



Ethical Leadership and Organizational Justice on Whistleblowing Intention through Psychological Safety among Employees in Service Organizations

Delta Lexi Arbawa^{1*}, Wahyu Kusuma Dewi², Ihda Nor Rohmah³

¹⁻³Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Semarang, Indonesia

Email: deltalexiarbawa@gmail.com¹, wahyulilik0101@gmail.com², ihranorrohmah99@gmail.com³

*Penulis Korespondensi: deltalexiarbawa@gmail.com

Abstract. Whistleblowing plays an important role in maintaining organizational integrity, transparency, and accountability, particularly in service-sector organizations where unethical practices may affect employees, customers, and other stakeholders. This study aims to examine the effects of ethical leadership and organizational justice on whistleblowing intention through psychological safety. A quantitative approach with an explanatory research design was employed. Data were collected from employees of service-sector organizations using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and purposive sampling. The proposed relationships were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), including measurement model, structural model, direct effect, and mediation analyses. The findings indicate that ethical leadership and organizational justice positively contribute to psychological safety and whistleblowing intention. Psychological safety also strengthens employees' willingness to report organizational misconduct and mediates the relationships between ethical leadership and whistleblowing intention and between organizational justice and whistleblowing intention. These findings highlight psychological safety as an important mechanism through which ethical and fair organizational environments encourage employee reporting behavior. Service organizations should therefore strengthen ethical leadership, fair organizational procedures, confidential reporting channels, and whistleblower protection to support organizational integrity.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership; Organizational Justice; Psychological Safety; Service Organizations; Whistleblowing Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations in the service sector increasingly face demands to maintain ethics, integrity, transparency, and accountability because their activities involve intensive interactions with customers, employees, regulators, and other stakeholders. Rozin & Park, (2022) explain that organizations present unique ethical challenges because individual honesty can be influenced by organizational norms, incentives, and social pressures. Consequently, fraud, abuse of authority, procedural violations, and other unethical practices can damage organizational credibility and stakeholder trust. According to Rüzgar (2023), organizational policies and strategic management practices are therefore important instruments for preventing corruption and strengthening ethical conduct. In this context, employees occupy a strategic position because they often have direct access to information concerning misconduct. However, reporting wrongdoing is not always an easy decision. Employees may anticipate retaliation, social exclusion, career consequences, or conflicts with colleagues and supervisors (Odri et al., 2025). Richardson (2023) further demonstrates that the consequences of whistleblowing can extend beyond employees themselves and affect their families. Therefore,

creating a work environment that enables employees to report misconduct safely is essential for organizational integrity and effective internal control.

Existing literature indicates that ethical leadership, organizational justice, and psychological safety provide important foundations for encouraging employees to speak up about organizational misconduct. Ethical leaders establish behavioral standards through integrity, ethical role modeling, fairness, and open communication. Alpkan et al. (2020) found that ethical leadership and distributive justice can promote internal whistleblowing through employees' trust in their leaders. Similarly, organizational justice reflects employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and information, which subsequently shape their attitudes toward management and the organization (Garcia et al., 2024). Psychological safety is also relevant because employees are more willing to express concerns when interpersonal risks associated with speaking up are perceived as manageable (Diabes et al., 2021). Burhan et al. (2023) demonstrated that psychological safety represents an important pathway through which ethical leadership encourages ethical voice. Nevertheless, previous studies have frequently examined these relationships separately or employed other mediating mechanisms, including leader trust and organizational identification (Rubab et al., 2023). Thus, an integrated examination of psychological safety as a mechanism connecting both ethical leadership and organizational justice with whistleblowing intention remains necessary, particularly within service organizations.

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine the effects of ethical leadership and organizational justice on whistleblowing intention through psychological safety among employees in service organizations. The study specifically investigates whether employees who perceive their leaders as ethical and organizational practices as fair develop stronger psychological safety, which subsequently increases their willingness to report misconduct. This objective is supported by Gupta & Bhal, (2020), who demonstrated that leadership styles and justice perceptions are relevant determinants of whistleblowing intention. Furthermore, Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, (2021) found that psychological safety plays an important mediating role in explaining employees' whistleblowing intentions, while Ibrahim et al. (2025) provide more recent evidence that ethical leadership can encourage internal whistleblowing through psychological safety and favorable reporting attitudes. Accordingly, this study addresses three central questions: whether ethical leadership and organizational justice influence psychological safety, whether these variables directly influence whistleblowing intention, and whether psychological safety mediates these relationships. Answering these

questions provides a more comprehensive explanation of the organizational and psychological mechanisms underlying employees' decisions to report wrongdoing.

This study argues that whistleblowing intention should not be understood solely as an individual moral decision but as an organizationally embedded behavior shaped by leadership, perceived fairness, and employees' sense of interpersonal security. Ethical leaders can provide behavioral signals that reporting misconduct is legitimate and consistent with organizational values, while fair organizational procedures can strengthen employees' confidence that their concerns will be treated appropriately. She et al. (2023) show that ethical leadership and organizational justice are closely connected with employees' willingness to communicate rather than remain silent. When these conditions generate psychological safety, employees may become more willing to take the interpersonal risks associated with reporting wrongdoing. This argument is consistent with evidence from Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, (2021) regarding psychological safety and whistleblowing and with Burhan et al. (2023) regarding ethical voice. The study therefore contributes theoretically by integrating ethical leadership, organizational justice, psychological safety, and whistleblowing intention into a unified explanatory model. Practically, the findings can guide service organizations in developing ethical leadership practices, fair organizational procedures, confidential reporting mechanisms, and stronger whistleblower protection to support sustainable organizational integrity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Ethics and Ethical Organizational Behavior

Business ethics provides the normative foundation for responsible organizational behavior by guiding decisions, policies, and interactions with stakeholders. Pollon et al. (2021) emphasize that business ethics is closely related to organizational dignity and corporate social responsibility, while Adisa et al. (2025) argue that organizational integrity depends on the consistency between ethical principles and managerial actions. Ethical organizational behavior is therefore shaped not only by individual morality but also by leadership, organizational norms, and ethical climate. Aloustani et al. (2020) found that ethical leadership contributes to ethical climate and organizational citizenship behavior, indicating that managerial conduct strongly influences employee behavior. Conversely, weak ethical environments may increase tolerance toward misconduct. Thus, organizations need ethical systems that promote integrity, accountability, and responsible conduct. This perspective is particularly relevant to whistleblowing because employees are more likely to report wrongdoing when ethical behavior is genuinely supported and reinforced within the organization (Gakhar & Mulla, 2021).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership refers to leadership behavior characterized by integrity, fairness, responsibility, respect, and adherence to moral standards. Adisa et al. (2025) identify ethical leadership as a key foundation of organizational integrity because leaders serve as role models and establish expectations regarding acceptable behavior. Alhaidan (2025) further shows that ethical leadership strengthens organizational justice by promoting consistency and fairness in managerial decisions. In employee reporting contexts, ethical leaders can reduce uncertainty by demonstrating openness and support toward ethical concerns. Burhan et al. (2023) found that ethical leadership promotes ethical voice through psychological safety, while Alpkhan et al. (2020) demonstrate that ethical leadership supports internal whistleblowing through trust in leaders. Similarly, Puni et al. (2021) confirm that ethical leadership is positively associated with whistleblowing intention. Therefore, ethical leadership is expected to create an ethical and supportive environment that strengthens employees' willingness to communicate concerns and report organizational wrongdoing.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness related to outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and organizational communication. Laundon et al. (2020) explain that fairness is central to the employment relationship because employees continuously evaluate whether organizational decisions and treatment are equitable. Ho (2025) shows that organizational justice significantly influences employee attitudes, while Alhaidan (2025) demonstrates that ethical leadership can strengthen justice perceptions. In whistleblowing situations, organizational justice is important because employees evaluate whether reports will be handled fairly and whether they will receive appropriate treatment after reporting misconduct. Gupta & Bhal, (2020) found that justice perceptions contribute to whistleblowing intention, whereas Alpkhan et al. (2020) show that distributive justice supports internal whistleblowing through trust in leaders. Therefore, fair organizational procedures and respectful treatment can increase employee confidence in reporting systems and encourage employees to disclose unethical practices through legitimate internal channels.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to employees' belief that they can express concerns, ideas, mistakes, or sensitive information without fear of unacceptable interpersonal consequences. Men et al. (2020) show that ethical leadership strengthens psychological safety by creating supportive interpersonal conditions, while Burhan et al. (2023) demonstrate that psychological safety represents an important pathway through which ethical leadership promotes ethical

voice. In whistleblowing contexts, psychological safety is critical because reporting wrongdoing can involve social, professional, and relational risks. Employees may remain silent even when they recognize misconduct if they expect retaliation, exclusion, or negative career consequences. Ibrahim et al. (2025) provide direct evidence that psychological safety contributes to internal whistleblowing by reducing perceived risks associated with reporting. Thus, psychological safety serves as an important psychological mechanism that enables employees to translate ethical concerns into actual willingness to speak up and report misconduct.

Whistleblowing Intention

Whistleblowing intention reflects an employee's willingness to report illegal, unethical, or harmful organizational practices to individuals or units capable of taking corrective action. Gakhar & Mulla, (2021) argue that whistleblowing results from interactions between personal and situational factors, while Solikhah et al. (2020) identify both organizational and individual determinants of reporting intention. Fear of retaliation remains one of the major barriers because employees may anticipate professional, social, or career-related consequences. Odri et al. (2025) confirm that retaliation concerns, organizational commitment, and individual control orientation influence whistleblowing intention. Organizational conditions can nevertheless strengthen reporting willingness. Puni et al. (2021) show that ethical leadership promotes whistleblowing intention, while Gupta & Bhal, (2020) highlight the importance of justice perceptions. Ibrahim et al. (2025) additionally demonstrate that psychological safety supports internal reporting. Therefore, whistleblowing intention depends substantially on ethical leadership, fairness, perceived safety, and confidence in organizational reporting mechanisms.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory explains employee behavior through reciprocal relationships between individuals, leaders, and organizations. When employees receive fair, respectful, and supportive treatment, they are more likely to reciprocate with constructive behaviors that benefit the organization. Aloustani et al. (2020) show that ethical leadership is associated with organizational citizenship behavior, illustrating the reciprocal nature of positive leader–employee relationships. Alpkan et al. (2020) further demonstrate that trust in leaders mediates the relationship between ethical leadership, distributive justice, and internal whistleblowing. In this study, ethical leadership and organizational justice represent positive organizational exchanges that can strengthen employees' trust and psychological safety. Burhan et al. (2023) show that psychological safety helps transform ethical leadership into ethical voice. Accordingly, Social Exchange Theory provides the main theoretical basis for explaining why

employees who experience ethical leadership and fair organizational treatment may reciprocate by protecting organizational interests through greater willingness to report wrongdoing.

Organizational Justice Theory

Organizational Justice Theory focuses on how employees evaluate fairness in organizational outcomes, procedures, interpersonal interactions, and information. Laundon et al. (2020) argue that these fairness judgments influence employees' trust, attitudes, and responses toward organizational policies. Ho (2025) similarly demonstrates that organizational justice has lasting effects on employee work attitudes, while Alhaidan (2025) highlights the connection between ethical leadership and employees' justice perceptions. In whistleblowing situations, perceived fairness becomes particularly important because employees must assess whether reports will be processed objectively and whether organizational authorities will treat them appropriately. Gupta & Bhal, (2020) show that organizational justice contributes to whistleblowing intention, and Alpan et al. (2020) demonstrate that distributive justice supports internal whistleblowing through trust. Therefore, Organizational Justice Theory complements Social Exchange Theory by explaining why fair organizational procedures can increase employees' confidence, psychological safety, and willingness to report misconduct.

Internal Whistleblowing Mechanisms and Employee Reporting Behavior

Internal whistleblowing mechanisms are formal systems that enable employees to report suspected misconduct through organizational channels such as supervisors, ethics officers, hotlines, internal audits, or confidential digital platforms. Lara (2024) emphasizes the growing importance of formal internal reporting systems in organizational governance, while Lee (2020) demonstrates that organizational structure and responsiveness influence whether employees choose to report wrongdoing internally. The effectiveness of these mechanisms depends not only on their availability but also on employee trust, confidentiality, responsiveness, and protection from retaliation. Odri et al. (2025) highlight fear of retaliation as a significant obstacle to whistleblowing intention. Internal reporting mechanisms can also generate broader organizational benefits; Lin et al. (2023) show that internal whistleblowing can support stronger corporate social responsibility. Therefore, organizations need credible reporting systems supported by ethical leadership, fair procedures, confidentiality, and adequate whistleblower protection to increase employee willingness to report misconduct.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Previous research generally confirms that ethical leadership and organizational justice influence employee whistleblowing, although different mediating mechanisms have been proposed. Alpan et al. (2020) identify trust in leaders as a mediator between ethical leadership,

distributive justice, and internal whistleblowing, while Rubab et al. (2023) highlight organizational identification in explaining the ethical leadership whistleblowing relationship. Burhan et al. (2023) demonstrate that psychological safety supports ethical voice, and Ibrahim et al. (2025) provide more direct evidence that psychological safety mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and internal whistleblowing. Gupta & Bhal, (2020) also confirm that leadership and justice perceptions are relevant to whistleblowing intention. However, research simultaneously integrating ethical leadership and organizational justice as antecedents of whistleblowing intention through psychological safety remains limited, particularly in service-sector organizations. This study therefore addresses this gap by testing psychological safety as a common psychological mechanism linking both organizational factors with whistleblowing intention.

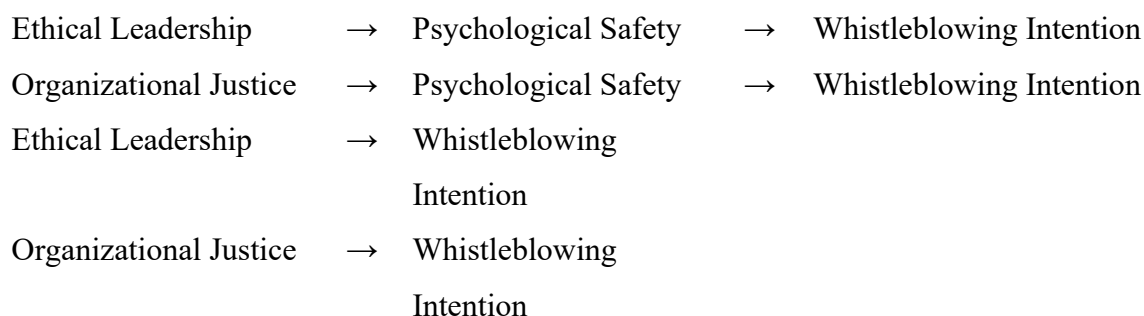
Hypothesis Development

The proposed hypotheses are grounded in empirical evidence indicating that ethical leadership, organizational justice, and psychological safety contribute to employees' willingness to report wrongdoing. Men et al. (2020) and Burhan et al. (2023) show that ethical leadership strengthens psychological safety, while Laundon et al. (2020) and Ho (2025) suggest that fair organizational treatment creates supportive and trusting work relationships. Ethical leadership has also been positively associated with whistleblowing intention Puni et al. (2021) Rubab et al. (2023), whereas Gupta and Bhal (2020) demonstrate that organizational justice is relevant to reporting intention. Ibrahim et al. (2025) further confirm that psychological safety facilitates internal whistleblowing. Based on these relationships, this study proposes: H1: Ethical leadership positively affects psychological safety; H2: organizational justice positively affects psychological safety; H3: ethical leadership positively affects whistleblowing intention; H4: organizational justice positively affects whistleblowing intention; H5: psychological safety positively affects whistleblowing intention; H6: psychological safety mediates the ethical leadership–whistleblowing intention relationship; and H7: psychological safety mediates the organizational justice–whistleblowing intention relationship.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework positions ethical leadership and organizational justice as the main antecedents of whistleblowing intention, both directly and indirectly through psychological safety. Social Exchange Theory explains that employees who receive ethical and fair treatment are likely to reciprocate through constructive behaviors intended to protect organizational interests, including reporting misconduct. Organizational Justice Theory complements this explanation by emphasizing the importance of fairness perceptions in

building employee trust toward organizational procedures. Burhan et al. (2023) support the role of psychological safety in translating ethical leadership into ethical voice, while Ibrahim et al. (2025) confirm its relevance to internal whistleblowing. Gupta & Bhal, (2020) further demonstrate the importance of leadership and justice in predicting whistleblowing intention. Accordingly, the proposed model assumes that ethical leadership and organizational justice enhance psychological safety, which subsequently increases whistleblowing intention, while both antecedents may also exert direct effects on employees' willingness to report wrongdoing.



3. RESEARCH METHOD



Figure 1. The structure of the research flow diagram.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the relationships among ethical leadership, organizational justice, psychological safety, and whistleblowing intention. The explanatory design was selected because the study focused on testing direct and indirect relationships among the proposed constructs within a theoretically developed model. Ethical leadership and organizational justice were positioned as exogenous variables, psychological safety as a mediating variable, and whistleblowing intention as the endogenous variable. Data were collected at the individual employee level using a cross-sectional survey design. This approach enabled the study to statistically evaluate whether employees' perceptions of ethical leadership and organizational justice contributed to

their psychological safety and subsequently influenced their intention to report organizational misconduct.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of employees working in service-sector organizations, where employee interactions, organizational procedures, and ethical conduct are particularly important for maintaining service quality and stakeholder trust. Respondents were required to have sufficient work experience to understand leadership practices, organizational fairness, workplace interactions, and internal reporting procedures. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique because respondents needed relevant organizational experience to provide meaningful assessments of the research constructs. Eligible participants were active employees who had worked in their organization for at least one year and were familiar with workplace policies and supervisory practices. This selection criterion was intended to ensure that respondents could evaluate ethical leadership, organizational justice, psychological safety, and whistleblowing intention based on their actual organizational experiences.

Data Collection and Variable Measurement

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to eligible respondents in service-sector organizations. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Ethical leadership was measured through employees' perceptions of leader integrity, fairness, ethical role modeling, and ethical communication. Organizational justice covered perceptions of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational fairness. Psychological safety measured employees' perceptions of whether they could express concerns and sensitive information without fear of negative interpersonal consequences. Whistleblowing intention reflected employees' willingness to report observed unethical or inappropriate organizational practices through available reporting channels. The questionnaire was structured systematically to ensure that each indicator represented its respective latent construct and was easily understood by respondents.

Ethical Considerations and Respondent Confidentiality

Considering the sensitive nature of whistleblowing, this study emphasized respondent anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation throughout the data collection process. Respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the research and were not required to provide personally identifiable information that could reveal their identity or organizational position. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could complete the questionnaire based on their perceptions and workplace experiences without disclosing specific cases, individuals,

or incidents of organizational misconduct. The collected data were analyzed in aggregate form and used exclusively for research purposes. These procedures were intended to minimize concerns about retaliation, social pressure, or professional consequences and to encourage respondents to provide accurate assessments of leadership, organizational justice, psychological safety, and whistleblowing intention.

Data Analysis and Measurement Model Evaluation

The research model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which enables simultaneous evaluation of measurement quality and structural relationships among latent variables. The analysis began with an evaluation of the outer model to determine the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Discriminant validity was examined to ensure that each construct was empirically distinct from the other constructs included in the model. Indicators and constructs were evaluated against established statistical criteria before proceeding to structural model analysis, thereby ensuring that the measurement model provided an adequate basis for testing the proposed relationships among variables.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the inner model was evaluated to examine the explanatory capability and relationships among the research constructs. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the proportion of variance in psychological safety and whistleblowing intention explained by their respective predictors. Predictive relevance and effect sizes were also considered to provide a more comprehensive assessment of model performance. Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. The analysis tested the direct effects of ethical leadership and organizational justice on psychological safety and whistleblowing intention, as well as the direct effect of psychological safety on whistleblowing intention. Statistical significance was determined using the predefined significance level.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether psychological safety explains the mechanisms through which ethical leadership and organizational justice influence whistleblowing intention. The analysis examined two specific indirect relationships: ethical leadership through psychological safety to whistleblowing intention and organizational justice

through psychological safety to whistleblowing intention. The significance of these indirect effects was assessed using bootstrapping results based on the corresponding path coefficients, *t*-statistics, and *p*-values. The direct effects of ethical leadership and organizational justice on whistleblowing intention were simultaneously considered to determine the nature of the mediation. This procedure enabled the study to establish whether psychological safety functions as a complementary mechanism connecting ethical and fair organizational conditions with employees' willingness to report misconduct through appropriate organizational channels.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study involved 200 employees working in service-sector organizations with diverse demographic and employment backgrounds. The respondents consisted of 108 males (54.0%) and 92 females (46.0%), with the largest proportion having four to six years of work experience (33.5%). Most respondents were staff members (63.0%), followed by supervisors (23.0%) and managers (14.0%). The descriptive results also indicated generally favorable perceptions of the research constructs. Ethical Leadership recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.61$), followed by Organizational Justice ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.65$), Psychological Safety ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.68$), and Whistleblowing Intention ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.72$). These findings indicate that employees generally perceived their leaders as ethical, considered organizational practices relatively fair, felt reasonably safe to express workplace concerns, and demonstrated a favorable willingness to report misconduct. The complete respondent profile and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics.

Aspect	Category/Construct	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	108	54.0	—	—
	Female	92	46.0	—	—
Work Experience	1–3 years	58	29.0	—	—
	4–6 years	67	33.5	—	—
	7–10 years	44	22.0	—	—
	> 10 years	31	15.5	—	—
Position	Staff	126	63.0	—	—
	Supervisor	46	23.0	—	—
	Manager	28	14.0	—	—
Research Variables	Ethical Leadership (EL)	—	—	4.08	0.61
	Organizational Justice (OJ)	—	—	3.94	0.65
	Psychological Safety (PS)	—	—	3.87	0.68
	Whistleblowing Intention (WI)	—	—	3.79	0.72

Note. $N = 200$; SD = standard deviation.

The PLS-SEM evaluation demonstrated that the measurement and structural models met the required assessment criteria. As reported in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha ranged from .872 to .904, composite reliability ranged from .907 to .927, and AVE ranged from .662 to .744, indicating adequate internal consistency and convergent validity. Psychological Safety achieved an R^2 of .547 and Q^2 of .352, while Whistleblowing Intention achieved an R^2 of .638 and Q^2 of .421, demonstrating satisfactory explanatory and predictive capability. The hypothesis testing results in Table 3 show that all direct relationships (H1–H5) were positive and statistically significant. Psychological Safety also produced significant indirect effects between Ethical Leadership and Whistleblowing Intention ($\beta = .161$, $p < .001$) and between Organizational Justice and Whistleblowing Intention ($\beta = .188$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H1–H7 were supported, confirming the proposed direct relationships and mediating role of Psychological Safety.

Table 2. Measurement and Structural Model Evaluation.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	R^2	Q^2
Ethical Leadership (EL)	0.891	0.918	0.691	N/A	N/A
Organizational Justice (OJ)	0.904	0.927	0.680	N/A	N/A
Psychological Safety (PS)	0.872	0.907	0.662	0.547	0.352
Whistleblowing Intention (WI)	0.886	0.921	0.744	0.638	0.421

Note. AVE = average variance extracted; R^2 = coefficient of determination; Q^2 = predictive relevance. R^2 and Q^2 are applicable only to endogenous constructs.

Table 3. Direct and Indirect Effect Testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t -Statistics	p -Value	Decision
H1	EL $\rightarrow$ PS	0.386	6.742	< .001	Supported
H2	OJ $\rightarrow$ PS	0.451	7.863	< .001	Supported
H3	EL $\rightarrow$ WI	0.214	3.624	< .001	Supported
H4	OJ $\rightarrow$ WI	0.187	3.116	.002	Supported
H5	PS $\rightarrow$ WI	0.417	7.218	< .001	Supported
H6	EL $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ WI	0.161	5.126	< .001	Supported
H7	OJ $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ WI	0.188	5.843	< .001	Supported

Note. EL = Ethical Leadership; OJ = Organizational Justice; PS = Psychological Safety; WI = Whistleblowing Intention; β = standardized path coefficient.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Ethical Leadership and Organizational Justice positively influence Psychological Safety, supporting H1 and H2. Ethical Leadership had a significant effect on Psychological Safety ($\beta = .386$, $p < .001$), indicating that employees feel safer expressing concerns when leaders demonstrate integrity, fairness, openness, and consistency in ethical behavior. Organizational Justice produced an even stronger effect on Psychological Safety ($\beta = .451$, $p < .001$), suggesting that fair procedures, equitable outcomes, respectful interpersonal treatment, and transparent communication provide employees with confidence that expressing concerns will not expose them to unreasonable interpersonal consequences.

These results indicate that leadership behavior and organizational fairness operate as complementary conditions for creating a psychologically safe workplace. In service organizations, where employees frequently interact with supervisors, colleagues, and customers, establishing these conditions is particularly important for developing an environment in which ethical concerns can be communicated openly.

The results also support H3, H4, and H5 by demonstrating significant positive effects of Ethical Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Psychological Safety on Whistleblowing Intention. Psychological Safety showed the strongest direct effect ($\beta = .417, p < .001$), followed by Ethical Leadership ($\beta = .214, p < .001$) and Organizational Justice ($\beta = .187, p = .002$). These findings suggest that employees' willingness to report wrongdoing depends not only on whether leaders behave ethically or organizational procedures are fair, but particularly on whether employees personally feel safe when communicating sensitive information. Ethical leadership establishes moral expectations regarding acceptable conduct, while organizational justice increases confidence that reports will be handled appropriately. Psychological Safety subsequently reduces perceived interpersonal risks associated with reporting misconduct. The R^2 value of .638 further indicates that the proposed model provides substantial explanatory capability for variations in Whistleblowing Intention among the respondents.

Finally, the significant indirect effects support H6 and H7 and demonstrate the mediating role of Psychological Safety. Ethical Leadership influenced Whistleblowing Intention indirectly through Psychological Safety ($\beta = .161, p < .001$), while the indirect effect of Organizational Justice through Psychological Safety was slightly stronger ($\beta = .188, p < .001$). Because the corresponding direct effects remained statistically significant, Psychological Safety demonstrates partial mediation in both relationships. The findings support Social Exchange Theory by indicating that employees may reciprocate ethical leadership and fair organizational treatment through constructive behavior intended to protect organizational interests. They also reinforce Organizational Justice Theory by showing that perceptions of fairness contribute to both psychological security and reporting intentions. Practically, service organizations should strengthen ethical leadership development, transparent procedures, confidential reporting channels, anti-retaliation policies, and whistleblower protection to ensure that employees perceive internal reporting as safe, credible, and organizationally valued.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that ethical leadership and organizational justice play important roles in strengthening psychological safety and whistleblowing intention among employees in service-sector organizations. Ethical leadership creates an environment characterized by integrity, consistency, openness, and ethical standards, which encourages employees to feel more secure when expressing concerns about organizational misconduct. Organizational justice similarly contributes to psychological safety by strengthening employees' confidence that organizational decisions, procedures, communication, and interpersonal treatment are implemented fairly. Furthermore, ethical leadership and organizational justice contribute directly to employees' willingness to report wrongdoing. These findings demonstrate that whistleblowing intention is not determined solely by individual ethical considerations but is also shaped by organizational conditions that provide employees with confidence that reporting misconduct is legitimate, valued, and appropriately supported.

Psychological safety serves as an important mediating mechanism linking ethical leadership and organizational justice with whistleblowing intention. Employees who experience ethical leadership and fair organizational treatment are more likely to feel psychologically secure, which subsequently strengthens their willingness to report unethical practices. This mechanism demonstrates that ethical leadership and organizational justice become more effective in encouraging whistleblowing when employees perceive that speaking up will not expose them to unacceptable interpersonal or professional consequences. The findings therefore support the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, in which positive organizational treatment encourages constructive reciprocal behavior, and Organizational Justice Theory, which emphasizes the behavioral consequences of perceived fairness. Overall, integrating ethical leadership, organizational justice, and psychological safety provides a comprehensive explanation of employees' whistleblowing intention within service-sector organizations.

Service-sector organizations should strengthen ethical leadership practices by ensuring that managers consistently demonstrate integrity, fairness, transparency, and openness toward employee concerns. Organizational policies and decision-making procedures should also be implemented fairly and communicated clearly to strengthen employee confidence in organizational systems. In addition, organizations should develop accessible and confidential internal reporting channels supported by explicit whistleblower protection and anti-retaliation policies. Reports of misconduct should be handled objectively, confidentially, and responsively to demonstrate that employee concerns are taken seriously. Creating a psychologically safe

work environment is equally important; employees should be able to raise ethical concerns without fear of social exclusion, unfair treatment, or negative career consequences. These practices can strengthen trust in internal reporting mechanisms and encourage employees to participate actively in protecting organizational integrity.

Future research should extend the proposed model by examining additional organizational and individual factors that may explain variations in whistleblowing intention. Organizational trust, ethical climate, perceived organizational support, fear of retaliation, organizational commitment, and organizational culture could be incorporated as mediating or moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee reporting behavior. Future studies could also compare different service industries, such as banking, healthcare, education, hospitality, and public services, because ethical risks and reporting environments may differ across organizational contexts. Longitudinal or multi-source research designs are also recommended to examine whether changes in leadership practices, organizational justice, and psychological safety produce changes in actual reporting behavior over time. Such extensions could improve the generalizability of the model and distinguish whistleblowing intention from actual whistleblowing behavior.

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