

Ethical leadership and Employee turnover Intentions: mediated by occupational stress and well-being and moderated by Work-life Balance in India's Hospitality Sector

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Article History:

Received: 10-11-2024

Revised: 12-12-2024

Accepted: 07-01-2025

Abstract:

Introduction: This paper investigates the complex links between ethical leadership practices, employee occupational stress, well-being, and turnover intentions in India's hotel business. This research draws on theoretical frameworks to investigate how job demands, work-family spillovers, and individual personality factors influence employee well-being and turnover intentions. Prioritising outcomes such as emotional well-being and turnover intentions provides a more comprehensive view of the elements that influence employee satisfaction and retention. The study's comprehensive methodology seeks to bring insight on how hospitality organisations may better assist their personnel, resulting in a healthier and more sustainable workplace.

Objectives: This study assesses how ethical leadership affects employee turnover intentions in India's hospitality sector. It focuses on the mediating effect of occupational stress and well-being and the moderating effect of work-life balance.

Methods: This study collected data using a survey of frontline employees from 18 hospitality firms. The study analyzed 283 respondents' data to test the set hypothesis. A moderated mediation model was assessed using PROCESS macro for SPSS to test the assumed relationships.

Results: The results display that ethical leadership reduces turnover intentions through its positive impact on employee well-being and its support to mitigate occupational stress. Work-life balance strengthens these effects, highlighting its critical moderating role.

Conclusions: Using the principles of the Job Demands-Resources model and Conservation of Resources theory as central to this study, this study assesses how ethical leadership affects employee-related concerns, such as turnover intentions, stress, and well-being. This study promotes ethical leadership practices and implementation of policies supporting work-life balance to improve employee well-being, moderate turnover, and increase organizational outcomes in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: Ethical leadership (EL), Employee turnover intentions (ETI), occupational stress (OS), Employee well-being (EWB), Work-life Balance (WLB), Hospitality, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

1. Introduction

Organisational leaders have several challenges in today's rapidly globalising, intensely competitive, and uncertain market, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Two of these difficulties are maintaining company operations in uncertainty and developing staff ethics and abilities (Brewster et

al., 2018; Davies & Woodward, 2014). Employees frequently consider quitting their jobs due to the great pressure; this emphasizes the leadership role in balancing employee and organizational outcomes (Sims et al., 2009; Van Driel, 2019). Emerging as a critical component in fostering employee engagement, influencing ideas of appropriate behavior, and protecting against ethical failures is ethical leadership (Sarwar et al., 2020; Bachmann & Gatemann, 2017). Even with its recognized importance, empirical research on ethical leadership and how it affects workplace dynamics yields ambiguous results that call for more investigation (Southgate et al., 2023; Junaidi, 2023).

Frontline staff members are essential to the hospitality sector, as the face of the company, and directly impact client experiences and organizational success (Hsu et al., 2019; Kim & Jang, 2022). Heavy workloads, long and irregular timings, and a lack of leadership support are among the ongoing issues facing the industry, though, and they not only impact workplace results but also make it more difficult for employees to juggle their obligations to their families (Yavas et al., 2008; Tsaur & Tang, 2013; Fotiadis et al., 2019). Against these obstacles, promoting employee well-being and lowering turnover intentions depend critically on ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is important in many cultural settings, as academics have highlighted its benefits for knowledge sharing, work fulfillment, and organizational outcomes (Sharma et al., 2019; Sugianingrat et al., 2019; Goswami & Agrawal, 2023). Even so, a general "crisis of trust" is brought on by power dynamics and ethical difficulties in the modern organizational environment (Darcy, 2010; Frank, 2002; Yukl, 2006). These uncertainties and difficulties, including balancing work and life, influence job satisfaction and intent to leave the company (Budhwar & Debrah, 2001; Balz & Schuller, 2018).

Although previous research studied these variables, a gap prevails in studying the combined impact of EL, EWB, EOS, and WLB, which has received less attention (Berber et al., 2022; Walker, 2021). This work attempts to close this gap by determining how EWB and EOS mediate the connections between EL and ETI. Further, the relationship is moderated by WLB. This study proposes a refined understanding of the intricate relationship in the hospitality sector between ethical leadership, organizational culture, and employee results. This research provides culturally pertinent insights into the specific challenges and dynamics influencing employee attitudes and behaviors within this business by emphasizing the Indian context. This study enhances theoretical understanding and practical applications for leaders in organizations aiming to foster ethical leadership while improving employee well-being in the competitive Indian hospitality sector through a multi-dimensional approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative standpoints.

2. Theoretical Background

This article explores the intricate associations between ethical leadership practices, employee occupational stress, well-being, and turnover intentions within India's hospitality industry. It aims to provide insights by weaving together three well-established theoretical models to explain these dynamics. The JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2001) offers a foundational perspective on balancing job demands and resources allocated to shaping employee experiences. It highlights how emotionally and physically taxing work roles can long-term affect an individual's health. Conversely, job resources—such as supportive social networks and autonomy—can mitigate these effects by fostering higher engagement and productivity. Rather than generalizing about resources, this study hones in on specific stressors, like mental fatigue and the intention to quit the organization.

Additionally, the Spillover Theory, proposed by Staines in 1980, sheds light on how different domains of life—work and family—intersect and influence each other. For instance, work stress can spill over into personal life, leading to conflicts between career and family responsibilities. Conversely, work experiences can improve well-being and create a harmonious balance. This study builds on this idea by investigating how work stress and work-family issues add to turnover intentions. Adding another layer to the discussion, the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) emphasizes the human drive to secure, keep, and build means to navigate challenges and maintain well-being. Employees who experience resource depletion may resort to drastic measures, like job changes, to safeguard their health and energy. This study employs COR theory to investigate how resource loss triggers behaviors like turnover intentions.

The hospitality industry is known for demanding schedules, labor, and complex interpersonal dynamics. This presents a high-pressure environment that, if not well-managed, can lead to significant employee stress. Ethical leadership thus emerges as a vital resource in mitigating the negative effects of job demands while nurturing employee wellbeing and retention. Leaders who model ethics, fairness, and transparency can create a supportive work culture, helping employees navigate challenges, reduce stress, and enhance well-being.

To fill this gap, we draw from theories and literature studied to explore the leadership dynamics identifying how ethical leadership promotes and/or undermines work stress, improving employee well-being and reducing turnover intentions. We examine how positive, effective leadership promotes beneficial organizational outcomes. This paper integrates the theoretical frameworks to examine how job demands, work-family spillovers, and individual personality traits shape employee well-being and turnover intentions. Prioritizing outcomes like emotional well-being and turnover intentions offers a more nuanced understanding of the factors driving employee satisfaction and retention. Through this comprehensive approach, the study aims to shed light on how organizations in the hospitality sector can better support their workforce, ensuring a healthier and more sustainable work environment.

3. Literature Review

Association between Ethical Leadership and Employee Turnover Intentions:

Employee turnover intentions and enhancing well-being hinge significantly on leadership practices. Brown et al. (2005) characterize ethical leadership as "the display of ethically correct behavior using individual conduct and organizational interactions." This concept goes beyond Western settings, as research by Ng and Feldman (2015) and Chen and Hou (2016) highlights its positive impact globally. These studies show that ethical leadership fosters favorable employee attitudes and behaviors while mitigating negative effects like workplace deviance and the desire to leave the organization.

Moreover, ethical leadership is vital in crafting a supportive workplace by easing stress and reducing burnout. Harms et al. (2017) emphasize its contribution to improved employee well-being, demonstrating how ethical leadership can enhance workplace harmony. This aligns closely with the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001), identifying an ethical leadership approach to shield from the adverse effects of challenging jobs on well-being and turnover intentions. The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) further deepens this understanding by suggesting that ethical leadership supports employees, reducing stress and lowering the likelihood of turnover.

However, it is essential to examine gaps in the existing research critically. For instance, ethical leadership practices must be explored within specific cultural contexts, especially in industries like Indian hospitality, characterized by emotional labor and tight deadlines. Focusing on culturally relevant elements of ethical leadership—such as relationship-focused leadership and value alignment—may provide deeper insight into practices that affect employee well-being and retention.

In the exceptional cultural and operational setting of the Indian hospitality businesses, ethical leadership becomes even more significant. Leaders who demonstrate strong ethical principles and foster a supportive, values-driven workplace will likely reduce employee stress, improve job satisfaction, and ultimately lower turnover intentions. This research suggests that when ethical leadership is prioritized, the hospitality industry can inspire a more committed and resilient workforce. This is consistent with studies suggesting that ethical leadership can lessen desires to quit the organization. Grounded on the studied literature, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Ethical leadership is negatively associated with employee turnover intentions.

Employee Well-being effect on the relation between Ethical leadership and Employee turnover intention

Employee well-being has gained importance worldwide and reflects its acknowledged importance as a key measure of society's prosperity (OECD, 2016). It is being included in world agendas more and more, such as the health and well-being goals of the UN (UN, 2019b). The challenging dynamics of the Indian hospitality sector work environment and the necessity of employee retention make employee well-being notably essential. Chen et al. (2021) indicated that ethical leadership techniques are essential for promoting employees' psychological safety, trust, and respect. Fairness, openness, and empathy are emphasized by ethical leaders in the workplace, fostering a supportive setting that eases the stress associated with work and develops workers' sense of control and independence (Brown et al., 2005). Work-life balance is an important hospitality industry component, facilitating and promoting psychological well-being in this supportive work environment (Armour, 2002).

Furthermore, data points to an association between leadership and lower employee distress levels (Purvis et al., 2014). Because they uphold honesty and responsibility, ethical leaders help their staff feel safe and predictable, which reduces stress and anxiety related to uncertainty and ambiguity at work (Brown et al., 2005). Thus, employees can handle difficulties connected to their jobs and preserve their health. Similarly, work-life quality is affected by the emotional aspects of employee well-being (Salanova et al., 2003). Human well-being is influenced by personal and organizational elements, emphasizing the need to address organizational procedures and leadership behaviors to support employee well-being (Anttonen & Rasanen, 2008). The need for ethical leadership in improving well-being is highlighted even more in the hospitality business, where workers regularly deal with stressful schedules, emotional labor, and interpersonal problems.

This study underlines the enabling effect of employee well-being between intentions to quit the organization and ethical leadership. Theoretically, ethical leaders who promote a positive work atmosphere that encourages employee well-being also minimize the probability of turnover (UN, 2019b). The theoretical underpinnings inform the empirical analysis in this research of the

relationships connecting ethical leadership, employee well-being, and employee turnover intentions within the Indian hospitality sector, as revealed in the literature. Following this, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Ethical leadership is positively associated with employee well-being.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Employee well-being is negatively associated with employee turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Employee well-being positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover intentions.

Occupational Stress as a Mediator between Ethical leader and Employee turnover intention

The hospitality sector is challenged by job uncertainty, hectic work schedules, and emotional labor demands (Schmidt et al., 2019). As Danna and Gryphon (1999) stress, the social climate of the workplace is crucial to employee well-being in this situation. Employee well-being is much impacted by occupational stress, including episodic stress brought on by particular events and chronic stress from normal work (Eden & Dov, 1990). This stress can have negative medical and psychological effects and can show up as anxiety, depression, and general psychological distress (Ridner, 2004). Even when people can use coping strategies to deal with stress (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2019), intensities of work stress are consistently related to lower well-being and inclinations to leave the company (Moore, 2000; Zhang & Lee, 2010).

Conversely, ethical leadership styles favor workers' health by promoting psychological safety, respect, and trust in the workplace (Brown et al., 2005). Ultimately, such encouraging settings can lower stress levels, improve perceived control and autonomy, and enable greater work-life stability, thus enhancing worker well-being. Knowing the importance of workplace dynamics becomes essential because employees are the main stakeholders that significantly influence organizational performance and the customer experience (Su & Swanson, 2019; Rupp & Mallory, 2015).

Developing on this understanding of ethical leadership, occupational stress, and how these affect the welfare of employees, the following theories are put out:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Ethical leadership is negatively associated with occupational stress.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Occupational stress is positively associated with employee turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Occupational stress negatively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee turnover intentions.

WLB moderating role between EWB and ETI, while EWB and EOS mediate between EL and ETI.

The benefits of ethical leadership, which are typified by the values of respect, openness, and justice (Brown et al., 2005), have long been recognized. Employees working for principled leaders feel added in control, faith, and psychological safety (Brown et al., 2005; Sharma et al., 2016). As such, this encourages lower stress, higher job satisfaction, and stronger organizational commitment. Physical and psychological aspects of employee well-being are closely related to several organizational aspects (Ng & Feldman, 2015). Further, Psychological well-being reflects workers' emotional states and is shaped by how they see their jobs and chances for growth inside the company (Hayat & Afshari, 2021). Also,

WLB, or balancing personal and professional life, determines employee well-being (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Conflicts between job and family and increased stress are common results of imbalances in this balance (Reichl et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2013). At the same time, workers who feel their jobs are improving society's welfare will likely have happy, passionate states and psychological health (Appiah, 2019).

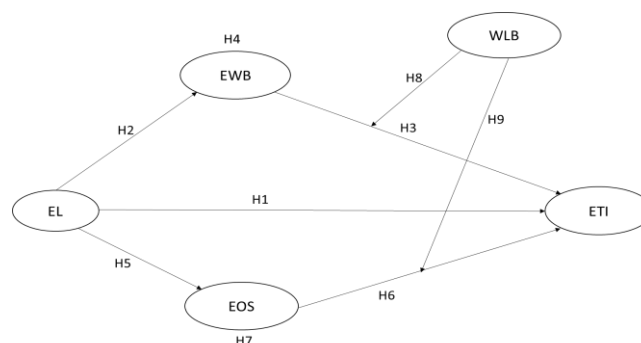
Better general well-being and increased job satisfaction are linked to WLB (Brough et al., 2014). Employees emotionally attached to the company's objectives are likelier to take supportive actions and participate in work activities (Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Kim et al., 2016). Promoting employee well-being also requires striking a work-life balance or balancing personal and professional lives (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Zhang et al., 2013). Also, disputes that result from the meeting point of work and family obligations and work interfering with personal life have repeatedly been linked to higher intentions to leave the company (Boyar et al., 2003) and feelings of exhaustion (Reichl et al., 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Conversely, studies have indicated that preserving a healthy WLB results in higher job satisfaction (Keeney et al., 2013) and lower inclinations to leave the company (Brough et al., 2014; Keeney et al., 2013). Ethical leadership greatly aids work-life balance, defined by respect, openness, and justice (Brown et al., 2005).

Moreover, organizational culture has become a major element affecting workers' mental health in connection to their jobs (Jackson & Hua, 2009). Workers who are comfortable communicating their needs and trust their managers are more likely to believe they receive enough help in juggling their work and personal obligations, which may lower stress levels. This paper proposes that ethical leadership helps reduce occupational stress and further reduces stress in settings where work-life balance is valued. Hence, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H8: Work-life balance moderates the negative relationship between employee well-being and turnover intentions.

H9: Work-life balance moderates the positive relationship between occupational stress and turnover intentions.

Figure 1: Theoretical model



4. Research Methodology

This study was conducted within India's dynamic hospitality industry, involving 18 hospitality firms, restaurants, and travel brokers. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the sector employs an impressive 88 million workers, reflecting its significant contribution to the nation's economy. Focusing on India's

expanding hotel industry, the research explores the intricate relationships between EL, EWB, EOS, WLB, and ETI.

To ensure a diverse and representative sample while minimizing potential biases, we used simple random sampling, a method chosen for its efficiency and inclusiveness. Participants characterize different demographic backgrounds, with diverse age groups and genders, to attain a wide viewpoint. This approach also addressed the limitations often associated with convenience sampling. Data was collected via an online survey platform, prioritizing respondents' convenience and confidentiality (Brown et al., 2005; Hayes, 2018).

The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' views of EL, ETI, EWB, EOS, and WLB. Reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs surpassing the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The validity of the measurement model was further tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), applying established fit indices like the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2010). The results confirmed an excellent fit between the proposed model and the data, strengthening confidence in the reliability of the measurement approach. Convergent validity was estimated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs exceeding the required threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed, as the AVE for all constructs was more than the squared correlations among constructs, ensuring that each concept measured was distinct and unique (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The analytical framework of this study, shown in Figure 1, involved a moderated mediation study by applying PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). Mean composite scores were calculated for all variables to facilitate detailed data analysis. Using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples, bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) assessed the implication of direct and indirect effects (Hayes, 2018). Specifically, the study examined how EL influences ETI through EWB and EOS mediating roles, employing Model 4 from Hayes (2018). Additionally, Model 14 was used to explore how WLB moderates the relationships between EWB-ETI and EOS-ETI. To further confirm the strength of the findings, a control variable was included to account for potential confounding effects.

Measures

Ethical leadership was measured using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Enderle (1987), consisting of 10 items. These categories assessed numerous attributes and actions indicative of EL, such as expressing care for ethical ideals, enforcing clear ethical norms, and providing an example of ethical decision-making. EWB was evaluated via a six-item scale created by Zheng et al. (2015) based on Skevington, Lotfy, and O'Connell's (2004) work. Sample items comprised evaluating the sensation of belonging to the organization and analyzing one's quality of life. Occupational stress was measured using a 13-item scale derived from Peterson et al. (1995), including role overload, role ambiguity, and conflict. The scale had specific questions to evaluate the necessity of diminishing particular role obligations. The participants' perceptions of work-life balance were evaluated using a four-item scale developed by Brough et al. (2014). Two questions were added to tailor the scale for the present study. All six questions utilized a tool to assess the WLB as balanced over the preceding quarter. The ETI was assessed via a three-item scale established by Michaels and Spector (1982) and subsequently

refined by Cohen (1999). Participants expressed their degree of contemplation of departure from the organization, offering insights into their plan to resign.

5. Results

Frontline middle- and lower-level employees actively engaged in putting the organization's policies and practices into effect made up the survey respondents. A convenient sample guaranteed strict data use for academic reasons and ethical concerns about the identity of respondents (Spector, 2006). Two hundred eighty-three filled-out questionnaires were used for analysis out of the 400 distributed. Mostly, these responders worked at the front desk in security, housekeeping, guest service, and food upkeep. With 45.9% male and 54.1% female participants, the respondents' demographic profile showed a balanced distribution over the 20–60 year age range. Remarkably, 71.3% of participants belonged to the 20–39 age range. Educationally speaking, 23% were undergraduates, 43% were postgraduates, and 33% were graduates. Moreover, 74% of the participants operated in the hospitality sector for two or more years, which qualified them for the study's goals.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and correlation analysis explaining the connections between the relevant variables. The mean, standard deviation, and correlation values show complex associations among the examined variables. Higher levels of EL and EWB are related to lower intents to leave the company; that is, ethical leadership (EL) and employee well-being (EWB) display negative correlations with turnover intention (ETI). On the other hand, a positive correlation between occupational stress (EOS) and ETI suggests that higher stress levels are linked to plans to leave the workforce. Comparably, a good work-life balance (WLB) negatively correlates with ETI, indicating that a better balance between work and life lowers turnover risk. Crucially, the interdependence of EL, EWB, WLB, EOS, and ETI is shown by their important correlations. The study finds a substantial and favorable correlation between the dependent variable (ETI) and the independent variables (EL, EWB, WLB, EOS), offering important new information on the determinants affecting turnover intentions in India's hospitality industry.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses

Detail	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	EL	ETI	EWB	EOS	WLB
Gender	283	1.54	0.50					
Age	283	1.99	0.94					
Salary	283	2.40	0.71					
Tenure	283	2.65	1.36					
EL	283	1.94	0.41	1				
ETI	283	2.05	0.37	-.784**	1			
EWB	283	3.18	0.50	.888**	-.856**	1		
EOS	283	2.95	0.42	-.861**	.747**	-.873**	1	
WLB	283	2.72	0.36	.782**	-.762**	.882**	-.775**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source (s): The authors

Measurement Validation

Cronbach's Alpha calculates reliability scores; the variable interest values found are more than 0.7. The reliability scores observed were EL (0.946), DC (0.837), ETI (0.842), EWB (0.931), EOS (0.951 and WLB (0.892). The scores realized were within the minimum range of 0.70 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). (Table 2 presents items for each construct and Cronbach Alfa scores). Two items from EL and three from the EOS instrument were observed to have low loadings and, hence, not used for further study.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Original scale Items
EL	0.946	8	10
ETI	0.842	3	3
EWB	0.931	6	6
EOS	0.951	10	13
WLB	0.892	6	6

Multicollinearity

The study examined multicollinearity to determine if tolerance and VIF (variance inflation factor) (Table 2) were within acceptable statistical limits. The findings show that the multicollinearity requirements are adequate. The tolerance value is less than 1.0, and the predictor variable's VIF value is > 5. Multicollinearity is not violated (Yu et al., 2015). According to Kock (2015), when a variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeds 3.3, it indicates severe collinearity, and CMB influences the model. All collinearity variance inflation factors (VIF) remained less than 3.3, representing no CMB problems. (Table 2)

Table 3. Multicollinearity

Variables under study	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3.48	0.03		100.84	0.00		
EWB	-0.76	0.04	-1.01	-17.34	0.00	0.02	1.52
EOS	1.52	0.05	1.66	34.16	0.00	0.02	2.83
EL	0.00	0.01	0.00	-17.16	0.00	0.58	1.74
WLB	-0.30	0.03	-0.33	-10.17	0.00	0.05	1.48

a. Dependent Variable: ETI

Source (s): The authors

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The CFA results verified the empirical evidence for future research into the suggested model. Table 4 displays the model fit values. The CFA results show excellent model fit measures ($\chi^2 / df = 1.899$, Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.871, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.908, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

= 0.967, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.964, Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.042, standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = 0.037). The RMSEA value is within the permissible range (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The proposed model exhibits excellent fit indices. The study's measurements are credible. (Table 3)

Table 4. Model Fit measures

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	718.654	--	--
DF	483	--	--
CMIN/DF	1.488	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
CFI	0.967	>0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.041	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.042	<0.06	Excellent
PClose	0.988	>0.05	Excellent

Source (s): The authors

To test the internal consistency of the construct's components, the Discriminant and Convergent Validity (DV, CV), as well as Composite Reliability (CR), are utilized (Hair et al., 2014; 2017). Table 5 shows the outcome. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended an upper limit of CR > 0.7. The resulting CR value exceeds the (0.7) cut-off value (Table 4). It has a great degree of internal consistency. Strong correlations between components present within the same structures suggest a high CV. Agreeing with Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2006; 2010), the examined constructs and items are valid when (CV > 0.7 AVE > 0.5). (Table 4). Discriminant validity (DV) is established after the square root of the AVE is larger than the correlation between the constructs. Compared to AVE scores, the squared correlations between interest components are lower (Malhotra & Dash, 2011; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results support the research's framework.

Table 5. Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	EL	EOS	EWB	WLB	ETI
EL	0.947	0.695	0.014	0.975	0.815				
EOS	0.952	0.665	0.02	0.953	-0.036	0.733			
EWB	0.932	0.694	0.014	0.934	0.039	0.119†	0.833		
WLB	0.898	0.596	0.02	0.91	0.141*	-0.039	-0.076	0.772	
ETI	0.843	0.641	0.003	0.845	-0.058	-0.033	-0.01	-0.009	0.801

Significance of Correlations: † p < 0.100, * p < 0.050, ** p < 0.010, *** p < 0.001

Source (s): The authors

Hypothesis testing

The SPSS and SPSS Process Macro are used to conduct regression analysis using variable combinations while doing mediation and moderation studies. The 95% confidence interval was

calculated by bootstrapping up to 5000 samples to assess the direct and indirect effects. The CI reflects the significance of the study. The Process Macro results are significant if the lower confidence interval (LLCI) and the upper level of confidence interval (ULCI) value include 0.

Mediation was evaluated using Model 4 of Hayes (2013), indicating that EL indirectly influences ETI through EWB and EOS. The following are the outcomes of the mediation analysis presented in Table 6. EL is negatively associated with ETI. Results are (95% CI, B (-0.55), SE (-0.04), t (-12.73), and p (0.000). As per the results, H1 is accepted. EL has a statistically significant positive relationship with EWB (95% CI, B (0.62), SE (0.09), t (7.84), p (0.000), LLCI-ULCI (0.55 - 0.92)). As per the results, H2 is accepted. Similarly, there is a negative relationship between EWB and ETI (95% confidence interval (CI), B (-1.52), SE (0.052), t (-29.21), p (0.000), LLCI-ULCI (-1.63 / -1.42)) as per results H3 is accepted. The findings also show that EL is negatively associated with EOS. As per the results, H5 is accepted. Results are (95% CI, B (-0.78), SE (-0.06), t (-13.69), and p (0.000). However, we observe a positive relationship between EOS and ETI (95% confidence interval (CI), B (.52), SE (0.04), t (12.06), p (0.000), LLCI-ULCI (0.44 – 0.61)) as per results H6 is accepted. When the mediating factor EWB and EOS are included, (95% CI, B (-.94), SE (0.98), LLCI-ULCI (-1.15 - 0.77)) As per results H4 is accepted and EOS (95% CI, B (0.41), SE (0.055), LLCI-ULCI (0.32 - 0.57)). As per the results, H7 is accepted. Also note, EL's indirect influence on ETI was significant and with a complete mediation effect via EWB and EOS, developing the direct effect of EL on ETI insignificant, i.e. (95% CI, B (-0.15), SE (0.01), t (-1.47), p (0.14), LLCI-ULCI (-0.04 - 0.01)).

The result supports EWB and EOS's role as mediators in the EL-ETI interaction. Also, when leaders are principled and adopt well-being practices, employee turnover intention decreases; at the same time, ethical leadership may also help reduce occupational stress and create a need for more than typical HRM procedures that may be required to promote a positive impression. The findings support the study's method of looking at employee well-being as an organizational effort to address employee retention.

Table 6. EWB and EOS Mediation Results

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
EL-EWB	.615	.378	0.104	171.38	1	281	0
EL-EOS	-.632	-.400	0.151	187.49	1	281	0

Variables	B	SE	T	p	95 % Confidence Interval (CI)		
					LLCI	ULCI	Hypothesis
EL - ETI	-0.55	-0.04	-12.53	0.00			H1 accepted
EL – EWB	0.62	0.09	7.84	0.00	0.55	0.92	H2 accepted
EWB - ETI	-1.52	-0.52	-29.21	0.00	-1.63	-1.42	H3 accepted
EL - EOS	-0.78	-0.06	-13.09	0.00	-0.67	-0.89	H5 accepted
EOS - ETI	0.52	0.04	12.06	0.00	0.44	0.61	H6 accepted

Mediation Test							
EL – ETI)	-0.15	0.01	-1.47	0.14	-0.04	0.01	

EL-EWB-ETI	-0.94	0.98	-1.15	-0.77	H4 accepted
EL-EOS-ETI	0.41	0.55	0.32	-0.57	H7 accepted

Note. CI = Confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Source (s): The authors

PROCESS Model 14 was applied to test the mediated moderation relationship among the proposed variables. While the study successfully tested the moderated mediation effect of EWB and EOS; for the model to be proven, it is essential to assess the moderation effect of WLB. Hence, this study proposed that while EWB and EOS mediate between EL and ETI, WLB moderates the connection between EL and EWB (H8); the WLB moderates the interaction amid EOS and ETI (H9). The following test results were obtained.

Table 7. WLB moderation Results

Variables	B	SE	t	p	95 % Confidence Interval (CI)		
					LLCI	ULLCI	Hypothesis
EL - ETI	-0.01	.0079	-.6558	.5125	-.0207	.0103	
EWB-ETI	-3.90	.2483	-15.704	.0000	-.3876	-.4100	
EOS-ETI	2.297	.1773	12.9537	.0000	.9477	.6457	
WLB-ETI	0.68	.0530	1.2775	.2025	-.0366	.1720	
(M1) EWB * WLB-ETI (W1)	0.74	.0755	9.7850	.0000	.5905	.8879	H8 accepted
(M2) EOS * WLB-ETI (W2)	-0.51	.0538	-9.5651	.0000	-.6202	-.4085	H9 accepted

Note. CI = Confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

M1- Mediation model 1 (EWB), W1 Moderation model 1 (WLB), M2- Mediation model 2 (EOS), W2 Moderation model 2 (WLB)

Source (s): The authors

Table 7 represents the mediated moderation effect assessed on the proposed framework using process macro model 14.

The moderated mediation results obtained are significant. The scores obtained present the WLB moderation effect on EWB and ETI (B = 0.74, SE = .0755, T = 9.7850, p = .0000 LLCI/ULLCI range = .5905 / .8879). WLB moderation effect on EOS and ETI (B = -0.51, SE = .0538, T = -9.5651, p = .0000, LLCI/ULLCI range = -.6202 / -.4085). Following are the results of the moderated mediation model: firstly, the direct effect of EL on ETI (B = -0.01, S.E. = 0.0079, p = .5125, t = -6558, LLCI/ULLCI range = -0.0207 - 0.103) is observed to be insignificant. Secondly, the direct effect of EWB and ETI has

remained significant and negative; scores are (B = -3.90, S.E. = 0.2483, p = .000, t = -15.7035, LLCI/ULCI range = -0.3876 - -0.4100). Similarly, EOS effect on ETI (B = 2.297, S.E. = 0.1773, p = .000, t = 12.9537, LLCI/ULCI range = 0.9477 - 0.6457). The relationship observed between EWB – ETI is negative, referring to higher EWB, which helps reduce ETI, and EOS – ETI is positive, referring to higher EOS, which increases ETI.

Table 8 explains the results of the moderated mediation model. The results suggest that EOS's low WLB (2.5) effect is (0.7878) and decreases further from 0.618 to 0.4865, increasing WLB from 2.92 to 3.25. Similarly, the negative effect of EWB on ETI is continued at a low-level WLB (2.5) effect (-0.9252) and WLB at (3.25) effect (-1.2680). The results obtained suggest a complete moderated mediation for the proposed framework. The results suggest that WLB plays an important role of moderator between the EWB – ETI and EOS – ETI, while EWB mediates EL – ETI; similarly, EOS mediates EL – ETI. The results support H8 and H9.

Table 8. Index of moderated mediation

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
WLB	.4570	.1087	.3072	.7372	
INDIRECT EFFECT: EL -> EOS -> ETI					
WLB	Level	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
2.5000	Low	.7868	.0964	.6183	1.0000
2.9200	Medium	.6186	.0833	.4613	.7918
3.2500	High	.4865	.0853	.3111	.6502
Index of moderated mediation:					
	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
WLB	-.4004	.0941	-.6467	-.2772	
INDIRECT EFFECT: EL -> EWB -> ETI					
WLB	Level	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
2.5000	Low	-.9252	.1108	-1.1378	-.6952
2.9200	Medium	-1.0761	.1163	-1.3105	-.8562
3.2500	High	-1.2680	.1373	-1.5633	-1.0265

6. Discussion

The complex relationships among employee well-being (EWB), employee occupational stress (EOS), work-life balance (WLB), and turnover intentions (ETI) in India's hospitality industry are examined in this paper. The statistical data show several interesting conclusions.

A strong negative correlation ($\beta = -0.55$, $t = -12.53$, $p < 0.00$) was found between EL and ETI. This shows that, at a higher statistical implication ($p < 0.00$), employee turnover intentions fell by 0.55 for every 1.0 increase in ethical leadership score. Brown et al., 2005; Chen & Hou, 2016; Ng & Feldman, 2015) show that higher levels of ethical leadership correspond to decreased inclinations to leave the organization voluntarily. This emphasizes the need to develop organizational commitment, trust, and respect through ethical leadership actions, eventually lowering staff turnover.

Comparably, there is a negative correlation between EWB and ETI; that is, higher levels of well-being are linked to lower intentions to leave the company. On the other hand, turnover intentions are positively correlated with occupational stress, representing that higher stress levels are associated with more intentions to quit. These results are consistent with earlier studies and emphasize stress management and employee well-being in determining intentions to leave the company (Purvis et al., 2013; Salanova et al., 2003). EWB and ETI correlated significantly negatively ($\beta = -1.522$, $t = -29.22$, $p < 0.00$). Once more, with a very high degree of statistical significance ($p < 0.00$), a one-unit rise in the employee well-being score was correlated with a 1.522-unit fall in the intention to leave the company. Against this, a positive correlation between EOS and ETI was found ($\beta = 0.522$, $t = 12.057$, $p < 0.00$). This means that statistically significant at $p < 0.00$, a one-unit rise in the occupational stress score of the employee resulted in a 0.522 rise in the ETI.

As the study proposes, WLB moderates the relation amid EWB, OS, and ETI rather than directly affecting them. In particular, work-life balance is enhanced via occupational stress, employee well-being, and ethical leadership's indirect impacts on leaving intentions. The good influence of ethical leadership on well-being is amplified when workers believe that their WLB is supported. By contrast, the detrimental effects of work stress are lessened, resulting in reduced intent to leave the company. These results stress the need to foster a work-life balance-promoting atmosphere to improve ethical leadership programs' efficiency in attracting and keeping talent (Brough et al., 2014; Reichl et al., 2014). WLB had a moderated mediation index of 0.4570 (Table 8) and a substantial moderation effect indicated by a Bootstrapping Confidence Interval (BCI) ranging from 0.3072 to 0.7372 (Table 8). At larger levels of WLB, EL's indirect influence on ETI via EOS—increased stress resulting in higher turnover intentions—was likewise more effective. Furthermore, revealing a considerable moderating impact, the index of moderated mediation for WLB and EL's indirect influence on ETI via EWB was -0.4004, with a BCI ranging from -0.6467 to -0.2772.

7. Theoretical Contributions

This study provides a noteworthy understanding of the link between ethical leadership and employee turnover intentions, contributing substantially to leadership, organizational behavior, and employee retention. By using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), it illustrates how ethical leadership encourages enhanced employee performance. Foundational theories such as Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) stress the inverse link between ethical leadership and turnover intentions, highlighting its importance in fostering organizational commitment and minimizing attrition rates. This research improves previous theoretical frameworks by integrating occupational stress and employee well-being as mediating elements, offering a more sophisticated view of how ethical leadership decreases turnover intentions. Additionally, it illustrates the moderating function of work-life balance, illustrating how contextual circumstances may magnify or lessen the impact of ethical leadership on employee outcomes. The results underline the importance of organizational policies encouraging work-life balance in boosting employee happiness and retention.

8. Practical Implications

The results give meaningful insights for HR professionals and organizational leaders. To establish a healthy work atmosphere and enhance employee retention, firms should emphasize building ethical

leadership traits in their managers. Implementing wellness efforts, such as stress management programs, flexible work arrangements, and employee wellness activities, may improve work-life balance, increase well-being, and minimize turnover intentions. Training programs that educate managers with skills to alleviate workplace stress and build a supportive work culture are equally crucial. By implementing a complete strategy incorporating ethical leadership development and well-being programs, firms may boost employee happiness, limit attrition, and ultimately generate superior organizational performance.

9. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study delivers valuable insights, it is not without limits. The use of a cross-sectional design reduces the ability to demonstrate causal links. Future research might utilize longitudinal or experimental approaches to improve causal findings. Furthermore, the research's emphasis on a unique organizational environment may restrict its generalizability. Expanding the scope to encompass varied sectors and cultural locations might strengthen the external validity of the results. Despite these limits, the research makes substantial insights into understanding the connection between ethical leadership, employee well-being, and work-life balance, reaffirming their value for employee retention strategies.

10. Conclusion

This study underlines the crucial importance of ethical leadership in boosting employee outcomes and minimizing turnover intentions. Investigating the mediating impacts of occupational stress and employee well-being and the moderating influence of work-life balance offers a complete framework for understanding how ethical leadership influences organizational performance. The research enhances theoretical views and educates firms with practical techniques to develop a supportive working culture. By promoting ethical leadership and incorporating tailored interventions, firms may enhance employee happiness, minimize attrition, and build a more engaged workforce.

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