HOW ETHICAL LEADERSHIP SPARKS EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study investigated the impacts of ethical leadership on employees' innovative work behavior, and employee resilience. Meanwhile, the relationships between employee resilience and employees' innovative work behavior, as well as work engagement were also examined. This study also considered the influence of employee resilience as a mediating factor in the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. Finally, the study considered whether work engagement relates to innovative work behavior. A total of 580 survey questionnaires were distributed to bank employees working in eight banks in southern Thailand, with a total of 441 valid responses being collected. Data were analyzed according to structural equation modeling (SEM) using SPSS PROCESS macro. It was found that ethical leadership positively relates to employees' innovative work behavior and employee resilience. Employee resilience had a positive relationship with both employees' innovative work behavior and work engagement. Meanwhile, employee resilience positively mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. Finally, this study also found that work engagement positively impacted innovative work behavior.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Employee resilience, Work engagement, Employees' innovative work behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

An organization's success depends on its ability to innovate (Elrehail et al., 2018). In recent years, organizations have been under constant pressure to develop new products and services to remain competitive (Zacher & Rosing, 2015). Individuals must drive this continuous innovation (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that academics are devoting increasing attention to individual-level innovative work behaviors (e.g., Martín, Ramos, & Herrero, 2018; Rigtering et al., 2019). Employees' innovative work behavior is regarded as a crucial factor in the development of an organization's daily and dynamic capabilities. Understanding the factors that permit or inhibit innovative capacities in organizational contexts has long been a focus of academic research (Shafique et al., 2019).

Organizational leadership has received much interest in research and in practice in the past few years which has been attributed to the belief that all of a leader's actions impact the attitudes of individuals within a company (Tuffour et al., 2019). Ethical leadership has appealed to the attention of professional practitioners and academics (e.g., Wen et al., 2021; Ullah et al., 2021). Ethical leadership entails normatively sufficient ethical

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behaviors, and the disclosure of ethics through their actions (Brown et al., 2005). Thus, ethical leadership has a significant impact on work attitudes and behaviors (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Employees frequently encounter a variety of legal and ethical issues when developing and executing various ideas; this puts emphasis on the importance of ethical leaders who support ethical standards, flexibility, responsibility, and accountability, in employees' efforts, as possible indicators of innovative work behaviors. Nonetheless, few studies in previous research have considered the impacts of ethical leadership on the work-related implications of innovative behavior, which focuses on people's creative contributions to organizational performance. Therefore, this study looks into the underlying mechanisms through which ethical leadership can affect employees' innovative work behavior in the banking sector.

Another important aspect of this study is an investigation of resilience. Employee resilience refers to an individual's capability to encounter troubles positively and enhances the awareness of an enthusiasm mechanism (Anser et al., 2020). The relationships between ethical leadership, employee resilience, and employee innovative work behavior, have been studied by previous research and discussions. Employee resilience, one of the most significant consequences of ethical leadership, should be introduced as a mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee innovative work behavior. More specifically, this study proposes investigating work engagement as a mediator between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior, as various studies have focused on the effects of work engagement in stimulating employees' innovative work behavior (Afsar, et al., 2020; Montani, et al., 2020). Previous research regarding employees' innovative work behavior in the banking sector has seldom studied the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior via employee resilience and

work engagement.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

According to social exchange theory, leaders' ethical effects on subordinates are reciprocal (Yong-jun, 2012). Ethical leadership addresses how to manage the relationships between an organization's leaders and its employees. In interpersonal interactions, ethical leadership supports employees' rights and places a premium on equality, freedom, respect, and other essential human rights (Xiao & Zhao, 2017). As a result of the foregoing discussion, employees might realize their contributions at work; they develop a strong feeling of commitment for a meaningful return on investment and are keen to participate in increasingly innovative business activities. Correspondingly, this study applied social exchange theory to describe the underlying mechanisms relating ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior.

2.1 Ethical Leadership and Employees' Innovative Work Behavior

Ethical leadership is characterized as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to subordinates through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005). An ethical leader is defined as someone who lives what they teach, who values justice, and delivers relevant information (Asif et al., 2019). Leaders with strong moral and ethical convictions, stimulate favorable thoughts among employees by stressing the value of employee performance in achieving organizational objectives (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Tu & Lu, 2016). Moreover, employees who work with ethical leadership are encouraged to make their own judgments and think for themselves (Walumbwa et al., 2011). It is critical to instill a sense of purpose in employees, assist them

in making their work more valuable (Den Hartog, 2015), and inspire them to be more adaptable and innovative at work (Chen & Hou, 2016).

Innovative work behavior is defined as "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization" (Janssen, 2000). That is to say, the act of putting creative ideas into practice is innovation (Tahir, 2020). Employees' innovative work behavior is influenced by various factors embedded in existing research (Tahir, 2020). One of the variables that impacts employees' innovative work behavior is leadership. A positive leadership style is an essential aspect in establishing employees' innovative work behavior (Wang et al., 2019).

Since ethical leadership may establish the supportive environment required for creativity to flourish, ethical leadership can play a critical role in molding employees' innovative work behavior (Duan et al., 2018). Employees can effectively manage the threats, challenges, and disputes that come with engaging in innovative behavior (Zahra et al., 2017). However, idea formation, idea development, and idea execution, are all examples of employees' innovative work behavior (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013).

Ethical leadership instills meaning in work by emphasizing the value of the work (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Ethical leaders make employees feel more important in their job and come up with fresh ideas to improve organizational objectives (idea formation). Altruism and honesty are qualities that ethical leaders demonstrate (Gardner et al., 2005), which increases the supportive work environment for employees, allows employees to express their views, sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues (idea development). Ethical leadership plays an extraordinary role in implementing novel ideas, work procedures, and policies (idea execution). Previous study has also shown that ethical leadership encourages employees to display innovative

work behavior (Chen & Hou, 2016; Wen et al., 2021). Thus, this study suggests that ethical leadership predicts employees' innovative work behavior. The first hypothesis is as follows:

H1. Ethical leadership relates positively to employees' innovative work behavior.

2.2 Ethical Leadership, Resilience, and Employees' Innovative Work Behavior

Resilience is described as "the ability of the individual to resist the condition of hopelessness when facing a problem" (Siebert, 2005). Resilience manifests as an ability to bounce back from hardship (Avey et al., 2008). Psychological resilience is an important component in determining a person's abilities to cope with life's challenges (Zehir & Narcıkara, 2016).

Even though leadership's influence on employee resilience has been largely overlooked in prior research (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), employee resilience is known to be influenced by the behavior of leaders (Salehzadeh, 2019). Leaders can perceive information, conversations, and relationships with employees in a favorable light, producing positive emotions (Zehir & Narcıkara, 2016). Generally, some leadership behaviors positively impact employee resilience (Park et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, limited previous research has focused on the interactions of ethical leadership with employee resilience. However, the process of establishing and sustaining resilience in followers can be successful only when the leaders' values are firmly rooted in an ethical basis. Furthermore, employee resilience necessitates an ethical leader's constancy, esteem, and stimulus (MacIntyre et al., 2013). Seemingly, ethical leadership can influence employees' positive emotions to increase employee resilience.

Additionally, employees' resilience can be related to employees' innovative work behavior. That is, employee resilience denotes an individual's capacity to recover rapidly from adversity; adversity allows employees to grow stronger and more

innovative (Anser et al., 2020). Moreover, individuals with high resilience are likely to have success in their innovative work behaviors (Cho & Lee, 2014). Bani-Melhem et al. (2021) also stated that innovative work behavior is important for resilient and solid employees. Furthermore, De Weerd et al. (2018) expressed that an individual's knowledge of their resilience may positively impact their innovative work behavior following adversity.

The mediating role of employee resilience on the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior is discussed. No previous research has found that ethical leadership improves employees' innovative work behavior through the mediating role of employee resilience. However, the influence of ethical leadership on employees' innovative work behavior should be investigated. Resilient people are full of energy and have a positive attitude in the face of adversity. In addition, they must be able to bounce back from adversity with positive results (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018). The impression of resiliency acts as a stimulant, providing enthusiasm to apply new knowledge and skills at work. Moreover, employees who have had resilience training are better equipped to spot difficulties, test different solutions, and provide new ideas. Thus, employee resilience could spark employee innovation. Three hypotheses were utilized to study the relationships between ethical leadership, employee resilience, and employees' innovative work behavior.

H2. Ethical leadership relates positively to employee resilience.

H3. Employee resilience relates positively to employees' innovative work behavior.

H4. Employee resilience mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior.

2.3 Employee Resilience and Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as "a positive and fulfilling job-related disposition, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In the workplace, vigor signifies a high level of power and perseverance. It is the desire to put effort into prescribed tasks, as well as the ability to persevere in the face of hardship (Ojo et al., 2021). Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, passion, drive, confidence, and effort (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Absorption is defined as being completely focused and deeply engaged in one's job rather than being conscious of time, whereby one cannot be separated from one's work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement emphasizes a psychological sense of fulfillment with one's professional duty (Wefald & Downey, 2009).

The capacity to survive tough circumstances and acquire strength from hardship has been defined as resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Positive emotions are positively predicted by resilience (Philippe et al., 2009), allowing employees to focus on their work (Ojo et al., 2021). To put it another way, employees who display resilience in the face of adversity can be active and have a robust emotional connection to their work. Many previous studies have found a positive relationship between employee resilience and work engagement. Bande et al. (2015) posited that resilience can increase work engagement. Additionally, Kim et al. (2019) stated that work engagement had been demonstrated to be influenced by personal resources like resilience. Moreover, Cao and Chen (2019) expressed that the most positively important work engagement indicator is resilience. Dai et al. (2019) explained that employee resilience is a personal capability that has been related to higher levels of work engagement, while Malik and Garg (2020) revealed that employee resilience is a personal resource that is positively associated with work engagement. Extrapolating from the abovementioned concept, it is hypothesized that:

H5. Employee resilience relates positively to work engagement.

2.4 Work Engagement and Employees' Innovative Work Behavior

High levels of power and inner drive to achieve greater performance objectives describe work engagement (Jason & S.N, 2021). Previous research on work engagement has identified work engagement as a definite psychological concept related to a variety of productive outcomes, for instance, employee performance (Nazir & Islam, 2017), personal initiative (Hakanen et al., 2008), and career satisfaction (Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2017). This study focuses especially on the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior.

Employee conduct connected to distinct phases of the innovation method is referred to as innovative work behavior; it might simply entail imitating appropriate, efficient work behavior from other sectors (De Spiegelaere et al., 2016). Work engagement is a predictor of employee innovative work behavior (Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007). Moreover, it refers to engaging in work duties with a high level of innovative capability and effectiveness (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). Furthermore, employees' innovative work behavior has been shown to be significantly influenced by their work engagement (Nazir & Islam, 2020). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H6. Work engagement relates positively to innovative work behavior.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants and Procedure

Employees working in commercial banks in southern Thailand were chosen as respondents because of their expertise in the subject of workplace innovation. The research design for this study is focused on cross-sectional data collected from bank employees in southern Thailand. In this study, the components were assessed using a self-reported questionnaire. Based on basic random selection, 8 bank branches within the different work units of these banks were selected. Data were gathered during November – December 2021 from banks operating in the 5 southern provinces of Thailand, namely, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla, Trang, and Phatthalung. The shortlisted banks' managers or vice managers were asked for permission to disseminate the questionnaire to their employees.

Employees selected for the study were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that their identities would be treated confidentially. A total response rate of 76.03 percent from the 580 delivered surveys yielded 441 complete and error-free responses for data analysis. Participants were asked to complete a survey that contained questions about the factors as well as demographic information. According to guidelines provided by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the sample size was deemed adequate for the study. Given the importance of the three independent variables considered here, the sample size of 441 respondents more than satisfies the recommended sample size for the study.

In terms of demographic aspects, there were 107 males and 334 females in the sample, with 78.4 percent having a bachelor's degree, 18.7 percent having a master's degree, and the remainder having a diploma or Ph.D. In terms of age, 48.6 percent of respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40, 35.4 percent were between the ages of 20 and 30, 12.2 percent were between 41 and 50, and the remaining 3.8 percent were between the ages of 51 and 60. In terms of organizational tenure, 45.7 percent of respondents had worked for their current employer for 1–5 years, while 31.3 percent had spent 6–10 years with their current employer.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaires were translated into Thai from English. To confirm the reliability and validity of the study instrument, a standard translation and back-translation technique was used (Brislin, 1970). The original instrument was translated into Thai,

while a Thai English specialist then translated the Thai version back into English, remarking on any ambiguous elements. Finally, two native Thai speakers were invited to pre-test the Thai version of the instrument; no major understanding issues were discovered.

Ethical leadership was evaluated using 10 items from the ethical leadership inventory by Brown et al. (2005). Employees responded on a five-point Likert-scale, ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree" regarding the ethical leadership of their supervisors. The following is an example of a scale item: "My leader defines success not just by results but also by the way that they are obtained." The Cronbach's α value for this scale was found to be 0.96.

Employee resilience was measured using 6 items of the brief resilience scale (BRS) by Smith et al. (2008). A sample scale item is "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times." The responses were assessed on a five-point scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree." The reliability value for this scale was found to be 0.92.

Work engagement was assessed using the 9 items short version (UWES-9) of the scale by Schaufeli et al. (2006). The scale's elements indicate three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption, with each dimension including three items. All the items were rated on a scale ranging from "1 = never" to "7 = always". Sample items for each dimension are: "At my work, I feel bursting with energy", "I am enthusiastic about my job", and "I feel happy when I am working intensely", for vigor, dedication, and absorption respectively. The Cronbach's α value for this scale was 0.92.

Employees' innovative work behavior was measured using the 10-item scale by De Jong et al. (2010). "I pay attention to issues that are not part of my daily work" represents an example of items in this scale. Employees were polled on their thoughts regarding innovative work behavior. The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree". The Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.95.

3.3 Control Variables

In this study, the control variables consisted of education, age, and organizational tenure, as these criteria have been previously shown to be connected to employees' innovative work behavior (Hammond et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2016). Nonetheless, these control factors had no effect on innovative work behavior. The study anticipated that by including nonsignificant control variables, the degree of freedom would be reduced (Atinc et al., 2012). To maintain statistical power, they were removed from the analysis.

3.4 Common Method Variance

All variables in the study were gathered from a single source, namely employees. Thus, CMV can affect the measurement of employees' innovative work behavior. The severity of CMV was determined using Harman's single factor method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). When one factor describes more than 50 percent of the variance in the research variables, this is known as common method variance (Afsar et al., 2020). The result showed that 39.41 percent of the variance could be described by one factor. As this is less than 50 percent it can be determined that CMV does not seem to be an issue in this investigation.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model

Before the hypotheses were examined, the construct validity of the variables was investigated. A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were performed using chi-square statistics and the fit indices of RMSEA, RMR, GFI, NFI, TLI, and CFI (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004) to examine the individuality of the study variables by applying AMOS 21. The fit indices supported the suggested four-factor framework for ethical leadership, resilience, work engagement, and innovative work behavior, $\chi2 = 967.730$, df = 474, $\chi2$ /df

= 2.061, RMSEA = 0.049, RMR =.067, GFI =0.900, NFI =.943, TLI = .962, and CFI = .970. These indices were all within the acceptable bounds (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Furthermore, variance inflation factors (VIFs) for the independent variables were generated to test multicollinearity. The highest VIF value which can be used is 4 (Hair et al., 2010). The values of the VIFs were all below 4 and varied from 1.031 to 1.161, indicating the non-appearance of multicollinearity.

The convergent and discriminant validities were calculated to ensure that the constructs were valid. Moreover, it was necessary to calculate composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha(α), and construct factor loadings for construct reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Construct reliability was established as all of the alpha and CR values were larger than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). The results are displayed in Table 1. There must be a lower limit of 0.5 average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct to provide convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014), while each of the items must also have a minimum loading value of 0.5 (Hulland, 1999). The convergent validities are provided, as illustrated in Table 1. The study applied the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) to complete discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is determined when the HTMT ratio is less than 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 1 demonstrates that all constructs have an HTMT lower than 0.9, indicating adequate discriminant validity. The results suggest that the measurement model is capable of evaluating the model's variables.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients for all the research variables. The coefficients are pointing in the expected direction and complement all the model's direct pathways. According to the sample correlation coefficients, ethical leadership was substantially connected to resilience (r = 0.352, p < 0.01), work engagement (r = 0.116, p < 0.05), and employees' innovative work behavior (r = 0.700, p < 0.01). Furthermore, the data show that employees' resilience was favorably connected to employees' innovative work behavior (r = 0.360, p < 0.01). Work engagement had a positive relationship with employees' innovative work behavior (r = 0.172, p 0.01). Work engagement had a significant relationship with employee resilience (r = 0.161, p < 0.01).

Table 1 Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Min loading	Alpha	CR	AVE	HTMT ratio			
					(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Ethical leadership	0.843	0.965	0.970	0.764				
2. Employees' innovative work behavior	0.749	0.956	0.962	0.718	0.730			
3. Work engagement	0.657	0.938	0.948	0.675	0.120	0.180		
4. Employee resilience	0.684	0.878	0.871	0.532	0.372	0.383	0.175	

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Ethical leadership	4.518	0.603	1			
2	Employees' innovative work behavior	4.377	0.618	0.700**	1.		
3	Work engagement	5.447	0.742	0.116*	0.172**	1	
4	Employee resilience	4.483	0.539	0.352**	0.360**	0.161**	1

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, the SPSS PROCESS macro was applied (Hayes, 2012); this is a frequently used method for determining direct and indirect effects on the variables (Ahmed et al., 2020). Based on this method, the predictor has a direct relationship with the criterion variable and an indirect relationship with the criterion through a mediator. The magnitude of two mediators' effects, i.e., employee resilience and work engagement, was calculated.

The findings of Table 3 revealed that ethical leadership had a significant positive impact on employees' innovative work behavior (β=0.649; t= 18.106; $p < 0.001$) and employees' resilience (β=0.352; t= 7.890;

**Table 3** Estimates Based on the Structural Model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardized beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Outcome
H1:	EL→EIWB	0.649***	0.036	18.106	0.000***	Supported
H2:	EL→ER	0.352***	0.045	7.890	0.000***	Supported
H3:	ER→EIWB	0.118**	0.036	3.282	0.001**	Supported
H5:	ER→WE	0.137**	0.050	2.732	0.003**	Supported
H6:	WE→EIWB	0.078*	0.034	2.300	0.011*	Supported

Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effect						
Mediating effects		**Effect**	**SE**	**p-value**	**LLCI (95%)**	**ULCI (95%)**	**Degree of mediation**
H4	EL→ER→EIWB	0.041***	0.015	0.000***	0.014	0.074	Partial

Note (s): $p^* < 0.05$, $p^{**} < 0.01$, $p^{***} < 0.001$; EL=Ethical leadership, ER= employee resilience, WE=Work engagement, EIWB= Employee innovative work behavior
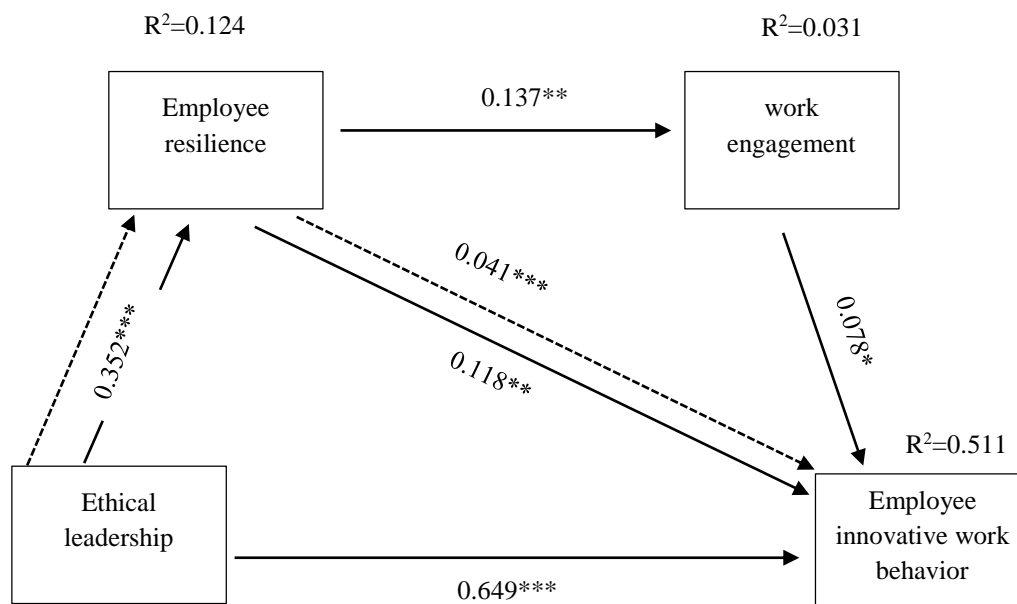
Figure 1 Estimated Model
Note (s) : ⟶ direct effect , ------▶ mediating effect,
* = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01; *** = p < 0.001

p <0.001), thus supporting H1 and H2. Moreover, the effects of employee resilience on employees' innovative work behavior (β=0.118; *t*= 3.282; *p* < 0.01) supported H3. Employee resilience was shown to be positively related to work engagement (β=0.137; *t*= 2.732; *p* < 0.01), supporting H5. Lastly, work engagement and employees' innovative work behavior were linked significantly (β=0.078; *t*= 2.300; *p* < 0.05), supporting H6. Furthermore, Table 3 presents the mediating effects. Employee resilience significantly mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior (β = 0.041, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.014, 0.074]). Therefore, H4 was supported.

5. DISCUSSION

This study depicted ethical leadership as having a positive relationship with employees' innovative work behavior. According to previous research, employees' innovative work behavior is influenced by ethical leadership (e.g., Özsungur, 2019; Tahir, 2020). Wen et al. (2021) posited that employees feel paramount and relevant to the organization because of the numerous kinds of support offered by ethical leadership, which emboldens them to embrace innovative behavior.

This finding reveals that ethical leadership is positively linked to employee resilience. This outcome is in line with MacIntyre et al. (2013), who posited the practice of instilling and fostering resilience in employees, if the leaders' principles are firmly rooted in ethical principles; as well as preparedness, resilience necessitates the constancy, tolerance, and challenge of ethical leadership.

Employee resilience has a positive relationship with employees' innovative work behavior. The findings align with previous employee resilience research (Bani-Melhem et al., 2021; Cho & Lee, 2014). Moreover, the findings show and validate that personal adversity, which builds resilience, influences employees' ability to innovate (De Weerd et al., 2018). When employees can retain a high degree of resilience at work, they are able to invent ideas for innovative goals.

These findings are aligned with the line of reasoning that employee resilience positively influences work engagement (Cao & Chen, 2019; Dai et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Malik & Garg, 2020). Employees must develop individual resilience resources that enable them to remain positive, persistent, and powerful, in the face of challenges or unpredictability; these qualities will boost their work engagement (Ojo et al., 2021).

The study's findings are also consistent with previous empirical studies that show work engagement is significantly associated with employees' innovative work behavior (Agarwal, 2014; Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007; Nazir & Islam, 2020). Experiencing favorable emotions enhances thought-action styles, boosting the possibility of innovative work behavior, according to the positive benefits of work engagement on employees' innovative work behavior.

Previous research has attempted to investigate the mediating role of resilience, but no study which exploited this mediating path has found a link between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. The current study confirms that ethical leadership positively impacts employees' innovative work behavior. This is mainly due to the many types of support offered by ethical leadership, which encourages employees to have a strong degree of resilience and, as a result, inspires them to implement innovative work practices. However, only a small number of studies have investigated how the mediating role of employee resilience might help to promote innovative work behavior. This study contributes to closing the gap and answering the requests of Wen et al. (2021), who introduced new mediating variables from other personalities (i.e., resilience).

6. PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS

These findings have several practical consequences for businesses. First, ethical

leadership was proven to have a favorable impact on employees' innovative work behavior, implying that businesses should realize the value of ethical leadership in their long-term growth and should improve their efforts to cultivate ethical leadership. Furthermore, in addition to professional skills, businesses should consider ethics and moral cultivation when hiring managers and equipping existing leaders with ethical training. The bank should use interview questions that emphasize ethical challenges, or perform integrity examinations. Existing leaders may also benefit from training programs that include subjects like rewarding ethical conduct in subordinates, conveying the value of ethics, or dealing with ethical difficulties. This will assist managers in improving their own ethical conduct; developing a productive, ethical culture; and providing the underpinning factors for employees to be involved in innovative work behavior.

Since employee resilience mediates the association between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior, managers must pay attention to employee resilience. Employees that are more resilient are more able to perform innovative work behaviors. Therefore, managers may encourage employee resilience through a variety of methods, including on-the-job training, two-way communication, coaching, and mentoring. Focusing on mindfulness and awareness of their thoughts will help employees better arrange their ideas and train themselves to tolerate unpleasant situations.

Organizations can integrate employee resilience in the creation and execution of ethical leadership policies and practices to further nurture the advantages of work engagement and innovative work behavior. Work engagement is also a critical condition with important organizational implications; businesses must determine how to generate and then sustain the degree of energy and enthusiasm that employees require for work. The most important practical conclusion of this study is that training, development programs, and carrying out directing activities,

will be active in creating positive states of mind (i.e., resilience and engagement) for organizational employees.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are various limitations to this study that point to important future research topics. Although the quantitative data used in this study can show how multiple factors are linked, it cannot explain why this association occurs. Additionally, qualitative data may be used to establish trends in future studies. A combined technique (qualitative and quantitative data) may then be used to conduct a more thorough analysis of ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. This study only considered the influence of immediate managers on employees' innovative work behavior. On the other hand, relevant prior research has revealed that various degrees of leadership have diverse effects on employees. In the future, researchers can investigate the mechanisms by which ethical leadership affects employees' innovative work behavior, at various levels.

Moreover, from the standpoint of employee resilience and work engagement, this study has shown a link between ethical leadership and employees' innovative work behavior. Future studies may introduce additional mediating factors from various theoretical perspectives, such as hope, trust, and optimism, to better understand the impacts of ethical leadership on employees' innovative work behavior. Data were collected in the context of Thailand, which could be affected by traditional Thai culture. In other situations, different perspectives on ethical leadership studies may be discovered. Consequently, future research might consider a variety of countries to confirm the findings of this study.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the impact of ethical leadership on employees' innovative work behavior in Thailand. The results

indicate that, in addition to ethical leadership having a positive impact on boosting employee innovation, employee resilience and work engagement also assists employees in enhancing their abilities and motivating them to seek more innovative work behaviors. The banking industry was employed as a case study in this study. The findings could be applied to other industries such as education, services, manufacturing, and communication.

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