Ethical leadership: through the eyes of employees

Kalshoven, K.

[Link to publication](#)

Chapter 5

Ethical Leadership and Followers' Citizenship Behavior:
The Role of Responsibility and Autonomy

Abstract

In this multi-source study, we investigated a mediated moderation model proposing the moderating role of job autonomy and the mediating role of responsibility in the relationships between ethical leadership (subordinate rated) and both an affiliative and a challenging form of follower citizenship behavior, namely helping and initiative (supervisor rated). In line with expectations, a study of 147 leader-follower dyads demonstrated that perceived job autonomy moderated the relationship of ethical leadership with citizenship such that it was positive when job autonomy was high, but not significant when job autonomy was low. This moderated relationship was mediated by the extent followers show responsibility at work. Responsibility fully mediated the moderated relationship of ethical leadership with initiative and partially mediated the moderated relationship of ethical leadership with helping behavior. [1]

Introduction

In difficult times such as the current financial crisis organizations face an increased pressure to perform efficiently and effectively. At the same time, recent ethical scandals have generated pressure from various stakeholders to manage organizations in an ethical manner (Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Research is starting to suggest that ethical leaders play an important role in influencing employees' behaviors and ultimately unit or even organizational performance (for a review, see Brown, & Treviño, 2006). For example, recent studies show that ethical leader behavior has a positive relationship with perceptions of leader effectiveness (Kalshoven & Den Hartog, 2009), top management team effectiveness (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) and citizenship at individual- and group-level (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, in press; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog, & Folger, 2010; Walumbwa, & Schaubroeck, 2009). We aim to contribute to this, so far, limited body of work on ethical leadership and follower citizenship behavior by addressing two critical needs: namely investigating the context in which ethical leaders are more likely to positively influence employee citizenship behaviors and help clarifying how ethical leadership positively relates to employee citizenship behaviors.

Previous studies show small but positive correlations between ethical leadership and citizenship behaviors and they ignore possible moderators of this relationship. However, related leadership research clearly shows that the context in which leadership takes place is highly relevant and affects the relationship between leader behavior and follower behavior. For example, related research shows that the relationship between charismatic leadership and citizenship is stronger in some contexts than in others (e.g., Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007). We propose that this also holds for ethical leadership. Here, we test whether the work context (and specifically job autonomy) moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and follower citizenship behavior. Specifically, we argue that ethical leader behavior will have more impact on citizenship behavior in a high job autonomy context. In these high autonomy situations followers are likely to be more open to the influence of an ethical leader who acts as a role model and provides guidance and direction than in more prescribed contexts.

Additionally, we try to shed more light on *how* ethical leadership relates to employee citizenship. We propose enhancing follower responsibility as a mechanism through which ethical leadership may affect follower behavior. We propose that ethical leadership will be related to employees' demonstration of responsibility and, in turn, employees who behave more responsible at work are also likely to show more citizenship behavior. Combining this with the argumentation above suggests that this relationship will mainly exist in high autonomy contexts. We thus test a mediated moderation process suggesting that especially in high autonomy contexts ethical leadership is related to citizenship behaviors through stimulating follower responsibility. This mediated moderation model is tested using leader-follower dyads in a field setting. Multi-source ratings are used to prevent common source bias problems (see e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Figure 1 depicts the research model that is described in more detail below.

Figure 1 - *Proposed research model.*
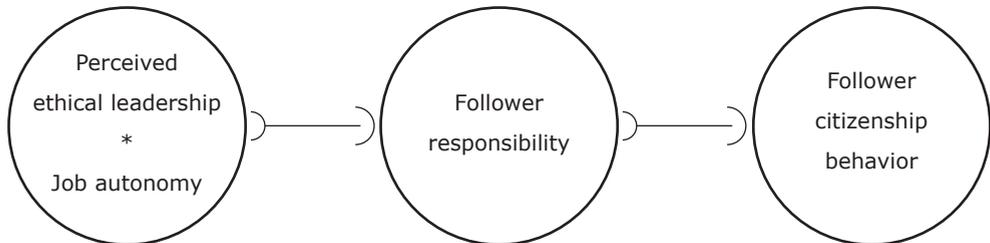
Ethical Leadership and Citizenship Behavior

Ethical leaders make fair decisions, allow followers' voice, promote and reward ethical behavior, treat others with respect and care, and consider others in making decisions (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh, & Den Hartog, 2009a; Kalshoven et al., in press). Brown and colleagues (2005) define ethical leadership as: "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" (p. 120). Drawing on this definition, Brown et al. describe ethical leaders as honest, trustworthy, fair and caring. Such leaders make fair and principled decisions,

consider ethical consequences of decisions, have an open communication style and provide employees with voice (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003). Further, ethical leaders draw attention to ethics by explicitly talking about ethical issues. Ethical leader behavior shows some overlap with other leadership styles, such as transformational (Bass, & Steidlmeier 1999; Barling, Christie, & Turner, 2008), transactional (Brown et al., 2005) and authentic leadership (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). However, previous research shows that ethical leadership is also clearly distinguishable from these styles (cf., Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., in press; Walumbwa et al., 2008). In the current study we focus on the relationship between ethical leadership and follower citizenship behavior.

Organ defines citizenship behaviors as "organizationally beneficial behaviors and gestures that can neither be enforced on the basis of formal role obligations nor elicited by contractual guarantee of recompense" (Organ, 1990, p. 46). Such behaviors maintain or improve the social and psychological context within which work tasks are performed (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Scholars have distinguished various forms of citizenship, including affiliative and challenging forms (Van Dyne, Cummings & McLean Parks, 1995). Both affiliative and challenging citizenship behaviors go beyond direct role requirements and both contribute indirectly to organizational effectiveness (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996; Organ, 1988). Van Dyne et al. describe affiliative behaviors as interpersonal and cooperative, including helping, courtesy or compliance. Challenging forms of citizenship include voice, taking charge, and taking initiative (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Van Dyne et al., 1995).

Interpersonal helping behavior is one of the most frequently studied forms of affiliative citizenship behavior and a strong predictor of individual performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Van Dyne, et al., 1995). Helping behavior involves followers voluntarily helping co-workers on work-related problems or preventing the occurrence of such problems (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Examples of helping behavior include helping co-workers who have high work loads or who are new. In contrast, challenging citizenship is change oriented and involves a constructive challenge to the status quo (cf., Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008; Morisson, & Phelps, 1999). Initiative can be seen as one form of challenging citizenship and is change focused and anticipatory in contrast to passive or reactive behaviors

(cf., Frese & Fay, 2001; Bolino & Turnley, 2005). Examples of initiative include taking initiative to improve the circumstances at work, solving problems and making suggestions for change (Grant, 2000). In the current study, we include helping as an affiliative and initiative as a challenging form of citizenship behavior.

Social learning theory (Brown et al., 2005) as well as social exchange theory (Mayer et al., 2009) are used as theoretical foundations in the ethical leadership field and are useful in understanding individuals´ reactions to ethical leader behavior. Both these perspectives suggest that ethical leadership is likely to relate positively to followers' citizenship behaviors. Based on social learning, Treviño and colleagues (2003) argue that ethical leaders' act as role models of appropriate behavior. Such leaders use reward, punishment and open communication about the importance of ethics to stimulate ethical conduct among followers (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2003). Ethical leaders set an example by showing concern and considering others in making decisions. As leaders are role models of ethical behavior they become the target of emulation and identification for employees (cf., Bandura, 1986; Hogg, 2001). Such emulation may take the form of showing citizenship.

Furthermore, an important element of ethical leadership is power sharing, allowing voice or empowering, which reflects giving employees a say in decision making, stimulating them to provide input and listening to their ideas and concerns (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Kalshoven et al., in press; Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006). This should enhance employees' willingness to show different forms of citizenship, for example to speak up or show initiative. Research indeed suggests that employees who perceive their leader as exhibiting more power sharing engage in more citizenship (Kalshoven et al., in press).

Besides social learning, social exchange theory is also important to help understand follower reactions to ethical leadership (Mayer et al., 2009; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milder, 2002). Based on the norm for reciprocity, followers are willing to reciprocate when treated fairly and with concern (e.g., Blau, 1964; Cropanzano, & Mitchell, 2005; Mayer et al., 2009). Ethical leaders share power, provide guidance, behave fairly and consistently and demonstrate that they care about the welfare of their employees. In return, subordinates may experience a personal obligation and try to reciprocate through engaging in citizenship behaviors. High quality relationship between leader and follower suggests that

when followers feel a personal obligation (Kamdar, McAllister & Turban, 2006) they will wish to reciprocate and will be inclined to go beyond expectations (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

So far, research on the relationship between ethical leadership and citizenship behavior has mainly focused on affiliative forms of citizenship behavior. Positive relationships are found. For example, Mayer et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between ethical leadership and group-level helping rated by supervisors and employees. Further, Piccolo et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between ethical leadership and helping rated by co-workers and Kalshoven et al. (in press) found a similar relationship for supervisor-rated helping. Research on ethical leadership and challenging citizenship behavior has been more limited so far. One study shows ethical leadership relates positively to follower voice (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Thus, in line with this empirical evidence we expect ethical leadership to relate positively to citizenship behaviors. Nevertheless, studies show that the strength of the associations found between ethical leadership and citizenship behavior varies from of .11 and .49. This may be due to the existence of moderator or mediator variables.

The Moderating Role of Autonomy

Job autonomy reflects the extent to which a job allows freedom, independence, and discretion to select the methods used to conduct work tasks or schedule work (Hackman, & Oldman, 1976). Autonomy is an important situational factor that can affect the leadership process. Such situational factors have not yet been studied much in the ethical leadership process. Piccolo and colleagues (2010) examined job autonomy as a mediator between ethical leadership and effort, suggesting that ethical leaders may affect effort through enhancing autonomy, but did not find support for such mediation. Based on the situational strength model (e.g., Mischel, 1977) we suggest that job autonomy may act as a moderator rather than a mediator of the ethical leadership – follower behavior relationship.

Situational strength theory contrasts two types of situations affecting individuals' behavior, namely strong and weak situations (Mischel, 1977). In strong situations (i.e., low job autonomy), the situation is structured and clear. Strong situations provide individuals with signals for what is expected and how to behave appropriately. People tend to act similarly. Weak situations (i.e., high job autonomy), on the other hand, are ambiguous. That is,

they are open to different interpretations and it is less clear how to respond appropriately. In weak situations, people do not have clear external social or structural cues to guide their behavior and people tend to act differently in those situations. In work settings, jobs differ in the extent to which the employees can perform tasks in distinctive ways, that is, select appropriate work behaviors, decide the order of job tasks or coordinate activities with other employees. The work aspects that best captures these differences is the amount of job autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Greater job autonomy creates fewer constraints on employees' behavior and thus provides a weaker situation that allows individuals to choose and drive their own behaviors. Autonomy and situational strength are not identical constructs; however, in work settings the amount of job autonomy is a substitute for conditions that permit (weak situations) or inhibit (strong situations) differences in behavior (cf., Barrick & Mount, 1993).

The ambiguity experienced by people in weak or high job autonomy situations and their tendency to look for cues to guide their behavior, create opportunities for the influence of ethical leaders. In such weak situations, followers' self-concepts, values, and identities can be more readily appealed to (Shamir & Howell, 1999) and people tend to affiliate more with group members (Hogg, 2001). Furthermore, in the absence of clear extrinsic justifications for behavior, followers are more likely to look at others (especially leaders) to provide information on how to behave (Burger, 2009). As leaders are usually the prototype of a work group and this prototype is used as information on appropriate attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Hogg, 2001), followers will become more prone to the ethical guidance of leaders (Brown et al., 2005). Thus, if job autonomy is high, followers will have more freedom in deciding how to behave and will look at leader's behaviors for clues for appropriate conduct.

Employees, in strong or low job autonomy situations where means and ends are specified and prescribed, will probably distinguish more between tasks or behaviors that are in-role or extra-role (Hackman, & Oldman, 1977). In such low autonomy work situations, ethical leadership is less likely to have a strong influence on follower behavior as followers are less likely to need their leader for guidance or as a model of appropriate behavior. In such structured and clear contexts, employees will tend to behave more similarly and there is less room for social exchange. Thus, leaders may have less room to affect followers in

such contexts. Therefore, we expect the relationship between ethical leadership and citizenship is less strong when job autonomy is low.

In general, we suggest that job autonomy interacts with ethical leadership and that the guidance of ethical leaders is especially relevant to followers in more ambiguous or weaker high autonomy contexts. Thus, we propose that job autonomy moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and follower citizenship such that this relationship is stronger in high than in low job autonomy situations.

Hypothesis 1: Job autonomy moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and followers' citizenship behavior, such that the relationship between ethical leadership and followers' citizenship behavior is stronger when followers' job autonomy is higher.

Our research model, depicted in Figure 1, proposes a mediated moderation model. Mediated moderation exists when the interaction between two variables (in our model ethical leadership and job autonomy) affects a mediator, which then affects a dependent variable (in our model citizenship behavior; Morgan-Lopez & MacKinnon, 2006). Thus, besides refining our notion of in which situations ethical leadership is most strongly related to follower behavior, another important question is whether an intermediary mechanism explains this link. Here, we suggest followers' responsibility functions as such a mechanism.

The Mediating Role of Responsibility

We argue that in high job autonomy contexts ethical leadership influences citizenship behaviors through the mediating effect of responsibility. We develop the argumentation for this hypothesis in steps, first describing the responsibility construct and the relationship of responsibility with both citizenship and ethical leadership. Next, we include the role of job autonomy. Finally, we combine these elements in a mediated moderation model.

Individuals vary in the amount of responsibility they take at work (Frese & Fay, 2001). Researchers have indicated that learning experiences are essential in developing a sense of responsibility (e.g., Winter, 1992). Winter (1991) suggests that individuals who take responsibility are able to control their behavior, which implies they can fairly be blamed

for negative actions or appreciated for positive ones. Responsibility can be described as behaving with dependability, taking responsibility for one's actions, and being concerned about one's impact on others (Blasi, 1983; Winter, 1991).

Schwartz (1968) showed that having control over one's behavior and taking responsibility for one's actions is necessary for showing moral behavior. Citizenship is seen as moral in that an individual chooses to perform behavior that is beneficial to another and that is generally regarded as virtuous, over one that is not (cf., Graham 1995; Ryan, 2001). According to Blasi (1980) the decision for individuals to behave altruistically is dependent on the level of responsibility they take. Furthermore, one connotation of responsibility is showing concern for others (Blasi, 1983). In that sense, responsibility can refer to a felt moral obligation to help others without consideration of an expected personal benefit (Kanungo, 2001; Maclagan, 1983). This suggests that employees who take responsibility for their actions are more likely to exhibit affiliative citizenship behaviors.

Evidence also suggests that responsibility is likely to stimulate challenging forms of citizenship (cf., Bledow & Frese 2009; Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashforth, 2008; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). For Example, Morrison and Phelps (1999) found support for a relationship between responsibility and taking charge (i.e., a form of challenging citizenship). Responsibility for actions and their outcomes gives individuals the feeling that showing initiative is possible or appropriate (cf., Frese, & Fay, 2001). In contrast, Grant and Ashforth (2008) argue that if employees are not held responsible for their behaviors, it will be safer for them not to take any risks and thus not to behave in a challenging way. Followers who take responsibility are not likely to give up easily and are likely to search for opportunities and information to act on (Ashford, & Tsui, 1991; Bandura, 1999). Hence, we expect that responsibility and challenging citizenship behaviors are positively related.

Although the relationship between ethical leadership and follower responsibility has not yet been studied, related research suggests that responsibility is important in the ethical leadership process. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) showed that leaders' personal concern for social responsibility is related to ethical leadership. Leaders who were perceived as more ethical showed more concern for social responsibility in terms of having an inner obligation to do what is right, taking responsibility for others, being dependable,

instilling self-control and having awareness of the consequences of their actions (Winter, 1991, 1992). This suggests that ethical leadership involves demonstrating a sense of responsibility at work. Building on this, we suggest that followers are likely to emulate the responsibility that their leaders demonstrate. Ethical leaders model taking responsibility which followers may copy by showing a higher sense of duty and responsibility themselves. Further, as ethical leaders share power, followers are likely to feel empowered to make decisions without checking with their supervisor first. This again suggests that followers are more likely to take responsibility.

Although ethical leaders are generally likely to stimulate follower responsibility, leader role modeling is more likely to affect follower responsible behavior when autonomy is high as this context implies followers have a range of different behavioral options and responses they could choose from, including whether to take responsibility or not Mischel, 1973. In that context, ethical leader responsibility role behavior is likely to enhance the extent to which followers take responsibility. In contrast, were job autonomy is low, behavior is driven more by demands of the context than the choice of the follower. Followers are likely to behave similarly in such structured and clear circumstances and leaders' modeling will likely have less impact on follower behavior. Thus, we argue that ethical leadership promotes followers responsibility in high autonomy situations.

We combine the argumentation above in our proposed mediated moderation model (see Figure 1). Our model suggests that the strength of the mediated relationship of ethical leadership with followers' citizenship behaviors through responsibility will vary depending on the level of job autonomy. This indirect effect of ethical leadership on citizenship will be stronger when job autonomy is high compared to when autonomy is low. Employees with high job autonomy have discretion in choosing behavioral options. The situation is ambiguous and the ethical role model formed by the leader is likely to guide followers to take responsibility and show desired behavior. In low autonomy jobs, where behavior is more prescribed and individuals have less room for their own input, methods or decisions, less guidance is needed from leaders and taking responsibility is a less appropriate behavioral option. In other words, ethical leadership will be related to citizenship behaviors through responsibility, especially when autonomy is high.

In sum, we propose that responsibility mediates between the interaction of ethical leadership and job autonomy on citizenship behaviors. In a high autonomy context, ethical leaders' modeling, integrity and power sharing enhance followers' responsibility and in turn followers are likely to show citizenship. Taken together, we expect that the interaction between ethical leadership and job autonomy in relation to citizenship behaviors will be mediated by responsibility.

Hypothesis 2: Responsibility mediates the interaction between ethical leadership and job autonomy on follower citizenship behavior.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Via organizational contacts, data for the present study was requested from 299 employees and 103 supervisors working in different organizations in the Netherlands and the survey was administered in Dutch. The organizations were located in non-profit sectors such as health care and government agencies and in profit sectors such as insurance and construction. In total, 74 leader- and 207 employee questionnaires were returned. Two followers' and one leader questionnaire were returned incomplete and were removed from the dataset. For testing our hypothesis we needed matched questionnaires (i.e., supervisor-employee dyads), 147 dyads could be formed. This translates to response rates of 65 % and 49 % for the supervisors and employees respectively. This matched dyad sample includes 147 employees, rated by 70 direct managers (i.e., on average, managers rated two employees). The average age of supervisors was 50 years (SD = 8); 32 % were women. The average age of employees was 45 (SD = 9); 41 % were women. For 87 % of the participants supervisor-employee tenure was over six months.

Our organizational contacts were management team members who provided (email) addresses of leaders and their direct followers. The employees who participated in the study were randomly chosen from the workgroup of a particular leader by our organizational management contacts (i.e. not by the supervisors themselves). For this study, both paper-and-pencil and online versions of the questionnaires were created. The paper version

was only used if organization contacts asked for it due to employees' lack of computer access or experience. Within each organization only one way of data collection was used. Of all completed questionnaires, 72 % used the online version of the questionnaire.

Supervisors as well as employees received a questionnaire and an information letter or email. The letter (email) explained the importance and purpose of the study, explained the voluntary nature of participation, assured confidentiality and offered an overall feedback report at the close of the study. Also, approval and support from the management team of each organization was provided in the letter. All participants received a reminder after two weeks. The online version of the employee and supervisor questionnaires was linked using email addresses and the paper version using a matching code. Both supervisors and employees were given the names of the person they were supposed to rate to avoid confusion. Supervisors were asked to rate responsibility and citizenship behaviors of two or three of their direct reports. Employees were asked to rate ethical leadership of their direct supervisor and job autonomy.

Measures

Ethical leadership. We measured ethical leadership as experienced by followers with the Ethical Leadership at Work questionnaire (ELW) developed and validated by Kalshoven et al. (in press) in the Netherlands. The ELW measures ethical leadership detailed with 38 items. Seven forms of ethical leader behavior are included in the overall ethical leadership scale: fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification and concern for sustainability. Kalshoven et al (in press) show these behaviors can be measured separately or combined in an overall score for ethical leadership as we do here. Measuring leadership styles as a combined second-order construct including several behavioral components is more often done in leadership research (see e.g., transformational leadership see e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; or authentic leadership see e.g., Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Overall ethical leadership consists of seven dimensions. The first dimension is *fairness* (6 items) including leaders' honesty, taking responsibilities, treating followers equally and being dependable. *Integrity* (4 items) reflects being consistent in word and deed and

keeping promises. *Ethical guidance* (7 items) reflects acting according to ethical standards, being a role model, and setting expectations about work-related ethical issues. *People orientation* (7 items) refers to caring about people, respecting others and their feelings and taking interest in their welfare. *Power sharing* (6 items) focuses on providing voice and opportunities for input. *Role clarification* (5 items) refers to clarification of expectations and responsibilities and engaging in open communication. *Concern for sustainability* (3 items) reflects being sensitive to environmental issues and caring for sustainability. Sample items are: "Manipulates subordinates (reverse coded)"; "Can be trusted to do the things (s)he says/ (s)he will do"; "Clearly explains integrity related codes of conduct" "Pays attention to my personal needs" and "Allows subordinates to influence critical decisions". The overall scale had a Cronbach's α of .95. The items had a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The correlations among the seven dimensions range from .15 to .66. To test the appropriateness of using this overall ethical leadership scale we performed confirmatory factor analysis. A second-order CFA, in which the individual items were modeled as indicators of their underlying dimensions (fairness, integrity, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, ethical guidance, concern for sustainability), which in turn were modeled as indicators of an overarching latent ethical leadership construct showed good fit, χ^2 (*df* = 658, N = 115) = 1047.29, p < .01, CFI =.96; NNFI = .95, RMSEA = .06 (cf. Hu & Bentler, 1999). Chi-square difference tests indicated that the second-order model yielded a better fit to the data than either a one-factor model, χ^2 (*df* = 665, N = 115) = 2526.54, p < .01, CFI =.86; NNFI = .85, RMSEA = .16, or other conceivable six-factor models, for example combining fairness and integrity items into one factor χ^2 (*df* = 650, N = 115) = 1172.61, p < .01, CFI =.94; NNFI = .94, RMSEA = .09, or four-factor models, for example, combining fairness and integrity items into one factor, combining people-orientation and power sharing items, combing role clarification and ethical guidance items and finally a concern for sustainability factor χ^2 (*df* = 659, N = 115) = 1517.47, p < .01, CFI =.92; NNFI = .91, RMSEA = .11. We thus chose to use the overall second order scale.

Responsibility. Responsibility was assessed with four items we developed based on Winter (1991; 1992). Winter distinguishes different elements of responsibility, namely to

take responsibility, own and acknowledge one's behavior, behave dependably and responsibly towards others, and to be able to be counted upon. These elements are reflected in the items we used for measuring responsibility. Before the current study, the items were presented to four leaders who were asked to comment on items they found ambiguous or difficult to answer about their followers. Based on their comments some small adaptations were made. The four items were: "takes responsibility at work", "acknowledges his/her mistakes", "is dependable and can be counted upon", "considers the impact of his/her actions on others". All questions were answered on a 5-point scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). An exploratory factor analysis was performed on the data with oblimin rotation. The results showed one factor with an eigenvalue above 1 and four items loaded well on that factor, which explained 67 % of the variance. Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Citizenship behavior. Two forms of citizenship behavior were included, one affiliative form, namely employees' interpersonal helping behavior and one challenging form, namely personal initiative. Interpersonal helping was assessed using 4-items developed by MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Fetter (1991). The items were reformulated to be used as supervisor ratings. Interpersonal helping behavior refers to the process of helping a co-worker complete a job-related task. A sample item is: "is always ready to help or lend a helping hand to those around him/her". Cronbach's alpha was .91. Employee initiative was assessed using 7-item scale developed by Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, and Tag (1997). The items were reformulated to be used as supervisor ratings. Frese et al. demonstrated the scales' convergent validity with ratings by others. A sample item is: "he/she is particularly good at realizing ideas". Cronbach's alpha was .90. The citizenship items had a 5-point response scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

As there is some discussion in the literature about the dimensionality of citizenship (see e.g., LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002), confirmatory factor analysis was performed to show that these two forms of citizenship are distinguishable as two separate factors and that they differ meaningfully from responsibility. A three factor model showed a good fit to the data χ^2 (*df* = 87, *N* = 143) = 186.49, *p* < .01, CFI =.97; NNFI = .97, RMSEA = .087, SRMR = .063 (cf. Hu & Bentler, 1999). A two factor model including helping and intitiative combined into one factor as well as responsibility, χ^2 (*df* = 89, *N* = 143) = 562.27, *p* < .01,

CFI =.91; NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .10, and a one factor model χ^2 (df = 90, N = 143) = 575.21, p < .01, CFI =.90; NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .20, SRMR = .10, did not fit the data. These models supported the empirical distinctiveness of responsibility, initiative and helping.

Job Autonomy. Job autonomy is measured with six items taken from Jackson, Wall, Martin and Davids (1993). A sample item is: "Decide how to go about getting your job done". Responses for all job autonomy items were given on a 5-point answering scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Cronbach's alpha was .85.

Measurement model. Prior to moving on to testing our hypotheses, we tested a measurement model at the item-level to verify whether the scale items were adequate indicators of their underlying construct. The measurement model had five latent factors, ethical leadership, autonomy, responsibility, helping behavior and initiative. To increase indicator stability (e.g., West, Finch, & Curran, 1995) and meet sample size guidelines for parameter estimation (see Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000) we used the behavioral dimensions of ethical leadership as indicators to form a reduced set of indicators. The procedure reduced the number of indicators for the latent variable ethical leadership to seven. This expected measurement model provided a good fit to the data χ^2 (df = 340, N = 143) = 531.54, p < .01, CFI =.95; NNFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06 (cf. Hu & Bentler, 1999). Conceivable alternative models with fewer factors (such as a four-factor model that comprised helping and initiative into one factor or a three-factor model that included ethical leadership, autonomy and combined responsibility, helping and initiative into one factor) did not fit our data. Thus, these models supported the distinctiveness of all study variables.

Analytic Strategy

Hypothesis 2 proposes a "mediated moderation" model. Mediated moderation refers to an effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable that is different depending on the level of a moderator variable and a mediator variable is shown to be responsible for the moderation (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). To test for mediated moderation, the guidelines of Muller et al. (2005) were followed which operationally defines Baron and Kenny's (1986) conceptualization of mediated moderation

(see also Grant, 2008; Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008; Schaubroeck, Lam & Cha, 2007).[1]

The guidelines of Muller et al. (2005) suggest testing three different regression models. First, Model 1 regresses the dependent variable (i.e., follower citizenship) on the independent variable (i.e., ethical leadership), the moderator (i.e., autonomy) and the interaction term (i.e., ethical leadership*autonomy). Second, Model 2 regresses the mediator (i.e., responsibility) as dependent variable with the same independent variables as in Model 1 (i.e., ethical leadership, autonomy and ethical leadership*autonomy). Third, Model 3 builds on Model 1. Model 3 also includes the mediator (i.e., responsibility) and an interaction term between the mediator and the moderator variable (i.e., responsibility* autonomy). To confirm mediated moderation, first, the interaction term in Model 1 should be significant and reduced or become non-significant in Model 3. Second, in Model 2 the interaction term should be significantly related to the mediator and finally, the mediator should be significantly related to the dependent variable in Model 3 (Muller et al., 2005). Following the suggestions of Aiken and West (1991), the independent and moderator variables were mean centered. The interaction term was created by multiplying the centered variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables. Ethical leadership was positively and significantly correlated with both follower initiative ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), follower helping ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) and job autonomy ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), whereas ethical leadership was not significantly correlated with responsibility. Moreover, responsibility was correlated with helping ($r = .68$, $p < .01$), initiative ($r = .73$, $p < .01$) and job autonomy ($r = .18$, $p < .05$) Job autonomy was not correlated with helping or initiative.

We then ran the three different regression models outlined above and the results of these regressions are reported in Table 2 for helping behavior and in Table 3 for initiative.

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[1] Edwards and Lambert (2007) have formulated an alternative approach. However, Bond, Flaxman and Bunce (2008) note that Edwards and Lambert' conceptualization does only differ on moderated mediation. This does not matter for the type of model we test in this study, namely mediated moderation.

Table 1 - *Means, standard deviations and correlations*

	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Ethical leadership	3.67	.42				
2	Job autonomy	4.01	.56	.20**			
3	Responsibility	4.10	.63	.09	.18*		
4	Helping behavior	4.00	.75	.18*	.04	.68**	
5	Initiative behavior	3.88	.65	.19*	.11	.73**	.58**

Note: N = 147

*p <.05; **p <.01. All tests are one-tailed.

The results from model 1 support the predicted interaction between ethical leadership and job autonomy in relation to helping (β = .22, p <.01) and initiative (β = .18, p <.05). This is in line with hypothesis 1, ethical leadership is related to both follower citizenship behaviors and these relationships are stronger in high than in low job autonomy contexts. These significant interactions were plotted in Figure 2 and Figure 3 at one standard deviation above and below the means. The slope for the relationship between ethical leadership and follower initiative was positive and significant for employees with high job autonomy, t (143) = 3.03, p <.01, but not for employees with low job autonomy, t (143) = -.38, ns. Similarly, the slope for the relationship between ethical leadership and helping was positive and significant for employees perceiving high job autonomy, t (143) = 3.34, p <.01, but not for those with low job autonomy, t (143) = -.73, ns.

Similar to the results found testing model 1, the results of model 2 (see Table 2 and 3) show a significant and positive interaction effect of ethical leadership and job autonomy, but in this model on the mediator responsibility (β = .17, p <.05). These results support an indirect effect of the interaction between ethical leadership and job autonomy on follower work behaviors. Simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that when job autonomy was high, responsibility was significantly positively related to ethical leadership, t(143) = 2.96, p < .05. By contrast, when job autonomy was low, responsibility was negatively but not significantly related to ethical leadership, t(143) = -1.62, ns.

Table 2 - *Regression results for mediation moderation:*

Followers' helping behavior

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	β	β	β
Ethical leadership	.13*	.02	.11
Job autonomy	.02	.17*	-.10
Ethical leadership*Autonomy	.22**	.17*	.11*
Responsibility			.67**
Responsibility*Autonomy			.00
F	3.94*	3.01*	28.80**
Total R^2	.08	.06	.51

Note. N = 147.

For model 1 and 3 the outcome variable is helping behavior and for model 2 responsibility.

* p ≤.05; ** p <01. All tests are one-tailed.

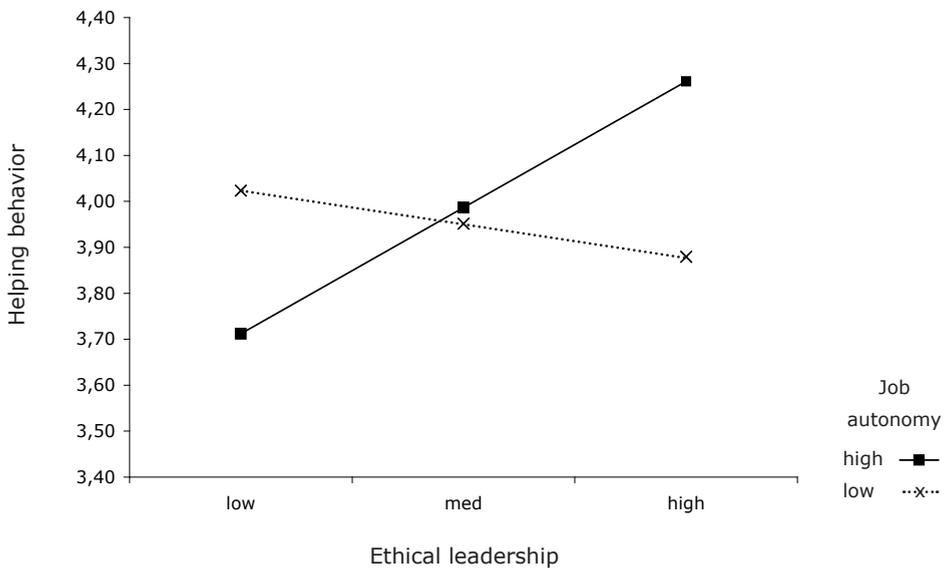Figure 2 - *Follower helping behavior as a function of ethical leadership and job autonomy interactions*

Table 3 - *Regression results for mediation moderation:*

Followers' initiative behavior

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	β	β	β
Ethical leadership	.14*	.02	.10
Job autonomy	.09	.17*	-.02
Ethical leadership*Autonomy	.18*	.17*	.07
Responsibility			.73**
Responsibility*Autonomy			.04
F	3.70*	3.01*	35.67**
Total R^2	.07	.06	.56

Note. N = 147.

For model 1 and 3 the outcome variable is initiative behavior and for model 2 responsibility.

* p <.05; ** p <01. All test are one-tailed.

Figure 3 - *Follower initiative behavior as a function of ethical leadership and job autonomy interaction.*
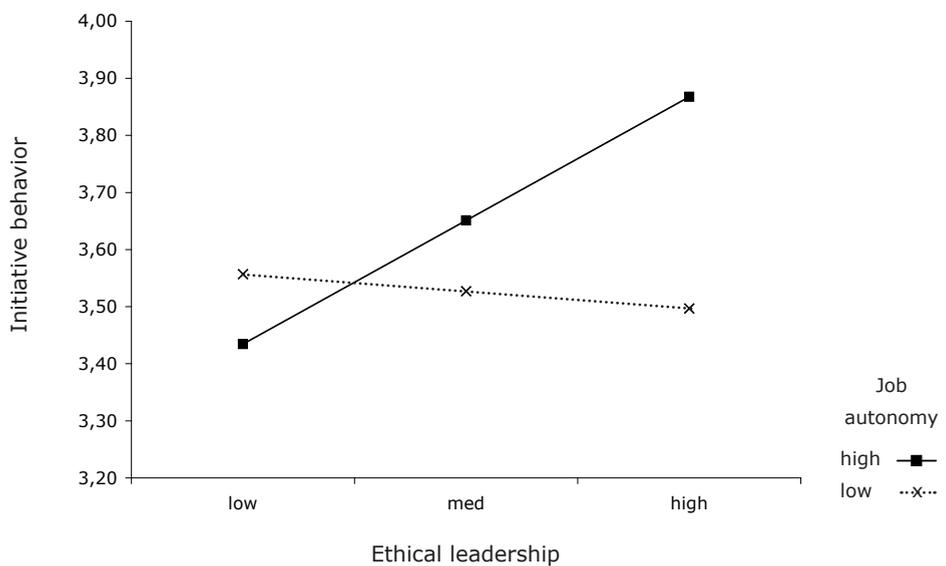
The results of model 3 in Table 2 shows the mediator responsibility was significantly related to helping (β = .67, p <.01). For helping behavior, the residual direct effect of ethical leadership on helping is less strongly moderated by job autonomy once the mediator is included in the model (β reduced from .22, p < .01 to .11, p < .05), but it remained significant. This implies there is partial mediation in line with hypothesis 2. A Sobel test was performed to assess whether the decrease in the beta is significant (Goodman, 1960). The z-value was 1.96, p < .05, indicating a significant drop in the beta coefficient. The relationship between initiative and the mediator responsibility was significant (β = .73, p <.01). The formerly significant direct effects of the interactions of job autonomy with ethical leadership (see Table 3, Model 3) became non-significant for initiative behavior after controlling for the mediator (β = .04, ns). This supports a full mediation in line with hypothesis 2. Thus, responsibility fully mediates the indirect relationship of ethical leadership with initiative and partially mediates the indirect relationship with helping when job autonomy is high, but not when it is low.

Discussion

In the current study we proposed and found that ethical leadership is associated with followers' citizenship behaviors in high autonomous situations and that this association runs at least in part via enhanced responsibility. We replicate previous studies relating ethical leadership with affiliative citizenship behavior, such as helping. We add to the literature that ethical leadership is also related to initiative, which is a challenging citizenship behavior. Specifically, we found that employees are more likely to behave proactively and take initiative to make suggestions or change their work environment and to help others at work if they perceive their leader as more ethical, which was in line with our expectations based on social learning and social exchange theory.

A finding of the present study that extends previous research concerns the interaction between ethical leadership and job autonomy in relation to helping and initiative. We found that the relationship between ethical leadership and these citizenship behaviors was positive in high job autonomy situations. In low job autonomy situations there is no relationship between ethical leadership and follower citizenship. This finding is in line with our

reasoning that ethical leaders are more likely to be turned to as role models and for guidance in more ambiguous and autonomous situations.

Another contribution of this study is that we demonstrated that the interaction effect of leadership and job autonomy on citizenship behavior was mediated by responsibility. In other words, leaders who are honest, principled, and responsible, shape a fair and respectful relationship with employees, allow employees voice and model and reward ethical behavior, enhance a sense of responsibility in followers. That in turn translates into higher levels of citizenship when job autonomy is high. Overall, we found support for our research model proposing a mediated moderation effect. Full mediation of responsibility was found for initiative and partial mediation for helping.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the field in several ways. Prior studies on the effects of ethical leadership have focused mainly on employees' attitudes. Recently, research has started to address the relationship between ethical leader behavior and different employee behaviors. Our study adds to this stream of research by showing that ethical leadership relates positively to both affiliative and challenging citizenship behavior. Also, this study responds to the call for more understanding of the intermediary mechanisms and context in which ethical leaders affect follower work behaviors (e.g., Brown, & Treviño, 2006; De Hoogh, & Den Hartog, 2009a). Here, we developed and tested a mediated moderation model, which is not often done to date (cf., Muller et al., 2005). The mediated moderation model is supported by our data.

The partial mediation for helping and full mediation for initiative may be explained by the affiliative versus challenging nature of these work behaviors. Helping is primarily related to the social work area and focuses on interpersonal relationships whereas initiative is more change, organization and task-oriented. Helping specific others will usually be valued by colleagues and supervisors (McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison, & Turban, 2007) and as helping tends to be appreciated, it strengthens relationships (McAllister et al., 2007). The costs to exhibit helping are low and the social rewards are high. Therefore, responsibility may be less crucial and may be only one reason to help others, more affiliative and social-emotional

reasons may also play a role and motivate to help others. In contrast, challenging citizenship behavior such as showing initiative may involve risks, because supervisors may resist attempts to change the status quo (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Given these potential costs, employees may be reluctant to behave proactively when they are unsure whether this behavior is legitimate. When followers view proactivity and initiative to be within the boundaries of their responsibilities, they may perceive it as less risky. Therefore, followers are more likely to perform proactive in exchange for ethical treatment of their leader. Additionally, responsibility is needed to provide clear expectations and ownership regarding task requirements (Breaux, Munyon, Hochwater, & Ferris, 2009; Tetlock, 1985) and may therefore be related to initiative. Thus, helping is more interpersonal and initiative is more task-oriented and this difference may explain that responsibility fully mediates in explaining initiative and partly mediates in explaining helping.

Results indicate responsibility to be important for ethical leaders in stimulating employee helping and initiative in high autonomy situations. Ethical leaders, who have been shown to be responsible individuals themselves (cf., De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008), may be attracting or selecting employees who want and can handle responsibility in their jobs, consistent with Schneider's (1987) model of attraction-selection–attrition. However, the results did not show an overall direct relationship between ethical leadership and followers' responsibility. In line with the social learning theory, we would have expected a relationship between ethical leadership and followers' demonstration of responsibility as ethical leaders may be able to guide their followers in how to take responsibility at work by using communication, rewarding and role modeling. On the other hand, research has suggested that learning experiences are necessary in developing responsibility (Winter, 1992). Employees are more likely to take responsibility in situations where they have an opportunity to decide how to act (responsibility and job autonomy were related in this study) and in those situations the guidance of an ethical leader may be more necessary for them. Like in other leadership studies, the context seems highly relevant in studying ethical leadership.

In the current study, we focused broadly on employees' responsibility for contextual and task related behaviors rather than responsibility specifically for work tasks. Responsibility related to contextual performance is similar to social exchange in that the nature of

the exchange is unspecified. Social responsibility refers to a moral obligation to help others without any consideration of an expected personal benefit (Maglagan, 1983). We find that when employees perceive their leader as acting ethically, they tend to reciprocate by show-ing such responsibility and are likely to perform various behaviors, regardless of whether these behaviors are requested. Contextual responsibility thus shows similarities with the theory of Blau (1964) on social exchange. Social exchange theory thus seems a useful framework that can help explain the effects of ethical leader behavior.

Here, we add to the existing literature by addressing and empirically testing a novel mediator, namely responsibility, as a link between ethical leadership and follower be-havior. Researchers have also suggested that ethical leaders may affect follower behavior through enhancing trust (cf., De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009a; Kalshoven, & Den Hartog, 2009; Walumbwa, & Schaubroeck, 2009) or task significance (cf., Piccolo et al., 2010). Trust and task significance are mediators that are also suggested as relevant for related leadership styles such as transformational leadership (cf., Piccolo, & Colquitt, 2006; Pillai, Schreisheim, & Williams, 1999). Responsibility may be especially relevant in regard to ethi-cal leadership as it more specifically relates to the socially responsible influencing process of ethical leadership (cf., De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009a).

Finally, we found that ethical leadership is related more strongly to employees work behaviors under conditions of high job autonomy than under conditions of low job autonomy. The context in which leaders and followers interact is important in shaping the ef-fects of leaders and has not yet been sufficiently investigated in the ethical leadership field. The situation can constrain or facilitate a leader's behaviors. In line with previous leadership studies, situational strength helps explain under which situations leaders have an influence. Using this theory, we proposed and found an important role for job autonomy.

High job autonomy (i.e., a weak situation) implies a more ambiguous situation with fewer cues or reinforces to guide behavior. The appropriate behavior in these ambigu-ous situations is less clear. In this situation employees are more open to the direction and role modeling of desired behavior provided by ethical leaders than in a more prescribed context that already offers sufficient guidance. The findings support the importance of social learning in ethical leadership research (cf., Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven & Den Hartog,

2009). However, when job autonomy is low (i.e., strong situation) an ethical leader does not seem to have an impact on followers' behaviors. In these low autonomy situations followers will construe the situation in the same way and therefore draw similar conclusions as to appropriate responses.

Practical Implications

        The results also have some practical implications. As demonstrated by previous and current research, organizations can enhance citizenship behaviors by encouraging leaders to develop close, fair and respectful relationships with employees and by modeling desired behaviors. Moving beyond past research, our results also demonstrate that an autonomous work situation and followers taking responsibilities are important to yield helping and initiative. Our results indicate that ethical leadership is especially important for influencing followers in a high autonomy work context. Organizations could train their leaders to act as role models, for instance, by emphasizing a sense of responsibility. Previous research has shown that ethical leadership is only partly based on leader personality (cf., Walumbwa, & Schaubroeck, 2009), which suggests training leaders in ethical behavior may be a realistic option for enhancing desired work behavior more broadly. In doing so, organizations can make leaders aware of their important position as role models of appropriate behavior and stress that employees are likely to copy their behavior.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

        Main strengths of the current study include that it was a field study and common source bias was reduced by using different raters of leader and follower citizenship behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Further, the study included two different forms of citizenship behavior. Also, the followers that participated in the study were randomly selected whenever leaders had multiple followers in their work group. To encourage fair and honest answers, all participants were assured confidentially and were informed that the organization and their leader would only receive an overall report and not their specific responses.

        While this study had a number of strengths, several limitations should be addressed as well. First, responsibility was assessed with new items developed for this study.

As measures of this construct are scarce, we created items that operationalized this construct. The items were based on the theoretical work of Winter (1991). The data showed good internal reliability and a good fit of the measurement model. As a first step in studying the role of follower responsibility, we chose to focus on demonstrated responsibility as rated by supervisors. Future research may also investigate other types of responsibility as a mediation mechanism such as felt responsibility, being accountable or a responsible organizational climate. For example, felt responsibility reflects feeling personally accountable and responsible for the results of the work (e.g., Hackman & Oldman, 1976).

Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study implies we cannot test causal relationships. Where inferred, directionality of relationships is based on and supported by existing literature. However, reversed causation or additional causal paths may also be possible, for example, employees who experience more job autonomy may also be more likely to perceive their leader as ethical (Piccolo, et al., 2010). Obviously, there is a need for a longitudinal design in future research, not only to address causality but also to explore how ethical leadership evolves over time. Also, the time perspective is different between affiliative and challenging citizenship behavior. A worker with high initiative considers long-term impact of their actions, whereas helping behavior is short-term oriented (Frese & Fay, 2001). More attention for such time issues is needed in future research. In addition, only one form of challenging and one form of affiliative citizenship behavior was studied. However different forms of employee behavior seem relevant to include in future work.

Research is needed to examine a broader range of situational influences on ethical leadership. Additional work characteristics could play a role in leadership processes. For example, meaningfulness could play a role in the relationship between ethical leader behavior and employees' work behavior. Also important to investigate are situational influences that include ethically oriented situational characteristics, such as facing ethical dilemmas. As ethical dilemmas are seen as ambiguous situations, ethical leaders may have more influence on employees in such a situation (Treviño, 1986). Employees are more likely to search for a role model in ambiguous situations. However, the current lack of validated measures of ethically oriented situational factors has hindered this research. Another promising direction involves assessing the role of organizational level situational factors, such as

the type of organization. For example, De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) found that leaders in voluntary, mission-driven organizations were seen as more ethical than leaders in profit organizations.

Individual difference moderators are also potentially of interest. For example, the effect of ethical leader behavior on employee citizenship could be moderated by whether the employee is low or high on responsibility as a personality trait. In line with this, employees high on responsibility may be less influenced by an ethical leader than employees low on responsibility as they are already prone to 'do the right thing'. Employees low on responsibility may need more encouragement of an ethical leader to do so.

Conclusion

The pressure from society to operate ethically has increased organizations' interest in ethical behaviors of leaders and employees. Ethical leaders stimulate helping and initiative behavior by modeling desired behavior and building fair relationships. Results of our field study with matched data from multiple sources help to extend our knowledge on how and under which conditions ethical leadership has an impact on employees' work citizenship Especially, we found important roles for responsibility and job autonomy in this regard.