

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER MOTIVATION IN PORTUGUESE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE MODERATE ROLE OF COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the current educational context, transformations are continuous, and the ethical dimension of leadership has become one of the main concerns of school cluster directors, given its direct influence on teachers' motivation. This study, conducted with a sample of 204 teachers from Portuguese public schools, aimed to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership, motivation, and commitment.

The results revealed that ethical leadership is positively correlated with intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment. On the other hand, despotic leadership exhibits a negative correlation with organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, it was found that commitment plays a mediating role in the effect of ethical leadership on teachers' intrinsic motivation.

These findings underscore the importance of promoting ethical leadership in schools, not only to foster teachers' motivation but also to strengthen their commitment to the institution. Conversely, the need to avoid despotic practices is emphasized, as they can adversely affect not only teachers' motivation but also their commitment to the educational organization. These conclusions further highlight, as future research avenues, the importance of promoting ethical leadership in educational institutions to ensure a healthy and productive work environment for teachers.

1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the teacher is influenced by the historical, cultural and political context, being a concept in constant evolution (Carvalho, 2016) affected by bureaucracy, greater accountability and public scrutiny (Carvalho, 2016; Flores, 2016). In this context, the leader (i.e., the school director) has a particularly important role in that he can articulate, encourage and mobilize his followers – teachers, specialized technicians and educational assistants – to achieve the goals

related to the construction of quality education, the improvement of the skills acquired, and the academic results obtained by students. Over the past few years, the topic of leadership in educational institutions has been addressed as one of the key variables for the development of teachers and schools (Flores, 2016). Several works stand out in terms of the historical evolution of the theme, such as that of Bass and Bass (2008) or Yukl e Gardner (2020), that of Blackmore (2004) in Australia, the comparative study between Portugal and England by Day et al. (2007), the meta-analysis on educational leadership in Portugal by Costa et al. (2015), the systematic literature review by Castanheira and Costa (2011) and Jacobs et al. (2016) in the USA, Frost (2012) and Muijs and Harris (2006) in the United Kingdom.

Considering the perspective of Ryan and Deci (2022) on motivation and the principles that circumscribe the theory of self-determination, school leaders assume particular relevance in promoting contexts with a low level of control that encourage autonomy, where each individual can pursue own choices, as well as internalizing and integrating norms and values. In other words, school leaders have the responsibility to promote the creation of organizational climates that promote the satisfaction of teachers' autonomy and relationship needs (Esteves; Formosinho; Machado, 2016; Gil; Machado, 2016).

Leadership styles can thus contribute positively to a teacher's affective commitment to the school (Mahmoud; Belbase; Alsheikh, 2023), in particular, through the support provided to teachers and the development of a positive school climate (i.e., Day; Flores; Viana, 2007). In addition to the leadership of school principals, other factors have been identified as catalysts or inhibitors of teachers' commitment (Flores, 2016; Getahun; Tefera; Burichew, 2016) such as, for example, those relating to national education policies, support administrative, student behavior and parental demands (Xiao; Wilkins, 2015).

Through this route, school leaders can contribute to increasing teachers' intrinsic motivation, promoting full internalization of extrinsic motivation, as well as

affective commitment to the school. Finally, school leaders can contribute to job satisfaction and psychological well-being perceived by teachers, and with this bring consequent positive attitudes towards work on the part of teachers at school (Franco; Sousa; Sá, 2022).

1.1 Leadership and ethics in an educational context

Ethical and moral leadership in the educational context has been a growing concern, with significant effects on relationships and organizational activity (Abun et al., 2023; Yukl & Gardner, 2020; Yukl & Mahsud, 2019). Furthermore, the impact on the psychosocial health of everyone involved in the educational process (Yukl & Gardner, 2020; Yukl & Mahsud, 2019; Leithwood, 2022) and the challenges in educational leadership such as isolation, the management of ambiguity and the adoption of ethical principles in conduct, among others (Costa et al., 2024; Kaiser; Yukl & Craig, 2020).

The most developed leadership model in schools has been the transformational leadership model (Leithwood, 2022) which conceptualizes leadership in seven dimensions: 1. building a vision for the school; 2. establish objectives for the school; 3. stimulate intellectually; 4. offer individual support; 5. model good practices and important organizational values; 6. demonstrate high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture; and 7. develop structures that facilitate participation in school decisions. From this perspective, transformational leaders can produce organizational change and contribute to job satisfaction and performance at the individual, group and educational context levels (York-Barr; Duke, 2022). This both at the level of individual teachers, the teaching class and the school, as an organizational structure, must stimulate higher levels of intrinsic motivation, organizational trust and commitment (Leithwood, 2022).

These perceptions of leadership, judgments, and representations constructed about leaders and leadership can be affected by several variables, such as age group and training and by other conditions, such as length of service in the profession (Araşkal; Kiliç, 2019; Getahun; Tefera; Burichew, 2016).

Some authors, such as Rego and Braga (2017), defend the transformational leadership model as it integrates the concepts of values and ethics into leadership. Therefore, despite the positive effects arising from transformational leadership, the principle that the ethical and moral assessment of leadership cannot end in analyzing the consequences of leadership itself must be taken into account. It is therefore necessary to differentiate the moral character of the leader as well as the ethical legitimacy of the values embedded in the vision and their respective articulation with the morality of the processes of choice and action that leaders and followers embrace and pursue.

Conceptualizations of leadership have therefore emerged with the aim of narrowing the focus on ethical and moral issues, seeking to substantiate and develop conceptually and operationally the construct of ethical and moral leadership and to understand the impact of the ethical and moral dimension of leadership (Abun et al. al., 2023).

Regarding to the ethical and moral issues of leadership, Bass and Avolio (1993); Bass; Avolio, Bruce (2020) recognize that the ethical dimension of transformational leadership is in itself morally neutral, that is, without differentiation of the moral values underlying its behavior. Ultimately, two leaders can adopt identical transformational behaviors and even have similar consequences. However, it is the underlying values that allow you to identify the ethical and moral dimensions of your behavior. Howell and Avolio (1992) add that transformational leaders can act both ethically and unethically, depending on the values they incorporate in their vision and strategic guidance. To give greater appreciation to the ethical dimension in leadership and promote understanding of the impact of ethical leaders on their followers, the concept of ethical leadership and the models associated with this construct emerge (Abun et al., 2023).

From this perspective, ethical leadership is defined as the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct to be carried out through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers

through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown; Treviño; Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Ethical leadership is a construct that can be measured through four dimensions: morality and justice, power-sharing, role clarification and despotic leadership (De Hoogh; Den Hartog, 2008). In this multidimensional approach to ethical leadership, there is an antagonistic relationship between the notions of ethical leadership and despotic leadership. Ethical leadership reflects behaviors that meet the interests of followers and despotic leadership, on the contrary, reflects authoritarian behavior, which serves the leader's own interests. Thus, they constitute independent constructs, negatively correlated and measured by the aforementioned dimensions: morality and justice, power-sharing, role clarification and despotic leadership (De Hoogh; Den Hartog, 2008).

1.2 Motivation in an educational context

Work motivation is defined as “a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form direction intensity and duration” (Latham; Pinder, 2005, p.486).

Highlighting the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan; Deci, 2022) which proposes a multidimensional view of motivation and distinguishes how different types of motivation can be promoted or discouraged. From this perspective, there are three possible types of motivation: amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Amotivation is defined as the lack of motivation for an activity (Ryan; Deci, 2017, 2022). Intrinsic motivation is the ability to do an activity for its own sake, that is, because it is interesting and enjoyable (Ryan; Deci, 2017, 2022). In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to commitment to activities for instrumental reasons (receiving rewards, being approved, avoiding punishments and/or disapproval, increasing self-esteem or reaching a personally valued goal (Ryan; Deci, 2017, 2022)).

A first form of extrinsic motivation, which is not completely internalized, is external regulation that envisages carrying out an activity to obtain rewards (Bizarria et al., 2018). Introjected regulation is defined as the regulation of behavior through the internal pressure of ego forces, namely shame and guilt, which is known as ego-involvement. This form of internalization is experienced as internal control (Bizarria et al., 2018). Finally, identified regulation presupposes that an activity is carried out because it identifies in a volatile way with its value or meaning, which is accepted as one's own. Identified regulation differs from intrinsic motivation in activities in which it is not carried out for internal satisfaction, but for the instrumental value it represents (Ryan; Deci, 2017, 2022). In contrast, internally controlled motivation has been the explanation for most desirable behavioral, attitudinal and affective outcomes (Ryan; Deci, 2017, 2022).

From the perspective of SDT (Ryan; Deci, 2017), it is emphasized that school leaders must promote contexts that encourage autonomy, in which people can exercise their own choices, and internalize/integrate norms — low level of control. In this way, the chance arises of participating in decisions and promoting understanding in the face of possible negative feelings, when it is necessary to carry out a difficult task, as well as the development of a meaning for the activities to be carried out.

Leadership in an educational context can thus constitute an agent of motivation and a reinforcement of intrinsic motivation for teachers to motivate themselves, implying that the principal is accessible, fair, and firm with parents and students (Jacobs; Gordon; Solis, 2016). Principals can also be essential agents in developing teachers' support and motivation, justice and trust, as well as being concerned about their personal and professional growth and development (Frost, 2012; Jacobs; Gordon; Solis, 2016).

1.3 Teacher Commitment (TC)

According to Mowday et al. (1982), the concept of commitment was characterized as a strong belief in the acceptance of goals and values, the willingness to exert considerable efforts on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain participation in it. Organizational commitment (OC) has been studied both as a contextual variable and a mediating variable of leadership (Cunha et al., 2021) and has been identified as one of the most important factors for the success of education (Getahun; Tefera; Burichew, 2016; Xiao; Wilkins, 2015).

OC has been defined as a predictor of teachers' performance at school, contributing to the prevention of teacher burnout (Day, 2021). Teachers' OC also has an important influence on students' cognitive, social, behavioral and affective results (Day, 2021). This is a concept that is assumed as a part of the teacher's professional life, and can be increased or decreased by factors that have already been mentioned previously, such as the leadership of principals, student behavior, administrative support, the demands of parents as well as national education policies (Day, 2021). Teachers who are committed have the lasting belief that they can make a difference in students' life and learning paths (effectiveness and efficiency) through who they are (their identity), what they know (knowledge, strategies, skills) and how they teach (i.e., their beliefs, attitudes, personal and professional values incorporated into their behaviors) (Franco; Sousa; Sá, 2022; Gagné et al., 2014).

In the model of commitment as a factor in the effectiveness of teacher performance (Meyer; Allen, 1991), OC is conceptualized as being divided into three components that can coexist with each other: affective, normative and calculative (continuity). Affective OC can be defined as emotional identification with the organization; the normative is the perceived obligation (ethical or moral) to remain in the organization; Finally, the calculation is defined as the perceived cost of leaving the organization (such as loss of seniority or lower wages).

OC has been referred to as having a mediating effect on variables such as satisfaction, organizational climate and work motivation (Choi; Tran; Park, 2015; Demirtas; Akdogan, 2014, Lyndon; Rawat, 2015).

In short, improving the perception of the level of teacher training, that is, the way in which teachers feel capable of responding to the challenges that the school poses to them, contributes to feelings of commitment to the school on the part of the teacher and to their commitment to students (Franco; Sousa; Sá, 2022).

In this way, school leaders will be able to enhance teachers' motivation, their commitment to school, effective performance, satisfaction and positive attitudes towards work and psychological well-being (e.g. Franco; Sousa; Sá, 2022).

Considering that there may be ethical or less ethical (despotic) behaviors on the part of the educational leader towards teachers and that commitment may constitute a mediating variable of leadership and that leadership may have a positive impact on motivation, this study aims to verify, in an educational context, what is the relationship established between ethical leadership, OC and teacher motivation.

2 MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1 Sample

The sample for this study consists of 204 teachers from 30 school groups in the North (Oporto district) and Center of the country (Aveiro district). Of these participants, 156 (76.5%) were female and the remaining 48 (23.5%) were male. Regarding age, 26 (12.7%) participants are between 20 and 40 years old, 87 (42.6%) are between 40 and 50 years old and 91 (44.6%) are between 50 and 60 years old. Regarding years of experience, 18 (8.8%) participants have up to 15 years of experience, 43 (21.1%) participants have between 15 and 20 years of experience, 45 (22.1%) have between 20 and 25 years of experience and 98 (48.0%) have more than 25 years of professional experience.

2.2 Instruments

The assessment protocol was composed of the sociodemographic questionnaire constructed for the present study, the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ; De Hoogh; Den Hartog, 2008; Portuguese version of XXX et al., 2016), the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS; Gagné et al., 2014; Portuguese version of XXX; Coimbra in press) and the Organizational Commitment Assessment Scale (OCAS; Meyer; Allen; Smith, 1993; Portuguese version of Nascimento; Lopes; Salgueiro, 2008).

The sociodemographic questionnaire allowed the collection of information on age and gender, and years of professional experience.

The ELQ (De Hoogh; Den Hartog, 2008; Portuguese version by XXX et al., 2016) constitutes an adaptation and validation for the Portuguese population of the Ethical Leadership Scale, consisting of 23 items, rated on a typical scale 7-point Likert. It allows evaluating ethical leadership in two dimensions: 1) ethical leadership – considers the way in which leaders should behave ethically and morally ($\alpha = .96$); 2) despotic leadership – reflects authoritarian behavior that serves the leader's own interests ($\alpha = .91$).

The MWMS (Gagné et al., 2015; Portuguese version of XXX, 2018) is a multidimensional scale consisting of 19 items with the objective of assessing motivation for work. This encompasses 5 dimensions: 1) amotivation ($\alpha = .93$); 2) external regulation ($\alpha = .90$); 3) identified regulation ($\alpha = .77$); 4) introjected regulation ($\alpha = .89$); and 5) intrinsic motivation ($\alpha = .89$). These dimensions assess the different levels of motivation for work, from the absence of motivation (amotivation) to the optimal level of motivation (intrinsic motivation). Items in each dimension are evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale.

The OCAS (Meyer; Allen, 1991; Meyer; Allen; Smith, 1993; Portuguese version by Nascimento; Lopes; Salgueiro, 2008) is a multidimensional questionnaire, consisting of 19 items, which assesses the level of worker commitment to the organization. It encompasses the 3 components that constitute OC: affective ($\alpha =$

.86), calculative ($\alpha = .72$) and normative ($\alpha = .75$). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale.

2.3 Research hypotheses

The present study is focused on the following research hypotheses:

1. The perception of ethical leadership is positively correlated with OC and intrinsic motivation;
2. The perception of despotic leadership is negatively correlated with OC and intrinsic motivation;
3. The perception of ethical leadership may be a predictor of intrinsic motivation mediated by OC;
4. The perception of despotic leadership may be a predictor of extrinsic regulation mediated by OC.

2.4 Procedures

Face-to-face contact was made with the directors of 30 secondary schools and groups of public schools in the North and Center of the country, to whom the objectives were explained and participation in the present study was requested. Following the acceptance of participation by the directors, the link was requested to be sent by email to all teachers. Additionally, the director placed the link to fill out the questionnaires on the online portal of each group. Teachers were also asked to forward the link to all colleagues under the same conditions. In the evaluation protocol sent, participants were informed about the objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as the confidentiality of the data collected.

Data collection took place between the months of August and November 2023, including the socio-demographic questionnaire which requested the age, gender, and years of profession of the participants. 204 valid questionnaires were

collected. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0).

The statistical tests used in data analysis depended on the type of variable analyzed and/or the length of the assumptions for the use of parametric tests. When these assumptions were not verified, non-parametric tests were applied (Marôco, 2021).

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Firstly, the reliability values of the questionnaires used were analyzed. Next, the results obtained by the participants in the variables under analysis were presented and, subsequently, the variables were explored in relation to sociodemographic information and correlational analyzes between the variables were carried out. Finally, the results relating to the relationship between leadership, commitment, and motivation were analyzed.

Cronbach's alpha values allowed us to verify the level of reliability of each of the instruments, that is, to estimate the degree to which the measured result reflects the true result, that is, to what extent a measurement is free from the variance of random errors (Field, 2013). Observing Table 1, it is possible to see that the alpha values found in this study present acceptable values $\alpha > .70$) (Field, 2013). It was found that the values found in this study are close to the values of the adaptation studies, except for the values of the commitment dimensions, which were shown to be much lower than the values of the adaptation study.

In Table 1, it can be seen that the highest averages relate to ethical leadership, identified regulation and affective commitment. On the other hand, amotivation and despotic leadership are the dimensions with the lowest levels.

By observing Table 2, it appears that ethical leadership is positively correlated with intrinsic motivation ($r=.318^{**}$; $p < .01$) and OC. These results allow us to confirm the first research hypothesis, in which we stated that the perception of ethical leadership is positively correlated with OC ($r=.264^{**}$; $p < .01$) and intrinsic

motivation ($r=.318^{**}$; $p < .01$). According to Cohen's criteria (1988), the correlation between ethics and intrinsic motivation is moderate and between ethics and commitment is low. The trend of the second hypothesis is also confirmed, since the results demonstrate that despotic leadership is negatively correlated with OC ($r = -.177$; $p < .05$) and negatively correlated with intrinsic motivation ($r = -.276$; $p < .01$). However, according to Cohen and colleagues, in 2003, the strength of these relationships is low, which indicates that the influence of the variables is smaller and that there may be other factors that influence the relationship between despotic leadership, OC and intrinsic motivation.

It is also verified that despotic leadership is positively correlated with extrinsic regulation ($r = .233$; $p < .01$), with the strength of this relationship being moderate.

Despite the perception of ethical leadership being positively correlated with OC and the strength of this relationship being moderate ($r= .318$; $p < .01$), it was decided to continue other explorations to check whether they were in line with other studies that seem to highlight the positive impact of ethical leadership on intrinsic motivation (Den Hartog; De Hoogh, 2009; Yukl et al., 2011) and commitment (Bogler; Somech, 2004).

Therefore, regression analysis was used to investigate the third hypothesis, which stated that the perception of ethical leadership could be a predictor of intrinsic motivation mediated by OC (cf. Figure 1). The results indicate that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of commitment ($b = .22$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$), that commitment is a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation ($b = .22$, $SE = .09$, $p < .01$) and that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation ($b = .36$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$). These results support the mediation hypothesis. The value of ethical leadership decreased after controlling for the mediator, commitment ($b = .31$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$), consistent with partial mediation. Approximately 12% of the variance in intrinsic motivation is explained

by the predictors ($\text{Adj}R^2 = .12$, $F(2, 201) = 14.45$, $p < .001$), with this effect being considered moderate in magnitude (Cohen, 2003).

The results indicate that the indirect coefficient is significant ($b = .10$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [.005, .124]). According to the results obtained, ethical leadership appears to be associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation, mediated by commitment.

To verify the fourth hypothesis, that organizational commitment is a mediator in the effect of despotic leadership on extrinsic regulation, regression analysis was used (see. Figure 2). Although the degree of the relationship was low between despotic leadership and extrinsic regulation ($r = .233$, $p < .01$), the strength of the relationship was significant and, as such, it was decided to continue other explorations to see if they would in line with other studies (Abun et al., 2023) that highlight the relationship between ethical leadership and motivation. For the authors, although there is a continuum between ethical and despotic leadership, they are treated as independent constructs, negatively correlated and measured by the aforementioned dimensions: morality and justice, power-sharing, role clarification and despotic leadership (De Hoogh; Den Hartog, 2008). Despotic leadership translates into strategies for controlling behavior or promoting commitment to school with activities for instrumental reasons (such as receiving rewards, approval, avoiding punishments and/or disapproval), which SDT recommends as extrinsic motivation or a form of extrinsic regulation (Gagné; Deci, 2005; Ryan; Deci, 2000).

The results indicate that despotic leadership is a significant predictor of commitment ($b = -.13$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$), that commitment is a significant predictor of extrinsic regulation ($b = .28$, $SE = .10$, $p < .01$) and that despotic leadership is a significant predictor of extrinsic regulation ($b = .27$, $SE = .030$, $p < .001$). After controlling for the mediator — OC — the value of despotic leadership increased ($b = .30$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$). These results show that commitment is not a mediator between despotic leadership and extrinsic

regulation. Approximately 8% of the variance in extrinsic regulation is explained by the predictors ($\text{AdjR}^2 = .08$, $F(2,201) = 9.88$, $p < .001$), this effect being small (weak) in magnitude (Cohen; 2003).

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This work aims to verify in the sample under study the relationships between ethical leadership, OC and motivation in an educational context.

Regarding the results obtained, we will consider their analysis and discussion based on each of the hypotheses presented.

In regards to the first research hypothesis, the results suggest that the perception of ethical leadership is positively correlated with affective commitment and intrinsic motivation. According to Cohen's criteria (2003), the correlation between ethical leadership and intrinsic motivation is moderate and between ethical leadership and commitment is low. This information is in line with several studies (Demirtas; Akdogan, 2014; Lyndon; Rawat, 2015), where positive relationships were found between different types of leadership and/or leadership practices with OC and the teacher's affective commitment to the school, (e.g., Mahmoud; Belbase; Alsheikh, 2023). It is also in line with studies by Ashfaq et al. (2021) and Agha et al. (2017), where positive relationships were found between ethical leadership, OC and motivation for work, even though these studies refer to the impact of leadership on commitment, in a more general sense. Taking into account that, in the present study, the relationship between ethical leadership and commitment is low, it may therefore be justified to carry out other studies with larger samples to evaluate, particularly, the impact of the ethical dimension of leadership on the commitment.

Analyzing the results, the fact that ethical leadership is positively related to motivation (Den Hartog; De Hoogh, 2009; Yukl et al., 2011; Yukl & Gardner, 2020) and OC (Bogler; Somech, 2004) was found in both the results of this study and in the literature review (Bogler; Somech, 2004; Den Hartog & De Hoogh,

2009; Yukl et al., 2011) which should be considered for reflection, in improving leadership practices in an educational context.

Regarding the second hypothesis — the perception of despotic leadership is negatively correlated with affective commitment and intrinsic motivation — the results presented encourage the interpretation that despotic leadership is negatively related to OC and intrinsic motivation, but positively with extrinsic regulation. However, according to Cohen (2003), the strength of these relationships is low. This information seems to be in line with several studies (Demirtas; Akdogan, 2014; Lyndon & Rawat, 2015).

Regarding the 3rd third research hypothesis, it was concluded that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of commitment ($b = .26$, $SE = .06$; $p < .001$), that commitment is a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation ($b = .26$, $SE = .09$; $p < .01$) and that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation ($b = .36$, $SE = .07$; $p < .001$). These results thus supported the hypothesis of mediation by commitment. The value of ethical leadership decreased after controlling for the mediator (OC), which indicates and is consistent with partial mediation. Approximately 13% of the variance in intrinsic motivation was explained by the predictors ($AdjR^2 = .12$, $p < .001$) [$F(2,201) = 14.45$, $p < .001$]. The results encourage an interpretation that the effect of ethical leadership on commitment is low and that the effect of ethical leadership becomes higher when intrinsic motivation and ethical leadership are integrated, even though the effect of intrinsic motivation in terms of magnitude is low. . School leaders are highlighted with the responsibility of promoting organizational climates that encourage the satisfaction of teachers' autonomy and relationship needs, because, in doing so, they increase their intrinsic motivation, promote a full internalization of extrinsic motivation and affective commitment with the school.

Finally, regarding the fourth research hypothesis — the perception of despotic leadership is a predictor of calculative commitment mediated by extrinsic motivation — the results indicate that despotic leadership is a significant predictor

of commitment, that commitment is a significant predictor of extrinsic regulation and that despotic leadership is a significant predictor of extrinsic regulation.

Although the degree of the relationship between despotic leadership and extrinsic regulation was low, the strength of the relationship was moderate and significant and, as such, it was decided to continue other explorations to see if they were in line with other studies (e.g., Gagné ;Deci, 2005).

After controlling for the mediator, OC, the value of despotic leadership increased ($b = .30$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$), which suggests that commitment is not a mediator between despotic leadership and extrinsic regulation. Approximately only 8% of the variance in extrinsic regulation is explained by the predictors ($AdjR^2 = .08$, $p < .001$) [$F(2,201) = 9.88$, $p < .001$], this effect being weak in magnitude (Cohen; 2003).

Ethical leadership derives from the construct of transformational leadership (Brown; Treviño, 2006) and its manifestation results in higher levels of intrinsic motivation, trust, commitment, and loyalty (Leithwood, 2022). Despotic leadership, on the other hand, may be considered closer to the construct of transactional leadership, which translates into strategies for controlling behavior or promoting commitment to school with activities for instrumental reasons, such as receiving rewards, approval, avoiding punishments and/or disapproval, increase self-esteem, or achieve a personally valued goal that SDT as extrinsic motivation (Ryan; Deci, 2000).

According to the results obtained, the correlation between ethical leadership and intrinsic motivation is moderate and between ethical leadership and commitment is low. Commitment is still a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation, and ethical leadership is a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation. In addition to the strength of the relationship between despotic leadership and extrinsic regulation being significant, despotic leadership is negatively correlated with OC.

This research therefore indicates that school directors or school groups may try to increase teachers' motivation by acting ethically and influencing work motivation in an environment of positive OC.

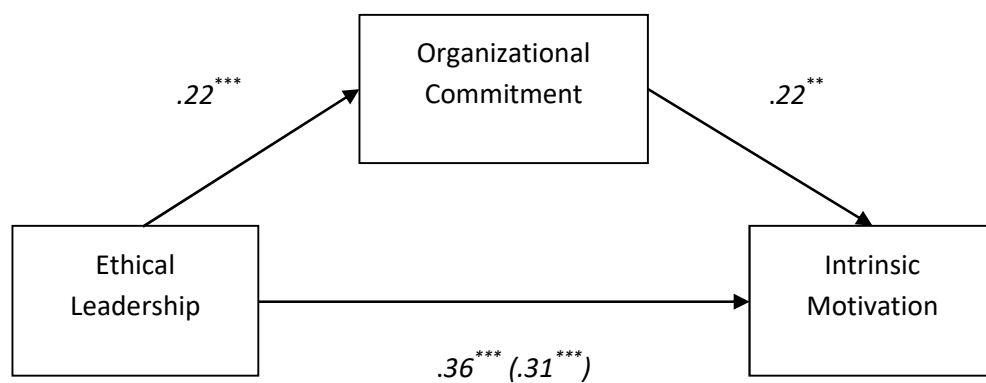
If teachers' motivation and commitment are reflected in improved student learning as a result of the principal's leadership, then the principal will become a more successful leader.

The present study proves to be an important contribution to the study of leadership in an educational context, in particular to the analysis of its ethical dimension. Finally, it's essential to mention the need to carry out future studies that relate leadership (Hanges; Dickson, 2004), and specifically ethical leadership, with the commitment and motivation of teachers, in other samples, given the scarcity of empirical studies on the relationship between these variables in the Portuguese educational context and the magnitude of the results obtained.

5 TABLES AND FIGURES

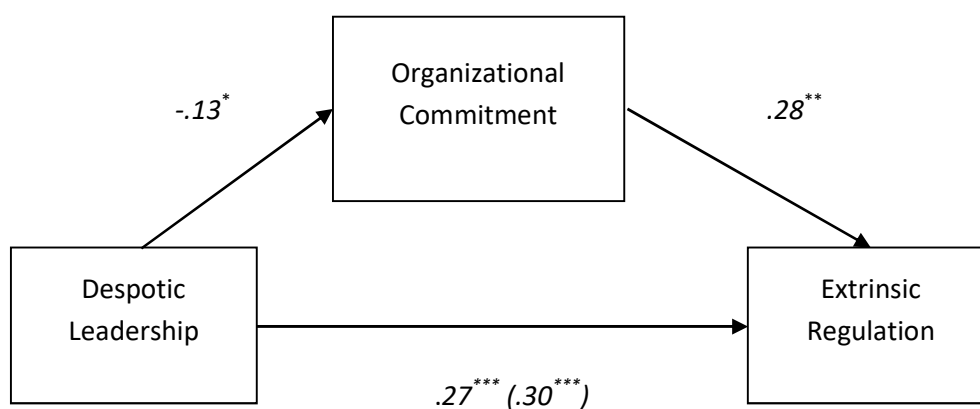
5.1 Figures

Figure 1. Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Intrinsic Motivation Mediated by Organizational Commitment



$**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Figure 2. Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Relationship between Despotic Leadership and Extrinsic Regulation Mediated by Organizational Commitment



$*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$

1.1 Tables

Table 1

Internal Consistency Values (Cronbach's Alpha)

	Studies and Samples				
	Portuguese adaptation and validation		This study		
	A	N	A	Average (SD)	N
ELQ		316			204
Ethic	.95		.96	5.46 (1.06)	
Despotic	.89		.91	2.44 (1.28)	
MWMS		468			204
Amotivation	.81		.93	1.79 (1.43)	
Extrinsic Motivation	.74		.90	2.37 (1.30)	
Identified Regulation	.74		.77	6.14 (0.96)	
<i>Introjeted</i> Regulation	.78		.89	4.75 (1.42)	
Intrinsic Motivation	.88		.89	5.26 (1.15)	
OCAS		461			204
Affective Commitment	.91		.86	5.51 (1.11)	
Calculative Commitment	.84		.72	3.69 (1.13)	
Normative Commitment	.91		.75	4.29 (1.12)	

6 NOMENCLATURE

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Teacher Commitment (TC)

Organizational Commitment (OC)

Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ)

Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS)

Organizational Commitment Assessment Scale (OCAS)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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