

Impact of Ethical Sales Leadership on Salesperson Behavior Performance in the Business-to-Business Markets of Pakistan: A Mediation Effect through Customer Orientation

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Abstract



Building and sustaining long-term customer relationships and adopting ethics may boost sales success. This is possible with ethical sales leadership. This is vital for all businesses. Research shows that customer orientation increases salesperson behavior. This is mediated by ethical sales leadership. Salespeople act better when their supervisors are ethical. Through perceived ethical sales leadership, client orientation indirectly impacts salesperson conduct. For the study, business-to-business salespeople were purposefully sampled. The researcher may thoroughly test hypotheses using structural equation modeling. This study reveals that role manager customer orientation influences ethical sales leadership and salesperson conduct performance.

Salespeople gain from managers' customer focus and ethical sales leadership. Managers substantially influence salesperson conduct and customer focus. This study shows that ethical sales leadership impacts Pakistani business-to-business salespeople. Their managers' customer attention influences salespeople's behavior. Client orientation as a critical feature of ethical leadership is added to the literature. The study's findings enhance customer-oriented sales orientation research. Improved salesperson customer orientation enhances behavior.

This study analyzes how sales supervisors enhance customer orientation via ethical sales leadership. By boosting client orientation, sales managers may increase business-to-business salespeople's behavior, performance, and effectiveness. Sales managers may boost business-to-business sales with ethical leadership. This boosts business customer focus. Further research and analysis of this study's implications may improve ethical sales leadership. The smart PLS 3 structural model featured consumer orientation as a mediator. Customer Orientation moderated the Ethical Sales Leadership effectiveness relationship. This study closes with management, theoretical, and recommendation implications. The study's limitations and further research inform these results and recommendations.

Keywords: Ethical Sales Leadership, Customer Orientation, Salesperson Behavior Performance, B2B, Pakistan.

Introduction

Scholars have already noted the most significant elements affecting a salesperson's productivity. A wide range of variables that might influence salespeople's success are examined. The sales manager, who may be a national sales manager or marketing manager, immediately affects the salesperson's actions. To receive encouragement, the sales subordinates emulate how they act after these leaders. For securing collective and organizational objectives as the result of this motivation to achieve greater performance Ethical sales leadership means managerial leadership is the focus of this research, which is important to the firm and its surroundings collectively. This study focuses on Pakistani business-to-business marketplaces. Sales leadership predicts sales organization management (Ingram et al., 2005). Sales managers' leadership styles, particularly ethical sales leadership, primarily affected salesperson performance and customer orientation.

The literature evaluation conducted by Adams (2023) using Google Scholar's Harzing Publish or Perish tool shows a need for more Pakistani business-to-business studies focusing on ethical sales

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leadership. The sales leadership predicts a salesperson's job success is important. Whatever their sales supervisors' leadership style (Mulki et al., 2006).

Lee, Yeh, Yu, and Lin, (2023) found that transactional leadership is essential to forecast salesperson performance fluctuations accurately. Since other scholars have defined various leadership styles, the salesperson's effectiveness needs additional criteria or schemes to adequately comprehend their sales boss's behavior. Transactional leadership is crucial in situational compensation and subordinate discipline today. Other leadership characteristics are equally important in sales. These characteristics improve salespeople's success in the company.

Today, achieving sales targets is a possibility and must be done ethically. This research asks sales leaders if they are emphasizing unethical sales tactics. Unethical behavior may damage relationships between Pakistani business-to-business sales managers, executives, and clients. This will raise the problem of managing the task by all parties and adversely impact client correspondence output, which is vital to the sales organization's long-term success.

Researchers concluded that ethical sales leadership encourages unscrupulous salespeople (Brown et al., 2005). This study exhibits ethically suitable behavior in every aspect of their lives and is trustworthy and equitable. This Behavior is called Ethical sales leadership (ethical sales leadership term used in this study). Followers are urged to use that sales strategy. Researchers point out that leaders' ethics predict followers. Job performance is also affected by ethical leadership (Bedi et al., 2016).

A better understanding is needed of how work performance affects job performance. According to Bouckennooghe et al. (2015) study, ethical sales leadership positively and indirectly affects work performance, particularly sales performance. As per the future research directions of Schwepker Jr. (2019) ethical sales leadership and salesperson behavior performance can be further checked through mediating variables like customer orientation and now it is researched for Pakistani B2B marketplaces.

Significance of the Research

The existing body of literature on ethical sales leadership has predominantly focused on Western contexts. This study aims to investigate the dynamics of B2B markets in the context of Pakistan. Utilizing mediation study methods gives researchers valuable insights into the perceptions of salesmen toward the person in charge or the manager. The present study aims to fill a gap in the existing research literature by investigating the relationship between ethical sales leadership and salesperson behavior efficiency. Additionally, it is going to investigate the potential mediating role of customer orientation in this relationship. This research would clarify sales maximization theory.

This study will assist Pakistani corporations in determining whether their sales division uses ethical sales leadership to maximize salesperson effectiveness. Field training and sales manager pressure affect salesperson performance and Ethical Sales Leadership. The phenomenon's impact on the interconnections among suppliers, vendors, and representatives for sales within the context of commercial marketing in Pakistan is a subject of interest. The current study aims to establish a basis for ethical sales leadership by examining its role in motivating and persuading salespeople to effectively meet the needs of clients. This, in turn, is expected to contribute to the growth of business-to-business revenue in the context of Pakistan.

Research Problem

Due to active rivalry among the industrial companies of Pakistan. The long-term management and customer trust of Customers i.e. (distributors, retailers, and final consumers) have significantly decreased over the past decade. At the same time, the pressure on sales has increased in the Business Markets.

Salespeople may emulate their supervisors' ethical leadership if they think they should. Additionally, this enhances a manager's ethical appropriateness for obedience. The manager's captivating demeanor may also improve salespeople's perspective, which may boost their followers' sales attribution. The influence of ethical sales leadership on salesperson conduct in Pakistan's B2B sector will be assessed using customer orientation.

Research Objectives

The goals of this research are:

1. Identify the influence of ethical sales leadership on salesperson behavior performance.
2. Examine the influence of Ethical Sales Leadership on customer orientation.

3. To examine how customer orientation affects salesperson effectiveness.
4. Examine how customer orientation mediates the relationship between ethical sales leadership and salesperson performance.

Research Questions

1. How does Ethical Sales Leadership impact Salesperson Behavior Performance?
2. How does Ethical Sales Leadership affect customer orientation?
3. Is the customer orientation affecting the salesperson's behavior performance?
4. Does Customer Orientation mediate between Ethical Sales Leadership and Salesperson Behavior performance?

Research Hypotheses

1. Ethical Sales Leadership is positively related to Salesperson Behavior Performance.
2. Ethical Sales Leadership is positively related to customer orientation.
3. Customer orientation is positively related to a salesperson's behavior performance.
4. There is a mediation effect of Customer Orientation between Ethical Sales Leadership and Salesperson performance?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Social learning theory helps to explain why and how ethical leaders influence their followers. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) is based on the idea that individuals learn by paying attention to and emulating the attitudes, values, and behaviors of attractive and credible models. The conceptual framework of this research is based on an integrative model of the antecedents of sales performance developed by Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, and Ford (1977). Substantive meta-analyses in sales performance research carried out by (Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011) tend to support this model. In their meta-analysis, they divided the determinants of sales performance conceptualized in the Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, and Ford (1977) model into six main categories: role perceptions, aptitude, skill level, motivation, personal factors, and organizational and environmental.

Literature Review

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leaders are reliable. Ethical leaders handle their staff decently and normally. These people were regarded as fair and ethical, caring for their sales staff, and advancing society. Honest administrators, not just ethical people who influence others, are respected. The personality of an ethical leader might symbolize character. According to Brown and Trevino (2006), Ethical Leaders provide regulating nodes and indications to make employees morally responsible.

According to Lawton and Páez (2015), research has changed from investigating ethical leadership to regulating language, emphasizing how leaders may use positive, descriptive language to shape their management styles and make moral judgments. A meta-analysis found moral leaders just, honest, and principled. Bedi et al. (2016) claim that such Figures use rewards, and penalties, through information to shape the morals of their followers.

Sharif and Scandura (2014) say under pressure and examination. Ethics-based leadership builds trust and reduces ambiguity. Studies have examined how moral leadership influences organizational processes and outcomes. The social learning theory of Bandura (1986) asserts that people see organizational leaders as moral role models. Executive ethics affected staff conduct and organizational morale (Bedi et al., 2016). Leading ethically is essential throughout organizational change.

The existing body of study on a close connection between ethical leadership and job efficiency, specifically in the context of marketing efficiency, has yielded varied outcomes, understanding the impacts of ethical leadership requires an understanding of the mediating variables effect.

Ethical Sales Leadership

Ethical sales leadership must establish expectations to ensure staff ethics. The objective of this study is to examine the way sales leadership manifests the enthusiasm and willingness of salespeople to provide outstanding services to clients. Anser et al. (2021) define ethical leadership as demonstrating justice via acts and social repercussions and inspiring followers to do the same. According to Stouten et al. (2010), the Conservation of Resource (COR) theory, shows the association between ethical sales leadership, a manager's aggressive conduct, and service renewal efficacy. Ethical sales leadership helps salespeople adopt the COR method to earn, keep, and use resources. Sales leaders with high

morals assist their teams in identifying better business-to-business customer resources like distributors and retailers for sales recovery.

According to Enwereuzor et al. (2021), unpleasant office environments contribute to workplace animosity, ethical leaders may provide a good learning environment in addition to monitoring salespeople's activities. As per the research by Stouten et al. (2010), analytical results show that managers' hostility diminishes with ethical leadership, which accelerates workplace improvement.

Customer Orientation

Saxe and Weitz (1982) propose that the idea of client orientation evaluates the extent to which salespeople are equipped to assist customers in identifying their needs and promoting sales presentations that meet those needs.

Customer Orientation is best maintained by the salesman in the field. The person using marketing idea books does it well. Salespeople kept high-pressure selling and manipulation away from customers.

According to Boles et al. (2001) found that salesperson orientation improves customer orientation, organizational culture, and environment. Selling and consumer orientation consider human, organizational, and managerial results. The researchers showed that male consumers' attributes don't match customer-focused behavior (O'Hara et al., 1991; Pettijohn et al., 1997; Siguaw & Honeycutt, 1995). Salespeople are more customer-focused as they become older, but longevity has mixed consequences.

Salesperson Behavior performance

Behavior performance measures how well salespeople accomplish their jobs (Babakus et al., 1996). The performance measure assumes salespeople have more control over their actions than their results. It includes negotiating support, marketing, technical competence, adaptive selling, collaboration, and proposal demonstration.

Multiple facets of behavioral effectiveness were studied. The researchers state that top sales executives assess proficiency and assurance, perform a demonstration of proposals, provide information, and establish budgetary restrictions (Cravens et al., 1993) and others conducted a study on the behavior-based marketing supervisory oversight of salesmen (Oliver & Anderson, 1994).

Sales strategy, technical competence, and adaptive selling are crucial to salesman-customer interactions in many marketing ecosystems. Information gathering, profit expenses, and scheme presentations were the research's main objectives.

The formulation of Hypothesis and Model Development

Ethical Leadership and Salesforce Customer Orientation.

The Leader's personality strongly influences customer orientation. Leadership principles and value-sharing concepts directly affect employee behavior (Kennedy et al., 2003).

A comprehensive review by Kirca (2005) found that solely managerial efforts can establish a customer-focused setting. Harris and Ogbonna (2001) considered customer-oriented governance helpful for managers. O'Hara et al. (1991) say ethical leadership demands confidence and backing through the customer-focused strategy that helps sales managers build their abilities and improve salesperson relationships. According to Lio and Subramony (2008), Customers followed a customer-focused sales leadership style.

Another investigation identified members usually obey the Boss for moral purposes. Otherwise, people won't adhere to the leader they trust, hence ethical leadership increases customer orientation (Schwepker & Good, 2004). Following the standard, moral managers purposefully deny those who perform immoral job methods. The moral Manager could teach by showing if they care regarding individuals. Finally, according to (Kennedy et al., 2003), bosses care about the success of colleagues while standing together using their support, which increases customer orientation. According to scientific pieces of evidence, unethical salesmen are less customer-focused (Howe et al., 1994).

The salespeople's ethical behavior is stimulated by Ethical leaders to prioritize workers' best interests. These were crucial for a customer-focused atmosphere as, by example, they lead. Salespeople, like ethical leaders, expect enhanced customer-oriented behavior when the sales leader creates an open, reassuring work environment that is cooperative, admirable, and joint-relied operations. Schwepker Jr. (2003) posited that the establishment of ethical sales leadership has been

identified as promoting a marketing team that is oriented towards meeting the needs and demands of customers. Therefore, we have put forth the proposition that.

H1 There is a positive influence of ethical sales leadership on customer orientation in the business-to-business markets of Pakistan.

Customer-orientation Behaviors and Sales Performance

To improve customer experience researchers found that marketers who prioritize customer wants and preferences are more willing to invest in them and adopt different methods (Periatt et al., 2004). Thus, salespeople who prioritize customer happiness work harder to identify possible issues and provide solutions that satisfy customers.

Customer-centric mindsets and actions have been shown to enhance the efficiency of sales in several studies on selling (Homburg et al., 2011; Korschun et al., 2013).

Some studies found no association between customer-focused sales activity and success. The foregoing reason, client satisfaction and performance of marketers might be impacted by their client-centric actions (Franke & Park, 2006; Terho et al., 2015). Hence, we proposed that.

H2 There is a positive impact of customer orientation on salesperson behavior performance in the business-to-business markets in Pakistan.

Ethical leadership and salesperson performance

Salespeople who lead ethically are always responsible. The present study sought to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and worker productivity, with a particular focus on domains outside the realm of financial promotion. According to a study conducted by Babakus et al. (1996), it has been found that leaders who exhibit ethical behavior could inspire and motivate individuals to strive for higher levels of performance and enhance productivity within the workplace.

Researchers claim moral managers may motivate staff to work harder (Piccolo et al., 2010). According to the findings of Liu et al. (2013), a study was conducted to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and employee efficiency within leader-follower pairs in a Chinese industrial business. The results of the study revealed a favorable connection between ethical leadership and employee efficiency; however, the multivariate statistical computation did not identify an important link.

Ethical leadership improved operational efficiency among Chinese financial institution staff members (Bouckennooghe, Zafar, & Usman, 2015). According to a study conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2010), it has been found that several factors mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and job performance. These factors include intellectual wealth, leader-member exchange, confidence in oneself, and recognition of the firm. The study suggests that these variables play a significant role in influencing the impact of ethical leadership on job performance.

A positive relationship between moral leadership and work performance was found in the most recent systematic literature review (Bedi et al., 2015). These observations suggest the following research hypothesis.

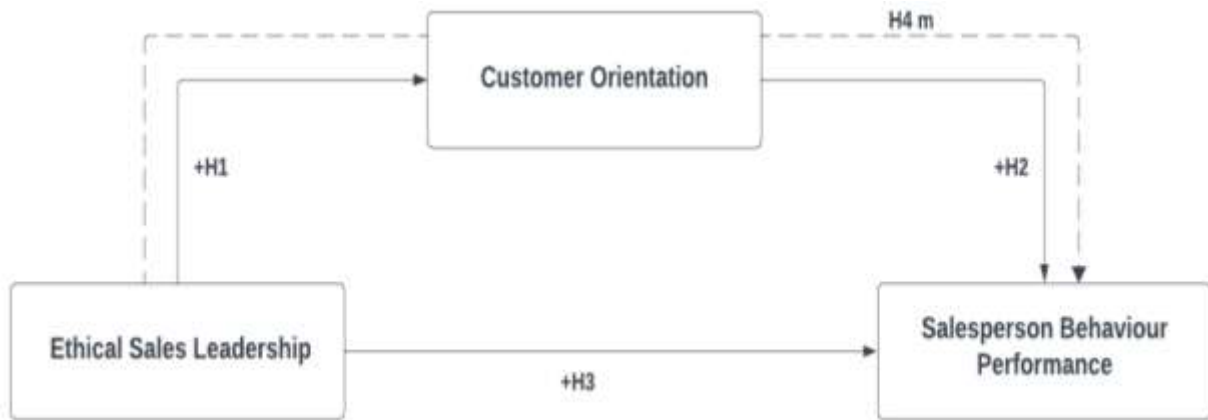
H3: There is a positive relationship between sales managers' use of ethical leadership behaviors and salesperson behavior performance.

Indirect effect of customer Orientation on Ethical Sales leadership and salesperson behavior performance.

According to one research, in Pakistan's business-to-business marketplaces, there is a partial mediation impact of customer orientation between ethical sales leadership and salesperson behavior performance. Role conflict functioned as a complete mediator, whereas customer orientation and role conflict were used and evaluated as parallel mediators (Brohi, 2023).

Hence, we propose that.

H4: there is a mediation effect of customer orientation between ethical sales leadership and salesperson behavior performance.



Source: Research model developed by the authors.

Figure: 1

Target Population, Research Sample, and Sampling Technique

I examined the number of registered firms in various industries in Pakistan on the Trade and Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) website. Later, corporate addresses and phone numbers were examined, and consent was requested by phone.

People were emailed a purposive sample Google form questionnaire during COVID-19. The outbreak restricted physical access, making the questionnaire impossible. The respondents were sales managers—a cross-sectional study. People contributed data from August 2019 until November 2020.

The research examined 430 Pakistani B2B sales managers. Pakistanis generally. This B2B Company’s Google form selected the respondent. The Saunders et al. (2009) sampling table suggests 384 samples for larger populations or when the population is unknown to maintain a 5% margin of error.

Arbuckle (2010) counted observations using SPSS and Smart PLS 3. Originally, 200 was the limit. Build a trustworthy model with 200 representative people. Hofmann and Nieberg (2018) observed that increased confidence intervals need larger samples. Arbuckle (2010) suggests a 200-sample Smart PLS analysis initially. The literature supports the 1970 Krejcie and Morgan equations for determining sample size in large populations, as Alkindy et al. (2016) found.

Variables, operational definitions with reference, and number of items.

Variable	Operational definition	Items	Reference
Ethical Leadership	ethical leaders partake in normatively appropriate behavior toward followers.	10	(Brown et al., 2005)
Customer Orientation	a work value that captures the extent to which employees’ job perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors are guided by an enduring belief in the importance of customer satisfaction.	05	(Perrewe’ et al. 2004)
Behavior Sales Performance	It involves the behavioral activities and strategies pursued by salespeople in carrying out their sales role.	04	(Miao & Evans 2007)

Respondents’ demographic profile

The data was collected from 430 respondents and 411 respondents represented males while just 19 mentioned females. This means that most of the selling job is done by males with a valid percentage of 95. The age contributed from 31 years to 40 years as the highest participation with a percentage of 46% and 198 respondents out of 430 respondents. The education descriptive variable shows that most of the respondents with the highest participation rate in this sales survey were master's degree holders with a 300 value. This means that the salespeople are highly qualified people. The sales experience

variable shows that most of the participants have more than 8 years' experience of in sales. This means that are performing great experience with the number 275 people out of 430 people with 64 valid percent. In terms of designation. Most of the respondents were field sales officers. These are people who directly interact with the customers i.e. distributors and retailers and Business to business Contexts of Pakistan. They represented 40 percent of the sample with 172 values out of 430 people. The last demographic variable was job sector information. The manufacturing sector surpassed all the other sectors in this data collection survey. They represented 45.6 percent out of 100. The detail of the information is shown in Table 01.

Table 01 Demographic Analysis		N=430	
Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	411	95%
	Female	19	05%
Age	20-30	96	22.3%
	31-40	198	46%
	41-50	100	23.3%
	51 years and above	36	8.4%
Education	Intermediate	07	1.6%
	Graduate	30	7%
	Masters	300	69.8%
	MS/MPhil/PhD	93	21.6%
Sales Experience	Last than one year	47	10.9%
	1-3 years	41	9.5%
	4-5 years	37	8.6%
	6-8 years	30	7%
	More than eight years	275	64%
Designations	Area Sales Managers	88	20%
	Branding Executive	31	8%
	Field Sales Executives (FSE)	07	1 %
	Field Sales Officers (FSO)	172	40%
	Marketing Development Officer	52	13%
	Marketing Executives	05	1 %
	Managers Planning & Logistics	15	3 %
	(RSM) Regional Sales Managers	22	5 %
Sales Managers	38	9 %	
Job Sector	Government Sector	16	3.7%
	Manufacturing Sector	196	45.6%
	Nonprofit Industry	23	5.3%
	Service Sector	95	22.1%
	Wholesaling Sector	100	23.3%

Analysis and results

According to Sarstedt et al. (2021), this connection is reflected in the outer loadings. For exploratory study, the value of Outer loadings should be 0.40 or greater than 0.40, but a value of 0.70 or more is preferred to emphasize its significance (Hair et al., 2021). The connection between the measured indicator variables and the reflecting construct is what it is. Indicators with loadings greater than 0.70 show that the construct accounts for more than half of the variation in the data. To ensure item dependability, this loading level is deemed acceptable.

According to Hair et al. (2021), there is an additional guideline about the outer loadings. Whether some items load over the 0.40 threshold and below the 0.70 threshold, it is recommended to eliminate the item in question and see whether the composite reliability value and average variance extracted increase. The ethical leadership items ES1, ES2, ES3, ES6, and ES8 were taken out of this study because their loading value was between 0.70 and 0.40, which is the lower and upper limits. According to Hair et al. (2021), it not only enhanced the average variance extracted but also ensured that the content validity of the scale was unaffected by the composite reliability score.

Five of the 10 ethical leadership criteria were eliminated after a thorough analysis. According to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021), the other items—ES4, ES5, ES7, ES9, and ES10—were subjected to further examination. If any of the other items' outer loading falls below the 0.40 criterion, they will be removed.

Customer orientation was another crucial factor in the measuring methodology. Along with being an intermediary, this variable is part of the five-item assessment framework. The information appears in Table C. Every item was examined in more depth. With an exterior loading value of 0.668 for CO2 and 0.636 for CO3, these items are loaded externally. The elements, namely CO2 and CO3, listed in the table, have outer loading values that are below the threshold level of 0.70 loading. Nevertheless, these items were kept as their removal does not contribute to enhancing the overall value of average variance extracted and composite reliability (Hair et al., 2021). All the outer loading values were also not below the threshold level of 0.40 (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2021). Ultimately, the behavior of the Dependent Variable in terms of sales success has four distinct elements. That is, BSP1, BSP2, BSP3, and BSP4. All goods satisfy the condition of having a value over 0.70, so no items were removed from the behavior sales performance. All objects were kept. Details are shown in the below table.

Construct	Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (CR)*	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**
Ethical Sales Leadership	ES4	0.724	0.769	0.844	0.520
	ES5	0.724			
	ES7	0.645			
	ES9	0.756			
	ES10	0.752			
Customer Orientation	CO1	0.711	0.754	0.834	0.505
	CO2	0.668			
	CO3	0.636			
	CO4	0.726			
	CO5	0.800			
Behavior Salesperson Performance	BP1	0.878	0.898	0.929	0.767
	BP2	0.884			
	BP3	0.912			
	BP4	0.825			

(CR)*Composite Reliability = Square of the summation of the factor loading/ (square of the summation of factor loading) + (square of the summation of the error variance)

(AVE)** Average Variance Extracted = summation of the square of the factor loadings/ (summation of the square of the factor loading) + (summation of the error variances).

Table 02

According to the requirements of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), it is expected that the value of Cronbach's alpha should exceed 0.700. According to the findings presented in Table 2, it is evident that the reliability of all the constructs proposed in the study falls within the range of 0.754-0.898. These values surpass the required threshold. The average variance extracted (AVE), which indicates the extent to which convergent validity is present, ranged from 0.505 to 0.767. These values surpass the minimum threshold of 0.500. The composite reliability of all constructs, namely English as a Second Language (ESL), Communication Skills (CO), and Business Speaking Proficiency (BSP), exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.700, as indicated by their respective values of 0.844, 0.834, and 0.929. Based on our comprehensive analysis, it is evident that the loading values associated with all measurements have demonstrated validity and reliability.

Discriminant validity

The degree to which the concept can be discerned through empirical means in comparison to analogous constructs is denoted. Additionally, the assessment of whether the construct effectively captures the intended variable is considered. The HTMT method, as introduced by Henseler et al.

(2015), is a novel approach in the field of research. This method aims to quantify the strength of the correlation between two traits. The HTMT measure is conceptually explained as the median amount of component values for various designs, as opposed to the mathematical median of the normal association for items measuring the same concept. According to existing literature, it has been established that higher values of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) can potentially signal issues about discriminant validity. The suggested threshold for the cutoff is typically set at 0.90, as advocated by several scholars in the field (Kline, 2011). However, it is worth noting that certain authors have proposed lower values, such as 0.85, as an alternative criterion.

Table 03 HTMT

	Behavior Sales Performance	Customer Orientation	Ethical Sales Leadership
Behavior Sales Performance			
Customer Orientation	0.490		
Ethical Sales Leadership	0.420	0.558	

The study findings indicate that all the measures reported in the HTMT analysis exhibit values below 0.85. These values fall below the threshold level recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). The ratios indicate that the level of validity is deemed acceptable for deriving output from the measures.

PLS-SEM Path Analysis

A range of models are analyzed using a statistical approach called structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine intricate correlations between variables. One such approach involves the use of two distinct models, namely the Inner and Outer models. These models serve as integral components within the SEM framework, facilitating the examination of latent constructs and their corresponding observed indicators. The Inner model, also referred to as the structural model, focuses on the underlying theoretical relationships between latent variables. The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively examine and analyze both the immediate and long-term effects of the latent constructs on each other.

By specifying the structural relationships, researchers can gain insights into the inner model, also referred to as the structural model, which captures the underlying relationships among latent variables.

On the other hand, the outer model focuses on elucidating the associations between latent variables and the observed indicators that measure them. (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Elucidated the nomenclature "evaluation simulation" instead. A combined approach in the Smart PLS 3 program serves as an example of how the two concepts were integrated.

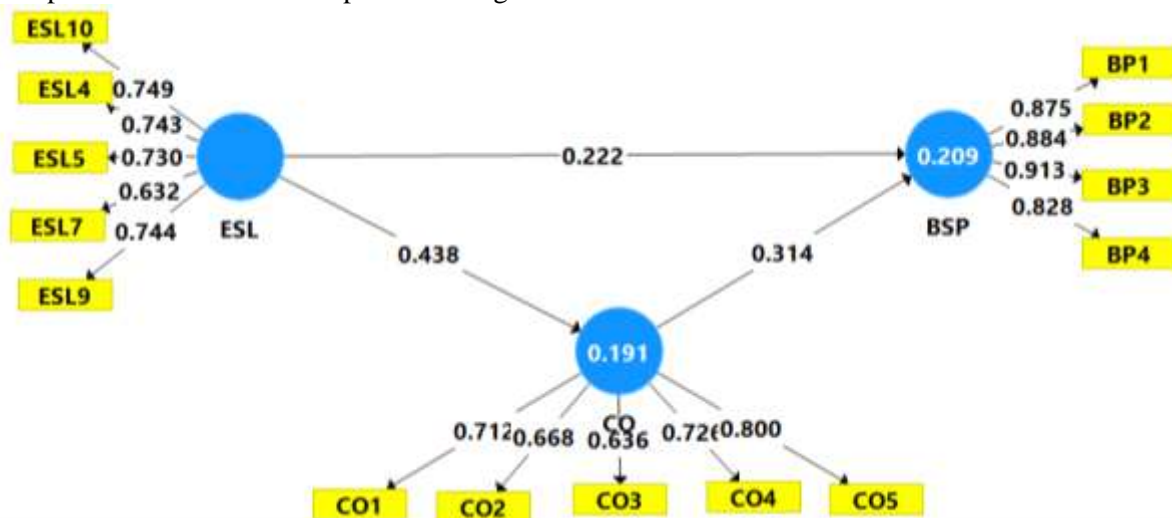


Figure 02: Measurement model and structural model

The partial least squares - structural equation modeling measure in question, as indicated by Hair et al. (2021), is widely recognized as the predominant approach for evaluating structural models

within the framework. The statement quantifies the extent of variability or dispersion within each dataset. The influence of exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variable was elucidated through a question of how the coefficients within an analytical model encapsulate the amalgamated. The factor of drive, or R square, measures how much the exogenous factors explain the variability in the endogenous factors. A value that approaches 1 signifies a greater proportion of the variability in the dependent variable being elucidated by the independent variable(s). The measure in question is a dimensionless metric that spans from 0 to 1.

According to Hair et al. (2021), an R square value of 0.75 suggests a strong coefficient of determination, whereas 0.50 implies a moderate coefficient. According to their study, 0.25 indicates a poor coefficient of determination. In the present study, the R Square value of the Behavior Sales Performance construct assumes a pivotal role as the dependent variable within the structural model. The predictors of interest in this study are ethical sales leadership and customer orientation. The present study examines the combined influence of two predictors on sales performance behavior, yielding a significant R Square value of 0.209. The present study examines the relationship between ethical sales leadership and customer orientation as predictors of behavior sales performance. Specifically, we investigate the extent to which these variables contribute to changes in behavior sales performance, expressed as a percentage. Our findings indicate that a 20.9% change in behavior sales performance can be attributed to the combined influence of ethical sales leadership and customer orientation. It is important to note that this change is observed within the endogenous variable, namely the behavior sales performance construct. According to Hair et al. (2021), there is evidence of a poor regression effect when examining the influence on sales performance.

Customer orientation, which is predicted by moral sales leadership, is the second endogenous variable in this structural model. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for the variable representing customer orientation is estimated to be 0.191. The second endogenous variable, which is the customer orientation construct, experienced a 19.1% change because of ethical sales leadership. This change is expressed in percentage terms. According to Hair et al. (2021), a study was conducted to examine the impact of a weak regression effect on Customer Orientation. The reports depicted in Figure 1 above are presented for observation and analysis.

Table 4 provides further support for the conducted path analysis by presenting essential statistical measures, including the P-value, path coefficients, and T-statistic values. The findings of this study indicate a positive relationship between Ethical Sales Leadership and Customer Orientation ($\beta= 0.438$, P-value= 0.000). Additionally, it was observed that Customer Orientation has an indirect effect on Behavior Sales Performance ($\beta= 0.314$, P-value= 0.000). Furthermore, the results demonstrate that Ethical Sales Leadership significantly influences Behavior Sales Performance ($\beta= 0.222$, P-value= 0.000). The findings of this study provide support for hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, respectively.

Path coefficient and Hypotheses testing

		Original	Sample	Standard	T	Statistics	P Values	Hypothesis
		Sample (O)	Mean (M)	Deviation	(O/STDEV)			Test
				(STDEV)				
ESL	->	0.438	0.442	0.045	9.742		0.000	Supported
CO	->	0.314	0.315	0.050	6.253		0.000	Supported
BSP								
ESL	->	0.222	0.226	0.050	4.415		0.000	Supported
BSP								

Mediation analysis: Customer orientation's indirect impact on the salesperson behavior performance and ethical sales leadership.

The mediator variable is vital to establishing a causal link between the predecessor and consequent factors. The comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the predictor variable

and the outcome variable greatly relies on the elucidation of the causal mechanisms that underlie their relationship. The following table shows the mediators' specific indirect effects, i.e., Customer Orientation.

Indirect Path

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
ESL -> CO - > BSP	0.071	0.073	0.024	2.925	0.004

With t-statistics of 2.925 and a path coefficient of 0.071 over the key threshold of 1.96, the Mediation hypothesis 04 is validated. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the computed p-value of 0.004 is below the established statistical threshold of 0.05. Based on the principles, it may be deduced that in Pakistan's B2B markets, the existence of customer orientation acts as a mediator between moral sales leadership and the performance of salespeople's conduct. The present study employs a partial mediation model, as evidenced by the variance accounted for (VAF) value of 65%. This falls within the accepted range of 20% to 80% as suggested by Hair et al. (2021). This conclusion is supported by the observed t-statistics and p-value. The findings of this study provide support for or lend credence to Hypothesis Four. The variable allele frequency (VAF) can be calculated using the formula: $VAF = (0.435 \cdot 0.163) / (0.435 \cdot 0.163 + 0.037)$. This equation determines the proportion of the variable allele in each population. In this specific case, the resulting VAF is 0.65, which can be expressed as a percentage by multiplying it by 100, resulting in a VAF of 65%.

Conclusion and discussion

To examine the varying perspectives of Business-to-Business employees regarding their immediate supervisors and subsequently assess the potential influence on their salesperson behavior performance was the objective of the present study. The results of the study provide thoughts experienced by business-to-business (B2B) professionals within their respective organizations, particularly in the context of Pakistan. To investigate the notable correlation between Ethical Sales Leadership, Customer Orientation, and Salesperson Behavior performance among business-to-business employees who participated voluntarily. To achieve the intended objective, a quantitative methodology was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires that were developed based on previous research and existing literature. The findings were computed utilizing the (PLS-SEM) technique.

The existing body of knowledge regarding leadership philosophies and their corresponding mediating elements is limited. However, Ingram et al. (2005) assert that leaders have the potential to exert a substantial influence on the extent of successful sales attained by their respective organizations. The present study sought to examine a leadership approach that has the potential to facilitate the development of an ethically conscious sales force, while simultaneously fostering enduring customer relationships. Consequently, it can be inferred that salespeople may encounter less difficulty in cultivating trusting relationships with their clients. According to the findings of Trevino and Nelson (2021), there is evidence to suggest that businesses with a strong moral foundation tend to experience financial benefits. Specifically, these businesses have been observed to generate higher sales revenue, incur lower operational costs, and potentially command higher prices for their products and services. The findings of this study indicate that there may be potential advantages for Pakistani business-to-business salespeople in relation to Perceived Ethical Sales Leadership behavior.

The results of the empirical analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive association among all the variables included in the study. Based on the findings of our analysis, it has been determined that customer orientation plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between ethical sales leadership and salesperson behavior performance. This mediation effect is observed to be positive and significant, suggesting that customer orientation acts as a partial mediator in this relationship.

Theoretical implications

The comprehension of the ethical leadership theory is most effectively achieved using this research endeavor. Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal (2011) have conducted studies that provide empirical evidence supporting a robust association between supervisory leadership and job performance within the sales domain. In a similar vein, a direct correlation has been observed between ethical sales

leadership and the performance of salespersons, as indicated by findings from studies on ethical leadership in the field.

The findings suggest that the impact of ethical leadership on salesperson behavior and performance is not direct, but rather operates through intermediary factors, specifically the customer orientations exhibited by subordinates.

Prior research has indicated that leaders who prioritize ethics demonstrate a genuine concern for the well-being of their subordinates, thereby serving as positive role models. Based on empirical evidence, it has been established that there exists a positive correlation between the perception of ethical sales leadership and the degree of customer orientation. The statement provides support for hypothesis H1 as posited in the present research. Kennedy et al. (2003) found that subordinates who perceive their leaders as genuinely concerned about their well-being are more likely to align themselves closely with their leaders in various aspects. The subordinates exhibit a greater inclination towards customer orientation when making decisions with distributors and retailers in the specific context of business-to-business interactions in Pakistan

Another study that provides additional support for the findings presented in hypothesis H1 was conducted by Schwepker Jr (2003). In this study, Schwepker Jr asserts that the effectiveness of a salesforce in catering to customer needs and wants can be enhanced by adopting a customer-oriented culture. This aligns with the underlying principles of ethical leadership, wherein the satisfaction of customers, including distributors and retailers, is considered a fundamental requirement for achieving success. Numerous theories have been proposed to explain the concept of leadership. However, this study aims to shed light on the influence of ethical sales leadership on the behavior and performance of salespersons. This impact can be observed both directly and indirectly, with the latter being mediated by customer orientation. The findings of this research align with hypotheses H2 and H3, specifically within the context of business-to-business marketing in Pakistan.

The salesperson in Pakistan's business-to-business markets demonstrates a heightened commitment to comprehending the needs of their customers. This dedication is exemplified through their adherence to the principles of customer orientation in their salesperson behavior. The salesperson, through prior knowledge, possesses an understanding of the potential challenges encountered by customers, which is derived from an analysis of the demands expressed by customers in their previous purchasing records. The extensive theoretical discourse presented herein lends support to the hypothesis (H4) posited in the context of this research endeavor.

Managerial implications

Sales managers who prioritize ethical conduct are encouraged to openly express their viewpoints about job-related matters, particularly those concerning ethics. Additionally, they are advised to actively listen to their employees, ensuring that their perspectives are taken into consideration during discussions surrounding decision-making processes. This approach aims to safeguard the well-being and best interests of employees. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that ethical managers bear the responsibility of upholding ethical standards in the processes of selection, recruitment, and termination of employees. Deviating from these standards can result in adverse repercussions for the organization. The attainment of desired outcomes can be facilitated through the implementation of a well-structured reward system, meticulously devised by sales managers.

Based on the findings of Piercy, Cravens, and Lane (2009), it can be inferred that there exists a relationship between the behavior performance of salespersons and their outcome performance. The potential for enhancing the salesperson's performance may be realized through the adoption of transactional and ethical sales leadership by sales leaders or managers. The correlation between senior individuals occupying sales positions within an organization and the presence of higher customer orientation and improved salesperson behavior performance has been observed. The observed phenomenon can be attributed to the presence of control variables. However, it has been observed that experienced salespeople may exhibit lower levels of behavioral performance.

Recommendations, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

It is important to acknowledge that every research endeavor is inherently bound by certain limitations. The present research thesis, like any study, is not without its limitations. However, it is important to note that these limitations can serve as valuable opportunities for future research endeavors. The research thesis encompasses a comprehensive model that incorporates mediators, specifically role conflict and customer orientation, which are applied within the context of Pakistan, with a particular

focus on business-to-business markets. Comprehensive variables relevant to the antecedents and effects of Ethical Sales Leadership and the performance of salesperson conduct are absent from the existing model. In the context of Pakistan, the current research investigates other dimensions that might be useful predictors and outcomes for ethical sales leadership. These constructs include social selling, ethical conflict, and turnover intentions. By incorporating these constructs, we aim to enhance our understanding of the multifaceted nature of ethical sales leadership and its implications in the Pakistani business environment.

The measurement of the outcomes of ethical sales leadership entails evaluating the perceptions of sales personnel regarding their superiors' adherence to ethical sales leadership practices. If the measurement criteria for ethical sales leadership are altered, it is plausible that the outcome could exhibit variation. In contrast, it is worth noting that the motivation driving salesperson behavior stems from their subjective interpretation of reality, which is influenced by the ethical leadership behavior exhibited by their supervisors. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies incorporate objective metrics of sales performance to facilitate accurate comparisons with self-reported sales performance measurements. Self-assessed measurements of sales performance are consistently employed in various contexts.

The examination of the capability position of ethical sales leadership within the sales force is a subject that warrants further investigation in future studies. To enhance ethical sales leadership within the sales force, it is imperative to consider the following inquiries for future investigation. The potential influence of a customer's perception regarding an organization's ethical performance on their purchase decisions from said organization, as well as the subsequent impact on potential customers' inclination towards establishing long-term relationships with ethical sales managers, warrants investigation.

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