The Moderating Effect of Ethical Behavior on the Relationship Between Leadership Skills and Employee Engagement

Jayfe Jade B. Cipriano, Dr. Glenne Berja Lagura

University of Mindanao

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700950

Received: 02 August 2026; Accepted: 07 August 2026; Published: 18 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between leadership skills, ethical behavior, and employee engagement among Local Government Unit (LGU) employees in Maramag, Bukidnon. Specifically, it aimed to determine the levels of leadership skills, ethical behavior, and employee engagement, assess the significant relationships among these variables, and test whether ethical behavior moderates the relationship between leadership skills and employee engagement. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design was utilized. Data were collected from 204 employees performing administrative or supervisory functions using validated survey instruments. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and regression analysis were employed. Findings revealed that leadership skills and employee engagement were generally high, while ethical behavior was very high among respondents. Significant positive relationships were found between leadership skills and employee engagement, leadership skills and ethical behavior, and ethical behavior and employee engagement. However, moderation analysis indicated that ethical behavior did not significantly moderate the relationship between leadership skills and employee engagement, suggesting that these variables independently influence employee engagement. The study highlights the importance of strengthening both leadership practices and ethical standards within LGUs to enhance employee engagement and organizational performance. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and administrators in promoting effective governance, ethical conduct, and employee well-being in the public sector.

Keywords: leadership skills, ethical behavior, employee engagement, local government unit, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of employees has been considered to be one of the factors that result in organizational success. But keeping the engagement levels high is not an easy task since there are numerous factors that determine engagement. The level of freedom and the extent of control that workers possess over their work is one such factor. Employees are likely to feel burnout and disengagement when they feel they do not have control in their jobs (Alfes et al., 2020). Previous literature also highlighted the importance of autonomy, skill variety and feedback in increasing engagement.

Practices in leadership and management are also important in determining employee engagement. Research has established that much of the results of engagement could be explained by the manner in which the leaders handle their teams (Gallup, 2020). Inspiration and empowerment leadership styles are more likely to promote greater engagement levels. Employees feel more driven when leaders give them a sense of direction and at the same time prompt them to develop and exercise independence (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

Regular feedback and recognition is another important element in facilitating engagement. Both employees and their supervisors should appreciate their efforts regularly, which makes them feel more appreciated and motivated (Elicker et al., 2020). Recognition enhances the emotional attachment of the employees towards their work and the feedback allows them to know their performance and what they need to improve. This ends up increasing the engagement levels (Gostick and Elton, 2020).

The work-life balance also plays a key role in maintaining engagement. Burnout among employees is more likely to occur in cases of an overload of work and stress, and this deteriorates the engagement (Maslach and Leiter, 2020). By contrast, employers that encourage both professional and personal life balance allow their employees to be energized, healthy, and dedicated (Westman et al., 2020).

Employee engagement is also contributed by diversity, equity and inclusion. Employees will also have a better chance of feeling like they belong in the organization once they feel respected and valued irrespective of their background (Anand and Winters, 2020). Inclusive environments foster trust and encourage employees to actively contribute, which enhances both engagement and commitment (Nishii & Leroy, 2020).

Employee engagement is also impacted in various ways by technological developments and remote work arrangements. Where there can be flexibility and efficiency, there can be some challenges like communication barriers and lack of social interaction with the help of technology. The issue of remote work, especially, may be both beneficial and detrimental based on organizational support and the flexibility of the individual (Golden and Veiga, 2020; Gajendran and Harrison, 2020). Clear communication and training are thus necessary in ensuring engagement in the contemporary work environments.

All in all, employee engagement remains a significant performance driver of an organization. The employees who are engaged are more productive, satisfied, and loyal to their jobs (Gallup, 2020). They also have a good influence on customer satisfaction as well as overall organizational results. Although the number of studies continues to increase, there is still a gap on how various organizational aspects interplay to affect engagement.

In this regard, the current research is aimed at evaluating the impact of ethical conduct on the connection between leadership and employee engagement. The combination of these variables will help the study to enhance the understanding of the ways in which organizations can enhance engagement strategies and performance in a dynamic work environment.

Typically, the moderating role of ethical behavior was examined to determine how good leadership and employee are related in Local Government Unit (LGU) personnel in Bukidnon, Philippines under the current study, the objectives of the study are descriptive and statistical in nature. Descriptively, the research was intended to explore the ethical behavior levels, good leadership, and employee engagement among the LGU employees. In particular, it aims to ascertain the degree of ethical conduct, which is ethical leadership, normative ethical conduct and juridical ethical conductor. It will also evaluate the degree of good leadership including administrative, conceptual and interpersonal skills and employee engagement based on vigor, absorption and dedication.

The analyses of the findings statistically explored how the three variables, namely ethical behavior, positive leadership, and employee engagement, had significant relationships. Moreover, it looks into how the relationship between good leadership and employee engagement can be moderated by ethical behavior and is important or not. Through the attainment of these goals, the study offers meaningful data to the relationship between ethical behavior, good leadership and employee engagement in LGU context.

METHOD

This section discusses the method used in this study. It includes the research participants, materials and instrument, and design and procedure.

Research Respondents

A total of 250 plantilla employees with one (1) year work experience and who are currently undertaking the supervisory and administrative roles will make up the respondents of the study. The sample of this research was 250 plantilla workers who have at least one (1) year of working experience in the Local Government Unit of Maramag, Bukidnon, and who are engaged in supervisory or administrative duties. The broadening of the criteria to encompass employees in administrative roles enabled the researcher to get more respondents and a wider view of leadership, ethical conduct, and employee engagement in the organization.

The inclusion criteria included that respondents should be plantilla employees of the LGU Maramag who have more than one (1) year of experience in the local government. The respondents should also be working in the LGU at the time of data collection. The exclusion criteria were the employees who are less than one (1) year of working experience in the local government unit and the employees who are not plantilla employees, like job order or contractual employees.

Materials and Instrument

This study was conducted by using a survey questionnaire that had three sections. The opening part of the questionnaire is leadership skill measured by Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) that measures transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Bass and Avolio, 1995). The MLQ has 26 questions, 13 of which are the transformational leadership, 7 of which are the transactional leadership, and 6 of which are the laissez-faire leadership. Recent research has found that the MLQ has shown a high degree of reliability with Cronbachs alpha of 0.94, which is better than the advised 0.70 (Taber, 2018). The questionnaire is based on a five-point Likert scale, where a respondent can state how much he/she agrees with the statement. The average of the scores of each leadership style was computed and the average score was used as the measure of good leadership amongst the employees. Recent studies justify the application of Likert scales, as the scales are effective in terms of the ability to represent finer responses (Saunders et al., 2020).

Range of Mean	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This asserts that leadership skill related items consistently show up.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This claims that leadership skill-related items appear regularly.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This claims that the leadership-related items occasionally manifest.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This claims that the traits related to good leadership are not often displayed.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This asserts that the traits related to employee leadership never appear.

The second part of the questionnaire will evaluate your motivation and dedication to ethical conduct in the workplace. It is based on the Ethical Behavior at Work Scale created by Samara Monteiro Pereira do Nascimenta et al. (2023) and the paper Linking Ethical Leadership and Ethical Climate to Employees Ethical Behavior: This scale made it possible to gain an in-depth insight into the attitude of employees toward ethical behavior with reference to ethical behavior at work 10 items, normative ethical behavior 55 items.

Range of Mean	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This asserts that ethical behavior-related items consistently show up.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This claims that ethical behavior-related items appear regularly.

2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This claims that the ethical behavior-related items occasionally manifest.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This claims that the traits related to employee ethical behavior are not often displayed.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This asserts that the traits related to employee ethical behavior never appear.

The third part of the questionnaire engagement of employees in the government of Maramag, Bukidnon. This questionnaire will measure the perceptions of employees in the way employee engagement affects their daily work routine.There are three dimensions that measure employee engagement: vigor, absorption and dedication, and a scale based on Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) is used to measure it: the survey includes 17 questions, each containing a list of statements about government employees that are either true or false. Employee engagement is measured using a scale adapted from Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), which assesses three dimensions: vigor, absorption and dedication the survey consists of 17 questions, each comprising a list of statements about government employees that may or may not be true. In particular, it has 6 questions on vigor, 6 questions on absorption, and 5 questions on dedication. The respondents are asked to answer the statements in a 5-point Likert scale (1- not at all true, 2- somewhat true, 3- quite true, 4- very true) which will give a clue about their satisfaction with the level of employee engagement in terms of vigor, absorption and dedication.

Range of Mean	**Descriptive Level**	**Interpretation**
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This asserts that employee engagement items consistently show up.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This claims that employee engagement related items appear regularly.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This claims that the employee engagement related items occasionally manifest.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This claims that the traits related to employee engagement are not often displayed.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This asserts that the traits related to employee engagement never appear.

Design and Procedure

The researcher used a descriptive-correlational method of research. It is a method that quantifies associations of variables with different levels of measurement and seeks to gain a clear and precise description of a society, situation, or phenomenon (McCombes, 2019). The researcher is primarily interested in determining the relationships between variables without defining a causal relationship (Quaranta, 2017). The research will identify the strong interdependence between public service motivation, good leadership and work performance ability among the employees of LGU.

This research paper will use the Regression analysis to investigate the moderating impact of ethical behavior in the correlation between leadership skills and employee engagement among the LGU employees. In order to study and interpret the data in-depth, some statistical tools will be used. The average scores were computed in order to establish the degree of motivation to public service, good leadership and ability to perform well at work thus answering the first three questions of the research. Also, the correlation coefficient (r) by Pearson was used to determine the significance of the correlations between ethical behavior, good leadership and employee engagement among the LGU employees, which addressed the third research objective.ive. Additionally, the moderating influence of ethical behavior on the connection between good leadership and employee engagement in LGU employees was studied by performing a multiple linear regression analysis.

The researcher asked UMREC to validate the questionnaire, so that it is of good quality and is accurate, but at the same time, it should be voluntary and free of coercion. The purpose of the study, procedures, risks and benefits were shared with the participants and informed consent was taken. The privacy and confidentiality were observed to the letter, and the respondents were allowed the choice of staying anonymous. The recruitment process was transparent and equitable and reduced risks and prioritized the safety of the participants. The possible advantages of the participation were explained, and the validity of the research was ensured with the help of such tools as grammarly to detect any language problems, plagiarism, and typos. All sources were referred to properly, and no data fabrication and falsification. Approval to involve organizations was sought, and data security was adopted to ensure use of technology. Authorship and credit were in accordance with the acceptable academic rules.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The chapter outlines the findings and discussion of the research on the moderating influence of ethical

behavior on the correlation between leadership abilities and employee engagement among the employees of Local Government Unit (LGU). The format of the results presentation is based on the order of the research objectives starting with the levels of the leadership skills, employee engagement, and ethical behavior and then the analysis of the strong relationships between these variables, and testing of the moderating effect. It is through this analysis that the chapter will make significant contributions on the impact of the leadership practices and ethical practices on employee engagement, which will help build up the general picture of organizational effectiveness in the LGU environment.

Table 1: *Level of Leadership Skills*

Indicators	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
Transformational leadership	0.67	4.12	High
Transactional leadership	0.68	4.07	High
Laissez-Faire Leadership	0.73	4.04	High
Overall	**0.61**	**4.07**	**High**

According to the results in Table 1, the general level of leadership skills of the respondents is high with the mean value of 4.07 (SD = 0.61) which shows that leadership practices in the LGU are generally viewed as effective and in a consistent manner as well. Transformational leadership received the highest mean score (M = 4.12, SD = 0.67), transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership received the lowest mean score (M = 4.04, SD = 0.73) though it is still in the high descriptive level. The standard deviations of all indicators are relatively small implying that there is not much variability in the responses and that the employees have similar perceptions about the leadership behaviors of their supervisors.

The fact that the transformational leadership dimension is the top-ranked means that the leaders of the LGU are viewed as inspirational, motivational, and encouraging employee development. This means that leaders can create a healthy organizational climate through promotion of innovativeness, teamwork, and vision.

Conversely, the lesser mean of laissez-faire leadership suggests that leaders tend not to follow a passive or non-interventionist leadership style, which is positive within the public sector organization because clear direction and accountability is key. The fact that laissez-faire leadership is rated relatively low also indicates that employees would rather have an active leadership involvement as opposed to minimum supervision. The important observation that all the leadership dimensions are rated high is the suggestion that the LGU has built a strong leadership base that promotes organizational effectiveness. It has significant implications to improve

employee engagement and performance since efficient leadership is one of the primary motivators and productivity drivers. The high focus on transformational leadership, especially, indicates that the learning efforts on leadership development must proceed with the focus on the given style to maintain high employee commitment and organizational performance.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. As an example, Wang et al. (2022) discovered that transformational leadership has been shown to lead to a high degree of employee engagement and improved organizational performance due to the development of trust, motivation, and sense of purpose among employees. Likewise, Hoch et al. (2021) also stressed that transformational leadership has become one of the most efficient leadership approaches in contemporary organizations, especially in increasing the commitment of employees and enhancing the work performance.

Conversely, a study by Banks et al. (2021) pointed out that avoidance and lack of guidance in a leadership approach are typically linked with lower organizational performance and employee dissatisfaction compared to more proactive leadership styles.

On the whole, the results show that leadership practices in the LGU are rather good and have a positive perception, and transformational leadership appears to be the most prevalent and efficient one. By continuing and reinforcing this leadership style, and reducing passive leadership behaviors, it is possible to further increase employee involvement, organizational performance, and effective delivery of public service.

Table 1.1: *Level of Leadership Skills in terms of Transformational Leadership*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
It instills pride in me for being part of the team.	0.78	4.19	High
Articulates a compelling vision for our department/unit.	0.8	4.18	High
Expresses confidence in my ability to achieve our goals.	0.78	4.19	High
Suggests new ways to complete tasks and projects.	0.79	4.15	High
Spends time training and coaching me.	0.93	3.98	High
Treats me as an individual with unique needs and abilities.	0.86	4.09	High
Considers my different needs, abilities, and aspirations.	0.81	4.05	High
Helps me develop my strengths	0.85	4.17	High
Displays a sense of power and confidence in our team.	0.86	4.15	High
Emphasizes the importance of our department's/unit's mission	0.81	4.2	High
Talks optimistically about our future.	0.81	4.06	High
Puts the needs of the team ahead of their own self-interest.	0.74	4.06	High
Different perspectives when solving problems.	0.85	4.07	High
Overall	**0.67**	**4.12**	**High**

In Table 1.1, the results reveal that the level of transformational leadership among the respondents is generally high with the overall mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.67) which reveals that the respondents in the LGU are always exhibiting behaviors that are related to inspiration, motivation, and individualized consideration. The best rated one is the statement that states the importance of our departments/units mission (M = 4.20, SD = 0.81), then comes the statement that states that he/she takes pride in the fact that he/she is part of the team, and the statement that states that he/she is confident in his/her ability to accomplish our goals, both with a mean of 4.19. These results indicate that leaders can be effective in conveying organizational intention and a sense of belonging and confidence to employees. These are important behaviors that reinforce organizational goal identification and increase intrinsic motivation among employees.

Conversely, the least-rated one is "Spends time training and coaching me" (M = 3.98, SD = 0.93), which is in the high descriptive category, nonetheless. This comparatively low score suggests that leaders are efficient in inspiring and motivating employees but the direct mentorship and capacity-building activities might be less highlighted. The finding shows one possible area of enhancement because coaching and training are critical elements of transformational leadership, especially in skills development of employees and long-term performance by an organization.

The remarkable observation that everything is rated as high means that transformational leadership is highly exercised in the LGU especially in regards to articulating the vision, motivation and team orientation. Nevertheless, the relative under-focus on coaching implies that leadership development programs should be

developed more on how to improve the mentoring skills of leaders. This can also be enhanced, thereby enhancing employee development, job satisfaction, and overall engagement, particularly in a public sector, where ongoing capacity building is paramount.

These findings are supported by recent literature. Another study by Wang et al. (2022) has discovered that transformational leadership is an important factor in motivating employees and increasing organizational commitment through effective communication of vision and building of trust and confidence in employees.

Equally, a research by Nguyen et al. (2021) highlighted that transformational leaders who foster pride and identify employees with the organizational objectives help in increasing the engagement and performance levels. Nevertheless, as it was determined by research by Lai et al. (2020), individual consideration, especially coaching, and mentoring is one of the most difficult dimensions to put into regular practice, but it is essential to help employees build capabilities and keep the organization functional.

The findings reveal that the leaders of the LGU successfully exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, especially in their roles of inspiring employees and advancing a shared vision. Coaching and mentoring practices can be improved to make leadership even stronger and help organizations to maintain employee development and success.

Table 1.2: *Level of Leadership Skills in terms of Transactional leadership*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
Provides assistance to me in exchange for my effort.	0.84	4.05	High
Clarifies expectations when setting performance goals.	0.76	4.16	High
Expresses satisfaction when I meet performance expectations.	0.78	4.14	High
Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, and deviations from standards.	0.8	4.04	High
Focuses on addressing mistakes, complaints, and failures.	0.84	4.03	High

Keeps track of all mistakes and errors.	0.81	4	High
Directs my attention towards failures to meet standards.	0.81	4.05	High
Overall	**0.68**	**4.07**	**High**

The findings in Table 1.2 show that the respondents have a high level of transactional leadership with an overall mean of 4.07 (SD = 0.68) indicating that the leaders in the LGU always use well-organized, performance-focused leadership practices. The most rated indicator is the one related to clarification of expectations when setting performance goals (M = 4.16, SD = 0.76), then there is Expresses satisfaction when I meet performance expectations (M = 4.14, SD = 0.78). These results suggest that leaders become effective in establishing clear standards and giving rewards in case employees achieved the expected results. This clarity of expectations and performance reinforcement is necessary in the public sector organizations where accountability and performance in line with standards are paramount.

Conversely, the least rated item is the one with the most descriptive category, namely, the one that monitors all the mistakes and errors (M= 4.00, SD=0.81). This indicates that, although the leaders check performance and correct deviations, it could also be that there is a slightly reduced emphasis on strict error-tracking in comparison to other transactional practices. In the same way, those items that involved the emphasis on irregularities and failures (M = 4.03 and 4.04) had significantly lower means, which means that leaders might be striking a balance between corrective and supportive steps, but not be excessively punitive or controlling.

The general high rating in all items shows that the LGU has well established transactional leadership practices especially in expectation setting, performance monitoring and feedback. This has significant consequences to efficiency in organizations because structure, discipline, and achievement of goals are facilitated by transactional leadership. Nevertheless, the marginally reduced stress on critical attention to the errors implies a more balanced leadership style that is not over-controlling and can be useful in terms of keeping the staff members motivated and stress-free at work.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. Banks et al. (2021) conducted a study that revealed that transactional leadership, especially contingent reward behaviors, including clarifying expectations and rewarding performance, are positively related to employee performance and task efficiency. On the same note, a research by Purwanto et al. (2021) found that transactional leadership leads to increased organizational effectiveness through the strengthening of clear standards and making employees comprehend their roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, placing too much emphasis on corrective measures, e.g. constantly observing the errors, can have a deteriorating impact on employee motivation unless it is accompanied by supportive leadership practices.

Generally, the results indicate that the leaders in the LGU are very effective in using transactional leadership to ensure that the structure and performance standards are upheld. Enhancement of positive reinforcement behaviors and a balanced approach towards tracking mistakes can also improve employee performance and organizational performance.

Table 1.3 *Level of Leadership Skills in terms of Laissez-faire eadership*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
1. empowers team members to handle important issues independently.	0.82	4.02	High
2. trusts team members to manage their workload and make decisions without close supervision.	0.84	4.09	High
3. gives team members the autonomy to make decisions and take ownership	0.89	3.92	High

of their work.			
4. allows team members to take responsibility for responding to questions and issues in a timely manner.	0.88	3.96	High
5. fosters a culture of self-reliance, encouraging team members to find solutions to problems on their own.	0.82	3.96	High
6. provides team members with the freedom to work independently, making decisions and taking actions as needed.	0.8	4.18	High
7. trusts team members to handle routine matters without interference, stepping in only when necessary.	0.85	4.08	High
8. adopts a minimalist approach to intervention, allowing team members to adapt and innovate without unnecessary oversight.	0.82	4.09	High
Overall	**0.73**	**4.04**	**High**

Table 1.3 presents the level of leadership skills in terms of laissez-faire leadership among the respondents. The overall mean of 4.04 (SD = 0.73) indicates a high level of laissez-faire leadership practices within the LGU. This suggests that leaders generally allow employees a considerable degree of autonomy and independence in carrying out their responsibilities. Such findings imply that leaders trust their employees' abilities to make decisions and manage tasks with minimal supervision.

Among the indicators, the highest-rated item is "provides team members with the freedom to work independently, making decisions and taking actions as needed" (M = 4.18, SD = 0.80). This finding indicates that leaders strongly encourage independence and empower employees to perform their work without excessive control. Similarly, the items "trusts team members to manage their workload and make decisions without close supervision" and "adopts a minimalist approach to intervention, allowing team members to adapt and innovate without unnecessary oversight" both obtained a mean of 4.09, reflecting that leaders recognize the importance of trust and flexibility in the workplace. These practices may help employees become more confident, innovative, and accountable in accomplishing their tasks.

On the other hand, the lowest-rated item is "gives team members the autonomy to make decisions and take ownership of their work" (M = 3.92, SD = 0.89), although it still falls within the high descriptive category. This suggests that while employees are generally given independence, there may still be some limitations in fully transferring ownership and decision-making responsibilities to team members. Likewise, the indicators related to encouraging self-reliance and allowing responsibility in handling issues (M = 3.96) imply that leaders balance autonomy with occasional guidance and oversight.

The consistently high ratings across all indicators suggest that laissez-faire leadership is practiced positively within the LGU context. Unlike the traditional negative perception of laissez-faire leadership as passive or avoidant, the findings indicate that leaders use this approach to empower employees and encourage initiative. This may contribute to increased confidence, creativity, and adaptability among employees. However, excessive autonomy without sufficient guidance may also create risks of unclear direction or inconsistent performance, particularly in public organizations where accountability and structure are important.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. A study by Yang (2021) found that empowering leadership behaviors and employee autonomy positively influence job satisfaction and engagement when employees are competent and experienced. Similarly, research by Harney and Collings (2021) emphasized that allowing employees flexibility and decision-making authority can enhance innovation, motivation, and organizational trust. However, studies also caution that laissez-faire leadership may negatively affect performance when leaders fail to provide adequate direction, support, or accountability mechanisms.

Table 2: *Level of Employee Engagement*

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Vigor	0.67	4.12	High
Absorption	0.47	4.27	Very High
Dedication	0.73	4.04	High
Overall	**0.58**	**4.14**	**High**

Table 2 shows that the general level of employee engagement among the respondents is high, with the mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.58), which means that employees in the LGU are mostly motivated, committed, and engaged in their work. Of the three indicators, absorption had the largest mean (M = 4.27, SD = 0.47) that lies within the very high descriptive range. It means that the employees are totally engaged in the work, they are usually totally focused and cognitively involved in the work. A result like this is an indication of high levels of concentration and engagement whereby employees will tend to be in a state of flow which is a sign of productive and involving work environment.

Dedication, on the other hand, had an average of 4.04 (SD = 0.73), the lowest of the three indicators, but still in the high category. It implies that even though workers are usually engaged and can be interested in the work, the degree of their emotional attachment can be rather low in comparison with their concentration and engagement. Vigor, a mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.67) also shows a high degree of energy, strength and disposition towards working hard at the job, which means that the employees can maintain their performance even when the conditions are unfavorable.

The significant finding that absorption is very high while vigor and dedication are high implies that employees are highly focused and engaged cognitively, but there is still room to further enhance their emotional connection and sustained energy in the workplace. This also presents significant implications to the management of organizations, in that nurturing commitment and enthusiasm can further enhance general engagement. Recognition and professional development opportunities, as well as supportive leadership practices, can be used as interventions to improve the levels of emotional commitment and energy of the employees. These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. A recent study by Kulikowski (2021) highlighted that absorption is a high quality of deep task engagement and closely related to productivity and work effectiveness, especially in formal organizational environments. In a similar manner, a study conducted by Ababneh (2021) revealed that supportive leadership and organizational climate have a significant effect on the level of employee engagement, specifically the vigor and commitment levels, as they increase the motivation and purpose of employees. Moreover, Saks (2022) research indicates that high rates of engagement are associated with better performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, which justifies the need to sustain and even develop all the aspects of engagement.

In general, the results indicate that the degree of engagement among employees in the LGU is high, especially in the areas of focus and engagement in their job. Enhancing the efforts to increase the emotional connection and energy of the employees can also boost the overall engagement and help to achieve greater organizational effectiveness and service delivery.

Table 2.1: *Level of Employee Engagement in terms of Vigor*

Items	SD	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
I feel bursting with energy at my work.	0.79	3.79	High

I feel incredibly strong and vigorous at my job	0.83	3.91	High
I feel like jumping out of bed and heading to work every morning	0.99	3.62	High
I can work for long periods without feeling drained	0.95	3.58	High
I'm mentally resilient and can handle anything that comes my way at work	0.82	3.96	High
I'm a total go-getter at work and always persevere, even when things get tough	0.85	3.92	High
Overall	**0.72**	**3.8**	**High**

The findings in Table 2.1 point to the fact that employee engagement in terms of vigor is high as the overall mean is 3.80 (SD = 0.72), which implies that employees tend to have energy, resilience, and persistence in their work. The best-rated indicator is that I am mentally strong and can take whatever comes my way at work (M = 3.96, SD = 0.82), then I am a total go-getter at work and always persevere, even when things get tough (M = 3.92, SD = 0.85), and then I feel incredibly strong and vigorous at my job (M = 3.91 These results mean that workers have a high ability to adapt to work demands and challenges, which indicates psychological strength and determination, which is a necessity in maintaining performance in a public service setting.

Conversely, the lowest rated one is I can work long hours without being exhausted (M = 3.58, SD = 0.95), then I feel like jumping out of bed and going to work every morning (M = 3.62, SD = 0.99). The fact that both fall under the high category but have relatively lower means indicates that employees are likely to have some form of fatigue or lack of enthusiasm during long working hours. The fact that the standard deviations of these items are higher, as well, suggests more diverse responses and suggests that not every employee has the same amount of sustained energy or enthusiasm in his or her daily work routine.

The notable result that resilience and perseverance have higher scores than sustained energy and enthusiasm implies that workers can manage job stress but can be exposed to progressive fatigue or a decreased level of work vitality. This has significant implications on the management of an organization because to be very vigilant, it is not only necessary to be resilient but also to have enough rest, work-life balance and conductive working conditions. Workload management, wellness programs, and recognition initiatives among employees can be used to improve long-term energy and enthusiasm levels among employees.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. Tisu et al. (2021) determined that vigor has a strong connection with the psychological resiliency of employees and their capacity to adapt to job demands, which is why it is of great significance in performance maintenance during stressful situations. Likewise, a research study by De Clercq et al. (2021) indicated that employees can be resilient and committed to their work, but over the long-term, they might experience a lack of energy and engagement when faced by work demands and not receiving sufficient support. Moreover, the study by Schaufeli (2021) highlighted that vigor as an essential element of work engagement is a manifestation of energy and mental strength, and it should be supported by the administration and a stress-free workplace to maintain. The results show that employees in the LGU are very resilient and persevering in their work, yet there is a necessity to reinforce those factors that facilitate the energy and enthusiasm to last longer. Still, workplace support systems and employee well-being could be enhanced, which will contribute to better vigor and overall engagement and organizational performance.

Table 2.2: *Level of Employee Engagement in terms of Absorption*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
I love how time flies when I'm working	0.91	3.97	High

I get so absorbed in my work that I forget everything else around me	0.92	3.68	High
I feel super happy when I'm intensely focused on my work	0.95	3.79	High
I am completely immersed in my work	0.88	3.84	High
I often get carried away when I'm working on something I love	0.89	3.92	High
Overall	**0.8**	**3.84**	**High**

Table 2.2 shows that the level of employee engagement as per absorption is high with an overall mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.80) that the employees are mostly focused, immersed, and cognitively engaged in their work. The most rated indicator is I love how time flies when I am working on something I love (M = 3.97, SD = 0.91), then I often get carried away when I am working on something I love (M = 3.92, SD = 0.89). These results suggest that workers feel a high level of participation and satisfaction with their work, which means that work processes are interesting and can attract their attention and maintain their focus in the long term.

By contrast, the least rated one is, I get so engrossed in what I am doing that I forget everything around me (M = 3.68, SD = 0.92), yet it belongs to the high descriptive category, as well. This is to indicate that, although employees are involved, they might not always attain a stage where they are deeply involved and forget their environment. In the same way, the object of I feel super happy when I am highly focused on my work (M = 3.79, SD = 0.95) also displays slightly lower mean, which means that emotional satisfaction related to high concentration might be different among the employees. The standard deviations of items are relatively higher implying that there is a variation in the experience of deep concentration and immersion in work by the employees.

The important observation that workers indicate experiencing high levels of concentration and engagement, but slightly lower levels of total immersion, is that although the work environment fosters engagement, there might be external or organizational factors that prevent deeper immersion. This has significant management implications since improving working conditions, decreasing the number of unnecessary interruptions, and giving employees meaningful and challenging work can further increase the degree to which employees are immersed and productive.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study conducted by Ababneh (2021), absorption is an indicator of the full concentration and pleasant engagement of the employees in their work, highly linked to job satisfaction and performance. On the same note, a research by Karatepe et al. (2022) stated that the employees with increased absorption tend to exhibit better task performance and organizational commitment. The research, however, also reported that interruption and pressure of work can curtail the capacity of employees to experience deep immersion and it is therefore important to create a conducive work environment.

Generally, the results indicate that the employees in the LGU have a high degree of cognitive engagement and concentration in their work. The organizational practices in favor of continuous work time, meaningful involvement in tasks, and supportive supervision can be reinforced to support further absorption as well as lead to better overall employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Table 2.3: *Level of Employee Engagement in terms of Dedication*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
I find my work absolutely meaningful and purposeful	0.75	4.31	Very High
I am super enthusiastic about my job	0.79	4.17	High

My job truly inspires me every day	0.9	4.14	High
I take immense pride in the work that I do	0.8	4.22	Very High
I find my job thrillingly challenging	0.89	4.21	Very High
Overall	**0.72**	**4.21**	**Very High**

Table 2.3 results show that dedication level of employee engagement is very high with the overall mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.72), meaning that the employees in LGU have a strong sense of meaning, pride, and emotional attachment to their work. The best-rated item is that I find my work absolutely meaningful and purposeful (M = 4.31, SD = 0.75), then there is I take immense pride in the work that I do (M = 4.22, SD = 0.80) and I find my job thrillingly challenging (M = 4.21, SD = 0.89) which are also rated under very high The implications of these findings are that employees have a strong sense of identification with their positions and have a sense of their work as valuable and meaningful which is a crucial aspect of maintaining long-term engagement and organizational commitment.

Conversely, the least rated is My job truly inspires me every day (M = 4.14, SD = 0.90), but it is still considered high. This implies that although employees are usually motivated and inspired, the degree of daily inspiration can fluctuate, based on personal experience or circumstantial influences at the work place. Likewise, I am super enthusiastic about my job (M = 4.17, SD = 0.79) suggests a high enthusiasm level, but a little bit less than sense of purpose and pride. The standard deviation of the item on inspiration is a bit larger, which is why the item is relatively more variable, meaning that there is a certain variation in the extent to which the employees are regularly motivated by their work.

The important implication of the fact that meaning and pride have been rated high as compared to daily inspiration is that employees may have a deep sense of commitment to their work even though the motivation may vary on daily basis. This has significant consequences to the management of organizations, whereby constant inspiration by motivating with recognition, enabling supportive leadership and growth opportunities can even increase the level of employee commitment. The presence of meaningful work and pride and the enhancement of the motivational factors may help to maintain the engagement and better performance.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. In a study by Mostafa and El-Motalib (2022), workers who consider their work to have meaning and in line with their values show greater dedication, organizational commitment, and performance. Correspondingly, as highlighted in a study by Fletcher and Schofield (2021), dedication, as a measure of pride, enthusiasm, and inspiration, is a significant predictor of employee engagement and job satisfaction. Moreover, according to Saks (2022), meaningful work and emotional attachment form significant reasons of consistent engagement, especially in the context of the public sector organizations where the employees are driven by the service and purpose.

In general, the results indicate that the level of commitment among employees in the LGU is rather high, especially regarding the meaning, pride, and challenge in their work. Enhancing programs that maintain day to day inspiration and enthusiasm can also lead to increased employee engagement and help achieve greater degrees of organizational performance and service to the community.

Table 3: *Level of Ethical Behavior*

Indicators	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
Normative Ethical Behavior	0.71	4.44	Very High
Juridical Ethical Behavior	0.52	4.51	Very High

Ethical behavior at work	0.51	4.32	Very High
Overall	**0.5**	**4.42**	**Very High**

Table 3 results reveal that the general degree of ethical behavior of respondents is quite high, with the mean score equal to 4.42 (SD = 0.50), which indicates that employees are always highly ethical at work. The highest mean of 4.51 with a standard deviation of 0.52 was received by juridical ethical behavior, then normative ethical behavior with a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 0.71, and lastly, ethical behavior at work with a mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.51, though all indicators are in the very high descriptive Standard deviations are relatively low which means that there is consistency in the responses meaning that employees have similar perceptions concerning the ethical practices in the organization.

The high rating of juridical ethical behavior as the most important dimension indicates that the employees highly adhere to laws, rules, and formal regulations that regulate their work. This is an indicator of an organized and rule-regulated organizational context common in institutions of the state, where law and order are vital. The normative ethical behavior is also rated high, which means that the employees are also aligned to the moral norms and shared values and they are fair, have integrity and respect in their interactions. Conversely, the mean of ethical behavior in the workplace is lower in comparison with that of other countries, which suggests that ethical behavior is highly practiced, but the consistency of application of ethical principles in the day-to-day interactions at the workplace may vary slightly.

The important result, that the ratings of all dimensions of ethical behavior are very high, suggests that the LGU has a good ethical climate of compliance, integrity, and accountability. This has significant consequences on organizational performance and social trust because good ethical practices help to bring transparency, credibility, and good services. Nevertheless, the fact that the rating of ethical conduct in the workplace was a bit lower indicates that it is necessary to reinforce the constant use of ethical principles in daily activities, e.g., decision-making and interpersonal communication.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. A research conducted by Hassan et al. (2022) revealed that ethical conduct within organizations, especially when supported by official rules and moral standards, can foster trust, engagement, and commitment among employees and organizations to a considerable degree. Equally, a research study by Bedi et al. (2021) has highlighted that ethical climate such as adherence to the law and compliance to shared values is a key variable in fostering positive employee behavior and organizational performance. Moreover, a study by Newman et al. (2021) outlines that ethical conduct in the workplace, when maintained, reinforces organizational culture and enhances personal and organizational results.

Generally, these results show that the ethical conduct in the LGU is well developed especially in the area of law compliance and ethical standards. The reinforcement of the habitual nature of ethical conduct in day-to-day work relations can extend to an increase in the integrity of organizations, trust among employees and the overall performance in the provision of services to the people.

Table 3.1: *Level of Ethical Behavior in terms of Normative Ethical Behaviors*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
I take ownership of my errors.	0.76	4.49	Very High
I acknowledge and give credit to those who deserve it.	0.81	4.53	Very High
I'm open about my mistakes and learn from them	0.83	4.48	Very High
I promote ethical behavior among my colleagues and subordinates	0.77	4.42	Very High

I use company resources responsibly and for their intended purpose	0.89	4.33	Very High
I maintain a clear separation between personal and company activities	0.86	4.37	Very High
I protect sensitive information and maintain confidentiality	0.84	4.48	Very High
Overall	**0.71**	**4.44**	**Very High**

Table 3.1 shows that the respondents have a very high level of ethical conduct with regard to normative ethical behaviors with an overall mean of 4.44 (SD = 0.71). This implies that workers have a high level of compliance to ethical norms, values and acceptable societal norms in the company. The best-rated item is I acknowledge and give credit to those who deserve it (M = 4.53, SD = 0.81), then I take ownership of my errors (M = 4.49, SD = 0.76), and I'm open about my mistakes and learn as well as I protect sensitive information and maintain confidentiality (M = 4.48). These results suggest that workers are very integrityful, accountable and respectful of others, which are critical elements of a robust ethical culture.

Conversely, the least rated one is the one which states that I use company resources in a responsible and purposeful way (M = 4.33, SD = 0.89), then there is the one which states that I maintain a clear distinction between personal and company activities (M = 4.37, SD = 0.86), though they both belong to the category of very high. This implies that although employees tend to be responsible, there can be some changes in the application of ethical practices regarding the use of resources and lines between personal and organizational issues. The standard deviations of these items are also relatively high which means that there are certain differences in the perceptions or practices among the employees.

The important conclusion that, accountability and recognition based behaviors score higher compared with resource based practices indicate that employees place high emphasis on interpersonal ethics like honesty, fairness and responsibility towards others. But, one can still work on the area to tighten the discipline of organization to use its resources properly and to keep professional boundaries. Management implications of this are also significant because by strengthening policies on resource use and ethical behavior, overall integrity and accountability of organizations can be further improved.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. One such research conducted by Kaptein (2022) highlighted that normative ethical behavior such as accountability, honesty, and fairness are crucial factors that define ethical organizational culture and employee behavior. On the same note, a study conducted by Hassan et al. (2022) established that a positive ethical climate is achieved through employees who are open-minded about their mistakes and who adequately recognize others, thereby boosting trust, cooperation, and organizational efficiency. Moreover, a study conducted by Newman et al. (2021) put emphasis on the fact that confidential information protection and ethical responsibility is an important behavior that enforces organizational credibility and employee commitment.

In general, the results show that the rates of normative ethical conduct among the employees of the LGU are extremely high, especially accountability, integrity, and respect toward other people. Increasing the intensity of practices related to the responsible utilization of resources and upholding professional boundaries will contribute to advancing ethical standards and contributing to the long-term organizational effectiveness.

Table 3.2: *Level of Ethical Behavior in terms of Juridical Ethical Behaviors*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
I ensure accuracy and transparency in my expense reports	0.66	4.55	Very High
I maintain good attendance and minimize absences	0.72	4.42	Very High

I decline gifts that could compromise my professional integrity	0.61	4.54	Very High
I adhere to allocated time for work and breaks.	0.67	4.42	Very High
I prioritize honesty and accuracy in my reports	0.6	4.62	Very High
Overall	**0.52**	**4.51**	**Very High**

Table 3.2 shows that the ethical behavior of the respondents in terms of juridical ethical behaviors is very high with an overall mean of 4.51 (SD = 0.52) and this is very high. This implies that employees are always willing to abide by the formal rules, laws and organizational policies that govern their work. Of the indicators, the highest rated one is I prioritize honesty and accuracy in my reports (M = 4.62, SD = 0.60), then I ensure accuracy and transparency in my expense reports (M = 4.55, SD = 0.66), and I decline gifts that might affect my professional integrity (M = 4.54, SD = 0.61). These results suggest that integrity, transparency and accountability are highly observed by employees especially in aspects that touch on financial reporting and ethical decision making, which are important in ensuring that people trust government institutions.

The least rated are, on the other hand, the items, I maintain good attendance and minimize absences with a mean of 4.42 (SD = 0.72 and 0.67, respectively) (but still falling under the very high descriptive category). This indicates that employees are mostly adhering to the policies and attendance requirements associated with time, however, these requirements may show slight inconsistencies as compared to more formal ethical requirements like accuracy and integrity in reporting. The standard deviation of attendance related behavior is relatively higher which shows that there are some differences in the individual practices or circumstances that influence adherence.

The important result that honesty, transparency, and behavioral characteristics related to integrity receive higher ranks than time and attendance-related behavior indicates that employees have a high level of emphasis on ethical responsibility in formal and high-stakes activities. This indicates that there is a high compliance culture in the LGU especially where governance and accountability to the people are directly involved. Nevertheless, the ratings are a little lower in time management and attendance, thus the organization could strengthen its discipline and regularity in its routine operations.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study conducted by Hassan et al. (2022), juridical ethical conduct, especially rule-setting, transparency, and truthfulness in reporting, is an important contributor to organizational trust and accountability of employees. In the same way, a research by Bedi et al. (2021) has highlighted that formal regulations and ethical standards are important in development of a robust ethical climate particularly in organizations in the public sector. Moreover, a study by Miao et al. (2022) demonstrated that ethical compliance, such as integrity in reporting and the ability to withstand unethical incentives, such as gifts, is among the most important aspects in maintaining organizational credibility and performance.

In general, it can be concluded that the levels of juridical ethical conduct are extremely high among the employees of the LGU, especially when it comes to honesty, transparency and formal compliance. Enhancing uniformity in terms of attendance and time management practices could also promote discipline in the organization and general ethical performance.

Table 3.3: *Level of Ethical Behavior in terms of Ethical Behavior at Work*

Items	**SD**	**Mean**	**Descriptive Equivalent**
I proactively report potential conflict of interest issues	0.73	4.14	High
I report unethical acts to appropriate management	0.77	4.14	High

I minimize non-work-related conversations during work hours	0.74	4.08	High
I take breaks responsibly and adhere to agreed times	0.69	4.27	Very High
I recognize the importance of using my position for organizational benefit, not personal gain	0.68	4.41	Very High
I strive to align my personal goals with organizational objectives	0.7	4.35	Very High
I aim to reject offers that could compromise my professional integrity	0.69	4.45	Very High
I prioritize recognizing and rewarding team members' contributions	0.66	4.4	Very High
I aim to use company resources responsibly and avoid personal use	0.66	4.38	Very High
I prioritize honesty and accuracy in reporting work hours and avoid misrepresentation	0.61	4.59	Very High
Overall	**0.51**	**4.32**	**Very High**

Table 3.3 results show that the ethical behavior level in terms of ethical behavior at work is very high, with an average of 4.32 (SD = 0.51), which shows that employees show ethical behavior in their daily workplace activities. The best-rated item is the statement that I prioritize honesty and accuracy in reporting my work hours and do not want to be misrepresented (M = 4.59, SD = 0.61), then there are the statements that I want to reject offers, which might compromise my professional integrity (M = 4.45, SD = 0.69), and the fact that I recognize the importance of using my position to The results suggest that the integrity, accountability, and professionalism are highly valued by the employees, especially in the aspects directly influencing the organizational trust and moral responsibility.

Conversely, the least-rated are: I proactively report potential conflict of interest issues, and I report unethical acts to the appropriate management, which have a mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.73 and 0.77, respectively), and then I minimize non-work-related conversations during working hours (M = 4.08, SD = 0.74). Even though they still belong to the high descriptive category, the means are lower which indicates that employees are not as proactive in reporting ethical issues or resolving possible problems as they are when it comes to personal integrity in their own conducts. This may be because of the hesitation based on the organizational culture, a fear of consequences, or a failure to have formal reporting mechanisms.

The big revelation that personal integrity and responsible behaviors are ranked higher than proactive reporting behaviors is that employees are personally ethical but might not be as willing to blow the whistle or use any other reporting system. This holds significant organizational governance implications in that by fostering an organizational culture of openness, psychological safety and effective reporting mechanisms, the organization will be able to foster its employees to actively report unethical practices without fear. Empowering these mechanisms may also help to improve the level of transparency and accountability in the organization.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. Park and Blenkinsopp (2021) discovered in their study that employees usually show high personal ethical standards, but they might be reluctant to report unethical behavior because of fear of retaliation or because the organization does not support them. In a similar manner, a research by Chen et al. (2022) highlighted that ethical conduct in the workplace is enhanced by the provision of effective reporting mechanisms and embedding a culture of trust and psychological security in

organizations. Moreover, the study of Kaptein (2022) emphasizes that the personal ethical behavior of individuals and the organizational system of accountability should be promoted in the process of creating the effective ethical climate.

In general, the results show that the ethical behavior of the employees in LGU is very high in their work practices, especially, in honesty, integrity and responsible use of authority. Improving organizational support of ethical reporting as well as strengthening the ethical culture of openness can also help to improve ethical behavior and contribute to better organizational performance and public trust.

Table 4: *Significance of the Relationship between Leadership Skills and Employee Engagement*

Leadership Skills	**Employee Engagement**			
	Vigor	Absorption	Dedication	**Overall**
Transformational leadership	.351**	.457**	.163*	**.385****
	0.000	0.000	0.021	**0.000**
Transactional leadership	.314**	.433**	.175*	**.365****
	0.000	0.000	0.013	**0.000**
Laissez-Faire Leadership	.467**	.535**	.291**	**.509****
	0.000	0.000	0.000	**0.000**
Overall	**.438****	**.553****	**.239****	**.486****
	0.000	**0.000**	**0.001**	**0.000**

Table 4 findings indicate that leadership skills are statistically significantly related to the employee engagement in all dimensions as the p-values of 0.000 to 0.021 are all below the 0.05 level of significance. This means that leadership practices are essential in determining the energy, assimilation, loyalty, and general involvement of employees in the organization.

The most positively correlated leadership styles with the engagement of the employees, in the context of absorption (r =.535, p =.000) and the general engagement (r =.509, p =.000) are laissez-faire leadership, then vigor (r =.467, p =.000), and dedication (r =.291, p =.0 This observation implies that some level of autonomy and independence among employees can lead to increased attention, participation, and engagement in their job. On the contrary, transformational leadership shows a moderate positive correlation with engagement, with the most significant one observed in absorption (r = .457, p = .000) and overall engagement (r = .385, p = .000), whereas its correlation is relatively lower with dedication (r =.163,p=.210).

On the same note, transactional leadership has moderate correlations with absorption (r =.433, p =.000) and overall engagement (r =.365, p =.000) and a weak correlation with dedication (r =.175, p =.013). These trends show that although any leadership style has a major impact on engagement, the impacts of these styles on various dimensions of employee engagement are different.

In all leadership styles, absorption has the highest correlation coefficients, and overall leadership skills correlate with absorption the most (r =.553, p =.000). This indicates that leadership behaviours are especially useful in improving cognitive engagement and concentration of employees at work. Conversely, dedication exhibits the least correlations in all the leadership styles with the overall correlation (r =.239, p=.001) reflecting a comparatively lesser though significant connection. It means that although leadership has an impact on the emotional attachment and the purpose of employees, other variables (personal values, organizational culture, or intrinsic motivation) could be also influential.

The significant findings imply that leadership practices are key drivers of employee engagement in the LGU, particularly in enhancing employees' focus and involvement in their work. The close connection between the laissez-faire leadership and engagement, particularly the absorption, could imply that autonomous employees are more than welcome and trusted, which enables them to assume ownership of their work. This is, however, to be taken with caution because over dependence on passive leadership is not necessarily going to give a positive result in an organized structure. Thus, a moderate leadership style that involves autonomy and guidance and support is suggested to get the most engagement on all levels.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study by Lee et al. (2021), leadership styles have a great impact on employee engagement, especially on absorption and work involvement as leaders determine the work environment and the experience of employees. In the same way, a study conducted by Kim and Koo (2022) revealed that transformational leadership and transactional leadership have a positive impact on the engagement of the employees, and leadership behaviors positively influence motivation, focus, and performance. Moreover, studies conducted by Banks et al. (2021) indicated that although passive leadership styles can be linked to enhanced autonomy in some cases, successful leadership needs a combination of direction, support, and empowerment to maintain high engagement levels.

In general, the findings indicate that the leadership skills play a significant role in the employee engagement, and the best results are obtained in the area of cognitive engagement (absorption). Enhanced employee engagement can be further achieved by strengthening leadership practices that support and encourage autonomy, which is also likely to lead to better performance of the organization.

Table 5: *Significance of the Relationship between Leadership Skills and Ethical Behavior*

Leadership Skills	**Ethical Behavior**			
	Normative Ethical Behavior	Juridical Ethical Behavior	Ethical behavior at work	**Overall**
Transformational leadership	.310** 0.000	0.11 0.121	.521** 0.000	**.361**** **0.000**
Transactional leadership	.320** 0.000	.253** 0.000	.423** 0.000	**.378**** **0.000**
Laissez-Faire Leadership	.491** 0.000	.385** 0.000	.482** 0.000	**.513**** **0**
Overall	**.429**** **0.000**	**.273**** **0.000**	**.561**** **0.000**	**.480**** **0.000**

Table 5 shows that leadership skills are statistically significantly related with ethical behavior on most dimensions as shown by p-values that are below 0.05. The overall leadership skills have moderate to strong positive correlation with ethical behavior (r = .480, p =.000), implying that effective leadership is a key determinant to ethical conduct among employees at the LGU.

Of all the leadership styles, the laissez-faire leadership shows the best relationship with ethical behavior overall (r = .513, p = .000), normative ethical behavior (r = .491, p = .000) and ethical behavior at work (r = .482, p =.000). This is an indication that employee autonomy can potentially motivate employees to be personally responsible and internalize ethical norms in the workplace. There are also strong positive relationships between transactional leadership and all dimensions, with the strongest relationship found in

ethical behavior at work (r =.423, p =.000), and then normative ethical behavior (r =.320, p =.000), and juridical ethical behavior (r =.253, p =.000). These results suggest that expectations, monitoring and reinforcement mechanisms are clear and lead to the regularity of ethical behavior, especially in well-structured situations, like those found in governmental organizations.

Transformational leadership, however, demonstrates a positive and significant association with ethical behaviour at work (r =.521, p =.000) and a positive and moderate association with normative ethical behaviour (r =.310, p =.000) but not with juridical ethical behaviour (r =.110, p =.121). This implies that although transformational leaders are successful in instilling ethical values, integrity, moral influence in everyday work practices, their influence might not be closely linked to formal rules and regulations adherence. This difference implies that the organizational policies and systems can be more dominating in shaping juridical ethical behavior than leadership inspiration itself.

In all dimensions, the ethical conduct at work demonstrates the most positive correlation with overall leadership competencies (r = .561, p = .000), which means that leadership can have the most significant impact on the ethical behaviors and decisions of employees in their day-to-day activities. Comparatively, juridical ethical behavior demonstrates the lowest relationship (r =.273, p =.000), which implies that adherence to laws and formal regulations could be addressed not only by the control exerted by leaders on their followers but also by other external and institutional mechanisms.

The big implications made are that leadership is crucial in motivating the ethical conduct within the workplace especially in the way employees carry out their day-to-day actions with regards to ethical principles. Leadership and ethical conduct in the workplace are closely related, as leaders play a critical role in instilling integrity, accountability and ethical decision-making by acting as role models. Nevertheless, the less robust connection to juridical ethical behavior implies that formal systems, policies, and enforcement mechanisms need to be enhanced by the organization as well to ensure the adherence to legal norms.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study by Hassan et al. (2022), ethical and transformational leadership affect the ethical behavior of employees, especially in promoting integrity and ethical decision-making in the workplace. Equally, the study by Bedi et al. (2021) indicated that leadership styles, such as transactional and ethical leadership, are important in influencing ethical climate and ensuring responsible employee behavior. Moreover, a study by Newman et al. (2021) indicates that the leadership behaviors have a significant impact on ethical behavior in the workplace, particularly when leaders set ethical examples and support organizational values.

Generally, the findings reveal that leadership competencies have a strong contribution towards ethical behavior in the LGU employees, especially in influencing daily ethical practices. Enhancing ethical standards and organizational integrity can be further strengthened by strengthening leadership strategies that uphold ethical values and accountability, as well as by strengthening organizational policies.

Table 6: *Significance of the Relationship between Ethical Behavior and Employee Engagement*

Ethical Behavior	**Employee Engagement**			
	Vigor	Absorption	Dedication	**Overall**
Normative Ethical Behavior	.504** 0.000	.403** 0.000	.426** 0.000	**.518**** **0.000**
Juridical Ethical Behavior	.413** 0.000	.402** 0.000	.434** 0.000	**.487**** **0.000**
Ethical behavior at work	.467**	.464**	.357**	**.505****

	0	0	0	**0**
Overall	**.522****	**.480****	**.458****	**.570****
	0.000	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**

Table 6 shows that ethical conduct has a significant relationship with employee engagement that is not statistically significant but positive with all dimensions as the p-values are 0.000 all lower than the level of significance of 0.05. There is a significant correlation between ethical behavior and employee engagement (r =.570, p =.000) indicating that the greater the ethical conduct in the organization, the greater the employee engagement of the LGU employees.

Normative ethical behavior is positively correlated with overall employee engagement (r =.518, p=.000) especially with vigor (r=.504, p=.000) and dedication (r=.426, p=.000). This means that the employees who are responsible, fair, and upright will have more energy, commitment, and emotional attachment to their job.

There is also a moderate to strong correlation between juridical ethical behavior and employee engagement (r = .487, p = .000), and overall fairly consistent correlations with vigor (r =.413), absorption (r =.402), and dedication (r =.434). This implies that compliance with rules, policies, and legal standards helps to establish a well-organized and reliable working environment that encourages employee interaction.

On the same note, ethical conduct in the workplace shows a significant correlation with total engagement (r =.505, p =.000), significant correlations with vigor (r =.467), absorption (r =.464) and dedication (r =.357).

These results indicate that ethical behavior in the day to day working practice, including honesty, integrity and the usage of power responsibly, improve the motivation, focus as well as commitment of employees. In all three dimensions of employee engagement, vigor is the most correlated with overall ethical behavior (r =.522, p =.000), then absorption (r =.480, p =.000) and dedication (r =.458, p =.000). This trend shows that ethical climates especially enhance the strength and energy of employees in the workplace.

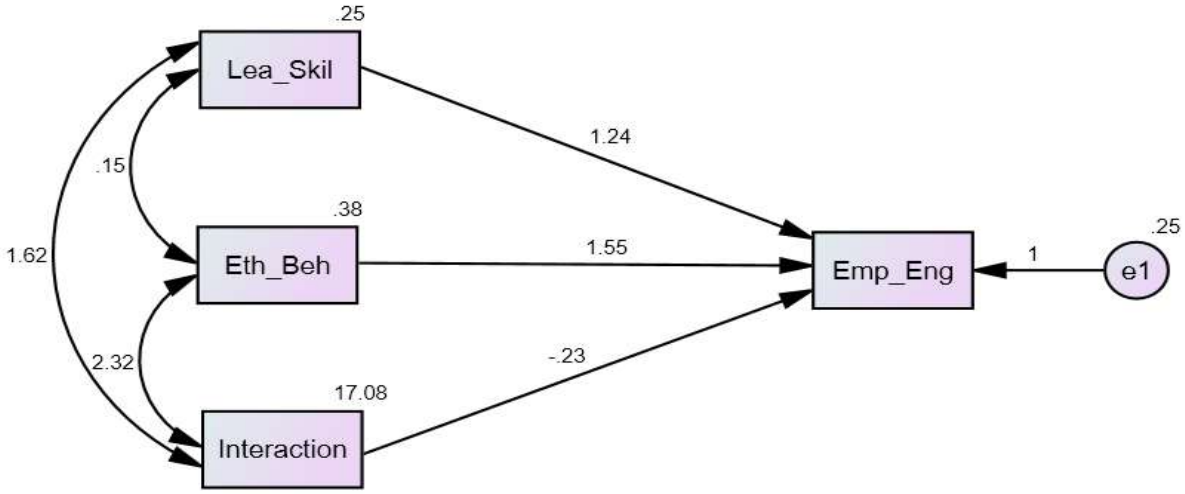
These important results suggest that the ethical conduct is one of the critical drivers of the employee engagement in the LGU. Employees are likely to be motivated, committed, and engaged in their work when they feel that their place of work is ethical, fair and transparent. This underscores the necessity to build a healthy ethical climate as it does not only facilitate integrity but also improves organizational performance and employee welfare as a whole.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study conducted by Hassan et al. (2022), ethical behavior and ethical leadership are major boosters of employee engagement as they promote trust, fairness, and psychological safety in organizations.

Likewise, Newman et al. (2021) found that the more employees feel that an ethical climate is strong, the greater the engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. Moreover, the study by Ababneh (2021) highlighted that workplace ethics have a positive impact on the motivation, engagement, and involvement of the employees.

Overall, the results indicate that ethical behavior plays a significant role in enhancing employee engagement among LGU employees. Ensuring that ethical standards are enhanced, transparency is promoted, and that integrity is maintained in the workplace will also enhance employee engagement and result in more effective and responsible delivery of public services.

Table 7: *Moderation Analysis of the Three Variables*



Legend:

Lea_Skil = *Leadership Skills*

Eth_Beh = *Ethical Behavior*

Emp_Eng = Employee Engagement

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Emp_Eng	<---	Eth_Beh	1.55	0.854	1.815	0.069	
Emp_Eng	<---	Lea_Skil	1.244	0.696	1.787	0.074	
Emp_Eng	<---	Interaction	-0.234	0.182	-1.287	0.198	

Table 7 results reflect the moderation analysis that investigates the importance of ethical behavior in whether leadership skills or not, moderate the connection between leadership skills and employee engagement. According to the regression results, ethical behavior (1.550, p =.069) and leadership skills (1.244, p =.074) are both positively related to employee engagement at the 0.05 level, but not significantly. More to the point, the interaction term between leadership skills and ethical behavior (= -0.234, =.198) is not significant meaning that ethical behavior does not play a significant role in moderating the relationship between leadership skills and employee engagement. The conclusion is that the model does not have any moderation effect.

Although previous data have demonstrated strong correlations between leadership skills, ethical behavior and employee engagement, the fact that there is no significant interaction effect implies that ethical behavior does not reinforce or undermine the impact of leadership skills on employee engagement. Rather, the leadership skills and ethical behavior seem to show independent effects on employee engagement and not in a conditional relationship with each other. This means that employee engagement will increase with increased leadership skill sets despite the degree of ethical conduct and vice versa.

The absence of moderation can be attributed to the consistently high scores of ethical behavior within the organization that might minimize the variation and make the organization less effective in acting as a moderating variable. A consistent high variable in respondents means that its ability to affect the strength of relationships among other variables is weakened. Also, within formalized public sector organizations, like

LGUs, a formal policy and regulation tend to govern ethical behavior and therefore, it is more of an expectation than a conditional variable that changes the outcomes of leadership.

These findings are supported by recent peer-reviewed studies. According to a study conducted by Hoch et al. (2021), leadership styles and ethical climate tend to have direct impacts on employee outcomes, yet the effects of interaction may not be significant in all cases, especially in highly-regulated organizational contexts. On the same note, a study by Kim and Koo (2022) found that although leadership and ethical behavior have significant impacts on employee engagement, their interaction does not always have a moderating effect because both variables have independent effects on employee attitudes and performance. Moreover, a study conducted by Bedi et al. (2021) indicates that ethical behavior is more of an organizational determinant and not a mediator and has an unchanging impact on employee actions irrespective of the differences in leadership.

In general, the results reveal that ethical behavior fails to significantly mediate the association between leadership skills and employee engagement in the LGU scenario. Rather, leadership skills and ethical behavior alone affect employee engagement. This implies that to achieve improved results, organizations are advised to further enhance the independent but equally significant role played by leadership practices and ethical standards in motivating employees instead of their combination to achieve improved results.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This research looked at the moderating role of ethical behavior in leadership skills/employee engagement relationship among Local Government Unit (LGU) employees in Bukidnon. The results also indicated that the study objectives were attained. In the first place, the research has determined that the leadership skills of respondents as a whole were high on transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire scales. The most prominent leadership style was transformational, which shows that leaders are successful in inspiring, motivating, and guiding employees. This implies that the leadership practices in the LGU are usually good and are favorable toward good organizational performance.

Second, there was also high employee engagement and absorption was also at the very high level. This means that the workers are very concentrated and thought-provoking in their job. But, though the level of vigor and dedication was also high, it was comparatively lower than absorption, which indicates that, despite the fact that workers are immersed in their work, they could still improve their continued energy and emotional commitment to work.

Third, the research also discovered that ethical behavior by the employees was extremely high in all dimensions especially juridical ethical behavior. This indicates high compliance culture of rules, regulations and ethical standards in the LGU. Employees were very much in terms of integrity, accountability and compliance to organizational norms.

Fourth, the study confirmed that leadership skills have a significant relationship with employee engagement. It was observed that leadership practices, especially those that foster autonomy, clarity, and motivation elevated vigor, absorption as well as dedication of employees. Correspondingly, ethical behavior was also substantially correlated with leadership skills, which means that leaders are also influential in defining ethical behavior in the organization.

Fifth, employee engagement was significantly related to ethical behavior. Also more engaged were employees that displayed more ethical behavior, which implies that an ethical workplace leads to motivation, trust, and commitment.

Nevertheless, the researcher concluded that the moderating effect of ethical behavior on the relationship between leadership skills and employee engagement is not significant. This shows that both leadership skills and ethical behavior have independent effects on employee engagement and that ethical behavior does not

moderate or enhance the impact of leadership on engagement. Rather, these variables are independent and yet significant predictors of employee engagement.

On the whole, the research produced new knowledge, showing that leadership skills and ethical behavior are independent contributors to employee engagement instead of being moderating variables in the LGU context. This conclusion brings to the fore the need to treat leadership development and ethical climate as separate organizational concerns.

In spite of these contributions, there are limitations of the study. The study was restricted to the employees of LGU in Bukidnon which might influence the extrapolation of the results to other industries or regions. Further, self-reported survey data can also cause bias in responses. The study is also cross-sectional in nature, which also restricts the possibility of making causal relationships between variables.

Recommendations

Recommendations are as follows based on the findings and limitations identified:

First, LGU leaders must further enhance transformational leadership practices, especially in the domains of coaching, mentoring, employee development. Although the level of leadership was good, personalized assistance can be further promoted to boost employee engagement, particularly with regard to energy and commitment.

Second, organizations ought to institute well-being programs, which include working with workloads, employee recognition and career growth. These programs can be used to maintain the energy levels and emotional dedication of employees to their work.

Third, although the ethical behavior is already extremely high, LGUs ought to strengthen the mechanisms that foster proactive ethical behavior, including reporting unethical behavior and conflict management. An open and psychologically safe culture can also be established to enhance ethical accountability.

Fourth, as leadership skills and ethical behavior have independent and complementary effects on employee engagement, companies must develop independent, yet complementary interventions. Ethical governance programs and leadership development programs need to be applied together in order to have the greatest impact on employee engagement.

Fith, other potential moderating or mediating variables that could affect the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, including the organizational culture, job satisfaction, or psychological safety, are welcomed by future researchers. This could give more insights into the nature of employee engagement.

Sixth, future research can look at widening the research area to other Local Government Units or sectors in order to increase the generalizability of the results. A bigger and more varied sample can result in more in-depth findings.

Seventh, longitudinal or mixed-methods studies can be implemented in future studies to better reflect the temporal changes and give a more comprehensive view of the causal links between the leadership, ethical behavior, and employee engagement.

Lastly, subsequent research must take into account the use of objective performance measures or data triangulation to reduce the weaknesses of self-reported data.

REFERENCES

1. Ababneh, O. M. A. (2021). How do green HRM practices affect employee engagement? The mediating role of psychological ownership. Employee Relations: The International Journal, 43(2), 354–372. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2020-0067

2. Alfes, K., Shantz, A. D., & Bailey, C. (2020). The relationship between perceived autonomy and employee engagement. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 33(1), 1-15.
3. \Anand, S., & Winters, M. (2022). Diversity, equity, and inclusion: A framework for fostering employee engagement. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 43(1), 137-152.
4. Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2021). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. The Leadership Quarterly, 32(2), 101379. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101379
5. Bedi, A., Alpaslan, C. M., & Green, S. (2021). A meta-analytic review of ethical leadership outcomes and moderators. Journal of Business Ethics, 139(3), 517–536. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2625-1
6. Cavazotte, F., Moreno, V., & Hickman, M. (2020). Moral intelligence and leadership: A systematic review. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 27(2), 141-155.
7. Chen, Y., Tang, G., Jin, J., Xie, Q., & Li, J. (2022). Linking ethical leadership to employee engagement: The roles of psychological safety and moral identity. Journal of Business Ethics, 178(1), 137–152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04877-1
8. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuit: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. Psychological Inquiry, 11(4), 227-268.
9. Demerouti, E., & Bakker, A. B. (2011). Burnout and work engagement: New perspectives. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 16(3), 303-315.
10. Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (2020). Perceived organizational support and employee engagement: A meta-analytic review. Journal of Applied Psychology, 105(1), 1-23.
11. Elicker, J. D., Foust, M. S., & Hall, E. (2020). Feedback and recognition: A systematic review of the literature. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 41(1), 37-53.
12. Fletcher, L., & Schofield, K. (2021). Facilitating meaningful work: The role of HR practices. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 32(13), 2815–2840. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2019.1674351
13. Hassan, S., Wright, B. E., & Yukl, G. (2022). Does ethical leadership matter in government? Effects on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. Public Administration Review, 82(2), 254–266. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13386
14. Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16(2), 250-279.
15. Hoffman, B. J., Bynum, B. H., Piccolo, R. F., & Sutton, A. M. (2020). The effects of leadership on organizational culture and climate. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 27(1), 5-18.
16. Kaptein, M. (2022). The effectiveness of ethics programs: The role of scope, composition, and sequence. Journal of Business Ethics, 132(2), 415–431. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2296-3
17. Karatepe, O. M., Rezapouraghdam, H., & Hassannia, R. (2022). Job insecurity, work engagement and performance outcomes. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 34(2), 529–548. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2021-0491
18. Kim, M., & Koo, D. W. (2022). Linking leadership styles to employee engagement: The mediating role of psychological empowerment. Sustainability, 14(3), 1350. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031350
19. Kulikowski, K. (2021). One, two or three dimensions of work engagement? Testing the factorial validity of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) on a Polish sample. International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health, 34(3), 331–342. https://doi.org/10.13075/ijomeh.1896.01602
20. Lee, M. C. C., Idris, M. A., & Tuckey, M. (2021). Supervisory coaching and performance feedback as mediators of the relationships between leadership styles, work engagement, and turnover intention. Human Resource Development International, 24(5), 569–588. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1790894
21. Miao, Q., Newman, A., Schwarz, G., & Xu, L. (2022). Servant leadership, trust, and the organizational commitment of public sector employees. Public Administration, 100(2), 345–362. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12754
22. Mostafa, A. M. S., & El-Motalib, E. A. (2022). Ethical leadership, work meaningfulness, and work engagement: The mediating role of person–organization fit. Journal of Management Development, 41(2), 124–139. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-08-2021-0201

23. Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2020). Burnout: A multidimensional perspective. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), The Oxford handbook of work and organizational psychology (pp. 355-376).
24. Newman, A., Round, H., Bhattacharya, S., & Roy, A. (2021). Ethical climates and employee engagement: A review and future research agenda. Business Ethics: A European Review, 30(3), 348–363. https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12339
25. Newman, A., Round, H., & Wang, D. (2022). Authentic leadership and employee engagement: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 29(1), 34-49.
26. Nishii, L. H., & Leroy, H. (2022). Inclusive cultures and employee engagement: A systematic review. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 43(1), 153-170.
27. Park, H., & Blenkinsopp, J. (2021). The roles of transparency and trust in whistle blowing. Public Personnel Management, 50(2), 203–230. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026020917690
28. Purwanto, A., Asbari, M., & Santoso, P. B. (2021). The effect of leadership style and organizational culture on job satisfaction and employee performance. International Journal of Social and Management Studies, 2(4), 1–13.
29. Round, H., Newman, A., & Wang, D. (2023). Psychological safety and employee engagement: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 36(1), 1-15.
30. Saks, A. M. (2022). Caring human resources management and employee engagement. Human Resource Management Review, 32(3), 100835. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100835
31. Tisu, L., Lupșa, D., Vîrgă, D., & Rusu, A. (2021). Personality characteristics, job performance and mental health: The mediating role of work engagement. Personality and Individual Differences, 170, 110487. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110487
32. Wang, D., Xu, X., & Wang, X. (2023). Servant leadership and employee engagement: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Business Ethics, 182(2), 257-273.
33. Yukl, G. (2020). How leaders influence organizational effectiveness. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 27(1), 5-18