climate. School principals' ethical leadership qualities such as honesty, fairness, rewarding and supporting teachers may nurture and foster ethical climate. The ethical leader is a role model for his/her followers regarding normative behavior and desirable outcomes for an organization (Sharma, Agrawal & Khandelwal, 2019). Our findings align with previous studies conducted in different public sectors (Ahmad & Umrani Waheed, 2019; Freire & Bettencourt, 2020; Huhtala et al., 2013). Trust and support in the relationship between leader and employee produce benefits for the organization reciprocally (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2016). The school principal as an ethical leader influences followers' emotional states and creates the conditions for an ethical context. Third, in our study ethical climate in school is positively associated with teacher job satisfaction. This suggests that teacher job satisfaction increases when ethical climate fosters ethical values, practices, behaviors and attitudes. The elimination of uncertainty in an organization by adhering to rules and norms can contribute to a more satisfactory environment for employees. Moreover, if a situation in an organization activates a person's traits, they would work more effectively. Also, strong situations in an organization might reveal some positive features (Newman et al., 2017).

Fourth, this study revealed that ethical climate mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher job satisfaction. When school principals show the attributes of a moral person and a moral manager, such as being a good role model and communicating values, the school climate is better constituted to have an ethical climate. When teachers sense an ethical climate in the school, they are likely to be satisfied with their work. The mediating role of ethical climate contributes to studies of effective leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Moreover, the mediating effect of ethical climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction is a new finding in the literature. A previous study found the need to understand the mediating effect of ethical climate on work attitudes (Newman et al., 2017). This study contributed to the understanding of ethical leadership, which has been described as having "immense potential for new academic scholars" in various organizations (Sharma, Agrawal & Khandelwal, 2019, p. 727). This study found that ethical leadership increases teachers' job satisfaction directly and indirectly by strengthening the ethical climate. Both the leadership behaviors and the climate in the school are important for the job satisfaction of the individuals. Teachers who do not trust their leader in the school and believe that there is no moral climate can only try to do as much as they are asked. For example, it is difficult to measure the climate in the school, but the climate in the school can be observed by observing the behavior of individuals. School is a space where individuals share different values, norms and symbols. Individuals influence each other verbally or nonverbally. The leader of the school is in sight and the teachers follow their principal. They share their thoughts about their school principals among themselves. In this respect, the biased and unfair behavior of the school principal may negatively affect the teachers and the moral values and norms in the school.

In an environment where people do not believe in themselves and do not share common moral truths, individuals' cynical behavior may increase, their motivation for work and commitment to school may decrease over time. Turkey is a country where collectivist values and solidarity are strong. In such an environment, unethical leadership behaviors and the school environment may affect teachers' trust in their school leaders more than in other societies.

Our findings support the idea that, due to the detailed bureaucratic structures of educational organizations and their central affiliation with the national Ministry of Education, fixed rules and norms might create an ethical climate. However, our results show that among the sub-dimensions of ethical climate, the independence dimension is lower than the other dimensions. This reinforces the view that ethical climate is focused on external control.

4.3. Conclusion

Our study contributes to research by examining how ethical leaders in educational organizations can influence job satisfaction. Our findings provide empirical evidence that ethical leadership and ethical climate can play a critical role in ensuring job satisfaction. Aldridge & Fraser (2016, p. 303) find that teachers are more energetic and determined to support student learning due to their job satisfaction, which increases the importance of school. Therefore, our findings suggest that ethical leadership and ethical climate are critical factors that strengthen schools as educational organizations. Teacher job satisfaction is an effective factor in student learning (Banerjee et al., 2017) and is related to various work attitudes such as greater willingness to innovate in the classroom (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008).

This study has several implications. Our findings indicate that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of both job satisfaction and ethical climate. Therefore, the organization should focus on ethical leadership practices in the workplace. For this reason, effective training programs on ethical leadership should be conducted regularly.

Our study found that ethical climate is a crucial variable in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction and educational institutions should focus on how to create ethical climate. Caring, rules, independence, laws and codes are very important to promote ethical climate. To strengthen and promote this climate in an organization, school leaders can emphasize open communication about ethical issues and create ethical awareness. In addition, rules and procedures can be explained to teachers in advance.

5. References

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