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Ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility and organizational citizenship behavior: Fostering sustainable employability in Iraqi Private Banks

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Abstract:

During times of economic volatility and in the process of administrative reform in post-conflict situations, strong leadership is essential to building a resilient workforce. To tackle this, the current study seeks to examine the effects of ethical leadership on "organizational citizenship behavior" (OCB) with corporate "social responsibility" (CSR) as a mediator in the private banking sector in Iraq. The research adopts a quantitative approach with the use of survey data from 229 banking professionals and is based on "Social Exchange and Social Identity theories". The conceptual pathways were tested using variance-based structural equation modeling, which was performed using SmartPLS 4. The results of the analyses strongly favor the proposed model, showing that ethical leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' perceptions of CSR initiatives and their engagement in discretionary citizenship behaviors. Moreover, CSR was observed to have a great impact on OCB. Importantly, the findings proved that CSR is a powerful mediator, which means that ethical leaders provoke citizenship behaviors by developing a socially responsible organizational climate. The study fills a significant gap in the literature because it tests a mediation model in a less-studied context of the Iraqi banking sector. It offers administrative lessons to policymakers and bank executives, indicating that the strategic need to invest in ethical leadership and true CSR activities is not only a moral requirement but a strategic need to increase sustainable employability and fight against economic adversities.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Private Banking Sector, Iraq, Sustainable Employability.

1. Introduction:

With the aftermath of the world financial crisis and rising pressure on sustainable development, the banking industry has been subjected to much criticism in terms of its ethical behavior and social investment. As the financial pillars of any economy, banks are expected not only to generate profit but also to promote social stability and sustainable employability (Iqbal et al., 2018). In the developing economies, in this case, the post-conflict Iraq, the contribution of the private banking sector plays a central role in fighting against poverty and unemployment through financial inclusion and stability. Nonetheless, the sustainability of such banks is strongly reliant on the internal human capital of the banks, that is, the desire of the employees to perform more than they are supposed to according to their

job descriptions, which is referred to as "Organizational Citizenship Behavior" (OCB) (Huang et al., 2021; Taamneh et al., 2024). Researchers have come to realize that OCB is not a personality factor but a response to the organizational environment that leadership has provided (Nguyen et al., 2021). Ethical Leadership (ETL), which involves normatively appropriate behavior and encouragement of the same to subordinates has become a crucial precursor to favorable employee performance (Gao & He, 2017). However, leadership is not a solitary game. According to the recent literature, the process by which ethical leaders can affect employees is by creating the perception of CSR (Hayat et al., 2023). As employees feel that their bank is socially responsible both internally to employees and externally to the community, they will more likely reciprocate with increased loyalty and citizenship behavior (Ahmad et al., 2020; Sikand & Saxena, 2025).

Although there are theoretical connections between these variables, the relationship between Ethical Leadership, CSR, and OCB is complicated and not well-researched in unstable economic conditions. The proposed study will explore these dynamics in the Iraqi private banking industry and provide information on how ethical management can promote the effectiveness of an organization and consequently the overall administrative objective of economic stability. The Iraqi banking industry is experiencing a Crisis of Trust and Stability Challenges in the private banking sector. Although these banks play a crucial role in economic recovery and alleviating unemployment (a major theme of the conference), their high employee turnover and poor engagement are a threat to their existence. The main issue is that most banking institutions pay strict attention to financial metrics and regulatory compliance and overlook the so-called Soft Assets, the ethical climate and extra-role behaviors of employees (OCB) that are required when the crisis strikes.

In the absence of OCB, banks would be stiff and weak; employees will do just the bare minimum, which will result in inefficiency and low quality of services. The current administrative problem is not the possible absence of technical skills, but the absence of ETL that can evoke a feeling of collective responsibility. Moreover, even though most banks say they do CSR, it is perceived as a marketing strategy and not a value system inculcated by leaders. Unless employees trust their leaders to be ethical, or the CSR of their organization to be genuine, the employees will not be inclined to practice citizenship behaviors. Thus, the question that this research seeks to answer is: How can the ETL be used by the Iraqi private banks to create a true image of CSR that consequently leads to the OCB required to sustain the institution and provide job security? Even though there is a significant body of existing literature on the direct relationship between ETL and OCB (Shareef & Atan, 2019; Yang & Wei, 2018) and the independent effect of CSR on employee outcomes (Choi et al., 2020; El-Kassar et al., 2017) Although these variables have been explored individually, few models were found that combine them in one mediated model, especially in the context of developing markets (Hayat et al., 2023). The existing literature is highly biased towards stable Western or Asian settings (Hameli & Yaslioglu, 2025; Pasricha et al., 2018) and there is a massive gap in terms of the way these theoretical processes can work in volatile post-conflict settings such as Iraq where the administrative structures have to deal with specific challenges. Moreover, although the banking industry is inherently based on the trust of the population and the stability of the institution (Iqbal et al., 2018), This reflects the fact that previous research has often been generalized across different sectors, with few studies examining how the special ethical climate of financial organizations affects citizen behaviors and the current study examines the CSR as a mediator between ethical leadership and citizenship behaviors in the private banking sector in Iraq, thus it extends the application of the Social Exchange and Social Identity theories into the administrative context in the Middle East. Purpose of the Study The study will explore how ETL improves OCB in the Iraqi private banking industry, and this will be done using CSR as the mediating variable. The study aims to offer administrative frameworks that support the achievement of institutional stability and sustainable employability by developing a model that connects leadership

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ethics and social performance and employee reciprocity and hence helping to achieve the overall economic objective of alleviating unemployment in a post-conflict environment.

2. Literature reviews of study:

The modern business environment, where the speed of changes and social demands are growing, does not assess organizations based on their financial achievements only, but their ethical behavior and social investments as well. Research in organizational behavior has therefore changed its focus to the study of how positive leadership styles and CSR activities can be used to create a sustainable and collaborative workforce. This part is a critical review of theoretical and empirical literature on ETL, CSR, and OCB.

Although the direct impact of leadership on employee behavior is well-established, the psychological and contextual processes, i.e., the role of CSR, by which ethical leaders can provoke discretionary behaviors such as OCB, are a gap that needs to be filled in further (Hayat et al., 2023). This review explains the role of ETL in establishing a moral environment that increases the perception of social responsibility of the organization among employees by relying on the "Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT)". It also contends that such a perception is a catalyst, which employees respond to by engaging in citizenship behaviors that can sustain the organization and benefit the community.

2.1 Ethical Leadership

Brown et al. (2005) define ethical leadership as when managers engage in appropriate moral behaviors in personal and professional settings and encourage their subordinates to do the same by communicating, modeling, and rewarding. Ethical leaders serve as moral exemplars who prioritize honesty, fairness, and responsibility, therefore encouraging employees to align their behavior with ethical norms (Brown et al., 2005; Schaubroeck et al., 2012).

Empirical findings indicate that ETL is an important factor in the formation of organizational culture and ethical climate, which in turn affects trust, commitment, and performance of employees (Shin et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2017). Ethical leaders also make it possible to successfully implement the CSR initiatives by instilling ethical values into the organizational strategies and practices (Nguyen et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2014). As a result, ETL is identified as a pillar system where ethical standards and socially responsible practices are propagated across organizations (Wu et al., 2015).

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is defined as the organizational activities that indicate the interest of a firm in ethical conduct, social well-being and environmental sustainability, not just on the economic and legal mandates (Garriga & Melé, 2013). According to Turker (2009), CSR is the general responsibility of an organization towards its internal and external stakeholders, which includes the employees, customers, society, government and the environment. According to the previous studies, CSR is not only an external legitimacy instrument but also an internal motivator of employee attitudes and behavior. Employees will tend to associate themselves with organizational values and trust the management when they feel that their organization is socially responsible (Newman et al., 2015). Research also indicates that ETL has a substantial impact on the perception of CSR among employees because it determines the way CSR policies are formulated and executed at the organizational level (Nguyen et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2015). Therefore, CSR is a key connection between ETL and desirable organizational performance.

2.3 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB is described as an optional behavior that extends beyond the official job mandate and helps in the successful operation of the organization (Organ, 1988). OCB is usually divided into individual-directed behavior (OCB-I) and organization-directed behavior (OCB-O) (Lepine et al., 2002). It has always been observed in literature that ETL and CSR

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are significant antecedents of OCB. ETL builds trust and moral responsibility in the employees of the organization, which motivates them to perform extra-role behaviors that are beneficial to their colleagues and the organization (Mayer et al., 2009). Likewise, CSR activities foster the feeling of accountability and organizational identification among employees and, consequently, OCB (Hansen et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2015). Tourigny et al. (2019) also state that CSR mediates the connection between ETL and OCB because it enhances organizational trust and responsibility-taking behavior among the workers.

On the whole, the literature reviewed indicates that ethical leadership, CSR, and OCB have a close theoretical and empirical connection. Ethical leadership influences the awareness of the workforce of corporate morality and social responsibility while corporate social responsibility is the realization of these moral principles. As a result, organizational citizenship behavior represents the positive, discretionary reactions of the employees. This trinity can be integrated and is a good representation of the combined effect of moral guidance and social accountability on promoting workforce engagement and long-term organizational viability (Nguyen et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework The research is based on two theoretical perspectives that are complementary, which are SET and SIT.

The SET (Blau, 1964) assumes that social behavior is an outcome of an exchange process. When leaders are ethical in their treatment of employees and the organization is responsible (CSR), a high-quality exchange relationship is established in the organizational context. This positive treatment is returned by the employees who feel obligated and grateful and react by performing discretionary positive behaviors (OCB) that are beneficial to the organization (Makumbe, 2025). According to SET, relationships are founded on mutual gains and debts. Employees who feel that they are treated ethically and taken care of by the organization, e.g. by CSR programs, feel a moral duty to return the favor with positive attitudes and discretionary behaviors, e.g. OCB (Newman et al., 2015). In line with this, the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) proposes that a person bases some of his or her self-concept on the organizations they are part of. Having an organization with high ethical standards and social responsibility improves the prestige of the organization. This makes employees proud to associate themselves with such an organization and this encourages them to contribute to its objectives by acting as citizens (Cheema et al., 2020). The combination of these theories offers a solid model of explaining how ETL can be translated into OCB using the CSR mechanism.

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1 Ethical Leadership and OCB

The direct influence of ETL on employees' discretionary behaviors is widely acknowledged in contemporary management research. Extensive empirical evidence provided by Huang et al. (2021), Taamneh et al. (2024) and Yang and Wei (2018) confirms that leaders who exhibit normatively appropriate conduct significantly enhance their followers' willingness to engage in OCB. Furthermore, recent studies in various sectors including higher education and public administration (Makumbe, 2025; Shareef & Atan, 2019) have consistently demonstrated that ETL is a more potent predictor of OCB than many other leadership styles, as it fundamentally alters the psychological state of the subordinate.

The theoretical rationale for this relationship is primarily grounded in Social Learning Theory. Yang et al. (2016) and Yang and Wei (2018) found that ethical managers are trusted and genuine to emulate by subordinates. Managers routinely demonstrate moral rectitude, equity, and empathy and therefore serve as the effective ethical bottom line for the workplace. Employees, through the process of observational learning, emulate these positive behaviors. Because ethical leaders often go beyond their own job descriptions to support their team and the organization, subordinates

mimic this behavior by engaging in OCB to align themselves with the leader's values (Shareef & Atan, 2019). In addition to social learning, SET provides a compelling explanation for this dyadic relationship. Research by (Makumbe, 2025) and (Taamneh et al., 2024) suggests that ETL creates a high-quality social exchange relationship characterized by trust and perceived organizational support. When leaders treat employees with dignity, allow for voice, and ensure justice (Taamneh et al., 2024), employees feel a sense of obligation and indebtedness. To reciprocate this fair treatment and the psychological well-being provided by the leader (Huang et al., 2021), employees voluntarily engage in OCB, viewing it as a way to "pay back" the leader and the organization for the favorable treatment they receive.

Moreover, Yang et al. (2016) found that ethical oversight positively influences citizenship behaviors towards specific colleagues (OCBI) as well as towards the organization (OCBO). Their findings suggest that managers who are morally oriented are able to establish an environment in which there is respect between the leader and followers and higher quality Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). As a result, employees are motivated to enhance the corporate culture, going above and beyond what is specified in their job roles. Based on the above, this paper argues that ethical managerial presence naturally inspires employees to participate in discretionary efforts in the workplace, which is supported by the findings from Huang et al. (2021) and Yang and Wei (2018).

H1: "Ethical Leadership has a significant positive impact on OCB".

3.2 Ethical Leadership and CSR

The claim that the quality of leadership is a key factor in defining the social performance of an organization has been well documented in the recent studies in management. There has been a convergence of empirical research such as (Alkhadra et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021) which have conclusively proved that ETL is a key antecedent to adoption and implementation of CSR initiatives. Also, the study by (Pasricha et al., 2018) and (Hayat et al., 2023) expands this knowledge by proving that ethical leaders are not only those who act in accordance with the legal norms but also those who actively incorporate social and ethical issues into the organizational strategy. Stakeholder Theory and "Social Learning Theory" are commonly used as theoretical foundations to build the bridge between ETL and CSR. According to the arguments presented in Nguyen et al. (2021) and Tourigny et al. (2019) ethical leaders are described as moral managers who are concerned about the well-being of all the legitimate stakeholders, not only shareholders. As opposed to traditional leaders who might only be interested in financial returns, ethical leaders view it as a moral responsibility to channel organizational resources to the community, the environment, and the welfare of the employees (Alkhadra et al., 2023). Thus, CSR is the organizational expression of personal values of the leader. In addition, (Pasricha et al., 2018) points out that ethical leaders are role models who establish the moral tone of the organization. Through their consistent fair and balanced decisions, they make the culture of valuing social responsibility institutional. This is backed by Hayat et al. (2023), which established that ethical conduct of top executives directly relates to the wider organizational policy that is more inclined to social good. Basically, the integrity of the leader and his interest in justice trickles down and the firm is seen as socially responsible by its employees and outside observers (Alkhadra et al., 2023).

Particular to the setting of the current research, (Tourigny et al., 2019) highlights that in a setting where hierarchy is high (as is the case in most Asian and developing settings), the ethical position of the supervisor is the main prism through which subordinates perceive the CSR of the organization. Leaders who exhibit the qualities of honesty, altruism, and trustworthiness will automatically promote CSR practices as a means of aligning the activities of the organization with the moral

standards (Gao & He, 2017). Therefore, based on the strong evidence presented by (Nguyen et al., 2021) in terms of (Alkhadra et al., 2023) , which in combination define ETL as the force behind organizational social performance, we hypothesize:

H2: "Ethical Leadership has a significant positive impact on CSR".

3.3 CSR and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The recent empirical literature has given strong evidence that CSR is directly related to positive employee behavioral outcome. In particular, the works of (Ahmad et al., 2020), (Hameli & Yaslioglu, 2025) and (Choi et al., 2020) have proven that the OCB of employees increases significantly in the case of active participation in socially responsible activities by organizations. Moreover, studies by (Kunda et al., 2019) and (Sikand & Saxena, 2025) affirm that this association is still pronounced in different organizational settings indicating that CSR is an intrinsic motivator of discretionary employee work, regardless of other factors.

This relationship can be best justified theoretically using SET and Norm of Reciprocity. Employees perceive CSR activities of an organization not as an outward act of charity, as confirmed by the results of (El-Kassar et al., 2017) and (Iqbal et al., 2018), but as an indicator of the overall goodwill, justice, and honesty of an organization. Employees are likely to view the organization as a good citizen when they feel that the organization is considerate and generous towards the community, the environment, and the stakeholders. This positive perception, as it is indicated by the logic of reciprocity in (Luu, 2017) and (Cheema et al., 2020), gives rise to a feeling of indebtedness among employees. To restore the organization to its ethical reputation and its philanthropic actions, employees willingly participate in extra-role actions, including assisting other employees, accepting work-related inconveniences, and volunteering to do extra work (OCB). In this perspective, OCB is the currency through which employees pay back the positive social contributions by the organization (Cingöz & Akdoğan, 2019).

In addition, empirical studies by (Iqbal et al., 2018) namely in the banking and service industry reveal that CSR programs lessen the occurrence of negative work behavior and make employees willing to perform above and beyond their job descriptions. These studies (Ahmad et al., 2020); (Choi et al., 2020) (Sikand & Saxena, 2025) all agree that CSR establishes a positive and grateful working environment, which of course drives employees towards more citizenship behavior. According to the theoretical model of social exchange and the stable empirical data presented by the mentioned research, we hypothesize:

H3: CSR has a significant positive impact on OCB.

3.4 The Mediating Role of Corporate Social Responsibility

The direct impact of ethical leadership on the discretionary behaviors of employees is well recognized in the current management studies. Wide range of empirical data presented by (Huang et al., 2021) (Taamneh et al., 2024), and (Yang & Wei, 2018) supports the idea that leaders with normatively appropriate behavior contribute greatly to the readiness of their followers to become OCB. Moreover, the recent research in other areas, such as higher education and government (Makumbe, 2025; Shareef & Atan, 2019) has repeatedly shown that ETL is a more powerful predictor of OCB than most other leadership styles because it changes the psychological condition of the subordinate. This relationship is theoretically justified by the "Social Learning Theory". Ethical leaders are valid and reliable role models to their subordinates as explained in (Yang et al., 2016) and (Yang & Wei, 2018). These leaders establish a moral standard in the organization by always exhibiting integrity, fairness, and concern towards others. Through observational learning, employees adopt these positive behaviors. Since ethical leaders tend to extend their job descriptions to assist their subordinates and the organization, the subordinates will imitate this action and

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perform OCB (assisting their colleagues or volunteering to do additional work) to be similar to the leader in terms of values (Shareef & Atan, 2019).

Besides social learning, the SET also offers an interesting explanation of this dyadic relationship. According to research by (Makumbe, 2025)and (Taamneh et al., 2024), ETL produces high-quality social exchange relationship that involves trust and perceived organizational support. Employees feel obliged and indebted when leaders treat them with dignity, give them a voice and provide justice (Taamneh et al., 2024). In order to return this equitable treatment and psychological comfort offered by the leader (Huang et al., 2021) employees willingly participate in OCB, and they consider it as a means of returning the favor to the leader and the organization that has treated them well. In addition, (Yang et al., 2016) differentiates between OCB to individuals (OCBI) and OCB to the organization (OCBO), and concludes that ETL has a positive influence on both. The paper contends that ethical leaders create a culture of respect and quality Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which in its own right encourages employees to make a contribution to the social fabric of the organization beyond their formal contractual duties.

Thus, we can use the intersection of "social learning and social exchange approaches" with the strong empirical data of (Huang et al., 2021) to (Yang & Wei, 2018) to posit that the existence of an ethical leader will inherently influence the employees to engage in extra-role behaviors.

The hypothesis that CSR is the explanatory variable (mediator) between leadership styles and employee behavior is confirmed by an increasing amount of empirical data. Conceptual models in which CSR mediates the role of leadership on OCB have been explicitly tested and confirmed in recent studies, most prominently (Hayat et al., 2023), (Iqbal et al., 2018), and (Sikand & Saxena, 2025). Moreover, validatory studies by (Nguyen et al., 2021) and (Alkhadra et al., 2023) indicate that the influence of ethics of a leader on the performance of firms and employee performance is not necessarily direct, but is in most cases passed through the establishment of a socially responsible organizational culture. The theoretical reasoning behind this mediation is based on Signaling Theory and SET. Whereas ETL gives the moral compass, CSR gives the physical manifestation of that morality. Ethical leaders are the main designers of the social policies of an organization as it is argued in (Tourigny et al., 2019) and (Pasricha et al., 2018). Employees use the actions of these leaders that they can see to determine the integrity of the organization. When an ethical leader introduces strong CSR programs, which include taking care of the community, environment, and employee welfare, this sends a plausible message to the workforce that the organization is upright and generous, and not just a profit making organization (Gao & He, 2017).

After this CSR environment is made by the leader, the second phase of the mediation takes place. As shown in (Ahmad et al., 2020) and (Hameli & Yaslioglu, 2025), when employees feel that their organization (influenced by ethical leadership) is socially responsible, they have an increased sense of trust and organizational identification. This perception of goodness, in the banking sector, and thus studied in (Iqbal et al., 2018), leads to a social exchange process. This makes employees feel good and proud to work in such an ethical organization. They therefore feel compelled to give back this good treatment by performing discretionary acts that benefit the organization, that is, OCB (Choi et al., 2020). Thus, CSR is the mediator: ETL is the antecedent which fosters CSR, and CSR is the condition which provokes OCB. It is possible that the CSR will not be adopted or seen as genuine without the ethical leader and that the CSR initiatives will not be turned into concrete citizenship behaviors without the ethical values of the leader being made concrete to employees. The fact that the positive impacts of executive ethical behavior on employee

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outcomes were greatly mediated by CSR perceptions supports this indirect route (Hayat et al., 2023). The combination of these results of (Ahmad et al., 2020; Alkhadra et al., 2023; Cheema et al., 2020; El-Kassar et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021) leads us to conclude that CSR is the process by which ETL can make employees go beyond their official responsibilities.

H4: CSR mediates the relationship between Ethical Leadership and OCB.

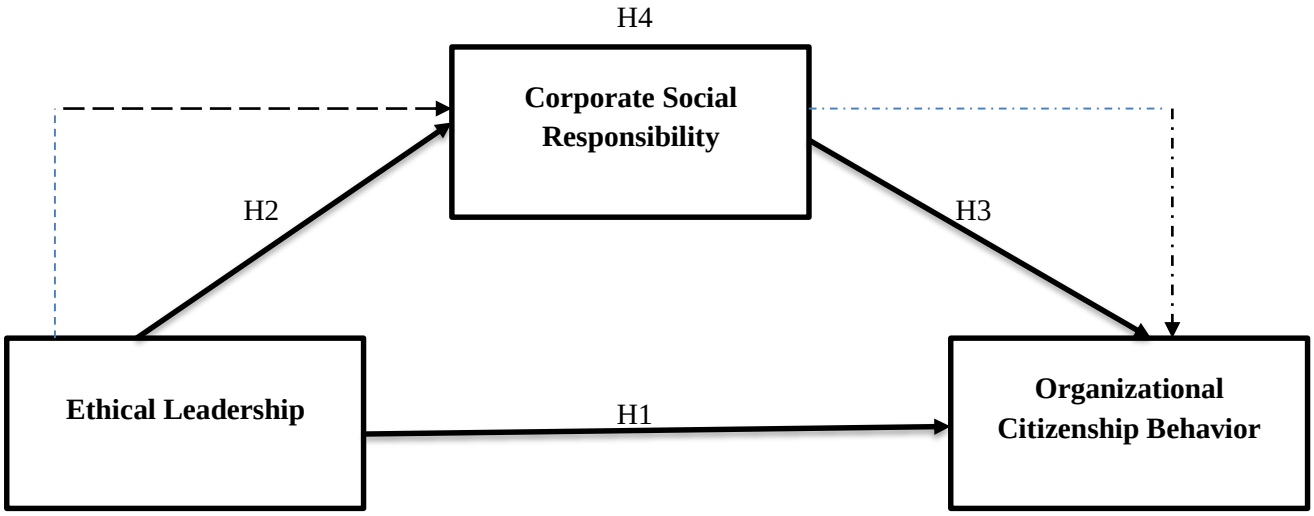


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

To empirically evaluate the proposed theoretical linkages among ethical leadership, CSR, and OCB, this study employs a deductive quantitative design. The research design was descriptive cross-sectional, which implied that data was gathered at one time. The design suits the study of the causal relationships in the mediation model proposed, and it is in line with the recent research in the area (Hayat et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2018).

4.2 Population and Sampling

The study target population will be the full-time employees of the Private Banking Sector in Iraq. This industry was chosen because of its central contribution to the stability of the economy of the country and its present requirement of administrative restructuring in order to fight unemployment.

A convenience sampling method was employed in order to have a representative sample. This is a commonly used approach in the study of organizational behavior where the complete list of population is not available owing to privacy policies in financial institutions. The researchers sent 400 questionnaires to the employees of different levels of management (branch managers, department heads, and frontline employees). Among these, 307 were sent back, and 229 valid responses were retained to be used in the final analysis, which resulted in a response rate of 57.25%.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

"A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect data. A back-translation technique" (Brislin, 1980) was used to make sure that the instrument is suitable in the Iraqi context. The original scales in English were translated into Arabic by a bilingual linguistic expert and then translated to English to guarantee conceptual equivalency. Ethical issues were also followed to the letter; the survey was accompanied by a cover letter that informed the respondents about the purpose of the study (academic research to reduce poverty and develop administration) and guaranteed them that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

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4.4 Measurement Instruments

Multi-item scales that were modified based on existing literature were used to measure all constructs. The responses were measured by a "Five-Point Likert Scale, with the 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)". ETL measured using 6 Items adopted from Taamneh et al. (2024) and Nguyen et al. (2021). CSR measured using 5 Items adopted from Iqbal et al. (2018) Nguyen et al. (2021) and OCB measured using 6 Items adopted from Iqbal et al. (2018) and Luu (2017).

4.5 Data Analysis Techniques

In order to test the proposed theoretical model and to analyze the hypothesized relationships, this study used the "Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)" with the help of SmartPLS 4 software. The main statistical tool used in this study was PLS-SEM because of a number of strategic reasons. First, it is commonly known as the most popular approach to exploratory research in which the goal is theory development and prediction (Hair et al., 2019). Second, PLS-SEM does not have a high sensitivity to the violation of data normality, and thus it is appropriate in social science studies where survey data is not always distributed in a strictly normal manner. Lastly, but most pertinent to this research, SmartPLS has better analysis of complex mediation models which enables the estimation of both direct and indirect effects simultaneously to be able to test the mediating effect of CSR (Choi et al., 2020).

The SmartPLS 4 data analysis was done in two phases. To determine the reliability and validity of the constructs, the Measurement Model was tested first. Second, Structural Model was implemented to test the research hypotheses. A bootstrapping process (5,000 resamples) was used in this stage to identify the statistical significance of the path coefficients and individual indirect effects in mediation as well as the predictive power of the model (R^2).

5. Results analysis:

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents that were involved in this study is given in Sample Characteristics Table 1. 229 valid questionnaires were gathered and processed. When it comes to the gender of the participants, most of the respondents were males, and they made up 79.9% of the total (n=183), and females made up 20.1% (n=46). This distribution is representative of the general workforce in the chosen industry, with men employees in many cases outnumbering their female counterparts in the operational and field positions. Regarding the level of education, the findings show that the sample is highly educated. Most of the respondents 86.9% have a bachelor's degree with 13.1 % having post-graduate degrees (Master or PhD). This is a high level of education, which implies that the respondents are cognitively mature enough to comprehend the survey questions about ETL and CSR in a positive manner. Lastly, in terms of work experience, the sample is professionally mature. The biggest category of respondents, 47.2 % is between 10 to 15 years of experience, and the other category (38.9) is below 10 years of experience. In the meantime, 14.0% of the participants have a high level of experience of over 15 years. This is a beneficial distribution to the study because the respondents who have moderate-to-high tenure have a greater chance of being more knowledgeable about the culture of the organization, leadership styles, and CSR practices.

Table (1) Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=229)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	183	79.9%
	Female	46	20.1%
		229	**100%**
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	199	86.9%

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	Post-Graduate Degree	30	13.1%
		229	**100%**
Work Experience	Less than 10 Years	89	38.9%
	10 – 15 Years	108	47.2%
	More than 15 Years	32	14.0%
		229	**100%**

5.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

The measurement model was tested to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. The reliability of the indicators was assessed first through assessing the outer loadings. Factor loadings should be more than 0.708 as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). All the item loadings as indicated in Table 2 and Figure 2 were between 0.726 EL6 and 0.934 CSR5 were confirmed as satisfactory indicator reliability.

Second, "Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability" (rho c) were used to measure internal consistency reliability. The findings indicate that the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were between 0.902 and 0.947 and Composite Reliability (rho c) were between 0.924 and 0.959. The values of all of them were above the threshold of 0.70, which means strong internal consistency.

Third, the "Average Variance Extracted (AVE)" was used to test convergent validity. The AVE of all constructs (CSR = 0.830, ETL = 0.716, OCB = 0.660) were significantly over the 0.50 level, which means that the constructs accounted for over 50 percent of the variance of their measures (Hair et al., 2019).

Table (2) Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Ethical leadership	EL1	0.850	0.920	0.921	0.716
	EL2	0.865			
	EL3	0.870			
	EL4	0.883			
	EL5	0.875			
	EL6	0.726			
CSR	CSR1	0.894	0.949	0.952	0.830
	CSR2	0.902			
	CSR3	0.924			
	CSR4	0.902			
	CSR5	0.934			
OCB	OCB1	0.844	0.896	0.898	0.660
	OCB2	0.881			
	OCB3	0.779			
	OCB4	0.839			
	OCB5	0.731			
	OCB6	0.792			

"Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)" were used to determine discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE of each latent variable (bold diagonal values) exceeds that of any other construct as reported in Table 3.

Table (3) "Fornell-Larcker criterion"

	CSR	Ethical Leadership	OCB
CSR	**0.911**		

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Ethical Leadership	0.584	**0.846**	
OCB	0.621	0.657	**0.813**

The HTMT ratios were all less than the conservative value of 0.85 (ranging between 0.619 and 0.703) as illustrated in Table 4, which clearly indicates that there was discriminant validity between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2019).

Table (4) HTMT

	CSR	Ethical Leadership	OCB
CSR			
Ethical Leadership	0.619		
OCB	0.667	0.703	

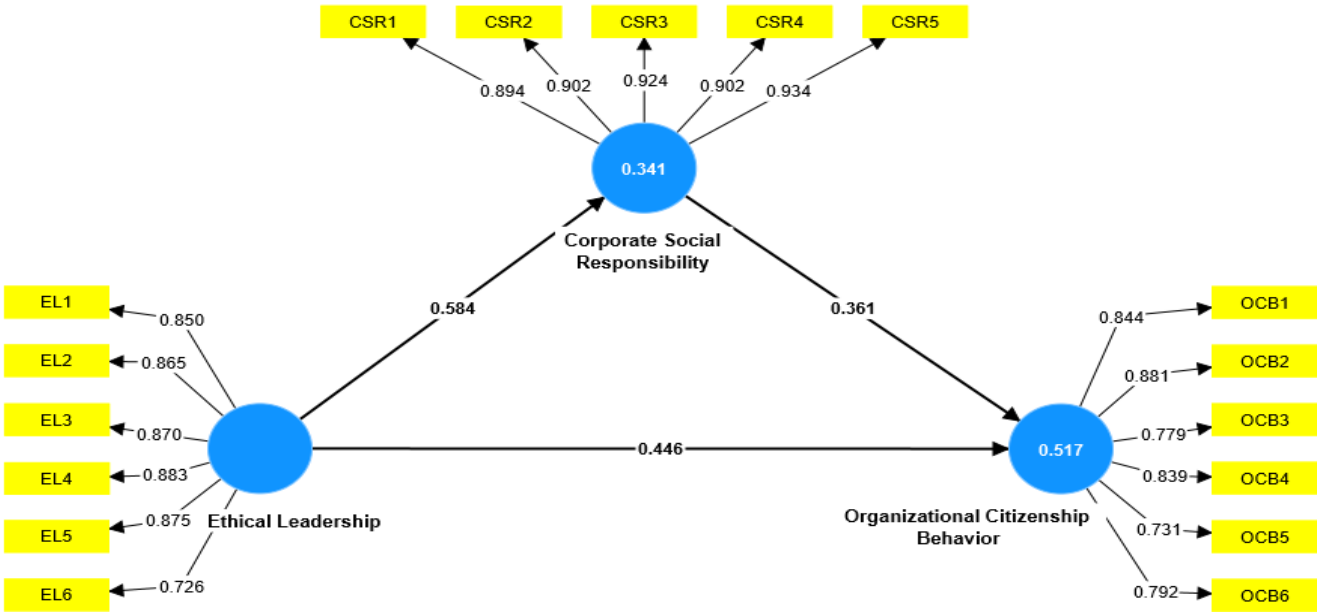


Figure 2 Measurement Model

5.3 Assessment of Structural Model

Collinearity was tested prior to testing the hypotheses. The "Variance Inflation Factor" (VIF) of the inner model was 1.000 and 1.516, which is way below the cut-off point of 3 (Hair et al., 2019), meaning that there were no collinearity problems.

The Coefficient of Determination (R2) and Effect Size (f2) were used to determine the predictive power of the model. Figure 2 showed the R2 of the model and this means the model explains 34.1 percent (R2 = 0.341) of the variance in CSR. The model accounts for 53.6 percent (R2=0.536) of variance in OCB, which is a moderate-to-strong predictive strength. The effect sizes of the variables ETL and CSR were found to be large (f2=0.516) and medium (f2=0.278), respectively, whereas CSR has a medium effect on OCB (f2=0.183).

The hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples). Table 5 results show that:

H1 Ethical Leadership positively affects OCB (β 0.446, t = 5.699 >1.96, p < 0.05). (Supported)

H2: There is significant positive relationship between Ethical Leadership and CSR with a beta of β= 0.584 and t = 10.300 >1.96 and p < 0.05. (Supported)

H3: CSR positively affects OCB significantly (β = 0.361, t = 3.976 >1.96, p < 0.05). (Supported)

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Table (5) Structural Model Results

Path	Original sample	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Result
"Ethical Leadership-> Organizational Citizenship Behavior"	0.657	0.043	15.129	0.000	Supported
"Ethical Leadership -> Corporate Social Responsibility"	0.584	0.057	10.300	0.000	Supported
"Corporate Social Responsibility -> Organizational Citizenship Behavior"	0.361	0.091	3.976	0.000	Supported

The specific indirect effect was tested to investigate the mediating effect of CSR (H4). These findings indicate that ETL has a substantial indirect impact on OCB through CSR (β= 0.211, t = 3.456 >1.96, p < 0.05). Moreover, Bias-Corrected Confidence Interval (95% CI) lies between 0.102 and 0.343. The interval does not have zero, and hence the mediation effect is significant. This implies Partial Mediation as the direct effect is also important. CSR mediates the relationship between Ethical Leadership and OCB, in part. (Supported).

Table (6) Mediation Analysis

Path	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
"Ethical Leadership -> Corporate Social _Responsibility -> Organizational Citizenship _Behavior"	0.211	0.212	0.061	3.456	0.001

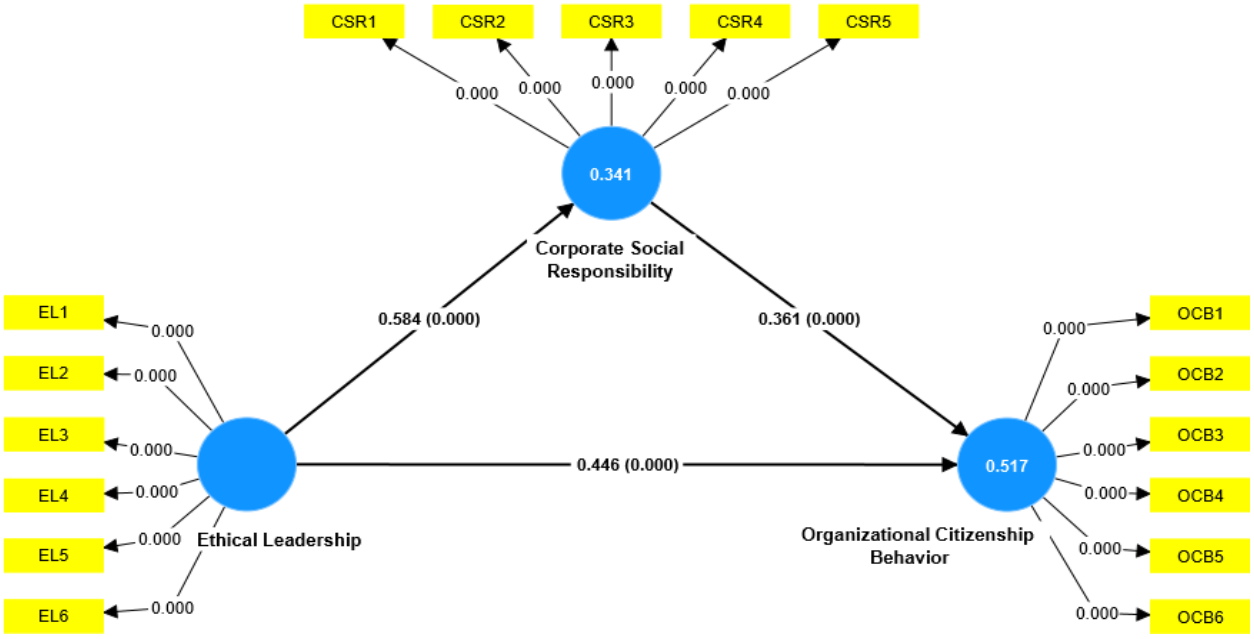


Figure 2 Structural Model

6. Discussion

The main aim of the research was to come up with a strategic model of the Iraqi private banking industry that would relate ETL with OCB mediated by CSR. The empirical findings of the Structural Equation Modeling (SmartPLS) supported all hypotheses put forward, and it gave a roadmap on how to

reform the administration of a post-conflict economy.

The Effect of ETL on CSR The results proved that there was a strong positive impact of ETL one the implementation of CSR initiatives. This implies that CSR in the Iraqi banking environment is not a bureaucratic role but the moral values of the top management. When the leaders are upright and care about the greater society, they will automatically lead the organization towards socially responsible activities. These results align with the essence of Stakeholder Theory and support the findings of Nguyen et al. (2021) and Alkhadra et al. (2023). These scholars argue that there are executives who are morally motivated and serve as stewards seeking to benefit society in the long run even at the expense of short-term profits. In addition, the findings lend weight to the claims of Pasricha et al. (2018) and their suggestion that it is principled supervisors who are the main creators of a corporate environment focused on the social good. The Effect of CSR on OCB The research found that the perceived CSR has a strong positive influence on the OCB of employees. This means that when the Iraqi bank workers view their organization as a good citizen, one that gives back to the community and treats employees fairly, they experience a feeling of pride (Social Identity) and a sense of duty (Social Exchange) to give back. As a result, they perform extra-role behavior, including assisting their colleagues and safeguarding the resources of the bank. This finding is in line with (Ahmad et al., 2020) and (Choi et al., 2020), which have made CSR a major contributor to employee discretionary effort. It is noteworthy that the result supports the sector-specific evidence presented by (Iqbal et al., 2018), which has shown that the internal ethical climate is a better predictor of employee behavior in the banking industry than financial incentives.

The Effect of ETL on OCB Consistent with Social Learning Theory, the findings showed that there was a positive direct relationship between ETL and OCB. The workers in the Iraqi private banks seem to follow the leader; when the superiors are seen to be fair and altruistic, the subordinates will replicate such actions by doing what is not in their job descriptions. This is similar to the results of (Huang et al., 2021) and (Yang & Wei, 2018) that point out that ethical leaders are role models who establish the behavioral norm of the workforce. Also, (Taamneh et al., 2024) contributes to this by implying that ETL builds a psychological contract founded on trust, which obliges employees to make voluntary contributions to the effectiveness of the organization.

The Mediating Role of CSR It is perhaps the most important finding of this study that CSR is confirmed as a mediator between ETL and OCB. This means that as much as ETL is required, it is best achieved when it is put into practical social practices (CSR). The CSR-focused environment that is established by the leader through the moral tone triggers employees to engage in OCB. This entire mediation process points out that CSR is the process by which the values of leadership are passed on to the workforce. This result confirms the theoretical framework by (Hayat et al., 2023), which established that executive ethics affect employee performance mainly by establishing a responsible organizational environment. In the same way, it resonates with (Sikand & Saxena, 2025), which claimed that sustainable leadership creates a pathway to employee citizenship via social responsibility.

7. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the literature on organizational behavior and administrative development in the emerging economies in several important ways.

First, it manages to incorporate both ETL and CSR into one unitary model to describe OCB. Although earlier studies have investigated these variables separately, this study illuminates the black box of mediation, which confirms that CSR is the psychological process by which leadership ethics are converted into employee citizenship behaviors. This is a continuation of the use of the SET to the more general

perceptions of the organization as opposed to a dyadic relationship.

Second, this study fills the need to have more empirical studies in non-Western settings. Proving the validity of Western management theories to the context of the Iraqi private banking sector, the study allows to prove that the necessity of ethical congruence and social responsibility is universal, but especially acute in post-conflict situations where the institutional trust is to be considered very weak. It makes literature richer as it gives evidence that the issue of Sustainable Employability in the Middle East is influenced by moral leadership as much as economic incentives.

8. Practical Implications

The findings have dire practical implications to the policymakers and bank executives in Iraq in their quest to achieve the aim of economic stability of the conference:

Recruitment and Training beyond Competence: Bank administrations need to change their selection criterion of branch managers and executives. Recruitment must not be done on financial prowess only but on Moral Intelligence. The leadership development programs should be implemented to teach the managers how to exemplify ethical conduct because it is the major contributor of stability of the workforce. CSR as a Strategic Employment Security: Banks no longer regard CSR as charity (Zakat/Sadaqah) or PR. Rather, CSR must be enshrined as an internal retention strategy. Banks that are fair in their treatment of employees and are involved in real community development minimize turnover intentions. A secure banking workforce translates into a secure financial sector and that is the foundation of any effort to fight national poverty.

Developing a Culture of Citizenship: Banks should have employees who practice OCB to enhance efficiency in their administration without necessarily raising costs. This paper demonstrates that you cannot command OCB, but you have to inspire it. Administrators are encouraged to understand that the road to a high-performing, collaborative workforce is initiated by the apparent integrity of the leader and the social contribution of the organization.

9. Limitations and Future Research

One methodological limitation of the present study is that it was cross-sectional and thus reflects the organizational context at a particular time. Future research should use longitudinal designs to better understand the impacts of changing leadership paradigms on citizenship behaviors over longer periods of time. Moreover, though this research concentrated on the private banking industry, future researchers are advised to apply this model in the public industry to determine the difference in the administrative contexts in their reaction to ethical leadership.

10. Conclusion

The general objective of the research was to determine the administrative and behavioral determinants of the concept of Sustainable Employability in the Iraqi private banking industry. This study demonstrates a key line of institutional resilience by empirically testing the relationship between Ethical Leadership, CSR and Organization Citizenship Behavior (OCB). The results indicate beyond reasonable doubt that the underlying source of positive organizational outcomes is the concept of Ethical Leadership. Yet, the research shows that leadership is not sufficient and should be directed by practical CSR activities to trigger the discretionary workforce efforts (OCB) to the maximum level. Employees mimic the actions of their leaders in being ethical and the organization in giving back to the society, which in turn leads to actions that increase efficiency, quality of service and stability within the organization.

Within the context of the conference in general, this paper proposes that the war on unemployment and poverty should start with the administrative restructuring of our financial institutions. Not only are we building better workplaces by developing ethical leaders and socially responsible banks, we are also building resilient institutions that are able to help the national economy and offer sustainable

livelihoods to the people of Iraq. Ethics and social responsibility, therefore, are not luxuries, but survival and growth strategies.

Data Availability:

The data available on request from authors

Conflict of Interest:

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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