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The impact of trust in the leader as a mediating variable between the moral integrity of the leader and job engagement: A field study in public sector institutions in Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of trust in the leader (TIL) as a mediating variable between the moral integrity (MI) of the leader and job engagement (JE) and to identify the consequent results that benefit officials in the surveyed institutions. The study population consisted of the employees of two public institutions (The Financial Supervisory Authority in the Governorate of Dhofar and the Directorate of Municipal Affairs in the Governorate of Dhofar). Primary data was collected from a convenient sample of 145 via an electronic questionnaire due to the directives related to social distancing in light of the global health crisis (COVID 19). The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Smart Partial Least Squares (Smart PLS). The findings of the study reveal that there is a statistically significant impact of the MI of the leader on the levels of JE on one hand and MI of the leader on the TIL, on the other hand. Moreover, it was also found that TIL partially mediates the relationships between the MI of the leader and JE.

1. Introduction

While many studies have addressed the important role of values in leadership styles, only a few studies, such as those conducted by Al-Dulaijan (2017) and Najm El-Din (2017) have explored the impact of trust in leader (TIL) and its relationship with to the moral integrity component of the leader.

Many researchers, including (Tabra, 2010) have continued to study the process of how to take advantage of the element of trust between the leader and the followers to affect the organizational trust as a whole. Najm El-Din (2017) indicated that there is a relationship between leader trust and organizational trust. He also pointed out that leaders can directly influence perceptions of organizational trust by enacting trustworthy behaviour. Chen and Sriphon (2022) stated that trust is conviction in another party's words, activities, or decisions and a feeling of confidence in a person or team that the said party can be depended on. Some argue that trust is a key factor for organizational stability and success. Al Ghamidi (2016) pointed out that an organization that is able to create a strong sense of trust in the workplace is better able to withstand storms that are caused by competition and has a clearer vision of what the organization represents. It is possible that both patterns (personal and ethical integrity) overlap in influencing the administrative leadership within the organization, as some values can be personal and can also be ethical from the other point of view. Al Ghamidi (2016) and Al-Ma'ashani (2014) argued that increasing the levels of TIL within the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar is an element that clearly depends on the degree of MI, which would increase the pattern of trust among followers. Since integrity is the basis of ethical leadership, it can be described as the most influential element of ethical leadership of the leader. Therefore, it is one of the factors that may lead to creating

a state of internal integration of the employee at work, or what is known as JE, which in turn will include a greater psychological response to the job. Again, this may be reflected positively in the form of an increase in the employee's commitment to his leader and his work. The degree of JE represents the state through which the employee integrates with the tasks of the job he is assigned to. JE is a concept closely related to the mental and emotional aspects of the employee, as it expresses the degree of emotional attachment between the individual and the profession. It is a process that requires a lot of confidence on the part of the individual towards the leader and leadership (Amin, 2018).

1.1. Moral Integrity of the Leader (MI)

Recently, one of the attributes most frequently referred to as required for effective leadership practice is moral integrity. In fact, it is a critical point that distinguishes an organization from other organizations, and from its competitors, because leaders who do not enjoy moral integrity only work on suspicious or dishonourable acts (Najm El-Din, 2017). Once the values of moral integrity within the organization are agreed upon, they must be put into practice by the chief executive officer (CEO) (Al-Dulaijan, 2017). Once implemented and incorporated into daily organizational activities, these ethical integrity strategies help prevent moral lapses that are harmful to the organization (Al-Uzzi & Al-Dulaimi, 2016).

Ng and Feldman (2015) explain that ethical leadership occurs when leaders display appropriate and morally expected behaviour in all situations. They interact ethically with the people they supervise, as well as demonstrate ethical behaviour when interacting with other types of people such as their supervisors or customers. The study Al-Dulaijan (2017) indicates that leaders who enjoy moral integrity are honest with themselves and others, learn from mistakes and work constantly in the process of self-improvement.

1.2. Job Engagement (JE)

In today's world economy, work encouragement has become the top priority for organizations. For organizations to be more productive, they believe in creativity and innovation. Therefore, the traditional roles of employees, i.e., accustoming them to work on specific model rules for years, whether for leader or follower, is no more effective and organizations have to find new ways of working in order to achieve, retain and motivate their employees. In this regard, one can understand that a competitive and committed workforce is the key to organizational success. Work engagement is most often defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002), as cited in Bakker and Albrecht (2018).

1.3. The Relationship Between Moral Integrity of Leader (MI) and Job Engagement (JE)

Moral integrity is a central issue for leadership, as it displays appropriate and morally expected behavior in all situations. Leaders play a major role in establishing a trust climate in their organizations due to their influence. As a result, leaders have a moral dimension and bear a greater level of moral responsibility. The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the quality of the relationship between the leader and his followers. Blau (1964) stated that when subordinates are treated in a fair and respectful way by their leaders, they are likely to think about their relationship with their leader in terms of social exchange (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017) rather than economic exchange. In turn, subordinates are likely to reciprocate by putting extra effort into their work, demonstrating enhanced job dedication, and increased engagement (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Thus, it can be said that when it comes to the issue of employee performance in an organization, creating a sense of trust is one of the main factors that must be considered.

Studies by Tabra (2010); Al-Ma'ashani (2014) and Al-Uzzi and Al-Dulaimi (2016) indicate the role of moral integrity of a leader in increasing the rates of JE by promoting teamwork, especially when employees choose work teams and give them some space to create their own strategies. A trustworthy leader can set the right course and goals for their team. When employees are allowed to work in cross-functional groups and given opportunities to express themselves, they are more likely to think outside the box and experience higher rates of JE.

1.4. The Relationship Between Moral Integrity of Leader (MI) and (TIL)

Moral integrity refers to adherence to a set of ethical principles that express personal integrity and are acceptable and positive for the subordinates. These ethical principles may include highly credible communications, a commitment to justice, and the harmony of words with deeds. Adherence to these principles develop can develop and enhance TIL by creating the belief and faith in subordinates that their leader wants something good for them, and has good intentions towards them rather than being motivated by self-interest. It also reflects that the subordinates believe that their leader cares about their interests and conditions (AL Brrow & AL–Noor, 2017). When subordinates consider their leader to have moral integrity, they are more likely to think of them as trustworthy and reliable.

1.5. The Relationship between Trust in Leader (TIL) and JE

As mentioned before, engagement occurs when an employee is fully committed to their work with focused energy and a positive state of mind. Engagement includes determinants that help improve and enhance communication between employees and top management of the organization (Bahr & Nassar, 2014). Therefore, a strong sense of trust in the employee-leader relationship encourages loyalty on both sides. When a leader asks an employee to go beyond his or her job duties to complete an important project, the employee is confident that he can do the task and agrees to go the extra mile. Similarly, a manager may allow an employee extended leave to attend to a personal issue, and this heightened sense of loyalty on both sides, bolstered by mutual trust, can improve company productivity and maintain employee retention. There is no doubt that having a great leader who charts the course and motivates others is the key to success in business. However, employees must have trust in the leaders and the integrity of leaders in the organization. Employees who have some kind of JE gain it through trust in a leader's set of skills. This means that many hurdles can be overcome, and decisions can be made quickly and with few errors (Ćulibrk, Delić, Mitrović, & Ćulibrk, 2018).

2. Research Problem and Questions

This study attempts to analyse the impact of TIL as a mediating variable between the MI and job engagement in public sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Modern management concepts can increase production and performance effectiveness, which are elements that can help support the relationship between the leader and the followers by raising the levels of subordinates' TIL. This creates a link between the leader's moral integrity and the potential benefits for followers resulting from an increase in administrative efficiency through job involvement (Tabra, 2010).

On the other hand, identifying situations that increase JE opportunities is essential for the success of organizations and the effectiveness of their performance. Moreover, building organizational confidence is a prerequisite for enhancing engagement rates within the organization (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011).

A leader's moral integrity is critical to their leadership credibility, which accurately determines their ability to exert effective influences (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). According to much of the previous literature, ethical leaders are more likely to have a greater impact on increasing trust between the leader and followers (Amin, 2018).

It is noticeable that many studies that have dealt with public sector companies, but few have indicated the role of MI in increasing the confidence of his subordinates and JE rates within these companies. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the impact of TIL as a mediator variable between the MI and JE through a field study in two public sector companies.

Through an examination of the impact of the moral integrity of leaders on work engagement and the mediating effects of trust of leaders, the study aims to contribute to the existing literature.

2.1. Research Hypothesis

After reviewing the literature on the moral integrity of leaders, trust in the leader, and job engagement, as well as considering the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been developed:

2.2. The Main Hypotheses

H1: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of JE (Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional) in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H2: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H3: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of JE (Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional) through TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H3a: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of Behavioural dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H3b: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of Cognitive dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H3c: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of Emotional dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

H4: There is a statistically significant effect of TIL on the levels of job engagement (Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional) in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

3. Methodology

The study followed a descriptive approach to collect data necessary to conduct a field survey on the dimensions of the study. The researchers developed a questionnaire for this purpose and used descriptive statistical methods to analyse the data and answer the research questions, ultimately achieving the research goals.

3.1. The Study Population and its Sample

The respondents in this study were drawn from the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman, specifically the Financial Supervisory Authority and the Directorate of Municipal Affairs. Data was collected from a sample by using a questionnaire (electronically) developed by referring to previous studies related to the subject. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale by assigning a numerical to each answer to determine the response of the researched sample to the items of the questionnaire. A total of 145 valid responses were obtained for statistical analysis.

3.2. Statistical Methods Used in the Study

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher utilized statistical software such as Analysis of moment structure (AOMS, V.20) and (SPSS, V.18). Several statistical methods were applied, including:
1. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire by evaluating the quality and conformity of the study scale through two scales:
- Confirmative factor analysis of the study model using (Smart PLS) software.
- Internal consistency and stability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient, internal consistency).
2. Structural equation modelling (SEM) to validate the study hypotheses.
3- Path analysis: Used to determine the direct and indirect impact of the independent and mediating variables on the dependent variable.

3.3. Validity and Reliability of the Study Tool

The initial version of the questionnaire was evaluated by a group of specialized university professors and academics at Dhofar University, who provided suggestions and feedback that were incorporated into the final version. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. Table 1 clearly shows that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the "TIL" scale was 0.837, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. Similarly, the reliability coefficient for the "Moral integrity" reached to the value of (0.931), and for JE the coefficient was (0.929). The overall reliability coefficient for the questionnaire was (0.955), exceeding the acceptable standard of (0.70) (Cortina, 1993). Therefore, we can conclude that the questionnaire is reliable and internally consistent and has the ability to achieve the objectives of the study.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

S. no.	Dimension	Cronbach alpha
1	Trust in leader	0.837
2	Moral integrity	0.931
3	Behavioural dimension	0.822
4	Cognitive dimension	0.800
5	Emotional dimension	0.893
6	JE	0.929
Total		0.955

3.4. Analysis of the study questions

The following are the study questions:
What is the level of TIL in the public sector institutions in Oman?
What is the level of MI in the public sector institutions in Oman?
What is the level of JE (Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional) in the public sector institutions in Oman?
The researcher used a set of descriptive statistics, including calculating the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative importance at the level of the statements and the variable in general, based on the responses of the study sample members.

Table 2. The means, standard deviation and relative importance of study variables.

S.no	Variable (Dimension)	Mean	SD	Relative importance
1	Trust in leader TIL	3.79	0.903	High
2	Moral integrity MI	3.92	0.963	High
3	Behavioural dimension of JE	4.14	0.963	High
4	Cognitive dimension of JE	3.98	0.885	High
5	Emotional dimension of JE	3.94	1.083	High

The results in Table 2 show the descriptive analysis of the study variables. The table indicates that all variables enjoy high levels of acceptance, with a mean greater than 3.78. This suggests that employees in the public sector (specifically, the Financial Control Authority and the Directorate of Municipalities Affairs in Dhofar Governorate) in Oman have a high level of trust in their supervisors, with a mean of 3.79. This result is consistent with the findings of Rana, Malik, and Hussain (2016).

The second question: "What is the level of MI in the public sector institutions in Oman (Financial Supervisory Authority and the Directorate of Municipal Affairs in Dhofar Governorate)?"

Table 2 demonstrates that the mean for MI is 3.9, which shows that respondents believe that their supervisors are morally committed and that their actions match their words. This result is in line with the findings of Najm El-Din (2017).

The third question is: What is the level of JE (Behavioural, cognitive, Emotional) in the public sector institutions in Oman?

Table 2 reveals that the three dimensions of JE have a high mean value of 4.02, indicating that employees in the two public institutions are highly dedicated and committed to their work. They are willing to go beyond what is expected of them and devote more time to their work. This is particularly true for the behavioural dimension, rather that the cognitive and emotional dimensions of JE. These results are consistent with what was stated in the previous study (Al-Shanti, 2019).

3.5. Analysis of the Study Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study were tested by the researchers using the (Smart PLS) program, based on the responses of the study sample members. The process was carried out as follows:
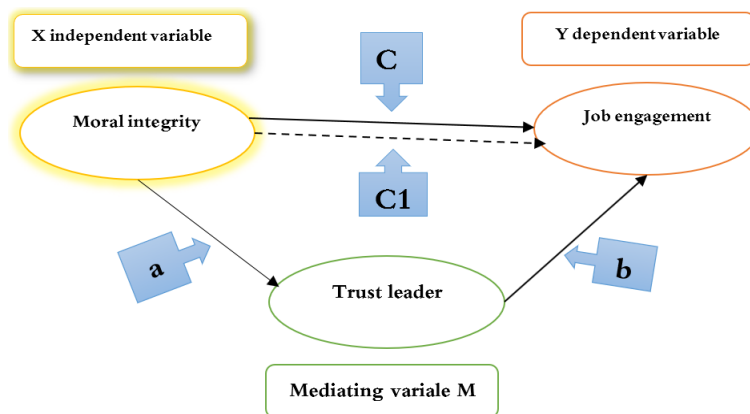

Figure 1. Concepts related to the direct and indirect effect of the study model.

From Figure 1 above, the indirect effect relationship is symbolized by the dashed arrow (C1).

Before testing the hypotheses of the study, the researchers conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the model and assessed its (convergent validity) to ensure that it was suitable for the collected data. The results showed that almost all statements satisfied the standard for factor loading greater than 0.7, composite reliability greater than 0.7, and average variance extract greater than 0.5 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Andersen, 2010). However, a few statements (1,2,3,16,25 and 29) that did not satisfy the criteria were subsequently removed, leading to modification of the model (see Appendix 1). The modified study model was then subjected to confirmatory factor analysis, as shown in Figure 2 and Appendix 1.
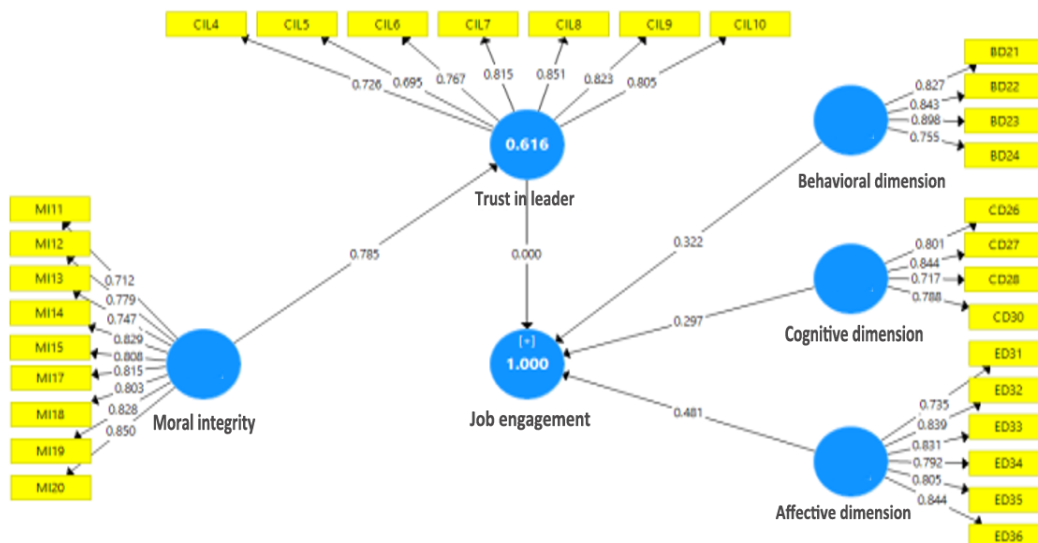

Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis of the study model after modification.

As for discriminant validity, two tests were conducted:

a. The results of Cross Loading Test show that the loadings of all items belonging to each variable were higher than the loading of the other variables, and exceeded the cut-off value of factor loading (0.70) (Ab Hamid, Sami, & Mohmad Sidek, 2017). This indicates that there is no overlap between the items belonging to different variables and that there is a discrepancy among the variable items (see Appendix 2).

b. The results of the Variable Correlation Test showed that the correlation coefficient of each variable with itself was higher than the correlation coefficient of the variable with other variables. This indicates the independence of each variable from the other, and the absence of overlap of the variables with each other (see Appendix 2).

3.6. Study Hypotheses

H1: "There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of JE measured through (Behavioural, Cognitive, and Affective Dimensions) in the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar".

The results of Table 7 and Figure 3 indicate that there is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the degree of JE measured through its three dimensions behavioural, Cognitive, and affective, as the statistical significance associated with the T values was lower than (0.01). This indicates that the study participants viewed MI as a factor in determining their level of job engagement, as measured by its cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. These results are consistent with prior research by Najm El-Din (2017), AL- Mantawi (2007), and Schöttl (2015), which also demonstrate the significant role of the moral integrity of supervisors in promoting JE.

H2: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

Table 7 and Figure 4 show that there is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of TIL. This is evidenced by the statistical significance associated with the (t) value of (17.110), which is lower than (0.01) level of statistical significance.

H3: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the levels of JE (Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional) through TIL in public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar – Sultanate of Oman.

To analyse this hypothesis, the researchers used the method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), which is based on two prerequisites for mediation analysis:

(A) That the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable through the mediating variable is statistically significant (the indirect effect relationship).

(B) The indirect effect is considered significant if the upper and lower bound estimates do not cross over zero. This hypothesis has been divided into three sub-hypotheses, as follows:

The first sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the behavioural dimension through the levels of TIL in the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The results of Table 7 and Figure 5 show that there is an indirect, statistically significant effect of MI on the behavioural dimension through TIL. This is evidenced by the statistical significance associated with t value of (6.027), which was lower than the statistical significance level of (0.01), satisfying the first prerequisite for mediation. Therefore, the researchers conclude that there is a partial effect of the MI on JE within the investigated public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar. This result supports the finding of the study (Al-Atawi, 2010).

The results show that there is an indirect, statistically significant effect of MI on the behavioural dimension of JE through TIL. The results of the statistical analysis show that there is a statistically significant effect of MI on the degree of behavioural dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in Dhofar Governorate. The statistical significance associated with (t) value of (6.027) was less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). Additionally, the same table shows that there is a statistically significant effect of MI on TIL, with a statistical significance associated with the (t) value of (18.143) less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). Moreover, there is a statistically significant effect of TIL on the behavioural dimension of JE, with a statistical significance associated with the (t) values of (7.614) less than the level of the statistical significance (0.01).

The second sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the cognitive dimension of JE through the levels of TIL in the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The results of Table 7 and Figure 6 show that there is an indirect, statistically significant effect of MI on the cognitive dimension of JE through TIL, at the statistical significance level of (0.01). With this result, the first condition for the mediation analysis is fulfilled.

The results also show that there is an indirect, statistically significant effect of MI on the cognitive dimension of JE through TIL. The statistical analysis revealed that there is a significant effect of MI on the degree of the cognitive dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in Dhofar Governorate. The statistical significance associated with the (t) value of (6.027) was less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). The same table also shows that there is a statistically significant effect of MI on TIL, with the statistical significance associated with the (t) value of (16.842) being less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). Additionally, there was a statistically significant effect of TIL on the cognitive dimension of JE, with a statistical significance associated with the (t) values of (6.654) less than the level of the statistical significance (0.01). This

suggests that respondents perceive their supervisors as making decisions that are in the interest of the employees. This result supports the findings of the study by Al-Taie, Abdulla, & Rasheed (2017).

The third sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of the MI on the emotional dimension of JE through the levels of TIL in the public sector institutions in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The results of Table 7 and Figure 7 show that there is an indirect, statistically significant effect of MI on the emotional dimension of JE through TIL, with a statistical significance level of (0.01). This result fulfills the first condition for the mediation analysis.

The results also show that there is an indirect statistically significant effect of MI on the emotional dimension of JE through TIL. The statistical analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant effect of MI on the degree of the emotional dimension of JE through TIL in public sector institutions in Dhofar Governorate. The statistical significance associated with (t) value of (6.760) was less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). The table also shows that there is a statistically significant effect of the MI on TIL, with a statistical significance associated with the (t) value of (17.889) less than the level of statistical significance (0.01). Additionally, there is a statistically significant effect of TIL on the emotional dimension of JE, with a statistical significance associated with the (t) values of (9.243) less than the level of the statistical significance (0.01). These findings suggest that employees perceive their supervisors as trustworthy, which can enhance their emotional attachment to their job.

Table 7. Model Estimates of the impact of trust in the leader (TIL) as a mediating variable between the moral integrity (MI) of the leader and job engagement (JE).

| Hypothesis	Relationships		St. er.	T value	Sig.	Size of the effect (β)
H1	MI -> BD	Moral integrity of leader -> Behavioral dimension	0.064	9.661	0.000	0.623
	MI -> CD	Moral integrity of leader -> Cognitive dimension	0.060	10.104	0.000	0.606
	MI -> AD	Moral integrity of leader -> Affective dimension	0.048	13.612	0.000	0.662
H2	MI -> TIL	Moral integrity of leader -> Trust in leaders	0.046	17.11	0.000	0.786
H3	MI -> TIL	Moral integrity of leader -> Trust in leaders	0.044	17.889	0.000	0.785
	MI -> BD	Moral integrity of leader -> Behavioral dimension	0.067	6.760	0.000	0.440
	TIL -> BD	Trust in leaders -> Behavioral dimension	0.063	9.243	0.000	0.561
H4	TIL -> BD	Trust in leaders -> Behavioral dimension	0.096	6.765	0.000	0.492
	TIL -> CD	Trust in leaders -> Cognitive dimension	0.087	6.522	0.000	0.479
	TIL -> AD	Trust in leaders -> Affective dimension	0.110	6.888	0.000	0.499
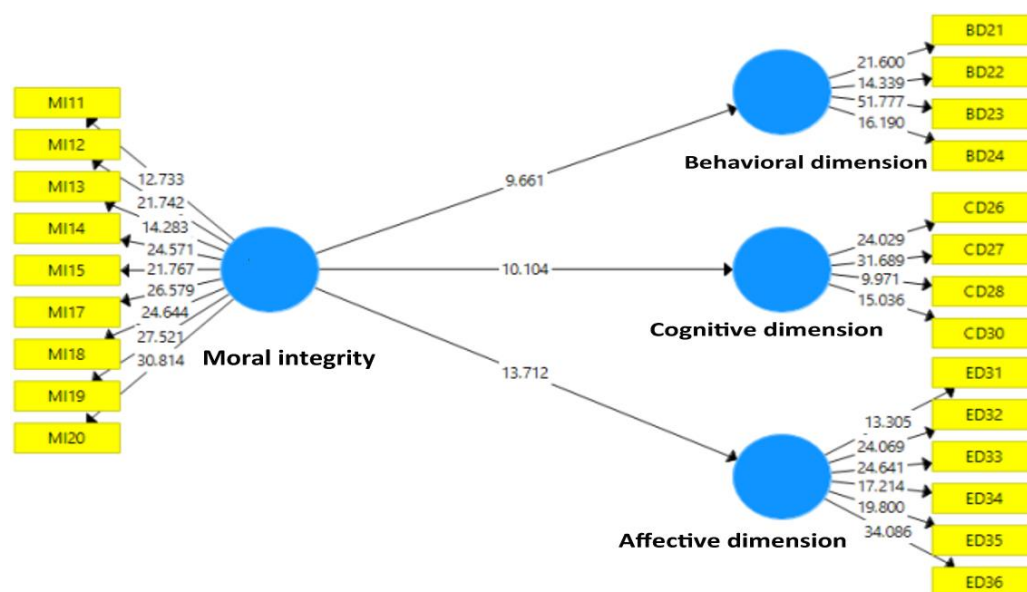
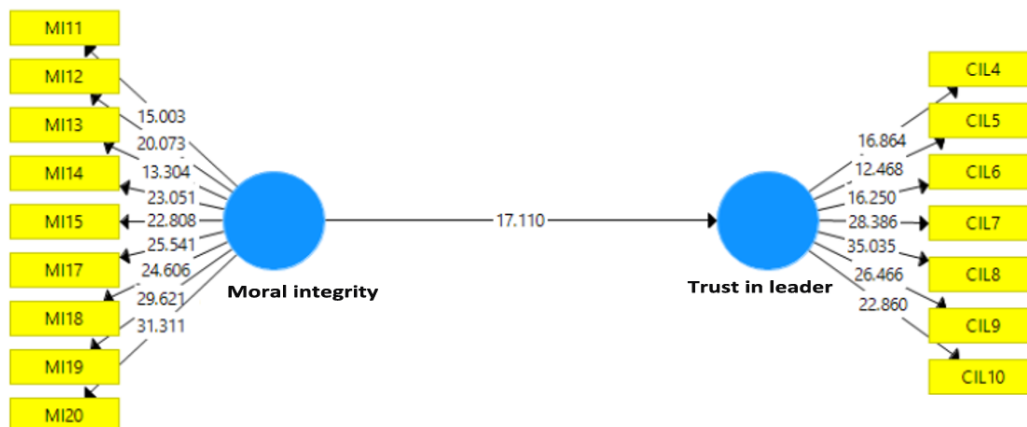**Figure 3.** Analysing the impact of MI on JE.

Figure 4. Analysing the impact of a leader's moral integrity on TIL.

Figure 5. Analysing the impact of a MI on the behavioural dimension of JE through TIL.

In order to ensure that the second condition is met in the mediation analysis that is to determine whether TIL is a mediating variable or not and that the effect of the indirect relationship is statistically significant, it is required that the upper and lower bound estimates do not cross over zero as follows:

Table 8. The direct and indirect effect between MI, TIL and the behavioural dimension of JE.

IV- > Mediator	Mediator -> DV	Automatic calculation	Standard deviation	Automatic calculation	Bootstrapped confidence interval	
Path a	Path b	Indirect Effect	SE	*t-value*	95% LL	95% UL
0.785	0.561	0.440	0.073	6.033	0.297	0.583

Figure 6. Analysing the impact of MI on the cognitive dimension of JE through TIL.

The results of Table 8 and Figure 7 show that TIL serves as a mediating variable for the relationship between MI and the behavioural dimension of JE. The values of the upper and lower levels of the confidence interval do not cross over zero, indicating that the indirect relationship between MI and the behavioural dimension of JE was significant at the level of (0.05) significance. Therefore, the second condition of the mediation analysis has been fulfilled. Consequently, it can be confirmed that there is partial mediation since both the direct and the indirect effects are statistically significant.

Also, to ensure that the second condition is met in the mediation analysis that is to determine whether TIL is a mediating variable or not and that the effect of the indirect relationship is statistically significant, it is required that the upper and lower bound estimates do not cross over zero as follows: Table 9.

Table 9. The direct and indirect effect between MI, TIL and the cognitive dimension of JE.

IV- > Mediator	Mediator - > DV	Automatic calculation	Standard deviation	Automatic calculation	Bootstrapped confidence interval	
Path a	Path b	Indirect effect	SE	T-value	95% LL	95% UL
0.785	0.512	0.402	0.075	5.359	0.255	0.549

The results of Table 9 and Figure 7 show that TIL is a mediating variable for the relationship between MI and the cognitive dimension of JE. The values of the upper and lower levels of the confidence interval do not cross over zero, and the table also shows that the indirect relationship between MI and the cognitive dimension of JE is significant at the level of statistical significance (0.05). With this result, it is clear that the second condition of the mediation analysis has been fulfilled. So, it can be confirmed that there is partial mediation as both the direct and the indirect effects are statistically significant.
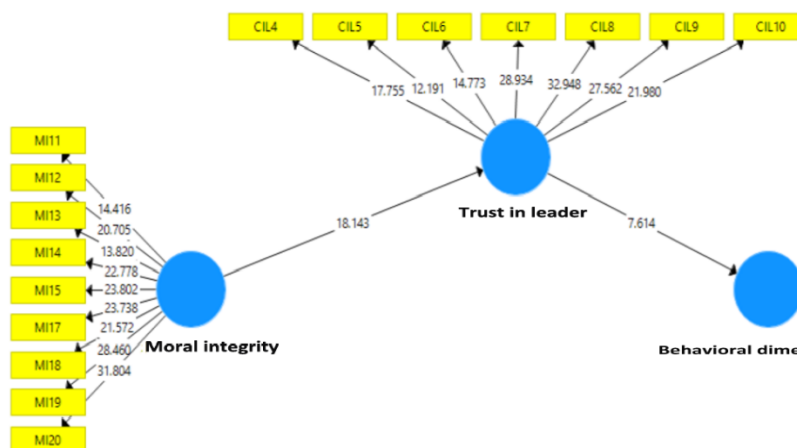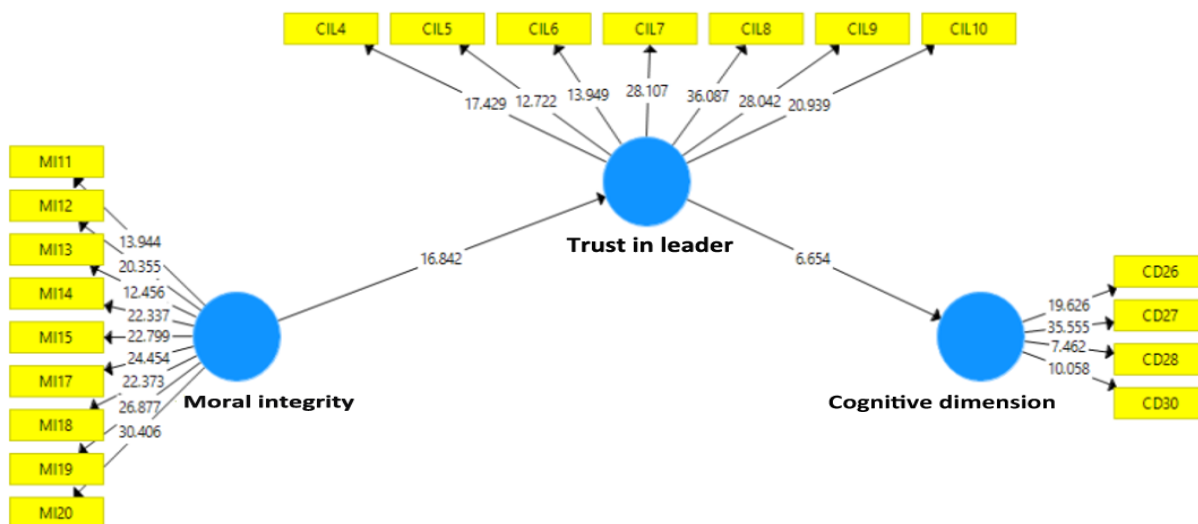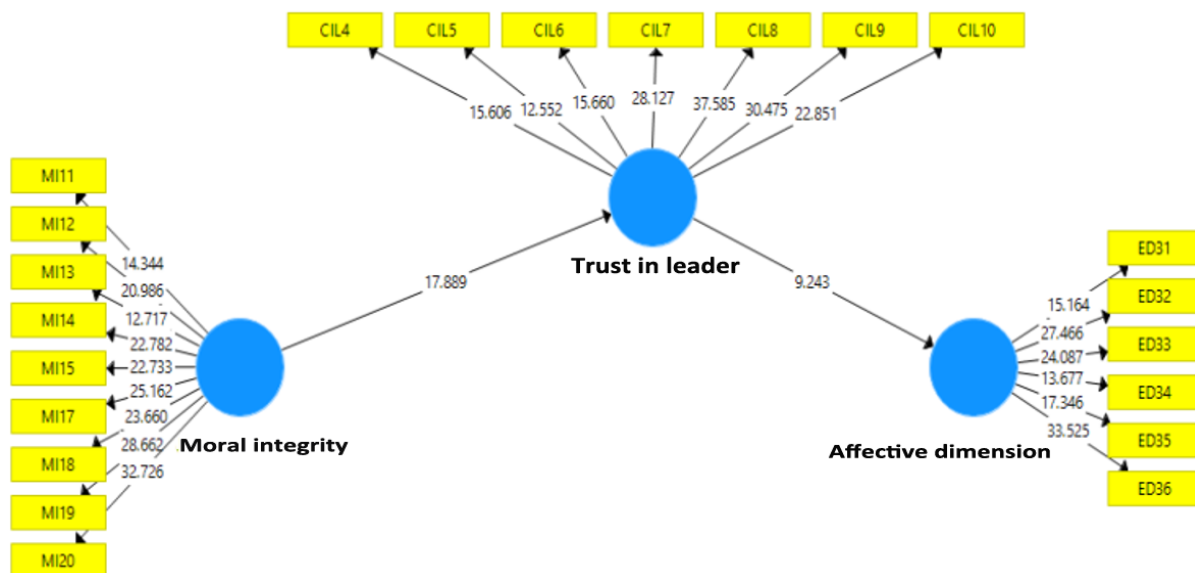

Figure 7. Analysis of the impact of MI on the emotional dimension of JE through TIL.

Moreover, to ensure that the second condition is met in the mediation analysis that is to determine whether TIL is a mediating variable or not and that the effect of the indirect relationship is statistically significant, it is required that the upper and lower bound estimates do not cross over zero as follows Table 10.

Table 10. The direct and indirect effect between MI, TIL, and the emotional dimension of JE.

IV- -> Mediator	Mediator -- > DV	Automatic calculation	Standard deviation	Automatic calculation	Bootstrapped confidence interval	
Path a	Path b	Indirect Effect	SE	T-value	95% LL	95% UL
0.784	0.578	0.453	0.067	6.763	0.322	0.584

The results of Table 10 show that TIL is a mediating variable for the relationship between MI and the emotional dimension of JE. The values of the upper and lower levels of the confidence interval do not cross over zero, and the table also shows that the indirect relationship between MI and the emotional dimension of JE is significant at the level of statistical significance (0.05). With this result, it is clear that the second condition of the mediation analysis has been fulfilled. Therefore, it can be confirmed that there is partial mediation as both the direct and the indirect effects are statistically significant. This result supports the results by Al-Atawi (2010) engagement, which in turn can improve overall organizational performance.

The results of this study can help decision-makers to design and develop appropriate policies and interventions to support and encourage more open communication between leaders and subordinates, leading to increased trust and higher levels of job engagement.

4. Conclusion

In general, it is noted that there is a great deal of interest in the areas of leadership, morality, trust, and job engagement, in recent years among researchers and practitioners. While there are numerous studies related to the moral integrity of leaders, trust in leaders, and job engagement separately, few, if any, have untargeted all three variables in a single model to examine their relationships within public sector institutions in GCC countries. Therefore, this study fills an important gap in the literature and contributes to our understanding of these crucial topics in this particular context.

The main focus and purpose of the study was to examine the mediating effect of trust in the leader on the relationship between the moral integrity of the leader and job engagement, as measured by the three dimensions behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimension. The study is novel in the public institutions of the Sultanate of Oman and contributes to the emerging field.

The results of the study indicate that the levels of the availability of the three main variables, namely the moral integrity of the leader, trust in the leader, and job engagement, were found to be high. In addition, the availability levels of the three dimensions of job engagement (behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions) among the respondents from the two public institutions in the governorate of Dhofar, Oman, were also found to be high, measured by an average mean of 4.14, 3.98, and 3.94, respectively. These results indicate that leaders in these institutions are characterized by moral integrity, and as result, employees trust them, which has led to high levels of job engagement, behaviourally, cognitively, and emotionally. These results support the findings of Al-Taie et al. (2017); Al-Dulaijan (2017); Al Ghamidi (2016) and Al-Abru and Noor (2017).

The results of the study reveal that there is a statistically significant effect of the moral integrity of the leader on all three dimensions of job engagement. This indicates that the study sample recognizes the important and influential role of moral integrity on job engagement, both cognitively and emotionally, as well as in terms of observable behaviour.

Moreover, the results of the study reveal that the trust in their leaders plays a mediating role in the relationship between moral integrity of the leader and job engagement. This suggests that the moral integrity of the leader influences the employees' trust in their leader, which in turn affects their level of job engagement. This result supports the finding of Engelbrecht et al. (2017) who found that a leader with integrity is perceived as trustworthy, which strengthens the trust of the employees in their leader (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). However, this same result contradicts the finding of the study by Najm El-Din (2017).

In addition, the results of the study reveal that there is a statistically significant effect of trust in the leader on the levels of job engagement. The researchers attribute this finding to the fact that when individuals have trust in their leaders, it can generate positive energy that can increase the effectiveness of employee engagement. This means that when employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to care about their work, be more productive, put forth more effort, and ultimately thus show higher levels of performance.

Finally, this study confirms that the variable (trust in the leader) partially mediates the effect relationship between moral integrity of the leader and all the three dimensions of job engagement. This is because the direct and indirect effect relationship both were statistically significant.

5. Implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on leadership and job engagement in public sector institutions by highlighting the importance of moral integrity and trust as predictors for job engagement behaviourally, cognitively, and emotionally. Authorities in public sector institutions should be aware of the level of moral integrity and trust among the supervisors to enhance job engagement and improve overall organizational performance.

The results of this study can help decision-makers design and develop appropriate policies and interventions to support and encourage more open communication between leaders and subordinates. This, in turn, can create trust and increase levels of job engagement.

6. Limitation and Future Research Directions

The results of this study should be viewed in light of some limitations. One of the main limitations of this study is the small sample size, which was drawn from only two public institutions. This makes it difficult to generalize the results. Future studies should aim to increase the sample size as well as extend the study to include a wider range of institutions, including the private sector, rather than solely focusing on public institutions.

This study found a significant relationship between three variables, all of which may be linked to overall organizational performance. In future research, other mediating variables such as organizational culture, climate, and leadership styles can also be included.

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Appendix 1

Table 3. Convergence validity test results for the model.

Construct	Items	Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Trust in leader	CIL1	-0.087	0.886	0.477
	CIL 2	0.476		
	CIL 3	0.592		
	CIL 4	0.723		
	CIL 5	0.716		
	CIL 6	0.746		
	CIL 7	0.795		
	CIL 8	0.833		
	CIL 9	0.799		
	CIL 10	0.796		
Moral integrity of the leader	ML11	0.708	0.942	0.618
	ML12	0.779		
	ML13	0.757		
	ML14	0.821		
	ML15	0.799		
	ML16	0.698		
	ML17	0.819		
	ML18	0.801		
	ML19	0.814		
	ML20	0.851		
Behavioural dimension	BD21	0.825	0.888	0.617
	BD22	0.829		
	BD23	0.881		
	BD24	0.75		
	BD25	0.616		
Cognitive dimension	CD26	0.766	0.863	0.56
	CD27	0.806		
	CD28	0.713		
	CD29	0.636		
	CD230	0.807		
Emotional dimension	ED31	0.735	0.919	0.654
	ED32	0.838		
	ED33	0.831		
	ED34	0.792		
	ED35	0.806		
	ED236	0.845		

Table 4. The results of the convergence test of validity of the model after modification.

Construct	Items	Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Trust in leader	TIL 4	0.726	0.918	0.616
	TIL 5	0.695		
	TIL 6	0.767		
	TIL 7	0.815		
	TIL 8	0.852		
	TIL 9	0.822		
	TIL 10	0.805		
Moral integrity	ML11	0.712	0.940	0.637
	ML12	0.779		
	ML13	0.747		
	ML14	0.829		

Construct	Items	Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
	ML15	0.808		
	ML17	0.815		
	ML18	0.803		
	ML19	0.828		
	ML20	0.850		
Behavioural dimension	BD21	0.827	0.900	0.693
	BD22	0.843		
	BD23	0.898		
	BD24	0.755		
Cognitive dimension	CD26	0.800	0.868	0.622
	CD27	0.843		
	CD28	0.719		
	CD30	0.789		
Emotional dimension	ED31	0.735	0.919	0.654
	ED32	0.838		
	ED33	0.831		
	ED34	0.792		
	ED35	0.806		
	ED236	0.845		

Appendix 2

Table 5. Cross loading test results.

Constructs/ Items	TIL	MI	BD	CD	AD
CIL4	0.726	0.649	0.480	0.427	0.376
CIL5	0.695	0.511	0.453	0.388	0.398
CIL6	0.767	0.627	0.357	0.321	0.403
CIL7	0.815	0.596	0.488	0.356	0.405
CIL8	0.852	0.678	0.411	0.421	0.505
CIL9	0.822	0.632	0.403	0.403	0.535
CIL10	0.805	0.601	0.439	0.399	0.428
MI11	0.592	0.712	0.355	0.360	0.386
MI12	0.579	0.779	0.456	0.447	0.448
MI13	0.534	0.747	0.487	0.374	0.438
MI14	0.698	0.829	0.599	0.579	0.624
MI15	0.605	0.808	0.450	0.474	0.516
MI17	0.666	0.815	0.483	0.495	0.574
MI18	0.599	0.803	0.497	0.545	0.525
MI19	0.629	0.828	0.417	0.448	0.535
MI20	0.702	0.850	0.567	0.507	0.596
BD21	0.499	0.524	0.827	0.604	0.523
BD22	0.359	0.357	0.843	0.619	0.541
BD23	0.537	0.608	0.898	0.678	0.631
BD24	0.431	0.512	0.755	0.616	0.609
CD26	0.481	0.583	0.712	0.800	0.611
CD27	0.474	0.491	0.596	0.843	0.638
CD28	0.254	0.386	0.437	0.719	0.510
CD30	0.330	0.398	0.618	0.789	0.630
ED31	0.511	0.527	0.638	0.586	0.838
ED32	0.527	0.567	0.643	0.672	0.831
ED33	0.494	0.563	0.556	0.602	0.792
ED34	0.251	0.379	0.480	0.574	0.806
ED35	0.409	0.508	0.458	0.544	0.845
ED36	0.493	0.603	0.577	0.696	0.386

Table 6. Variable correlation test results.

Constructs	BD	AD	CD	TIL	MI
BD	1				
AD	0.694	1			
CD	0.758	0.761	1		
TIL	0.551	0.558	0.495	1	
MI	0.604	0.652	0.593	0.785	1