

# ANTECEDENTS OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

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## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine the antecedents of ethical leadership by drawing on the theory of planned behavior (TPB). The authors hypothesized that a leader's attitude toward ethical behavior, subjective norm about ethical behavior and perceived behavioral control relate to his/her ethical intention and subsequently to the follower's perceptions of ethical leadership.

## Design/methodology/approach

The authors found general support for the model using data collected from a two-wave and two-source field study involving 119 supervisor-subordinate dyads.

## Findings

The results demonstrated that the leader's favorable attitude toward ethical behavior and perceived behavioral control predicted their moral intention and subsequently the follower's perception of ethical leadership, whereas the subjective norm did not.

## Practical implications

The study's findings provide important insights into developing relevant training and intervention programs in organizations to cultivate ethical leadership. These can be done by encouraging leaders' moral intentions

through changing their attitudinal and control beliefs regarding ethical behavior. Study findings also provide important insight into developing the recruiting device to help selecting individuals who may have favorable opinions toward ethical behavior and thus have the potential to be a moral leader.

## Originality/value

This study first demonstrates the applicability of the TPB in examining the antecedents of ethical leadership.

## Introduction

**Antecedents Of Ethics** The term ethics is derived from the Greek word *êthos*, meaning ‘custom and usage,’ it is more appropriately identified as originating from *swêdhêthos*, in which the concept of individual morality and behavioral habits are related and identified as an essential quality of existence. Shea, in 1988, defines ethics as the principle of conduct governing an individual or a profession and ‘standards of behavior’ (Murthy, 2004) [14]. Tandon (1994) [17] stated that ethics was advocated many decades back by the greatest Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The creator of ethics as a study of morality was the Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399 BC), who used ethics to define the terms of human virtues. The most important personal values identified are: righteousness, courage, honesty, tolerance, goodness, sincerity and fairness. Bozovic (2007) [2] referred that in the field of ethics, Socrates and the entire Hellenic world saw the issue of goodness in human life, i.e., happiness, as the most vital. Goodness is a human characteristic and the most significant moral value. Socrates believed that virtue could be taught, i.e. virtue is knowledge and added that knowing oneself is a prerequisite for happiness. Plato (428-427 BC) thought of happiness as an inner feeling and disrespect of ethical principles leading to unhappiness. Thus, those who seek happiness must practice self-control and adjust their behaviour in conformity to moral principles. Plato expressed a similar view in his "Republic", where he articulated that those who are happy are the ones who are just and who live an honest life, while those who are unjust are unhappy and the tyrant of the state also becomes the greatest tyrant of his own happiness. A man should strive towards his happiness, but he has an even greater aim of making his community happy.

Similarly, Aristotle (384-322 BC) enumerates the basic principles that happiness can be divided into: wisdom, virtue and welfare. He sees happiness only as the subjective side of goodness. Aristotle thought that to do good, human impulses and instincts must always be governed by reason and may not be suitable in them. The Stoics

and the Epicureans, Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel, further contributed to the theory of ethics based on Aristotle's teaching.

Mathias (1994) [13] highlighted that the Indian history and culture offers a good ground for the rooting of business ethics. From about 1000 to 1600 BC, the first definition of social and business ethics in India was framed. Tandon (1994) [17] further avowed that the history and culture of India offer a good ground for the rooting of business ethics. In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna had laid down the rights and obligations of each individual. He affirmed that the manager must see that the task assigned to him, not considering his gain or profit but must discharge his responsibility purely in terms of fulfilment and that which gives him satisfaction in the true sense. In the Aryan ethical code, there were rights and obligations for the sons who inherited their father's property would also inherit the debts, and the debts would go down to two generations. The Roman law laid down similar obligations almost 1300 years later. In the Mauryan era, the concept of accountability of the manager was first laid down. When India had various invasions, ethics had weakened, and it no longer played the same role. But ethics did come back at the time of Akbar's regime since he conceptualized and designed something indispensable for regular ethical functioning, i.e., a in understandable and stable commercial framework. The British East India Company, where ethics wavered till 1947, gave India a complex but a -sound system of rights, obligations, duties and an operational framework. Mahatma Gandhi, too, advocated that it is wrong to think that business is incompatible with ethics and it is possible to carry on business profitably and yet honestly and truthfully. Of all the definitions given to the term 'ethics', the vital points have been summarized by Adam (2012)

: · Identifying what is right and what is wrong,

· Identifying a generally acceptable standard of behavior,

· Identifying a system of moral principles and rules of conduct for a specific group of people or professionals, and finally,

### Objectives

Of The Study the main objectives of the study are;

1. To study the antecedents of ethics;
2. To examine the relationship of ethics with other analogous conceptions;
3. To analyse the rationale behind the development of ethical principles; and
4. To study the relevance of ethical conduct in the workplace

### Methodology Of The Study

[The](#) analytical research method has been applied to evaluate the issue of ethics and its relevance in the corporate world. The researcher has referred data from secondary sources viz; books, journals, articles, reports and the internet to critically assess the research problem.

### Significance Of The Study

An ethically managed organization commands respect from the public as well as from government organizations. An organization that behaves ethically stimulates other acquaintances to behave ethically as well. ‘Doing the right thing’, ‘[Not](#) harm’ and ‘Good to all’ are the general expectations of the public from any organization. [A](#) high level of morale and productivity can be easily obtained in organizations that treat all their employees with equality [and](#) encourage [the](#) good team and work culture and ethical practices. Employees treated ethically will more likely behave ethically themselves in dealing with customers and their other associates. It is observed from the study that ethics has become a focus of paramount importance because of the following aspects:

- Business ethics are important because if an enterprise lacks ethics, the employees, the customers, and everyone else involved with the company can be harmed.
- When management is [ethically leading an organization](#), employees follow in those footsteps. Employees make better decisions in less time with business ethics as a guiding principle; this increases productivity and overall employee morale.
  - It attracts customers to the firm’s products, boosting sales and profits.
  - It encourages the employees to stay with the business, provides job security, reduces [Labour](#) turnover and therefore increases [productivity](#)
  - It attracts more employees wanting to work for the business, reduces [recruitment](#) costs and enables [the](#) company to get the most talented employees
  - It attracts investors and keeps [its](#) share price high, thereby protecting the business from takeover.
- Ethical practices may also encourage the business to positively [impact](#) the people and the environment by contributing [to](#) community programs, [developing](#) nearby areas, local charities, funding the educational needs of underprivileged children etc. While this practice benefits the company by allowing them to bypass additional taxes, it also sends out a positive message. [It](#) can bring in more customers, increase or enhance positive business relationships, and even allow the firm to add new employees.

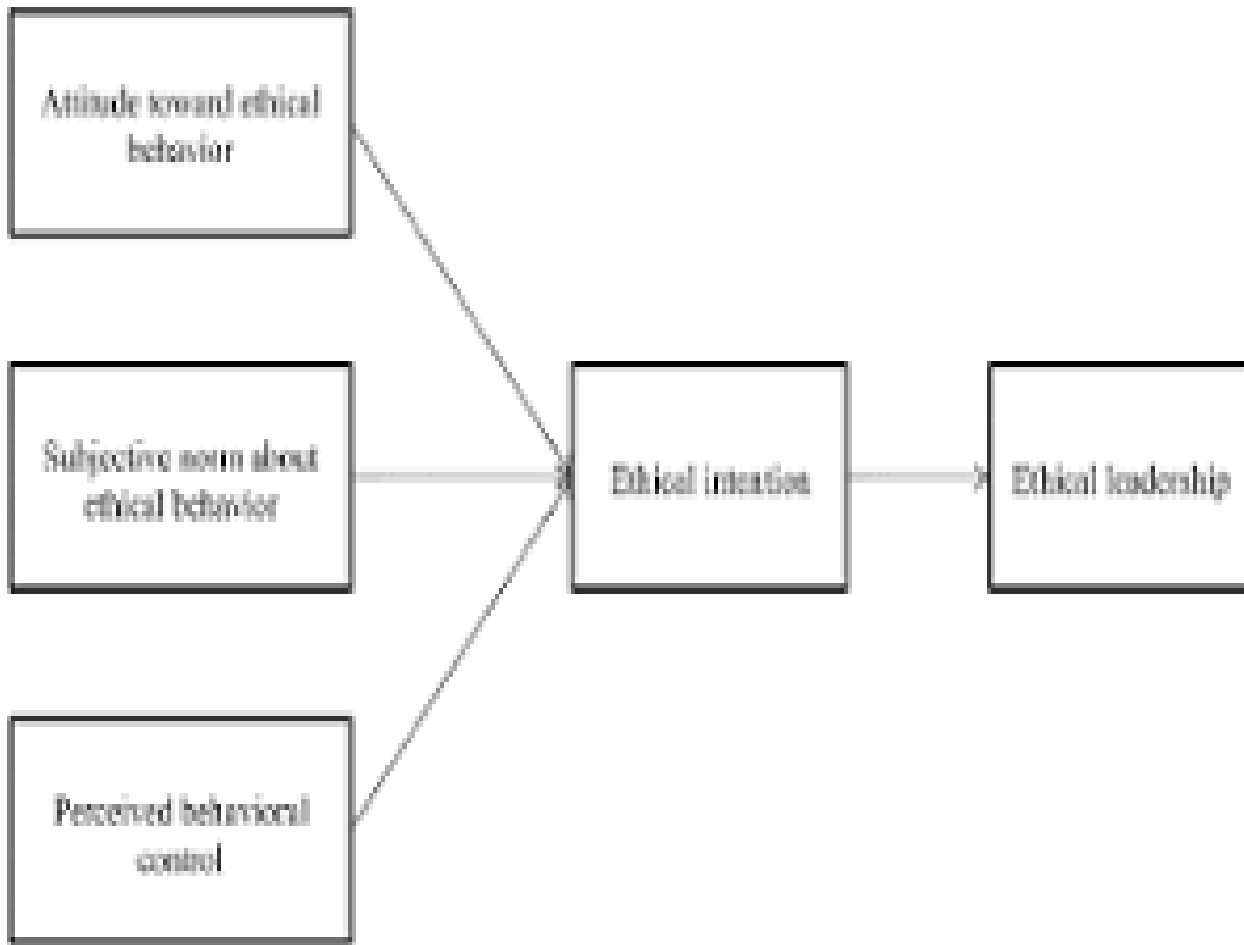
- Ethical conduct assists the organization [in complying](#) with the laws and regulations, as what is ethical in most the cases [is](#) also legal.
- Practice of ethics brings reputation to the business which guides other businesses and individuals to make investment decisions [in](#) the concerned [company](#).
- Ethical practices boost morale and promote esprit de corps. People can work in [a](#) team harmoniously when they trust one another and the management.
- Existence and practice of ethics by the employees develops a great sense of dignity and pride [and](#) provides them with a sense of job security.

### Theoretical background

The TPB (cf., Ajzen, 1991) suggests that individuals' behavior [is](#) driven by their behavioral intentions, which depend on the extent to which those individuals have a favorable attitude toward that behavior [is](#), a favorable subjective norm and a greater perceived behavioral control in the occurring situation of that particular behavior [is](#). This behavioral intention, preceded by actual behavior, indicates, "how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, -to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). TPB indeed has been shown to predict several domain-specific behaviors and behavioral intentions in the specific domain, such as managers' willingness to undertake unethical behaviors (Chang, 1998), salespersons' ethical intentions (Kurland, 1996), and ethical intentions of banking professionals and individuals (Buchan, 2005). A meta-analytic study also showed that TPB predicted intentions and behavior [is](#) in various domains (Armitage and Conner, 2001). According to TPB, behavioral beliefs, as attitudes, guide decisions [about](#) whether or not to perform a particular behavior [is](#) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). The attitude toward the behavior [is](#) can be defined as, "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior [is](#) in question" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). When this attitude is formed and accessible, it guides both intention and behavior [is](#) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). As such, individuals who have a more favorable evaluation toward performing a behavior [is](#) will have the intention to perform that behavior [is](#). In the same vein, we argue that a leader who holds a favorable evaluation (i.e., attitude) toward performing ethical behavior [is](#) will likely have the intention to enact ethical behavior [is](#) in the workplace. Such an [honest](#) intention may entail behaving in a way that harnesses and advocates what is appropriate, [and](#) being respectful and trustworthy toward others (i.e., followers), which eventually, constitutes leaders' demonstration of ethical leadership. Thus, drawing on TPB, we contend that [leaders will intend to enact ethical conduct when they hold a favorable attitude toward ethical](#)

[behavior](#). Such ethical intention will, in turn, translate into their demonstration of ethical leadership as perceived by their followers. Therefore, we hypothesize: H1a. A leader's attitude toward ethical behavior is positively related to [their](#) ethical intention. H1b. A leader's ethical intention is positively related to [their](#) followers' perception of ethical leadership. H1c. [Honest](#) intention mediates the relation between a leader's attitude toward ethical behavior and ethical leadership. TPB suggests that how others behave is also crucial for individuals when considering whether their behavior is right or wrong (i.e., the subjective norm). This subjective norm is "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior (p.188)" (Ajzen, 1991). Hence, subjective norm constitutes a form of social pressure to engage or not to engage in a particular form of behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Following this rationale, we argue that a leader's subjective norm regarding ethical conduct is likely to encourage him/her to shape his/her behavioral intention according to normatively appropriate. Indeed, norms indicate what behavior is ethically appropriate and guide leaders' ethical intentions and subsequently shape ethical leadership. Grounding on this line of reasoning, a recent study conducted among Bangladeshi sales 737 Antecedents of ethical leadership persons showed that subjective norms concerning ethical sales behavior related to their ethical selling intention and behavior (Ferdous and Polonsky, 2013). In addition, the norm can also be conceptualized as an ethical climate which may provide information about ethics and constitute aspects of work climate (Borry, 2017; Mayer, 2014). Hence, leaders may get normative information about ethics from their significant key persons in the workplace (e.g., upper-level leaders). Here, we contend that a subjective norm about ethical behavior will influence a leader's ethical intention. In turn, leader's honest intention will relate to their followers' perception of ethical leadership: H2a. A leader's perception of the subjective norm of ethical behavior is positively related to their ethical intention. H2b. Ethical intention mediates the relation between a leader's subjective norm about ethical behavior and ethical leadership. Finally, TPB (Ajzen, 1991) also stresses the importance of an individual's control in performing the particular behavior of interest. It concerns peoples' beliefs about personal and environmental factors that can help or impede their attempts to accomplish particular behavior of interest. Perceived behavioral control is defined as "the extent to which people believe that they are capable of performing a given behavior, that they have control over its performance" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010, p. 154). Considerable effort, skills and control are required to perform any particular behavior (e.g., ethical behavior) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010; Koger and Winter, 2010). A point to be noted, within the framework of TPB, perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy can be regarded as similar constructs in explaining behavior (see Ajzen, 1991; Cronan et al., 2018). In organizations, behaving as an ethical leader is challenging. Upholding normative standards in the volatile workplace amidst many influential factors (e.g., upper management pressure, employees' needs, customer

demands), leaders often require moral courage for them in order to act ethically (Tanner et al., 2010). Hence, a leader may need behavioural control and appropriate regulation to behave ethically. Here, we contend that a leader's perceived behavioural control, specific to performing the ethical behaviour in the organization, will relate to the enactment of ethical leadership. In line with TPB and previous research (e.g., Kashif et al., 2018; Kurland, 1996), leader's perceived control should encourage the moral reflection and awareness needed to be ethical; in such a way that it fosters ethical leadership. Accordingly, for leaders to have behavioural control, their intention to act ethically should be heightened. This heightened ethical intention should, in turn, translate into the demonstration of their ethical leadership as perceived by the followers. Therefore, we hypothesize: H3a. A leader's perceived behavioural control is positively related to their ethical intention. H3b. Ethical intention mediates the relation between a leader's perceived behavioural control and ethical leadership





## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Ethical leadership**

Moral managers serving as role models are proactive in promoting ethical behavior in the organization. They regularly establish expectations regarding ethical behavior in the workplace and use rewards and punishments to ensure that employees follow ethical guidelines. Strong moral managers are role models for employees based on their behavior and how they reward or punish ethical/unethical conduct. They model their behavior to meet high moral standards. Ethical leaders are role models because they possess status, power and credibility (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Based on the previous research and additional research, Treviño and colleagues used social learning theory to conceptualize ethical leadership (Bandura, 1977; 1986). According to social learning theory, individuals learn proper behavior by observing others (role modeling). They imitate credible and attractive models' behaviors, attitudes, and values (Brown and Treviño, 2006). By observing the supervisors' behavior, employees will be influenced to behave ethically or unethically. When a leader shows caring and concern for employees, followers will perceive a leader as caring and concerned for their well-being. They will reciprocate that leader's support with healthy organizational behavior. In addition, how the supervisor uses rewards and punishments will influence how employees behave. Ethical behavior will increase when subordinates see their manager rewarding ethical behavior and punishing unethical behavior. However, rewarding or failing to punish employees who conduct unethically will send a message that such behavior is appropriate (Brown and Mitchell, 2010). Therefore, as a role models, managers play an essential role in determining what employees perceive as proper behavior.

### **Moral Identity**

Moral identity is built around moral traits (helpful, honest, caring, and generous) and influences peoples' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Aquino and Reed (2002) proposed that moral identity is comprised of two aspects: internalization (the private component that is reflected in a person's beliefs, behaviors, and actions in the world) and symbolization (a person's willingness to convey his or her moral personality to other people through how they act). People high in moral identity internalization participate in moral actions and behave more ethically than others (Mayer et al., 2012). Individuals high in moral identity symbolization partake in Brown and Mitchell (2010) recommended more research into the relationship between moral identity and ethical leadership. Intuitively, moral equivalence should be related to ethical leadership. Ethical leaders possess attributes incorporated into moral identity. Leaders high in moral identity behave morally and do not



compromise their ethical principles (Colby and Damon, 1992). They participate in behaviors related to ethical leadership.

### **Ethical Climate**

Organizations have many work climates, one of which is an ethical work climate (Simha and Cullen, 2012). The ethical climate is a subset of the organization's climate (Treviño, Butterfield, and McCabe, 1998). The ethical climate is 'the prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures with ethical content' (Victor and Cullen, 1988, p. 101). Employees' perceptions of right or wrong behavior in the organization's workplace are influenced by the ethical climate, which establishes norms of behavior (Babin, Boles, and Robin, 2000) and impacts ethical decision-making and behavior (Martin and Cullen, 2006). Research has reported that ethical climate is related to job satisfaction

The behavior of the leaders of an organization is the most crucial determinant of its climate (Stringer, 2002). Organizational leaders influence the organization's ethical work climate by establishing clear expectations of ethical conduct, supporting the organization's values by using rewards and punishments, and coaching, supporting, and mentoring subordinates regarding ethical behavior.

An organization's ethical climate impacts employee ethics (Wimbush and Shepard, 1994). Ethical leaders emphasize the significance of moral behavior, which will positively impact a firm's ethical climate. Because ethical leaders emphasize the importance of ethics when making decisions (doing what is correct), they are in a unique position to nurture moral work climate

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support (POS) has been analyzed extensively for almost 35 years. as "the extent to which employees perceive that their contributions are valued by their organization and that the firm cares about their well-being." Similar to ethical leadership, the norm of reciprocity and social exchange theory) are the basis of POS. According to the standard of reciprocity, individuals will respond to another in kind (i.e. returning a benefit or favour when one receives a gift or favour from another person). When employees perceive increased support from the organization, they will exert increased effort to help the organization to achieve its objectives

and goals, leading to increased rewards Employees will experience more outstanding organizational commitment and an increased expectation of being rewarded for high performance, which leads to increased loyalty and extra-role and intra-role performance that is helpful to the organization Social exchange theory also is an integral component of ethical leadership. Defined social exchange as “voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do bring from others” In contrast to economic exchanges that involve, for example, pay for work performed, social exchange relationships stimulate greater feelings of gratitude, trust, and reciprocity. The connection is long-term, involves a high level of trust and obligation, and stresses the socio-emotional characteristics of the relationship

### Relationship Of Ethics

Analogous Conceptions The following portrays the relationship of ethics with other similar concepts:

1. Ethics and Morality tends to be universal and prescriptive, and when there is a conflict between ethics and morality, the latter must succeed. A person may cheat in a game to win, i. In such a case, the activity is considered unethical, it may not necessarily account for immoral as immorality is a more significant character flaw than being wicked. Unethical behavior may arise in only certain circumstances or situations, but immorality possesses fundamental flaws rendering one untrustworthy in most the situations

2. Ethics and Values Edward Spranger (1928) [15] states ‘values’ as the constellation of likes, dislikes, viewpoints, inner inclinations, rational and irrational judgments, prejudices and association patterns that determines a person’s view of the world. Murthy (2004) [14] has classified values into four aspects : criteria for accepting values, values required to be optimized, values in the nature of rights of beneficiaries and institutionalizing ethical implementation of values. He has identified 26 values related to business ethics that may contradict and overlap each other. Suresh and Raghavan (2007) [16] referred to that values make actions, character, traits and objects excellent or bad. Values and Ethics are not different from the whole identity, and both collectively define the true self of an individual. Hill and Jain (2010) [6] opined that like a society, an organization to has a culture combines of values and norms. Values are abstract ideas and beliefs of a few top

managers, while norms are the social guiding principle stipulating behaviour in particular circumstances. These two components have a [significant](#) influence on the ethics of a business.

3. Ethics and Law Ethics are neither codified in books nor enforced on anyone by anybody. Unlike ethics, law is stringent rules of actions enforced by the legal authority—requiring compliance and a legal binding force. Failure to follow the law shall invite legal consequences. Ethics constitutes a higher standard than law (Suresh and Raghavan, 2007) [16]. Donaldson (1994) [3] advocated that ethics can achieve much more [for](#) society than what a binding law cannot accomplish. Mathias (1994) [13] opines that not everything illegal is immoral; similarly, not everything immoral is illegal. There are few laws which are considered in-appropriate in certain circumstances.

4. Ethics and Religion Traditionally, a more important link between religion and ethics was that religious teachings were thought to [justify](#) doing what is right. The reason was that those who obeyed the moral law [would](#) be rewarded [with](#) an eternity of bliss while everyone else [would](#) go to hell (Source: Encyclopedia Britannica). Donahue (2006) [5] affirms that the relationship between religion and ethics is about the relationship between revelation and reason. Religion is based on the idea that God reveals insights about life and its true meaning. These insights are collected in texts of the holy books (the Bible, the Torah, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita) and presented as “revelation.” From the stance of [the](#) humanistic approach, ethics is based on the doctrine of reason. Anything that is not rationally verifiable cannot be considered justifiable. [Ethical](#) principles need not derive their authority from religious dogma, [from this perspective](#). Instead, these principles are upheld for their value in promoting independent and responsible individuals—people who are capable of making decisions that maximize their well-being while respecting the well-being of others

### Rationale Behind The Development

Ethical Principles Business ethics and personal ethics go hand in hand. The ethics learned at a young age are usually maintained through adulthood and put into practice in daily lives. The employees must share the same ethics as the company or practice them while employed. Some businesses give their prospective employees informational materials that contain a mission statement, policies, and other ethical responsibilities that all employees must abide by. While these efforts are noteworthy, it does nothing if the employee refuses to respect the organization by following the guidelines laid out for them. There are innumerable factors that affect the growth and advancement of ethical principles of an individual. An individual as a professional is required to act

different<sup>ly</sup> depending upon his position and job status. He develops an ethical ideology from learning at various stages of life, including prior incidents and from observation . An individual's psychology is created by how he is groomed and taught since childhood. Friends, relatives, religion, culture and the environment collectively influences the ethical perspective of an individual

Even though the law is binding yet it cannot compel an individual to be ethical unless he identifies, understands and upholds the concept of ethics to act accordingly when the circumstances demand. John Akers (former chairman of the board of IBM) strongly believes that education in ethics should begin in childhood development, including practical devices as role models and codes of conduct and through literature and history. Shiv Khera, a renowned Indian motivational speaker, asserted that values and ethics break under pressure, but one should not allow the values to deteriorate. However, the researcher observed that an ethically sound person would try hard not to resort to something unethical even in a challenging situation. Josephson (2013) [12] highlighted that in today's ultra competitive, high tech, interdependent business world, charisma without conscience and cleverness without character is a formula for economic and personal failure. Abraham Lincoln described the character as the tree and reputation as the shadow. One's character is what he is, and one's reputation is what people perceive him. The author has recognized 12 ethical principles of a business executive; honesty in all actions, maintaining personal integrity, fulfilling commitments, being loyal within the framework of the ethical tenents, being fair and just, showing compassion towards others, treating others with respect, abiding with the law, commitment to excellence, exemplifying honour and ethics with effective leadership, building company's reputation and increasing the employees morale and being accountable. It is observed that an organization with strong ethical principles can bring considerable benefits to their business, such as:

- Boosting the sales and profits by attracting the customer's to the firm's products or services;
- Reducing the Labour turnover and thereby increasing the productivity by retaining the employees in the business;
- Reduction of recruitment costs by attracting the talented prospective employees who are eager to be associated with the organization; and
- Protecting the business from takeovers by attracting the investors and keeping the company's share price high.

### Relevance of Ethical Conduct

At Workplace, Donaldson (1994) [3] avowed that ethics is vital not only for the smooth and effective functioning of an organization but ~~it is~~ also crucial for society's protection of society. Ethics has become a focus of paramount importance at the workplace because of the following aspects:

- Ethical conduct promotes a robust public image for the organization. People respect an organization that makes ethical choices. Customers like doing business with an organization they can trust.
- Ethical conduct makes the best use of resources. Money, time, and effort are put into productive activities rather than diverted for questionable purposes or personal gain.
- Ethical conduct on all employees also helps maintain quality and productivity. When employees follow ethical standards, they do not cut corners or short-change the company or its customers.
- Ethical conduct assists the organization in complying with laws and regulations. What is ethical is also legal.
- Ethical conduct ensures excellent, and proper relationships with customers and other stakeholders.
- Ethical conduct boosts morale and promotes teamwork. When employees trust one another and management, they can work together more harmoniously and effectively.
- Ethical practices boost confidence and promote esprit de corps. People can work in a team harmoniously when they trust one another and the management.
- Existence and practice of ethics by the employees develops a great sense of dignity and pride and provides them with a sense of job security.

VIII. Findings working as an ethical business has its many benefits, not least of which is attracting and keeping investors, employees and customers. Consequently, it is seen that;

- Companies with a strong ethical identity tend to maintain a higher degree of stakeholder satisfaction, positively influencing the company's financial results.

Ethical business practices can help companies avoid legal problems and negative financial results once unethical behavior is discovered.

- A company that sets out to work within its own ethical guidelines is also less at risk of being fined for poor behavior and less likely to breach one of the multitude of laws concerning required behavior.

- Since people are becoming more aware of ethics, they are inclined to do business with organizations that practice ethics.

- Customers are at ease buying products or services from a company they know source their materials and Labour ethically and responsibly.

- Employees prefer to work at companies where they will be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. When companies establish a high standard for ethical business conduct, employees know that they will be treated well.
- Again, [the](#) performance of ethics by employees may vary depending upon various [criteria](#), via; job insecurity, personal problems, unhealthy relationships [s](#) with the seniors/colleagues etc.

Suggestions and Conclusion Being fair, honest and ethical is one of the crucial human needs. Reputation is one of a company's most important assets, and one of the most difficult to rebuild should it be lost. Businesses not following any kind of ethical code lead to wider consequences. Unethical behavior [ur](#) may damage a firm's reputation and make it less appealing to stakeholders. Business ethics are more than just words used to enhance the image of a corporation; they are the very foundation of success. Thus, ethics related activities should be expanded, [and](#) opportunities regarding principle-based ethics should be encouraged in business concerns. Organizations guided by ethics and values are profitable in the long run, [and](#) often it is viewed that ethics succeeds the law in safeguarding the society. Every employee desires to work for an organization that is fair and ethical in its practices. An organization that is believed to be driven by moral values is respected in society and revered by its employees. Besides the apparent benefits of business ethics in a well-developed culture, more dignified corporate values, and a satisfied customer, business ethics expands way [further](#). A company that believes in proper conduction and following of business ethics survives [in the](#) long run. With consistent ethical behavior [ur](#) comes [an](#) increasingly [favourable](#) public image, more trust the customer and more longevity of the business.

### Discussion In this paper

We examined how TPB can contribute to understanding antecedents for ethical leadership. More specifically, we [discussed](#) how leaders' attitudes toward ethical behavior [ur](#), subjective norms about ethical behavior [ur](#), and

perceived behavioral controls may contribute to ethical intentions and ethical leadership. The results of a two-wave field study demonstrate general support for our hypotheses and the utility of TPB in ethical leadership literature. Specifically, our findings illustrate that when leaders had a favorable attitude toward ethical behavior and perceived behavioral control, their intention to act ethically was likely to increase, fostering the demonstration of their moral leadership. However, we did not find support about the role of the subjective norm in predicting ethical leadership. Although this finding seems consistent with previous ethics studies in general business (e.g., Buchan, 2005; Chang, 1998; Kurland, 1996), it demands further explanation. Subjective norm is the perceived social pressure to take account of others' expectations resulting in one's behavior. In organizations, leaders hold powerful positions (Giessner and Schubert, 2007), and research has shown that influential persons often interpret situations in a way that allows them to follow their own opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and personalities to choose how to behave (see Galinsky et al., 2008; Keltner et al., 2003; Overbeck et al., 2006). Violating norms or not being influenced by norms also signals power that permits individuals to behave following their own volition and overlook situational constraints (Van Kleef et al., 2011). As such, leaders may be less susceptible to subjective norms. It is plausible that due to this reason, we see examples of ethical leaders in organizations where unethical conduct is more pervasive, leading to the case of a few good apples in a barrel of rotten apples.

Furthermore, TPB also suggests that the relative importance of the three variables may vary across behaviors and situations (Ajzen, 1991). Below, we discuss these findings' theoretical and practical implications and limitations. Theoretical implications Our research findings not only enrich our understanding of the emergence of ethical leadership by employing TPB but also its potential significance in leadership study. This contribution is significant as it expands our knowledge of leaders' characteristics (attitude toward ethical behavior) and situational influence (perceived behavioral control), which are indispensable to cultivating ethical leadership more effectively in the organizations (cf., Ko et al., 2018). Our study also extends the understanding of the connection between leader moral development and ethical leadership. Although previous studies have shown that leaders' cognitive moral development positively relates to followers' perception of ethical leadership (LODJ 40,6 (Jordan et al., 2013), the specific mechanism which may link to moral intention results in ethical leadership remains insufficiently addressed. Our research demonstrates that leaders who have a positive attitude toward ethical behavior or perceived behavioral control relating to ethical behavior have the intention to act ethically, which is seen in their moral leadership. This finding provides important insights into what makes a leader ethical. Perhaps leaders' attitudes toward ethical behavior and perceived behavioral control may relate to



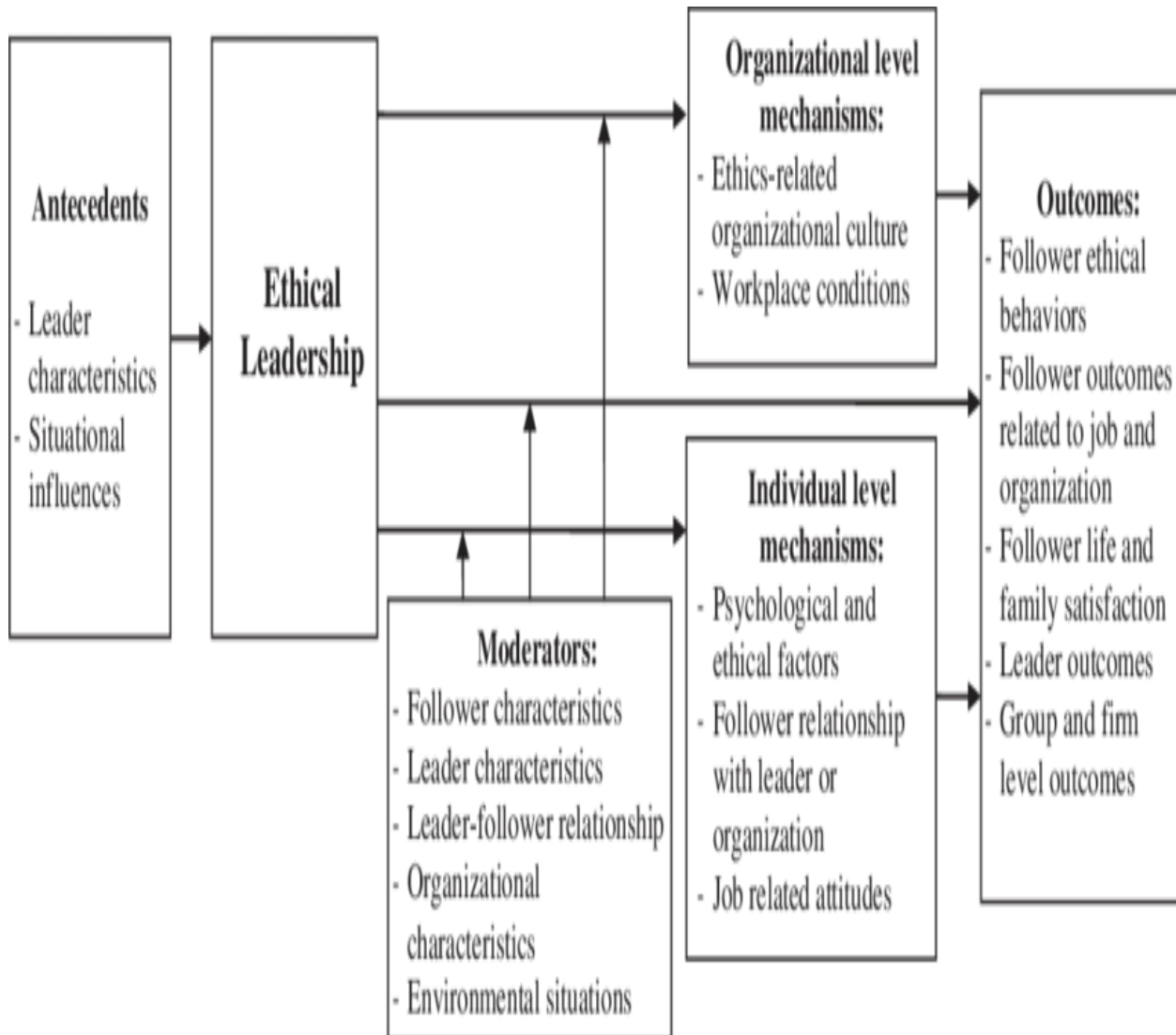
cognitive moral development. It would be interesting for future research to more explicitly investigate the link between the factors of TPB and leaders' cognitive moral development

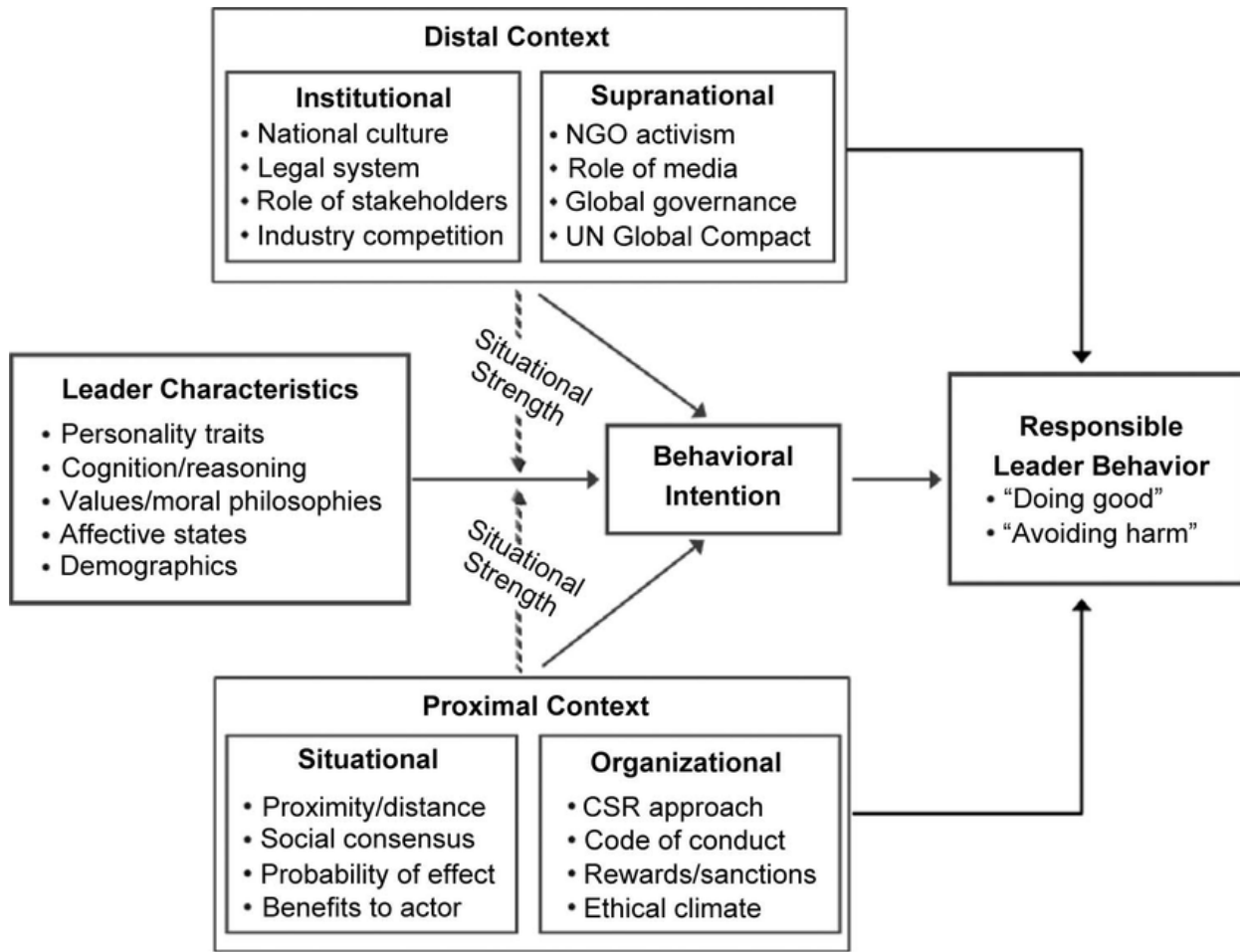
### Practical implications

Our research findings suggest that developing the relevant training and intervention program in organizations to foster ethical leadership is possible by encouraging leaders' ethical intentions by changing their attitudinal and control beliefs regarding ethical behavior. Because the intervention technique based on the TPB framework has outlined the promise to change any particular behavior of interest (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Hence, our study findings provide the initial insight [into scholars and practitioners' often-asked question: Can ethical leadership be trained or developed?](#) Our work also offers important practical insights into developing employee selection processes by devising selection instruments to sort out individuals who have a favorable attitude toward ethical behavior and self-control to be a future leaders with [moral](#) leadership potential in the organization.

### Conclusion

The present study draws on the TPB to examine the antecedents of ethical leadership. We find that leaders' favorable attitudes toward ethical behavior and perceived behavioral controls are [essential](#) antecedents of [moral](#) leadership. In doing so, we provide a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents of ethical leadership.





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