

The Role Of Organizational Commitment In Mediating The Influence Of Ethical Leadership On Employee Engagement: Evidence From Public Organizations In Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the direct influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement, and the role of organizational commitment in mediating the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement. This research was conducted on public organizations in Indonesia. The study population was all employees in the Regional Secretariat of Southeast Sulawesi Province totaling 626 people. Determination of the sample using the Slovin formula with a precision of 5%, thus the research sample amounted to 244 respondents. Data collection using questionnaires and research data were analyzed using smart PLS ver 3. Research results: ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment, organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, and organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on mediating the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement, and the value of the mediation path coefficient is greater than the direct influence thus. The results of the study also show that employees who form a long-term relationship with their workplace will be involved in the activities of their work units and involved in organizational activities. Leadership behavior changes the level of commitment of followers; hence, the commitment to be a mediator between leadership style and employee behavior.

Keyword: Ethics Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Employee Engagement.

1. Introduction

Employee engagement is critical but many organizations ignore its effect on organizational success (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). Employee engagement can be a powerful organizational lever to increase employee productivity and improve various measures of organizational performance (Richman et al., 2008). Given the importance of employee engagement, organizational leaders need to understand the factors that contribute to employee engagement. Kahn, (2010) shows that employee engagement is influenced by psychological conditions such as: availability, meaningfulness, and security. The study of Schaufeli & Bakker, (2010)

shows that employee engagement is influenced by fairness, the suitability of values between job and personal demands. principles, rewards and recognition, and control of work. Meanwhile, the study of Macey & Schneider, (2008) concludes that employee engagement is influenced by personal characteristics, leadership, and work attributes. The study of Ashfaq et al., (2021) also examines the influence of ethical leadership on the engagement of karyawan.

One aspect that can improve employee behavior to engage in their work is a leadership role. The importance of managerial ethics from a normative perspective largely determines what

managers should do in particular on public organizations or how they should behave (Hart, 1993), for example, proposes that managers in public organizations should be careful, trustworthy, and considerate, and their actions should be consistent with public values and interests. Ethical leadership style is essential in encouraging ethical behavior in the workplace. While transmitting institutional ethical values (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Thus, public sector organizations rely on leadership to build and support an ethical climate (West et al., 2004).

The role of the leader is recognized in actively shaping organizations to be more ethics-oriented (Schaubroeck & Shao, 2012). Some studies have found that ethical leadership increases followers' awareness and moral judgment (Resick et al., 2011), fosters dedication, optimism, initiative, extra effort, altruism, better work attitudes and the presence of followers' willingness to help others with work-related issues (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven, 2010). The impact of ethical leadership on follower behavior is shown to have broader consequences, helping to reduce counterproductive and unethical behavior (Huberts et al., 2007).

According to Hunt et al., (1985) organizational commitment describes employee interest and connection to the organization. Committed employees identify themselves with the goals and objectives of their organization and strive for their association with the organization to continue their membership. Research by Ashfaq et al., (2021) also reveals that organizations, as well as individuals, benefit from the high commitment of employees. Organizational commitment is associated with increased employee engagement (Hunt et al., 1985).

The current priority of public organizations is not only improving services but also increasing employee engagement. Employee engagement can be evidenced by their attitudes, actions, and efforts towards the organization, or can be translated as their commitment. Organizational support in the form of employee welfare and appreciating contributions from employees can increase employee productive contributions and produce more engaged employees (Eisenberger et al., 2010). Employees with low

perceived organizational support are more skeptical. Conversely, when perceived organizational support is high, employees find their work environment more acceptable and show more engagement in the work (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Research by Ruslan et al., (2019) found that organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.

Organizational commitment in addition to influencing employee engagement, is also influenced by ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is essential in encouraging ethical behavior in the workplace (Ashfaq et al., 2021). Ethical leadership fosters employee commitment to the organization (Vitell & Singhapakdi, 2008). Ethical leadership in addition to increasing willingness to report unethical behavior, ethical leadership can influence employee attitudes in a favorable way. Brown et al., (2005) suggest that ethical leaders tend to have a positive effect on subordinate commitment to the organization. Research by Ashfaq et al., (2021) also found that ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational committees.

Ethical leadership is important to be applied in public organizations, especially for the Provincial Government of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Because the leadership system elected by the people requires leaders to behave ethically in order to gain trust in the community. In addition, ethical leadership is also important to increase awareness for employees to be loyal in carrying out their duties and increase the participation of employees to be involved in their activities and overall organizational activities to improve organizational performance. Thus, it is important that this research be carried out as a reference for local governments to implement ethical leadership in their organizations in order to increase employee awareness and engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ethics Leadership

In the early 1920s, scholars began to pay great attention to leadership styles, focusing on the proper behavior of leaders and the role they played as value transmitters to followers. As a result, the issue of

morality began to be considered a component of transformational leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2003), which led to an extensive literature on ethical leadership. Brown et al., (2005) conceptualize ethical leadership as the influence of the leader on the ethical behavior of followers, and they define it as 'the demonstration of normatively appropriate behavior through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such behavior to followers through two directions: communication, reinforcement, and decision-making'.

In this definition, the leader is understood as a moral person, due to his own personal traits, altruistic character and motivations, and as a moral manager who proactively influences the ethical behavior of his followers (Brown et al., 2005). Over time, another conceptualization of ethical leadership has been provided. Resick et al., (2011) describe ethical leadership as consisting of six different dimensions (character and integrity, ethical awareness, community/people orientation, motivating, encouraging and empowering, and managing ethical accountability). Kalshoven, (2010), instead, use seven dimensions to define ethical leadership: fairness, division of power, role clarification, people-oriented behavior, integrity, ethical guidance, and concern for sustainability.

Scholars have also researched why leaders who behave ethically promote the ethical behavior of their followers. Two theories to describe this process of transmission are the theory of social learning and the theory of social exchange (Brown et al., 2005; Moore, 2020). The theory of social learning Bandura & Walters, (1977) establishes that almost anything can be learned through vicarious learning, which is carried out through a person who acts as a role model and uses rewards and punishments. Observing the behavior of supervisors, employees learn which behaviors their leaders expect from them, and, once implemented, these behaviors are valued and reinforced. The theory of social exchange (Blau, 1968), on the contrary, highlights that the ethical leadership behavior implemented by the supervisor creates a sense of personal obligation in the employee, who must tend to reciprocate the fair and caring treatment received from the supervisor.

2.2. Organizational Commitment

According to Allen & Meyer, (2000) that organizational commitment can be defined generally as a psychological relationship between the employee and his organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization. Organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies his or her goals as well as his or her desire with a particular organization to maintain membership in the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2018).

Commitment represents the power of individual identification with and engagement in the organization. It is a concept that has played an important role in the philosophy of HRM. Guest, (1987) suggests that HRM policies are designed to maximize organizational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work. Beer et al., (1984) identify commitment in their concept of HRM as a key dimension because it can not only generate more loyalty and better performance for the organization, but also in self-esteem, dignity, psychological engagement, and individual identity.

Appelbaum et al., (2000) reveal that organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct that reflects the worker: identification with the organization (loyalty), attachment to the organization (intention to stay), and willingness to expend effort on the name of the organization (discretionary effort). 'An alternative, although a closely related definition of commitment emphasizes the importance of behaviour in creating commitment. Three behavioral traits are important in tying individuals to their actions: the visibility of the action, the extent to which the outcome is irrevocable, and the extent to which the person performs the action voluntarily. Commitment refers to attachment and loyalty. It is related to the feelings of individuals about their organization. Mowday, (1998) states that it is characterized by an emotional attachment to one's organization resulting from shared values and interests.

2.3. Employee Engagement

Role theory implies that individuals behave according to the functional, relational and structural features of the social units in which they coexist (Biddle, 2013). Biddle, (1986) asserts, role theory concerns one of the most important features of social life, patterns of behavior or a typical role. It explains the role by assuming that people are members of a social position and have expectations for their own behavior and that of others. As a conceptual lens, role theory helps to systematically regulate their assumptions with regard to how individual roles in groups are assumed and evolved to form interpersonal interactions (Biddle, 2013). In a preliminary study, Graen & Ginsburgh, (1977) revealed that "members of an organization get their work done through roles", and that the application of roles acts as a means to organize team-level processes.

Kahn (2010) defines employee engagement as 'the utilization of members of an organization' to play a role in their work; In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during the performance of their roles. Harter et al. (2002) state that engagement is the engagement and satisfaction of the individual with as well as enthusiasm for work. Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as a distinct and unique construct composed of cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Components related to individual roles.

Employee engagement is defined as a state of persistent positive affective-motivational satisfaction in employees characterized by a high level of activation and pleasure (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Employee engagement is defined as the high emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his work, organization, manager, or co-worker which in turn influences to apply additional discretionary efforts to his work (Alfes et al., 2010). Employee engagement as an employee's cognitive, emotional, and individual behavioral state directed to desired organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Engagement as a psychological presence but further states that it involves two important components: attention and absorption. Attention refers to cognitive availability and the amount of time

one spends thinking about roles while absorption means being engrossed in roles and refers to the intensity of one's focus on roles (Rothbard, 2001). Employee engagement as an emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Saks, 2006) and a representation of the level of personal commitment that employees are willing to make or to invest in their work (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. The effect of ethical leadership on employee engagement

Communicating, acting as role models, and rewarding and punishing certain behaviors as primary mechanisms to explain how leaders shape the perceptions, norms, and behaviors of followers (Brown et al., 2005). Regarding the effects of ethical leadership, the literature shows that they are associated with an increased sense of meaning and well-being in the workplace (Avey et al., 2012). Furthermore, ethical leadership seems to be positively related to work engagement (Ahmad et al., 2017; Asif et al., 2019).

The study is based on the predictions of resource conservation theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Conservation of resource theory proposes that people invest resources to attract further, more valuable resources. Conservation of resource theory considers the positive style of a leader as a large organizational resource that increases the energy levels of employees and their efficacy (Salanova et al., 2011). Organizational resources can be considered as the main antecedents that encourage work attachment to employees (Eldor, 2016). In this sense, employees who have an increased level of engagement in the workplace have a tendency to invest the resources at their disposal to achieve results that satisfy them, that is, engagement. Therefore, we can hope that leaders can increase employee engagement by increasing their efficacy by being a source of support for employees. Research by Ashfaq et al. (2021) also found that ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Thus the research hypothesis is:

H1: Ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement

3.2. 3.2. The influence of ethical leadership on organizational commitment

Leadership style is a major factor influencing organizational commitment (Saha et al., 2016). Book et al. (2019) show that there is a strong relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment. There is a lot of literature on the influence of leadership styles and organizational commitment (Bass & Avolio et al., 2004). However, several studies have been published that focus mainly on how the ethical behavior of a leader is related to the level of commitment of employees to the organization. Zhu et al. (2004) proposes that organizational commitment is an important result of ethical leadership. Brown et al. (2005) suggest in their research proposition that ethical leadership behavior tends to contribute to follower job satisfaction, but also tends to contribute to their organizational commitment. Pettijohn et al. (2008) investigated employee perceptions of employer ethical behavior and commitment outcome variables from job satisfaction and turnover. Raymond & Julian (2015) find a relationship between ethical leadership behavior and affective commitment. Previous research has also found that ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Lotfi et al., 2018). Thus the research hypothesis is:
H2: Ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment

3.3. The effect of organizational commitment on employee engagement

Employee engagement is believed to stem from organizational commitment, therefore, employees form long-term relationships with their workplace (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Engagement and energy to work together with the work environment leads to organizational commitment (Jung et al., 2021). Macey & Schneider (2008) argue that motivated employees, when given autonomy, become deeply engaged with their work. Furthermore, in addition to having social influence, leadership also plays a constructive role in increasing

employee engagement (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). According to Steers (1977) committed employees have a strong desire to keep in touch with the organization, since organizational commitment gives rise to positive traits, and it creates a strong impetus to work and contribute to the achievement of goals. Therefore, commitment presupposes that committed employees will expend greater effort on their work and face more engagement (Steers, 1977). Previous research has also found that organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Lotfi et al., 2018). Based on the findings of previous studies, the research hypothesis:

H3: Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.

3.4. The role of organizational commitment in mediating the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement

Leadership behavior changes the level of commitment of followers; hence, commitment becomes a mediator between leadership style and employee behavior (Yousef, 2000). Previous studies have found that organizational commitment to acting as a mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Yousef, 2000). This is done because of ethical leadership as a normatively appropriate demonstration of behavior through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such behavior to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). The clarity maintained by ethical leaders in their expectations, communications, and responsibilities is reciprocated with a more committed and engaged workforce within the organization (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Several studies have supported the importance of ethical leadership and its positive effects on follower behavior outcomes (Iqbal et al., 2020). Similarly, research by Ashfaq et al., (2021) found that organizational commitment plays a positive and significant role in mediating the influence of ethical

leadership on employee engagement. Thus the research hypothesis:

H4: Organizational commitment plays a role in mediating the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement.

4. Measurement and Data

4.1. Measurement

Ethical leadership measurements include: ethical guidance, fairness, leader integrity, caring behavior (Ahmad et al., 2017). Most employees look outside of themselves to ask others for ethical guidance (Trevino, 1986). In the workplace, leaders should be the primary source of such guidance. Justice is seen as an important form of ethical leader behavior. The alignment of justice closest to leadership is the idea of interactional justice and its focus on treating employees with dignity and respect. Integrity, including consistency of actions with values embraced. Caring behavior, showing strong concern from the leadership for ethical and moral values.

Organizational commitment variables with measurements: a) affective commitment, b) continuance commitment, c) normative commitment. This measurement refers to the opinion of Allen & Meyer (2000), Raveendran & Gamage (2019). The measurement of employee engagement refers to the research of Memon et al. (2021), namely: a) Passion, referring to "a high level of energy and mental resilience while working, willingness to invest effort in one's work, and perseverance even in the face of

adversity, b) dedication, referring to "a sense of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge, c) absorption, the employee is fully concentrated and very engrossed in his work, in which time flies quickly and a person has difficulty getting away from work. The collection of research data used questionnaires, with a scale of data measurement using internal data between 1 and 5. A very strong answer with point 5 and a very weak answer with point 1.

4.2. Data

The population in this study was all employees of the Regional Secretariat of Southeast Sulawesi Province which amounted to 626 people. Determination of the sample using the Slovin formula with a precision of 5%, thus the research sample amounted to 244 respondents. The collection of research data used questionnaires, with a scale of data measurement using internal data between 1 and 5. A very strong answer with point 5 and a very weak answer with point 1.

5. Result

Descriptive analysis displays the mean, maximum value, minimum value and standard deviation of each indicator used. The descriptive statistical values contained in Table1 show that all indicators obtain a mean value greater than the standard deviation. This indicates that the current mean value indicates a good representation of the overall data.

Table1: statistic description

	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
X11	4.358	4.25	2.75	5	0.483
X12	4.262	4	3	5	0.436
X13	4.025	4	2.25	5	0.503
X14	3.768	3.75	2	5	0.474
Y11	4.143	4	2	5	0.541
Y12	4.231	4	3	5	0.468
Y13	4.198	4	3	5	0.506
Y21	4.182	4	3	5	0.485
Y22	4.101	4	2.667	5	0.451

Y23	4.127	4	3	5	0.393
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5.2. Inferential Statistics

The outer loadings value as presented in table2 shows that all indicators have an original sample value

greater than 0.5 and smaller p-values 0.05 thus all indicators are able to reflect the variables.

Table2: Outer loading

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X11 <- Ethics Leadership	0.792	0.792	0.031	25.859	0.000
X12 <- Ethics Leadership	0.899	0.900	0.011	80.106	0.000
X13 <- Ethics Leadership	0.712	0.707	0.055	12.862	0.000
X14 <- Ethics Leadership	0.680	0.677	0.045	15.033	0.000
Y11 <- Organizational Commitment	0.603	0.598	0.064	9.402	0.000
Y12 <- Organizational Commitment	0.871	0.871	0.021	41.682	0.000
Y13 <- Organizational Commitment	0.898	0.898	0.013	66.658	0.000
Y21 <- Employee Engagement	0.855	0.855	0.016	54.957	0.000
Y22 <- Employee Engagement	0.837	0.835	0.028	29.802	0.000
Y23 <- Employee Engagement	0.891	0.891	0.018	50.640	0.000

Table 3 shows that the contribution of ethical leadership variables to organizational commitment is 0.427. Meanwhile, the contribution of ethical leadership variables and organizational commitment to employee engagement was 0.614. Meanwhile, the

Q-Square value is 0.778 which reflects that the contribution of ethical leadership variables and the role of organizational commitment variables as mediating variables to employee engagement is 0.778 or with a strong level of closeness.

Table3: R-Square

	R Square
Employee Engagement	0.614
Organizational Commitment	0.427
Q Square (predictive relevance)	0.778

The value of the path coefficient as presented in table 4 shows that the direct influence, namely: ethical leadership on employee engagement, ethical leadership on organizational commitment, and organizational commitment to employee engagement has a positive original sample value and each p-value is smaller by 0.05, then declared significant.

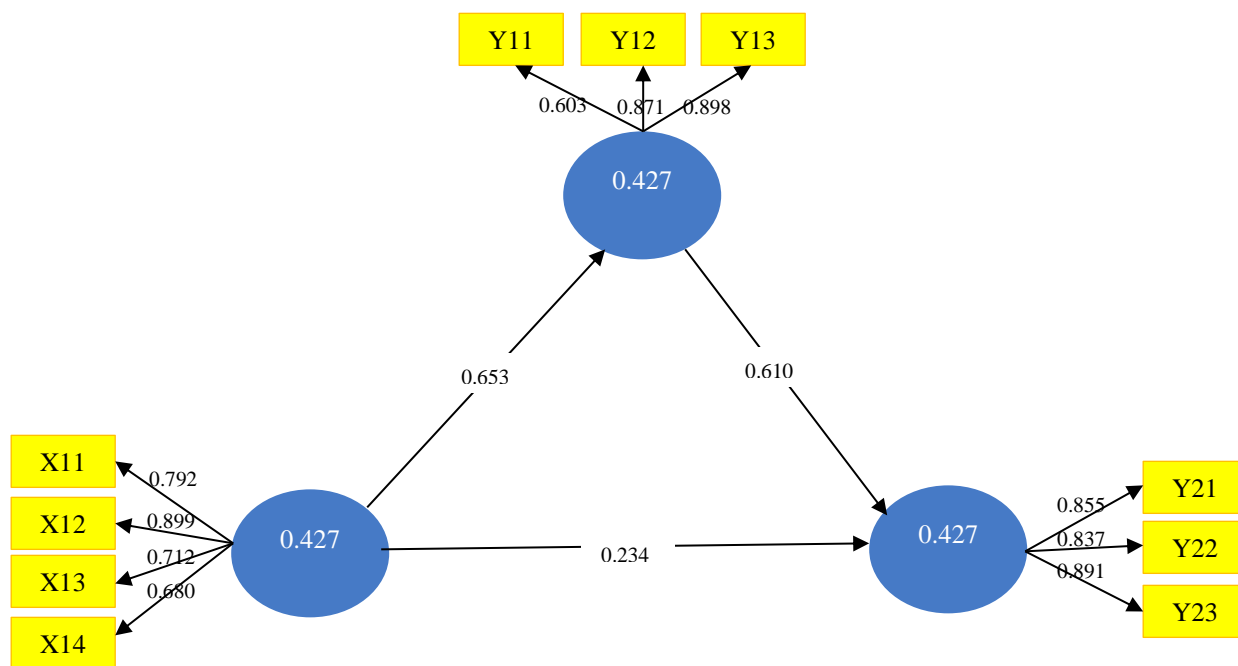
Similarly, the indirect influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement mediated by organizational commitment is also significant and the value of the path coefficient is greater, thus the nature of the mediation variable of organizational commitment is full mediation.

Table4: Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
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Ethics Leadership -> Employee Engagement	0.234	0.233	0.061	3.816	0.000
Ethics Leadership -> Organizational Commitment	0.653	0.655	0.037	17.439	0.000
Organizational Commitment -> Employee Engagement	0.610	0.611	0.051	11.853	0.000
Ethics Leadership -> Organizational Commitment -> Employee Engagement	0.399	0.400	0.041	9.800	0.000

Figure1: Empirical model



6. Discussion

The ethical leadership path coefficient for employee engagement is 0.234 and the p-value is 0.000 or significant at the 1% level. This shows that leaders who communicate with subordinates, act as role models, and reward as the main mechanism to explain how leaders shape perceptions, norms, and behaviors to subordinates (Brown et al., 2005). The influence of ethical leadership is linked to increased sense of meaning and well-being in the workplace (Avey et al., 2012). Ethical leadership seems to be positively related to work engagement (Ahmad et al., 2017; Asif et al., 2019). Conservation of resource

theory considers the positive style of a leader as a large organizational resource that increases the energy levels of employees and their efficacy (Salanova et al., 2011).

The ethical leadership path coefficient for organizational commitment is 0.653 and the p-value is 0.000 or significant at the level of 1%. This shows that leaders who communicate with subordinates, act as role models, are fair, have integrity to keep employees afloat in the organization. Leadership style is a major factor influencing organizational commitment (Saha et al., 2016). Book et al. (2019) show that there is a strong relationship between

leadership style and organizational commitment. The results of this study are supported by previous researchers. Zhu et al. (2004) find that organizational commitment is an important result of ethical leadership. Brown et al. (2005) suggest in their research proposition that ethical leadership behavior tends to contribute to organizational commitment. Raymond & Julian (2015) find a relationship between ethical leadership behavior and affective commitment. Previous research has also found that ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Lotfi et al., 2018).

The coefficient of the path of organizational commitment to employee engagement is 0.610 and the p-value is 0.000 or significant at the level of 1%. This shows that employees who form a long-term relationship with their workplace will be involved in the activities of their work units and involved in organizational activities. This is as supported by the opinion of Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) that employee engagement is believed to stem from organizational commitment, therefore, employees form long-term relationships with their workplace. Engagement and energy to work together with the work environment leads to organizational commitment (Jung et al., 2021). Macey & Schneider (2008) argue that motivated employees, when given autonomy, become deeply engaged with their work. Furthermore, in addition to having social influence, leadership also plays a constructive role in increasing employee engagement (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). According to Steers (1977) committed employees have a strong desire to keep in touch with the organization, since organizational commitment gives rise to positive traits, and it creates a strong impetus to work and contribute to the achievement of goals.

The indirect influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement mediated by the organization's commitment to have a path coefficient of 0.399 and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that leaders who communicate with subordinates, act as role models, are fair, have integrity to make employees stay in the organization, with this the employee will be involved in carrying out his

activities and organizational activities in his work unit. Leadership behavior changes the level of commitment of followers; hence, commitment becomes a mediator between leadership styles and employee behavior (Yousef, 2000). Previous studies expected organizational commitment to act as a mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee engagement (Meyer & Smith, 2000; Yousef, 2000). This is done because of ethical leadership as a normatively appropriate demonstration of behavior through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such behavior to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005).

7. Conclusion

This study examines the influence of ethical leadership on employee engagement mediated by organizational commitment. The results showed that leaders who apply ethical leadership are characterized by communicating with subordinates, acting as role models, fair, having integrity making employees to engage in organizational activities and activities full of dedication and absorption, besides that employees will also stay in the organization. Ethical leadership shapes the perceptions, norms and behavior of subordinates so that subordinates are willing to survive and engage in activities. The results of the study also show that employees who form a long-term relationship with their workplace will be involved in the activities of their work units and involved in organizational activities. Committed employees have a strong desire to stay in touch with the organization, because organizational commitment creates a strong impetus to work and contributes to the achievement of goals. Leadership behavior changes the level of commitment of followers; hence, the commitment to be a mediator between leadership style and employee behavior.

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