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**Article**

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Administrative Sciences

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# The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Innovative Work Behaviors: A Mediating–Moderating Model of Psychological Empowerment, Job Crafting, Proactive Personality, and Person–Organization Fit

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**Abstract:** The study assesses a model designed to investigate the mediating impact of psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality, and to examine the moderating influence of person–organization fit on the relationship between ethical leadership and employee innovative behavior. A sample of 782 full-time employees from various industries in Jordan were surveyed to gather data on ethical leadership, innovative work behaviors, psychological empowerment, job crafting, proactive personality, and person–organization fit. The study employed an empirical research design, with data collected through surveys. The results reveal a positive correlation between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior, with psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality as the mediators in this relationship. The link between ethical leadership and innovation work behaviors is also moderated by person–organization fit. The study's model suggests that ethical leadership practices enhance innovation. Prioritizing ethical principles, transparency, fairness, trust, and accountability cultivates a culture valuing ethics and encouraging innovation. The results provide insights to boost empowerment and proactive behaviors and highlight the importance of a person–organization fit that aligns values for an innovation-friendly workplace. Fit considerations should also be incorporated in recruitment and retention processes. The study makes significant theoretical contributions by synthesizing insights from ethical leadership theory and developing a comprehensive framework to understand how ethical leadership influences innovative work behavior. The research also extends prior work by examining the moderating role of person–organization fit by emphasizing the importance of aligning individual and organizational values in fostering innovation.

**Keywords:** ethical leadership; innovative work behaviors; psychological empowerment; job crafting; proactive personality; person–organization fit; mediation; moderation

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## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic business landscape, organizations prioritize innovative work behavior to thrive in turbulent environments. Innovative behavior is defined as intentional actions that contribute to new ideas, processes, or products, and is crucial for organizations' survival and competitiveness as it fosters progress and provides a competitive edge (De Jong and Den Hartog 2010). The indispensability of innovation has evolved into a fundamental driver of organizational success, emphasizing its role in sustaining competitive advantage and long-term survival (Choi et al. 2021; De Jong and Den Hartog 2010). Scholars like Berisha et al. (2020) underscore the positive outcomes of innovative behaviors and link them to enhanced performance and productivity.

Within the context of innovation, ethical leadership, which prioritizes ethical principles in decision-making, emerges as a critical factor (Lawton and Páez 2015). This ethical leadership style influences organizational citizenship behavior, builds trust, promotes

creativity, enhances reputation, and contributes to sustainable business success (Javed et al. 2017; Piccolo et al. 2010). While previous studies have explored the moral aspects and ethical behaviors influenced by ethical leadership, there is a need to understand its motivational role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, especially innovative work behaviors (Brown and Treviño 2006).

Previous research investigating the significance of ethical leadership for employee innovative work behavior has particularly examined its direct influence, which fails to completely clarify why ethical leadership is related to innovative work behavior. A few studies have examined mediating and boundary situations that positively link ethical leadership with employees' innovative work behavior (Rasheed et al. 2024) and circumstances under which ethical leadership is more or less likely associated with employees' innovative work behavior (Masood and Asim 2023). Moreover, a few researchers have examined the linkage between psychological empowerment (Llorente-Alonso et al. 2024), job crafting (Jasmina Tomas et al. 2023), proactive personality (Riani and Harsono 2024; Yeap 2024; Zhang and Xu 2024), and person–organization fit (Pham et al. 2024; Zhou 2024) and innovative work behavior. These voids in previous studies restrict our knowledge about when and how leaders' moral behavior promotes innovative work behavior of the employees in organizations.

To address these gaps in the literature, this study investigates the individual-level factors that mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative behavior, including psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality. Additionally, this study explores the moderating role of person–organization fit in this relationship. Aligning with Brown and Treviño's (2006) recommendation and responding to scholars' calls (e.g., Albdareen et al. 2024; Hoang et al. 2023; Xie et al. 2024) to investigate contextual impacts that encourage a work setting, which can facilitate or avert the influences of ethical leadership on employees' innovative work behaviors, the study provides empirical evidence and explanations for the mediating and moderating processes involved in ethical leaders' influences on employee outcomes. This multifaceted exploration enhances our understanding of the intricate dynamics between ethical leadership, individual psychological factors, and innovative work behavior (Gu et al. 2015; Javed et al. 2017; Mayer et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2018).

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

### *2.1. Ethical Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior*

The well-established link between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors, as seen in studies such as Aslam et al. (2024), Brown et al. (2005), Chen and Hou (2016), and Jing et al. (2022), is rooted in social exchange theory, which emphasizes reciprocity (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2007). This relationship suggests that employees are more inclined to innovate when ethical leaders provide support, and emphasize fairness and positive treatment (Haque and Yamoah 2021; Saxena and Prasad 2024). Ethical leaders cultivate trust and mutual respect through clear values, which motivates employees to reciprocate with innovative behavior.

Transparency, honesty, and fairness in ethical leaders establish trust and confidence in the workforce (Walumbwa et al. 2011) and empower employees to take risks and engage in innovation, buoyed by perceived support. Ethical leaders' genuine concern for employee well-being fosters reciprocity and encourages positive behavior (Wibawa and Takahashi 2021). For instance, Liu et al. (2023) found that ethical leadership promotes psychological safety and facilitates innovative work behaviors, because employees feel secure to share ideas and collaborate. This approach not only enhances organizational trust but also fosters a dynamic environment that encourages sustained innovative contributions from employees. Yeap (2024) indicated that a moral leader supports open communication, stimulates participation in making decisions, motivates individuals to express their opinions, and applies equitable treatment. These behaviors stimulate individuals to execute new visions or thoughts. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Ethical leadership is positively related to employees' innovative work behavior.*

### *2.2. The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment*

Psychological empowerment, as defined by Spreitzer (1995), involves individuals' perception of feeling in control of their work and believing in their ability to impact organizational outcomes. Ethical leadership that is dedicated to moral principles significantly influences psychological empowerment in organizational settings (Brown and Treviño 2006). This type of leadership fosters trust and transparency, enhances security, and contributes to psychological empowerment. As role models, ethical leaders profoundly impact followers' psychological empowerment by exemplifying behaviors aligned with ethical standards (Meng and Neill 2022) that foster self-efficacy (Dust et al. 2018).

The positive impact of ethical leadership extends to the organizational culture, with leaders actively cultivating an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages open communication and collaboration (Wong et al. 2020). In this type of culture, individuals feel empowered to express their opinions, share innovative ideas, and contribute to the organization's success. Ethical leaders who prioritize fairness and justice contribute to a positive organizational environment that reinforces psychological empowerment through equitable recognition and rewards (Walumbwa et al. 2011). The impact of ethical leadership on psychological empowerment reflects a dynamic interplay between individual perceptions of ethical conduct, organizational culture, and the cultivation of personal efficacy and autonomy (Liu et al. 2021). In ethical leadership, leaders give individuals a sense of meaning by illustrating and expressing the value and importance of their jobs. They improve individuals' sense of competency by providing constructive feedback, promoting self-efficacy, and creating a feeling of autonomy (self-determination) by delegating some authority to individuals (Suifan et al. 2020). Abbas (2023) found that ethical leadership positively influences employee psychological empowerment. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Ethical leadership is positively associated with employees' psychological empowerment.*

Grounded in self-determination theory, Kustanto et al. (2020) posit that psychological empowerment increases autonomy, competence, and meaningfulness in employees' work and, consequently, increases creative thinking and problem-solving behaviors. Singh and Sarkar (2019) argue that empowerment transforms challenges into growth opportunities and fosters a mindset that encourages the exploration of novel ideas. Providing skills, knowledge, and resources enhances employees' positive psychological state, which is conducive to innovation (Echebiri et al. 2020; Nham et al. 2024; Singh and Sarkar 2019; Ye et al. 2022). With a sense of ownership and control over their work, individuals are more motivated to contribute to the organization's innovative endeavors. In turn, this fosters a dynamic and inventive workplace culture. Recent studies (e.g., Al Daboub et al. 2024; Alwali 2024; Pham et al. 2024) provide empirical evidence regarding the positive association between innovative work behavior and psychological empowerment. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Psychological empowerment is positively associated with innovative work behaviors.*

The intricate relationship between ethical leadership, psychological empowerment, and innovative work behaviors is pivotal in an organizational context (Brown and Treviño 2006). In addition to upholding ethical standards, ethical leaders contribute to the work environment by fostering psychological empowerment and paving the way for innovative behaviors such as creativity and proactivity (Sattar et al. 2020). This cascade effect underscores the profound influence of ethical leadership, not only in promoting ethical conduct, but also in cultivating a work culture that stimulates individuals' innovative

potential. Psychological empowerment is a crucial link in this transformation process. When employees perceive their leaders as ethical, they experience heightened autonomy, competence, and impact, which increases motivation and a greater willingness to engage in innovative behavior (Gu et al. 2015; Javed et al. 2017). This collective research underscores the critical role of ethical leadership in promoting psychological empowerment and driving employees to exhibit work behavior. Understanding and leveraging these intricate relationships are imperative for fostering a culture of innovation and ethical conduct to achieve organizational excellence and adaptability. Prior studies (e.g., Sattar et al. 2020; Zahra and Waheed 2017) have verified that psychological empowerment positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior. Based on the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior.*

### 2.3. The Mediating Role of Job Crafting

Job crafting, which involves intentional adjustments to tasks, relationships, and work perceptions, is notably influenced by ethical leadership. Ethical leaders, by setting a moral tone and emphasizing fairness and transparency, establish a culture of trust and psychological safety, and empower employees to proactively design their roles (Piccolo et al. 2010; Saleem et al. 2022). Ethical leaders' transparent communication and constructive feedback are crucial for employees to understand ethical guidelines in job crafting (Ahmad et al. 2023). This type of transparency extends to the dissemination of organizational values to guide employees to align their roles with their personal and organizational objectives. Thus, ethical leadership not only facilitates effective communication and role guidance, but also creates an atmosphere that empowers employees to proactively engage in job crafting and, as a result, fosters a positive and meaningful work experience. Previous research (e.g., Asif et al. 2023) confirmed the positive link between ethical leadership and job crafting. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Ethical leadership is positively associated with employees' job crafting.*

Job crafting involves the proactive adjustment of one's own job tasks and responsibilities and is intricately linked to the promotion of work behaviors. Job crafting can be enhanced by empowering employees to shape their roles in alignment with their strengths, preferences, and passions (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). This customization of professional identities not only fosters a sense of ownership but also strengthens the relation between employees and their work (Ok and Lim 2022). Heightened engagement resulting from job crafting encourages individuals to experiment with new methods and solutions, which contributes to a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the organizational context (Guo et al. 2023). Thus, job crafting can actively contribute to a workplace's innovative fabric. Earlier studies (e.g., Kaur and Rahmadani 2023; Tomas et al. 2023) have revealed that job crafting is positively linked to innovative work behaviors. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Job crafting is positively associated with innovative work behaviors.*

Job crafting encompasses three dimensions: task, relationship, and cognitive crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Task crafting involves adjusting tasks and responsibilities to better match one's skills and objectives. Relationship crafting focuses on shaping interactions and cultivating positive workplace relationships. Cognitive crafting entails reframing work perceptions to discover meaning and purpose. Engaging in these dimensions allows individuals to actively tailor their work experiences to better align with their values and aspirations, which improves work-related outcomes (Berg et al. 2013).

Ethical leadership, as emphasized by Fu et al. (2020), prioritizes ethical conduct, integrity, and fairness. While studies have examined the direct link between ethical leadership and innovative behaviors, few have examined the indirect relationships. Ethical leadership cultivates a positive work environment and inspires employees to engage in job crafting (Asif et al. 2023). This indirect influence suggests that ethical leadership fosters work behaviors by encouraging job crafting and enhancing autonomy and self-efficacy. When employees reshape their roles to align with their values, they are motivated to take risks, generate fresh ideas, and seek opportunities for improvement. Thus, job crafting serves as an indirect mechanism through which ethical leadership enhances employees' innovative work behaviors (Asif et al. 2023). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *Job crafting mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behaviors.*

### *2.4. The Mediating Role of Proactive Personality*

Shaped by ethical leadership, a proactive personality flourishes in a positive workplace that nurtures trust and psychological safety, and enables individuals to express themselves without fear (Brown et al. 2005; Hyatt and Gruenglas 2023). Ethical leaders who serve as integrity role models inspire followers to align proactive behavior with ethical considerations, which fosters personal growth and organizational well-being. This impact shapes organizational dynamics, increases openness, and grants employees autonomy for initiative (Brown and Treviño 2006; Hu et al. 2018). This approach not only facilitates the collective expression of proactive traits but also cultivates a culture of innovation (Crant 2000). Ethical leadership plays a pivotal role in cultivating a proactive organizational culture that is capable of adapting, seizing opportunities, and navigating ethical challenges with resilience. Yeap (2024) found that a proactive personality explains the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** *Ethical leadership is positively associated with employees' proactive personality.*

A proactive personality, considered a predictor of innovative work behaviors (Li et al. 2020), is characterized by initiative, self-motivation, and a willingness to take on challenges (Mubarak et al. 2021). Individuals with a proactive personality actively seek opportunities to contribute and have a positive impact on their work environment. Their inclination to take calculated risks and challenge the status quo creates an atmosphere that supports and encourages innovation in the workplace. Proactive individuals not only generate creative ideas, but also inspire and motivate their peers, thus contributing to a collaborative and innovative organizational culture (Li et al. 2020). Ullah et al. (2024) found that proactive personality positively influences innovative work behavior. They note that proactive orientation is vital for driving change, adapting to evolving circumstances, and fostering a work environment that values and nurtures innovation. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 9 (H9).** *A proactive personality is positively associated with innovative work behaviors.*

A proactive personality is characterized by self-starting and self-directed behaviors that surpass standard expectations (Jiang 2017), and involves actively pursuing opportunities and assuming responsibility for personal growth, and initiating actions for positive changes in professional and personal domains.

Ethical leadership acts as a catalyst that motivates proactive employees to engage in innovative work behaviors. Ethical leaders foster an environment of trust, transparency, and open communication that allows for the free expression of ideas. Individuals with proactive personalities are driven by innovation, seek information, willingly share knowledge, and display fearlessness in challenging norms (Li et al. 2020). Ahmad et al. (2023) emphasize

that proactive employees find inspiration in ethical leaders, viewing them as role models who prioritize fairness and ethical decision-making. Thus, a proactive personality may play a vital mediating role in translating ethical leadership's influence on promoting innovative work behaviors within the organization. Yeap's (2024) study results confirmed that a proactive personality mediates the association between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 10 (H10).** *A proactive personality mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior.*

### 2.5. The Moderating Role of Person–Organization Fit

Several studies have explored the relationship between ethical leadership and employee innovation behavior, yielding diverse outcomes. While Van der Wal and Demircioglu (2020) and Haque and Yamoah (2021) emphasize a positive direct link, Al Halbusi et al. (2021), Ye et al. (2022), and Musenze and Mayende (2022) question the direct nature of this relationship. Further investigation is needed to understand the underlying mechanism with the proposed moderating variables: employee attributes, psychological safety, and perceived organizational support (Jin et al. 2022). Limited attention has been paid to person–organization fit as an organizational factor influencing the impact of ethical leadership on innovative behavior (Jin et al. 2022).

Person–organization fit gauges the alignment between an individual's attributes and organizational demands, spanning values, culture, goals, and mission alignment (Bright 2021; Kristof-Brown et al. 2023). Nham et al. (2024) and Tang et al. (2021) highlight its significance by indicating that alignment fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and satisfaction and positively impacts motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. This synchronization not only enhances individual performance but also augments the overall success of an organization (Verquer et al. 2003). Deeply rooted in social cognitive principles, person–organization fit is relevant to the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors. Similar to the emphasis on person–organization fit, ethical leadership, when aligned with employees' values, cultivates an environment in which innovative work behavior thrives (Liu et al. 2023). Supportive ethical leaders create a culture of trust and openness that is crucial for nurturing innovative thinking. The alignment between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors underscores ethical leadership's pivotal role as a catalyst for innovation within organizations. Previous studies (e.g., Afsar et al. 2018; Akhtar et al. 2019) have highlighted that a person–organization fit is positively linked to innovative work behavior. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 11 (H11).** *Person–organization fit positively moderates the positive relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors, such that the positive relationship will be stronger under high levels of person–organization fit than under low levels of person–organization fit.*

The overall model is exhibited in Figure 1.

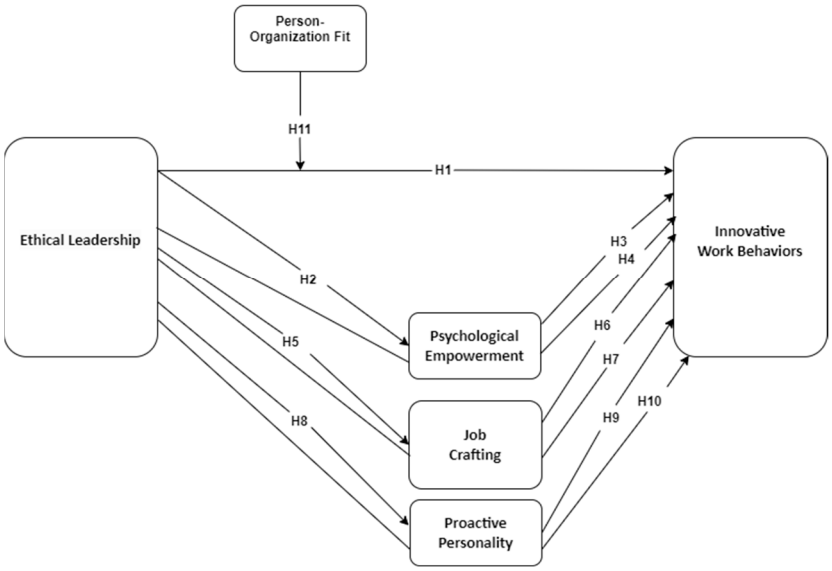


**Figure 1.** Model of the study.

## 3. Methods

### *3.1. Participants and Procedures*

The data collection process employed a survey method with an online questionnaire through SurveyMonkey. To define our sample frame, first, we identified all listed companies in the Amman Stock Exchange Market, including those owned by the government, which amounted to 139 companies. Next, we identified the total number of full-time employees in the target companies, based on disclosure information provided to the Amman Stock Exchange Market. Accordingly, the total number amounted to 4750 employees. To calculate our sample size, we utilized Cochran's (1977) formula using "Confidence Level (95%) and Margin of Error (5%)". Based on this formula, the ideal size of our sample is 356 employees. Then, we executed random sampling techniques to provide each listed company participant with a similar opportunity to be chosen. Such a technique decreases the possibility of bias by assuring that the sample is representative of the identified companies. Consequently, the sample included employees from a wide array of sectors, such as governmental, private, technology, and educational entities. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 15 participants to verify the clarity and effectiveness of the survey questionnaire. As a result, all participants confirmed that the questionnaire was clear and understandable. Following the pilot study, the questionnaire was initiated in March 2023.

Informed consent was obtained from all the survey participants, emphasizing the voluntary nature of their participation and the assurance of strict confidentiality of their responses. Ethical approval was secured from the human resources departments in the organizations, reaffirming the dedication to conducting research with ethical integrity. Stringent quality control measures and thorough checks were consistently applied to enhance the data's accuracy and reliability. The survey was conducted over 22 weeks, approximately equivalent to five months. During this period, 972 responses were gathered; however, 102 of the responses contained invalid values, and 88 did not meet the research criteria. The final dataset comprised 782 valid and usable questionnaires. Collected data were analyzed using Mplus version 8.10, Amos version 28.0, and SPSS version 28.0. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the study sample.

**Table 1.** The characteristics of the study sample.

| Variable | Category | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 637 | 81.5 |
| | Female | 145 | 18.5 |
| Age | 30 years or less | 186 | 23.8 |
| | 31 to less than 40 years | 258 | 33.0 |
| | 41 to less than 50 years | 182 | 23.3 |
| | 51 years or more | 156 | 20.0 |
| Academic background | Diploma | 89 | 11.4 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 311 | 39.8 |
| | Master's degree | 249 | 31.9 |
| | Other qualifications | 133 | 17.0 |
| Work experience | Less than one year | 68 | 8.7 |
| | 1 to 5 years | 295 | 37.7 |
| | 6 to 10 years | 241 | 30.8 |
| | 11 years or more | 178 | 22.8 |
| Working hours per week | Less than 20 h | 112 | 14.3 |
| | 21 to 25 h | 121 | 15.5 |
| | 26 to 30 h | 168 | 21.5 |
| | 31 h or more | 381 | 48.7 |
| Job titles | Managerial/Executive | 132 | 16.9 |
| | Professional | 178 | 22.8 |
| | Administrative | 94 | 12.0 |
| | Technical/IT | 136 | 17.4 |
| | Skilled tradesperson | 63 | 8.0 |
| | Service industry | 42 | 5.4 |
| | Sales | 51 | 6.5 |
| | Other | 86 | 11.0 |
| Total | - | 782 | 100.0 |

### *3.2. Measurement Tools*

As outlined below, the study used existing scales from the literature. Ethical leadership was assessed using the 10-item scale developed by Brown et al. (2005). Respondents rate their agreement on "a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)". Sample items include "My supervisor listens to what employees have to say" and "My supervisor sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics". The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.993.

Innovative work behavior was measured using nine items developed by Janssen (2000). Respondents rate their agreement on "a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)". Sample items include "I often look for new working methods, techniques and tools." The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.864.

Psychological empowerment was measured using Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale. Sample items include "I am confident about my ability to do my job". Items are assessed on "a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)". The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.888.

Job crafting was assessed using a short 12-item scale developed by (Tims and Bakker 2010). Sample items include actions such as "Proactively taking on new tasks." Participants

indicate the frequency of these behaviors on "a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = very often)". The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.877.

Proactive personality was assessed using Seibert et al.'s (1999) 10-item scale. Respondents rate their agreement on "a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)". Sample items include "I will finish everything that is feasible to me regardless of the success rate". The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.765.

Person–organization fit was evaluated using nine items developed and validated by Cable and DeRue (2002). Respondents rate their agreement on "a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)". Sample items include "My organization's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life". The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.862.

### *3.3. Common Method Variance and Multicollinearity*

This study addresses potential issues of common method variance and multicollinearity in the primary data collection process. In accordance with prior research (Podsakoff et al. 2003), the risk of common method variance arises because of the reliance on self-reported data from the same respondents for all survey items. To mitigate this concern, we employed "Harman's single-factor test, which involves a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)", where all variables loaded onto a single general factor. The analysis met the criteria set by Hu and Bentler (1999), with the consolidated variables forming a single latent variable that explained 33.24% of the total variance and was comfortably below the 50% threshold. Consequently, we found that common method variance does not significantly impact the study, because the data analysis results remained within acceptable ranges. Additionally, we assessed multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor (VIF). The highest VIF value was 1.61, well below the accepted threshold of five, as recommended by James et al. (2013). This indicates that multicollinearity was not a significant concern in the analyzed data. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis values of all the variables remained within the acceptable range (0.76 to 0.93), confirming a normal distribution pattern.

## 4. Results

### *4.1. Factor Loadings, Reliability, Convergent, and Discriminant Validity*

We conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the measurement scales, including assessments of CFA factor loadings, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. The results are summarized in Table 2 and show that all item loadings of the scales exceeded the 0.50 threshold. Hair et al. (2014) recommended that factor loading estimates should ideally be higher than 0.5 and that any item with a factor loading below this threshold should be removed from the measurement model. This suggests that all the items made significant contributions to their respective constructs. To ensure the establishment of convergent validity, three crucial criteria were carefully examined: factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (Hair et al. 2014). The values of the factor loading, "Composite Reliability", "Cronbach's Alpha", and "Average Variance Extracted AVE", as shown in Table 2, exceed the preferable threshold with 0.70, 0.80, 0.80, and 0.50, respectively, as indicated by Hair et al. (2014). These values underscore a robust relationship between the observed variables and their corresponding latent factors, signifying a commendable level of convergent validity demonstrated by each construct. We also assessed fitness indices for each variable, as shown in Table 3. The values of "Chi-square ($\chi^2$)", "Normed-fit index (NFI)", "Comparative fit index (CFI)", "Goodness-of-fit statistic (GFI)", "Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)", and "standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)" satisfy the acceptable values of 0, with more than 0.90, 0.90, 0.90, less than 0.08, and 0.10, respectively, as mentioned by Hooper et al. (2008). Thus, the model fitness is confirmed.

**Table 2.** Confirmatory factor analysis, reliabilities and AVE for study variables.

| Variable Name | Measurement Items | Factors Loadings | Composite Reliability | $\alpha$ | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethical Leadership | EL1 | 0.838 | 0.946 | 0.933 | 0.637 |
| | EL2 | 0.805 | | | |
| | EL3 | 0.939 | | | |
| | EL4 | 0.822 | | | |
| | EL5 | 0.904 | | | |
| | EL6 | 0.564 | | | |
| | EL7 | 0.967 | | | |
| | EL8 | 0.691 | | | |
| | EL9 | 0.751 | | | |
| | EL10 | 0.639 | | | |
| Innovation Behavior | INWB1 | 0.906 | 0.941 | 0.864 | 0.641 |
| | INWB2 | 0.894 | | | |
| | INWB3 | 0.875 | | | |
| | INWB4 | 0.721 | | | |
| | INWB5 | 0.751 | | | |
| | INWB6 | 0.732 | | | |
| | INWB7 | 0.661 | | | |
| | INWB8 | 0.810 | | | |
| | INWB9 | 0.821 | | | |
| Psychological Empowerment | PsyEmp1 | 0.831 | 0.934 | 0.888 | 0.598 |
| | PsyEmp2 | 0.725 | | | |
| | PsyEmp3 | 0.728 | | | |
| | PsyEmp4 | 0.706 | | | |
| | PsyEmp5 | 0.713 | | | |
| | PsyEmp6 | 0.789 | | | |
| | PsyEmp7 | 0.807 | | | |
| | PsyEmp8 | 0.813 | | | |
| | PsyEmp9 | 0.794 | | | |
| | PsyEmp10 | 0.738 | | | |
| | PsyEmp11 | 0.836 | | | |
| | PsyEmp12 | 0.752 | | | |
| Job Crafting | JC1 | 0.778 | 0.921 | 0.877 | 0.537 |
| | JC2 | 0.698 | | | |
| | JC3 | 0.829 | | | |
| | JC4 | 0.674 | | | |
| | JC5 | 0.662 | | | |
| | JC6 | 0.558 | | | |
| | JC7 | 0.673 | | | |
| | JC8 | 0.673 | | | |
| | JC9 | 0.874 | | | |
| | JC10 | 0.879 | | | |
| | JC11 | 0.503 | | | |
| | JC12 | 0.732 | | | |
| Proactive Personality | PROP1 | 0.805 | 0.912 | 0.765 | 0.505 |
| | PROP2 | 0.768 | | | |
| | PROP3 | 0.714 | | | |
| | PROP4 | 0.731 | | | |
| | PROP5 | 0.679 | | | |
| | PROP6 | 0.697 | | | |
| | PROP7 | 0.741 | | | |
| | PROP8 | 0.611 | | | |
| | PROP9 | 0.701 | | | |
| | PROP10 | 0.669 | | | |
| Person–Organization Fit | P-O fit1 | 0.869 | 0.901 | 0.862 | 0.522 |
| | P-O fit2 | 0.617 | | | |
| | P-O fit3 | 0.705 | | | |
| | P-O fit4 | 0.573 | | | |
| | P-O fit5 | 0.784 | | | |
| | P-O fit6 | 0.688 | | | |
| | P-O fit7 | 0.693 | | | |
| | P-O fit8 | 0.615 | | | |
| | P-O fit9 | 0.807 | | | |

**Table 3.** Model goodness of fit indices.

| Variable Name | $\chi^2$ | NFI $\geq$ 0.90 | CFI $\geq$ 0.90 | GFI $\geq$ 0.90 | SRMR $\leq$ 0.08 | RMSEA < 0.10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethical Leadership | 0.00 | 0.922 | 0.934 | 0.951 | 0.071 | 0.066 |
| Innovation Behavior | 0.00 | 0.908 | 0.912 | 0.941 | 0.068 | 0.074 |
| Psychological Empowerment | 0.00 | 0.934 | 0.910 | 0.935 | 0.078 | 0.056 |
| Job Crafting | 0.00 | 0.935 | 0.922 | 0.946 | 0.071 | 0.069 |
| Proactive Personality | 0.00 | 0.911 | 0.909 | 0.931 | 0.066 | 0.054 |
| Person–Organization Fit | 0.00 | 0.901 | 0.912 | 0.936 | 0.073 | 0.060 |

Our evaluation of discriminant validity was guided by the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which posits that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for a construct should exceed its correlation with other constructs (Rönkkö and Cho 2022). Simultaneously, we employed the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), with a threshold of less than 0.90, to assess discriminant validity, where a ratio exceeding this value suggests potential issues (Kline 2011). The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5 and confirm the discriminant validity, as the AVE values surpass the correlation values. Additionally, all HTMT values are below 0.85 and provide further support for the established discriminant validity.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for study variables.

| | Constructs | Mean | (SD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | **Gender** | 1.46 | 0.504 | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| **2.** | **Age** | 3.12 | 0.696 | −0.464 ** 0.001 | -- | | | | | | | | |
| **3.** | **Job Title** | 4.12 | 2.368 | 0.213 0.143 | −0.186 0.200 | -- | | | | | | | |
| **4.** | **Academic Background** | 1.59 | 0.733 | −0.147 0.313 | 0.345 * 0.015 | −0.079 0.592 | -- | | | | | | |
| **5.** | **Current Experience** | 2.75 | 1.127 | 0.060 0.683 | 0.012 0.932 | −0.184 0.207 | 0.204 0.160 | -- | | | | | |
| **6.** | **EL** | 4.04 | 0.774 | −0.207 0.154 | 0.186 0.200 | −0.381 ** 0.007 | 0.126 0.388 | 0.202 0.164 | -- | | | | |
| **7.** | **INWB** | 3.68 | 1.004 | −0.123 0.402 | 0.295 * 0.039 | −0.427 ** 0.002 | 0.319 * 0.026 | 0.291 * 0.042 | 0.796 ** 0.000 | -- | | | |
| **8.** | **PE** | 4.03 | 0.676 | −0.485 ** 0.000 | 0.396 ** 0.005 | −0.303 * 0.035 | 0.259 0.072 | 0.073 0.620 | 0.571 ** 0.000 | 0.554 ** 0.000 | -- | | |
| **9.** | **JC** | 3.91 | 0..708 | −0.287 * 0.045 | 0.392 ** 0.005 | −0.310 * 0.030 | 0.024 0.870 | −0.088 0.548 | 0.439 ** 0.002 | 0.323 * 0.024 | 0.423 ** 0.002 | -- | |
| **10.** | **PP** | 3.72 | 0.720 | −0.084 0.567 | 0.168 0.248 | −0.312 * 0.029 | 0.098 0.503 | 0.256 0.076 | 0.740 ** 0.000 | 0.589 ** 0.000 | 0.363 * 0.010 | 0.145 0.320 | -- |
| **11.** | **P–O fit** | 4.06 | 0.691 | −0.147 0.315 | 0.175 0.230 | −0.384 ** 0.006 | 0.092 0.528 | 0.138 0.346 | 0.542 ** 0.000 | 0.434 ** 0.002 | 0.356 * 0.012 | 0.745 ** 0.000 | 0.339 * 0.017 |

EL, ethical leadership; INWB, innovative work behaviors; PE, psychological work behaviors; JC, job crafting; P–O Fit, person–organization fit. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

**Table 5.** Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| INWB | 0.844 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| PE | 0.594 | 0.612 | -- | -- | -- |
| PP | 0.831 | 0.737 | 0.459 | -- | -- |
| JC | 0.495 | 0.373 | 0.483 | 0.189 | -- |
| P–O fit | 0.613 | 0.497 | 0.387 | 0.421 | 0.846 |

EL, ethical leadership; INWB, innovative work behaviors; PE, psychological empowerment; PP, proactive personality, JC, job crafting; P–O Fit, person–organization fit.

### *4.2. Hypotheses Testing*

In the assessment phase of the structural model, systematic adherence to the established guidelines, as described by Hair et al. (2014), was maintained. The key criteria for this evaluation included scrutiny of the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), in-sample prediction based on effect size ($f^2$), and in-sample prediction based on predictive relevance ($Q^2$). Cohen's (1988) categorization of $R^2$ values in the behavioral sciences designates 2% for a small effect, 13% for a medium effect, and 26% for a large effect. The interpretative framework for $Q^2$ values that indicates the predictive relevance of the exogenous construct for the endogenous one, considers values above zero as meaningful, 0.25–0.50 as medium, and those exceeding 0.50 as a large effect, which aligns with Hair et al.'s (2014) guidelines. For $f^2$, thresholds of 0.2, 0.15, 0.35, and above 0.35 denote small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Hair et al. 2014).

In this investigation, the observed variance ($R^2$) revealed substantial values, with ethical leadership at 0.63, psychological empowerment at 0.30, job crafting at 0.11, and proactive personality at 0.34, signifying a moderate to large impact. Regarding effect size ($f^2$), the results presented in Table 6 surpass the recommended threshold of 0.02 for a small effect, as established by Cohen (1988). Additionally, following Hair et al. (2014), the results demonstrate $Q^2$ values of 0.10, 0.12, 0.09, and 0.15 for ethical leadership, job crafting, psychological empowerment, and proactive personality, respectively, and confirm the model's predictive relevance.

Adopting the two-step modeling approach, the results indicate a substantial and positive association between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors ($\beta = 0.796$, $t = 9.028$, $p < 0.000$), providing robust support for H1. Before delving into the specifics of the mediating hypotheses, it was essential to explore the relationships between the independent and dependent variables and proposed mediators, as highlighted by Hayes and Preacher (2010). Table 6 underscores the significant relationships, demonstrating that ethical leadership correlates significantly with psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.571$, $t = 4.774$, $p < 0.000$), job crafting ($\beta = 0.439$, $t = 3.350$, $p < 0.002$), and proactive personality ($\beta = 0.740$, $t = 7.554$, $p < 0.000$). Consequently, H2, H5, and H8 were validated. Additionally, the findings reveal positive associations between innovative work behaviors and psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.554$, $t = 4.564$, $p < 0.000$), job crafting ($\beta = 0.323$, $t = 2.339$, $p < 0.024$), and proactive personality ($\beta = 0.589$, $t = 7.554$, $p < 0.000$). Therefore, H3, H6, and H9 were confirmed.

The results presented in Table 6 offer a comprehensive examination of the indirect effects within the context of a mediation framework. Investigating H4, the data show that the impact of ethical leadership on innovative work behaviors is intricately influenced by psychological empowerment. The calculated $\beta$ is 0.084, and the associated t-value is 6.6905, collectively contributing to a robust and statistically significant indirect effect. The bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (CI) for this mediation process ranges from 0.080 to 0.220 and emphasizes the reliability of the observed mediation effect, which surpasses zero. Shifting attention to H7, where job crafting acts as a mediator, the effect size ($\beta$)

is 0.0145 with a t-value of 8.1807, which indicates a significant and substantial indirect effect. The 95% CI for this mediation effect ranges from 0.060 to 0.180 and confirms the statistical significance of H9. Proactive personality emerges as a mediator (H10) with a β of 0.0008 and a t-value of 6.0086. The corresponding 95% CI ranges from 0.050 to 0.140 and underscores the statistically significant mediating effect of proactive personality. Collectively, these findings offer compelling empirical support for the hypothesized indirect relationships between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors, and elucidate the crucial mediating roles of psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality in this intricate dynamic.

**Table 6.** Results of the structural model analysis.

| Path | Path Coefficient | t-Value | *p*-Value | $f^2$ | Test Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EL → IWB | 0.796 | 9.028 | 0.000 | 0.2511 | Accepted |
| EL → PE | 0.571 | 4.774 | 0.000 | 0.1235 | Accepted |
| EL → JC | 0.439 | 3.350 | 0.002 | 0.1502 | Accepted |
| EL → PP | 0.740 | 7.554 | 0.000 | 0.1121 | Accepted |
| PE → IWB | 0.554 | 4.564 | 0.000 | 0.0922 | Accepted |
| JC → IWB | 0.323 | 2.339 | 0.024 | 0.0230 | Accepted |
| PP → IWB | 0.589 | 5.001 | 0.000 | 0.0912 | Accepted |
| EL X P–OF → IWB | 0.261 | 5.231 | 0.001 | 0.0813 | Accepted |
| | **Beta** | **t-value** | **95% CI bias Corrected LL** | **UL** | |
| **Indirect effect** | | | | | |
| EL → PE → IWB | 0.0840 | 6.6905 | 0.080 | 0.220 | Accepted |
| EL → JC → IWB | 0.0145 | 8.1807 | 0.060 | 0.180 | Accepted |
| EL → PP → IWB | 0.0008 | 6.0086 | 0.050 | 0.140 | Accepted |
| **Moderator (P–OF)** | **Conditional indirect effect** | **SE** | **95% CI bias Corrected LL** | **UL** | |
| **Conditional indirect effect** | | | | | |
| Low | 0.011 | 0.006 | −0.0040 | 0.026 | |
| High | 0.043 | 0.016 | 0.020 | 0.078 | |

EL, ethical leadership; IWB, innovative work behaviors; PE, psychological work behaviors; PP, proactive personality, JC, job crafting; P–OF, person–job fit, LL; lower level, UL, upper level.

The outcomes pertaining to H11 reveal the moderating influence of person–organization fit on the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors. We examine the conditional indirect effects under varying levels of person–organization fit. The results indicate a positive but relatively small effect (0.011) in situations characterized by low person–organization fit. However, the 95% CI ranges from −0.0040 to 0.026 and includes zero, suggesting a lack of statistical significance under these conditions. In contrast, for high person–organization fit, the conditional indirect effect increases to 0.043, with a CI ranging from 0.020 to 0.078, which is entirely above zero. This denotes a statistically significant and positive moderation effect, affirming that the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors is significantly strengthened in contexts characterized by high person–organization fit. These findings empirically support the notion that person–organization fit positively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors, highlighting the contextual impact of organizational fit on leadership outcomes.

## 5. Discussion of the Results and Conclusions

The study results demonstrate a substantial and positive linkage between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors. This result aligns with previous studies (Aslam et al. 2024; Brown et al. 2005; Chen and Hou 2016; Jing et al. 2022). Ethical leaders build trust and confidence with followers (Walumbwa et al. 2011), give employees a sense of perceived support, empower them, and create a workplace culture that supports knowledge sharing and collaboration (Liu et al. 2023; Wibawa and Takahashi 2021), which ultimately facilitates innovative work behaviors.

Moreover, this study's findings revealed that ethical leadership positively affects employees' psychological empowerment. This result is supported by previous studies (e.g., Abbas 2023; Suifan et al. 2020). Leaders who adhere to morals and ethics standards usually share authority with followers, enabling followers to perceive their work's meaning, value, and importance and promoting their self-efficacy and autonomy (Abbas 2023; Suifan et al. 2020). The findings also revealed that psychological empowerment is positively linked to innovative work behaviors. This finding aligns with previous studies (e.g., Al Daboub et al. 2024; Alwali 2024; Pham et al. 2024). When followers are empowered and equipped with skills, knowledge, and resources, they become more motivated to contribute to the organization's innovative endeavors (Echebiri et al. 2020; Nham et al. 2024; Singh and Sarkar 2019; Ye et al. 2022). Furthermore, the findings showed that psychological empowerment positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. This result agrees with previous studies (e.g., Sattar et al. 2020; Zahra and Waheed 2017). As discussed earlier, ethical leaders share power with followers and provide them with essential skills and knowledge that enable those followers to engage in innovation activities effectively.

Additionally, the study findings exhibited that ethical leadership positively affects employees' job crafting. This result harmonizes with previous studies (e.g., Asif et al. 2023). Ethical leaders believe and appreciate followers' right to develop themselves and achieve success by authorizing them to alter their job tasks to be adaptable to changing conditions (Piccolo et al. 2010; Saleem et al. 2022). Moreover, the results demonstrated that job crafting is positively associated with innovative work behaviors. This result is consistent with prior studies (e.g., Kaur and Rahmadani 2023; Tomas et al. 2023). New skills and knowledge from job crafting encourage individuals to experiment with new methods and solutions, which nurtures organizational innovation activities (Guo et al. 2023; Ok and Lim 2022). The results also illustrated that job crafting positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behaviors. Ethical leadership facilitates a positive work environment and motivates employees to engage in job crafting (Asif et al. 2023); as ethical leaders foster job crafting, this will, in turn, enhance autonomy and self-efficacy, enable employees to reshape their roles to align with changing environment by taking risks, generate fresh ideas, and seek opportunities for improvement. Thus, job crafting explains how ethical leadership improves employees' innovative work behaviors (Asif et al. 2023).

The study results also indicated that ethical leadership is positively associated with employees' proactive personalities. This result corresponds with previous studies (e.g., Yeap 2024). Ethical leaders who serve as integrity role models motivate individuals to adopt proactive behaviors with ethical considerations to protect the organization's interests (Brown and Treviño 2006; Hu et al. 2018). In addition, the results exhibited that a proactive personality is positively associated with innovative work behaviors. This result aligns with prior research (e.g., Li et al. 2020; Ullah et al. 2024). Proactive individuals usually develop creative ideas and boost and motivate their peers, thus contributing to activating organizational innovative initiatives (Li et al. 2020; Ullah et al. 2024). Furthermore, the results uncovered that the proactive personality positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. This result agrees with Yeap's study results (Yeap 2024). Ethical leaders establish trust, transparency, and open communication that enable

knowledge sharing, which is essential for proactive employees to innovate (Ahmad et al. 2023; Li et al. 2020).

Finally, the study results showed that person–organization fit positively moderates the positive relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors. When an individual's attributes align with organizational demands, spanning values, culture, goals, and mission (Bright 2021; Kristof-Brown et al. 2023), this alignment not only enhances individual performance but also augments the overall success of an organization (Verquer et al. 2003). Similar to the emphasis on person–organization fit, moral leadership, when aligned with employees' values, cultivates an environment where innovative work behavior thrives (Liu et al. 2023). Supportive ethical leaders create a culture of trust and openness crucial for nurturing creative thinking (Afsar et al. 2018; Akhtar et al. 2019).

### *5.1. Theoretical Contributions*

This study significantly advances theoretical understanding by synthesizing insights from ethical leadership theory (Brown and Treviño 2006; Cropanzano and Mitchell 2007). The resulting model provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences innovative work behavior. Noteworthy is the exploration of individual-level mediating factors such as psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality (Seibert et al. 1999). By delving into these psychological processes, this research not only advances the understanding of the ethical leadership–innovation relationship, but also lays the groundwork for more targeted and effective organizational interventions (Lee et al. 2020). By rigorously examining and testing these relationships, this study responds to recent calls (Brown and Treviño 2006; Gu et al. 2015; Javed et al. 2017; Purc and Lagun 2019; Zhang et al. 2018) to further explore the influence of ethical leadership on innovative work behaviors.

This study contributes theoretically by exploring the moderating role of P–OF in the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviors. It builds on prior research highlighting the relevance of contextual factors, particularly the alignment of individual and organizational values. Informed by frameworks such as Kristof-Brown's (2000) person–environment fit, this study investigates the nuanced conditions that enhance ethical leadership's impact on fostering innovation, emphasizing the pivotal role of person–organization fit as a determinant for driving innovation. By proposing that the effectiveness of ethical leadership in promoting innovation depends on the congruence of individual and organizational values, this study aligns with Brown and Treviño (2006) and Purc and Lagun (2019). This approach establishes a comprehensive framework that contributes to the theoretical foundation of the influence of ethical leadership on innovative work behavior. This research underscores the need to consider the interplay between ethical leadership and person–organization fit for a nuanced understanding of innovation dynamics in workplaces.

### *5.2. Practical Implications*

The theoretical framework presented in this study has significant practical implications for organizations seeking to cultivate innovative work behavior within their teams. The positive relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior implies that organizations can strategically enhance innovation by fostering ethical leadership practices (Le and Lei 2018). To achieve this, leaders are encouraged to prioritize ethical principles in decision-making, exhibit transparent and fair behavior, and actively promote trust and accountability within the workplace (Lawton and Páez 2015). This approach contributes to the creation of a workplace culture that not only values ethical considerations but also stimulates employees to participate in innovative behaviors, thereby establishing a competitive advantage in today's dynamic business environment.

Furthermore, the identified mediating role of psychological empowerment, job crafting, and proactive personality offers practical insights into the specific mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences innovative work behavior. Organizations can leverage

this understanding to design targeted interventions that enhance psychological empowerment, job crafting, and a proactive personality among their workforce (Oprea et al. 2019). For instance, customized training programs can be developed to strengthen ethical leadership skills, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and trust building. Simultaneously, initiatives that support psychological empowerment, such as skill development opportunities and recognition programs, can be implemented to create an environment conducive to innovation.

The moderating role of person–organization fit underscores the practical need for organizations to assess and align their values with those of their employees' practices. Initiatives to shape organizational culture have become imperative. Ensuring that employees perceive a strong alignment between their personal values and the ethical principles promoted by leadership not only enhances positive work outcomes but also amplifies the positive impact of ethical leadership on stimulating innovative work behavior. This practical understanding can guide organizational strategies in talent management and cultural development to create a harmonious and innovation-friendly work environment.

Additionally, organizations can enhance innovative work behaviors by incorporating person–organization fit considerations into the recruitment, selection, and retention processes. Human resources practitioners could emphasize cultural alignment during the hiring process to ensure that individuals who join the organization share similar values and beliefs, thus maximizing the positive impact of ethical leadership on innovation. This aligns with practical recommendations from earlier studies that emphasize the importance of fit in personnel decisions (Kristof-Brown 2000), and offering a concrete strategy for organizations to leverage the moderating effect of person–organization fit on the leadership–innovation relationship.

### *5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions*

While this study makes significant contributions, several limitations warrant consideration and highlight avenues for future research. The study's cross-sectional design constrained the establishment of definitive causality, prompting suggestions for future longitudinal research to unravel the dynamic interplay between ethical leadership, psychological empowerment, job crafting, proactive personality, person–organization fit, and innovative work behavior. A longitudinal approach could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how these variables evolve over time, thereby shedding light on the temporal aspects of their relationships.

In addition to examining common method bias, it is important to acknowledge that reliance on self-reported data introduces potential common method bias. Therefore, there is a pressing need for future research to incorporate objective measures or adopt multisource data collection methods, as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Furthermore, the generalizability of the findings may have been influenced by cultural and contextual factors of the sample. Thus, it is essential to underscore the significance of replicating the study in diverse organizational and cultural settings to enhance its external validity, as emphasized by Chua et al. (2008).

This study focuses on specific mediating and moderating factors in the ethical leadership–innovative work behavior relationship, leaving room for future research exploring alternative mediators and moderators. For example, investigations into organizational climate, leadership communication styles, and team dynamics could reveal additional influences on the impact of ethical leadership on innovation (Walumbwa et al. 2011). Furthermore, while this study predominantly emphasizes individual-level mechanisms, future research could extend its scope to examine the collective impact of ethical leadership on team-level innovative work behavior, offering insights into a broader organizational culture (Piccolo et al. 2010).

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