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Ethical leadership and organizational resilience: exploring the interconnected dynamics

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide insights into the mechanisms through which ethical leadership impacts organizational resilience and fill the gap in the existing literature that has largely studied the two variables in isolation.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses a systematic literature review, using peer-reviewed articles focused on ethical leadership and organizational resilience published between 2018 and 2024. This study uses databases like Scopus, Google Scholar and Web of Science and keywords including "ethical leadership," "organizational resilience" and their intersections.

Findings – The findings of this study are based on the review of 14 selected papers. The review found that ethical leadership significantly enhances organizational resilience by nurturing organizational culture (organizational learning culture, ethical culture, ethical reporting, system thinking and ethical climate), promoting organizational flexibility (ability to adapt and ability to innovate) and positively impacting human capital (employee ethical conduct, trust, readiness to change, citizenship behavior, creativity and commitment). Key findings indicate that ethical leaders influence the organizational culture, supporting resilience strategies.

Research limitations/implications – This study's limitations include a limited literature search, restricted to certain databases and peer-reviewed articles in English. The focus on studies conducted between 2018 and 2024 and the methodological diversity of the studies further limited the ability to draw overall conclusions.

Originality/value – This study's originality lies in the lack of studies explicitly linking ethical leadership and organizational resilience. Most studies implicitly suggest that ethical leadership promotes organizational resilience through isolated mediating factors. This study contributes to advancing theoretical mechanisms through which ethical leaders impact resilience and suggests practical applications in organizations that want to achieve sustainability in turbulent times.

Keywords Ethical leadership, Organizational resilience, Organizational sustainability, Ethical leaders, Quality of employment

Paper type Literature review

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Modern organizations are complex and ever-changing (Goswami and Agrawal, 2023; Goswami *et al.*, 2021; Holbert *et al.*, 2021), and to succeed, they need to be resilient (Shani, 2020) and have effective leadership (Zaim *et al.*, 2021). Ethical leadership is determined by a transparent leadership style that indulges in responsible decision-making (Bachmann, 2017). Ethical leaders have a moral compass that helps them manage ethical dilemmas and challenges well. As such, ethical leaders influence the overall ethical climate of the organization and enable organizational resilience (Hillmann and Guenther, 2021; Ullah *et al.*, 2021). As defined by Brown *et al.* (2005), ethical leadership embodies normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. It promotes such conduct to followers through effective communication, reinforcement and decision-making. This conceptualization is supported by a broad spectrum of studies, indicating a consensus on the fundamental attributes of ethical leadership (Avey *et al.*, 2011; Bedi *et al.*, 2016; Ullah *et al.*, 2021). The increasing scrutiny of leadership legitimacy and diminishing trust in corporate governance underscore the imperative for ethical leadership, which is perceived as a rational response to such challenges (Bachmann, 2017; Bhatti *et al.*, 2020; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). Nevertheless, most previous studies have focused on the generalized benefits of ethical leadership and not delved into sector-specific or country or culture-specific impacts of ethical leadership (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020; Iqbal *et al.*, 2020; Joplin *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Ouakouak *et al.*, 2020; Schwepker and Dimitriou, 2021). Also, while there is substantial literature on the benefits of ethical leadership (Bhatti *et al.*, 2023), there is a lack of studies evaluating the challenges ethical leaders may face (Ciulla, 2020; Coleman and Taylor, 2023; Johnson, 2020). There are gaps in the literature related to the barriers that ethical leaders may face in diverse cultural or sector contexts and in the emerging AI-business integration that bring forth additional ethical concerns (Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2020; Kosztyán *et al.*, 2023). Though ethical leadership is known to affect sustainability or the ability to balance economic, social and environmental responsibilities for long-term viability (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020; Dey *et al.*, 2022; Ilyas *et al.*, 2020; Saha *et al.*, 2020; Saleem *et al.*, 2020), it has not been researched in terms of its more direct impacts on resilience, particularly in the context of increasingly complex and uncertain market environments. The sustainable leadership pyramid highlights critical elements like long-term decision-making, internal succession planning and a shared vision, which contribute to organizational resilience by embedding flexibility and adaptability in managerial practices (Bencsik and Berke, 2023; Vereb *et al.*, 2025).

Organizational resilience, defined as the capacity to adapt, recover and grow stronger from adverse events, is multifaceted, encompassing skills, capabilities, traits, results, procedures, conducts, tactics and performance styles (Kuenzi *et al.*, 2020; Raetze *et al.*, 2021). Despite its recognized importance, the concept needs more clarity and a standardized definition, underlining its practical and academic utility (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Hillmann and Guenther, 2021). Nevertheless, two distinct approaches to defining and assessing organizational resilience have emerged: one that views resilience primarily through an economic lens and another that adopts a holistic perspective, emphasizing a blend of individual-level and organizational capabilities (Duchek, 2020; Rodriguez-Sanchez *et al.*, 2021). There are several antecedents of organizational resilience studied in previous studies (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Do *et al.*, 2022; Hillmann and Guenther, 2021; Iftikhar *et al.*, 2021; Rodriguez-Sanchez *et al.*, 2021; Vakilzadeh and Haase, 2021) and leadership has been linked to it (Eliot, 2020; Gichuhi, 2021; Lombardi *et al.*, 2021), though most studies have focused on linkages with servant leadership (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2021; Batool *et al.*, 2022; Wiroko, 2021)

or authentic leadership (Bilgetürk and Baykal, 2021; Kleynhans *et al.*, 2021; Mao *et al.*, 2023). While both ethical leadership and organizational resilience have been studied independently in previous literature, few studies have directly and comprehensively linked ethical leadership with resilience. Additionally, recent research highlights how financial behaviors and willingness to pay, influenced by age group dynamics and economic priorities, intersect with leadership strategies to enhance organizational resilience (Kálmán *et al.*, 2024, 2025; Szalai *et al.*, 2024). Literature acknowledges the importance of ethical leadership and organizational resilience (Cheng *et al.*, 2022; Vakilzadeh and Haase, 2021), and there is a substantial indication of linkages between the two constructs (Gichuhi, 2021; Suriyankietkaew *et al.*, 2022; Vera *et al.*, 2020). However, ethical leadership and organizational resilience have been studied as standalone constructs, underscoring a gap in the existing literature. While there is recognition that leadership impacts resilience (Eliot, 2020; Gichuhi, 2021; Lombardi *et al.*, 2021) and ethical leadership improves capabilities and adaptability (Grote, 2019), there is a lack of framework that explores the direct mechanism through which ethical leadership impacts resilience (Ayoko, 2021). Ethical leadership is found to be pivotal in developing an ethical organizational climate and fostering resilience through building trust, commitment and adaptability (Katz, 2018). However, there are very few studies that have explored the direct link between ethical leadership and organizational resilience comprehensively (Rodriguez-Sanchez *et al.*, 2021). For example, studies have emphasized ethical leadership's role in developing trust and driving positive change in organizations (Sharif and Scandura, 2014) or the role of ethical leadership in developing an organizational climate that facilitates resilience (Engelke and Swegan, 2024). Furthermore, ethical leadership and organizational culture have been studied together as factors in creating an ethical environment that leads to organizational resilience and sustainability (Engelke and Swegan, 2024; Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2021, 2022; Hillmann, 2021; Hillmann and Guenther, 2021).

However, the fuller practical and operational mechanisms linking ethical leadership to resilience remain underexplored. Although studies, such as those by Kanokorn *et al.* (2013), have touched upon ethical leadership's contribution to business resilience, they often lack comprehensive and practical frameworks. Furthermore, these studies need to examine emerging trends and long-term sustainability implications.

As such, there is a need for a comprehensive exploration of the interplay between these two concepts and the constructs and mechanisms that link them. It is also essential to understand the practical applications and future implications of how ethical leadership may be linked with organizational resilience in diverse sectors, market environments or cultures. The current paper, therefore, aims to fill this gap by examining the underlying factors involved in the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational resilience through a systematic review of the literature. It also focuses on developing a deeper exploration of the benefits and challenges of ethical leaders in promoting organizational resilience and operationalizing ethical leadership in resilient organizations. This paper will also discuss emerging trends that may have future implications and intends to provide practical managerial insights for organizations aiming for long-term sustainability.

1.2 Research questions

The main objective of this paper is to provide a holistic understanding of ethical leadership benefits and challenges and to explore its relationship with organizational resilience:

- What are the benefits of ethical leadership documented in literature?
- What are the challenges faced by ethical leaders?

- How do ethical leaders impact organizational resilience?
- What are the emerging trends in ethical leadership and organizational resilience, and what implications do they hold for the future?

2. Methodology

The systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to ensure the study's rigor, reliability and validity while also serving as a guide for future research. More specifically, the research was undertaken using the following approaches:

2.1 Research design

A SLR approach was adopted to synthesize and analyze the existing literature. SLR is based on collecting, collating, synthesizing and analyzing large amounts of relevant and specific studies, which can provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic (Mohamed Shaffril *et al.*, 2021; Snyder, 2019). The current SLR, too, was undertaken to develop a comprehensive review of what is known about the benefits and challenges of ethical leadership, the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational resilience and any emerging trends that have implications for the future. The SLR research strategy included developing a search strategy, selecting the key search terms, determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria and, finally, a systematic selection of papers for the review using the PRISMA guidelines (Page *et al.*, 2021; Sarkis-Onofre *et al.*, 2021) and using Rayyan QCRI to help in the screening (Johnson and Phillips, 2018). These are discussed in detail below.

2.1.1 Databases included. The literature search used multiple academic databases, including ProQuest, Scopus and the Web of Science. These databases were selected for their credible and authoritative indexing and extensive coverage. Both ProQuest and Web of Science provide a wide array of academic journals that help explore the breadth of the topic, while Scopus offers extensive cutting-edge papers that provide the latest research. Additional sources were identified through snowballing techniques, such as scanning the reference lists of key articles and reviews.

2.1.2 Search terms. The search was based on a set of predetermined keywords, including ethical leadership and its synonyms like moral leadership, value-driven leadership, benefits, challenges, organizational resilience and its synonyms like business resilience and future trends. The synonyms were used to make the search more comprehensive.

2.1.3 Search strategy. Initially, keywords listed in Table 1 were used as depicted in Table 2, and searches were conducted using the "OR" and "AND" operators across three databases, yielding a total of 8,472 results (including Scopus: 1,401; ProQuest: 4,090; and the Web of Science: 2,981).

2.1.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria. The SLR incorporated articles based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and quality. Articles were selected for inclusion if they specifically focused on ethical leadership, organizational resilience or the interplay between these two areas. Only those published in peer-reviewed journals, available in full text and written in English were considered. This was done to ensure only high-quality articles and only those that could be reviewed fully by the research were included (Table 3).

2.2 Selection strategy

As seen above, only studies since 2018 published in English and those with available full texts were included. Also, using the guidelines set by Moher *et al.* (2009), a multiple-stage search approach using the PRISMA methodology was used (Figure 1). These results were

Table 1. Search terms

Research question	Corresponding keywords
What are the benefits of ethical leadership documented in literature?	"Ethical leadership," "moral leadership", "value-driven leadership," "benefits"
What are the challenges faced by ethical leaders?	"Ethical leadership," "moral leadership", "value-driven leadership," "challenges"
How do ethical leaders impact organizational resilience?	"Ethical leadership," "moral leadership," "value-driven leadership," "organizational resilience," "business resilience"
What are the emerging trends in ethical leadership and organizational resilience, and what implications do they hold for the future?	"Ethical leadership," "moral leadership", "value-driven leadership," "organizational resilience," "business resilience," "future trends," "emerging trends"

Source(s): Authors' own editing

Table 2. Search strategy

Search operators	Corresponding papers
"ethical leadership" or "moral leadership" OR "value-driven leadership" AND "benefits"	Scopus: 110 ProQuest: 500 Web of Science: 275
"ethical leadership" or "moral leadership" OR "value-driven leadership" AND "challenges"	Scopus: 541 ProQuest: 2,229 Web of Science: 1,179
"ethical leadership" or "moral leadership" OR "value-driven leadership" AND "organizational resilience" OR "business resilience"	Scopus: 121 ProQuest: 342 Web of Science: 198
"ethical leadership" or "moral leadership" OR "value-driven leadership" AND "organizational resilience" OR "business resilience" AND "future trends" OR "emerging trends"	Scopus: 629 ProQuest: 1,019 Web of Science: 1,329

Source(s): Authors' own editing

Table 3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
English language	Non-English language
Published 2018–2024	Published before 2018
Peer-reviewed articles only	Full text not available
Full-text journal articles	Books, conference papers, thesis

Source(s): Authors' own editing

then imported into Rayyan software (Ouzzani *et al.*, 2016). In the second stage, 3,171 duplicate records were identified and removed, which reduced the included papers to 5,301. The third stage involved a more detailed screening based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 3. This also included manual reading of the articles' titles and ensuring that only those explicitly mentioned ethical leadership and organizational resilience were included. This stage further narrowed the articles to 115. Next, the study abstracts were

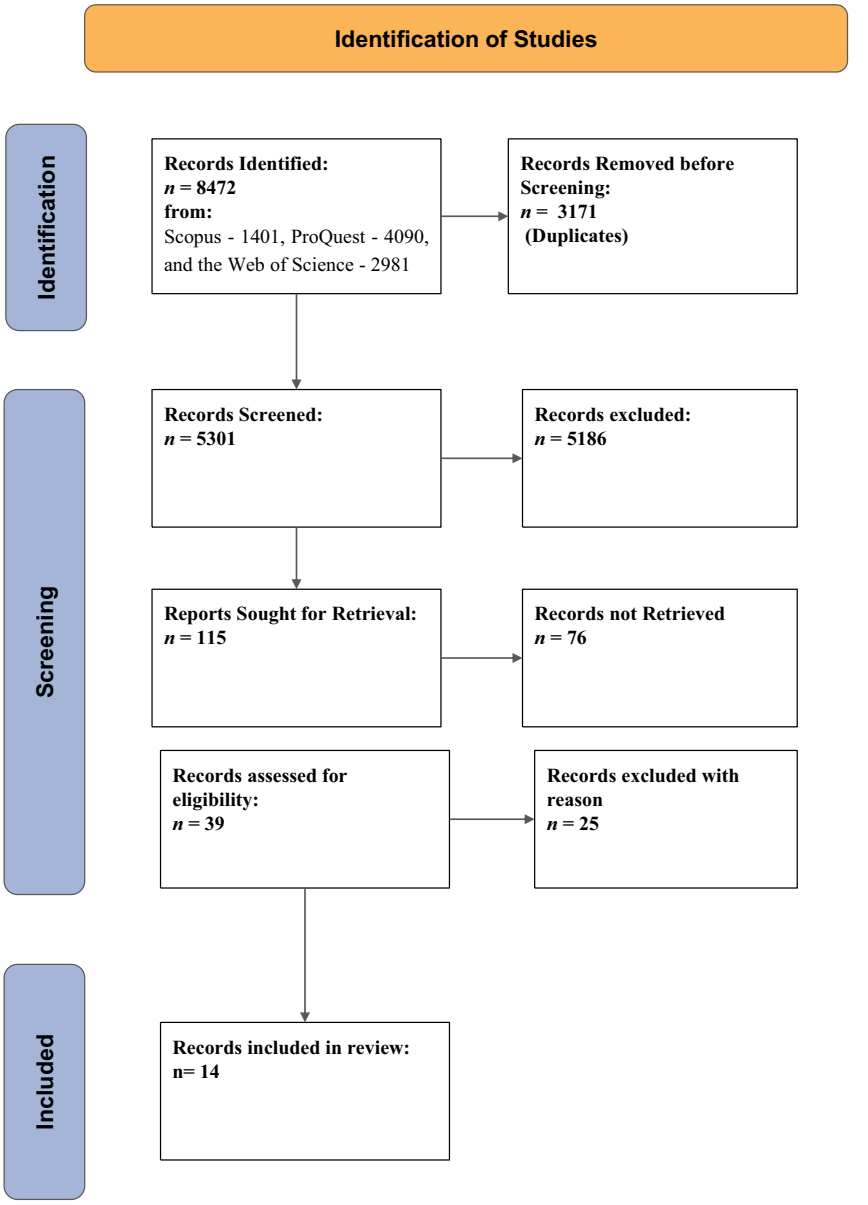

Figure 1. PRISMA method for screening
Source: Authors' own editing

reviewed to assess their eligibility and relevance, reducing the pool to 39 studies. Finally, a CASP appraisal (Long *et al.*, 2020) led to the final selection of 14 studies for the final review, elaborated in Table 4.

Table 4 contains 14 studies from diverse regions exploring ethical leadership from various perspectives and its impact on organizational resilience. The studies use different methodologies, including quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and case studies. Additionally, they cover regions such as Nigeria, Turkey, Oman, France, New Zealand, Uganda, Pakistan and Iraq, as well as global contexts. Table 4 gives a brief overview of the findings related to the role of ethical leadership in enhancing organizational culture, innovation, resilience, employee behavior and crisis management across different sectors and cultural settings.

The studies are further appraised in terms of their quality in the following section.

2.3 Quality appraisal

The quality of studies is essential to ensure their integrity, trustworthiness and credibility and, as such, needs to be evaluated. Critical Appraisal Skills Program (Long *et al.*, 2020) and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tool (Munn *et al.*, 2019) are used to assess the quality (Moorley and Cathala, 2019). The instruments are tailored for various approaches with specific checklists and are capable of evaluating studies in various fields. The CASP tool was mainly used in the current evaluation process, as it had a proven track record of enhancing clarity and rigorous reporting standards (Long *et al.*, 2020). It is also straightforward and accessible and is also easy to implement (Long *et al.*, 2020). The CASP tool provides a structured set of questions, which help evaluate a study's methodological soundness, relevance to a topic, applicability and reliability. As such, the CASP tool helped assess each included study in the current research (Appendix).

The studies were manually reviewed and presented in a matrix form where the findings, methodology, location and other details were listed. A manual thematic analysis was conducted to develop the themes and connections between the studies and is presented in the next section.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Meta-analysis

The review revealed that ethical leadership and organizational resilience have been studied across diverse disciplines and published in a range of journals (Figure 2).

The diversity of publications indicates that this is an expanding field of study. Ethical leadership, resilience, innovation and ethical behavior have been studied along with these topics across diverse organizational settings.

Next, Figure 3 shows the distribution of studies across different countries.

Figure 3 underscores the global representation of studies – from the Middle East and Africa to Europe and Asia. This suggests an increasing focus on ethical leadership in regions that are currently experiencing transformations in their society and business environment. Subsequently, the studies have used quantitative, qualitative and theoretical approaches, indicating the complex nature of research in ethical leadership and organizational resilience.

3.2 Underpinning theories

The research is supported by ethical leadership theory (Banks *et al.*, 2021) and organizational resilience theory (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Ethical leadership theory is a framework for understanding how leaders can influence their organizations through moral principles. It also shows how integrity, fairness and transparency may create an environment supporting ethical behavior and decision-making (Shakeel *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, organizational

Table 4. Studies included in the review

Paper	Title	Methodology	Findings
Tamunomiebi (2018)	The moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between ethical managerial practices and organizational resilience in tertiary health institutions in Bayelsa state, Nigeria	Quantitative survey-based cross-sectional research using 83 directors and heads of departments from the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa and Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital	Organizational culture has a moderating role in the relationship between ethical managerial practices and organizational resilience
Özsungur (2019)	The impact of ethical leadership on service innovation behavior: the mediating role of psychological capital	A quantitative survey of 376 blue-collar workers from 140 joint stock companies in Adana, Turkey	Ethical leadership significantly affects innovation and is mediated by psychological capital on service innovation behavior
Thomas (2020)	Organizational resilience of NGOs in Oman. *GIS business*	Quantitative Survey of 200 NGOs in Oman	Leadership positively impacts ethical culture and resilience
Ginocchio (2023)	Organizational resilience: Case study of SGPROD medical IT company	Case study of one medical IT company in France	Effective communication, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership enhance resilience
Cook *et al.* (2021)	Nurses on the frontlines in Aotearoa, New Zealand, navigating through the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, engaged in sensemaking	Qualitative research was conducted through online, in-depth interviews with 29 frontline nurses; the data set was extracted from a large nationwide mixed methodology study of frontline nurses in New Zealand	Ethical leadership supports nurses' resilience during COVID-19 through effective sensemaking
Musenze and Mayende (2023)	Ethical leadership (EL) and innovative work behavior (IWB) in public universities: examining the moderating role of perceived organizational support (POS)	Quantitative questionnaire-based study using 291 academic staff in a university in Uganda	Ethical leadership led to innovative work behavior but was moderated by organizational support
Shafique *et al.* (2020)	How ethical leadership influences creativity and organizational innovation: Examining the underlying mechanisms	A quantitative survey of 322 IT employees in Pakistan	Ethical leadership led to creativity and organizational innovation
Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023)	Ethical leadership as a prerequisite for sustainable development, sustainable finance and ESG reporting. In: Dion, M. (eds) Sustainable finance and financial crime. Sustainable finance	Quantitative survey of 153 firms from 24 countries and 11 sectors across the globe	Ethical leaders impact promoting behaviors like timely and transparent disclosure of ESG policies

(*continued*)

Table 4. Continued

Paper	Title	Methodology	Findings
Lin *et al.* (2020)	The adoption of technological innovations in a B2B context and its impact on firm performance: An ethical leadership perspective	The adoption of technological innovations in a B2B context and its impact on firm performance: An ethical leadership perspective. Global perspective	Technological innovation positively impacts firm performance, particularly when paired with ethical leadership, which acts as a moderating factor; strong ethical leadership enhances the positive effects of technological innovation on firm performance
Crosweller and Tschakert (2020)	Climate change and disasters: the ethics of leadership	Systematic literature review of related literature and employs examples of natural hazards in Australia	Incorporating ethical leadership practices, such as those found in feminist care ethics and relational leadership ethics, can help bridge this gap by promoting more compassionate and inclusive decision-making processes
Vito *et al.* (2023)	Leadership and Organizational Challenges, Opportunities, Resilience, and Supports during the COVID-19 Pandemic	A qualitative study was conducted using a focus group and an online survey (qualitative questions) on 25 directors and managers of three mental health facilities in Canada	Ethical leaders face organizational challenges, such as striking a balance between differing agendas, managing external and internal relationships and safety versus service delivery
Sarwar *et al.* (2020)	Ethical leadership, work engagement, employees' well-being, and performance: a cross-cultural comparison	A quantitative survey using 295 workers from diverse organizations in Iraq	Ethical leadership and ethical organizational climate were directly linked and the ethical climate impacted the ethical behavior of employees
Metwally *et al.* (2019)	How ethical leadership shapes employees' readiness to change: the Mediating Role of an Organizational Culture of Effectiveness	This study used a quantitative approach with a survey methodology; data were collected from 270 employees of three of the largest public foreign trade organizations in Egypt in two rounds	Ethical leadership significantly and positively affects employees' readiness to change, and an organizational culture of effectiveness mediates this relationship; ethical leaders can also shape the organizational culture
Al Halbusi *et al.* (2020)	Examining the impact of ethical leadership and organizational justice on employees' ethical behavior: Does person–organization fit to play a role?	A survey-based methodology using 295 employees from organizations in Iraq	Ethical leadership positively influences employees' ethical behavior, and this relationship is mediated by organizational justice; furthermore, the impact of organizational justice on ethical behavior is stronger among employees with a high P–O fit compared to those with a low P–O fit

(*continued*)

Table 4. Continued

Paper	Title	Methodology	Findings
Ali *et al.* (2018)	Ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior: Mediating role of organizational justice: a Case Study of Education Sector	A survey-based study using 250 faculty members in educational institutes in Pakistan	The study found a direct positive impact of ethical leadership on employee outcomes like organizational citizenship behavior; also, the perception of organizational justice moderated the relationship
Tufan *et al.* (2023)	The mediating effect of organizational justice perception on the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace deviant behaviors	The quantitative survey-based study used 487 customs officers working at 28 international airports across Turkey	The findings suggest that EL negatively impacts workplace deviant behavior; the relationship was moderated by the perceptions of organizational justice
Osman *et al.* (2024)	The impact of ethical leadership on Employee Ethical Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Employees' Resilience In KSA	The study used a survey to assess the academic and non-academic staff of King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia	The study found that ethical behavior impacted both employee resilience and employee ethical behavior; though employee resilience did not lead to ethical behavior per se

Source(s): Authors' own editing

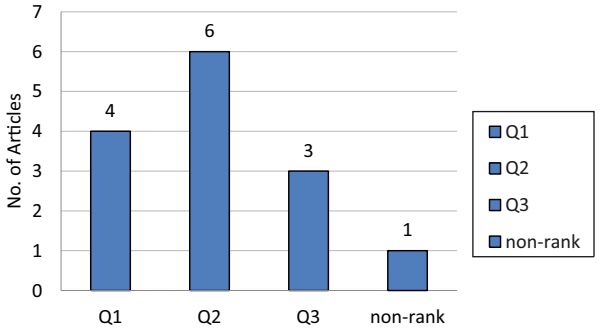

Figure 2. Journal rankings
Source: Authors' own editing

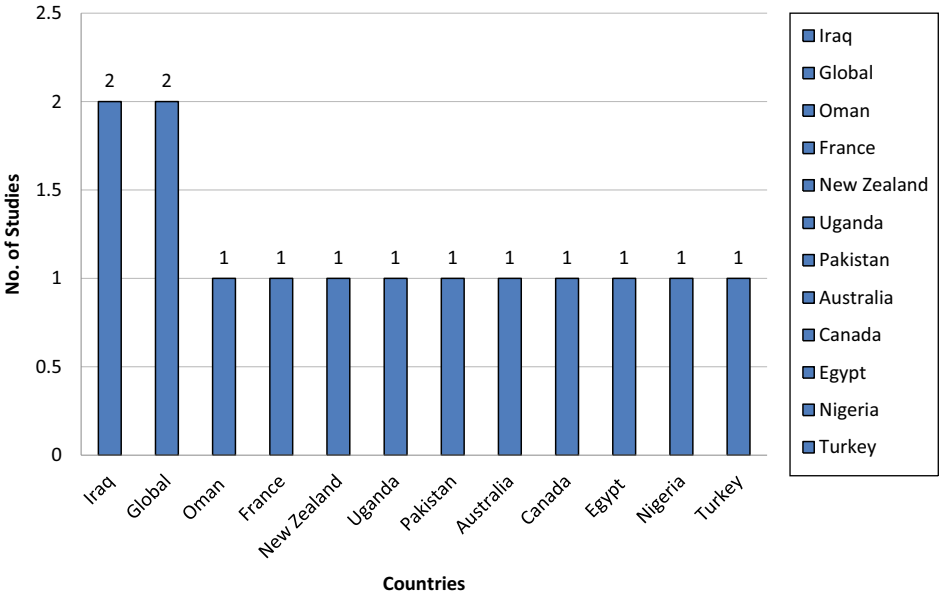

Figure 3. Visual representation of the countries covered in the selected articles
Source: Authors' own editing

resilience theory explores how organizations can adapt to changes and adversities. This theory can be used to understand ethical leadership's role in enhancing organizations' resilience (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive view of how ethical leadership can be a pivotal factor in an organization's resilience. The ethical leadership theory (Banks *et al.*, 2021; Shakeel *et al.*, 2019) forms the primary conceptual foundation of the study. It explains how ethical leadership, grounded in principles such as fairness, integrity and transparency, influences employee behavior, shapes ethical

organizational climates and supports decision-making processes. The theory informs how ethical leaders foster trust and guide ethical conduct across the organization.

The organizational resilience theory (Chen *et al.*, 2021) supports our understanding of how organizations build the capacity to adapt to, recover from and grow through adversity. It frames resilience as a capability influenced by organizational learning, innovation, adaptability and systems thinking – all of which are shown in this review to be linked with ethical leadership practices.

While the transformational leadership theory (Banks *et al.*, 2021; Thomas, 2020) is not the focus of this study, this theory is referenced in the literature reviewed, particularly where transformational and ethical leadership overlap in influencing organizational learning, innovation and adaptability, key drivers of resilience (Table 5).

These three theoretical lenses collectively underpin the integrative framework developed in this study. The review shows how ethical leadership enhances resilience through mechanisms such as fostering ethical organizational culture, promoting innovative behavior, enabling employee readiness to change and supporting ethical reporting and system thinking. By explicitly naming and integrating these theories, this study extends prior research and contributes to a clearer understanding of how ethical leadership serves as both a direct enabler and strategic catalyst for organizational resilience.

3.3 Ethical leadership, benefits, challenges and emerging trends in the implementation of organizational resilience

Table 6 summarizes the studies included in this paper and categorizes them on the basis of their focus and findings, which are summarized as follows:

Benefits: Nine papers focused on the benefits of ethical leadership in organizational resilience. A prominent benefit of ethical leadership was reported by Sarwar *et al.* (2020) for its impact on employee ethical behavior. Metwally *et al.* (2019) found ethical leadership to have a positive effect on employees' readiness to change. It also discussed how ethical leaders may help the development of a supportive organizational culture. Other benefits mentioned included a positive impact on organizational learning. Ethics training and system thinking within the organization (Thomas, 2020) and the development of both social capital and political capital were also examined (Thomas, 2020). Additional benefits mentioned in the literature include a direct and significant impact on psychological capital, innovation and service innovation (Özsungur, 2019). Moreover, innovative work behavior has been linked to ethical leadership by Musenze and Mayende (2023), with organizational innovation and employee creativity (Shafique *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, a benefit of ethical leadership in promoting organizational sustainability is cited by Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023), which promotes behaviors like timely and transparent disclosure of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies. Cook *et al.* (2021) have postulated that ethical leadership can play a crucial role in developing situational and crisis resilience through sense-making.

Table 5. Underpinning theories

References	Applied theory/model
Banks *et al.* (2021); Shakeel *et al.* (2019)	Ethical leadership theory
Chen *et al.* (2021)	Organizational resilience theory

Source(s): Authors' own editing

Table 6. Benefits, challenges and emerging trends of ethical leadership

Authors	Benefits							Challenges				Emerging trends			
	Positive employee outcomes/ethical and responsible behavior/readiness to change/creativity	Organizational learning	Ethical organizational culture and climate	Ethics training and systems thinking	Innovation	Ethical reporting	Resilience/social capital/stability/ sustainability	Person organization fit	Complexity of decisions/ situational ambiguity	Balancing competing priorities	Ethical leadership (EL) during emergency	EL in NGOs	EL leading innovation	EL and employee social and environmental awareness
Sarwar *et al.* (2020)	*		*					*						
Metwally *et al.* (2019)	*													
Ginocchio (2023)			*				*							
Tamunomiebi (2018)			*				*							
Thomas (2020)		*		*			*							
Özsungur (2019)	*				*								*	*
Musenze and Mayende (2023)					*									
Shafique *et al.* (2020)	*				*									
Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023)						*	*							
Al Halbusi *et al.* (2020)								*						
Crosweller and Tschakert (2020)									*		*			
Vito *et al.* (2023)										*				
Cook *et al.* (2021)											*			
Lin *et al.* (2020)													*	

Source(s): Authors' own editing

Similarly, a benefit of ethical leadership is pointed out by Ginocchio (2023) for an non-governmental organization's (NGO) resilience that often struggles for survival.

Challenges: Four studies were found that underscored the challenges faced by ethical leadership in implementing organizational resilience. These included challenges related to alignment with organizational culture and person–organization (P–O) fit (Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2020; Sarwar *et al.*, 2020), navigation of complex decision-making process (Crosweller and Tschakert, 2020) and balancing the diverse organizational agenda (Vito *et al.*, 2023).

Emerging trends: Five studies have highlighted the emerging trends in ethical leadership and its impact on organizational resilience-related literature. For example, Cook *et al.* (2021) have pointed out the role played by clinical leaders in healthcare settings during the pandemic, while Ginocchio (2023) has underscored the importance of ethical leadership in NGOs' resilience and viability. Özsungur (2019) and Lin *et al.* (2020) have linked ethical leadership to organizational resilience through its impact on innovation, while Özsungur (2019) has also highlighted the effect of ethical leaders on social and environmental awareness among employees. Crosweller and Tschakert (2020) have underscored the challenges faced by ethical leadership during disaster and emergency management, as the neo-governmental approach is to downplay vulnerabilities but hold individuals accountable for any lack of management.

4. Discussion

4.1 Benefits, challenges and emerging trends in ethical leadership

The review focused on the benefits and challenges of ethical leadership and the main themes that emerged are presented in Table 6.

4.1.1 Benefits. 4.1.1.1 Positive employee outcomes. Several studies have linked ethical leadership with employee behavior outcomes. For example, Ali *et al.* (2018) and Tufan *et al.* (2023) discuss the interplay between ethical leadership and employee behavior. Using a sample of 295 workers from diverse organizations in Iraq, Sarwar *et al.* (2020) found that ethical leadership and ethical organizational climate were directly linked, and the ethical climate impacted employees' ethical behavior. Similarly, Metwally *et al.* (2019), using 270 employees from three foreign trade organizations in Egypt, reported that ethical leadership significantly and positively affects employees' readiness to change, and an organizational culture of effectiveness mediates this relationship.

4.1.1.2 Ethical organizational culture and climate. Ginocchio (2023) found that ethical leadership, emotional intelligence and effective communication can significantly strengthen organizational culture. Thus, ethical leadership contributes to organizational resilience during turbulent times (Ginocchio, 2023). Ethical leaders can build two-way open communications and maintain positive and ethical emotions, impacting employees' ability to sustain themselves during environmentally turbulent times. Similarly, Tamunomiebi (2018) reported organizational culture's direct and moderating effects on managerial ethical practices and resilience in a study of 113 directors and heads of departments at the University Teaching Hospital in Kolobiri. Tamunomiebi (2018) found that directors' strict adherence to ethical principles could foster a culture conducive to resilience. As such, ethical managerial practices not only impact the operational aspects of an organization but also contribute to its ability to withstand and adapt to challenges. Osman *et al.* (2024) discussed the critical role of ethical leadership in fostering an ethical organizational climate and resilience.

4.1.1.3 Organizational learning, ethics training and systems thinking. Thomas (2020) found that transformational leadership (which has some overlap with ethical leadership [Banks *et al.*, 2021]) facilitates organizational learning and adaptation. Organizational learning and adaptation are considered to be the critical components of resilience (Thomas, 2020).

Using 200 managerial-level respondents from NGOs in Oman, Thomas (2020) found that ethical and caring leaders were likely to positively impact ethics training and system thinking within the organization. In this manner, they were able to help develop social capital and political stability for the organization and help build resilience. Thomas (2020), therefore, also indirectly links ethical leadership to organizational resilience.

4.1.1.4 Innovation. Özsungur (2019) linked ethical leadership with psychological capital, innovation and service innovation in a survey of 376 employees from 1,294 joint stock companies across Turkey. This research also linked ethical leadership with developing ethical, socially aware and responsible employees.

Innovation is a key benefit of ethical leadership in other studies as well. For example, Musenze and Mayende (2023) found that the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behavior was moderated by perceived organizational support. Musenze and Mayende (2023) used 291 academic university employees from Uganda and concluded that employee innovative work behavior, which has been linked with resilience in several studies like Azevedo and Shane (2019) and Lisbet *et al.* (2023), was a beneficial outcome of ethical leadership. Organizational innovation and followers' creativity has also been reported as an outcome of ethical leadership by Shafique *et al.* (2020). Using data from 322 small IT firms in Pakistan, it was found that ethical leadership fosters employee creativity through psychological empowerment and knowledge sharing while directly leading to organizational innovation. On the other hand, organizational innovation has been linked with organizational resilience in several studies (Shafique *et al.*, 2020).

4.1.1.5 Ethical reporting. As illustrated by Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023), ethical leadership leads to organizational resilience by promoting timely and transparent disclosure of ESG policies. Ethical leaders are likely to create a trustworthy, fair, compassionate and resilient workplace. Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023) based their findings on a study of 153 firms from 24 countries and 11 sectors using an econometric model to determine their success. These 153 firms were considered ethical and sustainable, and Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023) found evidence to support a significant correlation between these sustainable firms and ethical leadership. Cook *et al.* (2021) in New Zealand illustrated the role of ethical leadership in supporting nurses' resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While substantial literature is available on the benefits of ethical leadership, most studies have linked it indirectly to organizational resilience as seen above. Most of the above studies have yet to directly focus on ethical leadership's benefits in promoting organizational resilience, focusing only on the factors moderating or mediating the relationship between the two constructs. Nevertheless, the few studies that have delved into the subject have found that ethical leadership plays a crucial role in promoting organizational resilience by including employees' readiness to change, responsible and ethical behavior, creativity and generating a conducive organizational climate and culture that supports resilience. Ethical leadership encourages organizational learning, system thinking, ethical training and ethical reporting, as well as helping build up social capital and sustainability. All these factors have direct and indirect linkages with organizational resilience.

4.1.2 Challenges. While the benefits are significant, ethical leadership can also present challenges, especially in alignment with organizational culture and P–O fit, navigation of complex decision-making processes and balancing the diverse organizational agenda.

4.1.2.1 Culture alignment. One major challenge is the potential need for more alignment between leaders' ethical standards and organizational culture. For example, Sarwar *et al.* (2020) found that ethical leadership could positively impact employee ethical behavior, but the relationship was moderated by the P–O fit (which manifested as value and goal

congruence or as a fitness between organizational culture and employee personality). As such, ethical leaders are likely to face challenges in the absence of such P–O fit.

Al Halbusi *et al.* (2020) reported from their survey-based study of 295 Iraqi employees that ethical leadership positively influences employees' ethical behavior, but this relationship was mediated by organizational justice. Furthermore, the impact of organizational justice on ethical behavior was stronger among employees with a high P–O fit compared to those with a low P–O fit. In this scenario, leadership will likely be challenged when organizational justice is lacking, and P–O fit is high.

4.1.2.2 Navigating complex decisions. Ethical leadership can also present challenges, especially in complex situations where ethical clarity is not easily achieved. Leaders may face dilemmas where they must balance business goals with ethical considerations. For example, according to Crosweller and Tschakert (2020), ethical leadership faces significant challenges in disaster and emergency management because of the neo-governmental stance of underplaying vulnerabilities and blaming individuals rather than organizations. Crosweller and Tschakert (2020) develop a framework, using the natural hazard crisis in Australia, to show how leaders are caught in a dilemma to protect citizens and manage disasters most responsibly and ethically.

4.1.2.3 Balancing responsibilities. Vito *et al.* (2023) reported that ethical leaders face multiple challenges to streamline priorities and responsibilities, especially during a crisis. Using in-depth focus groups and surveys of 25 directors and managers from three mental health facilities in Canada, Vito *et al.* (2023) found challenges related to balancing competing agendas during the pandemic. These included strained internal/external relationships and challenges related to balancing standards of service delivery with staff safety.

The review shows that ethical leaders struggle to have an impact if there is a lack of P–O fit, if they are faced with complex decisions, especially during emergencies which create ambiguity on ethical conduct, and when there are multiple priorities that they need to take care of. Reading these findings in light of the benefits provided by ethical leadership, especially in creating supportive mechanisms for organizational resilience as seen in the previous section, it becomes important to understand the barriers that hinder ethical leaders and explore methods of removing them. This review, therefore, provides valuable insights to guide future research in the above-mentioned direction.

4.1.3 Emerging trends in ethical leadership and organizational resilience. 4.1.3.1 Ethical leadership and resilience in crisis. A notable trend in the current literature is the growing emphasis on the role of ethical leadership in sectors characterized by high stress and crises, such as health-care and emergency services. For example, Cook *et al.* (2021) discuss how ethical leadership helped frontline nurses in New Zealand through the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through ethical leadership, these nurses were able to undertake effective sensemaking that led to resilience during the crisis (Cook *et al.*, 2021). This study was based on interviews with 29 frontline nurses, and it found that clinical leaders whose roles matched closely with ethical leaders had played an important role in building resilience among the staff. Such clinical leaders had been at the forefront of managing and sustaining the operations of the health-care system during COVID-19. Similarly, Crosweller and Tschakert (2020) found that incorporating ethical leadership practices during a crisis can enable more compassionate and inclusive decision-making processes. Crosweller and Tschakert (2020) developed a conceptual framework to support decision-making during natural disasters in Australia that called for a collective and ethically grounded response to disaster management using ethical leadership.

4.1.3.2 Ethical leadership and resilience in non-governmental organizations. Ginocchio (2023) suggests that ethical leadership may play a crucial role in creating and sustaining resilience among NGOs. NGOs often struggle to face external challenges and funding pressures, and Ginocchio (2023) found that ethical leadership can help support staff well-being and organizational stability.

4.1.3.3 Ethical leadership and resilience by technology innovation. The review of the literature indicates that ethical leadership plays a role in developing an innovation culture by encouraging service innovation (Özsungur, 2019). Ethical leadership is also found to moderate the impact of technological innovation on firm performance and resilience (Lin *et al.*, 2020). Using data from 465 IT service firms, Lin *et al.* (2020) found that ethical leadership was key in promoting innovation and staying ahead of the competition even during environmental turbulence.

4.1.3.4 Ethical leadership and social resilience. Ethical leadership fosters a culture of responsibility and ethical conduct within organizations, but this can extend beyond the workplace. Employees whom ethical leaders guide are more likely to engage in socially responsible behaviors at work and in their personal lives (Thomas, 2020). These employees develop a heightened awareness and commitment to ethical practices and, as such, may indulge more in community engagement. They may support sustainable practices and advocate for social justice. Thus, it is seen that ethical leadership may have a multiplier effect on society by impacting employee behavior beyond the organizational boundaries (Özsungur, 2019). Moreover, research highlights that ethical attitudes can significantly influence broader societal and organizational outcomes. For example, integrating ethical behavior into educational curriculums demonstrates that fostering ethical awareness among students leads to improved workplace behavior and heightened awareness of social responsibility. These findings suggest that ethical leadership can also play a pivotal role in shaping future leaders' values and practices, particularly through education and mentoring (Barizsné Hadházi *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, ethical leaders can influence organizational policies and practices. They are likely to prioritize social and environmental sustainability-related organizational policies. These may include starting and implementing green initiatives, promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and ensuring transparent and ethical governance (Krambia-Kapardis *et al.*, 2023; Lin *et al.*, 2020). Such organizations, in turn, can set a standard for others in the industry to follow, thus leading to a more resilient society.

4.2 Ethical leadership and organizational resilience

In Section 4, there are almost no studies that have explored the direct linkages between ethical leadership and organizational resilience. However, findings have provided insight into the indirect ways this relationship has been explored. Moreover, the findings reveal the impact of ethical leadership on organizational resilience in sector-specific and culturally diverse contexts. For example, Sarwar *et al.* (2020) in Iraq and Metwally *et al.* (2019) in Egypt have provided country-specific insights by linking ethical leadership with the creation of a conducive organizational culture and positive employee outcomes that can lead to resilience and sustainability. Similarly, Metwally *et al.* (2019), Thomas (2020), Ginocchio (2023) and Tamunomiebi (2018) have undertaken research within the context of the stock exchange, NGOs, health care and education sectors. It can be said that ethical leadership is likely to impact organizational outcomes in diverse settings and contexts.

Moreover, the review has also linked ethical leadership with practices like ESG (Krambia-Kapardis *et al.*, 2023), which have a long-term impact on organizational resilience. Similarly, Özsungur (2019) and Shafique *et al.* (2020) have reported innovation and employee creativity

as outcomes of ethical leadership, which are essential for navigating global uncertainty and turbulence. The studies underscore the importance of ethical leadership in enabling organizational learning, creativity and building long-term resilience across diverse industries and regions. Thomas (2020) also revealed how the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational resilience is moderated in diverse cultural and operational contexts. For example, Thomas' (2020) study in Oman shows that leadership positively influences ethical culture (an organizational culture that encourages ethical practices and behaviors) and resilience. In addition, Tamunomiebi (2018) in Nigeria and Musenze and Mayende (2023) emphasize the moderating role of organizational culture and support in the relationship between ethical leadership and resilience, which parallels our observation of the importance of cultural and contextual factors.

The review, therefore, provides a comprehensive understanding of how ethical leadership may be impacting organizational resilience (Figure 4) and paves the way for further research.

4.3 Future implications

As organizations face growing complexities and ethical challenges, there is a greater need for leaders who can navigate these with integrity and foresight. Future research should, thus, focus on developing frameworks that integrate ethical leadership more deeply with organizational strategies. They need to explore the impact of digital transformation and globalized work environments on ethical leadership practices. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of ethical leadership on organizational resilience, as most current studies are cross-sectional.

This analysis underscores the importance of ethical leadership in shaping organizational resilience by critically reviewing the benefits, challenges and emerging trends associated

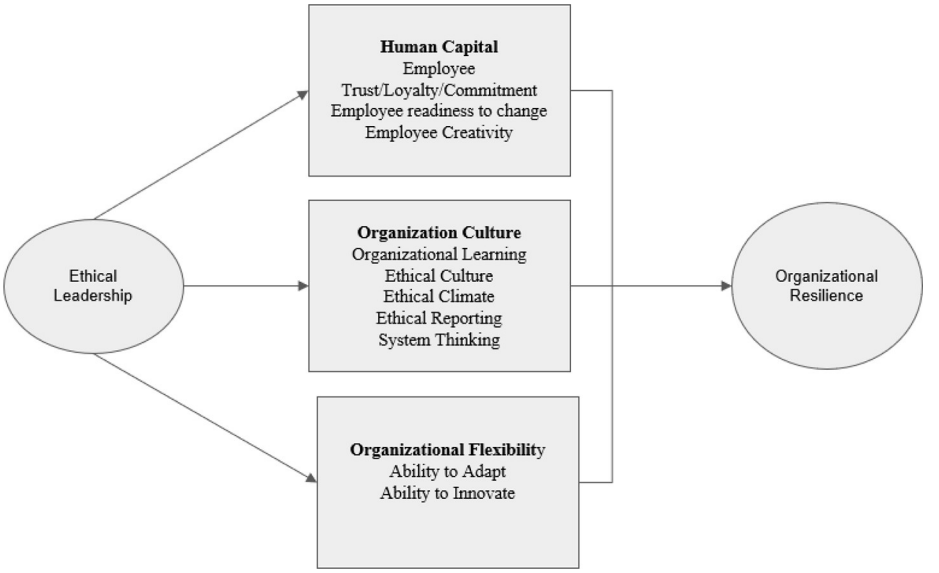

Figure 4. Framework for ethical leadership and organizational resilience
Source: Authors' own editing

with it. Nevertheless, there is a need for ongoing scholarly engagement on how ethical leadership can evolve to meet emerging organizational demands and challenges in the future.

5. Conclusion

This SLR critically examined the benefits and challenges of ethical leadership in promoting organizational resilience. It also discussed the emerging trends in ethical leadership and their future implications. The findings highlight the crucial role of ethical leadership in fostering an organizational culture that can lead to resilience and long-term sustainability of organizations. This paper identified critical benefits like enhanced trust, improved organizational adaptability and stronger alignment with ethical standards. These benefits collectively contribute to organizational resilience. It was also found that there were challenges related to aligning ethical leadership with existing organizational cultures. The review highlighted the discrepancies between leaders' and followers' ethical perceptions. Finally, it was found that the emerging trends indicate an increasing importance of ethical leadership in managing diversity, crisis and global challenges effectively.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This research contributes significantly to both academic discourse and practical applications, as it offers profound insights into the development of leadership frameworks and strategies that can enhance ethical conduct and resilience. Its main contribution is that it advances the existing theories by providing a novel integrative framework showing how ethical leadership simultaneously influences resilience through both employee behavior and organizational culture. This perspective has been largely unexplored in literature previously. For example, Ginocchio (2023) highlighted the enhancement of organizational resilience through effective communication, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership (Ginocchio, 2023).

The review integrated concepts from emotional intelligence, innovation, employee behavior, transformational leadership and strategic leadership theories, which helped better understand ethical leadership's multifaceted role in enhancing organizational resilience. For example, research by Sarwar *et al.* (2020) and Al Halbusi *et al.* (2020) in Iraq underscores the positive influence of ethical leadership on employees' ethical behavior and organizational justice, along with Ali *et al.* (2018) and Tufan *et al.* (2023) who discuss the interplay between ethical leadership and employee behavior. The current study further builds on these findings and extends their applicability to global contexts and unpredictable situations, where ethical leadership is linked to resilience through innovation and adaptability.

Also, Özsungur (2019) found that ethical leadership positively influences service innovation and psychological capital, while Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) reported ethical leadership fosters a culture of innovation and resilience. Similarly, Shafique *et al.* (2020) further demonstrate that ethical leadership promotes creativity and organizational innovation, essential components of organizational resilience. The current study refines their findings by showing the importance of creativity and innovation within the ethical leadership framework and underscoring their complex impact on organizational resilience.

The current study also further strengthens the linkages between ethical leadership and resilience, as shown in earlier works. For example, Cook *et al.* (2021) in New Zealand illustrated the role of ethical leadership in supporting nurses' resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023) and Lin *et al.* (2020) highlight the widespread recognition of ethical leadership in promoting sustainable development and technological innovation.

It has also been found that ethical leadership is beneficial for immediate managerial outcomes and crucial for fostering resilience in the face of global and unpredictable changes.

For example, Osman *et al.* (2024) discussed the critical role of ethical leadership in fostering an ethical organizational climate and resilience (Osman *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, Shwetha *et al.* (2024) and Hoch *et al.* (2018) synthesize that ethical leadership is vital for organizational adaptability and resilience. This study extends the role played by ethical leadership and provides insights on how ethical leadership acts as a direct enabler of resilience, as well as a catalyst for organizations future resilience during volatile times by supporting creativity, innovation and adaptability.

The SLR also revealed how the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational resilience is moderated in diverse cultural and operational contexts. For example, Thomas' (2020) study in Oman shows that leadership positively influences ethical culture and resilience. In addition, Tamunomiebi (2018) in Nigeria and Musenze and Mayende (2023) emphasize the moderating role of organizational culture and support in the relationship between ethical leadership and resilience, which parallels our observation of the importance of cultural and contextual factors. By including studies from diverse countries, this review deepens the understanding of the cultural and contextual moderators and identifies the specific mechanisms like shared values that impact on ethical leaders' efficacy.

5.2 Managerial implications

For practitioners, this review highlights the practical importance of focusing on ethical leadership as a driver of organizational resilience. Managers can be encouraged to cultivate ethical leadership styles, adhere to ethical norms and values and lead by example through transparent and consistent actions. The research also provides insights for managers to encourage them to consider the alignment of ethical leadership with organizational culture as a critical factor for long-term organizational resilience. Training programs and leadership development initiatives should emphasize ethical decision-making, cultural sensitivity and crisis management to prepare leaders for the challenges of modern organizational environments.

6. Limitations and future research directions

6.1 Limitations

One limitation of the study was that the literature search was limited to selected academic databases, which might have excluded relevant studies from other sources. Also, only peer-reviewed articles in English were included, which may have led to publication bias and the exclusion of significant insights from non-English, non-peer-reviewed publications. As the review only included studies published between 2018 and 2024, it could have missed any earlier essential papers. The included studies' methodological diversity made it challenging to synthesize their findings, which could have made it difficult to draw objective and accurate conclusions. Also, contextual variations across different organizational settings and geographic regions may limit the generalizability of the results. As most of the included studies were cross-sectional, they needed to provide insights into the long-term effects of ethical leadership. Finally, while rigorous methods were used to minimize bias, the potential for researcher bias cannot be eliminated. Future research should address these limitations by expanding the scope of databases, including a broader range of publication types and languages, using longitudinal designs and exploring both positive and negative outcomes of ethical leadership.

6.2 Future research directions

Exploring ethical leadership in varied contexts: Future studies should explore the impact of ethical leadership across more varied contexts, including non-profit and governmental sectors, to generalize findings more broadly. Understanding how ethical leadership functions

in these sectors can provide deeper insights into its universal applicability and unique challenges. Some of the proposed research questions in this context are:

RQ1. How does ethical leadership impact organizational resilience in non-profit organizations?

RQ2. What are the unique challenges and benefits of ethical leadership in governmental sectors?

RQ3. How do cultural and structural differences in non-profit and governmental sectors influence the effectiveness of ethical leadership?

Longitudinal research on ethical leadership and organizational resilience: Longitudinal research is needed to assess the long-term effects of ethical leadership on organizational resilience, particularly through crises. Such studies can provide a comprehensive view of how ethical leadership sustains resilience over time and in varying contexts. Future studies may explore answers to the following questions:

Q1. What are the long-term impacts of ethical leadership on organizational resilience during and after crises?

Q2. How do the duration and consistency of ethical leadership practices influence organizational adaptability and recovery?

Q3. What key factors mediate or moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and long-term organizational resilience?

Integration of technology and ethical leadership practices: Further investigation into the integration of technology and ethical leadership practices could illuminate new strategies for enhancing organizational resilience. The role of digital transformation, AI and other technological advancements in supporting ethical leadership initiatives warrants thorough exploration. Some questions that can guide future research include:

Q4. How can technology enhance ethical leadership practices to improve organizational resilience?

Q5. What are the potential ethical dilemmas posed by the integration of technology in leadership, and how can they be addressed?

Q6. How do advancements in AI and digital tools influence the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational innovation?

Cross-cultural studies on ethical leadership: Research should also focus on cross-cultural studies to understand how ethical leadership is perceived and implemented in different cultural contexts. This can help in developing culturally sensitive leadership models that are effective globally. Some proposed research questions are:

Q7. How do cultural differences affect the implementation and outcomes of ethical leadership?

Q8. What are the commonalities and divergences in ethical leadership practices across different cultures?

Q9. How can organizations develop cross-cultural ethical leadership frameworks that promote resilience?

Impact of ethical leadership on employee well-being and performance: Investigating the link between ethical leadership, employee well-being and performance can provide insights into how leadership practices influence individual and collective outcomes within organizations. Future research can take guidance from the following questions:

Q10. How does ethical leadership influence employee well-being and job satisfaction over time?

Q11. What are the mechanisms through which ethical leadership enhances employee performance and engagement?

Q12. How can organizations leverage ethical leadership to improve overall employee morale and productivity?

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Appendix

Table A1. CASP methodology for qualitative review of studies

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Tamunomiebi (2018) Nigeria	Quantitative survey-based cross-sectional research using 83 directors and heads of departments from the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa, and Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital	83 directors and heads of departments	To examine the moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between ethical managerial practices and organizational resilience in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state	Organizational culture has a moderating role in the relationship between ethical managerial practices and organizational resilience	High as it directly studies ethical leadership and organizational resilience	*Strengths:* - Uses a robust cross-sectional design - Uses a comprehensive sample of directors and heads of departments in tertiary health institutions in Bayelsa state, Nigeria, eliminating sampling bias and enhancing reliability - Uses structured questionnaires and spearman's rank order correlation for data analysis, which demonstrate methodological rigor - It fills a significant gap in the literature by exploring the impact of organizational culture on ethical managerial practices and resilience *Weaknesses:* - Relies on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias - It uses a cross-sectional design that limits the examination of relationships over time - A relatively small sample size (83 respondents) affects generalizability This paper does not account for potential confounding variables, which may have influenced the observed relationships
Özsungur (2019) Adana, Turkey	A quantitative survey of 376 blue-collar workers from 140 joint stock companies in Adana, Turkey	376 blue-collar workers from 140 joint stock companies	To assess the impact of ethical leadership on service innovation behavior	Ethical leadership has a significant effect on innovation, and ethical leadership was mediated by psychological capital on service innovation behavior	High	*Strengths:* - This study uses a large sample of 376 blue-collar workers from 140 companies, ensuring a broad representation of the population - Uses well-established scales for measuring the main constructs used, ensuring the reliability and validity of the constructs - Use of structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which are sophisticated statistical techniques, provide adequate validation of the hypothesized model - Clearly demonstrates the significant effects of ethical leadership on psychological capital and service innovation behavior and the mediating role of psychological capital and, thus, provides valuable insights for both theory and practice

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
						Weaknesses: - Reliance on the self-reported method can introduce response bias - Suffers with the limitations associated with cross-sectional design - The sample is limited to blue-collar workers in Adana, Turkey, which may affect the generalizability of the findings - It does not thoroughly account for potential confounding variables
Thomas (2020) Oman	Quantitative Survey of 200 NGOs in Oman	200 NGOs	To identify and analyze the factors that lead to the development of resilient NGOs within the context of Oman	Leadership positively impacts ethical culture and resilience	High	*Strengths:* - A significant sample size of 200 managerial employees from NGOs in Muscat enhances the generalizability of the findings - It examines a wide range of factors affecting organizational resilience, including transformational leadership, management development, ethics training, systems thinking, social capital and political instability - It uses confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM), ensuring rigorous testing of hypotheses and validation of the research model - By focusing on NGOs in a politically unstable region, the study provides valuable insights into the practical challenges and resilience strategies applicable to similar organizations worldwide *Weaknesses:* - Reliance on Self-Reported data, may intrude response bias Cross-sectional design does not allow to study of any variability over time - No accounting or justification for the potential confounding variables - Some of the fit measures in the initial CFA did not meet the cut-off levels, indicating potential issues with the measurement model - The study has limited analysis because of isolating elements of Corley's model; also, because of a lack of linkages with prior research for comparison, the generalizability of the study is restricted

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Ginocchio (2023) France	Case study of one medical IT company in France	1 Case study of Medical IT Company	To examine and analyze organizational resilience with a focus on the role of individuals, particularly managers, in the resilience management process To highlight the importance of effective communication, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership in building and maintaining a resilient organization	Effective communication, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership enhance resilience		*Strengths:* - The case study is based on the author's extensive 20-year experience managing an SME in the medical IT sector, and as such, it provides practical insights and real-world applicability - Highlights crucial aspects such as effective communication, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership, which are essential for building organizational resilience Combines personal anecdotes with empirical data, ensuring a rich, qualitative understanding - Proposes updates to the process communication model to align with Generation Z expectations and thus us able to address the challenges related to a contemporary workforce *Weaknesses:* - Reliance on qualitative data from personal experience may limit the generalizability and empirical rigor - Potential to introduce researcher bias because of the author's personal involvement in the case study - Focused on a single organization, findings may lack diversity of experiences and challenges faced by different types of organizations - The study does not provide details on the specific methods used for data collection and analysis, which affects the replicability and credibility of the study
Cook *et al*. (2021) New Zealand	Qualitative methods using online in-depth qualitative interviews of 29 front-line nurses; the data set was extracted from a large nationwide mixed methodology study of frontline nurses in New Zealand	29 front-line nurses	To identify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on frontline nurses' sensemaking and well-being in Aotearoa New Zealand To explore the resilience and mitigation strategies adopted by nurses to sustain their well-being during the initial phase of the pandemic	Ethical leadership supports nurses' resilience during COVID-19 through effective sensemaking		*Strengths:* - By using data from a national mixed methodology study and integrating qualitative data from 29 remote interviews enhances the richness and depth of the findings - The study provides initial and relevant insight by its focus on the frontline nurses in various clinical roles during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic It gives a comprehensive overview of the six key themes using the thematic analysis - By drawing from theoretical concepts of sensemaking and liminality, the study provides a robust conceptual framework for analyzing the data

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
						Weaknesses: - Uses self-reported data from interviews, which may introduce response bias, and impact the objectivity of the research findings - The small sample size of 29 and the qualitative nature of the study limit the generalizability of the results to the broader population of nurses - The study's cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time without any contribution toward understanding the long-term impacts
Musenze and Mayende (2023) Uganda	Quantitative questionnaire-based study using 291 academic staff in a university in Uganda	91 academic staff	To investigate the impact of e-governance on service delivery in Uganda To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of e-governance systems in the public sector	Ethical leadership led to innovative work behavior but was moderated by organizational support		*Strengths:* - Uses a comprehensive mixed-methods approach providing a holistic understanding of the topic Is relevant to policy discussions in Uganda, as it focuses on a relevant and timely issue of e-governance - The study uses a good sample size made of relevant respondents, thus enhancing the reliability and validity of the results - Uses advanced statistical techniques for data analysis, which adds to research rigors *Weaknesses:* - Uses self-reported data (leading to response bias) and is cross-sectional, so it is limited in scope for future applicability of its findings - It has a limited geographical scope by focusing only on specific regions within Uganda, thus reducing the generalizability of the findings to other contexts - Does not acknowledge any potential confounding variables
Shafique *et al*. (2020) Pakistan	A quantitative survey of 322 IT employees in Pakistan	322 IT employees	To investigate the impact of ethical leadership on followers' creativity and organizational innovation To explore the mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences creativity and organizational innovation	Ethical leadership led to creativity and organizational innovation		*Strengths:* - By using a large sample size of 322 small-sized IT firms in Pakistan, the study ensures the reliability and generalizability of the findings - It uses multilevel modeling and hierarchical regression analyses, which are advanced statistical techniques that provide robust insights into the relationships studied - By addressing both individual and organizational levels of analysis, the study gives a comprehensive view of how ethical leadership influences creativity and innovation

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Krambia-Kapardis *et al.* (2023) Global	Quantitative survey of 153 firms from 24 countries and 11 sectors across the globe	153 firms from 24 countries and 11 sectors	To contextualize sustainable development and disentangle it from ESG considerations To identify the leadership qualities necessary for integrating sustainable development and ESG reporting within the framework of sustainable finance	Ethical leaders impact on promoting behaviors like timely and transparent disclosure of ESG policies		- It adds to the current literature as it introduces knowledge sharing and psychological empowerment as mechanisms through which ethical leadership impacts employee creativity *Weaknesses:* - It uses the self-reported data and cross-sectional design with their respective limitations - By focusing solely on small-sized IT firms in Pakistan, it has reduced generalizability to other industries or larger organizations - Does not discuss any potential confounding variables *Strengths:* - The paper effectively contextualizes sustainable development and distinguishes it from environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations. By doing this, it sheds clarity on these interrelated concepts and enriches literature - The study provides practical insights for leaders by synthesizing the leadership qualities needed to integrate sustainable development and ESG reporting - It uses perspectives from major organizations like BlackRock and European Commission and thus emphasizes the relevance and urgency of sustainable finance in contemporary business practices - By using 153 companies across 24 countries and 11 industries and using an econometric model, the study has wide applicability *Weaknesses:* - The paper relies heavily on theoretical discussions and external reports and, thus, may have limited originality in its contributions - Does not expand and fully explain the econometric model, raising questions about the robustness and transparency of the methodological approach - A limitation is that the study focuses solely on companies already considered ethical and sustainable, thus it may introduce selection bias, limiting the generalizability of the findings

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Lin *et al.* (2020) Global	The adoption of technological innovations in a B2B context and its impact on firm performance: An ethical leadership perspective	465 IT service companies; data obtained through two secondary sources: CSRHub and Thomson Reuters	To explore the impact of technological innovation on firm performance in a B2B context To investigate the moderating role of ethical leadership in the relationship between technological innovation and firm performance	Technological innovation positively impacts firm performance, particularly when paired with ethical leadership, which acts as a moderating factor. Strong ethical leadership enhances the positive effects of technological innovation on firm performance		*Strengths:* - The use of a dynamic panel data system generalized method of moments (GMM), the research ensures a large sample with comprehensive and credible data set - It provides valuable insights into linkages between leadership and innovation - By integrating ethical leadership as a moderating variable, the study adds depth to the analysis and highlights the importance of ethical practices in leveraging technological advancements for improved firm performance*Weaknesses:* - The secondary data may introduce limitations related to data accuracy and relevance, as the data was not collected specifically for this study - The complexity of the model may limit its accessibility and understanding for a broader audience - The focus on IT service companies may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or sectors
Crosweller and Tschakert (2020) Australia	Systematic literature review of related literature and uses examples of natural hazards in Australia	Desk research	To examine the impact of modern societal structures on disaster leadership and management To explore additional leadership qualities needed to address increasing disaster intensity and consequences effectively	Incorporating ethical leadership practices, such as those found in feminist care ethics and relational leadership ethics, can help bridge this gap by promoting more compassionate and inclusive decision-making processes		*Strengths:* - By linking modernity, risk society, neoliberalism and governmentality, the paper provides insights into disaster leadership constraints - It has a practical relevance as it uses the Australian natural hazard examples - It adopts a multidisciplinary perspective by using leadership ethics, feminist care ethics and compassion philosophy *Weaknesses:* - The conceptual framework may lack empirical validation and, hence, offers only tentative practical application - The research has focused only on modern Western democracies, which may reduce generalizability to non-Western or less developed contexts - As there is an over-reliance on secondary literature, there is a chance that the selection of papers and reports may introduce bias from selected sources and interpretations - There is a lack of reference to specific examples and case studies that could have shown practical implications

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Vito *et al.* (2023) Canada	Qualitative study using focus group and online survey (qualitative questions) on 25 directors and managers of 3 mental health facilities in Canada	25 directors and managers of 3 mental health facilities	To explore the challenges and opportunities faced by leaders and organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic To identify individual and organizational resilience factors that support leaders in managing crises	Ethical leaders face organizational challenges like striking a balance between differing agendas like managing external and internal relationships and safety versus service delivery		*Strengths:* - Qualitative approach with focus groups and surveys provides rich data on leaders' COVID-19 experiences - By using a diverse sample of directors and managers from three mental health/addiction agencies, the study has enhanced its relevance - It reveals comprehensive insights based on the thematic analysis in terms of identifying challenges, opportunities and resilience factors - The study is relevant and timely as it addresses a critical issue with practical recommendations for leadership resilience during crises *Weaknesses:* - Self-reported data may introduce bias - A small sample size may affect generalizability - Cross-sectional design limits the assessment of long-term impacts and changes - A lack of quantitative data could limit the robustness of the analysis
Sarwar *et al.* (2020) Iraq	A quantitative survey using 295 workers from diverse organizations in Iraq	295 workers from diverse organizations	To investigate the mediating effects of organizational ethical culture on the relationship between ethical leadership, work engagement, employees' well-being and performance To compare the impact of ethical leadership on employee outcomes in the hospitality industries of Italy and Pakistan	Ethical leadership and ethical organizational climate were directly linked, and the ethical behavior of employees was impacted by the ethical climate		*Strengths:* - It adds to the literature on cultural influence on ethical leadership by conducting a cross-cultural comparison of Italian and Pakistani hospitality industries - A large sample size of 697 hotel managerial employees enhances reliability and generalizability - Structural equation modeling (SEM) and measurement invariance tests ensure rigorous statistical validation - Highlights ethical culture's mediating role between ethical leadership and outcomes like well-being, engagement and performance *Weaknesses:* - Self-reported data from questionnaires may introduce bias - Focus on hospitality in two countries may limit generalizability to other sectors or contexts - Cross-sectional design limits causal inferences - Does not address the confounding variables fully

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Table A1. Continued

Author/year/country of the study	Study design	Sample	Aim	Findings	Relevance to review	Quality appraisal strengths and limitations Methodological Rigor: CASP
Metwally *et al*. (2019) Egypt	A quantitative approach with a survey methodology; data were collected from 270 employees of three of the largest public foreign trade organizations in Egypt. Data was obtained in two rounds	270 employees of three of the largest public foreign trade organizations	To examine the direct positive effect of ethical leadership on employees' readiness to change To investigate the mediating role of an organizational culture of effectiveness in the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' readiness to change	Ethical leadership significantly and positively affects employees' readiness to change, and this relationship is mediated by an organizational culture of effectiveness. Ethical leaders can also shape the organizational culture		*Strengths:* - The study shows generalizability and reliability by using a large sample of 270 employees from three large Egyptian trade organizations - Using validated scales, ensures accurate measurement of ethical leadership and readiness to change - It uses temporal data separation that reduces method bias and enhances validity - By focusing on the Arab cultural context, it provides unique insights *Weaknesses:* - It uses self-reported data, which may introduce bias - It uses only a cross-sectional design that may limit causal inferences - It does not include temporary employees or contractual workers, which may reduce its generalizability, especially in the current workforce context
Al Halbusi *et al*. (2020) Iraq	A survey-based methodology using 295 employees from organizations in Iraq	295 employees from organizations	To investigate the mediating effect of organizational justice on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' ethical behavior To examine the moderating role of person–organization fit (P–O fit) on the relationship between organizational justice and employees' ethical behavior	Ethical leadership positively influences employees' ethical behavior, and this relationship is mediated by organizational justice. Furthermore, the impact of organizational justice on ethical behavior is stronger among employees with a high P–O fit compared to those with a low P–O fit		*Strengths:* - By addressing the impact of ethical leadership and organizational justice on employees' ethical behavior, the paper delves into a critical and contemporary issue in organizational behavior and ethics - The large sample size of 295 employees from public organizations in Iraq adds to the applicability and generalizability of the findings - Use of structural equation modeling (SEM) reflects a rigorous statistical approach and adds to validity - By introducing the concept of P–O fit as a moderating variable, the research adds to the existing literature *Weaknesses:* - It uses a self-reported method and a cross-sectional design, which have their respective limitations in the form of response bias and lack of ability to infer any causal relationships - The study is limited to the specific and typical cultural context of Iraq, which limits its scope for applicability in other settings

Source(s): Authors' own editing