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**The Interplay between Ethical Leadership and Supervisor Organizational Embodiment
on Organizational Identification and Extra-role Performance**

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**The Interplay Between Ethical Leadership and Supervisor Organizational Embodiment
on Organization Identification and Extra Role Performance**

Abstract

This research shows the importance of supervisor organizational embodiment (SOE) for the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identification. Drawing on the social identity model of organizational leadership, we propose that ethical leaders promote organizational identification and subsequently extra-role performance only when employees perceive that their leader shares the values and norms of their organization. In a two-wave study and a multi-source study, our findings suggest that the benefits of ethical leadership for organizational identification and consequently extra-role performance are dependent on high levels of SOE; when it is low, ethical leadership does not foster organizational identification, rendering SOE a necessary condition for this relationship. Further, the stability of the effects using multiple research designs strengthens the robustness of our findings. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: social identity model of organizational leadership, ethical leadership, organizational identification, supervisor's organizational embodiment, necessary condition.

The Interplay Between Ethical Leadership and Supervisor Organizational Embodiment on Organization Identification and Extra Role Performance

Ethical leadership has been in the spotlight because of recurrent corporate scandals that undermine the trust and reputation of both leaders and organizations (Waldman et al., 2006). In particular, research on ethical leadership from an identity lens gained momentum in recent years (e.g., Gerpott et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2015), not least because core attributes of ethical leaders such as fairness and honesty bear consequential identity implications in the workplace (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Over the years, a significant amount of research consolidated the ethical leadership's impact on a range of organizational outcomes (Hoch et al., 2018), including organizational identification (Bedi et al., 2016). Under the social identity lens, scholars theorized that organizational identification is a particularly important mediator for the ethical leadership – organizational outcomes relationship under the premise that subordinates always view their leaders as representatives of their organizations. Accordingly, ethical leaders, displaying fair and honest behavior, are seen as representatives of similarly fair and honest organizations, thereby leading to greater levels of subordinates' feelings of trust and respect for the organization (O'Keefe et al., 2019; Qian & Jian, 2020; Zhu et al., 2015).

Although there is empirical support for the idea that ethical leadership *per se* promotes organizational identification, the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identification may be conditional. Specifically, existing research focuses on the positive effect that ethical leaders have on organizational identification, regardless of the organizational values and norms in which this relationship is set (e.g., Zhu et al., 2015). This approach reduces ethical leadership to a compliance with organizational norms and standards and disregards any potential mismatch between the leader's ethical ideals and the organization's norms. However, this undermines the focus of ethical leaders on ethical and

moral behavior in spite of the organizational norms and values (Lemoine et al., 2019) and ignores the possibility that ethical leadership can in fact work against organizational identification if the leader promotes ethical conduct despite the organization. From a social identity perspective, we contend that not all ethical leaders convey identity-relevant inferences sufficient to promote good employee-organization relationships (Sluss et al., 2012). An ethical leader's behavior, such as fair and considerate treatment of followers, would only carry identity-relevant cues for organizational identification if followers perceive them as salient representatives of the organization (Hogg, 2001; Koivisto & Lipponen, 2015; Sluss et al., 2012; Tyler & Blader, 2003). For example, ethical leaders are ideologically opposed to unethical practices (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Lemoine et al., 2019), but may find themselves in an organization where less ethical (or even unethical) practices are normative. In this instance, the ethical leader who behaves according to fundamental moral tenets (e.g., fairness and transparency) acts in contrast to the norms of the organization. And while the ethical leader's behavior encourages followers to internalize the leader's values as their own (Lee, 2017), they are unlikely to carry identity-relevant cues for an organization that does not share an equally moral base and they are therefore unlikely to promote subordinate feelings of trust and respect for the organization (Koivisto & Lipponen, 2015; Sluss et al., 2012). Furthermore, Qian & Jian (2020) and Zhu et al. (2015) relied on the notion that employees instinctively think about leaders as representatives of the organization, its characteristics, and experiences. However, research shows that employees vary in the extent to which they perceive their leaders as representatives of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010).

To address these theoretical gaps, we argue that the extent to which ethical leaders drive follower organizational identification should be considered relative to the values and the normative standards in which leaders are embedded (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). To this end, we build on Gerpott et al.'s (2019) work that showed ethical leadership fosters follower

moral identity, and ethical leaders who are prototypical enhance this relationship. We further explore this notion of identity-relevant implications of ethical leadership by posing that ethical leaders must embody their organization's values to foster follower's organizational identification. Whilst Gerpott et al. (2019) show a direct relationship between ethical leadership and follower moral identification, we argue that in the context of organizational identification, the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identification is purely conditional - ethical leaders will only imbue identity relevant information for the organization when the organization is seen as equally ethical. In line with SIMOL, we contend that a supervisor's organizational embodiment¹ (SOE), which refers to employee perception of the extent to which their leader shares the values and norms of their organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010), constitutes a prominent condition for the ethical leadership – organizational identification relationship. According to SIMOL, a leader is more likely to engender psychological group membership and employees' attitudes toward the organization when they are perceived to embody the characteristics of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Hogg et al., 2012). It follows then, that the extent to which an ethical leader can foster organizational identification (and subsequent work outcomes) is contingent on the extent to which followers perceive the fundamental attributes and behavior of their ethical leader to match the normative conduct of the organization.

We subject our model to two empirical tests. In Study 1, we use a time-lagged design to test our moderation hypothesis. In Study 2, we apply a multi-source design to replicate the

¹ SOE and leader group prototypicality are both embedded in social identity theory and the literature on psychological group membership and identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Turner et al., 1987). SOE encapsulates the characteristics and the experiences of the organization in the same manner as leader group prototypicality embodies the attributes and behavior of the group. In his review on SIMOL, van Knippenberg (2011) refers to both terms as "conceptually redundant" (p.1028) as they capture the same construct, albeit that SOE is positioned in the literature reflecting the organization as a collective unit and being perceived as embodying the characteristics of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010) whereas the focus of group prototypicality is on encapsulating the norms of one's group. In line with van Knippenberg (2011), we use the terms interchangeably.

findings from Study 1 and extend the model to follower extra-role performance. By doing so, we contribute to the ethical leadership literature by more accurately explaining its link with organizational identification. Through SIMOL, we provide an integrated account of a necessary condition for ethical leadership to foster follower organizational identification and work behavior.

Ethical leadership and organizational identification

Ethical leadership is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Ethical leaders uphold universal moral conduct and are perceived to be honest, approachable, fair, and trustworthy (Burton et al., 2006). They communicate and model ethical standards to their followers and use rewards and sanctions to shape ethical behavior (Brown et al., 2005). The emphasis on what is ‘normatively appropriate’ bounds ethical leadership to subjective followers’ evaluations relative to the context in which it is embedded (Brown et al., 2005; Eisenbeiß & Giessner, 2012), which signals the relevance of both leader and organization’s values and moral standards on employees’ perceptions and behaviors. Social identity theory explains why not only ethical leadership promotes organizational identity, but why it is a particularly important antecedent of organizational identification.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) define organizational identification as “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization” (p. 34). In other words, it is a “self-defining concept” that reflects the level of perceived overlap between an individual’s self and the values, interests and norms of the organization (Van Dick et al., 2004, p.353). Social identity theory stems from group membership and explains how individuals strive to belong to groups to define their identity, reduce uncertainty and enhance their self-esteem (Hogg &

Terry, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). Moreover, certain identity cues such as distinctiveness of organizational values and practices, social support, and participation in decision making (Ashforth et al., 2008; Fuller et al., 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001) can prompt the development of organizational identification. In this respect, ethical leaders' core attributes such as fairness, justice, and honesty have significant identity implications in the workplace (Tyler & Blader, 2003; Sluss et al., 2012), especially amongst those followers who hold high ethical standards. For example, ethical leaders strive for procedurally fair treatment of their followers (Shin et al., 2015). This conveys identity-relevant information such as respect for followers, which is likely to shape followers' identities within the organization (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Accordingly, scholars argue that ethical leaders engender relational (i.e., with one's leader) and organizational identification because of their moral and ethical treatment of followers (Zhu et al., 2015). Organizational identification renders organizational attributes such as goals, norms, and values salient and self-defining for individuals and constitutes a fundamental subtext upon which attitudes and behaviors are defined in the organization (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Lee et al., 2015).

However, while past work found that ethical leadership may *per se* facilitate organizational identification (Bedi et al., 2016; O'Keefe et al., 2019; Qian & Jian, 2020; Zhu et al., 2015), we note that the current findings are based on the premise that leaders' ethical conduct is always representative of what the organization stands for (cf. Sluss et al., 2012). In other words, it relies on the assumption that followers uniformly think of their leaders as representatives of the organization's values and policies (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Hogg et al., 2012), neglecting the possibility that the leader's ethical behavior, which centers on communicating and reinforcing moral behavior may well be opposed to organizational norms in which the leader is embedded (Abrams et al., 2008). Accordingly, a leader who deviates from the prescriptive organizational norms is considered not characteristic of the organization

and may be evaluated less favorably (Abrams et al., 2008). Moreover, those leaders may have reduced influence over the group's attitudes and behaviors (van Knippenberg, 2011). As it stands, even an ethical leader who epitomizes fairness and moral behavior may not necessarily signal to followers that the organization adopts similar principles unless followers perceive a match between the values and norms of the ethical leader and those of the organization, in other words, unless followers perceive that the organization is equally ethical. Based on these premises and drawing on SIMOL (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), we argue that SOE is a critical, albeit unexamined, factor for the ethical leadership and organizational identification relationship, as we detail below.

SIMOL and the key role of SOE

Grounded in social identity and self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987), SIMOL suggests that group membership carries normative influence shaping what members sense as desirable and appropriate behavior. Furthermore, it also has identity implications by helping members define who they are and who they identify with (Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg et al., 2012). SIMOL views leadership as a multidimensional and recursive process that hinges on the extent to which the leader is considered group prototypical, i.e., the extent to which the leader is seen to represent and embody the group's identity (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Accordingly, leaders who embody the group's characteristics have unwavering influence over followers' psychological group membership as they most clearly represent what is group-normative (Sluss et al., 2012; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). There is empirical support for the positive impact of leader group prototypicality on organizational outcomes (see Barreto & Hogg, 2017). For instance, Sluss et al., (2012) showed that prototypical leaders embody the organizational identity and prompt followers to identify with the organization.

Leader group prototypicality is also captured by the concept of SOE – a particular form of group prototypicality where the referent group is one’s organization and the term encapsulates the extent to which supervisors are perceived as embodying the characteristics of the organization in which they are embedded (Eisenberger et al., 2010). SOE reinforces the idea that high perceived similarity or alignment between the leader and their organization is essential for followers to generalize feelings and attitudes from the relationship with the leader to the relationship with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). In other words, for a successful generalization process, leaders and their organizations need to “be tied together” (Sluss et al., 2012, p. 953), and to be considered in very close alignment with each other. Indeed, Eisenberger et al. (2010) provide further testament that higher leader SOE facilitates the generalization of followers’ feelings and attitudes towards their leader to the organization, by showing that high levels of SOE are necessary to translate a high-quality relationship with the leader into higher organizational commitment. Similarly, Eisenberger et al. (2014) found that SOE moderated the LMX -perceived organizational support relationship, in such way that this relationship is stronger when the supervisor is seen as a representative of the organization. Shoss et al. (2013) also found that when employees perceive their supervisors as characteristic of the organization, they view abusive supervision as a harmful behavior representing the detrimental stance of the organization. Likewise, Huang et al. (2015) argued that when employees consider their supervisor as representative of the organization, they fear losing his/her supervisor’s support, and they do not display deviant behaviors toward the supervisor.

Following these theoretical propositions and empirical evidence, we build on the notion that a leader’s behavior carries identity-relevant information, notably if the leader is considered prototypical of the group/organization in which they are embedded (Koivisto & Lipponen, 2015; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Ethical leaders exhibit high levels of moral behavior

and expend effort to communicate ethical standards to their followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Such exemplary behavior engenders collective (group beliefs about OCB; Yaffe & Kark, 2011) and individual beliefs (follower moral identity; Gerpott et al., 2019). The favorable treatment followers receive from ethical leaders entices them to internalize the leader's values as their own, giving rise to follower identification with an entity they deem as representative of their leader (e.g., identification with the leader; Lee, 2017). This identification is further bolstered if followers perceive the ethical leader to be representative of the group they lead (Koivisto & Lipponen, 2015). For example, Gerpott et al. (2019) found that ethical leaders who are group prototypical have a stronger influence on follower's moral identity because the ethical norms propagated by the leader are taken as an indication of group-normative behavior. For this identification process to span to key referents such as the organization, ethical leaders need to be seen to embody core attributes of the organization, thus demonstrating high SOE (Hogg, 2001; Sluss et al., 2012). Accordingly, for the ethical leader's behavior to carry identity-relevant cues for the organization, their demonstration of fair, honest, and just behavior needs to be seen as embodying the values of the organization. In this respect, the leader and the organization need to be considered as equally high on ethical behavior for followers to identify with the organization. We propose that only when an ethical leader is perceived as an in-group member of their organization (i.e., high SOE), they will promote organizational identification because only then their behavior will carry identity-relevant inferences for organizational identification. Conversely, when an ethical leader is not seen as representative of the organization, their ethical behaviors do not reflect the organizational values and identity, and will not carry identity-relevant cues for organizational identification.

Hypothesis 1: SOE moderates the effect of ethical leadership on organizational identification such that the relationship is positive only when SOE is high.

Effects on Performance

Social identity theory argues that organizational identification is one of the main processes that drive positive follower outcomes (van Knippenberg et al., 2004) and research consolidates this assumption across a range of outcomes (Lee et al., 2015). Although researchers found that organizational identification helps explain the effect of ethical leadership on employee voice and performance (Zhu et al., 2015), organizational cynicism (Qian & Jian, 2020), and employees' morale and job satisfaction (O'Keefe et al., 2019), we argue based on SIMOL, that SOE is a boundary condition for this relationship. Accordingly, ethical leaders who embody the organization's values (i.e., high SOE) highlight identity-relevant inferences about the organization, such as openness, trustworthiness, and fairness, and can thus foster follower organizational identification (Steffens et al., 2014; Van Knippenberg, 2011).

Moreover, SOE speaks to employees' motivation to attain organizational goals because the leader and the organization are seen as 'one' and both in favor of 'us' (van Knippenberg, 2011). The result is a motivated employee who endorses the organizational goals, values, and norms as their own and demonstrates this through positive work-related attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Lee et al., 2015; Riketta, 2005). Specifically, they are inclined to put in effort in not only meeting their job requirements but more so in discretionary actions that go beyond formal job requirements and that are not formally rewarded by the organization (Lee et al., 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2000). This is important and central for organizational functioning (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

On the other hand, when ethical leaders are not perceived to embody the organization's values but rather their own, they would be less likely to influence follower organizational identification (Eisenberger et al., 2010) and to drive follower performance through organizational identification. Therefore, we propose that ethical leadership may

increase follower extra-role performance via organizational identification; however, this relationship is contingent on SOE.

Hypothesis 2: The effect of ethical leadership on extra-role performance via organizational identification is positive only when SOE is high.

Insert figure 1 about here

Studies 1 and 2

We carried out two studies to test our model (see Figure 1). We use constructive replication to provide additional confidence in the findings' validity and stability (Hüffmeier et al., 2016). Study 1 examined hypothesis 1 using a time-lagged design, in which ethical leadership and SOE were measured at time 1 and organizational identification at time 2, five months later. Study 2 retested the interaction effect between ethical leadership and SOE on organizational identification and extended the findings to show how organizational identification serves as a mechanism via which ethical leadership increases extra-role performance. In this study, we used a cross-sectional design and two different sources of data (i.e., employees provided information regarding ethical leadership, SOE, and organizational identification, and supervisors rated employees' extra-role performance). Taken together, these studies assess the stability of the interaction effect between ethical leadership and SOE over time and across samples.

Study 1

In this study, we investigate the moderating role of SOE in the ethical leadership-organizational identification relationship by a) examining a diverse sample of employees from multiple organizations (including insurance, education, consulting, technologies, banking), and b) measuring predictors (ethical leadership and SOE) and organizational identification with a five-month time lag between them.

Method

Sample and Procedure

We used social media websites (i.e., LinkedIn and Facebook) to recruit study participants in Portugal. In the recruitment ad, we asked participants to share the link with their personal contacts. The survey link was available for 1 month. We collected 201 surveys in time 1, in which we included all the items pertaining to the ethical leadership and SOE measures. To match the surveys collected in time 1, we requested participants to create a personal code in time 1 and re-use the same code in time 2. The final matching sample (t1-t2) was 101 participants (50% of the original time 1 sample).

The majority of participants were female (56.6%). The average age of employees was 34.78 (SD= 9.05; ranging from 20 to 64). The educational attainment was reported as follows: less than high school: 10.7%; high school: 15.5%; university attendance: 8.8%; undergraduate degree: 38.8%; graduate studies: 26.2%. Participants worked in a variety of occupations, such as administrative staff, bank clerks, teachers, information systems technicians, among others. There were no significant demographic differences between those participants who only filled the first survey and those who filled both surveys (age: $F= 1.86$, $p= .18$; gender: $F= .46$, $p= .50$; educational attainment: $F= 2.70$; $p=.10$).

Measures

Participants rated their agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree).

Ethical Leadership (time 1, $\alpha= .91$). To measure ethical leadership, we used the ten-item scale developed by Brown et al. (2005). A sample item is: “My supervisor conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner”.

Supervisor Organizational Embodiment (time 1, $\alpha=.91$). We assessed SOE with five items, which is consistent with past measurements of the construct (Eisenberger et al., 2014; Shoss et al., 2013). Specifically, we took four items from the original scale (Eisenberger et

al., 2010), which are the most representative of the construct (Shoss et al., 2013), and added one additional item created by Eisenberger et al. (2014). The items used were: “My supervisor is typical of my organization”; “My supervisor is characteristic of my organization”; “My supervisor and my organization have a lot in common”; “My supervisor is representative of my organization”; and “My supervisor and my organization are similar”.

Organizational Identification (time 2, $\alpha=.85$). To assess organizational identification, we used the six-item scale from Mael and Ashforth (1992). An example item is: “When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment”.

Control variables. Following Becker’s (2016) recommendation regarding the inclusion of potent control variables only, we did not control for demographic variables as they are unrelated to our variables of interest (as can be seen in Table 1).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviation, variable intercorrelations, and scale reliabilities (α) are shown in Table 1.

Insert table 1 about here

Measurement Model

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) with Mplus 8 to examine the distinctiveness and validity of the constructs and the fit of our hypothesized model. The measurement model included three factors: ethical leadership, supervisors’ organizational embodiment, organizational identification. We provided information regarding the chi-square statistic (χ^2), comparative fit index (CFI), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR). The data presents an acceptable fit ($\chi^2(393)=710.71$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05; SRMR= .05) and the

hypothesized model fits the data better than the nested models (2 factor model, equating time 1 variables in one factor and time 2 variable in other: $\chi^2(188) = 737.81$; CFI = .77; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .09; one-factor model: $\chi^2(188) = 975.74$; CFI = .68; RMSEA = .14; SRMR = .11). Moreover, the factor loading range from .47 to .87 for ethical leadership, .68 to .90 for SOE, and .58 to .72 for organizational identification.

Hypotheses Testing

We used the PROCESS macro for SPSS (model 1: simple interaction; Hayes, 2013) to test our model. In all of the analyses, we calculated 95% confidence intervals (CI) of the hypothesized effects and used 10,000 bootstraps resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The predictors were mean-centered as recommended by Aiken and West (1991) and we estimated the simple slopes using the procedures recommended by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). Consistent with our predictions, SOE moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identification, supporting hypothesis 1 ($B = .17$; $p = .02$; 95% CI = [.03, .32]). We then explored the nature of the interaction by estimating the simple slopes (Cohen et al., (2003). Figure 2 illustrates the ethical leadership-organizational identification relationship for one standard deviation above the mean (i.e., high SOE) and one standard deviation below the mean (i.e., low SOE). The results from simple slope analysis showed that ethical leadership was related to organizational identification when SOE was high ($t = 2.92$, $p = .00$) but not when it was low ($t = .65$; $p = .52$). The difference between slopes was significant ($t = 2.31$, $p = .00$), further supporting our interaction hypothesis (hypothesis 1).

 Insert figure 2 about here

Necessary Condition Analysis

We explored how important ethical leadership and SOE are for organizational identification using a recent analytical method developed by Dul (2016a): Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA). NCA identifies the presence of a necessary (but not sufficient)

condition for an outcome. Using two ceiling line techniques, ceiling envelop (CE-FDH) and ceiling regression (CR-FDH), NCA separates observational data from the area without observations (Dul, 2016a). Dul (2016a) suggests that for the sake of a dichotomous decision, whether the necessary condition is observed or not, a value of $d = .10$ could be treated as a threshold and, additionally, a p -value for the NCA effect size may be calculated to avoid a false positive decision that the effect size is a random result of two unrelated variables (Dul et al., 2020). The effect size is the constraint that the ceiling exerts on the outcome and the larger the ceiling zone, the stronger the effect (Dul, 2016a). The NCA package (Dul, 2016b) for R software generated the following results. NCA effect sizes are “medium” (between .10 and .30) for SOE as a necessary condition for organizational identification (CE-FDH = .13 and CR-FDH = .11, $p=.03$ and $p=.04$, respectively). Figure 3 displays the results. Moreover, the bottleneck results show that to achieve high levels of organizational identification (above 4.6, 80%), the necessary level of SOE is 3 (55%). Note that ethical leadership is not a necessary condition for organizational identification (CE-FDH = .03 and CR-FDH = .03, $p=.71$ and $p=.65$, respectively). These results demonstrate that, on the one hand, ethical leadership is not a necessary condition for high levels of organizational identification; and, on the other hand, SOE is important and necessary to foster high levels of organizational identification.

Study 2

In this study, we re-examine the interaction effect between ethical leadership and SOE on organizational identification and extend the model to extra-role performance. By doing so, we answer a call for more replications in management research (Eden, 2002; Tsang & Kwan, 1999). Replications are critical to determining the external validity of the studies' results (Cook & Campbel, 1979) and to accumulate scientific knowledge (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Moreover, replication using the same models and analyses, but with different samples,

provides additional information regarding the generalization and a stronger basis for theoretical development (Tsang & Kwan, 1999). To provide a stronger theoretical contribution regarding the role of SOE as a specific boundary condition for ethical leadership-organizational identification, we test our model with a second, parallel mediator. We focus on perceived organizational support (POS; Eisenberger et al., 1986) because it represents an important mechanism associated with social exchange and reciprocity (Wayne et al., 1997), and ethical leadership has previously been linked to performance mostly via social exchange mechanisms (Bedi et al., 2016).

Method

Samples and Procedure

We invited several organizations operating in Portugal to participate in our study, asking their representatives for permission to collect data. The paper-based surveys were only provided if both employee and supervisor were willing to participate in the study. We collected data from 431 employee-supervisor dyads. After the deletion of participants who did not complete the survey and those who failed the attention checks, the final sample was 347 employees (and their respective supervisors), which represents a response rate of 82.6%.

The majority of participants were female (70.7%). The average age of employees was 37.21 (SD= 10.35; ranging from 18 to 62). Participants' organizational tenure average was 12.83 years (SD= 15.78). The educational attainment was reported as follows: less than high school: 15.4%; high school: 32.1%; university attendance: 8.7%; undergraduate degree: 36%; graduate studies: 7.8%. Participants worked in a variety of occupations in the healthcare (e.g., medical assistant, pharmacist, physician, nurse, doctor, hospital manager, cleaning staff, and administrative staff), and customer service (e.g., support technician, administrative staff, receptionist, salesperson, and maintenance services) sectors.

Measures

Participants rated their agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). We used the same scales for ethical leadership ($\alpha = .86$), organizational identification ($\alpha = .72$), and SOE ($\alpha = .85$) as in Study 1.

Subordinates' Extra-role Performance (supervisor measure). Supervisors evaluated their subordinates' extra-role performance with the five highest loading items of the scale used by Eisenberger et al. (2010). These items are oriented toward the organization and include the following categories: constructive suggestions; enhancing one's knowledge and skills to help the organizations; and protecting the organization. A sample item is: "This employee takes action to protect the organization from potential problems" ($\alpha = .88$).

Control Variables. To determine the inclusion of control variables, we again followed Becker's (2016) recommendations and control for both gender and education level as these demographic variables are theoretically and empirically related to our outcome. Specifically, gender and education level influence the display of OCBs (Kidder, 2002; Ng & Feldman, 2009), and they are correlated with OCBs in our sample.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviations, variable intercorrelations, and scale reliabilities (α) for both samples are shown in Table 2.

 Insert table 2 about here

Measurement Model

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) with Mplus 8 to examine the distinctiveness of the constructs and the fit of our hypothesized model. The measurement model included four factors: ethical leadership, supervisors' organizational embodiment, organizational identification, and extra-role performance, and fit the data reasonably well: $\chi^2(293) = 628.24$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .06. The four-factor model presented a

better fit than the nested models (Table 3) and the discriminant validity of the constructs was supported.

Insert table 3 about here

Although interactions cannot be artifactually created by common method variance (CMV) (Evans, 1985), we should nonetheless examine its potential impact on our model. To minimize concerns regarding CMV, we assessed the impact of a fifth latent variable, which represents a related method factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003, 2012; Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989). The improvement of model fit statistics means that CMV may be present, which is expected (Williams et al., 1989). Accordingly, after adding the latent method factor, the fit indices slightly improved as expected ($\chi^2(292) = 612.13$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .06). We then calculated the variance explained by the method factor, which accounted for 17% (below the 25% threshold, Williams et al., 1989).

Hypotheses Testing

To re-test the hypothesized model, we again used bootstrapping analysis (model 7: Hayes, 2013) because it offers a straightforward and robust strategy for assessing indirect effects, particularly mediated moderation effects (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Preacher et al., 2007; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Predictors were mean-centered (Aiken & West, 1991). We again found support for hypothesis 1, by showing that SOE moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational identification ($B=.31$; $p=.00$, 95% CI = [.18, .45]). We followed the same procedure as in study 1 to plot the interaction effects (see Figure 2). Ethical leadership was positively related to organizational identification when SOE was high ($t= 5.81$, $p= .00$), but not when SOE was low ($t=.70$, $p=.49$). The difference between slopes was significant ($t=4.48$, $p=.00$) suggesting

that the strength of the ethical leadership-organizational identification relationship is indeed affected by SOE.

Hypothesis 2 indicated the relationship between ethical leadership and extra-role performance is mediated by organizational identification and moderated by SOE (Table 4). As a preliminary test, we first examined the simple mediation model (model 4), which showed that the indirect effect of ethical leadership on extra-role performance via organizational identification was non-significant (Effect: .05, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [-.002, .11]). The conditional indirect effect of ethical leadership on extra-role performance via identification was significant when SOE was high (+ 1 SD ; $B = .10$; $SE = .04$; 95% CI [.01, .19]), but non-significant when SOE was low (- 1 SD ; $B = .01$; $SE = .02$; 95% CI [-.02, .04], controlling for POS as a second mediator. The index of moderated mediation was significant (Index (SE) = .06; $SE = .03$; 95% CI [.01, .11]), supporting hypothesis 2. The results remain the same when excluding POS as a second mediator from our analysis (high SOE: $B = .09$; $SE = .03$; 95% CI [.01, .18]; low SOE: $B = .01$; $SE = .01$; 95% CI [-.02, .04]).

Necessary Conditions Analysis

We followed the same analytical strategy as in study 1 to explore the presence of necessary conditions for organizational identity. NCA effect sizes are both above .10 for SOE (CE-FDH = .11 and CR-FDH = .11, $p = .04$ and $p = .01$, respectively). Figure 3 displays the results. Moreover, the bottleneck results show that to achieve high levels of organizational identification (above 4.5, 90-100%), the necessary level of SOE is 2.3 (33%). Note that ethical leadership is again not a necessary condition for organizational identification (CE-FDH = .04 and CR-FDH = .05, $p = .10$). Similar to study 1 findings, NCA results suggest that SOE is critical and necessary to promote high levels of organizational identification.

 Insert figure 3 about here

Discussion

Based on SIMOL and previous work on supervisor's prototypicality and organizational embodiment, we set out to question the assumption that ethical leadership *per se* fosters organizational identification, and proposed SOE as a boundary condition for this relationship. Our findings supported our predictions, by showing that the effect of ethical leadership on organizational identification only exists when followers perceive their leader to be representative of the organization. This positive effect vanishes when the leader is perceived to be low on SOE, rendering SOE a necessary condition for this relationship. Moreover, only when employees strongly identify their supervisors with the organization, ethical leadership indirectly promotes extra-role performance via organizational identification. We show that these effects span beyond mere reciprocity (Blau, 1964) as we controlled for the mediating role of a key social exchange mechanism (POS). Next, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Theoretical Implications

We present two main theoretical contributions. First, we contribute to the ethical leadership literature by challenging the proposition that ethical leadership *per se* engenders organizational identification. While a leader's behavior carries identity-relevant cues that followers build on to shape their own self-concepts (Lord et al., 1999), we argue that a leaders' ethical behaviors, such as honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness, may shape followers beliefs and identities (Gerpott et al., 2019; Lee, 2017), but are not enough to signal to followers that the organization has principles defined around employee needs and interests, which in turn fosters organizational identification (Koivisto & Lipponen, 2015; McAllister & Bigley, 2002). Across two studies, we show that ethical leadership is not enough to drive follower organizational identification because crucially, the behavior of the ethical leader is not necessarily representative of what the organization stands for. In fact, a leader who behaves according to ethical and moral standards may be in an organizational context that

opposes such behavior (or vice-versa). For an ethical leader to successfully convey identity-relevant inferences about the organization, followers need to perceive that the behavior of their ethical leader mirrors the values of the organization; that the ethical leader represents a salient in-group member of the organization (Sluss et al., 2012; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). In that light, we provide evidence that the context in which ethical leaders operate has a fundamental impact on whether they garner enough influence to drive psychological group membership – i.e., if the context embodies ethical practices adopted by the leader, then ethical leaders may well be able to foster organizational identification.

Second, drawing on SIMOL's assumption that the extent to which the leader is seen to embody the organization's identity is critical to influencing followers' attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Hogg, 2001; Sluss et al., 2012; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), we contribute to the ethical leadership literature and SIMOL by uncovering the role of SOE as a critical boundary condition for the ethical leadership-organizational identification relationship. We find that unless followers perceive the leader to be representative of the organization; high SOE (Eisenberger et al., 2010), ethical leadership may not be enough to drive organizational identification and subsequently extra-role performance. The transposition of the benefits of ethical leadership to the organization only occurs when the supervisor embodies the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010) and, in this way, he/she can exert identity-relevant influence over employees (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008), leading to favorable organizational outcomes (e.g., extra-role performance).

Furthermore, our findings revealed that ethical leadership will build organizational identification only if the leader is perceived 'right for the organization', i.e., ethical leadership is not enough, and it must be coupled with SOE to be able to foster organizational identification and extra-role performance (via identification). This suggests that not every organization may welcome ethical leadership. In fact, ethical leadership per se is not a

necessary condition for employees to demonstrate higher perceptions of ‘oneness’ with their organization. However, their supervisor’s embodiment of the organization’s values seems to be necessary and essential to build an employee’s organizational identification in light of the leader’s ethical behavior. Note that SOE as a necessary condition means that it cannot be compensated by having more ethical behaviors or by the presence of other (sufficient or necessary) factors (van der Valk et al., 2016). In other words, a necessary condition constrains and limits the existence of the outcomes (Dul, 2016a). Accordingly, this study also contributes to the establishment of SOE as a factor that provides fundamental insights into what ethical leadership is and when it can (or cannot) effectively foster employees’ positive attitudes towards the organization.

Practical Implications

This study also offers several important practical implications related to the ethical leadership – organizational identification (and subsequently extra-role performance) relationship. First, identifying supervisor’s organizational embodiment as a necessary condition suggests that organizations need to ensure a “match” between their values and norms and their leaders’ behaviors. If a minimal level of a necessary condition is not guaranteed, the outcome will not occur (van der Valk et al., 2016). Accordingly, it should be kept in mind that actions to promote ethical leadership may produce little impact on followers’ attitudes towards the organization if not coupled with others aimed at increasing leaders’ organizational embodiment. Thus, organizations need to act to enhance the fit between organizational and supervisor goals and values. First, during the recruitment and selection process, organizations may target candidates with values, beliefs, and objectives aligned with those from the organization. Second, organizations may use high organizational embodiment as a strategic guideline to promote employees to supervisory positions. Third, organizations should also focus on strategies that promote SOE as it is malleable (Gonzalez-

Morales et al., 2018) and it has an instrumental value. A possible way to contribute to SOE is to foster supervisors' own identification with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010). For example, organizations may facilitate the development of organizational identification by developing a clear mission statement that includes the organization's beliefs, using it as an active guide for decision making and practices, honoring the organization's history through traditions and rituals, and recognizing individuals who embody and edify the organization's core values (Kreiner, & Ashforth, 2004). In this line, organizations might also assess supervisors' identification with the organization when making decisions concerning leadership placements.

Limitations, Strengths and Future Research

Like any research, this study is not without limitations. Since employees provided information regarding ethical leadership, supervisors' organizational embodiment, and organizational identification, common method bias may be present. Although we note that interactions cannot be artifactually created (Evans, 1985), to minimize this concern, we demonstrated the consistency of the interaction effect in two studies, using different designs (Podsakoff et al., 2012), and we also assessed the impact of a CMV factor, which obtained a value below the threshold (Podsakoff et al. 2003, 2012; Williams et al., 1989). Moreover, due to the nature of our data - two field survey studies -, we cannot ensure causality (Antonakis et al., 2010). As such, we hope future research can replicate our findings using experimental designs.

We looked at SOE as one necessary condition for ethical leadership to drive organizational identification. However, there may be contexts where high SOE and organizational identification are detrimental to organizational outcomes. For example, when organizations have a negative reputation, ethical leaders - even with high SOE - may not be able to drive favorable outcomes. Research has begun to tap into these constructs (Neves &

Story, 2015; Ogunfowora, 2014) and we invite future research to further untangle the conditions under which this relationship may be attenuated.

Furthermore, future research may also want to consider other meaningful moderators that delve into the essence of the different forms of moral-based leadership and their respective impact on organizational outcomes (Lemoine et al., 2019). For example, disclosing the effect of different industries and corporate cultures on the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational outcomes would enrich our understanding of conditions that facilitate and/or undermine ethical leadership.

Also, scholars may wish to explore additional mechanisms through which ethical leadership impacts performance, namely group variables, such as cohesion or team spirit (Schermerhorn et al., 2002). How does ethical leadership shape the norms and behaviors within teams and influence group processes and performance? Ethical leaders' moral principles and values, integrity, and reliability are expected to promote positive expectations within teams, boosting levels of interpersonal and organizational trust, and also readiness and enthusiasm to cooperate with the leader and team members for the benefit of the organization (Schermerhorn et al., 2002).

Conclusion

This study challenges the assumption that ethical leadership is enough to drive organizational identification and set out to examine a key necessary condition. In a multiple design examination, we found that these positive effects only exist when leaders mirror organizations, i.e., supervisors are perceived as embodying the organization's values and practices. When they are seen as 'solo' agents, their ethical behavior does not enrich the employee-organization relationship. We hope our findings contribute to the broader discussion on the ethical leadership's process and how it can boost the employment relationship.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas ^{a b}

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ethical Leadership T1	3.39	.91	(.91)				
2. SOE T1	3.38	.96	.54**	(.91)			
3. Org. Identification T2	3.54	.82	.36**	.34**	(.85)		
4. Age	32.89	8.48	.04	.00	.23*		
5. Gender	55.8% males		.08	.04	.16	.03	
6. Education	4.59	1.21	.17	.09	.06	-.30**	.27**

Note. N= 101, T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2, SOE – supervisors' organizational embodiment

^a. 5-point scales ^b. Cronbach's alphas appear in parentheses along the main diagonal.

** p<.01; *p<.05

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas ^{a b}

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Ethical Leadership	3.82	.66	(.86)						
2. SOE	3.62	.79	.43**	(.85)					
3. Org. Identification	3.76	.71	.33**	.36**	(.72)				
4. Extra-role performance	3.67	.84	.31**	.08	.21	(.88)			
5. POS	3.43	.86	.47**	.50**	.45**	.16**	(.91)		
6. Age	37.21	10.35	-.09	.02	.04	-.05	-.13*		
7. Gender	29.3% males		-.04	.01	-.10	-.15**	-.10	-.09	
8. Education	3.87	1.30	.02	-.08	-.06	.16**	-.05	-.24**	.12

Note. SOE = supervisors' organizational embodiment; POS = perceived organizational support. Performance rated by leaders; all other variables are follower rated.

^a. 5-point scales ^b. Cronbach's alphas appear in parentheses along the main diagonal.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 3

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Models	χ^2	Df	$\Delta \chi^2$	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
4 factors	628.24	293		.91	.06	.06
3 factors ^a	1197.97	296	569.73**	.76	.09	.09
2 factors ^b	1491.65	298	293.68**	.69	.11	.10
1 factor	2207.08	299	715.43**	.50	.14	.13

^a Equating ethical leadership and SOE together; organizational identification; extra-role performance

^b Equating ethical leadership, SOE, and organizational identification together; extra-role performance

^c Equating ethical leadership, SOE, and organizational identification together; and extra-role performance

** $p < .01$

Table 4

Bootstrapping Results

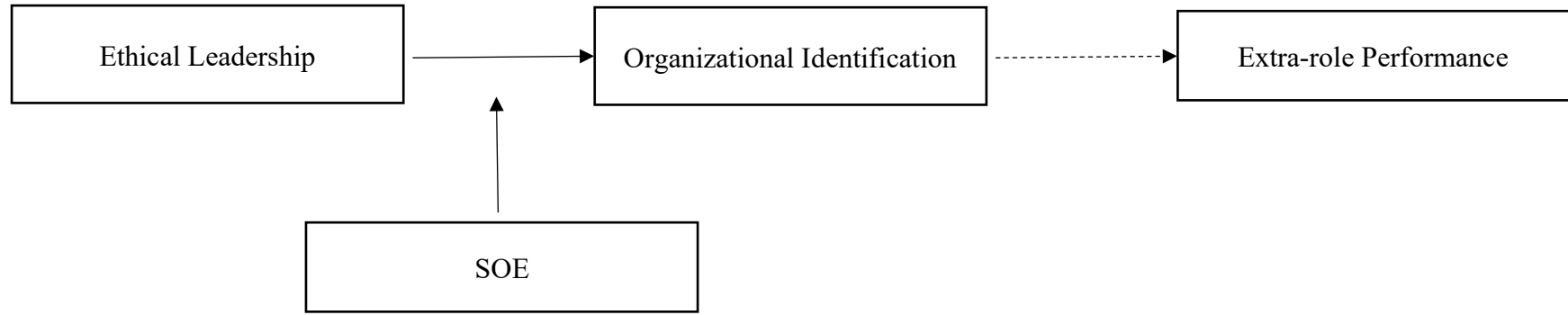
Model / Predictor	Mediator			Outcome		
	Organizational Identification			Extra-role Performance		
	B	SE(B)	95% CI	B	SE(B)	95% CI
Gender	-.12	.08	[-.28, .03]	-.26	.10	[-.45, -.07]
Education	-.01	.03	[-.07, .04]	.12	.03	[.06, .19]
EL	.29	.06	[.17, .42]	.34	.08	[.19, .49]
SOE	.18	.05	[.08, .28]			
EL x SOE	.31	.07	[.18, .45]			
Org. Identification				.18	.07	[.04, .32]
POS				-.04	.06	[-.16, .08]
Modmed Index					.06** (.03)	
R ²		.23**			.16**	

Note. SOE = Supervisor organizational embodiment; EL = Ethical leadership; POS = Perceived Organizational support. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Index of Moderated Mediation (via POS) = -.01, SE = (.02), 95% CI = [-.07, .03].

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Relationships only examined in Study 2 are represented with dashed lines.

Figure 2

Interaction Effects: Ethical Leadership x SOE on Organizational Identification

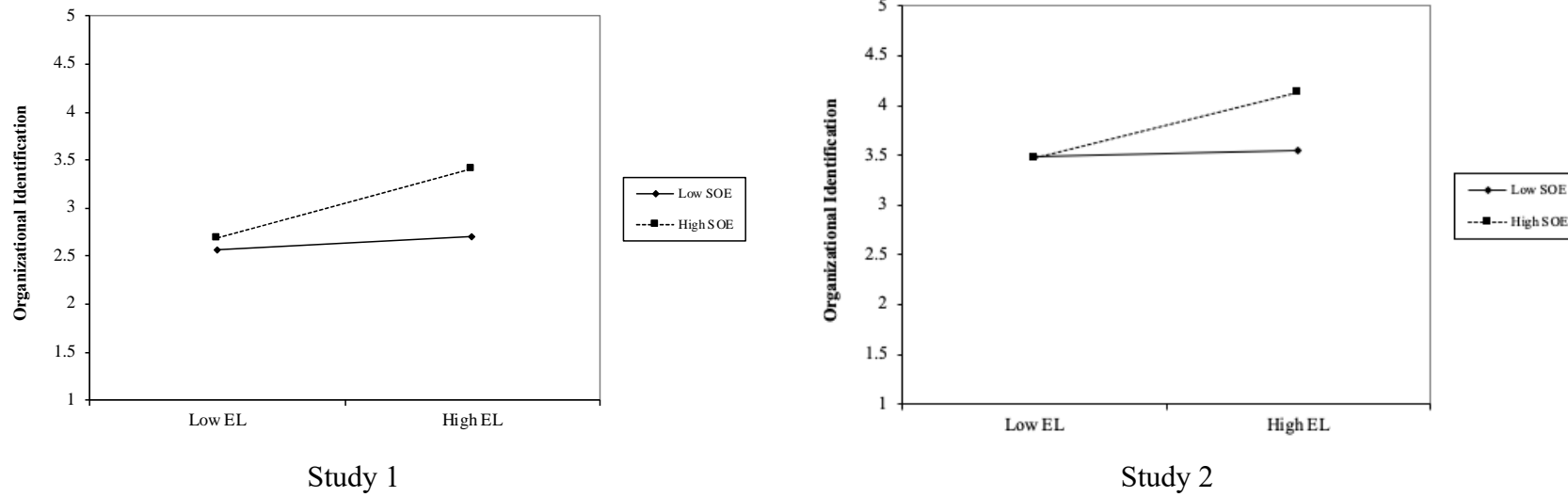
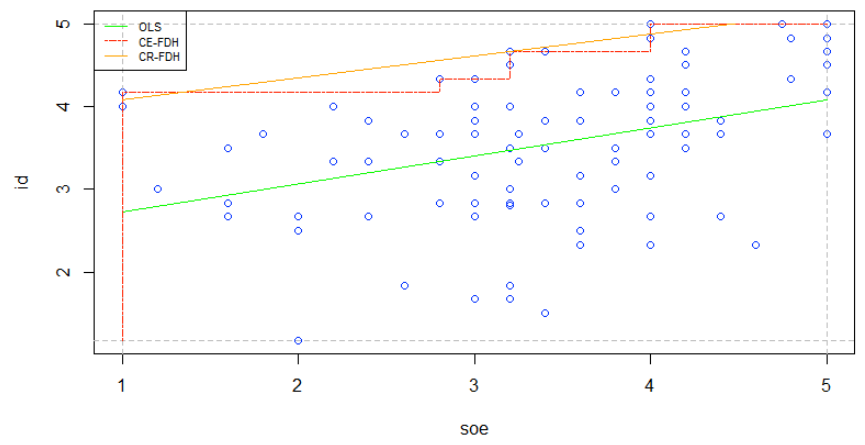
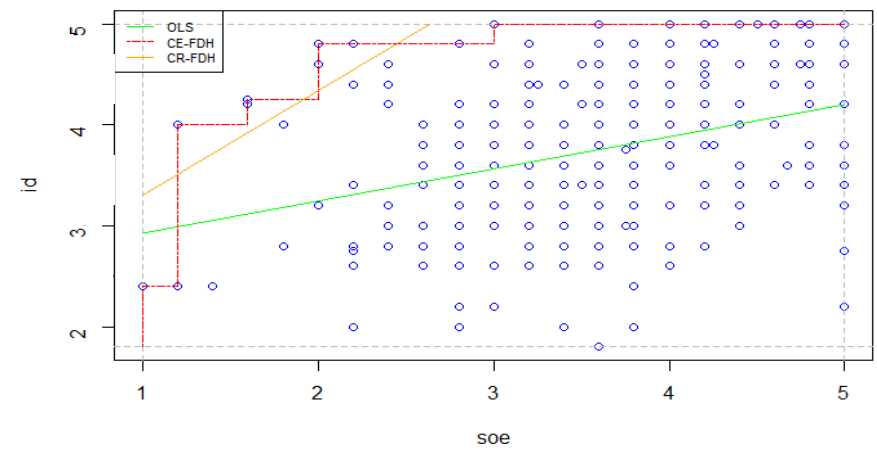


Figure 3

Necessary Condition Analysis Plots for Study 1 and Study 2



Study 1 NCA Plot



Study 2 NCA Plot