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# Designing and Testing a Model of the Relationship of Ethical Leadership to Organizational Citizenship and Counterproductive Work Behaviors: Mediating Role of Organizational Trust

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This study aimed to investigate the relationship between promotion-focused and prevention-focused ethical leadership to organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behaviors with the mediating role of the organizational trust. For this purpose, 180 stratified randomly selected employees participated in the study. Participants completed promotion-focused and Prevention-focused ethical leadership (Bush et al., 2020), organizational trust (Yoo & kanawattanachai, 2002), organizational citizenship behavior (Organ & Kanofsky, 1989) counterproductive work behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2002) questionnaires. Structural equation modeling (SEM) through AMOS-23 was used to assess the proposed model's fit indices and path coefficient. The bootstrap procedure by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was used for testing the mediation effect. Fit indices indicated a very good fit of the model with the data. Path coefficients showed that the promotion-focused Ethical Leadership (0.54) positivity and prevention-focused Ethical



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Leadership (-0.31) negativity has an effect on organizational trust and organizational trust has an effect on organizational citizenship behavior (0.51) and counterproductive work behavior (-0.47). Also, the results showed that the promotion-focused Ethical Leadership had a positive indirect effect on citizenship behavior through organizational trust and Prevention-focused Ethical Leadership had a positive indirect effect on counterproductive work behavior through organizational trust. We explored how these different types of ethical leadership may indirectly, through felt trust, impact citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior. Given the importance of ethical decision-making in organizations and the calls for increased ethical leadership, our findings have important implications for theory and practice.

***Keywords:*** the promotion-focused ethical Leadership, Prevention-focused Ethical Leadership, organizational trust, organizational citizenship behavior, the counterproductive work behavior.

In today's dynamic business environments, having a committed workforce that, in addition to creating innovation, can interact well with others, collaborate, and create positive behaviors is essential to the organization's effectiveness (Cooper, 2005). Meanwhile, although employees can make a significant contribution to the organization's performance by giving solutions and suggestions (GAO & Bataller, 2011), the disturbing regularity of ethical lapses in the business world highlights the importance of ethical leadership (Morrison, 2011). Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making" (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005). Ethical leadership has important implications for followers' interpretations of their environment, given that they tend to look outward for guidance on acceptable behavior and also a commitment to avoid negative and unethical behaviors (Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010), reducing unethical behaviors and conflict in



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labor relationships (Mayer & Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2010), creating positive workplace behaviors such as encouraging and appropriate behavior with subordinates (Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts & Chonko, 2009).

Ethical leadership also leads to high performance and organizational citizenship behavior among employees (Den Hartog, 2015). Scholars have suggested that these outcomes are the result of ethical leaderships behaving as both a "moral person" and a "moral manager" (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Ethical leader in "moral person" role exerts effects on follower behavior through social learning processes, in which ethical leaders promote ethical conduct as followers model the behaviors that they observe (Bandura, 1986; Brown et al., 2005). The ethical leader in "moral manager" role affects follower behavior through social exchange processes. Ethical leadership contributes to a high-quality exchange relationship that prompts reciprocal behavior from the follower (Brown & Treviño, 2006). It often takes the form of desired discretionary behaviors such as increased organizational citizenship and reduced counterproductive behavior (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum & Kuenzi, 2012; Neves & Story, 2015). Scholars have noted that a deontological approach to morality suggests that the ethicality of a behavior can be judged based on the actor ‘s intentions or on the extent to which the behavior is consistent with normative standards (Lemoine, Hartnell & Leroy, 2019).

Of course, it can also be assumed that the follower’s behavior also affects the type of ethical leadership behavior. This means that based on the work behavior of employees, whether the behavior is under normative standards or not, this ethical behavior can be promotional or controlling (Brown et al., 2005؛



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Lemoine, Hartnell & Leroy, 2019). Accordingly, two types of promotion-focused ethical leadership and prevention-focused ethical leadership behaviors suggest. Promotion-focused ethical leadership, which rewards, supports, and encourages the employees who act ethically, ethical leadership provide benefits to their employees. It makes them realize that they are in a quality relationship with their leader and helps employees participate in valuable voluntary behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior. (Ng & Feldman, 2015).

While in prevention-focused ethical leadership attends to "the wrong" through monitoring unethical employee behavior, warning about the consequences of unethical behavior, and punishing transgression and lead to undesired outcomes, such as decreased citizenship and increased counterproductive behavior (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels & Hall, 2017).

Therefore, by building theory, ethical leadership behaviors can be classified into two types of promotion-focused, and prevention-focused behaviors are related to ethical leadership. Still, it has different results and consequences (Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio & Eagly, 2017) that in previous studies This issue has not been addressed. Of course, the point to be noted is that these two types of behavior are not separate because the leader can have both types of behavior in a row. In one day, it should only be noted that the behavior of ethical leadership is promotion-focused and prevention-oriented. The type of behavior of followers has a different effect. It is also not a question of which behavior is more moral, but how these behaviors affect behavior because the perception that followers lead of the type of behavior affects the type of behavior they conduct.



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Considering the knowledge gained from the behavior of the promotion-focused and prevention-oriented ethical leadership, it should be noted that each of these behaviors has a different effect on employees' level of trust. Trust refers to the degree of vulnerability of one-sided tendencies and willingness to interact with the other party's actions, regardless of the ability to control and monitor the other party (Rostami, 2013). This tendency to become vulnerable translates into trusting behaviors such as subordinate judgment and a reduction in monitoring employee behavior (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Trust can have interpersonal effects and affect relationships within and outside the organization (Danaeifard, Rajabzadeh & Hasiry, 2009). In fact, trust is the level of self-confidence in which one person behaves ethically, justly, and predictably to empower another and creates positive expectations in the individual (Goh & Zhen, 2014; Lau, Lam & Wen, 2014). On the other hand, subordinates tend to accept that this trust is due to their positive behavior (Baer, Harris, Stanton & Haughton, 2015) because when followers see trust in their leadership, it leads to increased commitment. Commitment leads to a higher level of job satisfaction and improved performance.

In fact, the main idea of trust in the leader is the leader's personality that followers understand by understanding the characteristics of their leader such as ability, honesty, trust and confidence, benevolence in the workplace, service (Mayer et al., 1995). On the other hand, it should be noted that behaviors that indicate a low tendency for the leader to be vulnerable are interpreted inversely by followers. For example, supervisor supervision suggests that an employee is not trusted (Mayer et al., 1995). Based on the above, it can be argued that prevention-



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focused ethical leadership behavior has a negative impact on subordinates' trust in supervisors (Kollock, 1994) because employees cannot be directly informed of leadership motivations and goals, but when they observe leadership behavior can and find motivations (Reeder, 2009) and realize that leaders can be trusted by observing the behavior of subordinates (Skinner, Dietz & Weibel, 2014). When the ethical leader directly controls the subordinates, he creates a negative inner experience for the subordinates, which shows the leader's sense of distrust in them, thus reducing the amount of undesirable behavior in the subordinates. Of course, it should be noted that the behavior of an ethical prevention-focused leader should not be thought of as a detrimental factor to subordinates, but reinforcing these behaviors creates the impression in subordinates that a leader has negative judgments about his followers and distrusts them. (Stouten, van Dijke, Mayer, De Cremer & Euwema, 2013).

In this study, it is argued that there is an inverse relationship between the behaviors of prevention-focused ethical leadership and the trust of subordinates. Like when a leader warns his subordinate about the consequences of monitoring immoral behavior, which causes the subordinate to think more about that behavior. Given the inverse relationship between prevention-focused leadership behavior and subordinates' trust, these subordinates are likely to infer that the leader is unsure of their commitment to ethics and their ability to function unsupervised. The perception that their leader is uncertain of their ability to behave morally lowers their subordinates' self-confidence.

But the focus of promotion-focused leadership behavior is on the growth and development of subordinates, and it does so by supporting, socializing, and encouraging appropriate ethical



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behaviors (Brown et al., 2005). This leader does the right thing and supports subordinates who follow the right ethical principles and articulates the right moral values in the field for them. This type of leadership emphasizes right moral behaviors instead of prevention-focused leadership, which emphasizes the prevention of wrong ethical behaviors. According to social exchange theory, when subordinates value the positive evaluation of the leader by them, the ground for trust in leadership is provided in them (Blau, 1964). It causes subordinates to seek to compensate for this trust (Baer et al., 2015). Cropanzalo and Mitchell (2005) emphasized that receiving this valuable feeling from the leader helps build a secure relationship and build mutual trust. Subordinates feel in a reciprocal relationship with the leader. In this study, it is argued that promotion-focused ethical leadership behaviors have a positive relationship with the trust of subordinates.

Regarding behavioral consequences, according to social exchange theory, which emphasizes the role of trust in the process of moral leadership, it points out that the leader's trust in the subordinate allows the subordinate to seek action to compensate for and maintain that trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Recently, researchers have focused on how trust affects subordinates' working relationships. The leader sees trust in subordinates as a benefit (Beer et al., 2015). In this regard, Organ (1990) acknowledged that in the workplace, this tendency to reciprocate trust motivates subordinates to engage in more voluntary behaviors that go beyond their formal job requirements (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In confirmation of this, a meta-analysis has shown that subordinates, due to the trust they have observed from the leader, engage in



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organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, Conlon & Wesson, 2013). The present study investigates the effects of subordinates' trust on organizational citizenship behavior in favor of the organization and counterproductive work behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior are also in the opposite direction, so the antecedents that increase organizational citizenship behavior may have little or no effect on counterproductive work behavior (Dalal, 2005; Spector, Bauer & Fox, 2010).

Accordingly, it is suggested that these organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors be considered a pair to better evaluate the voluntary behaviors of subordinates. It should be said that the trust gained by the leader makes employees feel valued and enables them to consider themselves members of the organization (Lau et al., 2014), and increases their sense of self-confidence (Baer et al., 2015). This is consistent with social exchange theory because it suggests that subordinates are looking for ways to compensate for this benefit in terms of the trust they gain. One of these ways is organizational citizenship behavior, which is voluntary behavior and allows followers to balance this social exchange. In this way, employees work beyond job requirements, strongly support the organization, and volunteer to perform more tasks to offset the benefits received from their leader and supervisor (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009). The suggestion, then, is that when subordinates perceive trust in the leader, they seek to repay it by doing organizational citizenship behaviors and reducing counterproductive behavior. Another critical point that can be gained from the trust is the behavior of subordinates in performing counterproductive work behaviors to the detriment



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of the organization that harms the organization or intends to harm the organization (Sackett & DeVore, 2001; Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh & Kessler, 2006). When subordinates feel trusted by the leader, they are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. The leader's perception of trust shows subordinates that they are valuable members of the organization and lead to a high-quality relationship with their supervisor. (Bush et al, 2020; Baer et al, 2015). Both feel responsible for their leader and organization (Deutsch Salamon & Robinson, 2008; Lester & Brower, 2003).

A sense of responsibility reduces the desire of followers to harm the organization. It can be said that counterproductive work behavior is the result of injustice and imbalance in the relationship (Greenberg & Scott, 1996). Given that organizational trust is beneficial to the leader and the organization, it should reduce the likelihood of an imbalance that needs to be corrected, thus reducing behaviors that harm the organization. Overall, the suggestion is that when subordinates feel higher levels of trust, they are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. In this study, it has been argued that promotion-focused leadership behavior through organizational trust in subordinates leads to organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior of followers. In contrast, prevention-focused ethical leadership behavior leads to a decrease in organizational citizenship behavior and an increase in counterproductive work behavior by reducing organizational trust. Therefore, it can be said that according to the designed model, the hypotheses of this article are: prevention-focused ethical leadership has a negative relationship with subordinates 'trust, promotional-focused



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ethical leadership has a positive relationship with subordinates' trust, Prevention-focused ethical leadership has an indirect negative effect on organizational citizenship behavior through organizational trust Promotion-focused ethical leadership has an indirect positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior through organizational trust, Prevention-focused ethical leadership through an organizational trust has an indirect positive effect on counterproductive work behavior, and promotion-focused ethical leadership through an organizational trust has an indirect negative effect on counterproductive work behavior. Based on the available studies and research backgrounds, the researcher has designed a model shown in Figure 1, following the impact of promotion-focused and prevention-focused ethical leadership on organizational outcomes.

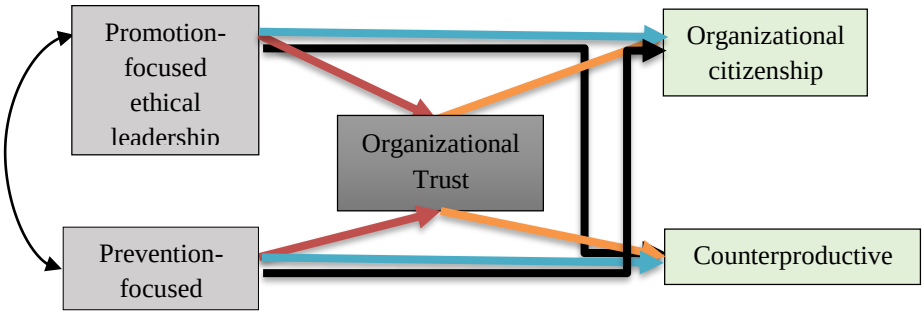


**Figure 1. The proposed model of the relationship of promotion-focused and Prevention-focused ethical leadership to organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behaviors with the mediating role of organizational trust**



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## Method

### Sample and Procedure

Participants were gathered using a sampling method through an organizational platform in Ahvaz. Organizational units include technical and administrative units (e.g., machine operator, maintenance specialist, administrative. Invitation letters were sent to the respective human resource departments. All workers who participated in the HSP were invited to complete the study questionnaires. Research questionnaires were distributed between 180 employees from different organization units stratified randomly selected to collect data. All 180 participants completed and returned the questionnaires (response rate= 100%). Data were collected using a self-reported questionnaire. The questionnaire included data on age, sex, education level. Of these participants, 70 percent were at least at college grade, 86 percent were 30 years and older, 85 percent had been in the current job position for more than five years, 20 percent were single, and 80 percent were married.

### Measures

**Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership Questionnaire**

Promotion-focused ethical leadership was assessed with a questionnaire derived from the Hinkin and Fear (1999) ethical leadership questionnaire, designed, developed, and validated by Bush, Welch, Beer, and Waldman (2020). The questionnaire consists of 6 items scored on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Its phrases include "My manager communicates a strong ethical mindset to employees" and "My manager rewards employees for doing the right thing." The scale was first translated by the researcher and adjusted for execution.



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The reliability coefficients of the questionnaire in the study of Bush et al. (2020) was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method of .94. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be .72 by Cronbach's alpha method. Also, the method of confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the validity of the Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership Questionnaire. The values of IFI (.90), CFI (.97), RMSEA (.08) and relative chi-square (2.83) were calculated. It is close to the criteria of fitness and was approved.

**Prevention-focused Ethical Leadership Questionnaire**

prevention-focused ethical leadership was assessed with a questionnaire derived from the Hinkin and Fear (1999) ethical leadership questionnaire, designed, constructed, and validated by Bush et al. (2020). The questionnaire consists of 6 items scored on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Its statements include "My manager carefully monitors employees to prevent ethical errors" and "My manager implements strict ethical policies". The scale was first translated by the researcher and adjusted for execution. The reliability coefficients of the questionnaire in the study of Bush et al. (2020) were calculated by Cronbach's alpha method of 0.93. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method of 0.81. Also, the confirmatory factor analysis method was used to evaluate the validity of the prevention-focused ethical leadership questionnaire. The values of IFI (.97), CFI (.97), RMSEA (.037) and relative chi-square (1.42) were calculated. It is close to the criteria of fitness and was approved.



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**Organizational Trust Questionnaire**

Organizational trust was assessed with a 12-item questionnaire developed by Yoo and Kanawattanachai (2002). The scale consists of 12 items that measure the three subscales of cognition-based trust (questions 1 to 4), impact-based trust (questions 5 to 8), and tendency to trust (questions 9 to 12). Each item in this questionnaire is graded on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items in the questionnaire include "I can speak freely about my group work ideas, and I know they will listen" and "Most people can be trusted to do what they say". The reliability coefficients of the questionnaire in the study of Yoo and Kanawattanachai (2002) calculated by Cronbach's alpha method was .93. In Rostami (2013) research, the reliability of the questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha method was 0.83%. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be .79 by Cronbach's alpha method. Also, to evaluate the validity of the organizational trust questionnaire, the method of analysis of confirmatory factors was used. The values of IFI (.94), CFI (.94), RMSEA (.029) and relative chi-square (3.48) were calculated. Fit is close and confirmed.

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire**

In the present study, Organ and Kanofsky's (1989) Organizational Citizenship Behavior Questionnaire was used to assess organizational citizenship behavior. This questionnaire had 15 questions, and its purpose was to evaluate the dimensions of citizenship behavior in favor of the individual (7 questions) and organizational citizenship behavior in favor of the organization (8 questions) and its dimensions (altruism,

conscience, chivalry, civic behavior, and politeness and consideration). The items in this questionnaire are: "I help my colleagues to perform their duties productively" and "I attend and participate in meetings that are related to the issues of my organization." Its response range is scored on a 5-point Likert from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Of course, four questions (7, 8, 9, and 12) are scored in reverse. To get the score for each dimension, the sum of the scores of the questions related to that dimension are added together. For the overall score of the questionnaire, the total scores of all the questions are added together. The Questionnaire of Organizational Citizenship Behavior by Islami (2007) has been translated and used in various researches in our country and has good validity and reliability. In Pour Soltani Zarandi and Amirji Naghandar (2013) research, the reliability of the questionnaire was .76 using Cronbach's alpha test. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha method was reported to be .70. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated to be .79 by Cronbach's alpha method. Also, the method of confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the validity of the Organizational Citizenship Questionnaire. The values of IFI (.93), CFI (0.94), RMSEA (.048) and relative chi-square (3.23) were calculated. It is close to the criteria of fitness and was approved.

**Counterproductive Work Behavior Questionnaire**

In the present study, Bennett and Robinson's (2002) counterproductive work behavior questionnaire was used to measure deviant behaviors. This questionnaire had 11 questions, and its purpose was to evaluate deviant behaviors directed at the organization and colleagues. Items in the questionnaire include:



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"I find long breaks at work acceptable" and "I get sick when I'm not sick". Its response range is scored on a 5-point Likert from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The reliability of the questionnaire in Golparvar, Alimardani, and Aghaei's (2010) research was calculated with Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.85). The reliability coefficients of the questionnaire in the present study were calculated by Cronbach's alpha method (.75), respectively. Also, the confirmatory factor analysis method was used to evaluate the validity of the counterproductive work behavior scale. The values of IFI (.95), CFI (.98), RMSEA (.05) and relative chi-square (1.89) were calculated. It is close to the criteria of suitability and was approved.

**Research Findings**

Table 1 shows the statistical indicators of mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient between research variables. In terms of demographic characteristics, 75% of the sample were male, and 25% were female. In addition, 20% had a Ph.D.'s degree, 25% had a master's degree, 45% had a bachelor's degree, and 10% a high school diploma. The mean age of the participants was 39.3 years, the lowest of which was 25 years and the highest of which was 51 years old. Finally, 20% of the participants were single, and 80% were married.



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**Table 1**

**Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Coefficients between Research Variables**

| Scale Descriptive index | mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Promotion-focused Ethical Leadership | 32.80 | 3.32 | - | | | |
| Prevention-focused Ethical Leadership | 26.61 | 5.77 | -.42** | - | | |
| Organizational Trust | 39.93 | 5.79 | .67** | -.54** | - | |
| Organizational citizenship behaviors | 28.51 | 4.22 | .41** | -.34** | .57** | - |
| counterproductive work behavior | 13.22 | 6.79 | -.54** | .61** | -.70** | -.47** |

As can be seen in Table 1, the correlation coefficient between promotion-focused ethical leadership with organizational trust (.67), organizational citizenship behavior (.41), and counterproductive work behavior variables (-.54) were significant at the level of p<.05. The prevention-focused ethical leadership with the variables of organizational trust (-.34), organizational citizenship behavior (-.34), and counterproductive work behavior (0.61) were also significant at the level of p < .05. The structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the proposed model. The fit of the proposed model was based on a combination of fit criteria to determine the adequacy of the proposed model with the data. If relative chi-square ($X^2$) is not statistically significant, it indicates the appropriate fit of the model.

The value of the relative chi-square ($^{X^2}/_{DF}$) is zero, and the smaller it is, the better. The acceptable value is less than or equal to 3. Acceptable values of GFI (Fit Goodness Index), AGFI (Adaptive Fitness Goodness Index), CFI (Comparative Fitness Index), IFI (Incremental Fitness Index), and TLI



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(Tucker-Louise Index) are equal to or greater than .90. In the square root of variance estimation of approximation error (RMSEA), the value between 0.08 to .10 reflects the model's average fit. The value considering revising .06 to .08 indicates the model's acceptable fit. A value between .01 and .06 indicates a perfect model fit, and a value of .00 (zero) indicates a model with the excellent fit (Nesi, 2004; Hooman, 1385; quoted by Eshrati, 1389). The fit of the proposed model with the data based on fitness indicators is reported as the absolute fitness index in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Fitness Indicators of the Research Model**

| Model | $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2$/df | GFI | AGFI | NFI | CFI | IFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Proposed model** | 5.49 | 1 | 5.49 | .98 | .93 | .98 | .98 | .98 | .95 | .09 |
| **final model** | 7.54 | 3 | 2.51 | .99 | .96 | .99 | .99 | .99 | .98 | .05 |

As shown in Table 2, in the proposed model, the obtained indicators indicate the suitability of the proposed model. Figure 2 shows the final research pattern.



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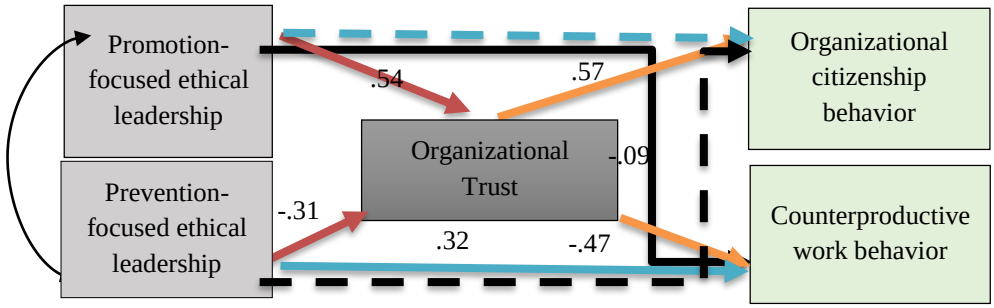


**Figure 2. The final model of the effect of promotion-focused and prevention-focused ethical leadership on citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behavior with mediating role of organizational trust**

Findings on simple relationships Table 3 shows the direct paths and their standard coefficients for the final research model.

As shown in Table 3, all path coefficients are significant in the proposed model of the present study at high levels.



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**Table 3**

**The Structural Pattern of Straight Paths and their Standard Coefficients in the Final Model of the Present Study**

| path | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Promotion-focused ethical leadership → organizational trust** | .54 | .060 | 15.58 | .0001 |
| **Promotion-focused ethical leadership → organizational citizenship behavior** | .04 | .065 | .834 | .40 |
| **Promotion-focused ethical leadership → counterproductive work behavior** | -.08 | .083 | -2.120 | .034 |
| **Prevention-focused ethical leadership organizational trust** | -.31 | .035 | -8.88 | .0001 |
| **Prevention-focused ethical leadership → organizational citizenship behavior** | -.05 | .033 | -1.080 | .28 |
| **Prevention-focused ethical leadership behavior → counterproductive work** | .32 | .042 | 9.089 | .0001 |
| **Organizational trust → organizational citizenship behavior** | .51 | .040 | 9.312 | .0001 |
| **Organizational trust counterproductive work behavior** | -.47 | .051 | -10.829 | .0001 |

According to Table 3, it can be said that the relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership (.54) and prevention-focused ethical leadership (-.31) with organizational trust is significant at the level of $p < .05$. It should also be said that the relationship between organizational trust and organizational citizenship behavior (.51) and counterproductive work behavior (-.47) is significant at the level of $p < .01$. These findings show that ethical leadership can affect organizational trust and, through trust will have consequences such as organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior.

To analyze the mediator hypotheses, findings on mediator relationships were used with AMOS 24 software. Table 4 shows the indirect paths and their standard coefficients in the final research model. As shown in Table 4, all indirect path coefficients are significant in the proposed model of the present study. Accordingly, all indirect hypotheses were confirmed.

**Table 4**

**Structural Pattern of Indirect Paths and Their Standard Coefficients in the Final Model of the Present Study**

| path | Data | Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Promotion-focused ➡ trust ➡ citizenship behavior** | .28 | .284 | .428 |
| **Promotion-focused ➡ trust ➡ counterproductive behavior** | -.26 | -.618 | -.427 |
| **Prevention-focused ➡ trust ➡ citizenship behavior** | -.16 | -.148 | -.088 |
| **Prevention-focused ➡ trust ➡ counterproductive behavior** | .15 | .131 | .212 |



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According to Table 4, the organizational trust variable has been able to explain the mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership (promotion and prevention) and consequences (organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior). The confidence interval for the routes listed in Table 4 indicates no zero in this interval, which indicates the significance of the indirect routes. The confidence level for this interval is 95, and the number of Bootstrap samples is 5000.

## Conclusion

Importance of ethical leadership, defined as―the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such behavior to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Ethical leadership has essential implications for followers' interpretations of their environment, given that they tend to look outward for guidance on acceptable behavior (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño, 1986; Treviño & Brown, 2004). Indeed, recent high-profile scandals at Wells Fargo, Volkswagen, and Uber have reinforced the notion that an absence of ethical leadership can ―trickle down‖ to negatively influence follower behavior (Chin, 2018; Ochs, 2016; Siano, Vollero, Conte & Amabile, 2017).

In contrast, research has shown that the presence of ethical leadership leads to desirable outcomes, including follower ethicality, performance, and citizenship behavior (see Den Hartog, 2015 for a review). Scholars have suggested that these outcomes result from ethical leaders behaving as both a ―moral



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personal and a ―moral manager‖ (Treviño, Hartman & Brown, 2000; see also Brown & Mitchell, 2010).

Consider a leader who encourages his employees to behave ethically one day and oversees them the next to prevent them from making ethical mistakes. These contradictory behaviors are the same two types of ethical leadership that can happen to a leader even in one day. But it must be borne in mind that the leader will have good intentions to strengthen work ethic in both cases of these different leadership behaviors. However, when these behaviors are considered from the followers' point of view, the followers encourage the promotion-focused ethical leadership and support the ethical principles while considering the prevention-focused ethical leadership as supervising and strict, therefore, the followers may react with very different behaviors.

Of course, there is a consensus that such behaviors on the part of the leader will have a positive effect on followers (Dan Hartog, 2015; Limvin et al., 2019). However, it should be noted that this study was conducted with the aim of "examining the effect of promotion-focused and prevention-focused ethical leadership on organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors mediated by organizational trust in employees of an industrial company in Ahvaz." The study by Bush et al. (2020) has studied a relatively different approach to ethical leadership, examining it in two dimensions: promotion-focused and prevention-focused, and has challenged previous findings because this study, as in Bush Et al. (2020), highlighted key differences between promotion-focused ethical leadership and prevention-focused ethical leadership. In promotion-focused ethical leadership, employees tend to focus on the right behaviors, while prevention-focused ethical



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leadership behaviors lead employees to the wrong behaviors. In this regard, the results obtained from the analysis of data in this study show that there is a significant positive relationship (.27) between promotion-focused ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and a significant negative relationship (-.14) with counterproductive work behavior. There is a significant negative relationship (-.07) between prevention-focused ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and a significant positive relationship (.12) with counterproductive work behavior. These studies are consistent with the research of Bush et al. (2020) who reported that there is a significant relationship between promotion-focused ethical leadership with organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior.

Show more counterproductive work behavior with the findings of et al. (2005); Dan Hartok and Bolshak (2012), and Lou et al. (2014) are coordinated. These findings emphasize that ethical leadership may not always be entirely positive, and organizations should be more cautious about encouraging employee ethics in the workplace. In support of this, it should be said that ethical prevention-focused ethical leadership seeks to prevent unethical consequences.

This study also pays attention to the role of organizational trust in showing the positive effects of ethical leadership in a way that, unlike previous research that emphasized the ethical leader in the form of an ethical manager who had a one-way relationship with his followers (Troino, Hartman and Brown, 2000). More attention has been paid to the dynamic interaction between leader-follower in this study. Such a structure influences the attitudes and behaviors of the follower and



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provides the ground for trust, and can have positive consequences. The findings of Bush et al. (2020) show that ethical leadership behaviors greatly impact his relationship with employees based on the leader's perception of employees' unethical behaviors. In support of this, Trino et al. (2000) raise the issue of ethical hypocrisy, which determines the social exchange between leaders and followers. According to the study, the positive effect of promotion-focused ethical leadership on trust is undermined when leaders engage in behaviors inconsistent with their speech, indicating that engaging in ethical leadership alone is not enough.

Based on the effect of the ethical leader on employee trust and the guidance of followers' daily experiences, it seems necessary to examine factors such as individual differences between the follower-leader, the quality of the existing leader-follower relationship, and organizational structure level variables such as ethics. Therefore, the new intrapersonal approach to ethical leadership behaviors, its two distinct forms and their consequences for followers and organizations, raises new contexts that in this study, these two distinct forms with different consequences were confirmed by Bush et al. (2020), Liu, Song, Li and Liavo (2017) and Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao and Chang (2012). This study showed that ethical leadership focused on prevention creates an atmosphere of mistrust because of the damage it does to its relationships with followers, forcing employees to compensate and create reverse behaviors consistent with research by Bush et al. (2020). In confirmation of this, a leader who constantly monitors his subordinates on a given working day or warns his followers about the consequences of their immoral behavior in the workplace may have good intentions. Still, followers may Interpret the meaning



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of the leader's lack of self-confidence, which, of course, has been less addressed in research on how this trust plays a mediating role that underlies organizational citizenship behavior or counterproductive work behavior.

Similarly, organizations also encourage their leaders to ensure that subordinates are trustworthy. Leaders should be aware that cultivating a sense of trust in followers can benefit the organization in a way that goes beyond the leader-follower relationship. And this issue must also be considered. It is not only useful for moral leadership to be progressive, but the leader must also be progressive in practice, and his words and deeds must be the same and not contradictory. Based on the present study's findings, the following suggestions are made to the following researchers.

As organizations strive to develop ethical leadership, they should know that it is not enough to train leaders to act as promoters or preventers. Still, ethical leadership needs to be developed, and It is the display of a person's strong ethical character.

Preferably, courses should be provided for leaders and managers of different organizational levels, and ethical leadership and its dimensions should be fully described. So, they can provide trust in subordinates by coordinating their behavior and speech. Since ethical leadership is an essential issue in motivating employees and provides positive outcomes in the organization by building trust in subordinates, future researchers are advised to do more to distinguish the dimensions of ethical leadership. They can even examine whether Do these two separate dimensions have common antecedents or not? In generalizing the results, it is necessary to pay attention to the



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following limitations: The first limitation is that the majority of the sample of this study are men, so in generalizing the results to women, caution should be observed. Second, since the tool used in this study was a self-report questionnaire, specific limitations related to this type of tool should be considered. Third, the present study's design and the use of structural equation modeling do not prove causation, and caution should be exercised in this regard.

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