



# NOTICE OF RETRACTION: THE INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY IN MALAYSIA'S PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

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*After its investigation, the Research Ethics, Integrity, and Governance team at RMIT University found that the primary author of this paper breached the Australian Code and/or RMIT Policy and requested that the article be retracted.*

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## ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This paper aimed to examine the influence of ethical and transformational leadership on employee creativity in Malaysia's private higher education institutions (PHEIs) and the mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior.
Background	To ensure their survival and success in today's market, organizations need people who are creative and driven. Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of ethical leadership in fostering employee innovation and good corporate responsibility. Research on ethical leadership and transformational leadership, in particular, has played a significant role in elucidating the role of leadership in relation to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). In this study, we have focused on ethical and transformational leadership as an antecedent for enhancing employee creativity. Despite an increase in leadership research, little

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is known about the underlying mechanisms that link ethical leadership and transformational leadership to OCB. Because it sheds light on factors other than ethical leadership and transformational leadership that influence employees' extra-role activity, this research is relevant theoretically. OCB may have a mediating function between ethical leadership and transformational leadership style and employee creativity because it is associated with the greatest outcomes, but empirical research has yet to prove this. So, one of the study's goals is to add to the hypotheses about how ethical leadership style and transformational leadership affect employee creativity by using an important mediating variable – OCB.

Methodology	This study adopted a quantitative approach based on a cross-sectional survey and descriptive design to gather the data in a specific period. A convenient sampling approach was used to gauge 275 employees from Malaysia's PHEIs. To test the hypotheses and obtain a conclusion, the acquired data was analyzed using the partial least square technique (PLS-SEM).
Contribution	The study contributes to leadership literature by advancing OCB as a mediating factor that accounts for the link between ethical and transformational leadership and employee creativity in the higher education sector.
Findings	According to the research, OCB has a substantial influence on the creativity of employees. Furthermore, ethical leadership boosted OCB and boosted employee creativity, according to the research. OCB and employee creativity have both been demonstrated to benefit greatly from transformational leadership. Further research revealed that OCB is a mediating factor in the link between leadership styles and creative thinking among employees.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Higher education institutions should focus on developing leaders who value transparency and self-awareness in their interactions with followers and who demonstrate an inner moral perspective in addition to balanced information processing to ensure positive outcomes at the individual and organizational levels. Higher education institutions should place a priority on hiring leaders that exhibit ethical and transformational traits to raise awareness of these leadership styles among employees.
Recommendations for Researchers	The new study also adds significantly to the body of knowledge by examining the relationship between ethical and transformational leadership and the creativity of the workforce. It aimed to identify the relationship between transformational leadership style and individual creativity in higher education by examining the mediating influence of OCB.
Impact on Society	Higher education institutions should devise strategies for developing ethical and transformative leaders who will assist boost OCB and creativity within their workforce. Students and faculty in higher education can benefit from these leadership methods by learning to think in more diverse ways and by developing thought processes that lead to a larger pool of innovative ideas and solutions. As a consequence, employees who show creative behavior may be effectively managed by leaders who utilize ethical and transformational leadership styles and motivate them to show OCB that allow them to solve creative problems creatively.
Future Research	A mixed-methods approach should be used in future research, and this should be done in public institutions in developing and developed nations to put the findings to use and generalize them even further. Future research will be able to

examine other mediators to learn more about how and why ethical and transformational leadership styles affect PHEI employees' creativity.

**Keywords** ethical leadership, transformational leadership, employee creativity, private higher education institutions, Malaysia, organizational citizenship behavior

## INTRODUCTION

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Firms now operate in a highly volatile environment defined by rapid technological progress, requiring them to maintain their creativity and innovation while bringing their goods to the market. Several studies have proven the relevance of employee creativity in influencing the development and profitability of a business (Y. Chen et al., 2021; Chiang & Hung, 2014; Jiang et al., 2012). Prior research has also shown that encouraging creativity among organizational people is an important strategy for preserving competitive advantages and guaranteeing long-term survival. Many businesses are also always looking for new ways to inspire their employees to come up with creative ideas and unique solutions in the workplace (Stojcic et al., 2018). As a result, numerous academics have been interested in understanding the drivers of employee creativity; namely, identifying the essential factors that foster or stifle individual innovation (C.-J. Chen et al., 2010; Gichohi, 2014; Nastase et al., 2019; Olsson et al., 2019). Leadership style has been identified as one of the most important variables influencing organizational innovation and employees' creative behavior (Roibu et al., 2019).

Organizations nowadays confront strong competition and difficulties, and they require innovative and motivated employees to assure their survival and success. Previous research has shown that ethical leadership is critical in promoting employee creativity (Jordan et al., 2013; Kuenzi et al., 2020; Mayer et al., 2012) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Bolino et al., 2015; Chun et al., 2013; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2014). Ethical leadership is recognized as the most important leadership style that focuses on fostering beneficial psychological behaviors such as an ethical atmosphere, increased self-awareness, and morality. These behaviors are relatively important since they increase good sentiments among employees (i.e., creativity and affective commitment). Several studies have already investigated the function of OCB as a crucial mediator between various leadership styles and individual performance (Cho & Treadway, 2011; Kim & Park, 2019; Kwak & Kim, 2015). In particular, research on ethical leadership has been critical in clarifying the function of leadership in connection to OCB. Even though research on ethical leadership is increasing, there is a lack of research on the underlying processes that explain the connection between ethical leadership and OCB. This study is significant conceptually because it can provide light on what other factors, apart from ethical leadership, affect workers' extra-role behavior. Because of this, it is difficult to find empirical research that confirms the role of OCB as a potential mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership style and employee creativity, even if OCB is linked with the best outcomes. According to Jordan et al. (2013) and Kuenzi et al. (2020), the majority of empirical studies on ethical leadership are focused on its impact on performance. The authors also said that the empirical research that has been conducted to evaluate its impact on employee creativity and the processes that may influence this connection is limited. As a result, one essential goal of this study is to contribute to the theory that explains the link between ethical leadership style and employee creativity through the use of a critical mediating variable – OCB.

Transformational leadership has been proven to be favorably connected to employee creativity in studies. Transformational leadership entails actions that inspire people to reconsider how they conduct their jobs and push them to attempt new ways (Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Mayer et al., 2012). This leadership style includes actions that motivate employees to be passionate about their jobs and to embrace the challenge of attempting new ways to achieve a set of objectives (Antonakis & House, 2014; Bush, 2018). Furthermore, transformational leadership has a significant impact on employee creativity and is ideal for identifying innovative ideas that contribute to organizational efficiency

(Kwan, 2020). Transformational leadership encourages workers to question the current quo and experiment with new ways that stimulate employee innovation (Gong et al., 2009; Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Furthermore, transformational leaders help their people develop a creative self-concept (Kasımoğlu & Ammari, 2020). Employees should be more confident in trying new techniques and coming up with unique ideas as a result.

Despite the large number of studies on transformational leadership style and employee creativity, the empirical literature yielded mixed results, with some reporting that transformational leadership style has a negative influence on employee creativity (Henker et al., 2015; Ma et al., 2020; Saleem & Mahmood, 2019), a few stating a significant positive association between both constructs, and others concluding that there is no relationship between them (Gong et al., 2009; Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Although several prior research studied certain mediating variables between transformational leadership style and employee creativity (Chaubey et al., 2019), the underlying psychological mechanisms that link this style of leadership with employee creativity have not been well explored. Prior studies looked at OCB as a significant mediator between specific leadership styles and employee performance. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence in the existing literature to show whether OCB mediates the relationship between this leadership style and employee creativity. As a result, the purpose of this research is to see if OCB mediates the link between the two notions.

In general, there is rising evidence in the literature that leaders play an important role in fostering OCB among employees (Jyoti & Dev, 2015; Tse et al., 2018). The impact of leadership on OCB, on the other hand, can be determined by employee perceptions. Furthermore, previous studies demonstrated that OCB is critical for developing employee creativity and creative work behavior, and a considerable quantity of relevant literature demonstrates that OCB has a beneficial influence on employee creativity (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016; Suifan et al., 2018). Employees' activities and behavior that go above and beyond the call of duty can be used to calculate OCB; this behavior is often the result of strong workplace relationships. Bachrach et al. (2006) stated that OCB is likely to be revealed at an employee's choice and is unrelated to official regulations and awards in a company. Despite its importance, there have been relatively few studies that have investigated and confirmed whether OCB has any mediation impact on the connections between the stated leadership styles and employee creativity, notably in the Malaysian higher education sector.

The advent and fast growth of PHEIs in Malaysia have drastically altered the landscape. Indeed, globalization of the education industry is a prevalent tendency in emerging nations as a whole (Arokiasamy, 2017). With such fierce competition in this sector, Malaysia's education industry is well aware of the need to satisfy the high expectations of this economic sector in terms of attracting and maintaining an educated and competent workforce (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020). Furthermore, in order to compete on a global scale, human capital development is critical. Education may be seen as a capital good that is utilized to create human capital for social and economic development. In addition to public higher education institutions, PHEIs must be able to respond to and adapt to changes in the dynamic larger world to fulfill the current economic, political, and social needs. The higher education system in Malaysia has demonstrated progressive growth and development over the past two decades, which has spurred intensified competition between public higher education and private higher education. The future workforce must be adequately responsive to the changes and demands of the existing market through innovation. In addition, innovative educational professionals are necessary to ensure the implementation of innovation in the education and development aspects with respect to the challenges of the 21st century (Zreen et al., 2021).

PHEIs in Malaysia have achieved worldwide recognition, with 10 PHEIs appearing in the 2019 Quacquarelli Symonds university ranking (Quacquarelli Symonds [QS], 2019). It is a solid sign that PHEIs have risen to the top of Malaysia's higher education market. The need for PHEIs in Malaysia is also increasing owing to an increase in the number of high school dropouts, improved recruiting, and awareness efforts in schools (Yaakub & Mohamed, 2019). As of December 31, 2019, the country had 53 private universities, 38 collegiate universities, 12 branch campuses of foreign institutions, and

351 colleges (Lyn Chan & Muthuveloo, 2021; Munusamy & Hashim, 2019). The data in Table 1 show the total number of PHEIs in Malaysia. As a result, to give empirical insights on these concerns, the current study seeks to contribute to the existing literature and underlying theories by exploring the relationships between two leadership styles and employee creativity in the context of higher education. This study adds to the current research by investigating and confirming the function of OCB in the relationship between the selected leadership styles and employee creativity in the Malaysian higher education setting. The following parts offer an overview of this paper's literature review, followed by the study technique and findings analysis. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion, implications, conclusion, limits, and suggestions for further research.

**Table 1. List of private higher education institutions in Malaysia**

No.	Categories	Total
1	Universities	53
2	Branch campus of foreign universities	12
3	University Colleges	38
4	Colleges	351
Total		454

Source: Quacquarelli Symonds. (2019)

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### *EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY*

Increased employee creativity leads to increased production at work. Management and researchers must be aware of the most effective methods for encouraging employee innovation (Chang et al., 2014). Employee innovation requires both organizational support and personal drive. It is yet unknown how external and internal factors interact to create creativity. Understanding how external and internal factors interact in the context of an organization will inspire future innovative and creative acts. Employee creativity has previously been defined as the ability of employees to produce new ideas and ways for their job function, including the use of emerging technology and the suggestion of new procedures for achieving goals (Miao & Cao, 2019). Furthermore, this skill is honed by repeated exposure to various viewpoints and the accumulation of prior knowledge. There has been a lot of discussion on the value and importance of human creativity in terms of organizational success, competitive advantages, and individual performance. Several studies in various contexts have extensively addressed the merits of encouraging employee creativity in light of these advantages. It has been shown that stressors at work might have a favorable effect on individual creativity (Gong et al., 2009; Malik et al., 2019; Rhee & Choi, 2017). When it comes to creativity, Petrou et al. (2019) found that employment resources had favorable benefits. Research by Cai et al. (2019) employed supervisor support and work features to examine the influence of employees' psychological capital on individual creativity, and they identified a substantial association between these variables. According to the literature, one's ability to be creative depends on one's work environment.

### *ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR*

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to any activities performed voluntarily by workers that go above and beyond the scope of their job responsibilities and are not linked to a pay system (N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009). It is shown at the employee's choice and is unrelated to official incentives or organizational standards (Chun et al., 2013). Matta et al. (2015) defined OCB as an employee's voluntary contributions to the organization's progress and growth. The author went on to say that OCB has major consequences for an organization's success when individuals display it of their own will without regard for formal job requirements or a compensation system. In recent years,

the idea has been more clearly defined and expanded to encompass employee involvement in positive behaviors, such as taking on extra job tasks and supporting colleagues at work (Spector et al., 2010). OCB exists in higher education when employees conduct actions that are bigger and more than their defined work duties with the institution, academic staff, and students for the aim of promoting it and accomplishing desired goals. Employees' OCB raises the institution's educational level by allowing them to participate in instructional pedagogies and other administrative tasks (Farid et al., 2019). It also helps people to accept institutional changes and reduces workplace conflicts (Bodla et al., 2019). N. P. Podsakoff et al. (2009) testified that OCB was positively linked with organizational success, providing some evidence that OCB might contribute to employee innovation. A previous study has also shown that OCB has a favorable effect on employee creativity (Pablo & Ricardo, 2014).

OCB is defined as actions that support the social and psychological environment where task performance unfolds. Lee and Allen (2002) noted that these behaviors represent employees' voluntary actions, such as helping coworkers and attending non-obligatory events that facilitate organizational flow, although they are not essential components of the task at hand. OCB across individuals leads to better organizational performance (Rifai, 2018). OCB constitutes actions that are taken with no expectation for recognition or compensation (Ali et al., 2018). OCBs provide social facilitation and reduce social friction by enabling group members to focus on their tasks more than on interpersonal relationships (Organ, 1988) or conflicts. OCBs can also enhance individuals' performance by building coordination skills. Hirst et al. (2009) suggested that OCB can contribute to organizational performance by enhancing coworkers' and managers' productivity by facilitating collaboration between work groups and enabling the organization to adapt to environmental changes. Lam et al. (2016) found that engaging in OCB behaviors enhances employees' vitality, which contributes to the enhancement of employees' resources leading to better well-being. Based on a study of the available literature, it was discovered that relatively few empirical studies were conducted to explore the relationships between OCB and employee creativity. As a result, this article contends that an organizational climate in which employees routinely assist one another and share their expertise with coworkers should be favorably related to creativity. Therefore, the first hypothesis is suggested:

**Hypothesis 1: In the PHEIs, OCB has a positive effect on employee creativity.**

### ***ETHICAL LEADERSHIP***

Ethical leadership is a well-known leadership paradigm that has piqued the interest of many academics. Despite a substantial amount of study on this idea, many areas remain unexplored. Ethical leadership is demonstrated by a leader's moral character and integrity, as well as the consistency of his or her ideals, words, and behavior. According to Mayer et al. (2012), ethical leadership is a style of leadership that is distinguished by specific psychological skills and a well-defined direction for the company, resulting in a leader's increased self-awareness and a beneficial impact on subordinates' actions. Jordan et al. (2013) defined ethical leadership style as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws on and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, in order to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced information processing, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (p. 672). This leadership style embodies all of the good characteristics associated with social and psychological well-being, such as self-confidence, ambition, pleasant emotions, and goal achievement.

Ethical leadership stimulates critical thinking among employees to the point that a leader's ethical behavior, especially his or her emotional intelligence, plays a key role in creating and fostering workplace innovation (Kuenzi et al., 2020). It has been acknowledged throughout the literature that ethical leaders have distinct characteristics, such as acting on their words, beliefs, and values, and would develop interpersonal relationships with their followers to foster an organizational culture in which creativity is nurtured and rewarded (Men et al., 2020). As a result, real leaders' inventive spirit and motivation are seen to be crucial for promoting creative behavior in the business. According to Eisenbeiss

and van Knippenberg (2015), ethical leadership elicits good feelings in employees, which fosters their creativity. Furthermore, Walumbwa et al. (2011) found that subordinates of ethical leaders had higher intrinsic motivation as a result of their leaders' support for self-determination, and this drive eventually fosters creativity at work. Ethical leadership has been highlighted in the literature as a major factor of employee creativity, including more recent research that found it to have a beneficial influence on creative outcomes (Fu et al., 2020; Joplin et al., 2021).

According to the social exchange hypothesis, when organizational employees consider their leaders' behavior to be fair, they are more inclined to go above and beyond their official job description by exhibiting behaviors that benefit the whole company. According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), when a genuine leader fosters a fair and innovative culture, organizational people are more eager to engage in positive behaviors that benefit the business. Ethical leaders strive to encourage citizenship behaviors among workers by raising their understanding of the importance and value of supporting one another at work (Paterson & Huang, 2019). Walumbwa et al. (2011) discovered that ethical leadership style had a beneficial influence on employees' OCB, which is consistent with previous studies. Other researchers have claimed that engaged individuals at work are more likely to exhibit OCB, which would eventually increase the organization's effectiveness, efficiency, and performance (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). Previous studies have also shown that OCB has a beneficial influence on employee creativity and has the potential to moderate the link between leadership style and individual performance (Paterson & Huang, 2019; Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2019; Strydom, 2021). Men et al. (2020), for example, discovered that OCB mediates the link between ethical leadership and employee performance. However, according to the existing literature review, it is difficult to locate a study that examined the mediating effect of OCB on the link between ethical leadership style and employee creativity. Thus, this research suggests that:

**Hypothesis 2: In the PHEIs, ethical leadership has a positive effect on employee creativity.**

**Hypothesis 3: In the PHEIs, ethical leadership has a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.**

**Hypothesis 4: In the PHEIs, organizational citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee creativity.**

### ***TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP***

Transformational leadership is a prominent kind of leadership that occurs when organizational connections are designed to achieve a shared goal through changing, inspiring, and enhancing followers' behaviors and ethical goals (Antonakis & House, 2014; Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). Transformational leaders place a premium on developing their subordinates' full potentials, excellent value systems, higher needs, moralities, and motivations (Bush, 2018). This growth motivates subordinates to work together, modify their views, and prioritize organizational objectives above personal interests (Kwan, 2020). Prior research revealed that transformational leadership consists of four different behaviors: the expression of an inspiring vision, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and personalized concern (Braun et al., 2013; Kwan, 2020; van Dierendonck et al., 2014). According to Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009), transformational leaders' actions are the primary drivers of individual creativity. When leaders offer their followers personalized attention, they exhibit support and empathy for their issues and become receptive to fresh proposals or ideas from them (Eisenbeiss & Boerner, 2013). As a result, subordinates can be encouraged to think creatively, to go beyond normal procedures, and to foster innovative behavior without fear (Dong et al., 2017). Similarly, intellectual stimulation may boost followers' creativity by pushing them to challenge major assumptions about the formed framework of thinking and everyday actions, as well as to dive into prior issues and circumstances in novel ways. Furthermore, by displaying charismatic behavior (idealized influence) and articulating an

inspirational vision, leaders encourage people to go above and beyond expectations and to make extra efforts to develop innovative solutions to workplace challenges (Awang et al., 2020).

Because transformational leaders have the capacity to inspire their subordinates to go above and beyond their job obligations and to question the status quo, they can increase their efforts in everyday tasks with the goal of exceeding job duties and displaying higher OCB at work (Bass, 1999). “Transformational leaders change the way workers think about their job, causing them to perceive it as more fulfilling, challenging, and meaningful, which influences the amount to which they participate in citizenship performance” (Hamstra et al., 2011, p. 184). Transformational leadership followers are likely to identify strongly with their leaders and feel driven to contribute above and beyond expectations (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). Bass (1999) discovered a favorable link between transformational leadership components and workers’ OCB in the preceding research. Similarly, Bush (2018) revealed that transformative leadership had a beneficial effect on employees’ OCB. Despite extensive study on transformational leadership and employee OCB, empirical literature on these ideas in underdeveloped countries is sparse.

According to social exchange theory, when transformational leaders inspire and pay close attention to their followers via individualized care, it encourages people to understand their creative potential and worth. As a result, the followers will have a high degree of intrinsic drive, which will lead to increased innovation among them (Richter et al., 2016). According to Schaubroeck et al. (2007), transformative leaders foster a creative atmosphere. Employees are given opportunities to offer innovative approaches without fear of reprisal in this atmosphere. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to attempt new ways to job completion, which promotes workplace creativity. Mittal and Dhar (2015) also said that transformational leaders motivate their people to study and seek out new and innovative methods to complete tasks. Numerous prior studies have also demonstrated that this leadership style has a favorable impact on employee creativity (Braun et al., 2013; Grant, 2012; Willis et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is a variety of elements that may serve as a moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and creativity. OCB has previously been investigated as a major mediating variable between different leadership styles and employee performance. Dong et al. (2017) discovered that OCB has an important role in improving the links between transformative leadership and worker long-term performance. However, there is insufficient evidence in the existing literature to support the function of OCB as a mediator between transformational leadership style and employee creativity. To fill this need, the current study employs OCB as a crucial mediator between transformational leadership style and employee creativity. Consequently, the following hypotheses are suggested:

**Hypothesis 5: In the PHEIs, transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee creativity.**

**Hypothesis 6: In the PHEIs, transformational leadership has a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.**

**Hypothesis 7: In the PHEIs, organizational citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity.**

Based on the above discussions, underlying theories, and existing gaps in the literature between the selected constructs, the research framework for this paper is presented in Figure 1.



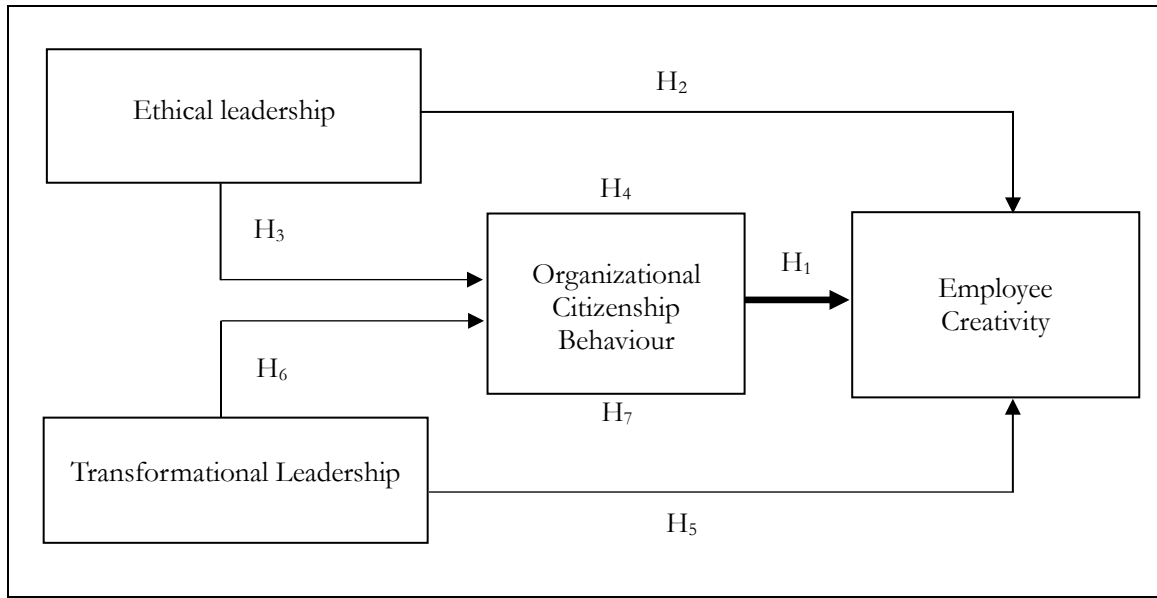


Figure 1. The conceptual framework

## METHODOLOGY

### *MEASURING INSTRUMENTS*

#### **Ethical leadership**

The ethical leadership questionnaire (ELQ) consists of 15 items, each with a 5-point Likert-style scale. The elements describe many dimensions of ethical leadership, such as honesty, integrity, justice, altruism, behavioral congruence with stated ideals, communication of ethical principles, and offering ethical advice. To preserve some consistency with previous research, we attempted to adapt items from previous scales on ethical leadership, such as the ELQ (Langlois et al., 2014), and the morality and fairness scale created by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008). Respondents were asked to rate their supervisor's behavior on a five-point Likert scale (5 corresponding to "strongly agree," 1 corresponding to "strongly disagree"). "My boss has a clear grasp of how others view his/her competence," for example. In this investigation, the scale reliability was 0.85, suggesting a good level of internal consistency.

#### **Transformational leadership**

A 12-item version of Bass and Avolio's (1990) multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) was used to assess transformational leadership. Despite some concerns about the psychometric validity of this measure, it has been widely used in leadership research and is widely regarded as the best validated measure of transformational leadership. The most current version of transformational leadership in the MLQ, Form X (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2008), covers the following aspects: charismatic leadership, inspiring leadership, customized consideration, and intellectual stimulations components. There are three things in each dimension. Respondents used a five-point answer scale to indicate how frequently their supervisor showed the behavior described in each item, with 1 indicating not at all, 2 indicating once in a while, 3 indicating occasionally, 4 indicating quite regularly, and 5 indicating constantly. This factor has a reliability of  $\alpha = 0.89$ .

### **Organizational citizenship behavior**

The scale, which consists of 24 items, was developed by P. M. Podsakoff et al. (1990) and is largely based on the conceptual work of Organ (1988). The item numbers for the five reverse-scored items on this scale were 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. The remainder of the items were given a thumbs up. While analyzing the elements for statistical analysis, due care was given in these respects. The scale's internal consistency was 0.87 (Altruism = 0.83, Courtesy = 0.81, Conscientiousness = 0.79, Civic Virtue = 0.85, Sportsmanship = 0.77). It is crucial to highlight that, in this study, rather than supervisory evaluations, an employee self-rating technique was employed. To reflect this shift in emphasis, all items were reworded.

### **Employee creativity**

Employee creativity may be measured in a variety of methods, including expert evaluation, product approach, supervisor ratings, and self-rated evaluations (Shalley et al., 2004). The Zhou and George (2001) scale was used to measure employee creativity. It is a 13-item scale that was initially used or designed to be rated by employees' supervisors/managers. However, because the current study included data from workers, the original scale was significantly modified to make it a self-report measure. Participants understand what is being evaluated (personality characteristics, values, or inventiveness) and are willing to report correctly (Allen et al., 2018). Participants were asked to rate each item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "totally disagree" to "absolutely agree." The scale's Cronbach's alpha is  $\alpha = 0.88$ . All the scale items were improvised to suit the selected sector, i.e. full-time academics at the PHEIs in Malaysia, wherever it was required (see the Appendix).

## ***SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS***

Creswell and Sinley (2017) used a quantitative technique to evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the sample size under observation. Because it is useful for gathering quantitative data to analyze the connection between factors, a cross-sectional survey approach using questionnaires was used, based on the need to gather information from a large sample at a time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The eligible participants were full-time academics at the PHEIs in Malaysia. We contacted six PHEIs in Malaysia to participate in our study. The study adopted a stratified sampling technique and the choice of this technique was based on the need to ensure that the study covered universities that are privately managed within the higher education sectors in the country. In the guidelines, we informed the prospective respondents that their responses were anonymous and they were informed of the voluntary nature of participation. We emphasized in the guidelines that only academicians with more than one year of working experience in their institutions need to participate in the survey.

The study was performed from March to June 2020 and included participants from Malaysian PHEIs. The survey URL was shared on social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Because English is the official medium of teaching at Malaysian PHEIs, the survey questionnaire was not translated into Malay (the national language of Malaysia). A pilot study of 40 samples from the six chosen universities was carried out, and small adjustments were made based on ideas and comments from the respondents. Approximately 450 questionnaires were sent via Google Docs to potential responders from Malaysia's chosen PHEIs. The recipients were mostly full-time professors and administrators who consented to take part in the research. The convenience sampling approach was utilized to speed up the data gathering procedure and get the required results. In addition to its advantages, such as simplicity of use and reduced cost, it was appropriate for data collecting to avoid the difficulties associated with contacting the respondents. In previous research, convenience sampling was also utilized to obtain data from employees in the higher education setting. The non-response bias was examined using Armstrong and Overton's (1977) guidelines. This was accomplished by comparing the first (15% of received questionnaires) to the last (15% of returned questionnaires by respondents). Independent sample t-test results showed that the differences between

the means of the first and last participants on each indicator of the key constructs are negligible, indicating that non-response bias is not a problem.

A total of 350 questionnaires were given to eight PHEIs in Peninsular Malaysia, with 290 returned; however, 15 of those received had incomplete information and were deleted. In the study, only 275 valid replies were utilized, giving a 78.5% response rate. The descriptive analysis revealed that 172 (62.8%) of the respondents were men and 103 (37.2%) were females who took part in the study from eight PHEIs in Peninsular Malaysia. The marital status of the participants was as follows: 43.1% were married, 31.9% were single, 11.6% were separated/divorced, 9.6% were in a relationship, and 3.8% were unidentified. Around 12.2% of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 29, 44.3% were between the ages of 30 and 39, 27.6% were between the ages of 40 and 49, 14.8% were between the ages of 50 and 59, and 1.1% were above 60. As a result, the majority of the sample's participants were between the ages of 30 and 39. In terms of academic qualification, 70.3% held a postgraduate degree, 22.1% held a bachelor's degree, 5.2% held a diploma qualification, and just 2.4% held a high school diploma. In terms of job experience, the descriptive analysis revealed that the vast majority (72.7%) had more than 5 years of experience in their institutions. Finally, everyone who volunteered to take part in this study was a full-time employee (Table 2).

**Table 2. Sample demographic variables**

Variables	Values	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	172	62.8
	Female	103	37.2
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	88	31.9
	Married	119	43.1
	Divorced/separated	32	11.6
	Unidentified	11	3.8
<b>Age</b>	20-29	34	12.2
	30-39	122	44.3
	40-49	76	27.6
	50-59	41	14.8
	≥ 60 years	3	1.1
<b>Education</b>	High school diploma	7	2.4
	Diploma	14.3	5.2
	Bachelor/Undergraduate degree	61	22.1
	Postgraduate degree	193	70.3
<b>Work experience</b>	1 – 4 years	75	27.3
	> 5 years	199	72.7

## RESULTS

### *DATA ANALYSIS*

The current study made use of structural equation modeling with Smart PLS 3.0. A two-stage method was employed in accordance with the guidelines (Hair et al., 2012). The model's psychometric characteristics were investigated in the first stage of the investigation. Individual item loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) ratings are obtained as a result of the measurement methodology described in Table 2. Items with loadings of 0.50 or higher were maintained using the rule of thumb technique proposed by Risher and Hair (2017) and Shmueli et al. (2019). Table 1 shows loadings for the retained items ranging from 0.707 to 0.774. Second, the composite reliability ratings indicated by Fornell and Larcker (1981) were attained in a responsible manner based on the 0.60 threshold. The measuring model's results reveal that composite reliability scores

range between 0.686 and 0.798. As a result, AVE scores were likewise guaranteed to be 0.50 or higher. The AVE values in Table 3 range from 0.698 to 0.817. Finally, the model's psychometric characteristics were confirmed by validating the internal consistency reliability, reliability, and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2013).

**Table 3. Results of instrument validation**

Construct	Measurement Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronch Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	ELQ1	0.811	0.818	0.797	0.85
	ELQ2	0.725			
	ELQ3	0.681			
	ELQ4	0.714			
	ELQ5	0.877			
	ELQ6	0.712			
	ELQ7	0.862			
	ELQ8	0.708			
	ELQ9	0.713			
	ELQ10	0.727			
	ELQ11	0.761			
	ELQ12	0.766			
	ELQ13	0.713			
	ELQ14	0.735			
	ELQ15	0.761			
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	II1	0.898	0.828	0.808	0.89
	II2	0.825			
	II3	0.881			
	IM1	0.754			
	IM2	0.873			
	IM3	0.712			
	IS1	0.864			
	IS2	0.808			
	IS3	0.713			
	IC1	0.797			
	IC2	0.761			
	IC3	0.786			
<b>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</b>	OCB1	0.754	0.798	0.826	0.87
	OCB2	0.725			
	OCB3	0.781			
	OCB4	0.714			
	OCB5	0.737			
	OCB6	0.712			
	OCB7	0.719			
	OCB8	0.708			
	OCB9	0.713			
	OCB10	0.727			
	OCB11	0.761			
	OCB12	0.766			
	OCB13	0.713			
	OCB14	0.735			
	OCB15	0.761			
	OCB16	0.725			
	OCB17	0.781			
	OCB18	0.714			
	OCB19	0.777			
	OCB20	0.712			
	OCB21	0.732			
	OCB22	0.708			

Construct	Measurement Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronch Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Employee Creativity	OCB23	0.713	0.803	0.819	0.88
	OCB24	0.727			
	EC1	0.709			
	EC2	0.725			
	EC3	0.781			
	EC4	0.717			
	EC5	0.877			
	EC6	0.712			
	EC7	0.862			
	EC8	0.738			
	EC9	0.711			
	EC10	0.727			
	EC11	0.751			
	EC12	0.769			
	EC13	0.731			

Notes: AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability

### ***NON-RESPONSE BIAS AND COMMON METHOD VARIANCE***

The *t*-test was used to assess the non-response bias in the results. Comparative analysis is provided regarding all factors around 40 fast and 40 delayed reactions. Zero substantial variations ( $p > .05$ ) have been established, contributing to the inference that the results are clear from non-response bias. When survey data is obtained from a single source, common method bias (CMB) is an issue. As a result, in order to assess the level of such bias, the study used a mix of two approaches; namely, a procedural method and a statistical method. The study used a procedural approach to guarantee clarity of questioning and used a conventional survey technique (Fuller et al., 2016). The statistical technique is evaluated using Huang et al.'s (2019) latent method factor approach. "Factor loadings relating the technique impact latent variable to the substantive indicators were included in the method model" (Chin et al., 2012, p. 1014). The average substantive factor loading explained variance of the construct's indicators is 0.765, as shown in Table 4. The average method factor loading, on the other hand, is -0.001. CMB was unlikely to represent a severe hazard in this investigation since method factor loading yielded negligible and tiny values.

**Table 4. Common method factor analysis**

Construct	Indicators	Substantive Factor Loadings (Ra)	Ra <sup>2</sup>	Method Factor Loadings (Ra)	Rb <sup>2</sup>
Ethical Leadership	ELQ1	0.724***	0.711	0.139*	0.022
	ELQ2	0.801***	0.732	-0.033 NS	0.001
	ELQ3	0.866***	0.794	0.036 NS	0.014
	ELQ4	0.821***	0.727	-0.169*	0.003
	ELQ5	0.776***	0.697	-0.317 NS	0.022
	ELQ6	0.873***	0.751	0.170 NS	0.011
	ELQ7	0.782**	0.684	0.145 NS	0.014
	ELQ8	0.814***	0.882	0.189 NS	0.029
	ELQ9	0.879***	0.810	0.143 NS	0.052
	ELQ10	0.717**	0.822	0.042 NS	0.013
	ELQ11	0.877***	0.714	0.039 NS	0.011
	ELQ12	0.901***	0.894	0.045*	0.012
	ELQ13	0.836***	0.788	0.040*	0.011
	ELQ14	0.892***	0.876	-0.039 NS	0.003
	ELQ15	0.911***	0.812	0.043 NS	0.012

Construct	Indicators	Substantive Factor Loadings (Ra)	Ra <sup>2</sup>	Method Factor Loadings (Ra)	Rb <sup>2</sup>
Transformational Leadership	II1	0.867***	0.937	-0.169*	0.003
	II2	0.828***	0.815	0.149 NS	0.051
	II3	1.024***	1.135	0.050*	0.029
	IM1	0.841***	0.641	0.149*	0.023
	IM2	0.826***	0.727	-0.218 NS	0.029
	IM3	0.874***	0.518	0.142*	0.024
	IS1	0.885**	0.498	0.138*	0.027
	IS2	0.894***	0.512	0.127*	0.024
	IS3	0.861***	0.329	0.151*	0.022
	IC1	0.834**	0.418	0.133*	0.026
	IC2	0.902***	0.420	0.144*	0.028
	IC3	0.865***	0.498	0.151*	0.031
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	OCB1	0.772***	0.737	-0.179*	0.003
	OCB2	0.777***	0.776	0.170 NS	0.012
	OCB3	0.796***	0.619	0.263*	0.002
	OCB4	0.817***	0.461	0.225*	0.025
	OCB5	0.714***	0.630	0.192*	0.021
	OCB6	0.751***	0.718	0.026 NS	0.024
	OCB7	0.711**	0.719	0.209*	0.027
	OCB8	0.792***	0.812	0.258*	0.028
	OCB9	0.811***	0.819	0.244*	0.022
	OCB10	0.863**	0.718	0.267*	0.026
	OCB11	0.819***	0.834	0.269*	0.028
	OCB12	0.813***	0.898	-0.255**	0.001
	OCB13	0.881***	0.855	0.254*	0.003
	OCB14	0.889***	0.823	0.149 NS	0.021
	OCB15	0.825***	0.722	0.239*	0.029
	OCB16	0.841***	0.841	0.278*	0.023
	OCB17	0.810***	0.817	0.268*	0.028
	OCB18	0.883***	0.818	0.242*	0.024
	OCB19	0.885**	0.810	0.238*	0.027
	OCB20	0.844***	0.878	0.227*	0.024
	OCB21	0.861***	0.729	-0.251**	0.001
	OCB22	0.901***	0.812	0.233*	0.026
	OCB23	0.889***	0.823	0.244*	0.028
	OCB24	0.880***	0.797	0.251*	0.022
Employee Creativity	EC1	0.801***	0.711	0.139*	0.022
	EC2	0.803***	0.732	-0.033 NS	0.001
	EC3	0.866***	0.794	0.036 NS	0.014
	EC4	0.821***	0.727	-0.169*	0.003
	EC5	0.776***	0.697	-0.317 NS	0.022
	EC6	0.873***	0.751	0.170 NS	0.011
	EC7	0.782**	0.684	0.145 NS	0.014
	EC8	0.814***	0.882	0.189 NS	0.029
	EC9	0.879***	0.810	0.143 NS	0.052
	EC10	0.853**	0.822	0.142 NS	0.013
	EC11	0.846***	0.714	0.149 NS	0.011
	EC12	0.859***	0.894	-0.141 NS	0.002
	EC13	0.837***	0.788	0.145 NS	0.021
	Average	0.861***	0.765	-0.001	0.001

Note: \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05, NS = not significant

### *DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS*

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the chosen variables, including mean values, standard deviations, and correlations. The mean values varied from 3.73 to 4.24, as seen in the table. It also demonstrates that the lowest value for standard deviation is 0.42 and the maximum value is 0.69. The research also revealed a favorable relationship between ethical leadership and both OCB ( $r = 0.568$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and employee creativity ( $r = 0.524$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, transformational leadership is

linked to OCB ( $r = 0.471, p < 0.01$ ) and employee creativity ( $r = 0.601, p < 0.01$ ). It was also shown that there is a positive association between OCB and employee creativity ( $r = 0.398, p < 0.01$ ). Finally, the study found that ethical leadership is associated with transformative leadership ( $r = 0.614, p < 0.01$ ). All of the factors are positively and substantially linked with each other, according to these data.

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics and correlations**

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Ethical leadership	4.17	0.42	1.00			
2. Transformational leadership	4.24	0.46	0.614**	1.00		
3. OCB	3.98	0.61	0.568**	0.471**	1.00	
4. Employee creativity	3.73	0.69	0.524**	0.601**	0.398**	1.00

Correlations are significant at \*\* $p < 0.01$

### ***DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY***

We considered the two main methods for assessing discriminant validity. First, we compared the root-squared values of AVEs with the corresponding correlation coefficients. As shown in Table 6, the root-squared values of AVEs are of higher value than the pair of correlation coefficients for the associated constructs, thereby satisfying the conditions for discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Also, no individual correlations are found to be greater than their respective composite reliabilities, while most of the correlation coefficients are consistently smaller than the cut-off value of 0.70 (Tabachnick et al., 2007). All these results indicate satisfactory discriminant validity.

**Table 6. Fornell Lacker's discriminant validity**

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Ethical leadership	<b>0.835</b>			
2. Transformational leadership	0.526	<b>0.886</b>		
3. Organizational citizenship behavior	0.597	0.611	<b>0.891</b>	
4. Employee creativity	0.499	0.397	0.634	<b>0.808</b>

To test the discriminant validity of variance-based estimators, Henseler et al. (2015) suggested higher boundary criteria known as the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation, which we aimed to utilize in this study [68]. Though we acknowledge that HTMT was originally established for variance-based or partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), we opine that HTMT is applicable in this study, despite its usage of covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), on the basis that the items measuring the factors need to be assessed in terms of its variance (or variability), as in the case of running a factor analysis, which avails and runs in the same way regardless of whether CB or PLS-SEM is applied to assess the structural model. Moreover, HTMT has been shown to achieve higher specificity and sensitivity rates (97% – 99%) when compared to cross-loadings (0.00%) and Fornell and Larcker's criteria (20.82%) (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). Specifically, discriminant validity may be tested by comparing the HTMT values of two constructs, where the HTMT value of two components should ideally be less than 0.85, but can reach as high as 0.90 if the constructs are conceptually comparable (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016; Yusoff et al., 2020). The HTMT ratio test findings vary from 0.187 to 0.462, indicating that all constructs are independent of one another and, as a result, discriminant validity exists in this study (see Table 7).

**Table 7. Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio test (HTMT)**

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Ethical leadership	-			
2. Transformational leadership	0.404	-		
3. Organizational citizenship behavior	0.213	0.321	-	
4. Employee creativity	0.187	0.241	0.462	-

### ***STRUCTURAL MODEL***

After achieving acceptable factor loadings, reliability, and validity assumptions, the structural model was constructed. Through this model, the hypotheses of the study that were presented in the literature review section were verified. Table 8 shows the values of path estimates regarding the relationships among constructs. The analysis indicated that OCB has a positive impact on employee creativity ( $\beta = 0.428$ ,  $t\text{-value}=5.213$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); therefore, **H<sub>1</sub>** is accepted. It was also found that ethical leadership style positively and significantly impacts employee creativity ( $\beta = 0.241$ ,  $t\text{-value}=3.272$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); thus, **H<sub>2</sub>** is confirmed. The positive effect of ethical leadership on OCB is also confirmed in this study ( $\beta = 0.408$ ,  $t\text{-value}=3.119$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); therefore, **H<sub>3</sub>** is supported. Additionally, the results showed that transformational leadership has a positive influence on employee creativity ( $\beta = 0.201$ ,  $t\text{-value}=2.674$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); hence, **H<sub>5</sub>** is accepted. Further, the analysis showed that transformational leadership positively influences OCB ( $\beta = 0.399$ ,  $t\text{-value}=3.216$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); therefore, **H<sub>6</sub>** is supported.

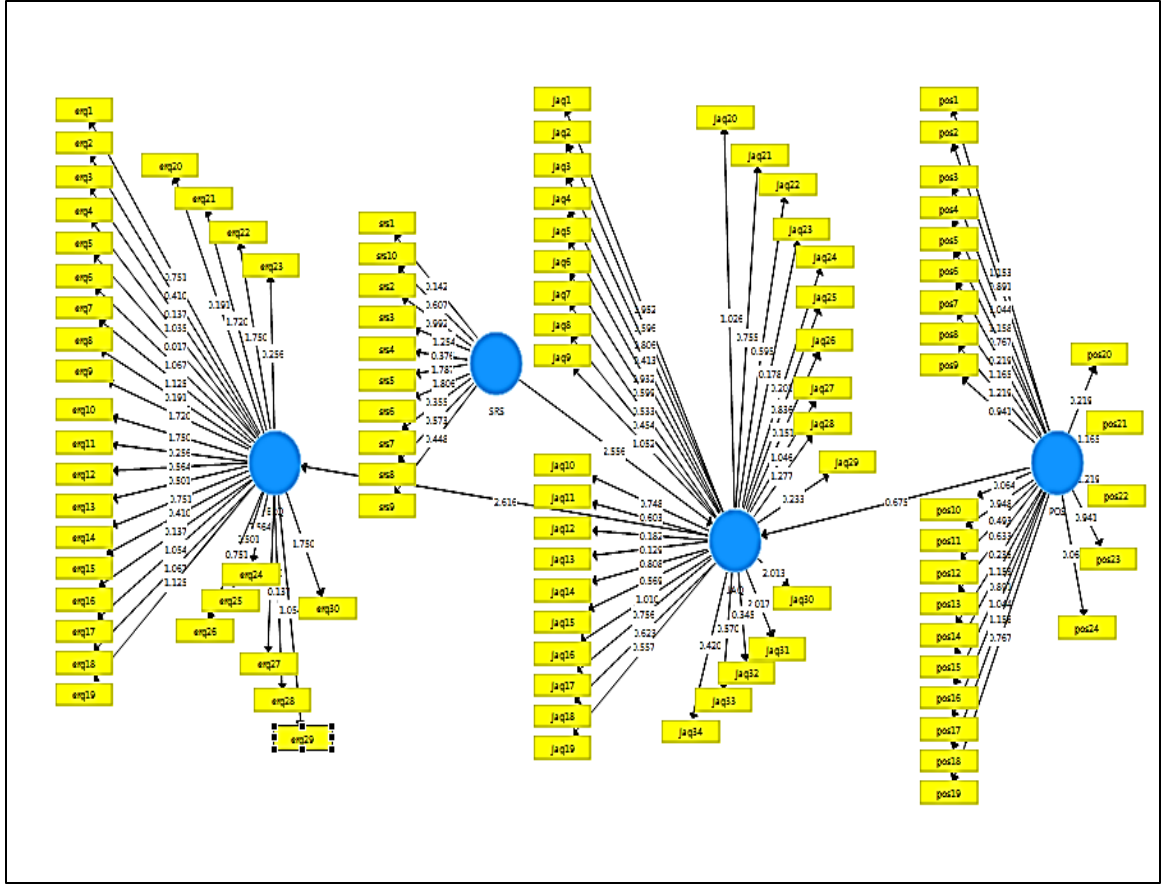
**Table 8. Result of structural modeling**

Hypothesis	Constructs	$\beta$	$t\text{-value}$	P-value	Decision
Hypothesis 1	OCB $\longrightarrow$ EC	0.428	5.213	0.001	Supported
Hypothesis 2	EL $\longrightarrow$ EC	0.241	3.272	0.005	Supported
Hypothesis 3	EL $\longrightarrow$ OCB	0.408	3.119	0.002	Supported
Hypothesis 5	TL $\longrightarrow$ EC	0.201	2.674	0.001	Supported
Hypothesis 6	TL $\longrightarrow$ OCB	0.399	3.216	0.000	Supported

Note: OCB= Organizational citizenship behavior, EL= Ethical leadership, TL= Transformational leadership, EC= Employee creativity

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model of the current study. The model shows the direct relationship between ethical leadership, transformational leadership, and OCB and employee creativity. It also depicts the indirect relationship of ethical leadership and transformational leadership with employee creativity through the mediation of OCB practices.





**Figure 2. Path result on ethical leadership, transformational leadership, OCB, and employee creativity**

The recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008) were followed to test the mediating impact of OCB between the independent variables (ethical leadership and transformational leadership) and the dependent variable (employee creativity). First, the indirect influence of an independent variable on the dependent variable should be computed. According to the authors, if it is substantial and positive, the first criteria for the mediation test is met (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The values of the lower and upper bounds should then be computed. If there is no zero between the values of the lower and upper bounds of the 95% Confidence Intervals (CIs), the indirect impact is considerable and there is a mediation. Otherwise, no evidence exists to support the mediating impact.

In **H<sub>4</sub>**, it was anticipated that OCB mediates the linkages between ethical leadership style and employee creativity. The analysis presented in Table 9 shows that the indirect effect of ethical leadership on employee creativity is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.210, p < 0.05$ ). The results also showed that there is no zero between the lower bound (0.022) and upper bound (0.323); thus, OCB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership style and employee creativity, and this confirms that **H<sub>4</sub>** is supported. Finally, it was proposed in **H<sub>7</sub>** that OCB mediates the association between transformational leadership and employee creativity. Through the analysis, it was found that the indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee creativity is positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.187, p < 0.05$ ). The results also showed that there is no zero between the lower bound (0.021) and upper bound (0.243); therefore, OCB mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee creativity, and this means that **H<sub>7</sub>** is accepted.

**Table 9. Result of mediation test**

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	SE	LL95% CI	UL95%CI
<b>EL→OCB→EC (H4)</b>	0.326**	0.210**	0.03	[0.022]	[0.323]
<b>TL→OCB→EC (H7)</b>	0.319**	0.187**	0.04	[0.021]	[0.243]

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , OCB= Organizational citizenship behavior, EL= Ethical leadership, TL= Transformational leadership, EC= Employee creativity

## DISCUSSION

The principal goal of this research was to investigate the impact of ethical and transformational leadership styles on employee creativity, as well as to see if OCB mediates the link between these characteristics. According to the research, OCB has a good effect on employee creativity. N. P. Podsakoff et al. (2009) also confirmed that OCB had a positive impact on organizational effectiveness, lending credence to the potential linkages between OCB and employee creativity. According to Berg et al. (2017), since employees' creative behavior is dependent on their knowledge, which may be fostered through organizational training or information transfer among coworkers, it is critical to encourage employees to assist and support one another (De Clercq & Pereira, 2020). During the assessment of published literature, it was discovered that there is a scarcity of studies that examined the empirical influence of OCB on employee creativity. Thus, our research adds to the literature by demonstrating that OCB is favorably associated with employee creativity.

This study also found that ethical leadership has a favorable influence on OCB and employee creativity. The analysis provides empirical evidence regarding the effects of ethical leadership on OCB and employee creativity hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> sequentially. These three hypotheses are significantly and positively support the linkage between ethical leadership and OCB and employee creativity. The present study was carried out in a "real-work setting" and suggests ethical leadership is a positive antecedent of employee creativity. Second, ethical leadership is expected to optimize workplace outcomes in a collective culture compared with individualistic western cultures. Numerous research studies have explored the relationship between these variables such as Al Halbusi et al. (2021), Feng et al. (2018), and Hughes et al. (2018). Given that Malaysia is a collectivist society, ethical leadership is expected to be more effective in Malaysian organizations than in organizations in the west. Third, the study also tries to answer whether ethical leadership is as important for organizations in developing countries as in those of developed economies. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that workers' views of their leaders' ethical leadership influence their OCB (Ayu Putu Widani Sugianingrat et al., 2019), as well as workplace creativity (Yang & Wei, 2018). That is, an ethical leader who acts honestly, with relational transparency, and in a balanced manner will be able to create an open and honest connection with his or her followers (Ko et al., 2017). As a result, ethical leaders foster an organizational culture that fosters and encourages OCB and employee creativity. The empirical findings of this study contribute to the current literature and provide some interesting results. Overall, the results of this work provide support for the proposed hypotheses.

Furthermore, the study's findings indicated that OCB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership style and employee creativity as stated in H<sub>4</sub>. This finding suggests that an ethical leadership style might generate employees' emotive commitment to the business, which will eventually drive their creativity. Ethical leaders have characteristics that influence positively relationships with followers and their work environment. Followers feel freer and more confident to be creative, and, as a result, they improve their performance. Thus, perceptions of ethical leadership appear to motivate employees to be more creative at work and, subsequently, to achieve better job performance (Newman et al., 2017). According to Pablo and Ricardo (2014), certain characteristics of ethical leaders play a critical role in developing favorable exchange relationships with their subordinates because these leaders arouse confidence, inspire hope and optimism, and elicit positive emotions in their

subordinates, who reciprocate with greater OCB. As a result, in order to display innovative behavior, employees must be psychologically comfortable (Strydom, 2021).

According to the findings of this study, transformational leadership has a beneficial influence on OCB and employee creativity. The analysis provides empirical evidence regarding the effects of transformational leadership on OCB and employee creativity hypotheses H5 and H6 sequentially.

This conclusion was supported by earlier research that found transformational leadership had a substantial influence on employee creativity (Kuenzi et al., 2020). Bush (2018) also confirmed that employees are more likely to stay committed and rely heavily on a transformational leader who inspires and directs them to a new work approach. This might be due to the fact that transformational leaders focus on increasing their followers' skills to generate new ideas and change the present status quo (Newman et al., 2014). Furthermore, transformative leaders are known to show empathy, personalized concern, and support to their followers. Such characteristics may empower employees to question the present status quo without fear, resulting in more workplace creativity giving support to H5. Furthermore, the results indicated the beneficial influence of transformational leadership style on OCB as stated in H6. This conclusion is consistent with earlier empirical research, which found a positive connection between the two constructs (Kim & Park, 2019; Newman et al., 2014; N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009; Spector et al., 2010). This indicates that transformational leaders have a significant impact on influencing the behaviors of their followers in the organization and motivating them to go above and beyond expectations and work tasks (Fatima & Siddiqui, 2019).

Finally, the findings confirmed that OCB mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee creativity as stated in H7. This implies that employees' attitudes about their transformational leaders might boost their organizational emotional attachment, promoting their creativity at work. OCB offers opportunities for employees to self-develop, face work problems independently, take more responsibility, and improve their own competency (Xu et al., 2021). All of this is beneficial to increasing creativity at work. In summary, transformational leadership promotes employees' positive behaviors. These include helping co-workers, participating in organizational activities, and actively taking on tasks outside their specific job definition, as well as developing new suggestions and creative ideas; in other words, bettering their performance (Asif et al., 2019; Calia et al., 2021; Maheshwari, 2021).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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This study is one of the first to attempt to correlate ethical and transformational leadership styles with employee creativity in a higher education environment using OCB. This research also represents an important opportunity for legitimizing the ethical and transformational leadership style, in both scholarly and practitioner contexts. Although ethical leadership and transformational leadership are seen as core values in themselves, without empirically demonstrated pragmatic outcomes, it is less likely to obtain attention in both contexts. The findings indicated that ethical and transformational leadership behaviors affect employee creativity, which may be reinforced when workers demonstrate good OCB. As a result, businesses should establish methods to help them build ethical and transformational leaders in order to foster employees' OCB and creativity. These leadership approaches can inspire higher education personnel to think more dichotomously and to build thought processes that result in a wider pool of creative ideas and inventive solutions. As a result, it is thought that employees who display creative behavior may be effectively managed when leaders use ethical and transformational leadership styles and inspire them to exhibit OCB that allows creative problem-solving. The results provided significant support for the hypothesis that OCB mediates the connection between the chosen leadership styles (ethical and transformational leadership) and employee creativity in Malaysian PHEIs. Considering that creativity and OCB promote employees' performance, our study suggests that leaders who use ethical and transformative leadership styles are more able to stimulate important outcomes, such as creativity and OCB among employees in the PHEIs in Malaysia. These

findings also have practical and theoretical implications that may be useful for various higher education scholars and business practitioners when developing human resource strategies.

### ***PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS***

The purpose of this study was to investigate the direct and indirect impacts of ethical and transformational leadership styles on employee creativity in the higher education sector, using OCB as a mediator. According to the findings, ethical leadership has a favorable influence on employee creativity and OCB. Furthermore, the data suggested that the involvement of OCB is mediating this impact. In other words, ethical leaders have the ability to cultivate OCB in their followers, resulting in increased creativity. These findings suggest that higher education institutions should prioritize the development of leaders who value transparency and self-awareness in their interactions with followers, and who demonstrate an inner moral perspective in addition to balanced information processing, in order to ensure positive outcomes at the individual and organizational levels. Therefore, we recommend that organizations put greater emphasis on proper training and developmental programs for their leaders. Also to maximize the leadership effectiveness and make employees more engaged, creative, and committed, it is important for leaders to offer organizational rewards to their employees, ensure their participation in the decision-making process, make fair decisions and promote supervisory support. In addition, owing to the fact that transformational leadership is likely to promote followers' creativity, organizations, practitioners may find it valuable to invest in transformational leadership training for supervisors or use personality tests to screen for high caliber candidates who have high potentials for being a good transformational leader. Furthermore, this study indicates that higher education institutions should prioritize recruiting leaders with ethical and transformational characteristics in order to increase views of these leadership styles, since this may favorably affect workers.

The results also indicated that transformative leadership improves OCB and employee creativity. The mediating impact of OCB on transformational leadership style and creativity was also experimentally investigated and confirmed by statistically significant results. When transformational leaders instill OCB in their followers, it inspires people to become creative via the brainstorming of innovative ideas, which eventually supports the organization's competitiveness. According to these findings, transformational leaders' qualities may be extended to cope with the diverse demands of workers who exhibit innovative behavior in the higher education sector. To enhance employee engagement, higher education institutions should also create attractive work environments. Management is responsible for ensuring that workers perceive a balance between their personal, institutional, and family lives. At the same time, leaders must exhibit trustworthiness, honesty, respect, and politeness in the workplace in order to increase their reputation and, as a result, improve OCB and creativity among their followers.

### ***THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS***

The current study also makes an important contribution to the existing literature by investigating the impact of ethical and transformational leadership on employee creativity. It sought to close existing gaps by investigating the mediating impact of OCB between transformational leadership style and individual creativity in the setting of higher education. This study responds to a need for further empirical research into how ethical and transformational leadership impact employees' creativity and what factors may moderate these interactions. It also intended to broaden the theory of ethical leadership and social exchange theory by evaluating the stability and validity of these ideas across different cultures using a Malaysian sample. The empirical research has yet to investigate the mediating influence of OCB on the association between the selected leadership styles (ethical and transformational leadership) and employee creativity. As a result, the current study attempted to include these factors into a novel research paradigm. This is one of the first research to investigate the role of OCB as a mediator between these factors. According to the findings, transformational leaders' characteristics can positively affect employee creativity. Nonetheless, such influence may be efficiently

cultivated through OCB given by transformative leaders. The current study's findings provide an important addition to the understanding of the links between selected leadership styles and employee creativity as mediated by OCB since they provide a foundation for theoretical growth and creativity empirical inquiry in this area. Our results also indicate that employee creativity can be enhanced by leaders' adequate support. Thus, we believe creative employees can be led effectively if leaders are of the right transformational style and provide both task and relational support to the employees.

When ethical and transformational leaders foster a pleasant work environment and maintain strong connections with their followers, their followers tend to exhibit better attitudes and higher creativity at work, which benefits the entire organization.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

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The article contains a few limitations that should be considered in future research. First and foremost, the nature of the cross-sectional method may limit the capacity to draw convincing conclusions about causation. The favorable correlations discovered in this study may be regarded as correlational rather than causative. Positive connections between ethical leadership, transformational leadership, employee creativity, and OCB, for example, would grow complicated as they changed through time. As a result, the longitudinal approach may be more appropriate for assessing the positive connections revealed in this research. Second, self-reported data were used in this study to validate the hypotheses, which may have resulted in some bias. Despite the fact that the statistical analysis indicated that the test of common method variance does not pose a significant problem in this study, the collection of data from other sources is likely to improve its quality. As a result, future studies can use many sources of data to compare variables in order to minimize bias and achieve impartiality. Furthermore, the data was gathered from personnel in the higher education industry, allowing future studies to explore the factors in other situations. Finally, only OCB was regarded as a mediator between the identified leadership styles and employee creativity in this study. Indeed, the findings confirmed OCB's position as a moderator in the connections between certain leadership styles (ethical and transformational leadership) and employee creativity. As a result, future studies should look at other mediators to better understand how and why both ethical and transformational leadership styles impact employee creativity in PHEIs.

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## APPENDIX – STRUCTURED SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

### Section A: Respondent Demographic Information

#### **Instructions to Participants:**

This questionnaire has 4 sections. Please answer section A honestly and sections B, C, D & E questions by circling the response you deem fit. Your answers will determine the outcome of this study. You are advised not to discuss any answers with your colleague(s). There is no wrong or right answer. All information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and your valuable opinion is greatly appreciated. The information given is strictly for research purpose only. The typical time to complete this survey is about 15 – 20 minutes.

A. Please select by ticking (✓) to each question which best describe you.

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Marital status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced/Separated ☐  
Unidentified ☐
3. Age: 20 - 29 ☐ 30 - 39 ☐ 40 - 49 ☐ 50 - 59 ☐ > 60 ☐
4. Qualifications: Postgraduate degree ☐ Bachelor degree ☐ Diploma ☐  
High School Diploma ☐
5. Working experience: 1 - 4 years ☐ > 5 years ☐

### Section B: Ethical Leadership Questionnaire

**Instruction:** Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your principal.

Please use the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Undecided

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

1.	I establish trust in my relationship with others.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I try to ensure harmony in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I don't tolerate arrogance.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I follow procedures and rules.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I try to preserve everyone's safety and well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I try to make people aware that some situation disproportionately privilege some groups.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I speak out against unfair practices.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I seek out against unfair practices.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I seek to protect each individual's dignity.	1	2	3	4	5

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10.	I expect people to make mistakes (it's human nature).	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I speak out against injustice.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I am concerned when individuals or groups have advantages compared to others.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I check the legal and regulatory clauses that might apply.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I check my organization's unwritten rules.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I conduct an investigation.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Section C: Transformational Leadership Questionnaire**

**Instruction:** Please respond by considering how well each statement characterizes your school.

Please use the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Undecided

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

1.	My leader/manager instills pride in me for being associated with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My leader/manager goes beyond self-interest for the good of staff.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My leader/manager has my respect.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My leader/manager emphasizes on the specific importance of having a strong sense of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My leader/manager considers moral/ethical consequences of his/her decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My leader/manager emphasizes on the importance of group missions.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My leader/manager articulates a compelling vision for the company.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My leader/manager takes notice of whether or not he/she is appreciated by his/her staff.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My leader/manager treats me as an individual rather than as member of a group.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My leader/manager considers me as having different needs/abilities/aspiration.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My leader/manager helps me to develop my professional strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My leader/manager considers deferent perspectives when solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section D: Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire****Instruction:** Please respond by considering how well each statement characterizes your school.

Please use the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Undecided

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

1.	Takes additional tasks beyond what is required.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Helps others who have heavy work loads.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Performs activities for the marketing of the organization and the department.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Assists new employees even when this is not required.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Complains about trivial matters.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Is patient with peers.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Makes innovative suggestions to improve department work processes.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Does not misuse organizational equipment.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Agrees to peers' requests to switch shifts.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Gives advance notice if unable to come to work.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Contributes to a positive atmosphere in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Spends a great deal of time on private phone conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Takes steps to have good relationship with other workers.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Is mindful of peers' needs at work.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Reports to work on time.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Assume responsibilities as a team member.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Does not take extra breaks in addition to those formally scheduled.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Willingly performs activities that assist the department.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Treats his/her clients and patients with respect and dignity.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Attends functions that are not required, but that help the department's image.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Takes into consideration priorities in work interventions.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Performs his/her duties following professional standards.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Makes decisions based on knowledge and careful assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Keeps up to date with organizational procedures and standards.	1	2	3	4	5

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### **Section E: Creativity Questionnaire**

**Instruction:** Please respond by considering how well each statement characterizes your school.

Please use the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Undecided

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

1.	Suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Searches out new technologies, processes, techniques and/or product ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Suggests new ways to increase quality.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Is a good source of creative ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Is not afraid to take risks.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Promotes and champions ideas to others.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Exhibits creativity on the job when given the opportunity to.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Develops adequate plans and schedules for the implementation of new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Often has new and innovative ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Comes up with creative solutions to problems.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Often has a fresh approach to problems.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Suggests new ways of performing work tasks.	1	2	3	4	5

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY**



## AUTHORS

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