

**THE INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON TURNOVER INTENTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION****M Abyan Syuja<sup>1</sup>, Aryana Satrya<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Universitas Indonesia, m.abyan@ui.ac.id<sup>2</sup>Universitas Indonesia, aryana@ui.ac.id

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**ABSTRACT**

*The service industry in the mechanical engineering field company where employees are required to have high accuracy and under close supervision, potentially feel great work pressure which can stimulate turnover intentions. There are problems in organizational culture cultivation and good governance implementation, thus potentially having low results of ethical leadership and job satisfaction, which resulted in high turnover intentions. This research aims to analyze the correlation between ethical leadership and organizational culture towards turnover intentions directly and through job satisfaction as an intervening variable and to analyze the mediation effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions. The research method used is quantitative. Primary data are obtained directly from subjects through questionnaires. The populations are 524 employees. The sampling technique used census; thus, all populations can be used as research samples. Data are analyzed by pre-test and path analysis with Structural Equation Modelling. There is no directly proportional and significant correlation between independent variables towards mediation variables as well as inverse and significant correlation between independent variables and mediation variables towards dependent variables.*

**Keywords:** *Ethical Leadership, Turnover Intentions, Job Satisfaction.*

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**1. Introduction**

Turnover intention is a process that reflects whether an employee has thoughts or intentions to quit the job, look for another job, and intentions to leave the job that is currently being worked on (Kim, 2017). De Simone (2018) defined turnover intention as a complicated and strange process arising from negative feelings or thoughts about their work atmosphere, which will finally be responded to in the form of a decision to leave their workplace. Turnover intention refers to the tendency of an employee to intend to leave the company where he works; where when this trend is increasing will lead to the behavior to decide to leave the company (Tarigan & Ariani, 2015; Belete, 2018). Despite the fact that turnover is something that cannot be avoided by the company, however, the effect of turnover intention among the employees is very high and very concerning for the company at the moment (Habib, 2015). The turnover intention in large numbers in the company needs to get serious attention, and it is necessary to explore the reasons for the employee's resignation. Several research found that employee turnover intention is affected by job satisfaction and ethical leadership (Suifan, 2017; Belete, 2018).

Attention to the importance of turnover intentions cannot be separated from the factors which can give the effect of turnover intentions in the company. Among some aspects which can give the effect of turnover intention, one of them is ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is an important element for the organization because it helps the organization in reducing business expenses through fair and moral treatment of their employees and other resources. In their research, Demirtas (2015) defined ethical leadership as a style, or normative behavior carried out by the leader by showing personal actions and how the interpersonal relationship built will affect the behavior of the subordinates by conducting two-way communication, assertion, and decision-making. Wang (2016) stated that ethical leadership has a close relationship with the job satisfaction of the employees. Their research has proved how the job satisfaction level of an employee increases when under ethical leadership by implementing a

disciplinary attitude toward wrongdoers, fair and equitable treatment, and attention. With those treatments, the employees will respond with the return of positive attitudes and behaviors, which affects job satisfaction (Shafique, 2018).

Job satisfaction, according to Bernarto (2020), is a multi-dimensional concept that involves the pleasant emotional feelings of the employees in doing their jobs as well as having an impression from their work experiences. High job satisfaction will arise positive feelings in looking at anything, either their own self, their jobs, as well as their responsibilities (Colquitt, 2015). Job satisfaction itself can affect turnover intentions. Increasing job satisfaction through appropriate interventions to handle the company will encourage the desire of employees to be more engaged in their jobs (García-Sierra, 2016). Moreover, job satisfaction can completely mediate the relationship between ethical leadership. This is as stated by Shafique (2018) and Cronley (2017) in their research proved the significant relationship between job satisfaction mediating ethical leadership towards employees turnover intentions. Furthermore, Lin (2020) and Niguse (2018) added that job satisfaction also mediates the relationship of organizational culture towards turnover intentions. When employees face better changes in the company culture and are worker-friendly, will arise the eagerness to learn and work for the employees where is a reflection of the job satisfaction they experienced and will affect their desire not to commit turnover intention (Niguse, 2018).

Based on the explanations, it is very important for the researchers to predict, determine, and find every possibility which becomes the cause of someone committing turnover intention (Kim, 2017). This is what causes the author to eventually draw conclusions and conduct research regarding the effect of ethical leadership on turnover intentions through job satisfaction as mediating variable. Seeing that there is still no research linking ethical leadership as one of the independent variables towards turnover intentions, the researcher is interested in conducting this research. It is expected that this research is able to provide contributions to the management of human resources in the company as well as the organization. Therefore, it is expected the leaders to minimize the emergence of turnover intentions level in their employees.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Ethical Leadership**

Ethical Leadership is a leader who has principles, beliefs, and values which describe an appropriate organizational behavior, thus affecting the employees to reach the organization's purposes (Al-Sharafi, 2013). According to the qualitative findings, Brown (2005) developed ten indicators to measure the perception of ethical Leadership, namely the ethical leadership scale (ELS), such as: live an ethical life; gain success; listen to fellow employees; discipline the fellow employees; fair and balanced; trustworthy; discuss business ethics or values with fellow employees; set an example; consider the interests of fellow employees; ask for an opinion.

### **2.2 Job Satisfaction**

According to Word et al. in Sutanto (2013), job satisfaction is how far someone feels positive or negative towards a job. This means that job satisfaction is a positive feeling that arises from work. According to Luthans (1998), the measurement of employee job satisfaction by identifying five dimensions of existing job characteristics, the five dimensions above namely: the job itself, income/salary, promotion chance, supervision, and co-workers. According to Wibawa (2016), there are five causes that can arise the job satisfaction behavior towards an employee, namely: need fulfillment; discrepancies; value attainment; equity; and dispositional/genetic components.

A different opinion is delivered by As'ad (1995) stated that several causes can affect job satisfaction, namely: chance to move forward; job safety; salary; company and also management; supervision; intrinsic factors of the job; working conditions; social aspects in the job; communication; and facilities. Based on Luthans (1998), job satisfaction has an impact that can affect some things such as performance, turnover intentions, and attendance rate. The opinion of As'ad (1995) regarding the impacts of job satisfaction, namely: productivity or performance, as well as absenteeism and turnover.

### **2.3 Turnover Intentions**

Dharma (2013) stated that turnover intentions are the tendency level of behavior owned by the employees in order to think to look for a new job in a different organization as well as have a desire to quit the company within three months to two years. Turnover intentions also can be known from several indicators as follows: thoughts to quit, desire to look for vacancies, and intention to quit the organization. A different opinion is delivered by Harnoto

(2002) turnover intentions are characterized by several factors related to employees behavior, namely: Increased absenteeism; Feeling lazy to work; Improvement of working procedures; Increased protests to superiors; Increased positive behavior.

According to the opinion of Mobley (1978) that the high or low level of turnover intention will cause several impacts for the employees as well as companies; the impacts will be explained as follows: increased workloads; increased employee withdrawal fees; increased training costs; decreased production during the turnover process; profligacy caused by new employees; and the emergence of stress in employees. The hypotheses which can be formulated in this research are as follows:

*H1: It is suspected that there is a positive and significant effect between ethical Leadership towards job satisfaction of employees.*

*H2: It is suspected that there is a negative and significant effect between ethical Leadership towards turnover intentions.*

*H3: It is suspected that there is a negative and significant effect between job satisfaction towards turnover intentions.*

*H4: It is suspected that the indirect relationship (ethical Leadership towards turnover intentions through job satisfaction) is higher compared to the direct relationship (ethical Leadership towards turnover intentions).*

### 3. Research Method

This research used the quantitative method, where the research object is PT. X, which is headquartered in Bogor City, whereas these research subjects are all employees at the staff level at PT. X. Primary data in this research are obtained directly from the employees of PT. X through questionnaires. The populations are 524 staff PT. X. The sampling technique used census; thus, all populations can be used as research samples.

In this research, the independent variables are ethical leadership and organizational culture, the intervening variable is job satisfaction, and the dependent variable is turnover intentions. After adjusting the results of the questionnaire interpretation with the research object, the validity and reliability testing is conducted for pre-test data by using SPSS 25 software. This research also used the path analysis method with Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the effect of the intervening variable, as stated in Figure 1. The analysis supporting tool used is the SMART-PLS program.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Research Hypothesis Analysis

*H1: There is a positive and significant effect between ethical leadership toward job satisfaction of employees*

The diagram showed the ethical leadership variable with the job satisfaction variable showed the t-value number has fulfilled the criteria. Therefore it can be stated that the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction is positive and significant. The higher the good attitude and behavior in terms of leadership aspect, the higher the job satisfaction of employees in a company. This result is in line with the research which stated a positive relationship between both (Naiyananont, 2017; Celik, 2015; Qing, 2019; Ren, 2017).

The effect of employee authentic leadership behavior on job satisfaction is analyzed by analyzing whether there is a significant relationship (correlation) statistically between authentic leadership and transparency dimension in the relationship, internalized moral, balanced information evaluation, and self-awareness which is the authentic leadership and intrinsic satisfaction dimension and external which is job satisfaction.

The research by Naiyananont (2017) stated that ethical leadership has a positive correlation with job satisfaction. The difference gap between the leadership style presented by the manager and the leadership style expected by employees cause job dissatisfaction. Therefore, an authentic leadership attitude has a positive effect on job satisfaction levels. This situation reduces intra-organizational work stress and creates an organizational environment that improves employee performance.

Appropriate, honest, and fair treatment of supervisors, as well as two-way communication in giving a chance to participate and express opinions of their employees about every decision of the superior has given satisfaction in doing their job. The same results

Also stated by Çelik (2015) stated that ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction, where fair treatment will return a response in the form of positive attitudes and behaviors as a form of the job satisfaction they received.

*H2: There is no negative and significant effect between ethical leadership towards turnover intentions*

The diagram showed that the ethical leadership variable and turnover intentions variable showed the t-value number had not fulfilled the t-value criteria. Therefore it can be stated that the relationship between ethical leadership and turnover intentions is negative insignificant. One possible explanation is the choice of respondents because based on Nejati (2021) with variation respondents from various sectors, including telecommunication (39 percent), medical (27 percent), industrial (20 percent), and electronic (13 percent). The higher good leadership, the lower the turnover intentions of employees in a company. This result is in line with the research which stated a negative relationship between both (Shareef, 2018; Loi, 2015; Lin, 2017; & Shafique, 2018).

The research conducted by Shareef (2018) showed a negative and significant effect between ethical leadership and turnover intentions. In their research, the values of ethical leadership implemented in an organization (for example, fair attitude, decreased ego, and trust) have reduced the turnover intentions level of employees. The same result was also stated by Loi (2015) in their research stated that if ethical leadership is well implemented, then the intentions of employees to keep their job will tend to increase.

According to Shafique (2018), when the leaders show good and ethical leadership, employees reciprocally provide positive attitudes and behaviors towards their jobs, which minimize the possibility of turnover intention or an intention to quit and move to other companies. In fact, ethical leadership is not only important to generate positive employee behavior but also can reduce and divert unwanted attitudes and behaviors, such as a desire to change the company (Lin, 2017). Research by (Eisenbeiss, 2012) has shown that ethical leadership negatively affects the intention to change the company and reduce work stress. This is also confirmed by DeConinck (2014), who found in his study that ethical leadership directly and negatively affects turnover intention.

*H3: There is a negative and significant effect between job satisfaction towards turnover intentions*

The diagram showed that the job satisfaction variable and turnover intentions variable showed the t-value number had fulfilled the t-value criteria; therefore, it can be stated that the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions is negative and insignificant. The higher the job satisfaction level of employees, the lower the turnover intentions of employees in a company. This result is in line with the research which stated a negative relationship between both (Chen, 2015; Ekhsan, 2019).

The research by Chen (2015) and Ekhsan (2019) have found analysis results that stated that job satisfaction has a negative and significant effect on turnover intentions. When an employee gets a higher level of job satisfaction in the workplace, and thus the employee has a responsibility level, and the sense of belonging to the company in employee also increases; therefore, the desire to move will decrease (Scanlan, 2019).

Many companies try to reduce the turnover intentions of employees by encouraging them to increase the satisfaction of their employees with a focus on creating a healthy and supportive work environment. This means that job satisfaction is very influential on the turnover intentions desire where when job satisfaction increases, then the turnover intentions will decrease further. Supported by the research by Girma (2019), the increase in job satisfaction in employees reduces turnover intention or the desire to move in employees.

*H4: There is a higher indirect relationship (ethical leadership towards turnover intentions through job satisfaction) compared to the direct relationship (ethical leadership towards turnover intentions).*

Based on the research results, obtained a t-value score of  $> 1,96$ ; therefore, it can be stated that job satisfaction mediated the effect between ethical leadership and turnover intentions; the effect is negative. Ethical leadership through job satisfaction has proven to have a strong effect on turnover intentions in the research conducted by Nejati (2021). Several types of research stated that ethical leadership through job satisfaction has an effect on ethical turnover (Trevino, 2000; Nejati, 2021). However, there are several types of research that show that ethical leadership has a negative effect directly on employee turnover (Demirtas, 2014; Kim, 2015).

Nejati (2021) said that the ethical leadership implemented in an organization has given positive work experiences to the employees. In return, employees tend to reciprocate by showing a positive attitude regarding their jobs. This will finally have an impact on subsequent attitudes and behavior, namely reducing their desires to stay in their current jobs. The research by Ng (2015) added that employees working in a company with an ethical leader would make employees more satisfied with their jobs and more loyal to their supervisors and organizations. Therefore, the indirect relationship (ethical leadership towards turnover intentions through job satisfaction) is higher than the direct relationship (ethical leadership towards turnover intentions).

Table 1. Measurement Model Assesment.

Construct/Dimension	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	EL1	0,954	0,899	0,534
	EL2	0,556		
	EL3	0,686		
	EL4	0,809		
	EL5	0,715		
	EL6	0,695		
	EL7	0,657		
	EL8	0,784		
	EL9	0,789		
	EL10	0,556		
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	JSCD1	0,585	0,873	0,639
	JSCD2	0,725		
	JSCD3	0,175		
	JSCD4	0,549		
	JSP1	0,509		
	JSP2	0,536		
	JSP3	0,578		
	JSPD1	0,673		
	JSPD2	0,724		
	JSPD3	0,529		
	JSPD4	0,733		
	JSSD1	0,432		
	JSSD2	0,327		
	JSSD3	0,436		
	JSSD4	0,528		
	JSSD5	0,74		
	JSSD6	0,639		
	JSSD7	0,546		
	JSSD8	0,607		
	JSWI1	0,662		
JSWI2	0,524			
JSWI3	0,13			
JSWI4	0,482			
JSWI5	0,445			
<b>Turnover Intention</b>	TI1	0,92	0,951	0,866
	TI2	0,918		
	TI3	0,954		

(Source: Author, 2022)

## 4.2 Description of Job Satisfaction Mediation

The testing of the mediation value of job satisfaction in the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction with turnover intentions is based on the significance assessment of the relationship between two variables and the comparison of the  $\beta$  value in the direct and indirect relationship between research variables. The relationship between the ethical leadership variable with turnover intention has a significant value. The value showed that the EL variable has no significant effect on the TI variable. However, the indirect relationship mediated by JS has a significant positive value. This showed that JS has a full mediation effect, and there is an indirect only mediation in the relationship between EL and TI.

Based on the fourth hypothesis testing results, the job satisfaction variable has a role as a mediation between the ethical leadership variable and turnover intentions of employees. The implementation of ethical leadership in the workplace can support the realization of job satisfaction in employees, then the realization of job satisfaction will also have an effect in supporting the realization of a reduction in the turnover intentions level in an organization or company. The research results are also in line with several other types of research. This effect of ethical leadership on job satisfaction is supported in the research journal conducted by Qing (2019). This effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions is supported in the research journal conducted by Chen (2015), Ekhsan (2019), and Scanlan (2019), which found that job satisfaction has a negative and significant effect on turnover intentions in an organization or company.

Table 2. Inner VIF Values

	EL	JS	TI
EL		1,000	1,615
JS			1,615

(Source: Author, 2022)

## 4.3 Overall Analysis

Employees want their managers to have leadership qualities. The difference gap between the leadership style presented by the managers and the leadership style expected by the employees causes job dissatisfaction. Therefore, ethical leadership attitude has a positive effect on job satisfaction levels. Because the distance between the ethical leadership style expected by the wage earners is shown by their managers and the leadership style that they perceived is reduced, the job satisfaction level is increased. The fact that the leadership behavior of the managers in the organization gives satisfaction to employees enables open communication between leaders. This situation reduces intra-organizational work stress and creates an organizational environment that improves employee performance. Therefore, the job satisfaction in employees increased, and the turnover level of employees decreased.

The negative correlation between leadership control and external-oriented culture towards the level of comfort and well-being of employees affects the desire to change jobs. Cultures that are not oriented to flexibility tend to be rigid and pragmatic, characterized by not being open to new ideas, hard to develop, and closing the development between employees. Flexibility-oriented organizational culture, which is determined by the attitudes of a leader which can provide a context of cooperation and support, can give a big score because of its relationship with authentic leadership, which in turn produces a positive effect such as job satisfaction of employees and reduce the desire to move.

In the research, job satisfaction can completely mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational culture. This is supported by Cronley (2017) and Shafique (2018) in their research, which proved a significant relationship between job satisfaction mediates ethical leadership on employees' turnover intentions. Good leadership gave job satisfaction to employees and thus made them stay in their current job and show less desire to leave the company. Moreover, Lin (2020) and Niguse (2018) added that job satisfaction also mediates the relationship between organizational culture and turnover intentions. When employees face change to a better and more worker-friendly company culture, it will create enthusiasm for learning and working for the employees where this is a reflection of the job satisfaction they experienced and will affect their desires not to carry out turnover intentions.





Figure 1. Summary of Hypotheses Testing  
(Source: Author, 2022)

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

Referring to the results of previous research on the effect of ethical leadership and organizational culture variables on turnover intentions and job satisfaction of employees at PT. X, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Ethical leadership has not a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction for employees at PT. X. The application of positive leadership ethics by supervisors and leaders will provide feedback in the form of positive attitudes and behavior in the form of increasing job satisfaction felt by employees.
2. Ethical leadership has a negative and significant effect on the turnover intentions of employees at PT. X. The application of a good ethical leadership attitude by the leader will minimize the desire of employees to quit or move to another company.
3. Job satisfaction has a negative and significant effect on the turnover intentions of employees at PT. X. Job satisfaction felt by employees will form an attitude of royalty in the company so that it will reduce the desire to change jobs.
4. Ethical leadership has an indirect effect on turnover intentions through job satisfaction. Ethical leadership has formed a sense of job satisfaction in employees, which can ultimately foster an attitude of employee royalty to stay with the company.

### 5.1 Managerial Implications

In the discussion chapter, it is known that the hypothesis formulated in this study has been declared proven and acceptable, which has been tested statistically. The results of this study can be a reference and advice for the management of PT. X is primarily to increase job satisfaction and formulate steps to reduce the level of turnover intentions for employees. The variables that affect job satisfaction and turnover intentions are ethical leadership and organizational culture variables. This study has also confirmed that job satisfaction has a role in mediating the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational culture on turnover intentions. The analysis results obtained have stated that ethical leadership and organizational culture play an important role in increasing job satisfaction and reducing the level of turnover intentions of employees at PT. X. In addition, a stronger relationship is shown in the independent variable, namely ethical leadership and organizational culture, on the dependent variable, namely turnover intentions mediated by the job satisfaction variable, than in the independent relationship with the dependent without a mediating variable. Thus, these results can be a reference for the management of PT. X to pay special attention to these four aspects so that employees feel comfortable and increase their satisfaction at work, thereby eliminating the feeling of wanting to leave the company.

### 5.2 Limitations of the Research

The limitations in this study are the independent variables used are still limited. The research site used is still limited to one company, so it has limitations in measuring the turnover intentions of employees in general. Therefore, similar research is expected to be tested with more places and respondents in order to produce more valid results.

### 5.3 Future Research

The results of the analysis and the limitations found in this study are expected to be a suggestion and input for future researchers to expand the research so that it becomes a paper with more implementable results. The addition of variables as well as the expansion of the research place and respondents are expected to be carried out in further research as a comparison with the results of this study and existing theories.

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