

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS HO CHI MINH CITY**

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**PROMOTING EMPLOYEES' SERVICE OUTCOMES
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: THE ROLE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

Major: Business Administration

Code: 9340101

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

HO CHI MINH CITY - 2025

The research was conducted and completed at University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City:

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The dissertation will be defended at University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City at hour day month year

The dissertation can be found at the following library
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LIST OF PHD STUDENTS' PUBLICATIONS

• INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL:

- ◇ **Nguyen, L.L.H.** (2025), "Ethical leadership and public service recovery performance: the roles of thriving at work and moral self-efficacy", *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOTB-05-2024-0096> (**Scopus Q2; Publisher: Emerald**)
- ◇ **Nguyen, H. V., & Nguyen, L. L. H.** (2024). Linking ethical leadership to employee's prohibitive voice: the role of reflective moral attentiveness and leader identification. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*. Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-11-2023-0252> (**corresponding author**) (**Scopus Q1; ESCI; Publisher: Emerald**)
- ◇ **Nguyen, L. L. H.** (2023). Ethical leadership and interpersonal citizenship behavior in the public sector. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 19(3), 246-260. (**Scopus Q3; Publisher: Emerald**)
- ◇ **Long, N. L. H.** (2022). Active Interpersonal Citizenship Behavior among Public Servants: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy. *AJMI-ASEAN Journal of Management and Innovation*, 9(1), 26-38. (**ACI indexed**)
- ◇ **Le-Hoang Long, N., Thi-Thu Huong, N., & Viet-Anh, H.** (2022). Workplace Support and Service-Oriented Organisational Citizenship Behaviour: The Mediating Role Of Psychological Empowerment And Affective Commitment. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9(1), 2131984. (**Scopus Q2; ESCI; Publisher: Taylor & Francis**)

- ◇ **Le Hoang, L. N.,** Thu, H. N. T., & Ho, V. A. (2021). Service Innovative Behavior in the Aviation Industry: An Empirical Study of the Contribution of Perceived Organizational Support. *AJMI-ASEAN Journal of Management and Innovation*, 8(1), 75-86. **(ACI indexed)**
- **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE:**
 - ◇ **Nguyen, L. L. H.,** & Dinh, K. C. (2024). Linkage of prosocial motivation and the translation to behavioral outcome: Transcending ethical self-interest climate. *The joint Asian Conference on Business and Economic Studies*. - **Best paper award**
 - ◇ **Nguyen, L. L. H.,** & Dinh, K. C. (2024). Ethical leadership and public service adaptive behavior: The role of prosocial motivation. *The international conference on economics, law and government (ELG 2024)*
 - ◇ **NLH Long,** NH Kim, NT Tuan (2023). Toward sustainable development through workplace collaboration: When and How supervisor's moral translates to subordinates' behavior. *The international conference on economics, law and government (ELG 2023)*.
 - ◇ **Long, N. L. H.** (2022). Public service motivation in post-pandemic: a cross-sectional design. *The 8th International Conference for Young Researchers in Economics and Business*. 334-347.
- **SCIENTIFIC PROJECT:**
 - ◇ **University-level scientific research project:** Ethical leadership and interpersonal citizenship behavior in the public sector. **Code:** CELG-2022-04. **Role:** Research manager

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research overview

The New Public Management (NPM) movement contributes to the improvement of a country's efficiency and effectiveness by modifying the operational mechanisms of public organizations. Funck and Karlsson (2020) classified administrative reform into 2 categories consisting of (1) Management-based reforms and (2) Market-based reforms. Accordingly, one of the most noticeable changes is the increasing willingness of the public sector to implement best management practices from the private sector, such as performance management, empowerment, and optimizing the use of organizational resources (Funck and Karlsson, 2020). In addition, the transforming process also aligns with the increasing societal demands for higher public service quality, especially in the digital era (Mergel et al., 2019). In the context of Vietnam, the result from SIPAS 2024 (SIPAS - Satisfaction Index of Public Administration Services), drawing from the survey of 36,525 Vietnamese citizens, represented three most prominent expectations revolving around enhancing capacity, the transparency in communication of public services, and the service-oriented behavior of public sector employees. Thus, for adapting to changed demands, it can be observed that public organizations nowadays are changing their perspective and treating citizens in a manner similar to customers in the private sector (Van de Walle, 2016). Consequently, in order to satisfy citizens' needs, public organizations must address the issue of differences between customers, tailor several adaptations in public services, and tackle situations in which service outcomes fail to meet the citizens'

expectations (Chan et al., 2021; Van de Walle, 2016). Therefore, proactive service-oriented behaviors toward public service emerge as promising internal resources to fulfill the gap in administrative procedures and advance the sustainable development of the organization (Shim and Faerman, 2017; Silva et al., 2020).

The assessment of customers regarding an organization holds great importance for managers in enhancing workplace productivity, regardless of whether it takes place in a public or private setting (Scotti et al., 2007). For instance, a positive perception among citizens regarding public agencies can promote loyalty to the public organization, which is a crucial factor for the success of public services, such as actively participating in E-government services (Alkraiiji and Ameen, 2022). Since the feedback or perception of citizens about service quality directly influences public organizations regarding sustainable development, it is vital to provide better insights into public service. Prior studies in various contexts of service have proposed that customers tend to judge the service quality based on their experience interacting with service providers as represented by employees (e.g., Li et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2019). As the public sector is transforming to a market-oriented model (Van de Walle, 2016), competition arises between public institutions and between public and private organizations; it necessitates public servants to exhibit behaviors aimed at better serving citizens. Thus, this dissertation delves into the study of service adaptive behavior and service recovery performance among public servants. These service outcomes are desirable skills for public sectors employees in order to maintain positive customer experiences (Dawson et al., 2023; Feld et al., 2020).

1.2 Research gap

There are scientific gaps that could be addressed in a further systematic approach.

First, the code of ethics is the basis of good governance (Bellé and Cantarelli, 2019), but the effects of moral-related leadership styles in the public sector are still in doubt (Asif and Rathore, 2021). *Second*, compared to other variations of self-efficacy (e.g., occupational self-efficacy, creative self-efficacy), moral self-efficacy seems to receive less attention from scholars (Rullo et al., 2022). However, since moral confidence is recognized as the most desirable characteristic of public servants (Sulitzeanu-Kenan et al., 2022), moral self-efficacy has grown into a highly valuable trait. In this dissertation, we propose a moral point of view in which moral aspects will drive motivation and thriving in public organizations that lead to service-oriented behavior. *Third*, Ritz et al. (2020) posited the importance of research on public employees' motivation since it directly contributes to the mission or vision of public organizations. However, even though leaders directly impact subordinates' motivation through daily interaction, there is a shortage of studies delving into the relationship between leaders and public employees' motivation to serve others (e.g., citizens) (Eva et al., 2020). *Fourth*, why thriving at work could foster desirable outcomes for organizations under the impact of leadership still needs to be explored systematically (Kleine et al., 2019; Shadid et al., 2021). Thus, thriving at work acts as a mediator in linking moral antecedents and service outcomes, and is one of the new contributions to management literature, especially for service-setting. *Fifth*, unlike prior studies in service settings that concentrated on hospitality (e.g.,

Gip et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020). We expand management literature to other contexts of service for responding to scholars' research calls (e.g., Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). As a result of the literature review, there is a dearth of attention that notices both in-process service behavior and corrected-failure behavior in the public sector. *Finally*, an adverse working environment has emerged as an issue that lowers the productivity of public organizations in times of NPM, especially in developing countries (George et al., 2021; Mussagulova, 2021). The dissertation is also among the few studies that delve into the dark side of the ethical climate, especially in the public sector.

1.3 Research objectives and questions

The specific research objectives (RO) are as follows:

- RO1: To examine the direct effects of ethical leadership on public service outcomes, including service adaptive behavior and service recovery performance.
- RO2: To identify complex mediating mechanisms to link the association between ethical leadership and service outcomes that comprise moral self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, and thriving at work
- RO3: To examine the moderating roles of ethical self-interest climate on the linkage of ethical leadership between moral self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, service adaptive behavior, and service recovery performance.
- RO4: To propose implications for practitioners to enhance service adaptive behavior and service recovery performance based on the research findings

There are research questions (RQ) that need to be addressed:

- RQ1: Whether ethical leadership contribute to enhancing employees' service outcomes in terms of service adaptive behavior and service recovery performance?
- RQ2: How does the collection of personal determinants that include moral self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, and thriving at work interact under the supervision of ethical leadership?
- RQ3: Whether moral self-efficacy and prosocial motivation, thriving at work, recognized as personal determinants in translating ethical values from leaders to promote employees' service outcomes?
- RQ4: Does ethical self-interest climate considered as an obstacle to lessen the validity of ethical leadership?

1.4 Research scope

Content scope: The study places an emphasis on examining concepts revolving around ethical leadership, moral self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, thriving at work, ethical self-interest climate, service adaptive behavior, and service recovery performance. The interactions among these constructs are explained by social cognitive theory and social learning theory.

Location scope: The dissertation conducted a survey on public sector employees working at local administrative organizations in Viet Nam.

1.5 Methods

Preliminary research: Focus group and pilot study

Main study: Data were collected from 2 waves of survey with a two-month lag from the perception of non-managerial and managerial employees in the public service setting. PLS-SEM was employed to verify the structural model, including the evaluation of the measurement model, structural model, and robustness checks.

1.6 Research contributions

Research examines the mechanism of how and when ethical leaders promote public employees' service outcomes. There are contributions to the dissertation in both theoretical and practical aspects:

The dissertation examines the role of leaders in public organizations in enhancing public service quality.

Initial mediating roles of moral self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, and subsequent mediating role of thriving at work are investigated to clarify the way contextual factors, such as leadership, could enhance service recovery performance and service adaptive behavior. The sequential mediations provided a comprehensive procedure that moral facets develop into behaviors.

The view of SCT is also expanded to discover the moderating effect of contingency factor (ethical self-interest climate).

Finally, the research findings could be a beneficial document for practitioners to devise consulting and training activities.

1.7 Research structure: The dissertation consists of 5 chapters

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Key concepts

2.1.1 Ethical leadership

Building on the work of Treviño et al. (2000, 2003), researchers advocated ethical leadership as a behavioral style (Den Hartog, 2015). Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) proposed an inclusive definition of ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”

2.1.2 Moral self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to "one's perceived capabilities to learn or perform actions at designated levels" (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2021, p. 2). From the initial understanding of general self-efficacy, the concept of moral self-efficacy can be understood as "the set of beliefs which individuals have about their capabilities to self-reflect and self-regulate moral behavior." (Paciello et al., 2022, p. 8)

2.1.3 Prosocial motivation

Prosocial motivation is described as "the desire to expend effort to benefit other people" (Grant, 2008, p. 49). In this manner, the desire to serve others is considered a source of prosocial motivation (Kroll and Porumbescu, 2019).

2.1.4 Thriving at work

In the field of organizational behavior and management,

thriving can be identified as "thriving at work". Spreitzer et al. (2005, p. 538) stated that "thriving at work is the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work".

2.1.5 Service adaptive behavior

Unlike general adaptive behavior in the workplace, which involves the broad role of adaptability in responding to uncertain or diverse task demands (Kim et al., 2022), Gwinner et al. (2005, p. 135) classified adaptive behavior in a service context as "the deliberate modification of the service offering in a situationally appropriate manner in response to meeting perceived consumer needs".

2.1.6 Service recovery performance

Liao (2007, p. 476) defines employee service recovery performance as "the behaviors in which customer service employees who directly handle customer complaints engage to recover customer satisfaction and loyalty after service failures". From that point of view, SRP focuses on customer-contact employees who are responsible for delivering the service. SRP also refers to a specific form of discretionary behaviors aligned with the goals of the organization (Liao, 2007). Furthermore, to engage in service recovery performance, employees need to perform a set of actions (Michel et al., 2009), such as repairs, apology, explanation, and expressing empathy (Mihardjo et al., 2020).

2.1.7 Ethical self-interest climate

The category of ethical climate was first proposed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), which is further divided into nine types of

ethical climate based on two dimensions of ethical criterion and locus of analysis. In an egoistic ethical or self-interest climate, employees share a perception that the organization has a norm that focuses on self-interest before making an ethical decision (Wang et al., 2020). Specifically, ethical self-interest climate casts a grey prospect among employees that colleagues around them implicitly neglected the benefits of external stakeholders (e.g., customers) despite having a formal commitment to a code of ethics (Sheedy et al., 2021).

2.2 Underpinning theories

2.2.1 Social cognitive theory

Bandura (1986) posits that human behavior is both a cause and effect within a triadic reciprocal causation set of influences. These sets of factors embrace individual internal factors, behavior, and the external environment, in which each group reciprocally interacts with the others (Bandura, 1986). There are four prominent elements of social cognitive theory (Nabi and Prestin, 2017), including human agency, human capabilities, vicarious learning, and self-efficacy.

2.2.2 Social learning theory

Bandura (1971) posited that the learning process of individuals could be leveraged by observing direct role models and reproducing corresponding behaviors and thoughts for nurturing future corresponding behaviors. The observational learning process of individuals in the scope of social learning is managed by four types of processes, including (1) attention; (2) retention; (3) motor reproduction; and (4) reinforcement and motivational processes (Bandura, 1971).

2.3 Hypothesis development

The dissertation employed social cognitive theory and social learning theory to propose the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: Ethical leadership is positively related to service adaptive behavior.

H_{1b}: Ethical leadership is positively related to service recovery performance.

H_{2a}: Moral self-efficacy mediates the positive relationship between ethical leadership and prosocial motivation.

H_{2b}: Moral self-efficacy initially mediates the positive relationship between ethical leadership and thriving at work.

H₃: Prosocial motivation initially mediates the positive relationship between ethical leadership and thriving at work.

H_{4a}: Prosocial motivation and thriving at work sequentially mediate the association between ethical leadership and service adaptive behavior.

H_{4b}: Moral self-efficacy and thriving at work sequentially mediate the association between ethical leadership and service adaptive behavior.

H_{4c}: Prosocial motivation and thriving at work sequentially mediate the association between ethical leadership and service recovery performance.

H_{4d}: Moral self-efficacy and thriving at work sequentially mediate the association between ethical leadership and service recovery performance.

H_{5a}: Ethical self-interest climate negatively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and moral self-efficacy, such that the relationship will be weaker when Ethical self-interest climate is higher.

H_{5b}: Ethical self-interest climate negatively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and prosocial motivation, such that the relationship will be weaker when Ethical self-interest climate is higher.

H_{5c}: Ethical self-interest climate negatively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and service adaptive behavior, such that the relationship will be weaker when Ethical self-interest climate is higher.

H_{5d}: Ethical self-interest climate negatively moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and service recovery performance, such that the relationship will be weaker when Ethical self-interest climate is higher.

The associations between research constructs are depicted in Figure 2.1:

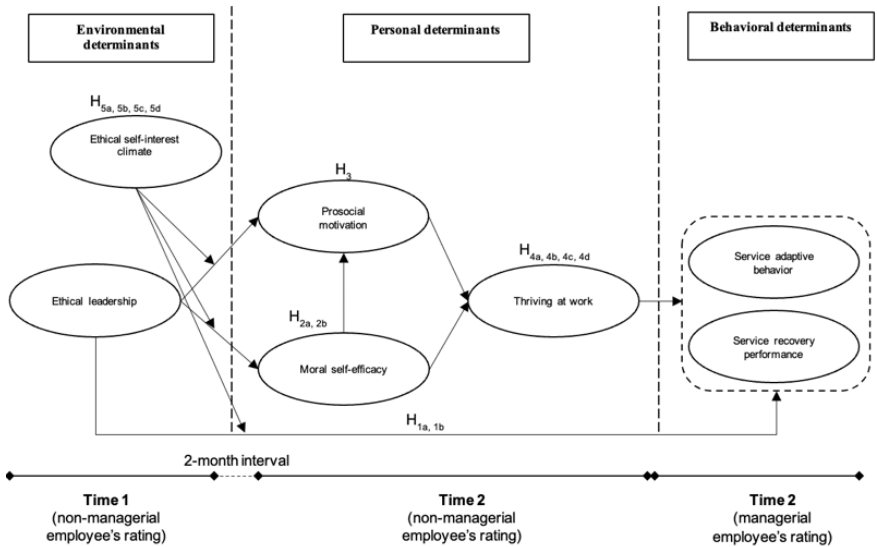


Figure 2.1. Research model (Source: By author's)

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Research design

The research procedure is described in the figure below

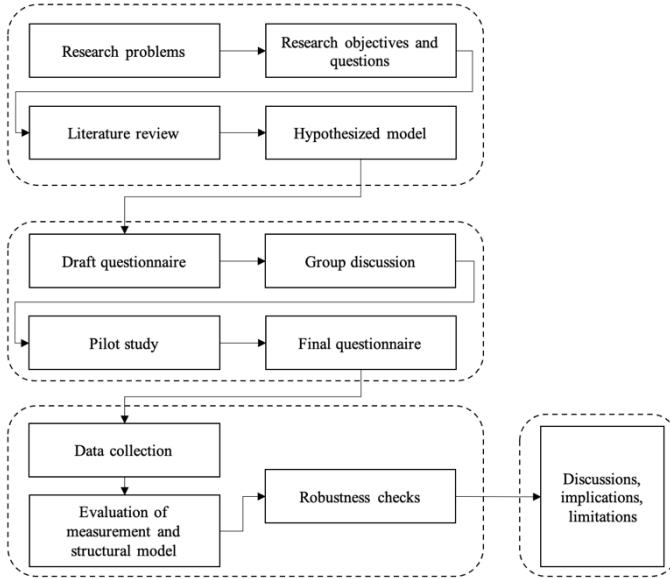


Figure 3.1 Research procedure

3.2. Preliminary research

Preliminary research consists of focus groups and pilot studies to validate the questionnaire before conducting the main survey.

3.4. Main study

3.4.1 Sample and procedure

The data of the dissertation were collected from public sector employees working at administrative public organizations in Viet Nam during the period from December 2023 to May 2024. We chose the snowball sampling method because we did not have a sampling frame to explore the population and to ensure the confidentiality of the

respondents' identities (Hendricks and Blanken, 1992; Parker et al., 2019).

The research data were collected in two waves with a two-month time lag. In the initial group, we collected data from their subordinates regarding their perception of the supervisor's ethical leadership style and ethical self-interest climate in wave 1 (starting in December 2023). Next, wave 2 (starting in February 2024) collected data from both supervisors and subordinates.

3.4.2 Analytic strategy

Following Hair et al. (2021), the analysis processes were implemented as follows: Stage 1: Test the measurement model to examine the relationship between the latent variables and its items. Stage 2: Test the structural model to examine hypotheses. Stage 3: Robustness checks.

3.5 Common method bias

To address common method bias in behavioral research, we follow several recommendations from Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, we collect data from multiple sources by asking for perceptions from supervisors and subordinates with a 2-month lag between each wave. Second, we employ a response-enhancing technique by emphasizing the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of answers and emphasizing that there is no right or wrong answer in the introduction part of the questionnaire.

To ensure the representativeness of the sample, the dissertation proceeds to conduct Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Furthermore, we adhere to the recommendation of Kock (2015) to assess the full collinearity issue of the model.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive statistics

After matching three questionnaires from two waves of survey, a total of 331 valid responses were received. The descriptive statistics for the respondents' profiles are presented below.

Table 4.1. Final demographic information

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Gender			
Female	170	51.4	51.4
Male	157	47.4	98.8
Prefer not to say	4	1.2	100
Age			
Below 25	42	12.7	12.7
25 to below 35 years old	82	24.8	37.5
35 to below 45 years old	126	38.1	75.6
45 to below 55 years old	60	18.1	93.7
Above 55 years old	21	6.3	100
Educational background			
College or equivalent	6	1.8	1.8
University or equivalent	261	78.9	80.7
Master's degree	64	19.3	100
Job tenure (year)			
N	331		
Mean	11.5		
Median	8.00		
Standard deviation	9.56		
Minimum	0.25		
Maximum	36.0		

4.2 Common method bias

The dissertation employed several techniques to mitigate the bias in behavioral study as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, the mediating relationship may contain bias when the participants rate all of the dependent and mediating variables at once; therefore, the

multiple waves of survey are considered appropriate (Cole and Maxwell, 2003). Second, to avoid bias in participant ratings, such as overestimating the phenomenon (e.g., public sector employees overrating their service recovery performance), we gauged data from multiple sources (Podsakoff et al., 2003), including the ratings from non-managerial employees and their supervisors. Third, we employed several enhancing techniques like previous studies in the leadership (e.g., Eluwole et al., 2022) to encourage the response from participants such as integrate the statement that “there is no right or wrong answer, we only get your perception”, “Authors commit to keep response confidential and only used for research purpose”. In a quantitative approach to examining common method bias, Harman’s one-factor test and Kock’s recommendation were employed. Harman’s one-factor test, which is an appropriate method to detect common method variance (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), indicated that a single factor did not account for more than 50% of the variance (29.6%). Finally, the full structural model VIF (inner VIF) range from 1.201 to 1.625, which are below the threshold of 3.3, confirming that our data are free from the issue of common method bias (Kock, 2015)

4.3 Measurement model

The measurement model was estimated through assessing indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 summarize the analysis results of estimating the measurement model

Table 4.2. Indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Outer loadings
EL	0.865	0.866	0.896	0.552	0.728-0.762
ESC	0.813	0.818	0.889	0.727	0.832-0.868
MSE	0.860	0.861	0.915	0.781	0.879-0.90
PM	0.852	0.854	0.894	0.628	0.763-0.821
TW	0.873	0.874	0.904	0.612	0.759-0.800
SAB	0.829	0.833	0.875	0.538	0.701-0.775
SRP	0.834	0.836	0.883	0.602	0.743-0.807

The discriminant validity was evaluated by the Fornell-Larcker criterion, assessing cross-loadings between observed variables, and the HTMT ratio. The table below provides the HTMT ratio to assess the distinction between constructs.

	EL	ESC	MSE	PM	SAB	SRP	TW
EL							
ESC	0.615						
MSE	0.576	0.460					
PM	0.429	0.205	0.475				
SAB	0.528	0.248	0.370	0.617			
SRP	0.649	0.300	0.438	0.656	0.727		
TW	0.512	0.247	0.527	0.483	0.554	0.560	

4.4. Structural model

Final results of the structural model are presented as follows:

Path description	β	LL/ UL	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Direct effects					
<i>H_{1a}</i> : EL→ SAB	0.305	[0.182: 0.411]	5.223	<0.001	Supported
<i>H_{1b}</i> : EL→ SRP	0.489	[0.376: 0.596]	8.640	<0.001	Supported

Path description	β	LL/ UL	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Mediating effects					
H_{2a} : EL→MSE→PM	0.124	[0.064: 0.203]	3.466	0.001	Supported
H_{2b} : EL→MSE→TW	0.144	[0.077: 0.230]	3.683	<0.001	Supported
H_3 : EL→PM→TW	0.079	[0.031: 0.154]	2.448	0.014	Supported
H_{4a} : EL→PM→TW→SAB	0.026	[0.009: 0.057]	2.110	0.035	Supported
H_{4b} : EL→MSE→TW→SAB	0.048	[0.026: 0.080]	3.492	<0.001	Supported
H_{4c} : EL → PM→TW→SRP	0.017	[0.004: 0.042]	1.713	0.087	Unsupported
H_{4d} : EL→MSE→TW→SRP	0.031	[0.014: 0.060]	2.694	0.007	Supported
Moderating effects					
H_{5a} : EL*ESC→MSE	-0.102	[-0.206: 0.001]	1.916	0.055	Unsupported
H_{5b} : EL*ESC →PM	-0.146	[-0.239: -0.054]	3.091	0.002	Supported
H_{5c} : EL*ESC→SAB	-0.113	[-0.211: -0.015]	2.252	0.024	Supported
H_{5d} : EL*ESC→SRP	-0.144	[-0.221: -0.060]	3.468	0.001	Supported

4.5 Robustness checks

4.5.1 Robustness check for measurement model

We executed confirmatory tetrad analysis with 5,000 subsamples and a significance level of 0.1 as recommended by Hair et al. (2023) for running CTA-PLS. All cases of the selected constructs, including ethical leadership, thriving at work, service adaptive behavior, and service recovery performance, contained zero numbers falling into the CI low adj.- CI high adj. interval, indicating a vanishing

tetrad in every instance. In other words, the vanishing tetrads suggested that our scales take a reflective form (Hair et al., 2023), thereby confirming the robustness of the measurement model.

4.5.2 Robustness check for structural model

4.5.2.1 Non-linear effects

The research proceeded with an evaluation of the quadratic effects of the antecedents on the targeted outcomes to diagnose potential cases where the fluctuations of the proposed endogenous constructs depend not only on the exogenous constructs but also on themselves (Sarstedt et al., 2020). All of the quadratic effects contain a small effect size and are also non-significant according to statistical values (t-value, p-value, and confidence interval assessment). Therefore, the structural model was confirmed for the robustness of ruling out of non-linear effect that may cause variations in the prediction.

4.5.2.1 Unobserved Heterogeneity

We performed finite mixture PLS (FIMIX-PLS) to examine the potential for misleading in translating data analysis results due to the effect of subgroups.

Criteria	3 Segments	2 Segments	1 Segment
AIC (Akaike's Information Criterion)	3571.934	3643.263	4147.777
AIC3 (Modified AIC with Factor 3)	3663.934	3704.263	4177.777
AIC4 (Modified AIC with Factor 4)	3755.934	3765.263	4207.777
BIC (Bayesian Information Criteria)	3921.729	3875.192	4261.84
CAIC (Consistent AIC)	4013.729	3936.192	4291.84
HQ (Hannan Quinn Criterion)	3711.447	3735.766	4193.27
MDL5 (Minimum Description Length with Factor 5)	6056.908	5290.909	4958.094

LnL (LogLikelihood)	-1693.967	-1760.631	-2043.888
EN (Entropy Statistic (Normed))	0.687	0.858	
NFI (Non-Fuzzy Index)	0.688	0.895	
NEC (Normalized Entropy Criterion)	103.495	46.989	

4.6 Discussion of results

Ethical leadership was found to have a direct and positive effect on public servants' service adaptive behavior (H1a). However, unlike previous studies that mainly considered adaptive behavior in the private service sector, especially in sales or hospitality contexts (e.g., Charoensukmongkol and Suthatorn, 2021; Cron et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2022), we have expanded the research stream to the public service sector to comprehend the effect of ethical leadership on the adaptivity of public sector employees. Furthermore, the moral values of ethical leaders are not limited to the boundary of in-processing services (service adaptive behavior) but extend into post-service interactions (H1b).

We discovered that moral self-efficacy plays an initial mediating role in linking the associations between ethical leadership and prosocial motivation, as well as thriving at work (H2a, H2b).

The dissertation specifically probes into the moral channel through which ethical leadership fosters thriving at work among public sector employees, leveraging prosocial motivation (H3)

The association between ethical leadership and service adaptive behavior can be bridged by two chain mediation mechanisms, including (1) prosocial motivation – thriving at work and (2) moral self-efficacy – thriving at work. Whereas chain mediation of moral

self-efficacy – thriving links the connection between ethical leadership and service recovery performance.

Ethical self-interest climate was identified as an obstacle to lessen the validity of ethical leadership by mitigating the influence of ethical leaders on subordinates' prosocial motivation, service-adaptive behavior, and service recovery performance.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

For RQ1, we found that ethical leadership could influence service outcomes among public sector employees in both direct and indirect relationships. Besides, we identified that moral self-efficacy and prosocial motivation play roles as mediators to explain the effect of ethical leadership on employees' personal determinants (RQ2). Furthermore, we discovered two pathways that ethical leadership could promote service outcomes among followers in the research context of public service (RQ3), which are (1) moral self-efficacy – thriving at work, and (2) prosocial motivation – thriving at work. Finally, the dissertation resolved RQ4 by confirming the moderating effect of ethical self-interest climate.

5.2 Theoretical implications

First, several scholars had been skeptical about the real impact of moral-oriented leadership styles in the public sector (e.g., Asif and Rathore, 2021). By exploring the effect of ethical leadership in the dissertation, we made distinctive contributions to unfolding the association between the ethical values of supervisors and service-oriented behaviors of subordinates in public organizations. Moreover, by exploring the behavior of public servants in both service delivery (service adaptive behavior) and service failure situations (service recovery performance), the dissertation stands as one of the first studies to consider both of these service situations, especially in the public sector.

The dissertation established a moral way that public sector employees adopt moral values from their supervisor and sequentially

fuel moral self-efficacy, thriving at work, and then leading service adaptive behavior. The chain mediation through moral cognition and thriving to link the effect of ethical leadership on service adaptive behavior was the new contribution to management literature, which has not been studied before. Furthermore, the chain mediation process that moral self-efficacy served as an initial mediator and thriving at work served as a consequential mediator factor to translate the effect of ethical leadership to service recovery performance of public employees was another new contribution in management literature.

The dissertation contributes to the limited understanding of the effect of leadership and prosocial motivation (Eva et al., 2020). Firstly, moral self-efficacy has been identified as an antecedent of prosocial motivation in transferring the effect from the leader. Hence, it has led to the following line of study: scholars could pay attention to the chain of external factors (e.g., leadership styles and human resource practices) influencing moral cognition (e.g., moral awareness, moral attentiveness) and resulting in prosocial motivation in order to promote desired behaviors. Secondly, prosocial motivation was found to encourage public sector employees to put more effort into learning and applying to serve better for the citizens (service adaptive behavior).

Ethical self-interest climate is a new contribution of the dissertation to the management literature that gives insight into the condition in which the effect of ethical leadership on public servants' prosocial motivation could be neutralized. Moreover, the data analysis supported the hypotheses (H_{5c} , H_{5d}) that public sector employees tend to neglect the observed model from their supervisors when they perceive a higher level of a self-interest climate.

Finally, the distinct contribution in the dissertation was related to the efforts to expand the SCT stream of research. Specifically, the combination of cognitive, motivational, and affective factors of the research within social cognitive theory has not been explored in previous studies. Furthermore, the dissertation expanded the research line regarding ethics in organizations by explaining the boundary span of social cognitive theory to explain the influence of other sources in organizations and how these alternative sources could affect the focal source of organizations (e.g., ethical leadership)

5.3 Practical implications

First, the moral competence of leaders in a public organization could enhance both the adaptivity of the public sector in daily tasks and recovery behavior, ensuring the quality of organizational public services. Since ethical leadership is characterized as moral manager and moral person aspects. There are suggestions for human resource policies regarding the recruitment and training of public managers. Specifically, both internal and external selection processes aimed at selecting public leaders need to integrate moral competencies as criteria for evaluation. The tests at the selection stage could consider the moral personality and test the capability to encourage moral standards at work of the candidate. Moreover, public policymakers could devise a moral competency and guidelines to practice ethical behaviors at work to train public managers in short training courses.

Second, the effects of ethical leadership on public sector employees' service outcomes (service adaptive behavior and service recovery performance) were identified through cognition-psychological state (moral self-efficacy - thriving at work) and

motivation- psychological state (prosocial motivation - thriving at work). Thus, besides fostering ethical leadership in public organizations, public policymakers could shift their attention to other triggering factors that could activate the two aforementioned mechanisms in order to promote desirable behavior of public servants. For example, to enhance moral self-efficacy of employees, several studies confirmed the role of humility of leaders (team level) (e.g., Owens et al., 2019), positive ethical climate (e.g., Yang et al., 2023), and responsible human resource practice (e.g., Liao et al., 2022) (organizational level). Likewise, prosocial motivation of employees could be activated to fuel the chain effect to behavioral outcomes by utilizing leadership or other organizational factors (e.g., Shao et al., 2017). Furthermore, since the dissertation has identified the role of moral self-efficacy in stimulating prosocial motivation, policies aimed at transforming the behavior of public servants could be unified under moral-related influences (e.g., ethics, humility, responsibility at different levels of the organization) to advance both channels.

Finally, public organizations need to pay attention to solving adverse aspects of the working environment, such as the self-interest tendency, which poses a contemporary issue in Vietnam (see Long, 2023). Specifically, organizational policies (e.g., values emphasizing responsibility) could encourage employees to care about others and reduce selfishness simultaneously (Wang et al., 2020). Hence, advancing from the above practical implications, comprehensive solutions at both organizational and team levels should be considered since we could adopt the perspective of social cognitive theory regarding interactions among external environment, personal determinants, and behavioral determinants. On one hand,

strengthening moral-oriented leadership styles (e.g., ethical leadership, humble leadership, servant leadership, etc.) has been a possible answer to develop a positive ethical climate (e.g., Al Halbusi et al., 2021; Elche et al., 2020; Owens et al., 2019). On the other hand, human resource practices need to be combined with leadership to reduce the effect of a self-interest working climate. In fact, policymakers could learn from prior studies that confirmed the function of HRM practice regarding various aspects, including (1) recruitment and selection; (2) training and development; (3) compensation; (4) performance management (Guerci et al., 2015; Manroop et al., 2014) in shaping a positive workplace climate.

5.4 Limitations and future research directions

Even though the research made efforts to limit bias based on the suggestions of Podsakoff et al. (2003). However, we mainly relied on the quantitative approach, which analyzes the primary data by PLS-SEM. Therefore, future research on leadership should combine multiple methods, such as qualitative methods, to get better insights. In addition, researchers may consider incorporating interdisciplinary knowledge to unfold the hidden characteristics of the phenomenon (e.g., retrieved from neuroscience) (e.g., Pittman, 2020; Waldman et al., 2019; Williams and Nowack, 2022).

Second, we analyzed the data from our participants, containing public sector employees and their supervisors. Even putting efforts to collect data from multiple sources to control bias from respondents, there could be some situations where employees overestimate their behavior and misinterpret it as our targeted behavior (e.g., service adaptive behavior). Likewise, the direct

supervisors could underestimate the true behavior of subordinates they neglecting the recovery performance of employees and considering these behaviors as standard behaviors. Therefore, further studies could retest the research model with more stakeholders, such as co-workers or citizens, to confirm the research findings.

Third, the research has limitations related to the measurement scales used. In this study, we employed subjective scales that were rated by both public servants and supervisors. While these scales have the advantage of reflecting the genuine feelings of respondents about their leaders and subordinates, it's important to note that raters may have biases toward others. Thus, future studies could employ different techniques, such as using objective scales and incorporating observational methods in experimental studies, to enhance the research findings.

Fourth, the context of this research also has the potential for development in future studies. Specifically, we focused only on the public sector in Vietnam. This narrow focus may limit the generalizability of the results and research implications due to cultural factors. Hence, there is a proposition that forthcoming studies should expand the research context.

Fifth, we acknowledge that the research may not provide a comprehensive reflection of the effect of leadership on employees' behavior because we have restricted the scope to service recovery performance and service adaptive behavior. However, this is also a drawback of behavioral studies, as no research can provide a complete set of outcomes due to limitations in research resources. As such, we suggest that further studies should be conducted on other desirable outcomes of ethical leadership in both the public and private sectors

Lastly, there is a need for more comprehensive research to propose other mechanisms from ethical leadership to public sector employees' behavior. Banks et al. (2021), for instance, proposed to further examine the contingency factors that could affect how employees value the ethical aspect of leaders. In this research, we have confirmed the effect of the contextual factor (ethical self-interest climate) on employees' evaluation of their supervisors. Further studies may want to include factors at the individual level (e.g., proactive personality, temporal focus, etc.).