

Ethical Leadership as an Organizational Approach to Address Workplace Bullying

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Abstract

In light of the evolving professional relationships within higher education institutions, workplace bullying has emerged as a negative organizational behavior reflecting imbalances in interpersonal interactions and power dynamics. This exploratory study aimed to analyze the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying at the University of 8 May 1945 Guelma. The study adopted a descriptive research design and employed an online questionnaire to collect data from a purposive sample of 70 university faculty members. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software.

The findings revealed that the level of ethical leadership was moderate, while workplace bullying was found to be at a moderate-to-high level, primarily manifested in strained professional relationships and weak cooperation among staff. The results also demonstrated a statistically significant negative effect of ethical leadership and its dimensions on reducing workplace bullying. Among these dimensions, **ethical administrative practices** had the strongest influence. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences were found in workplace bullying based on gender, years of service, or academic rank.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership; Workplace Bullying; University; Professional Relationships.

Research Problem

Contemporary organizations are undergoing profound transformations in patterns of authority and the structure of professional relationships, making the quality of work life a central issue in organizational behavior and organizational sociology. Organizations are no longer viewed merely as functional settings in which individuals perform specific roles; rather, they have become social arenas where power relations and symbolic struggles intersect. Within these environments, everyday professional practices are shaped by a complex network of social interactions that may generate various forms of domination or exclusion in the workplace.

Within this context, workplace bullying has emerged as one of the most significant forms of indirect organizational violence. Its consequences extend beyond causing psychological harm to employees to influencing the nature of professional relationships and the overall organizational climate. Workplace bullying should not be understood solely as an individual deviant behavior; from a sociological perspective, it can also be viewed as the product of an organizational structure that allows the reproduction of domination and inequality in the distribution of power and professional recognition within the workplace.

The importance of studying this phenomenon becomes even more evident within the university setting, which represents a distinctive intellectual and social environment that combines the logic of

the academic field with that of the administrative field. A university is not merely an institution for transmitting knowledge and producing qualified graduates; it is also a space in which individuals compete for academic status and symbolic power. As Bourdieu argues, knowledge itself becomes a form of symbolic capital employed in struggles over positions and academic hierarchy. Under such conditions, workplace bullying may take multiple forms, extending beyond overtly aggressive behaviors to include more subtle practices such as administrative marginalization, exclusion from participation in academic activities, or the use of organizational authority to reproduce professional hierarchies within the institution.

To address this phenomenon, ethical leadership has emerged as an important organizational approach that seeks to regulate professional relationships by promoting the values of justice, transparency, and ethical responsibility in the exercise of authority. This perspective is supported by several theoretical approaches. Social Learning Theory (Bandura) argues that leaders serve as behavioral role models whose ethical conduct shapes employees' behavioral patterns within the organization. Similarly, Social Exchange Theory (Blau) maintains that the relationship between leaders and subordinates is founded on the principle of reciprocity, whereby fair and ethical treatment fosters positive employee behaviors while reducing negative ones. Furthermore, Interactional Justice Theory emphasizes that the manner in which leaders treat their subordinates constitutes a key factor in reducing workplace bullying within the organizational environment.

Several recent studies have demonstrated an inverse relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying. Freire and Pinto (2022) found that ethical leadership contributes to reducing workplace bullying by strengthening the ethical climate within organizations. Likewise, Chalabi and Hassan (2024) concluded that higher levels of ethical leadership practices are associated with lower levels of workplace bullying behaviors. Nevertheless, most of these studies were conducted in industrial or service-sector organizational contexts, whereas the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying within the Arab university environment has received only limited scholarly attention.

The importance of examining this relationship is further reinforced within the Algerian university context, which is characterized by distinctive organizational and cultural features. Academic relationships intersect with bureaucratic administrative structures, while leadership practices and professional relationships are influenced by a certain degree of organizational centralization and power distance. These characteristics may affect both leadership practices and patterns of interaction among actors within the university institution.

Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying within the Algerian university environment, with the aim of understanding how ethical leadership practices can contribute to reducing negative organizational behaviors and fostering a professional climate founded on justice and mutual respect.

Based on this theoretical and empirical concern, the study addresses the following central research question:

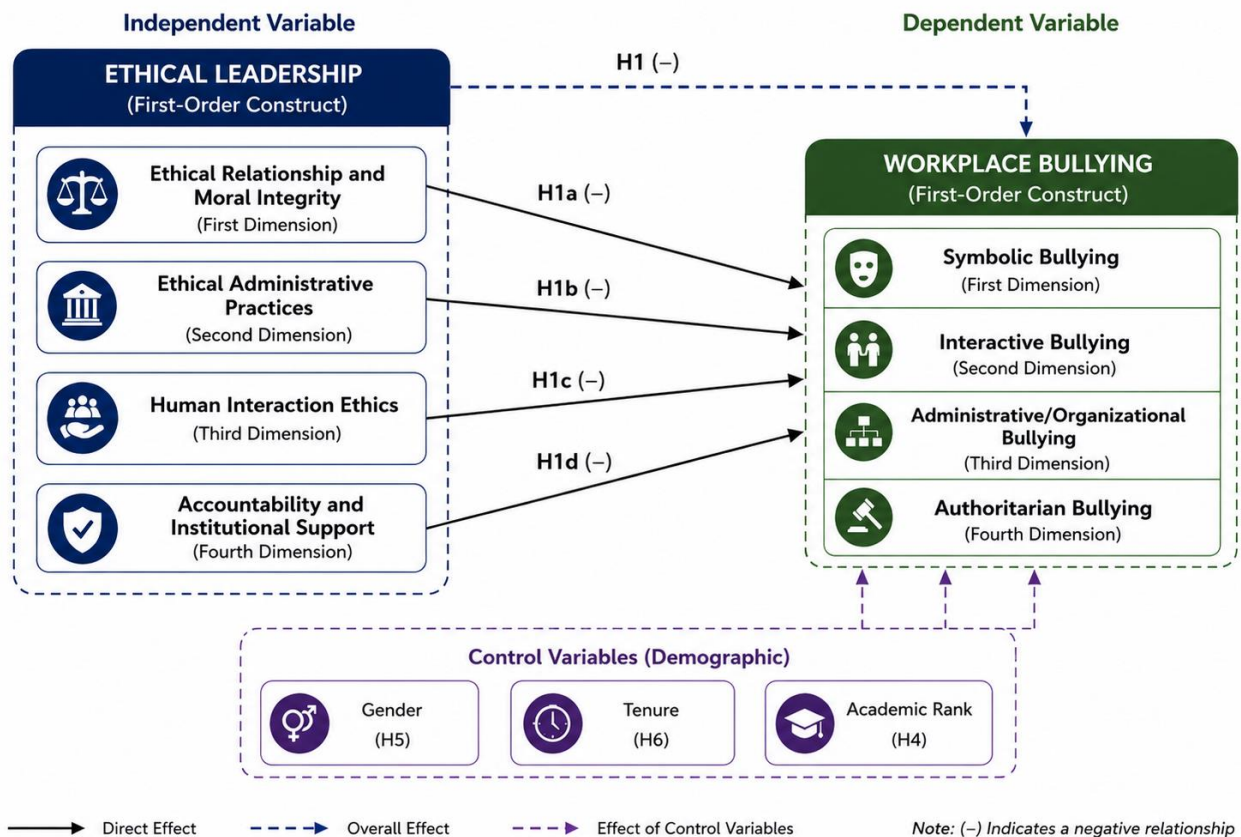
To what extent does ethical leadership, as an organizational approach, contribute to reducing workplace bullying within Algerian universities from the perspective of faculty members?

The following sub-questions are derived from this central question:

1. What is the level of ethical leadership practice in Algerian universities from the perspective of faculty members?

2. What are the predominant forms and manifestations of workplace bullying in Algerian universities?
3. What is the impact of leaders' ethical characteristics and their commitment to ethical administrative practices on reducing workplace bullying within the university?
4. What role does ethical leadership play in reducing manifestations of interactional bullying and the abuse of authority within the university work environment?
5. Do manifestations of workplace bullying differ according to faculty members' demographic and professional characteristics (**gender, years of experience, and academic rank**)?

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on a synthesis of previous studies.

The proposed conceptual model examines the relationship between ethical leadership as the independent variable and workplace bullying as the dependent variable within an analytical framework grounded in the organizational behavior literature.

In this model, ethical leadership is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising integrity and ethical role modeling, ethical administrative practices, ethical interpersonal conduct, and accountability and institutional support. Collectively, these dimensions reflect a values-based leadership style characterized by justice, transparency, and respect for individuals in the workplace. Conversely, workplace bullying is operationalized as the dependent variable through four principal dimensions: symbolic bullying, interactional bullying, administrative/organizational bullying, and authoritarian bullying, thereby capturing the various forms of negative behaviors that individuals may experience within the organization.

The model hypothesizes a negative and statistically significant relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying, such that higher levels of ethical leadership practices lead to a

reduction in the prevalence of workplace bullying. It further assumes that this relationship may vary according to individuals' demographic characteristics, which are included as control variables, namely gender, age, marital status, academic rank, and professional seniority.

Accordingly, this conceptual model provides an analytical framework for testing the causal relationships among its variables using quantitative statistical techniques, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the role of ethical leadership in promoting a healthy work environment and reducing negative organizational behaviors.

Main Hypothesis

- H1: Ethical leadership has a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying at the 5% significance level.

Sub-Hypotheses

- **H1.1:** Integrity and ethical role modeling have a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.2:** Ethical administrative practices have a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.3:** Ethical interpersonal conduct has a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.4:** Accountability and institutional support have a statistically significant effect on workplace bullying at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.5:** There are statistically significant differences in workplace bullying attributable to the respondents' demographic characteristics at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.6:** There are statistically significant differences in workplace bullying attributable to **professional seniority** at the **5% significance level**.
- **H1.7:** There are statistically significant differences in workplace bullying attributable to **academic rank** at the **5% significance level**.

FIRST: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

1. Objectives and Significance of the Study

1.1. Objectives of the Study

- To contribute to the enrichment of the scientific literature in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management by providing a theoretical and empirical analysis of two key concepts that significantly influence employees' organizational and psychological well-being.
- To analyze the phenomenon of workplace bullying within the work environment by examining its forms, causes, and consequences for both employees and organizations.
- To investigate the nature of the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying, and to determine the extent to which ethical leadership practices contribute to reducing this phenomenon.
- To interpret the relationship between the two variables in light of relevant theoretical perspectives.
- To propose a set of practical recommendations that may assist organizations in adopting ethical leadership practices to reduce workplace bullying and improve the organizational climate.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from several theoretical and practical considerations, the most important of which are as follows:

- **Theoretical Significance:** The study contributes to enriching the organizational behavior literature by examining the relationship between two important concepts—**ethical leadership** and **workplace bullying**—particularly in light of the limited number of studies that have investigated this relationship within the Arab and local contexts.
- **Sociological Significance:** The study contributes to a better understanding of the nature of social relationships within professional organizations and how ethical leadership can foster an organizational climate characterized by trust, justice, and mutual respect.
- **Organizational Significance:** The study provides an explanatory framework that organizations can utilize to reduce negative workplace behaviors, particularly workplace bullying, through the promotion of ethical leadership practices.
- **Practical Significance:** The study offers a set of practical recommendations that may assist decision-makers and human resource managers in developing organizational policies and training programs aimed at promoting ethical leadership within institutions.
- **Human and Psychological Significance:** The findings of the study are expected to contribute to improving the psychological and organizational work environment by reducing workplace bullying practices, thereby enhancing employees' sense of job security and job satisfaction.

2. The First Variable: Ethical Leadership

2.1. Operational Definition of Ethical Leadership

In this study, ethical leadership refers to the extent to which leaders practice leadership behaviors grounded in ethical values in their interactions with subordinates within the workplace. These behaviors include fairness in decision-making, respect for employees, transparency, integrity, accountability, and the promotion of positive behaviors within the organization. This variable is measured through employees' perceptions of these ethical leadership practices in the leader's interactions with them and in the management of organizational affairs, as well as the extent to which such practices contribute to fostering a professional climate based on respect and reducing negative behaviors within the institution.

2.2. Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership represents the driving force through which organizations and societies progress. Its principal dimensions include:

- **Integrity:** Integrity refers to adherence to ethical values and serves as the foundation for achieving justice, equality, trust, respect, and honesty. An ethical leader ensures the fair and equitable distribution of organizational resources and opportunities among employees. (Awadallah, 2023, p. 18)
- **Justice and Credibility:** Justice and credibility constitute fundamental characteristics of an ethical leader. They are reflected in fairness, equality, and credibility in the relationship between leaders and their employees. (Fakhri Sawsan Abu Aridah, 2023, p. 28)
- **Teamwork:** An ethical leader seeks to strengthen cooperation among members by fostering mutual trust and maintaining continuous communication with them. (Abdullah Al-Qudah, 2023, p. 17)

The dimensions of ethical leadership are also reflected in accountability for the academic and social success of the institution, as well as in promoting awareness, safeguarding values, and upholding democracy and fairness. (Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Alawiyah, 2020, p. 38)

- **Role Clarity:** Ensuring that responsibilities and organizational objectives are clearly defined.
- **Ethical Guidance:** Promoting ethical values through advocacy of ethical conduct and the application of appropriate systems of rewards and sanctions.
- **Participation in Decision-Making:** Encouraging the sharing of authority through consultation and participative decision-making. (Saeed Mohammed Al-Shaer, 2017, p. 26)
- **Moral Virtues:** These include clarity in instructions, making sound decisions, serving as a positive role model, consultation, modesty, piety, chastity, integrity, sincerity, self-monitoring, trustworthiness, cooperation, moderation, loyalty, patience, forbearance, self-sacrifice, enjoining truth, self-respect, avoiding harm to others, and benevolence. (Irsan Abdul Halim Al-Saadi, 2020, pp. 12–13)

According to Brown, ethical leadership consists of two principal dimensions: ethical personal characteristics and ethical managerial characteristics. Al-Sayyid Al-Hadari, however, classifies these characteristics into four dimensions as follows:

- **Personal Characteristics:** An ethical leader demonstrates honesty in interactions, integrity and trustworthiness in behavior, accepts responsibility for mistakes, acknowledges errors, welcomes constructive criticism, remains emotionally composed, and serves as a role model for others through both conduct and interpersonal interactions.
- **Managerial Characteristics:** These include a strong commitment to achieving the organization's vision and objectives, encouraging employees' creativity and innovation, involving subordinates in planning and decision-making, assigning tasks according to employees' abilities and preferences, supporting their professional development, adopting transparent performance evaluation criteria, and making fair and balanced decisions.
- **Human Relations:** An ethical leader strives to establish positive interpersonal relationships with all employees while taking into consideration each individual's needs and feelings, treating them with humanity, respect, and empathy.
- **Teamwork:** An ethical leader seeks to strengthen employees' confidence in themselves and in their capabilities, promote cooperation and harmony, reinforce collective responsibility and organizational commitment, create an environment conducive to communication and teamwork, encourage collective decision-making, utilize employees' potential effectively, and attribute organizational success to their cooperation, dedication, and collective efforts. (Mazyan, 2022, p. 151)

2.3. Organizational Significance of Ethical Leadership

The organizational significance of ethical leadership can be summarized as follows:

- It enables leaders to manage conflicts among followers by encouraging them to act with selflessness rather than selfishness and to focus on doing what is ethically right regardless of the outcome.
- It is grounded in a social perspective based on Social Exchange Theory, promoting discretionary behaviors that contribute positively to external groups while translating both explicit and implicit shared organizational goals into practice.

- It represents an indispensable step toward building a sustainable civilization founded on universal ethical values, particularly in multicultural societies facing widespread corruption, where legislative and organizational frameworks alone are insufficient.
- It enhances employees' organizational trust by emphasizing proactive ethical influence and adherence to ethical standards while remaining responsive to individual differences and situational factors.
- It contributes to human well-being by promoting consistent ethical values that reflect organizational realities.
- It guides organizational values in shaping others' behavior, preserving ethical standards, and encouraging thoughtful responses to ethical dilemmas.
- It constitutes an essential component of human conduct and is fundamental to ethical decision-making, serving as an integral part of business ethics from a normative perspective.
- It establishes a clear distinction between acceptable and unacceptable conduct in leading organizations toward the achievement of their objectives. (Kazem Hussein Al-Sharifi & Mohammed Dhaher, 2021, p. 75)
- Subordinates tend to emulate the behaviors of their leaders, whether positive or negative.
- Employees' adoption of their leaders' behaviors is reflected in the prevailing organizational culture, organizational goals and strategies, performance outcomes, resource utilization, and resource allocation.
- Ethical leadership contributes to creating a productive organizational climate characterized by ethically guided interactions that reflect the nature of employees' professional responsibilities. It promotes excellence in performance, commitment to work, employee autonomy in carrying out tasks and making appropriate decisions, an environment that encourages productivity, and the protection of employees' legitimate rights. (Al-Tarawneh, 2010, pp. 133–134)

The importance of ethical leadership becomes particularly evident in situations where formal rules and regulations are insufficient. In such circumstances, leaders must rely on sound judgment and moral conscience when making administrative decisions. Employees' awareness of ethical decision-making encourages greater dedication and commitment to their work, enabling them to achieve the highest possible levels of performance. This can only be accomplished through respectful treatment of employees, understanding their concerns and emotions, helping to resolve their problems, and fostering a sense of harmony and cohesion among members of the organization. (Mohammed Akik, 2020, p. 17)

3. The Second Variable: Workplace Bullying

3.1. Operational Definition of Workplace Bullying

In this study, **workplace bullying** refers to a set of negative and repetitive behaviors directed at an employee by colleagues or supervisors within the workplace. These behaviors manifest in various forms of abuse, exclusion, psychological pressure, or professional belittlement. This variable is measured through employees' perceptions of the prevalence of such behaviors within the organization, including exposure to humiliation, marginalization, workplace harassment, and abuse of authority, as well as the resulting negative effects on professional relationships and the organizational climate.

3.2. Dimensions and Forms of Workplace Bullying

3.2.1. Dimensions of Workplace Bullying

According to several studies, including those by **Einarsen and Hoel (2001)**, **Al-Fatlawi et al. (2017)**, and **Anjum and Adeel (2013)**, the principal dimensions of workplace bullying can be summarized as follows:

- **Work-Related Bullying:** This dimension refers to bullying practices directed at an individual in relation to job duties and responsibilities within the workplace. Such practices may include providing employees with incorrect information in order to mislead them or induce mistakes, assigning tasks that are inappropriate or inconsistent with their responsibilities, or denying them opportunities for competition and career advancement. Consequently, employees become confined within a restrictive organizational environment, whether in their interactions with colleagues or with management.
- **Person-Related Bullying:** This dimension encompasses a range of coercive behaviors that target the individual personally, resulting in the accumulation of emotional distress. Employees may perceive themselves as victims and, as a consequence, seek alternative employment opportunities. This form of bullying includes interpersonal conflicts, expressions of anger, the imposition of unnecessary restrictions on employees, and behaviors aimed at undermining an individual's personal status and self-esteem.
- **Physical Intimidation (Physical Abuse):** This dimension involves physical harm directed at individuals or damage to their personal belongings. It includes verbal or physical assault, regardless of whether threats are actually carried out. The accumulation of repeated threats may lead to psychological breakdown. In more severe cases, the use of physical force in the workplace may result in disability, death, or severe psychological harm. Such behaviors may include scratching, slapping, hair pulling, punching, burning, or even the use of sharp objects, firearms, or any other type of weapon that threatens an individual's safety and security. (Roel Dawood & Hassan Kojer, 2021, p. 890)

3.2.2. Forms of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying manifests itself in various forms within organizations, each having different consequences for employees. The most common forms include:

- **Organizational Bullying:** This form occurs when the organizational culture itself tolerates bullying behaviors without imposing consequences. It is often reinforced by a broader socio-economic environment in which employment opportunities are limited, compelling employees to endure bullying because of the lack of viable alternatives.
- **Managerial Bullying:** This is considered one of the most severe forms of workplace bullying. Employees subjected to bullying by their supervisors often experience feelings of helplessness and may ultimately resign, as abusive behaviors originating from managers tend to have a particularly harmful impact.
- **Co-worker Bullying:** This form includes behaviors such as ridicule, hostile gestures, spreading rumors, and unwelcome comments directed toward individuals or groups within the workplace.
- **Covert Bullying:** This is an indirect form of bullying intended to cause emotional harm. Its ultimate objective is to isolate the victim from colleagues or to exclude them from information and decision-making processes that directly affect their work conditions. (Roel Dawood & Hassan Kojer, 2021, p. 890)

4. Previous Studies

- **Alchalabi and Hassan (2024)** aimed to examine the importance and impact of **ethical leadership** on **workplace bullying**. The study addressed the central research question: *"Why has workplace bullying become prevalent among employees?"* To explain the relationship between the study variables, two main hypotheses and several sub-hypotheses were developed.
- To achieve the research objectives, the authors adopted a **descriptive-analytical approach** to examine the views of employees working at the **College of Fundamentals of Religion** at an Iraqi university. The sample consisted of **55 employees** drawn from a statistical population of **80 employees**, using a **purposive sampling** technique. Data were analyzed using **SPSS** and **Microsoft Excel**, and statistical techniques including **Spearman's correlation coefficient** and **simple linear regression** were employed. The findings revealed a **statistically significant negative relationship** between ethical leadership and workplace bullying, indicating that higher levels of ethical leadership are associated with lower levels of bullying behavior. Moreover, all dimensions of ethical leadership were found to have a statistically significant effect in reducing workplace bullying.
- **Teo and Nguyen (2024)** examined the role of **ethical leadership** in reducing workplace bullying and its impact on employees' perception of the **meaningfulness of work**. The study was conducted on a sample of **246 public-sector employees** in the **United States** and was grounded in **Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Morality**. The findings indicated that ethical leadership reduces employees' exposure to workplace bullying while enhancing their sense of meaningful work. The study also demonstrated that witnessing bullying negatively affects employees' perception of work meaningfulness, whereas employees' level of **moral disengagement** moderates the strength of these relationships. The authors concluded that promoting ethical leadership represents an effective mechanism for reducing workplace bullying and improving the quality of working life within organizations.
- **Pinto and Freire (2022)** sought to analyze the relationship between **ethical leadership** and **workplace bullying**, while examining the mediating role of the **ethical climate** within organizations. The researchers adopted a **descriptive-analytical approach** using a questionnaire administered to a sample of **223 Portuguese employees** who had worked in the same organization for at least **six consecutive months**. The findings demonstrated that the ethical climate plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying. This suggests that ethical leaders can reduce bullying behaviors by fostering a positive ethical climate and guiding employees toward more ethical conduct.
- Drawing on **Social Learning Theory** and **Social Information Processing Theory**, the study explained how the ethical climate mediates the influence of ethical leadership on reducing workplace bullying.
- **Al-Mansi (2019)** investigated the relationship between **authentic leadership** and **workplace bullying behaviors**, while examining differences according to employees' demographic characteristics. Using a **descriptive-analytical approach**, the study surveyed **247 employees**. The findings revealed significant differences in perceptions of authentic leadership according to **age** and **length of service**, whereas no significant differences were found according to **gender**. The study also found significant differences in exposure to workplace bullying across all demographic variables examined. Furthermore, a **statistically significant negative relationship** was identified between the dimensions of authentic leadership and workplace

bullying behaviors. The study recommended strengthening authentic leadership practices to reduce workplace bullying and improve the work environment.

- **Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green (2016)** conducted a **meta-analysis** of previous studies on **ethical leadership** to identify its organizational outcomes and the factors influencing its effectiveness. The study was based on **Social Learning Theory** and **Social Exchange Theory** to explain the effects of ethical leadership. The findings demonstrated that ethical leadership enhances **job satisfaction, trust in leaders, organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors**. It also reduces negative organizational behaviors while encouraging ethical conduct among employees. The study confirmed a strong relationship between ethical leadership and numerous positive organizational outcomes, although the strength of these relationships was influenced by contextual factors such as organizational sector and geographical location. The authors concluded that ethical leadership constitutes an effective approach for improving organizational performance and fostering an ethical and positive work environment.
- **Stouten et al. (2010)** examined the role of **ethical leadership** in reducing workplace bullying using a **quantitative research design** involving employees from various sectors, including **healthcare** and **manufacturing**. The findings revealed a strong negative relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying. Specifically, ethical leadership reduced bullying **indirectly** by improving the work environment, particularly through reducing workload and enhancing working conditions. However, the study did not find a direct effect of ethical leadership on workplace bullying beyond these mediating mechanisms. As one of the pioneering studies in this field, it highlighted the indirect mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences workplace bullying and recommended that leaders develop ethical behaviors as a proactive strategy for preventing workplace bullying while simultaneously improving both the physical and organizational work environment.
- **Azour, Mohammed Karim, and Sabah Ahmed (2022)** examined the role of **spiritual leadership** in reducing workplace bullying among a sample of faculty members in the **College of Administration and Economics**. The study adopted a **descriptive-analytical approach** and used a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument.
- The results revealed a **negative correlation** between the practice of spiritual leadership and workplace bullying at the overall level. In addition, spiritual leadership was found to have a statistically significant negative effect on workplace bullying. The findings also indicated that workplace bullying was relatively prevalent, reflecting the college's growing attention to the concepts of spirituality and spiritual leadership.

5. Theoretical Perspectives of the Study

This study is grounded in **three major theoretical perspectives** that facilitate the interpretation of the relationship between **ethical leadership** and **workplace bullying**:

- Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977);
- Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964); and
- Ethical Climate Theory (Victor & Cullen, 1988).

Figure 2 presents a summary of these theoretical perspectives and illustrates the scientific rationale for selecting each of them.

Figure 2. Theoretical Perspectives of the Study



Field Framework of the Study

First: Methodological Procedures

1. Research Method

This study adopted the descriptive research method, as it is considered the most appropriate approach for addressing the nature of the research topic and achieving its objectives. This method allows for describing the phenomena of ethical leadership and workplace bullying as they exist in reality, while identifying their characteristics and prevalence among the study participants. It also facilitates the analysis of the relationship between the two phenomena and the examination of the effect of ethical leadership, through its various dimensions, on reducing workplace bullying.

2. Population and Sample of the Study

This study was based on a **purposive sample** of university faculty members and is classified as an **exploratory study**, aiming primarily to explore the phenomenon under investigation rather than to generalize its findings.

To collect the data, an **online questionnaire** was developed and distributed via an electronic link to more than **150 faculty members** at the **University of 8 May 1945 Guelma**, representing various faculties and academic disciplines. Although efforts were made to obtain a larger number of participants, the response rate remained limited because a considerable number of faculty members did not respond to the online questionnaire.

Ultimately, **70 completed questionnaires** were retrieved and deemed suitable for statistical analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for achieving the exploratory objectives of the study and providing preliminary insights into the research topic.

Second: Analysis and Discussion of the Results

1. Reliability and Validity of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the degree of internal consistency among the items of each construct.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Ethical Leadership	16	0.95
Workplace Bullying	16	0.94
Overall Instrument	32	0.76

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the SPSS output.

The reliability analysis using **Cronbach's Alpha** indicates that the research instrument demonstrates a high level of internal consistency. The reliability coefficient for the **Ethical Leadership** construct was **0.95**, while the coefficient for the **Workplace Bullying** construct was **0.94**. These very high values reflect strong homogeneity among the items and their ability to measure the intended constructs with a high degree of accuracy and reliability. The overall reliability coefficient for the entire instrument was **0.76**, which is statistically acceptable and indicates a satisfactory level of reliability, supporting the use of the instrument for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the questionnaire possesses an adequate level of reliability, although the exceptionally high coefficients for some constructs may suggest a certain degree of similarity or redundancy among a few items.

The validity of the research instrument was also examined through **internal consistency validity**. The correlation coefficients between the individual items and the total scores of their respective constructs were positive and within acceptable ranges, indicating that the instrument effectively measures the constructs it was designed to assess.

2. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Table 2. Distribution of the Sample According to Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	30.0%
	Female	49	70.0%
Marital Status	Married	45	64.29%
	Divorced	1	1.43%
	Widowed	3	4.29%
Age	Less than 30 years	2	2.86%
	30–40 years	30	42.86%
	40–50 years	26	37.14%
	50–60 years	12	17.14%
Professional Seniority	1–5 years	26	37.14%
	11–15 years	8	11.43%
	16–20 years	9	12.86%
	21 years and above	16	22.86%
Academic Rank	Assistant Professor A	4	5.71%
	Lecturer B	28	40.00%
	Full Professor	19	27.14%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the SPSS output.

2.1. Gender

The distribution of the sample reveals several distinctive characteristics that contribute to understanding the nature of the study population.

The findings indicate a clear predominance of **female respondents**, who constitute **70%** of the sample, compared with **30%** for males. This suggests that the sample is predominantly female, reflecting the growing participation of women in the higher education sector. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study, as several sociological and organizational studies suggest that women tend to be more sensitive to unethical behaviors and violations affecting professional relationships. **Ward and King (2018)** concluded that women are generally less tolerant of unethical conduct and more strongly oriented toward moral judgment. Furthermore, more recent organizational research has shown that women's complaints regarding workplace misconduct are sometimes perceived as less credible when supporting evidence is insufficient. Consequently, female employees may be more likely to recognize manifestations of workplace bullying and to appreciate the importance of ethical leadership in mitigating such behaviors.

2.2. Marital Status

The results indicate that the majority of respondents are **married (64.29%)**, whereas the remaining categories account for relatively small proportions. This suggests that most participants enjoy a relatively stable family and social life. Previous studies in organizational behavior have demonstrated that family stability and marital satisfaction are positively associated with **job satisfaction** and **organizational commitment**, factors that may influence employees' interactions within the workplace and their perceptions of prevailing leadership practices. Accordingly, the high proportion of married respondents may explain responses that reflect relatively stable professional and social experiences when evaluating the role of ethical leadership in reducing workplace bullying.

2.3. Age

The sample is primarily concentrated within the **30–40 years** age group (**42.86%**), followed by the **40–50 years** age group (**37.14%**). This distribution reflects the predominance of participants possessing considerable professional maturity and organizational experience. These age groups are typically associated with career stability and the accumulation of professional experience resulting from continuous interaction with various leadership styles and workplace relationships. In this regard, **Einarsen et al.** argue that employees with greater professional experience are better able to understand organizational dynamics and identify negative workplace behaviors, including workplace bullying. Likewise, **Northouse** emphasizes that accumulated professional experience enhances individuals' ability to evaluate leadership practices and distinguish between value-based leadership styles and those characterized by abuse of authority or the absence of organizational justice.

Therefore, the age composition of the sample provides participants with sufficient professional and cognitive experience to offer a more accurate assessment of the role of ethical leadership in reducing workplace bullying within the university environment.

2.4. Professional Seniority

The findings show that the largest proportion of respondents belongs to the **1–5 years of professional experience** category (**37.14%**), indicating the presence of a substantial number of

relatively new faculty members. At the same time, **22.86%** of respondents have **21 years or more** of professional experience, reflecting considerable diversity in professional backgrounds. From an organizational perspective, this diversity combines the perspectives of newly employed academics, who experience leadership practices from the standpoint of professional adjustment, with those of experienced faculty members, who have acquired a deeper understanding of the institution's organizational culture and interaction patterns. In this context, **Schein (2017)** argues that longer organizational tenure enhances individuals' understanding of the organizational values and norms governing professional behavior. Similarly, **Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006)** contend that organizational experience enables employees to recognize the ethical dimensions of leadership practices and evaluate their impact on the organizational climate. Consequently, the diversity of professional seniority among respondents strengthens the value of their assessments regarding the role of ethical leadership in reducing workplace bullying.

2.5. Academic Rank

The results indicate that the largest proportion of respondents hold the rank of **Lecturer B (40%)**, followed by **Full Professor (27.14%)**. This suggests that most participants belong to academic ranks characterized by substantial professional experience and institutional standing within the university.

From a sociological perspective, individuals occupying these academic positions are generally more closely engaged with the university's organizational structure and prevailing leadership practices, making them better equipped to evaluate leadership behaviors and identify manifestations of unethical professional conduct. In this regard, **Alshammari (2015)** found that faculty members' perceptions of academic leaders' behaviors are closely associated with their evaluation of the ethical climate within higher education institutions. Similarly, **Aydin and Karakaya (2013)** reported a significant relationship between ethical leadership behaviors exhibited by university leaders and academics' organizational attitudes. These findings further support the importance of the respondents' professional experience and academic standing in evaluating the role of ethical leadership in addressing workplace bullying.

3. Descriptive Analysis of the Results

The arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated for the items of each study construct in order to determine the respondents' level of perception of ethical leadership practices and workplace bullying. The results were interpreted using the five-point Likert scale.

3.1. Descriptive Analysis of the First Construct

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Ethical Leadership Items

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Standard Deviation	Arithmetic Mean
Practices are consistent with ethical values	6 (8.6%)	32 (45.7%)	6 (8.6%)	23 (32.9%)	3 (4.3%)	1.13	3.21
Honesty and transparency prevail	5 (7.1%)	28 (40.0%)	13 (18.6%)	18 (25.7%)	6 (8.6%)	1.14	3.11
Commitments and promises are fulfilled	4 (5.7%)	28 (40.0%)	17 (24.3%)	18 (25.7%)	3 (4.3%)	1.02	3.17

Decisions are objective	4 (5.7%)	16 (22.9%)	15 (21.4%)	24 (34.3%)	11 (15.7%)	1.16	2.69
Tasks are distributed fairly	3 (4.3%)	18 (25.7%)	11 (15.7%)	28 (40.0%)	10 (14.3%)	1.14	2.66
Decisions are transparent	5 (7.1%)	30 (42.9%)	7 (10.0%)	22 (31.4%)	6 (8.6%)	1.18	3.09
Leaders assume responsibility	4 (5.7%)	27 (38.6%)	15 (21.4%)	18 (25.7%)	6 (8.6%)	1.11	3.07
Decisions are justified	5 (7.1%)	27 (38.6%)	16 (22.9%)	15 (21.4%)	7 (10.0%)	1.14	3.11
Employees are treated with respect	7 (10.0%)	31 (44.3%)	12 (17.1%)	16 (22.9%)	4 (5.7%)	1.11	3.30
Leaders consider faculty members' personal circumstances	7 (10.0%)	42 (60.0%)	9 (12.9%)	10 (14.3%)	2 (2.9%)	0.95	3.60
A cooperative work climate is promoted	6 (8.6%)	18 (25.7%)	21 (30.0%)	20 (28.6%)	5 (7.1%)	1.09	3.00
Leaders listen to employees	6 (8.6%)	22 (31.4%)	19 (27.1%)	16 (22.9%)	7 (10.0%)	1.14	3.06
Action is taken against unethical behavior	7 (10.0%)	24 (34.3%)	19 (27.1%)	14 (20.0%)	6 (8.6%)	1.13	3.17
Safe reporting channels are available	4 (5.7%)	10 (14.3%)	23 (32.9%)	23 (32.9%)	10 (14.3%)	1.08	2.64
Adequate institutional support is provided	2 (2.9%)	12 (17.1%)	24 (34.3%)	22 (31.4%)	10 (14.3%)	1.02	2.63
Whistleblowers are protected	4 (5.7%)	8 (11.4%)	31 (44.3%)	18 (25.7%)	9 (12.9%)	1.02	2.71

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the SPSS output.

The descriptive statistics for the **ethical leadership** construct indicate that the arithmetic means ranged from **2.63** to **3.60**, reflecting an overall **moderate** level of ethical leadership practices. The responses also exhibited a relatively high degree of consistency, as evidenced by the standard deviation values, which were generally close to one.

A closer examination of the rankings reveals substantial variation across the different dimensions of ethical leadership. The **human and interpersonal dimensions** ranked highest, with the item **"Taking into consideration faculty members' personal circumstances"** recording the highest

mean (3.60), followed by **"Respecting employees and acknowledging their efforts"** (3.30) and **"Ensuring that practices are consistent with ethical values"** (3.21).

In contrast, the **structural and procedural dimensions** recorded the lowest mean scores. The lowest-ranked items were **"Providing institutional support for victims of unethical practices"** (2.63), **"Providing safe reporting channels"** (2.64), **"Distributing tasks fairly"** (2.66), and **"Maintaining objectivity in decision-making"** (2.69). These findings carry important sociological and organizational implications. They suggest that the primary challenge facing academic leadership within Algerian universities lies not in day-to-day interpersonal interactions or individual ethical values, but rather in deficiencies related to the **institutionalization of ethical practices and procedural safeguards**. The organizational environment appears to lack effective mechanisms for protection and administrative accountability. The relatively low scores for fairness in task allocation and objectivity in decision-making indicate an organizational climate characterized by personalization and favoritism at the expense of meritocracy and organizational citizenship.

These empirical findings are closely aligned with those reported by **Stouten et al. (2010)** and **Freire and Pinto (2022)**, both of whom concluded that weaknesses in the implementation of ethical frameworks and procedural mechanisms within highly bureaucratic organizations undermine the structural effectiveness of **ethical leadership**, reducing it to superficial interpersonal behaviors that are insufficient to prevent organizational misconduct. The findings are also consistent with those of **Azour, Mohammed Karim, and Sabah Ahmed (2022)**, who found that the absence of safe reporting channels and inadequate protection for whistleblowers and victims directly undermine distributive justice and widen the trust gap within organizations. This, in turn, weakens positive social exchange relationships and creates conditions conducive to the growth of workplace bullying and the abuse of power within the university environment.

3.2. Descriptive Analysis of the Second Construct

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Workplace Bullying Items

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Standard Deviation	Arithmetic Mean
Employees are labeled with negative stereotypes.	13 (18.6%)	24 (34.3%)	13 (18.6%)	17 (24.3%)	3 (4.3%)	1.17	3.39
Employees are excluded from organizational activities.	12 (17.1%)	26 (37.1%)	20 (28.6%)	10 (14.3%)	2 (2.9%)	1.03	3.51
A particular group dominates the acceptance criteria.	13 (18.6%)	25 (35.7%)	22 (31.4%)	9 (12.9%)	1 (1.4%)	0.99	3.57
Organizational values are used to justify	12 (17.1%)	26 (37.1%)	17 (24.3%)	13 (18.6%)	2 (2.9%)	1.07	3.47

marginalization.							
Employees are excluded from meetings.	7 (10.0%)	20 (28.6%)	13 (18.6%)	25 (35.7%)	5 (7.1%)	1.16	2.99
Employees' suggestions are rejected.	8 (11.4%)	16 (22.9%)	21 (30.0%)	20 (28.6%)	5 (7.1%)	1.13	3.03
Tension and weak cooperation among employees.	20 (28.6%)	34 (48.6%)	7 (10.0%)	6 (8.6%)	3 (4.3%)	1.06	3.89
Employees' opinions are undervalued.	11 (15.7%)	31 (44.3%)	14 (20.0%)	12 (17.1%)	2 (2.9%)	1.05	3.53
Unequal distribution of tasks.	20 (28.6%)	26 (37.1%)	13 (18.6%)	10 (14.3%)	1 (1.4%)	1.07	3.77
Biased administrative decisions.	22 (31.4%)	26 (37.1%)	11 (15.7%)	11 (15.7%)	0 (0%)	1.04	3.84
Resources are allocated to specific groups.	12 (17.1%)	15 (21.4%)	20 (28.6%)	19 (27.1%)	4 (5.7%)	1.18	3.17
Decisions are made without explanation.	15 (21.4%)	25 (35.7%)	9 (12.9%)	19 (27.1%)	2 (2.9%)	1.19	3.46
Abuse of authority.	19 (27.1%)	22 (31.4%)	17 (24.3%)	10 (14.3%)	2 (2.9%)	1.11	3.66
Unilateral decision-making.	18 (25.7%)	23 (32.9%)	17 (24.3%)	9 (12.9%)	3 (4.3%)	1.13	3.63
Employees are punished for expressing their opinions.	14 (20.0%)	18 (25.7%)	18 (25.7%)	18 (25.7%)	2 (2.9%)	1.15	3.34
Condescending treatment of employees.	14 (20.0%)	17 (24.3%)	19 (27.1%)	17 (24.3%)	3 (4.3%)	1.17	3.31

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the SPSS output.

The descriptive statistics for the **workplace bullying** construct indicate that the arithmetic means ranged from **2.99** to **3.89**, reflecting a **moderate level** that clearly tends toward the higher end of the scale. The relatively low standard deviation values (**0.99–1.19**) indicate a reasonable degree of consistency among respondents' answers.

The ranking of the items reveals that the most prevalent manifestations of workplace bullying are **strained professional relationships and weak cooperation** (mean = **3.89**), followed by **biased**

administrative decisions (3.84), unfair distribution of tasks (3.77), and abuse of authority and unilateral decision-making (3.66). These findings have important sociological implications, suggesting that workplace bullying within Algerian universities is not merely the result of isolated individual misconduct but rather reflects structural organizational deficiencies in decision-making processes, authority distribution, and workload allocation. The prominence of biased decision-making and weak collaboration indicates that academic departments are gradually shifting from environments characterized by intellectual cooperation to organizational settings dominated by rigid bureaucratic hierarchies. Such conditions foster feelings of organizational alienation among faculty members and undermine trust and professional integration.

Workplace bullying also extends to more profound symbolic and interpersonal dimensions. High mean scores for **the dominance of certain groups in determining acceptance criteria (3.57)** and **the devaluation of colleagues' academic opinions (3.53)** suggest the use of symbolic mechanisms aimed at undermining the professional status and academic recognition of colleagues. Even more concerning from an organizational perspective is the apparent normalization of such behaviors through mechanisms of organizational learning and social imitation. In the absence of accountability and ethical leadership, individuals may reproduce authoritarian and domineering behaviors as adaptive strategies for career advancement within the university hierarchy.

These findings are consistent with the literature reported by **Stouten et al. (2010), Freire and Pinto (2022), Nguyen (2019), and Azour, Mohammed Karim, and Sabah Ahmed (2022).** Collectively, these studies emphasize that, within highly bureaucratic university environments, the absence of ethical leadership and supportive organizational practices weakens an ethical climate founded on fairness, integrity, and objectivity. Consequently, this creates favorable conditions for the spread of dominance, abuse of authority, and workplace bullying at the expense of interactional justice and mutual academic respect.

4. Hypothesis Testing

The study hypotheses were tested after verifying that the data satisfied the assumptions required for parametric statistical analyses, namely normality of distribution and homogeneity of variance.

The hypothesis-testing process began with the main hypothesis, which posited that ethical leadership has a statistically significant effect in reducing workplace bullying. This hypothesis was examined through four sub-hypotheses, corresponding to the dimensions of ethical leadership: integrity and ethical role modeling, administrative practice, ethics of interpersonal treatment, and accountability and institutional support. In addition, a fifth hypothesis examined whether significant differences exist in the level of workplace bullying according to the respondents' demographic characteristics (gender, professional seniority, and academic rank).

The following table summarizes the results of all hypothesis tests, including the regression coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), levels of statistical significance, and the decision reached for each hypothesis.

Table 5. Summary of the Results of the Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Significance (Sig.)	R^2	β
H1	Integrity and Ethical Role Modeling	0.000009	0.25	-0.44

H2	Administrative Practice	0.0000006	0.31	-0.49
H3	Ethics of Interpersonal Relations	0.0000012	0.29	-0.49
H4	Accountability and Institutional Support	0.00004	0.22	-0.42
H5	Differences by Gender Differences by Professional Seniority Differences by Academic Rank	Gender = 0.566 Professional Seniority = 0.272 Academic Rank = 0.645	—	—

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the SPSS output.

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that all dimensions of ethical leadership have a statistically significant negative effect on reducing workplace bullying, as all significance levels were below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms the validity of the four hypotheses related to the dimensions of ethical leadership.

Among these dimensions, administrative practice emerged as the strongest predictor of workplace bullying, explaining approximately 31% of the variance in the dependent variable. It was followed by ethics of interpersonal treatment, which accounted for 29% of the explained variance, integrity and ethical role modeling (25%), and finally accountability and institutional support (22%). This ranking suggests that leaders' day-to-day managerial practices—particularly fairness in decision-making, effective work management, and respectful treatment of employees—have a greater impact on reducing workplace bullying than institutional support mechanisms, despite the latter's recognized importance.

Furthermore, the results of the comparative analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in the level of workplace bullying attributable to gender, professional seniority, or academic rank. This finding indicates that workplace bullying is primarily an organizational phenomenon, influenced more by leadership practices and the prevailing organizational climate than by employees' demographic characteristics.

Accordingly, these findings support the main hypothesis of the study, confirming that strengthening ethical leadership contributes to reducing workplace bullying and improving the quality of the organizational environment within the university.

5. Discussion of the Results

This study sought to analyze the impact of ethical leadership, through its various dimensions, on workplace bullying within the university setting by adopting a conceptual model linking the independent variable (ethical leadership) to the dependent variable (workplace bullying). The findings yielded several important indicators that can be interpreted in light of the relevant theoretical literature and previous empirical studies.

5.1. Discussion of the Findings on Ethical Leadership

Before examining the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace bullying, it is essential to consider the current state of ethical leadership practices within the university, as they constitute the organizational framework through which patterns of behavior and professional relationships among organizational members are shaped.

The statistical analysis conducted using SPSS produced the following findings:

- The overall level of **ethical leadership** within the university was **moderate**, with arithmetic means ranging from **2.63** to **3.60**. This indicates the presence of ethical practices to a certain extent, although they have not yet become fully institutionalized within the organizational culture.
- **Human-centered leadership practices** received the highest evaluations. The item "**Taking into consideration faculty members' personal circumstances**" recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.95$), indicating that university leaders place considerable emphasis on the human aspects of their interactions with employees.
- The findings also revealed relatively weak performance in **institutional support and ethical accountability**. The item "**Providing the necessary institutional support**" recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.02$), suggesting that organizational mechanisms supporting ethical behavior remain limited.
- The respondents' answers demonstrated an acceptable degree of consistency, with standard deviations ranging from **0.95** to **1.02**, reflecting a relatively homogeneous assessment of the level of ethical leadership within the university.
- The regression analysis revealed a **statistically significant negative effect** for all dimensions of ethical leadership on workplace bullying, with regression coefficients ranging from $\beta = -0.42$ to $\beta = -0.49$, all with significance levels below **0.001**.
- Among all dimensions, **ethical administrative practice** emerged as the strongest predictor of reduced workplace bullying, achieving the highest explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.31$) and a regression coefficient of $\beta = -0.49$ ($Sig = 0.0000006$). This finding underscores that fairness in administrative procedures constitutes the cornerstone of effective ethical leadership.

Overall, the findings indicate that ethical leadership within the university exists at a moderate level, reflecting the partial presence of ethical practices without their full integration into the organizational culture. The results also demonstrate that human-centered dimensions are more developed than organizational and institutional dimensions, highlighting the need to strengthen accountability mechanisms and institutional support. Furthermore, the regression analysis confirms that ethical leadership plays a significant role in reducing workplace bullying, particularly through ethical administrative practices, emphasizing the importance of transforming ethical values into sustainable organizational practices.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings on Workplace Bullying

The analysis of the dependent variable (workplace bullying) yielded the following findings:

- The results indicate that the overall level of workplace bullying was moderate with a tendency toward the higher end of the scale, with arithmetic means ranging from 2.99 to 3.89. This reflects the presence of workplace bullying behaviors to varying degrees within the university environment.
- Strained professional relationships and weak cooperation ranked first among the manifestations of workplace bullying, recording the highest mean score ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.06$). This suggests that workplace bullying is expressed primarily through the deterioration of professional relationships rather than through overt hostile behaviors.
- Several forms of administrative and organizational bullying were also reported at moderate levels, with most items within this dimension recording mean scores above 3.00, indicating the presence of organizational practices that may reasonably be interpreted as bullying behaviors.

- Respondents' answers demonstrated an acceptable level of consistency, with standard deviations ranging from approximately 0.90 to 1.10, indicating relatively homogeneous perceptions regarding the prevalence of workplace bullying.
- The findings further indicate that workplace bullying extends beyond direct interpersonal misconduct to encompass relational and organizational dimensions, as reflected in the relatively high mean scores for items related to marginalization, weak cooperation, and administrative treatment.
- Overall, the results suggest that workplace bullying constitutes an organizational phenomenon requiring institutional intervention. The fact that most questionnaire items recorded moderate or above-average scores indicates that workplace bullying should not be regarded as a series of isolated incidents but rather as a recurring organizational issue.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that workplace bullying exists within the university at a moderate level, negatively affecting the quality of professional relationships and the organizational climate. The most prominent manifestations involve strained workplace relationships and weak cooperation, indicating that workplace bullying is more closely associated with the characteristics of the organizational environment than with individual misconduct. These findings underscore the need to strengthen organizational policies and promote leadership practices that foster a more equitable and respectful work environment.

5.3. Discussion of the Hypothesis Testing Results (Causal Relationship)

- **First Sub-Hypothesis:** The regression analysis confirmed a **statistically significant negative effect of integrity and ethical role modeling** on workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.44$, $R^2 = 0.25$, $\text{Sig} = 0.000009$). This finding indicates that leaders' commitment to ethical values and their consistent demonstration of these values in daily practice strengthen trust and mutual respect within the organization, thereby reducing hostile behaviors among employees.
- **Second Sub-Hypothesis:** The results demonstrated that **ethical administrative practice** represents the **most influential dimension** in reducing workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.49$, $R^2 = 0.31$, $\text{Sig} = 0.0000006$). This finding highlights that fairness in administrative procedures and transparency in decision-making constitute the primary foundations for regulating professional relationships and limiting workplace bullying behaviors.
- **Third Sub-Hypothesis:** The analysis revealed a **statistically significant negative effect of ethics of interpersonal treatment** on workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.49$, $R^2 = 0.29$, $\text{Sig} = 0.0000012$). This result confirms that professional relationships characterized by mutual respect and appreciation substantially reduce the likelihood of hostile behaviors within the organization.
- **Fourth Sub-Hypothesis:** The findings also indicated a **statistically significant negative effect of accountability and institutional support** on workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.42$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $\text{Sig} = 0.00004$). Although this effect was statistically significant, its relatively lower explanatory power compared with the other dimensions suggests the need to strengthen governance mechanisms and accountability systems within the university.
- **Main Hypothesis:** The results fully supported the **main hypothesis**, demonstrating that all dimensions of ethical leadership exert statistically significant negative effects on workplace bullying. Furthermore, the dimensions related to **ethical administrative practice** and **ethics of interpersonal treatment** emerged as the most influential, confirming that embedding

ethical values in everyday organizational practices constitutes the most effective approach for reducing workplace bullying within the university.

6. Discussion of the Findings in Light of the Theoretical Perspectives

The descriptive analysis revealed that workplace bullying was perceived at a moderate level with a tendency toward the higher end of the scale, with arithmetic means ranging from 2.99 to 3.89. These findings indicate that respondents perceive workplace bullying as a multidimensional phenomenon extending beyond individual misconduct to include organizational practices associated with decision-making, task allocation, abuse of authority, and professional marginalization. This pattern suggests that workplace bullying should not be viewed as isolated individual behavior but rather as the outcome of an organizational structure that permits the unequal reproduction of power relations.

This conclusion is clearly reflected in the high mean scores for strained professional relationships and weak cooperation (3.89), biased administrative decisions (3.84), unfair task distribution (3.77), abuse of authority (3.66), and unilateral decision-making (3.63). Collectively, these indicators demonstrate that the most prevalent forms of workplace bullying are closely associated with organizational power practices rather than with personal conflicts among employees.

These findings can be interpreted through the lens of Ethical Climate Theory proposed by Victor and Cullen (1988), which argues that organizational behavior is largely shaped by the prevailing ethical climate within the organization. When standards of justice, transparency, and accountability are weakened, the organizational climate becomes more conducive to unethical practices, including workplace bullying, by implicitly normalizing or legitimizing such behaviors. From this perspective, employees' perceptions of biased decisions, unfair task allocation, and abuse of authority reflect not merely isolated acts of misconduct but deficiencies in the organizational mechanisms responsible for regulating authority and preventing its misuse.

The findings can also be explained through Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that organizational relationships are founded on the principle of reciprocity. When employees perceive that they are treated with fairness, respect, and equity, they are more likely to demonstrate organizational commitment and cooperative behavior. Conversely, perceived organizational injustice undermines mutual trust and encourages negative behaviors characterized by exclusion, marginalization, and conflict. Accordingly, respondents' perceptions of biased decision-making, marginalization, and the devaluation of employees' opinions reflect an imbalance in social exchange relationships within the organization, whereby interactions between management and employees become characterized by unequal power rather than reciprocal trust and support.

From the perspective of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), organizational behaviors are transmitted not only through formal rules and instructions but also through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement. When employees observe that behaviors such as abuse of authority, unilateral decision-making, or the marginalization of colleagues occur without accountability, these behaviors gradually become normalized within the organization. They are subsequently learned and reproduced by organizational members, transforming workplace bullying from isolated individual actions into an integral component of the organizational culture.

Overall, these findings suggest that, from a sociological perspective, workplace bullying should not be interpreted merely as individual deviant behavior or a problem confined to particular employees. Rather, it should be understood as an organizational phenomenon rooted in the distribution of power, the level of organizational justice, and the prevailing ethical climate. Consequently, reducing

workplace bullying requires the development of an organizational culture grounded in transparency, accountability, and mutual trust, thereby strengthening ethical practices and minimizing the reproduction of bullying behaviors within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Drawing upon the comprehensive theoretical framework and the findings of the statistical analysis, this study advances a central proposition: the Algerian university does not operate within an organizational vacuum but rather constitutes a dynamic sociological field in which struggles for academic status intersect with rigid bureaucratic hierarchies. From this perspective, workplace bullying within the university cannot be reduced to isolated incidents of individual misconduct; rather, it represents the inevitable outcome of deep structural imbalances in the distribution of power and in the mechanisms governing professional and institutional recognition.

The empirical evidence provides compelling statistical support for the argument that adopting an ethical leadership approach is not merely a theoretical ideal but a strategic organizational mechanism for dismantling networks of domination and bureaucratic exclusion. Interpreted through the lens of Social Learning Theory, the findings demonstrate that when academic leaders—including department heads and deans—display integrity and transparency, they establish positive behavioral models within the organizational environment. These models function as institutional safeguards that weaken the conditions fostering symbolic and interpersonal forms of workplace bullying while preventing formal authority from being transformed into an instrument of domination.

Conversely, the study identified a fundamental organizational weakness reflected in the relatively low mean scores for the items concerning fair task distribution and objectivity in decision-making. These findings reveal a genuine crisis in the social exchange environment within academic departments and faculties. The strong perception among faculty members of insufficient administrative fairness and objectivity—which, according to the findings, is particularly pronounced among female faculty members and less experienced academics, who occupy relatively more vulnerable positions within the organizational hierarchy—directly undermines the unwritten psychological contract between faculty members and the institution. This breach of the psychological contract generates feelings of organizational alienation, transforming academic departments from environments dedicated to scientific inquiry and knowledge production into conflict-ridden settings characterized by polarization.

Accordingly, an integrated interpretation of the study's findings leads to an inevitable conclusion: restoring balance within the university requires a transition toward a climate governed by principles and the rule of law. Achieving this transformation necessitates the implementation of rigorous accountability mechanisms, the institutionalization of rights protection, and a shift from traditional hierarchical administration toward a more flexible and participatory model of university governance. Such a governance model would reduce power distance, weaken excessive centralization, and facilitate the reconstruction of the organizational climate on the foundations of interactional justice, mutual respect, and recognition of academic merit.

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