



The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Professional Learning Communities with the Mediating Role of Normative Commitment

Mohmmad Hassani^{1*}, Sina Gholipour Ghalandar², Abolfazl ghasemzadeh³

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received:

01/02/2024

Accepted:

23/05/2024

Available
online:

Summer 2024

Keyword:

Ethical
leadership,
professional
learning
communities,
normative
commitment,
participation in
decision
making.

Abstract

In organizational interactions and communities, professional learning communities have gained more attention from managers due to their sustainable benefits for human resources and organizations, which contribute to growth and development. This research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlation based on structural equations as a method. The statistical population of the study consisted of all primary school teachers in District Two of Urmia, totaling 1,236 individuals. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table, resulting in a selection of 291 individuals. A cluster random sampling method was employed. Data were collected based on four questionnaires: Brown et al.'s (2005) Ethical Leadership Questionnaire, Hu et al.'s (2015) Professional Learning Communities Questionnaire, Eisenberg et al.'s (2001) Normative Commitment Questionnaire, and Jangman et al.'s (2005) Teacher Decision-Making Participation Questionnaire, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.91, 0.91, 0.87, and 0.85, respectively. The validity of these questionnaires was confirmed by experts and through SPSS analysis. Data analysis was conducted using Smart PLS 3 software. The results indicated that ethical leadership has a positive and significant impact on professional learning communities, and normative commitment plays a mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and professional learning communities. However, participation in decision-making does not play a moderating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and professional learning communities.

Gholipour Ghalandar, S ., Hassani, M., & ghasemzadeh, A.,(2024), The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Professional Learning Communities with the Mediating Role of Normative Commitment , Journal of School Administration ,12 (2), 72- 86.

1. Department of Educational Sciences; Urmia University

*Corresponding Author:

Email: m.hassani@urmia.ac.ir

2. Department of Educational Sciences; Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

3. Department of Educational Sciences, Shahid Maddani University of Azerbaijan

Introduction

Today, education is an important factor in the development process. The main purpose of development is desirable and comprehensive change in economic, social, political and cultural dimensions, which also depends on the development of trained brains that can research, innovate and adapt themselves and society with the appropriate environment. Education and one of its main elements play a significant role in the development of each country (Hosseini, Dadili & Jalilvandfar, 2023). For coordination with the changes in the social and economic environment, extensive and sustainable educational reforms have been considered as priority all around the world. Educational policy makers and researchers have taken various actions to fulfill the community needs in educational reforms. Among these actions, emphasis on continuous, collaborative, reflective and extensional learning of teachers has been recommended as a powerful step to promote curricula, teaching, and student learning and achieve school improvement. Thus, concepts such as learning organizations, teachers' professional learning, and professional learning communities have been taken into consideration (Ho, Lee & Teng, 2015). International research including the results of the researches from the successful international school management project indicates that school leaders may have a crucial effect on the learning development of their schools (Gunnulfson, Jensen & Møller2021; Ylimaki et al., 2021). However, there are few studies on how layered leadership develops in different contexts, and especially on how leaders interact with others in professional learning communities in schools, which is of great importance (Brit & Marit, 2022). This issue becomes even more crucial when considering the literature on professional learning communities, which demonstrates that school leaders play a significant role in establishing and developing these communities (Louis, 2015).

According to a study done by Hausman & Goldring (2001), teachers of highly developed professional communities show high commitment to school

compared to teachers who have less participation and equality of options and learning opportunities in their school. This is because professional learning communities can enhance the increase of teachers' skills and abilities, or, their professional growth (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Professional growth also can increase respect and appreciation from colleagues, which is a significant predictor of teachers' organizational and professional commitment (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Therefore, an effective professional learning community is an important factor for teachers to enhance teaching and learning experience. Although there is no codified definition of a professional learning community, there are similar views about its nature among various researchers.

The principal influences the teachers and the school by choosing the appropriate leadership style, and can create and expand professional learning communities. Various studies have revealed that school leadership methods contribute to the promotion of professional learning communities in the school and the quality level of teachers and have a direct impact on teacher commitment at the teacher level (To et al., 2021). One of the leadership styles is ethical leadership, which is leadership via appropriate behavior by focusing on ethics, values, rights, and dignity of others, as honesty, integrity, trust, and fairness are considered important factors in ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is defined as "showing appropriate behaviors in terms of value through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and expanding these behaviors to followers via two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown, Trevin & Harrison. 2005). According to previous studies, ethical leadership is positively related to the perception of interactional justice, and being assured of following ethical behaviors (Bedi, Alpaslan, & Green, 2016). In ethical leadership, managers communicate honestly and treat employees trustfully (Yildiz, 2019). Based on the results obtained from studies, efficiency is increased and job satisfaction is improved (Schwepker, 2019). In an organizational environment, when a person sees the moral role of the manager in

achieving organizational goals, as a reward, he is obliged to participate in organizational processes and help the manager in attaining organizational goals (Ahmeds, et al., 2023). As an attractive field, ethical leadership has received much attention by people because the ethical or unethical behavior of a leader can influence the culture of the organization and thereby determines the thinking method and behavior of the members of the organization. Researchers show that ethical leaders treat others with respect, fully respect their rights, and use power in the form of social responsibility. Ethical behavior is a key component in some of leadership theories such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership. This component consists of some sub-components such as empathy/focus on individuals, honesty, fairness, moderation and responsibility. Based on the multidimensional approaches to ethical leadership, they think it is as a complex structure that consists of focusing on people, honesty, fairness, responsibility and moderation. (Al-Kubaisi, Shahbal & Khan, 2022; AlHarbi et al., 2022). Many of the behaviors and decisions of employees and managers in today's organizations are affected by their ethical values, as human resources are still of great importance both individually and in groups and this is considered the most important factor of competitive advantage, therefore taking the ethical principles into consideration in organizations is inevitable (Tabelli, Moradi & Irannejad, 2016). Work ethics can affect performance by better regulation of relationships, reduction of conflicts, the increase of the atmosphere of understanding and cooperation, as well as reducing costs caused by control (Mokhtaripoor & Syadat 2008). Research results indicate that the effect of principals' leadership on professional learning communities is indirectly determined via teachers' psychological characteristics such as trust, efficiency, and commitment (Yin; Keung and Tam, 2019). Teacher commitment is considered as the necessary beliefs and internal responsibility and commitment to school enhancement (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013). Managers with ethical focus as role models demonstrate characteristics such as honesty, trustworthiness, accountability, fairness and sacrifice (Li et al., 2017). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), teachers are inclined to develop a sense of commitment to be accountable, which in turn will promote professional learning communities. Teachers'

participation in decision-making increases the efficiency, ability, motivation and commitment of employees and allows the management to use the knowledge, expertise and experience of subordinates (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). Principals of schools have played a central role in school decision-making as the main authority figures for a long time, and teachers tend to accept principals' decisions without asking questions or showing their frank disagreement (Liu & Hallinger, 2020). When teachers' interests and voices are heard at a high level of participatory decision-making, it can enhance satisfaction between teachers and principals, and increase teachers' loyalty to principals (Zhang; Bowers and Mao., 2020).

Theoretical basics and research background

Professional learning communities

According to the results, the leadership of professional learning communities is based on building a relationship based on trust and a culture supporting critical reflection and distribution of leadership (Thornton, 2023). Both these definitions emphasize the importance of support, collaboration and thinking, having a clear goal for professional learning and focusing on enhancing teaching practice and quality. Professional learning communities are normally recognized by a culture of collaboration, where teachers work together to share knowledge, engage in collaborative planning, assess student data, and reflect on think about their practices (Khasawneh et al. 2023). Professional learning communities are teams of teachers who are gathered based on systematic way to learn collectively, and provide a framework and process for continuous learning and professional growth of teachers. Most of the researchers believe that the groups of professional communities have a shared mission and vision and are committed to collective learning and capacity building or empowerment. In fact, professional learning communities of teachers are committed to collective work in the continuous process of collective and functional research to achieve the best results for students. (Mirahmadi; Khorassani; Abolqasemi and Mehri. 2017). Collective power is established that creates culture of effective sharing via professional learning communities, being developed via shared visions and commitments, and it is a key to change and success (Bolan et al., 2005; Harris, Jones, 2013), and "a comprehensive and mutually supportive group of

individuals with a collaborative, reflective, and growth-based approach to examine and learn more about one's own performance in order to enhance student learning" (Stoll, 2011). A professional learning community is defined as a group of "educational professionals working together to create and retain a collaborative learning culture for all individuals" (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

Normative commitment

In the literature about organizational commitment, researchers have defined three different aspects of commitment, a commitment focusing on the emotional relationships of people in the organization, the commitment of the costs of leaving the organization and the commitment related to the interest staying in the organization (Aabdeen et al., 2016). Employees who consider themselves unprepared for a job, leave the organization and do not spend much time, but if they have a sense of ethical behavior in the organization, they are less inclined to leave it (Wong & Spence Laschinger, 2015). Normally, organizational commitment is a sense of attachment and loyalty of an employee to the work, and employees are asked to be committed when their goals are matched with the goals of the organization (Cohen, 2014). Based on these theoretical basics, Coyle-Shapiro, (2008) refers to normative commitment as an employee's commitment to stay in the organization and be loyal to it, and this is the same as an employee becomes aware of certain expectations to remain in the organization. Allen and Mayer (1990) state that normative commitment requires that employees believe their duty is to stay in the organization. In fact, normative commitment refers to the time the individuals are committed to their organizations because they are ethically obligated to behave like that. Normative commitment indicates one's sense of duty to continue working in the organization. It is stated that employees with a higher level of normative commitment feel obliged to stay with the organization.

Participation in decision-making

Participation in decision-making is considered as "an opportunity for an employee to present input into the decision-making process related to work issues (work organization, duty priority) or organizational issues" (Valverde et al., 2021). Although every decision-making process generates a final choice, teachers' participation in school decision-making can provide

the ground for the creation of professional learning communities. The individuals of the organization participate in the organizational decision in healthy organizations, and the people who participate in these decisions gain much power, and this is due to motivating them to involve in decision-making and enhance the knowledge and awareness of the people of the organization. This issue is of great importance in organizations that deal with knowledge such as schools (Ismaili, Samari & Hassani 2020). Teachers' participation in school decision-making is defined as the active participation of teachers in selection processes in educational or management areas such as curriculum management, student evaluation, school finances, and staff development, or at least a joint effect on it (Somech, 2010).

Ethical leadership

Various studies show that strong ethical leadership can help organizations increase trust, motivate employees, mitigate the risk of violating laws and ethics, increase competition, and enhance organizational culture, and it plays a significant role in the success of the organization (Kamilah et al., 2023). Ethical leadership consists of some dimensions including fairness, honesty, moral guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification and concern for stability (Kalshoven et al., 2011). With ethical leadership and the establishment of interactions based on ethics, the teachers can attend the school meetings and interactions, and professional learning communities are given more attention as the most important communities.

Brit & Marit (2022) in a study "Ethical thinking and decision-making in the leadership of professional learning communities" showed that establishing a professional learning community based on inclusive ethics, educational collaboration and democratic leadership are all important strategies. The leadership methods are based on an ethical view that emphasizes responsibility not only for personal ethics but also for the enhancement of civic ethics education that leads to self-knowledge and awareness of communities. In a study, Nazaruddin, Sofyani & Saleh (2021) examined the role of ethical leadership, organizational support and participatory decision-making in the implementation of effective performance measurement systems in higher education institutions and found that there is a positive effect of ethical leadership, perceived organizational support and

participatory decision-making on the perceived effectiveness of implementing performance measurement systems. Furthermore, participatory decision-making also is considered an intervening variable. McKenna & Jeske (2021) in a study "The impact of ethical leadership and decision authority on participation, burnout and intention to turnover intention of nurses" found that ethical leadership positively predicts decision authority among nurses. Ethical leadership also has an indirect effect on all three outcome variables (work engagement, burnout, and turnover intension). In a study "Critical relationship of self-awareness with ethical and participatory leadership: in decision processes", Black (2020) stated that there is no significant relationship between self-awareness and ethical leadership, or between self-awareness and group decision-making, but there is a significant difference between the level of self-awareness stated by the leader and participatory leadership. Some of the researches on the topic of the current study are as follows: Ardalan et al. (2019) in a study "The role of ethical leadership in organizational citizenship behavior with the mediating role of organizational justice and organizational commitment" found that ethical leadership with the mediation of justice and organizational commitment has an indirect, positive and significant impact on the behavior of organizational citizens. Tablli, Moradi & Irannejad. (2017) in a study "Relationship between ethical leadership and individual performance: the mediating role of organizational commitment" indicated that there is a positive and significant

relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment with individual performance. Also, the mediating role of organizational commitment is significant in the relationship between ethical leadership and individual performance.

Ethical leadership, a new style of leadership that seeks the participation and interactions of teachers based on ethical values, should take into consideration professional learning communities as one of the most important environments for growth and development and its relevant impact, which increases the importance of the relationship between ethical leadership and professional learning communities. Now, ethical leadership, as a leadership style, which is based on moral principles and values, has gain the attention of researchers, which can be used to manage the relationships and interactions within the school and create or expand the professional learning community as one of the most important school interactions. Indeed, it is worth to mention that two measures of normative commitment and teachers' participation in decision should be examined in the interactions and atmosphere of the school. Since there has been no research in this field by previous researchers and there is not enough research in this field, the current study attempts to answer the question whether ethical leadership is effective on professional learning communities via the mediation of normative commitment and with the moderating role of participation on teachers' decision-making?

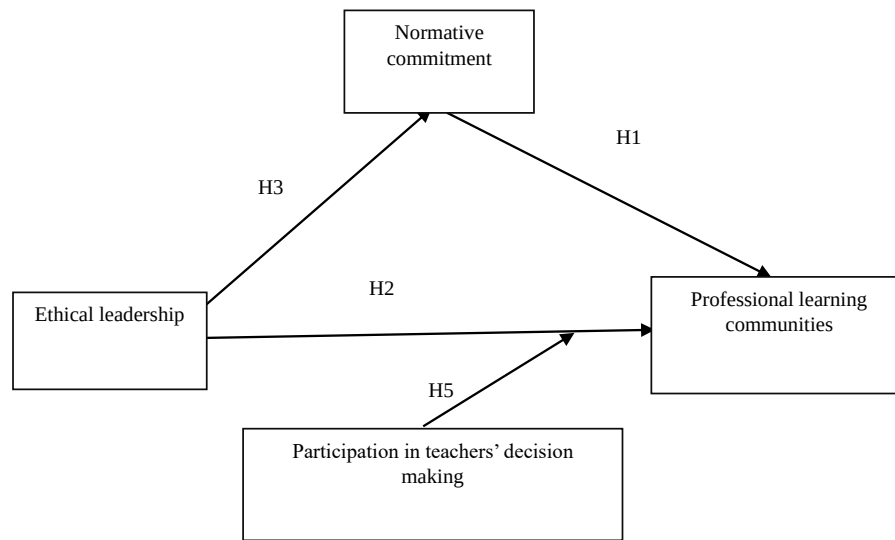


Figure 1- Conceptual model of study

Figure 1- Conceptual model of study Research Hypotheses

1. Ethical leadership is effective on the normative commitment of elementary school teachers in District 2 of Urmia.
2. Ethical leadership is effective on the professional learning communities of elementary school teachers in District 2 of Urmia.
3. Normative commitment is effective on the professional learning communities of elementary school teachers in District 2 of Urmia.
4. Ethical leadership affects the professional learning communities of elementary school teachers in District 2 of Urmia through the mediation of normative commitment.
5. Participation in decision-making plays a moderating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and the professional learning communities of elementary school teachers in District 2 of Urmia.

Methodology

The current study examines the effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities with the mediating role of normative commitment and the moderating role of teachers' participation in decision-making. This study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlation in terms of structural equations modeling. The statistical population consisted of all

primary teachers of second district in Urmia city. The size of the statistical sample was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table and 291 individuals were selected using the cluster random sampling method. For data collection, the 10-item ethical leadership questionnaire of Brown et al. (2005), the 16-item questionnaire of Ho et al.'s professional learning communities (2015), the 6-item normative commitment questionnaire of Eisenberger et al. (2001) and the 8-item questionnaire of participation in teachers' decision making by Jongmans et al. (2005) were applied. The questions of questionnaire were scored based on a five-point Likert scale (1-completely disagree), (2-disagree), (3-no idea), (4-agree) and (5-completely agree). The face and content validity of the research instruments were confirmed by experts, and in order to check the construct validity of the research instruments, confirmatory factor analysis was used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the research measure, and the reliability of the ethical leadership questionnaire (0.91), the professional learning communities questionnaire (0.91), the normative commitment questionnaire (0.87) and the teachers' participation in decision making questionnaire (0.85) was calculated. For data analysis, descriptive statistics methods (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) by Spss26 software and inferential statistics with confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation method to examine the relationships of variables were

used and the model was analyzed with the software SmartPls3.

Findings

In total, the data of 291 participants (75 men and 216 women) were analyzed. 9 individuals (3.1%) had associate degrees, 193 (66.3%) bachelor's, 87 (29.9%) had master's degrees and 2 people (0.7%) had Ph.D. To check the normality of the data distribution, the standard error index of the skewness coefficient was

applied. As shown in Table 2, considering that the standard error of the skewness coefficient of all variables is ranging -2 and +2. If the error value is smaller than -2 or larger than +2, then the assumption of normality of data distribution is rejected. Thus, it can be stated that the distribution of data in all variables is normal and parametric statistics can be used to examine research hypotheses.

Table 1. Descriptive data of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Skewness standard error
Ethical leadership	4.25	0.65	-1/08	0.14
Professional learning communities	4.18	0.65	-1/86	0.14
Normative commitment	4.32	0.69	0.92	0.14
Participation in teachers' decision making	4.01	0.76	- 0.62	0.14

As shown, it was determined that the highest mean (4.32) is dedicated to normative commitment and the lowest mean (4.01) is related to teachers' participation in decision-making.

Since the correlation matrix is the basis of the analysis of the path analysis model, the correlation matrix of the studied variables is shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of research variables

No.	Variables	1	2	3	4	Significance level
1	Ethical leadership	1				*****
2	Professional learning communities	0.634**	1			0.000
3	Normative commitment	0.537**	0.676**	1		0.000
4	Participation in teachers' decision making	0.655**	0.738**	0.577**	1	0.000

As shown in Table 2, the correlation coefficient between research variables is positive and significant. The highest correlation coefficient was found between teachers' participation in decision-making and

teachers' professional learning communities ($r = 0.738$). The lowest correlation coefficient was found between normative commitment and ethical leadership ($r = 0.537$).

Table 3. Convergent validity and divergent validity tests

Study variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted
Professional learning communities	0.938	0.946	0.529
Normative commitment	0.900	0.923	0.668
Ethical leadership	0.925	0.941	0.631
Participation in teachers' decision making	0.916	0.932	0.633

Model fit

SRMR and NFI indices were also used for the overall fit of the research model. The acceptable value

of SRMR index is less than 0.08 and the appropriate value of NFI index is higher than 0.9. The value of

SRMR index was 0.07 and NFI index was 0.93, which shows the good fit of the current research model.

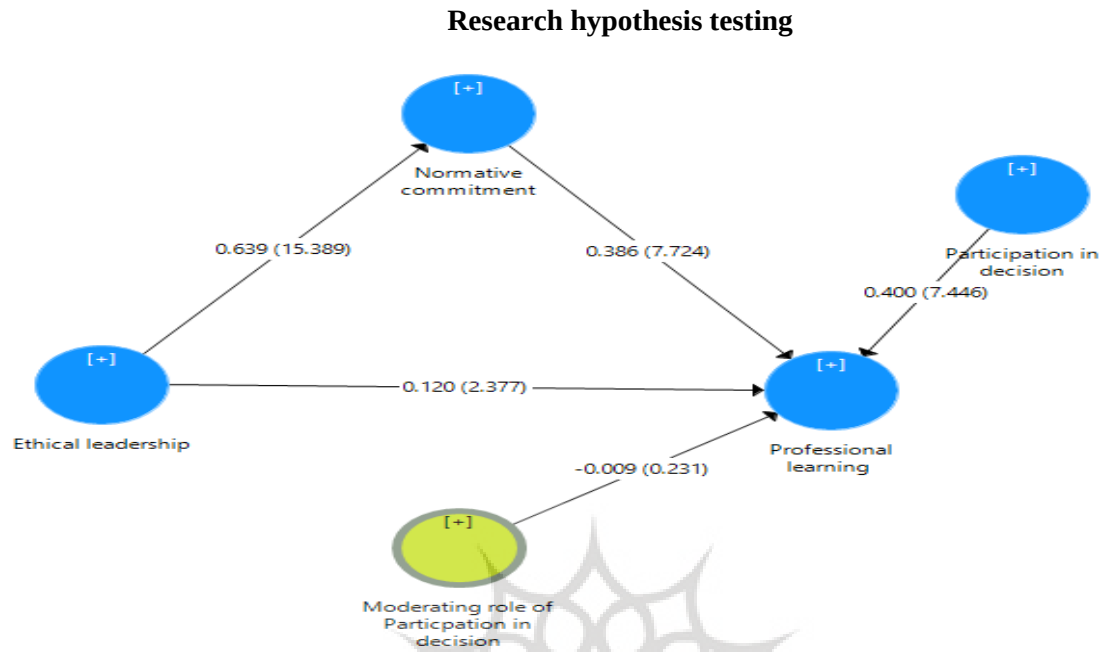


Figure 2. Research model in significant values and standard estimation

Table 5. The results of testing the research hypotheses

No.	Hypotheses	Standardized coefficient	T-value statistics	significance	Result
H1	Ethical leadership on normative commitment	0.639	15.389	0.000	Supported
H2	Ethical leadership on professional learning communities	0.120	2.377	0.022	Supported
H3	Normative commitment on professional learning communities	0.386	7.724	0.000	Supported
H4	Ethical leadership on professional learning communities with the mediating role of normative commitment	0.246	7.446	0.000	Supported
H5	Ethical leadership on professional learning communities with the moderating role of participation in teachers' decision making	-0.009	0.231	0.810	Rejected

Discussion and conclusion

The current study is aimed to examine the impact of ethical leadership on teachers' professional learning communities with the mediating role of normative commitment and the moderating role of participation in elementary school teachers' decision making. Based on the obtained results, all research hypotheses were supported, except for the last hypothesis, which was not verified.

The research findings of the first hypothesis “the direct effect of ethical leadership on normative commitment” showed that ethical leadership has a direct, positive and significant impact on normative commitment. The t statistic for the effect of ethical leadership on normative commitment is equal to 15.38 ($p > 0.05$) and this value is higher than 1.96, and it can be stated that the result is supported with 95% confidence interval. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Ahmeds et al. (2023),

Bahadori et al. (2021), Jamalzadeh et al. (2022), Ardalan et al. (2019), Tabli et al., (2017) and Dustar; Mostaghimi and Ismailzadeh., (2015). Bahadori et al. (2021) found that each of the components of organizational commitment including emotional commitment, continuous commitment and normative commitment have a significant relationship with ethical leadership. We found that ethical leadership is positively related to the perception of interactional justice, and the assurance of following ethical behaviors (Bedi et al., 2016: 139).

In ethical leadership, managers communicate honestly and treat employees trustfully (Yildiz, 2019). According to the results of studies, efficiency is promoted and job satisfaction is improved (Schwepker, 2019). In an organizational environment, when an individual observes the ethical role of the manager in attaining organizational goals as a reward, he is obliged to participate in organizational processes and help the manager in achieving organizational goals (Ahmads et al., 2023). Accordingly, managers with ethical leadership style affect the attitudes and feelings of their employees and make them dependent and committed to their organizations.

The leader can increase or decrease employee commitment by selecting their leadership style. If the leader adheres to ethical principles and values and leads in accordance with the ethics, it enhances employee commitment. The research findings regarding the second hypothesis, the direct effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities demonstrated that ethical leadership has a direct, positive and significant impact on professional learning communities. The t statistic for the effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities is equal to 2.37 ($p > 0.05$) and this value is higher than 1.96, it can be stated that the result is verified with 95% confidence interval. The result of this research is consistent with the result of Brit and Marit (2022). They came to the conclusion that establishing a professional learning community based on comprehensive ethos, collaborative learning, and democratic leadership are all important strategies.

Collective power is established that creates culture of effective sharing via professional learning communities, being developed via shared visions and commitments, and it is a key to change and success (Harris & Jones, 2013). Nkengbeza (2017) believes that professional learning communities of educational

institutions are groups that continuously deal with questions about the current situation and seek better solutions to improve their institutions. Professional learning communities suggest teacher's real opportunities for improvement, because encouraging teachers to self-evaluate gives them an opportunity for personal improvement. With ethical leadership and the formation of interactions based on ethics, the teachers are prepared to attend school meetings and interactions, and professional learning communities are given more attention as the most important communities.

With ethical leadership and their impact on professional learning communities, the growth and development of teachers, managers and organizations are formed, and by examining other aspects that affect these communities, the growth and progress can be achieved. Research findings regarding the third hypothesis "the direct effect of normative commitment on professional learning communities" revealed that normative commitment has a direct, positive and significant effect on professional learning communities. The t-statistic for the effect of normative commitment on professional learning communities is equal to 7.72 ($p > 0.05$) and this value is higher than 1.96, and the result is verified with 95% confidence interval. The obtained results are consistent with the research results of Motahrinejad and Joza (2020).

They found that in order to increase the commitment of teachers, school principals should improve their collective efficiency by creating appropriate organizational conditions, as professional learning communities play a crucial role in this regard. Normative commitment is defined as one's sense of obligation for an individual to stay in the organization.

This normative commitment is a form of commitment that should be made by an employee to his organization. Employees who are highly committed to this normative commitment tend to stay with the organization because of their high sense of commitment (George & Jones, 2012).

Antinluoma et al. (2018) state that professional learning communities affect teachers, teacher learning, school processes, and educational processes for both teachers and students. Professional learning communities enhance the commitment of all institutes to the school's visions and goals, and school principals contribute to their performance by providing the

necessary conditions and participating in professional learning community meetings.

Leclear (2005) defines a professional learning community as a collaborative group of teachers and school principals who work and learn in their commitment to improve student achievement, through collaboration and collaborative learning. Thus, Locklear pointed out that teachers should be supported by school leaders in the professional learning community to encourage them to be more committed and effective in their continuous learning and classroom practices. Employees who feel committed to the organization, have a sense of duty towards professional learning communities and relevant activities. Based on these findings, a committed employee feels responsible for collaborating and engaging constructively with colleagues.

They strive to encourage other employees to participate, interact, and work towards forming professional learning communities. By actively participating in these gatherings, they fulfill their duty and commitment, which contributes to the expansion of professional learning communities.

The research findings regarding the fourth hypothesis "the indirect effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities with the mediating role of normative commitment", showed that normative commitment has a direct, positive and significant impact on the relationship between ethical leadership and professional learning communities.

The statistic value for the effect of normative commitment in the relationship between ethical leadership of professional learning communities is equal to 7.44 ($p > 0.05$) and this value is higher than 1.96, it can be stated with 95% confidence that normative commitment has a mediating role and the result is supported. The results of the present research are consistent with the results of the research of Tabelli et al. (2017).

Effective professional learning communities include supportive and shared leadership, shared values and views, collective learning and application, shared individual methods and supportive conditions (Heap and Hoffman, 2010: 13), as with the formation of these communities in organizations, these characteristics are developed. Zulham et al. (2022) emphasize that ethical leaders should serve rather than desire to imitate, seeking to develop the capacity of others rather than showing their own abilities. By

creating a sense of commitment in employees, ethical leadership provides the ground for employees to participate in professional learning communities. Ethical leadership fosters normative commitment among employees, create a sense of responsibility for participating in organizational programs and activities.

By seeing the leader's interactions based on ethical principles and values, employees also adjust their interactions. This leads to the formation of professional learning communities, where employees engage with a sense of responsibility and commitment to interaction and participation in these gatherings.

Research findings related to the fifth hypothesis, "the indirect effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities by moderating participation in decision making showed that participation in decision making in the relationship between ethical leadership and professional learning communities has no significant effect.

The t statistic for the effect of participation in decision making in the relationship between ethical leadership of professional learning communities is equal to 0.23 ($p < 0.05$) and this value is less than 1.96, it can be stated that participation in decision making does not have a moderating role, thus, the hypothesis is rejected. This result is consistent with the study of Nazaruddin, Sofyani and Saleh (2021) as participation in decision making is useful for organizations and employees. According to Myers (2023), participation in decision making increases the value of employees to the company by enhancing attitudes and understanding between co-workers and managers.

When employees feel that their views and ideas are worthy and considered, they are likely to be more motivated to do their best to achieve organizational goals. This sense of ownership and participation not only increases their motivation but also provides a positive work environment where employees feel more empowerment and participation.

In an organizational environment, when a person observes the ethical role of a manager in achieving organizational goals as a reward, he feels obliged to participate in organizational processes and help the manager in achieving organizational goals (Ahmads et al., 2023). It is worth to mention that by promoting ethics in management, employees work in organizations with a sense of calmness and commitment, and with the enhancement of growth, they have a better feeling of their organization. The

sense of commitment in employees has many effects, and in this research it was also found that teachers who work with commitment towards their organization are always concerned about their own growth and that of the organization, and they attempt to engage their colleagues with a sense of duty towards performing the organization's plans and support them. Accordingly, managers with ethical leadership style affect the attitudes and feelings of their employees and make them dependent and committed to their organizations.

By using ethical leadership and disseminating ethical principles and values in schools and increasing the normative commitment of teachers, school principals can create and expand the field of their professional development and in this way pave the ground for academic and moral progress of students. According to studies, the sense of commitment of employees to organizations has many effects, and in this research it was also found that teachers who work with commitment towards their organization are always concerned about their own growth and the organization and attempt to carry out the program with a sense of duty, and guide and support their co-workers.

By attending professional learning communities with ethical leadership management, teachers become more professional and attempt to solve problems via cooperation and interaction, thus, the most attention is given to these communities. With the continuous presence of teachers in professional learning communities, they become more professional and can better encounter the challenges and problems of schools and help school management.

Limitations of the Research

Similar to all other studies, this study has encountered certain limitations and obstacles that impact the findings, including:

- Fearing the potential impact of the questionnaire results on their career paths , some teachers, has approached the researcher with apprehension and refrained from completing the questionnaire.
- The lack of data and information regarding the research variables within the country made data collection challenging task, necessitating the use of foreign articles, which resulted in significant time being spent on translating these materials.
- The data collection method was limited to questionnaires, and data were gathered only

quantitatively; it would have been beneficial to also incorporate qualitative methods.

Applied recommendations

-It is recommended that managers investigate the aspects of using ethical leadership style and use the experiences of managers who use ethical leadership style to treat their employees in order to provide the ground to increase normative commitment among employees.

- Considering the factors affecting normative commitment, it is suggested that organizations , enhance employees' sense of commitment by reducing negative factors. This will encourage employees to participate in and actively engage in the formation of professional learning communities with a sense of responsibility and duty.

-It is suggested that ethical leadership should be taken into consideration in all organizational and individual aspects of employees, and the behavior in the organization should be based on values and moral principles so that employees can work with an inner sense of commitment for the formation of professional learning communities.

-It is recommended that managers acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding of ethical leadership styles and, based on ethical principles and values create an environment conducive to the growth and development of teachers in professional learning communities.

-It is recommended that organizational managers share their experiences regarding ethical leadership and discuss the challenges they face in implementing this style to enhance employees' sense of commitment and facilitate their growth and development through participation in professional learning communities.

Research Suggestions

- Given that the research was performed in the education sector of District 2, it is recommended that similar studies be carried out in other regions and organizations for further studies.
- This study focused on the effect of ethical leadership on professional learning communities, and it is suggested that future research examine the effects of other components as well.
- Considering that our statistical population consisted of primary school teachers, it is recommended that this research be conducted in other

educational levels and qualitatively or quantitatively at the managerial level.

References

- Aabdeen, Z., Nazar-Khan, M., Mehmood Khan, H., Farooq, H., Salman, M., & Rizvan, M. (2016). The impact of ethical leadership, leadership effectiveness, work-related stress and turnover intention on the organizational commitment. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 2(2), 7–14.
- Antinluoma, M., Ilomäki, L., Lahti-Nuuttila, P., & Toom, A. (2018). Schools as professional learning communities. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 7(5), 76–91. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v7n5p76>
- Ahmeds, S., Seyed, S., Sumair, F., Asif, U., & Ashley, A. (2023). Promoting employee voice behavior: Role of ethical leadership and mediation of felt obligation. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 7(6), 735–750.
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organisation. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63, 1–18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1990.tb00506>
- Al-Kubaisi, H. U. D. A., Shahbal, S., & Khan, A. (2022). Educational institutional management: Pedagogical and distributed leadership—A competencies based learning model. *The Seybold Report Journal*, 17(10), 1601–1622.
- Alharbi, N. S., Youssef, H. A., Felemban, E. M., Alqarni, S. S., Alharbi, N. M., Alsayed, A. A. O., ... & Shahbal, S. (2022). Saudi emergency nurses preparedness for biological disaster management at the governmental hospitals. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(9), 1218–1235.
- Bedi, A., Alpaslan, C., & Green, S. (2016). A meta-analytic review of ethical leadership outcomes and moderators. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 139. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10551-015-2625-1>.
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brit, B., & Marit, A. (2022). Ethical thinking and decision making in the leadership of professional learning communities. *Educational Research*, 64(2), 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2022.2044879>.
- Bogler, R., & Somech, A. (2004). Influence of teacher empowerment on teachers' organizational commitment, professional commitment and organizational citizenship behavior in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 277–289.
- Brown, M. E., Trevino, L., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117–134.
- Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Stoll, L., Thomas, M., Wallace, A., & Greenwood, A. (2005). Creating and sustaining effective professional learning communities. Retrieved from http://www.saspa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Creating-and-Sustaining-PLCs_tcm4-631034-1.pdf.
- Bahadori, M., Ghasemi, M., Hasanpoor, E., Hosseini, S. M., & Alimohammadzadeh, K. (2021). The influence of ethical leadership on organizational commitment in fire organizations. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 37*(1), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-04-2020-0043>
- Cohen, A. (2014). *Organizational commitment theory*. USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M. (2008). The role of the employment relationship in employee well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 13(2), 127–134.
- Dostar, M., Mostaghimi, M., & Ismailzadeh, M. (2015). Ethical leadership and investigate the effect of its dimensions on organizational commitment. *Improvement and Change Management Studies*, 24(79), 27–45. [In Persian].
- Erdalan, M. R., Tajobi, M., & Majuni, H. (2019). The role of ethical leadership in organizational citizenship behavior with the mediation of organizational justice and organizational commitment. *Journal of Management in Organizations*, 8(2), 11–46. [In Persian].
- Eisenberger, R., Armeli, S., Rexwinkel, B., Lynch, P. D., & Rhoades, L. (2001). Reciprocation of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.1.42>
- Gunnulfsen, A. E., Jensen, R., & Møller, J. (2021). Looking back and forward: A critical review of the history and future progress of the ISSPP. *Journal of Educational Administration, ahead-of-print*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2021-0088>

- George, J. M., & Jones, G. R. (2012). *Understanding and managing organizational behavior* (S. Yagan, Ed.; 6th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Hipp, K., & Huffman, J. (2010). *Demystifying professional learning communities: School leadership at its best*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Hosseini, S. S., Dadili, S., & Jalilvandfard, S. (2023). Examine the importance of education and its role in the development and progress of the country. *New Developments in Psychology, Educational Sciences and Education*, 61(4), 117–129. [In Persian].
- Ho, D., Lee, M., & Teng, Y. (2015). Exploring the relationship between school-level teacher qualifications and teachers' perceptions of school-based professional learning community practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54, 32–43.
- Hausman, C. S., & Goldring, E. B. (2001). Sustaining teacher commitment: The role of professional communities. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76, 30–51.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2013). System improvement through collective capacity building: The power and potential of professional learning communities. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, 2, 4–17.
- Ismaili, E., Sameri, M., & Hasani, M. (2020). Analysis of the role of organizational trust, cooperation among teachers and collaborative decision making on teachers' teaching activities with the mediating role of teachers' self-efficacy (structural equation modeling). *Iranian Curriculum Studies Quarterly*, 15(65), 141–166. [In Persian].
- Jamalzadeh, M., Jamalzadeh, A., & Dezhkouhi, M. J. (2022). The mediating role of job enthusiasm in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment of elementary school teachers in Dehdasht. *Fourth National Conference on Professional Research in Psychology and Counseling from the Teacher's Perspective*, Minab. <https://civilica.com/doc/1528011>. [In Persian].
- Jongmans, C. T., Slegers, P. J. C., Biemans, H. J. A., & De Jong, F. P. C. M. (2005). Teachers' participation in school policy: Nature, extent and orientation. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 10(1), 1–12.
- Khasawneh, Y., Alsarayreh, R., Ajlouni, A., Eyadat, H., & Ayasrah, M. (2023). An examination of teacher collaboration in professional learning communities and collaborative teaching practices. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 10(3), 446–452.
- Kalshoven, K., Den Hartog, D. N., & De Hoogh, A. H. B. (2011). Ethical leadership at work questionnaire (ELW): Development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(1), 51–69. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.007>
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*.
- Kamilah, M., Mamduh, U., Damayanti, I. A., & Anshori, M. I. (2023). Ethical leadership: Literature study. *Indonesian Journal of Contemporary Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(4), 655–680. <https://doi.org/10.55927/modern.v2i4.4753>
- Li, Y., Wang, N., Liu, J., & Hou, X. (2017). Demystifying neural style transfer. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1701.01036*.
- Leclear, E. A. (2005). Relationship among leadership styles, school culture, and student achievement. (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation). University of Florida, USA.
- Lauermaun, F., & Karabenick, S. (2013). The meaning and measure of teachers' sense of responsibility for educational outcomes. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 30, 13–26.
- Louis, K. S. (2015). Linking leadership to learning: State, district and local effects. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 3, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v1.30321>
- Liu, S., & Hallinger, P. (2020). Unpacking the effects of culture on school leadership and teacher learning in China. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. Epub ahead of print 1 January, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143219896042>
- Motahrinejad, H., & Joza, H. (2020). Analyzing the structural relationships of professional learning communities and teachers' commitment with the mediating role of collective efficacy. *Journal of Management in Organizations*, 9(1), 91–113. [In Persian].
- Mirahmadi, K., Khorassani, A., Abolqasemi, M., & Mehri, D. (2017). Professional learning communities: A critical strategy to improve teachers' self-efficacy. *Education and Learning Research Journal*, 16(1), 1–14. [In Persian].

- McKenna, J., & Jeske, D. (2021). Ethical leadership and decision authority effects on nurses' engagement, exhaustion, and turnover intention. *J Adv Nurs*, 77, 198–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14591>
- Myers, E. (2023). Participative leadership theory and decision-making style. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/participative-leadership.html>. Last accessed: 06.07.2023.
- Mokhtaripoor, M., & Syadat, S. A. (2008). Management with ethical intelligence. *Journal of Tadbir*, 205, 29–33.
- Nazaruddin, I., Sofyani, H., & Saleh, Z. (2021). The role of ethical leadership, organizational support, and participative decision-making in the implementation of effective performance measurement systems in higher education institutions. *Malaysian Online Journal of Education Management (MOJEM)*, 9(1), 38–57.
- Nkengbeza, D. (2017). *Education reconstruction in a conflict and post-conflict environment: Building professional learning communities in schools in difficult environments*. London: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Sarafidou, J.-O., & Chatziioannidis, G. (2013). Teacher participation in decision making and its impact on school and teachers. *International Journal of Educational Management*. ISSN: 0951-354X.
- Schwepker, C. H. (2019). Strengthening customer value development and ethical intent in the salesforce: The influence of ethical values, person–organization fit, and trust in manager. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159(3), 913–925. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3851-0>.
- Stoll, L. (2011). Leading professional learning communities. *Leadership and learning*, 103–117.
- Somech, A. (2010). Participative decision making in schools: A mediating-moderating analytical framework for understanding school and teacher outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(2), 174–209.
- To, K. H., Yin, H., Tam, W. W. Y., & Keung, C. P. C. (2021). Principal leadership practices, professional learning communities, and teacher commitment in Hong Kong kindergartens: A multilevel SEM analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(4), 889–911. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211015227>
- Thornton, K. (2023). Leadership in professional learning communities: A review of literature. *Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care through Leadership and Organizational Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39419-5-11>.
- Tablli, H., Moradi, M., & Irannejad, S. J. (2017). The relationship between ethical leadership and individual performance: The mediating role of organizational commitment. *The Quarterly Journal of Ethics in Science and Technology*, 14(2), 142–149. [In Persian].
- Valverde, M., Torres-Jiménez, M., Lucia-Casademunt, A. M., & Pacheco-Martínez, A. M. (2021). Do national values of culture and sustainability influence direct employee PDM levels and scope? The search for a European answer. *Sustainability*, 13(14), 8016. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13148016>
- Wong, C. A., & Spence Laschinger, H. K. (2015). The influence of frontline manager job strain on burnout, commitment, and turnover intention: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 52(12), 1824–1833.
- Wahlstrom, K. L., & Louis, K. S. (2008). How teachers experience principal leadership: The roles of professional community, trust, efficacy, and shared responsibility. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44, 458–495.
- Yin, H., To, K. H., Keung, C., & Tam, W. (2019). Professional learning communities count: Examining the relationship between faculty trust and teacher professional learning in Hong Kong kindergartens. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 82, 153–163.
- Yildiz, M. L. (2019). Ethical leadership and organizational justice: The mediating effect of communication satisfaction. *Turkish Journal of Business Ethics*, 12(1), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.12711/tjbe.2019.12.1.0122>
- Ylimaki, R. M., Jacobson, S., Johnson, H. W., Klar, J., Nino, M. T., Orr, & Scribner, S. (2021). Successful principal leadership in challenging American public schools: A brief history of ISSPP research in the United States and its major findings. *Journal of Educational Administration*, ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2021-0087>
- Zhang, S., Bowers, A. J., & Mao, Y. (2020). Authentic leadership and teachers' voice behavior: The mediating role of psychological empowerment and moderating role of interpersonal trust.

Educational Management Administration & Leadership, Epub ahead of print 17 April 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220915925>

-Zulham, Z., Aini, Q., Mehmood, N., Sharma, S., Heri Iswanto, A., Suardi Wekke, I., Gustina Zainal, A., Pavlovna Panova, E., & Fedorova, N. (2022). Analysing the relationship between ethical leadership and the voice of Malaysian Muslim employees. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78(4).
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7340>

Name: Mohammad Hassani*

Email: m.hassani@urmia.ac.ir

Department of Educational Sciences; Urmia University, Urmia, Iran.



Name: Sina Gholipour Gholandar

Email: st_s.gholipour@urmia.ac.ir

Department of Educational Sciences; Urmia University



Name: Abolfazl Ghasemzadeh

Email: ghasemzadeh@azaruniv.ac.ir

Department of Educational Sciences, Shahid Maddani University of Azerbaijan

