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Ethical Leadership and Normative Commitment: Drivers of Urban Land Service Quality in Bahir Dar City-Ethiopia

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Abstract

Urban land service delivery is becoming a key source of public discontent in developing countries despite that it is the driving engine of the urban economy. This study aims at examining the influence of ethical leadership on the perceived quality of urban land service quality through the link of normative organizational commitment in Bahir Dar City. The study followed the positivist research paradigm in a quantitative research approach with a correlational research design. Participants of the study were urban land customers who are seeking urban land for residential house and business buildings. Perceived Leader Integrity Scale was adapted to measure ethical leadership. Normative commitment was measured using the Meyer and colleagues tool. Perceived service quality was measured employing the service quality scale, excluding customer expectations. Data were collected from convenience sample involving 346 customers. Structured questionnaires were employed using the five point Likert scale. SEM-AMOS software was used to carry out the analysis. Findings indicated that ethical leadership has significant and positive influence on the Perceived service quality (β=0.476, R^2=0.227) and the Employees' normative commitment (β=0.499, R2= 0.249), partially mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and the perceived service quality (β=0.391, R^2=0.15). The indirect effect (β=0.195, R^2=0.038) supports the strong direct effect, yielding a total impact of β=0.671 (R^2=0.450). This implies that appropriate ethical leadership practices and normative commitment contribute to improve urban land service quality. The study suggests that urban land administration organizations need to adopt ethical leadership and normative commitment practices to improve the ever-increasing challenges of urban land services in the study area.

Keywords

Ethical Leadership, Perceived Service Quality, Normative Commitment, Structural Equation Modelling, Ethiopia

Article History

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Introduction

The contemporary thirst for unbridled power and monopolistic resource control is frequently attributed to human immorality and unethical behavior (Hoeffler & Collier, 2023; Mlambo,

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2022; Pasupuleti, 2024). The contemporary thirst for unbridled power and monopolistic resource control is frequently attributed to human immorality and unethical behavior (Hoeffler & Collier, 2023; Mlambo, 2022; Pasupuleti, 2024). Pursuing political power is increasingly being used in developing nations as a means of gaining access to limitless resources for private gain (Hoeffler & Collier, 2023; Mlambo, 2022; Pasupuleti, 2024). One noteworthy example is the increase in land-grabbing incidents in developing countries' urban areas, which are often justified under the pretext of "investment" but result in the loss of a large portion of the land in exchange without the so-called investors adding no significant value (Marzocchi & Arribas Cámara, 2024; Woldesenbet, 2024). Contests over control over essential natural resources, particularly land, are at the heart of many ongoing political power struggles and civil wars in poor countries like Ethiopia (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Dimant & Tosato, 2016; Momoh, 2015; Resnick, 2014).

Urban land is currently influenced by a wide range of causes. But they can be roughly divided into two groups: driving and influencing elements. According to Shahhosseini and Dadashpoor (2026), structural factors including growing urbanization and demographic pressure, as well as haphazard and unplanned settlements, are some of the difficulties within the category of influencing factors. Inadequate human and technical capability, a lack of functional clarity and coordination, and ineffective monitoring and assessments are some of the institutional issues that have an impact (Emiru et al., 2023). Furthermore, political-economic factors such widespread corruption, power concentration, and cultural land administration concerns also have an impact on urban land administration (Amare, 2023). Urban land is driven by a number of issues, such as inadequate land governance that takes leadership into account, an exponential increase in the demand for land worldwide, inadequate legal enforcement, and regulatory frameworks, and power imbalances among stakeholders (Seyum, 2022).

Empirical studies have shown that all of these difficult elements are frequently linked to public organizations' lack of morally sound leadership (Shamspour et al., 2024; Valecha, 2022). Organizational recovery; resilience, sustainability, and prosperity have all been shown to benefit from ethical leadership. Additionally, ethical leadership gives careful consideration to employees' welfare, well-being, and work-life balance (Petek & Yeşiltaş, 2024; Ralinala et al., 2024; Yegon & Omwenga, 2022). Moreover, recent research has shown that ethical leadership significantly improves organizational outcomes like commitment, performance, productivity, and effectiveness (Percyval et al., 2023; Siyum, 2024). Ethical leaders foster a dependable and encouraging workplace that increases workers' organizational loyalty to their companies (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Dimant & Tosato, 2016). According to the same pattern, one of the primary causes of municipalities' failure to give high-quality services is their failure to use an ethical leadership style when providing urban land services (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Dimant & Tosato, 2016; Momoh, 2015; Resnick, 2014). In the majority of municipal service sectors in developing countries, the lack of community involvement and the transfer of power from communities to the leadership ultimately encourage authorities to engage in intense corruption, which significantly contributes to the failure of genuine service delivery (Petek & Yeşiltaş, 2024; Ralinala et al., 2024; Yegon & Omwenga, 2022).

In these nations, significant efforts have been undertaken to address the overt reasons of poor urban land service quality, concentrating on the symptoms rather than the underlying causes (Percyval et al., 2023; Siyum, 2024). Because it ensures moral guidance and promotes the serious implementation of ethical principles in public service organizations, ethical leadership plays a critical role in lowering the prevalence of such unrestrained resource looting (Tangkawarow & Tanoto, 2023; Wijesekera, 2023).Therefore, in order to maintain the equitable distribution of the limited resource, urban land, among all law-abiding inhabitants, urban service-centered organizations, like the urban land sector, must be run by moral and responsible leaders (Percyval et al., 2023; Siyum, 2024).

Distorting service delivery is one approach to entice citizens to participate in illegal and informal activities as well as corrupt behaviors. Ethiopian public trust, good governance, and the equitable provision of urban land services are all seriously threatened by corruption in public services, especially in the urban land sectors (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Dimant & Tosato, 2016; Momoh, 2015; Resnick, 2014). A sustainable approach to lowering corruption, particularly in the urban land sectors of emerging nations like Ethiopia (Siyum, 2024; Tesfay et al., 2019), requires ethical leadership to control such friendly social dynamics in the service delivery arena (Bayana, 2022).

On the other hand, there is a dearth of empirical research in Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Ethiopia, on the connection between ethical leadership and service quality (Eshete & Kassahun, 2025). According to Aisyah et al. (2026), the mediating role of normative commitment and the moral obligation of corresponding personnel that serve as a fabricating link between ethical leadership and service excellence were also disregarded. Because ethical leadership fosters trust and responsibility and improves the quality of urban land services in the research area, Bahir Dar, closing this gap is crucial on both practical and social levels (Siyum, 2024; Tesfay et al., 2019). According to Akpa et al. (2021) and Sokolic et al. (2024), the majority of prior research examined the relationship between service quality and transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles as group or unit matters. Seldom has the intersection of ethical leadership and service excellence been examined in urban land management settings.

Although Ethiopia's constitution guarantees high-quality public services on paper, there are far more complicated issues in practice (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Ghebrehiwet, 2021; Kulmie et al., 2024; Momoh, 2015). In order to illustrate this point, during the course of two years (2023 and 2024), Bahir Dar City encountered 38, 435 registered public service grievance issues in all of its government sectors. Of these, 9,841 were related to urban land administration. This poses a serious threat to service responsiveness, dependability, trust, and civility (Hailu & Shifare, 2019; Natnael Salfore & Devulapalli, 2022; Sharma et al., 2023).

This operational research has three significant contributions: First, it transfers ethical and adaptive strands to improve service quality in the urban land environment; second, it highlights the mediating role of normative commitment in bolding out leadership theoretical ethics echoes in improving urban land service quality; and third, the study provides new empirical evidence

from the study area to the global community on how the integration of ethical leadership and normative commitment can meaningfully qualify urban land service quality by reducing widespread corruption and eventually rebuilding harmony and trust between the public and governing bodies at a wider spectrum.

The startling rise in public complaints and grievances in the study area (Hailu & Shifare, 2019; Natnael Salfore & Devulapalli, 2022; Sharma et al., 2023), Bahir Dar, was tangibly caused by inadequate urban land municipal service delivery: inability to respond promptly; inability to deliver the promised service reliably and accurately; incapacity to communicate trust and confidence to the respective customers; lack of physical facilities, including personnel, written materials, and facilitating equipment; and a lack of consideration and individual attention to the respective customers (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Ghebrehiwet, 2024; Momoh, 2015). In order to address the dearth of empirical studies that link ethical leadership to service quality while taking normative organizational commitment into consideration, this research study focuses on the relationship between ethical leadership and the perceived service quality of urban land administration through the link of normative organizational commitment in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Perceived Service Quality and Ethical Leadership

Conceptually, ethical leadership is characterized by the actual application of honesty, equity, and responsibility in organizational performance decisions. According to Mahohoma and Sihlangu (2024), associates in a stable status must be deliberately encouraged to embrace these ideals. Ethical leadership is required by urban land administration as a transparent and responsible tool for providing leadership services and as a way to distribute resources logically. In this sense, moral leaders provide unbiased services in resolving disputes on nearby parcels and are receptive to inhabitants (Mishra et al., 2022). Among other things, dependability, responsiveness, empathy, and procedural justice are important factors to consider while evaluating the quality of public services. In order to promote harmony between the public and local governments and increase citizen satisfaction, these dimensions call on practitioners and leaders to exercise their managerial judgment (Siyum, 2024; Tadesse, 2019).

The Ethical Climate Theory, which holds that leaders must establish the moral and behavioral foundations of their employees and related organizational performance outcomes, can be used to theoretically shape the relationship between ethical leadership and service quality (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Victor & Cullen, 1988). In a similar vein, the Public Value Theory contends that organizational leaders can establish social justice and legitimacy in service delivery by promoting industrial peace and stability, which in turn improves service quality and ultimately targets citizen satisfaction (Moore, 2021; Piatak & Jensen, 2024). Focusing on situational shifting circumstances and modifying leadership and performance while integrating and balancing the boiling stakeholder expectations is vital for calibrating the predominance of service quality in the context of urban land administration (Tangdigling et al., 2019). Therefore, it is

crucial to integrate the public value theory and the ethical climate theory. By aligning these ideas, ethical leadership may be able to use the threads of fairness and integrity to examine how perceived urban land service quality is affected.

Weak urban governance with limited institutional capacity and bureaucratic red tape within the system increased public dissatisfaction in the service scene by compromising service quality for service coverage, according to empirical scenarios from domestic studies (Bayana, 2022; Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). Simplifying and implementing ethical leadership in an integrated strategy with normative commitment is the true cure-all for such societal 'degradation'. In public service sectors, this approach greatly encourages accountability and openness (Mishra et al., 2022). According to empirical studies in the field, institutional elements such as political will, economic stability, and legal enforcement have significant impacts on the quality of services provided (Ferede et al., 2024). The reliability and responsiveness aspects of service quality raised strands of motivation in the quest of integrating normative commitment and ethical leadership, according to a domestic empirical study (Desalegn et al., 2025).

The practical contextual interface in Ethiopia's urban land administration sector is characterized by irregular settlement expansion, vulnerability to corruption, and increasing urbanization that necessitates huge parts of urban land (Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). In actuality, urban land service delivery methods in Bahir Dar, the regional capital, are inefficient, opaque, and inconsistent; they are also prone to widespread corruption, which prevents the vast majority of urban poor people from receiving them at no cost (Engdaw, 2019). In order to improve the quality of public services, it is therefore necessary to create long-lasting societal norms using the ethical leadership threads of integrity and fairness. The developed world's best experience demonstrated that this circumstance occasionally offers more tangible benefits than implementing pointless bureaucratic reforms. It can't be worked out overnight, of course. It begins in the mother's womb, moves back and forth through real-world experiences, and ends with tacit knowledge, a higher type of learning (Ferede et al., 2024; Mishra et al., 2022).

All of these points are aimed at identifying the empirical research gap that exists in the study area, Bahir Dar City, regarding the direct relationships between ethical leadership and the quality of urban land services. Public complaints and grievances in this area combine the apex line (Engdaw, 2022). In order to curb the frequent and agreeable social dynamics that harm real public service delivery atrocity, it is essential and necessary to concentrate on ethical leadership style (Syahrani et al., 2022b). This is thought to reduce susceptibility to intense corruption (Demissie & Beyene, 2021; Dimant & Tosato, 2016). Additionally, those who generate income have the right to receive respectable and high-quality services in exchange (Abdu & Adem, 2023; Dubey & Srivastava, 2025).

A large portion of the literature in this field focuses on issues related to institutional capability, governance, corrupt practices, and corrective measures. The topic of ethical leadership on urban land's perceived service quality was left out of earlier studies as a future topic. Activities can be completed using informal venues when traditional service delivery locations are distorted. In the end, these casual interactions force citizens to pay for their

constitutional rights. This gap therefore compels scholars to develop the following direct hypothesis:

H1*: Ethical leadership has positive and significant influence on urban land perceived service quality in Bahir Dar City.*

Ethical Leadership and Normative Organizational Commitment

The third aspect of organizational commitment, known as obligation-based commitment, is normative commitment (Njoroge, 2022). Regardless of written laws and norms, it is the degree to which personnel feel obligated. According to Jawaad et al. (2019), desired employee behavior is shaped by psychological and social norms, which encourage employees to stick with their company as long as it has a good influence on them. This commitment is the degree to which an employee feels obligated to the company and believes that staying is the correct thing to do. Strong cultural or familial ethics are the source of it (Newstrom, 2018). By using subcontracts like ethical guidance, fairness, integrity, and concern for sustainability, ethical leadership infuses normative commitment with positive energy. This increases employee sense of obligation and raises moral expectations, which in turn qualifies trust, lowers turnover, and boosts positive performance in an organization (Santiago-Torner, 2025; Taamneh et al., 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, the relationship between normative commitment and ethical leadership necessitates the use of Brown et al.'s ethical leadership theory (2005). From the standpoint of social learning and social exchange theory, this theory attempts to define ethical leadership. According to this viewpoint, ethical leadership is viewed as "the promotion of such conduct to the followers, through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making, and the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships"(p.120). In order to qualify the quality of urban land services, this circumstance is expected to strengthen the connection between normative commitment and ethical leadership. Additionally, according to the ethical environment theory, leaders have the power to establish and uphold moral standards that influence workers' attitudes, social justice, and behaviors, all of which improve performance quality (Victor & Cullen, 1988).Employees are urged to develop a sense of moral obligation to regard the organization as if it is run on legitimate bases whenever organizational leaders are charged with ethical strands like fairness, ethical guidance, concern for sustainability and integrity, and transfer this to their followers (Moore, 2021). Additionally, the public value theory facilitates social fairness and legitimacy for service acquisition, which in turn streamlines employees' moral need to fix seeds of commitment (Piatak & Jensen, 2024). In the context of urban land administration, the integration of ethical climate theory, public value theory, and ethical leadership theory strengthens the normative organizational commitment embedded with ethical leadership behavioral values: fairness and integrity, harnesses quality services.

According to recent domestic empirical research, bureaucratic fluctuations and inadequate institutional capabilities prevented employee commitment from being activated, which could potentially harness vibrant urban land service delivery in Ethiopia generally and the city

administration of Bahir Dar specifically (Bayana, 2022; Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). Similar empirical research has shown that ethical leadership uses organizational normative commitment to leverage accountability, openness, and justice in public service settings (Bayana, 2022; Mishra & Hagos, 2025; Mishra et al., 2022; Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). Global best practices also demonstrate how normative commitment is positively impacted by ethical leadership in a variety of service sectors (Desalegn et al., 2025). Contextual scenarios in Ethiopia's urban land service performance confirmed that the service is strongly associated with rapid urbanization, informal settlement, and land speculation activities by syndicate groups and city gangsters who initiate informal land transactions outside of official government initiatives (Bayana, 2022; Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). The study area's urban land employees face significant challenges and have lost their sense of organizational commitment. This is due to the fact that staff dedication to providing high-quality services is eventually harmed by the growing demands of citizens and the long-standing bureaucratic administrative disorders (Engdaw, 2019).

Significant advancements in the field of study have been touched by the practical interactions of fragmented ethical leadership activities because they introduce justice, integrity, transparency, and accountability. According to Mishra et al. (2022), these common characteristics help employees fulfill their moral obligations, which in turn help them accomplish the goal of satisfying citizen service satisfaction. All of these incidents demonstrated the lack of empirical research that particularly examines the inherent relationship between normative employee engagement and ethical leadership in the context of the urban land service quality agenda. Therefore, the following direct hypothesis is formulated:

H2: *Ethical leadership has positive and significant influence on normative organizational commitment in urban land service quality practices of Bahir Dar City,*

Normative Organizational Commitment and Perceived Service Quality

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), the conceptual focus of normative organizational commitment is the follower's moral obligation, defined in terms of shared values, loyalty, and duty, to the extent of working in their organization in devotion. Public service organizations directly reflect prioritized population requirements, particularly those related to urban land productivity, services, and human resources. By exhibiting dependability, empathy, and service responsiveness for quality intact with their respective organizations, employees rectify this rhetoric in practical terms within their organization, with elevated moral obligations in urban land services (Siyum, 2024). In this case, the appropriate theoretical position is closely linked to the ethical climate theory, demonstrating how employee attitudes and behaviors are streamlined with the degree of organizational normative commitment (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Proven normative organizational commitment infuses the strands of justice and integrity that might encourage the provision of high-quality services in urban land administration offices. In a similar vein, the public value theory encourages adherents' moral duty to demand assiduous dedication, which in turn inspires reputable urban land services for quality goals (Moore, 2021; Piatak & Jensen, 2024). In order to provide the intended urban land service in the research region,

normative organizational commitment builds on moral and ethical obligations, as shown by the friendly relationship between the public value theory and the ethical climate theory.

It has been demonstrated empirically that task-oriented workers motivated by a recognized normative organizational commitment may manage accountable, dependable, and compassionate services that strive for high-quality accomplishment (Desalegn et al., 2025). Ethiopia has poor service delivery in the complicated urban environment due to its insufficient institutional capability and cunning bureaucratic maneuvers (Bayana, 2022). By utilizing responsiveness, accountability, and transparency to activate sharpening service delivery, diligent dedication reverses this occurrence (Mishra et al., 2022). According to Shaquela and Lyndon (2022) and Syahrani et al. (2022a), worldwide best practices have demonstrated that normative commitment serves as a link between ethical leadership and service quality initiatives in an organizational setting. Ethiopia's urban land social environment is characterized by rapid and unplanned urbanization, which makes it difficult to respond to service issues on a regular basis. To make matters worse, attempts to improve service difficulties are hampered by widespread urban land corruption (Bayana, 2022). Urban land services are severely misused in the regional capital, Bahir Dar. Those who may play a meaningful part in the invisible platforms of "Dellalas," brokers, receive the most noteworthy quality services. The bulk of people who live in cities are unable to participate in this "rule of game," which hinders their ability to obtain urban land for residential and commercial purposes (Engdaw, 2019). However, the extra-ordinary activities of some employees with better stances of normative commitment showed due diligent urban land perceived services. This area is not well taped, hardly studied in Ethiopia at large, in Amhara region and the city of Bahir Dar in particular (Mishra et al., 2022). This gap of empirical research instigates to develop this direct hypothesis:

H3: *Normative organizational commitment has positive and significant influence on the perceived service quality of urban land in Bahir Dar City.*

Mediation Effect of Normative Organizational Commitment

Building a bridge between the independent and dependent variables is the conceptual idea of mediation. The normative organizational commitment serves as the mediator variable in this study between the perceived quality of urban land services and ethical leadership. According to Jawaad et al. (2019) and Piatak & Jensen (2024), In this route, citizen’s perception of urban land service quality increases as practitioners ethical behavior shaped by ethical sentiments and moral obligation strands intrinsically interweaved to each other paving the way to the prevalence of service quality (Okechukwu Irem et al., 2025).

The ethical climate theory, which contends that moral leaders can influence followers' attitudes and behaviors, is the theoretical foundation for the study's indirect impact (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Workers can use concepts of moral responsibilities, justice, and ethical integrity to improve the quality of urban land services. Furthermore, according to the public value theory, in order to serve all people equally and sustainably, leadership must provide social justice and legal foundations that support employees' normative commitment in the process of service

delivery practices (Moore, 2021; Piatak & Jensen, 2024). The problem of the social environment's "volatile" dynamic must also be taken into account. In order to respond to quick speed changes in ever-changing surroundings, particularly in light of massive urbanization and the high demands of infrastructural advancements in managing informalities at Bahir Dar City Administration, situational leadership constructs are also incorporated in this study. Urban land is necessary for all of these activities, and the corresponding service problems worsen as a result. According to Tangdigling et al. (2019), ethical leadership must balance the constantly shifting urban environment with employees' normative commitment to inject their positive strands in raising service quality.

According to empirical research, normative commitment and ethical leadership have a beneficial interaction that enhances service quality (Desalegn et al., 2025; Hakimi, 2025; Lo et al., 2009). However, insufficient institutional and bureaucratic stature in Ethiopian urban administration today leads to ineffective and inaccessible urban service delivery (Bayana, 2022; Mitiku & Hondeghem, 2020). The relationship between ethical leadership and service delivery quality is mediated by normative commitment, according to empirical research (Mishra et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2025). Additionally, international empirical research has shown that employee commitment effectively mediates leadership and service performance (Chao et al., 2024).

In order to assist the vast majority of middle-class residential home builders and commercial land hungry operators, the study region is undergoing a continual urbanization process that necessitates extensive urban land services. Additional land is required for schools, medical facilities, places of worship, and other social amenities related to the city's growing population. In particular, the informal settlement channel restricted the city's official expansion zones in collaboration with urban "Delalas," brokers who frequently engaged in corrupt activities with local urban land practitioners and authorities (Bayana, 2022). In the study region, Bahir Dar city administration, all of these issues provide serious challenges to the predominance of ethical leadership and provide deep bases for building moral duty strands among urban leaders and employees (Engdaw, 2019). Though not always directly, ethical leadership and normative commitment play a huge influence in improving the quality of urban land service delivery to please clients. Therefore, in order to genuinely facilitate service delivery quality, the normative commitment's mediating role is still essential (Mishra et al., 2022; Syahrani et al., 2022b). This clarifies the current empirical research gap in Bahir Dar City Administration's urban land service sector on the mediating effect of normative organizational commitment between ethical leadership and perceived service quality.

People in Bahir Dar, the study area, frequently believe that land services are opaque and ineffective (Engdaw, 2019). Although it doesn't always directly affect service quality, ethical leadership is contextually important since it fosters justice and openness. Rather, by ensuring that leadership ethics are translated into consistent service delivery methods, workers' normative commitment mediates this relationship (Mishra et al., 2022; Syahrani et al., 2022b). The majority of recent research used generic organizational commitment to investigate the empirical relationship between transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership and service

quality. This demonstrates that there is a clear lack of empirical research that focuses on the mediating function of particular organizational commitment components, such as normative organizational commitment in the relationship between perceived service quality and ethical leadership. This indirect hypothesis must be developed in order to close this gap:

H4: *Normative organizational commitment fully mediates the relationship between ethical leadership style and the perceived quality of urban land service delivery in Bahir Dar City.*

The Study's Conceptual Framework

Through the mediation strands of normative organizational commitment, this study examined the complex relationship between ethical leadership and the perceived urban land service quality in Bahir Dar. The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 below illustrated the study's created model, which was intended to explain the relationship between the study's variables: perceived urban land service quality (DV), normative organizational commitment (MV), and ethical leadership (IV). The dependent variable is caused by the independent variable. The independent and dependent variables interact with the mediating variable. The elements of ethical leadership: ethical guidance, justice, integrity, and concern for sustainability, form the independent variable, whilst Meyer and Allen's (1993) organizational normative commitment items define the mediating variable. Workers feel obligated to the organization and think they should stay on (McClave and Sincich, 2018; Singh & Gupta, 2015). To keep personnel and foster a sense of normative commitment, organizations must offer incentives (Price, 2018). In public service organizations, normative commitment is essential. Achieving the organization's ultimate aim is pointless unless an employee chooses to work and stay with the company (Reig-Botella et al., 2022). For this reason, it was used in this study as a mediating thread that connected the independent and dependent variables.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), the three aspects of service quality, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, define the dependent variable. In summary, fig. 1 below provides a visual representation of this conceptual framework.

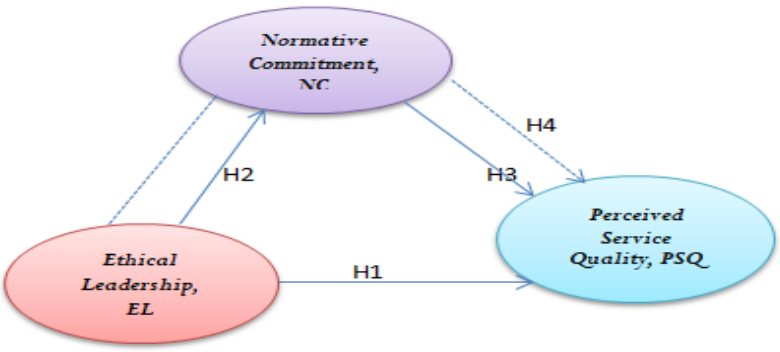


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study
Source: Researchers own work, 2025

Research Design and Methods

Description of the Research Area

One of Ethiopia's most picturesque cities, Bahir Dar, is situated on the southern banks of Lake Tana, where the Blue Nile River splits. Its lakeside location, palm-lined roadways, and abundant biodiversity have earned it UNESCO's designation as a Biosphere Reserve. It is positioned at 11°36′ N latitude and 37°23′ E longitude, the city lies 565 km northwest of Addis Ababa and sits at an altitude of 1,801 meters above sea level. With a projected population of 439,121 (ARBoPD, 2024), Bahir Dar is the political, economic, and cultural center of the Amhara National Regional State. It is also a popular tourist destination, known for its monasteries, religious celebrations, the Blue Nile Falls, and a variety of wildlife.

Despite its picturesque scenery, Lake Tana to the north and the nearby hills and mountains to the south currently prevent it from expanding due to resource constraints. The city is still ethnically diverse, with the Amhara predominating and minorities including Agew, Guragie, Oromo, and Tigre. Rapid urbanization, with a 6.5% annual population growth rate (Adigeh & Abebe, 2023), has made housing, transportation, waste management, and health services more difficult.

In terms of the economy, Bahir Dar is a bustling commercial center with a wide range of operations, including trade, manufacturing, social services, civil administration, and urban agriculture. It is a fast expanding hub of investment and growth due to its close vicinity to Lake Tana and fertile rivers, which improve its potential for agro-industry, horticulture, and tourism. Before the formal municipal government was established in 1962 to expedite urban development, the city underwent a variety of governance arrangements, reflecting Ethiopia's larger historical transitions (Fetene et al., 2012). With its council and cabinet offices, it now maintains the status of a Regiopolitan City Administration level, balancing political and non-political functions. However, consistent policy execution for more developmental endeavors has been hampered by leadership instability, which is characterized by frequent cabinet and mayoral turnover.

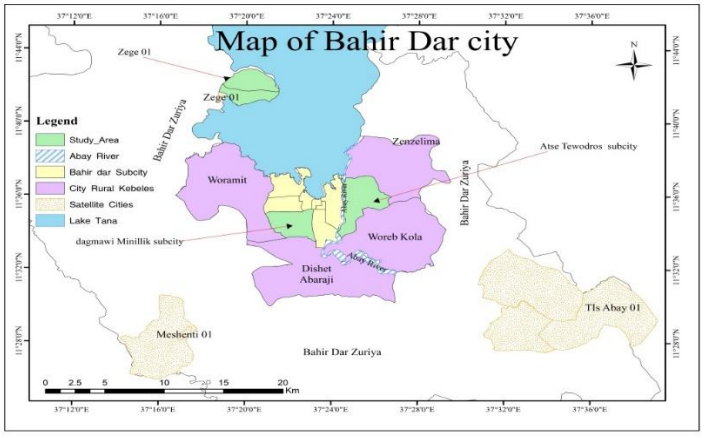


Figure2: Location of the study area
Source: Amhara Region Plan & Development Bureau, 2025

Research Design and Approach

A study's design is a road plan that ensures all of its essential components work together to answer the targeted challenge. According to Khanday and Khanam (2019), research design is the overall approach used to do research that establishes a concise and logical plan to address the defined research topic or questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of data. In order to explore the quantitative research approach employing the positivist research paradigm, this study used a correlational research design. This paradigm acknowledges the likelihood of the nature of social phenomena while placing appropriate focus on objective investigation (Gamage, 2025). The correlational methodology, which aims to investigate relationships between constructs without conducting an experiment, is suitable for examining the relationship between ethical leadership and service quality through the mediating threads of normative organizational commitment. According to Boumidouna (2024), modern modelling methods like Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which rely on covariance structures rather than experimental manipulation, are empirically supported by correlational designs.

By doing this, the researchers aimed to obtain detailed information from the study and determine the relationship between two or more factors. Additionally, it sought to determine whether two or more variables were connected and had an impact on the quality of organizational services. Therefore, using the mediating strands of normative commitment that rely on covariance-based models, the researchers attempted to examine the impact of ethical leadership on the perceived service quality of urban land service quality in Bahir Dar City Administration. Additionally, it is based on deductive reasoning and tests theoretical assumptions using sophisticated statistical verification and analysis (Yao, 2023). This allows for the empirical verification of the study's goal through the previously developed hypotheses, both directly and indirectly, using rigorous tests of mediation and latent constructs (Abreu-Ledón et al., 2026). Researchers can evaluate model fit indicators that can guarantee the validity of causal inferences at the designated conceptual model level inside this study design framework (Wulandari, 2022). This research design was applied within the Bahir Dar City Administration urban land service delivery context. Ethical leadership as reinforcing construct through the mediation link of normative commitment is supposed to consolidate urban land service delivery quality; ethical leadership is a reinforcing construct that is meant to consolidate the quality of urban land service delivery. Following a comprehensive assessment of the literature, the design explicitly specified the evolved conceptual model and produced three direct hypotheses as well as one indirect or mediated hypothesis.

Population, Sample, Sampling Method, and Data Gathering

The population of this study is fetched from one of the major cities of the Horn of Africca, Bahir Dar. The demographic of the study was chosen by the researchers to be the city's urban land users. In order to do this, the Zegie Leading municipality and the two sub-cities served as the research's target population. The Dagmawi Menelik and the Atsie Tewodros are these two sub-cities. The majority of urban land services are currently provided in these sub-cities, which are

the city's two main expansion zones. Additionally, the Zegie Leading municipality was active in maintaining the equilibrium of satellite cities; the mayor of Bahir Dar provided administrative and financial support to the cities. Moreover, this leading municipality entertained more urban land services as it is the largest touring and investment land scape compared to other leading municipalities such as Tis Abay and Meshenti. The service recipient population was taken from the two sub cities and the Zegie Leading Municipality of the City of Bahir Dar, numbering 50,921 (Amhara Region Bureau of Plan & Development, 2024). Thus, the respective sample size was estimated using the sample size estimation formula of Yemane (1976). The sample size is estimated to be 346 which were selected through the convenience sampling technique that gives convenient access of respondents from the targeted areas of the study. This population number is the number of legal Id. card carriers living in the two selected sub cities and the Zegie leading municipalities.

Data were gathered utilizing a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale in order to achieve the study's goal. The primary research was mobilized utilizing the suggested conceptual research model after a substantial pilot test employing the specified analytical technique, structural equation modeling, produced encouraging results.

Construct Definition of the Study

In this research context, ethical leadership encompasses the ethical leadership dimensions forwarded by (Kalshoven et al., 2011): Ethical guidance, role clarification, fairness, integrity, and concern for sustainability as clearly defined below:(1) *Ethical guidance*, ethical leaders not only act themselves morally but also ethically guide their followers by helping and supporting them to convert documentary organizational guidelines to practical work settings; (2) *role clarification*, ethical leaders are responsive, as they clarify roles by providing clear directives, goals, and expectations, which enhance employees' meaningful contribution to the organization's objectives;(3) *fairness*, presents that ethical leader must possess characters such as be honorable, transparent, and fair in practice; (4) *integrity*, fundamental for the leaders, referring to a practice of consistency in words and actions and following commonly accepted ethical standards; and (5) *concern for sustainability*, ethical leaders show a sense of concern for sustainability, that is, they recognize the wider influence of their actions, which extends beyond the work unit and organization and which may affect the welfare of the entire society.

The mediating variable, normative organizational commitment includes the six items of measuring normative organizational commitment (Cuj et al., 2019). The outcome constructs included the perceived service quality dimensions, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988): Reliability, Empathy and Responsiveness. They briefly defined these service quality dimensions in such a way that: (1) ***reliability***, the state of doing services to customers as the promised time, showing sincere interest on solving their problems, performs services right the first time, provide services at the required time and provide accurate information to customers; (2) ***empathy,*** the act of giving individual attention to customers, having best and heart-felt interests of customers, understand the specific needs of customers, and having convenient working hours to customers;

(3) ***responsiveness,*** the act of giving prompt services, the will to help customers and never be too busy to respond to the customer's request.

Data Analysis Tools

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the data because it makes it possible to estimate the intricate structural links between normative organizational commitment, ethical leadership, and perceived service quality (Byrne & St, 2022). Data cleaning and data normalization were carried out before to beginning estimate in SEM, as advised by Schumaker et al. (2022). In order to do this, fundamental multivariate analysis presumptions were thoroughly examined. The normalcy, linearity, homocedascity, and multicollinarity tests were these fundamental presumptions. Below are descriptions and illustrations of their related outcomes:

Test of Normality: A symmetrical, bell-shaped curve with the highest frequency of scores in the middle and smaller frequencies in the extremes is referred to as normal (Sevil & Yildiz, 2021).

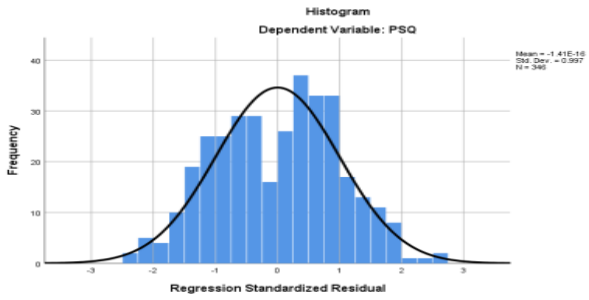


Figure 3: Test of Normality

The method used to assess normality was histogram, of residuals that compares the shape of the residual distribution to a normal curve. The residuals must form a bell-shaped curve centred on zero in order to meet the adequacy condition. Regression analysis and other further studies, such as SEM in this instance, are pointless if the dependent variable, perceived service quality, is not regularly distributed. This violates a crucial premise of the regression model. The study's normality test assumption demonstrated that the residuals are roughly normal since the bars closely match the normal curve. This suggested that the assumption of frequency normalcy is unproblematic. This demonstrated that the regression model that was employed in this study was either highly fitted or appropriately preferred.

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Test of Linearity: According to Naufa et al. (2025), linearity is the correlation between variables represented by a straight line. Understanding the degree of association between variables is crucial for data analysis. Regression makes the assumption that there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This implies that variations in predictors ought to be proportionate to variations in the result. The use of scatterplots, where the data points should nearly align along a straight line, is the criterion for adequacy in testing linearity in this study.

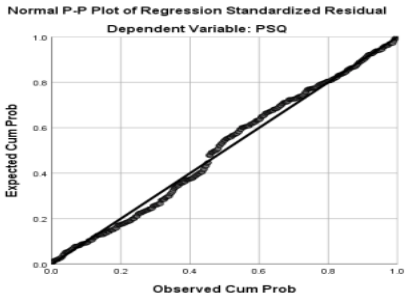


Figure 4: Test of Linearity

This study used scatterplots as a tool to test linearity. Regression analysis results will underestimate the underlying relationship if there is a nonlinear relationship between independent factors and the dependent variable. After doing a linearity test on this data, the researchers discovered that every variable in the study had a linear connection. Looking from left to right in figure 4 above, the P-P plots of regression reveal no significant variation in the residual's spread. In summary, scatterplots are used in this study to evaluate linearity. When residuals are randomly distributed and predictor-outcome correlations show a straight line rather than a curve, adequacy is verified.

Homoscedasticity Test: Homoscedasticity uses independent variables to estimate the variance of dependent variables. Both statistical and graphical techniques can be used to quantify homoscedasticity (Hair et al., 2006). All levels of the predicted values are assumed to have a constant variance of residuals in regression. In other words, regardless of how high or low the expected values are, the spread of errors should be approximately the same. The scatterplot of residuals against anticipated values was the method used in this investigation.

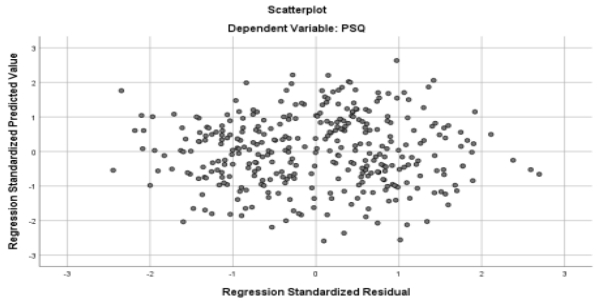


Figure 5: Test of Homoscedasticity

Random scatter, equal spread, and the absence of a funnel form are the requirements for adequacy. The residuals in this study are dispersed around zero without a distinct funnel or curve; the spread appears to be pretty constant across projected values (from roughly -3 to +3), indicating that homoscedasticity is satisfied and the variance of errors is stable throughout the regression model. In summary, a scatterplot of standardized residuals against anticipated values was used in this work to evaluate homoscedasticity. Therefore, the assumption applies to our efforts to fit the model.

Multicollinearity Test: Since severe multicollinearity inflates standard errors and makes it challenging to evaluate the distinct contribution of each predictor, regression implies that independent variables are not substantially connected with one another (Etaga & Ngonadi, 2021).

Table 1: Table showing **Collinearity Statistics**

		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	EL	.948	1.055

Source: AMOS estimation, 2025

In this study, the method researchers used to assess multicollinearity are the **collinearity statistics (Tolerance & VIF): Tolerance**: Proportion of variance in a predictor not explained by other predictors, and **Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)**: Reciprocal of tolerance; indicates how much variance is inflated due to correlation with other predictors. When Tolerance value ranges from = 0.1-1.0 and VIF ranges from = 1 - 10 multicolinearity does not exist. The table above showed that there is no tolerance value below 0.1 and above 1.0 and there is no VIF value less than 1 and above 10. So that based on the assumption, in this research, there is no multi-co linearity problem.

The measurement model and the structural model, the two primary components of SEM, were calculated after the essential assumptions were completed and verified. The measurement model's underlying factor structure was assessed using CFA, but the structural model also calculated the structural links between the latent variables (such as the impact of particular ethical leadership style aspects on perceived service quality). Additionally, the mediating effect of normative organizational commitment in employees in explaining the relationship between the particular ethical leadership qualities and perceived service quality was assessed using a bootstrapping technique (Byrne & St, 2022).

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Results and Discussion

This section highlights the study's main conclusions and compares them to earlier research of a similar nature, emphasizing whether the findings are consistent with or different from each other. By doing this, the foundation base is summarizing the participants' demographic profile in the manner as follows.

Demographic Profile of Participants

Urban land users that require land for residential or commercial purposes are the study's participants.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the Participants

Respondents	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Urban land Service Recipient Customers	Customers of the respective urban land offices	346	100
Gender	male	227	66
	female	119	34
Age	21-30 years	149	43
	31-40 years	177	51
	More than 40 years	20	6
Educational status	Reading and writing	28	8
	Certificate	59	17
	Diploma	95	27
	First Degree	136	39
	Second degree and above	28	8
Work Experience	1-10 years	152	44
	11-20 years	164	47
	More than20 years	30	9
Total		346	100

Source: Researchers' own estimation, 2025

In terms of gender, 35% of participants were female, and 40% of respondents had a bachelor's degree, indicating that many urban land customers have higher levels of education. This research project had an 87% response rate.

Results

Preliminary Assessments

A total of 398 urban land customers received the questionnaires; 346 of them responded, resulting in an encouraging response rate of 87%. Because the researchers visited the clients in person while they were looking for urban land services in the urban land administration offices, they were able to distribute the questionnaires to them, which led to a promising return rate. 52 responses with a missing response of less than 4% were removed from the dataset due to insufficient information after the returned surveys were further examined for missing values. The following tasks were then completed. All of the research variables' items ranged from -.225 to 0.125 for skewness and from -.592 to 0.250 for kurtosis, indicating that univariate normality was within acceptable bounds, according to the results of the evaluation of data normality and distribution. Kurtosis (< ±7) and skewness (< ±2) are within acceptable bounds (Kline, 2023). Second, the Variance Inflation Factor, or VIF, was also used to evaluate the multicollinearity issue. The tolerance value for each construct is 0.283, and the predictor and mediator constructs are both valued at 3.529. Consequently, the dataset passed the cut-off values for VIF larger than 10 and tolerance less than 0.10, demonstrating that there was no multicollinearity issue (Tomaschek et al., 2018). This suggests that the main research variables are unique and may be incorporated into the measurement and structural models without causing any problems with redundancy.

Evaluation of Measurement Models

Prior to determining the predicted relationships in the structural model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the suitability of measurement models. The findings verify that each research variable's items were significantly loaded on the corresponding dimensions. Additionally, every standardized factor loading is higher than the suggested cutoff (β=0.60) (Collier, 2020; Den Hartog, 2015; Kline, 2023). The normative organizational performance ranged from 0.60 to 0.86, the perceived service quality ranged from 0.630 to 0.750, and the specific ethical leadership aspects ranged from 0.610 to 0.950. These scores demonstrate that the observed items adequately represent their respective constructs and provide acceptable evidence for content-related validity.

Additionally, Tables 3, 4, and 5 show that all dimensions of the study variable have composite reliability (CR) and average variance extraction (AVE) scores that are higher than the suggested thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Collier, 2020; Kline, 2023), supporting sufficient evidence for convergent validity. In particular, table 3 below shows great internal consistency and strong reliability across constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.87 to 0.97. Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) is excellent, which supports measurement stability, particularly for Perceived Service Quality (0.98). Overall, these findings imply that the constructs are reliable and appropriate for more study examination.

Table3: Test of Reliability of major constructs

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	CR
EL	0.97	
NC		0.87
PSQ	0.97	0.98

Source: Own estimation (2025), EL, ethical leadership; NC, normative Commitment; & PSQ, Perceived service quality

The validity test indicates that all constructs satisfy acceptable standards, with AVE values above 0.50, as Table 4 below illustrates. While Normative Commitment (0.56) is sufficient but relatively weaker, Ethical Leadership (0.85) and Perceived Service Quality (0.92) show very strong convergent validity. All of the outcome, mediator, and predictor constructs are generally acknowledged as legitimate. Future researchers can, however, move forward and improve the mediator variable for its strength.

Table 4: Test of validity of major constructs

Construct	**AVE**
EL	0.85
NC	0.56
PSQ	0.92

Source: Own estimation (2025)

RMSEA=0.02, SMR=0.04, and GFI=0.86 are the scores of the absolute indices. The test results of the model fit indices showed an overall satisfactory fit (Table 5). The incremental fit index scores are as follows: CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97 and NFI = 0.88. Similarly, robust fit is confirmed by the parsimonious fit value of $\chi^2/df = 1.22$. While the perceived service quality showed a slightly weaker fit ($\chi^2/df = 3.44$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91), the construct-level fitness of the ethical leadership and normative commitment constructs also showed excellent fit. As a result, future refinement in relation to the other constructs is necessary.

Table 5: Model Fit Assessment

Name of category	Name of index	Index	Level of acceptance
Absolute fit	Chi square	0.000	p>0.05
	RAMESA	0.02	<0.08
	Standardized RMR	0.04	<0.08
Incremental fit	GFI	0.86	GFI>0.85
	AGFI	0.85	AGFI>0.85
	CFI	0.97	CFI>0.95
	TLI	0.97	TLI>0.95
	NFI	0.88	NFI>0.85
Parsimonious fit	Chisq /df	1.22	Chisq /df<3

Source: Own estimation (2025); Note: ***p < 0.001

A number of theoretically justified covariance were introduced between a few chosen error terms after the modification indices in order to further enhance the overall model fit (see Figure 6 below). The suggested structural model fits the data well to estimate the suggested direct and indirect (mediated) linkages, according to the modified model results displayed in Table 6 below, which show an acceptable to good model fit to data.

Table 6: Results of the structural model fit

Model		x^2/df	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Model		**1. 22*** **	**0.97**	**0.97**	**0.04**
Cut-off	**Excellent fit**	**>3**	**>0.95**	**>0.95**	**<0.08**
Acceptable fit	>3	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08	<0.06

Note: Model 1 = the initial structural model, Model 2 = the improved structural model by following modification indices, ***p < 0.001

Then, the results of the hypothesized relationships displayed in Figure 6 are explained as follows:

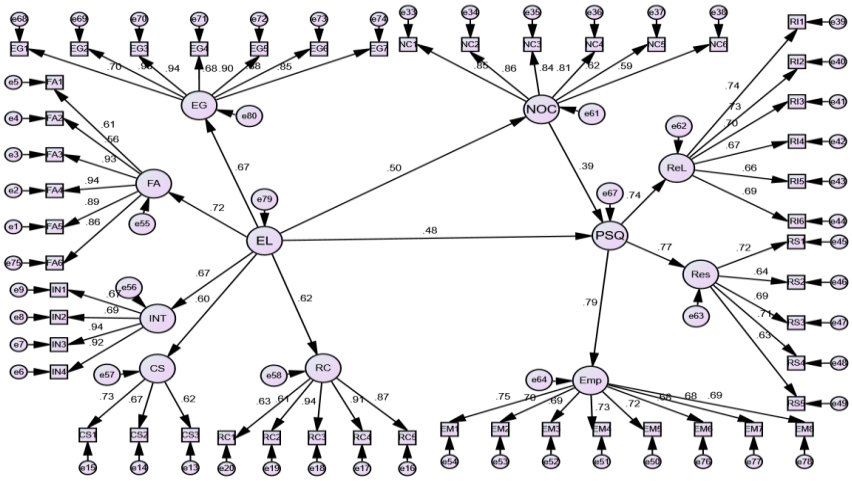


Figure 6: Path Diagram of the Structural Model

EL= Ethical Leadership; NC= Normative Commitment; and PSQ= Perceived Service Quality

Although the effect size varies from modest to large, there was a strong direct impact of ethical leadership style on perceived service quality. Perceived service quality is positively and significantly impacted by ethical leadership style, with a considerable effect size (β = 0.47, SE = 0.06, p = 0.006, R2 = 0.22). This suggests that when urban land service executives exhibit the various characteristics of ethical behaviors in their service delivery practices, a greater degree of perceived service quality, 22.7% of variance, occurs. An R^2 of 0.22 means that 22% of the variation in perceived service quality can be statistically explained by differences in ethical leadership style, ethical leadership style is a significant but partial predictor.

The direct impact of ethical leadership on employees' normative commitment varied, much like that of perceived service quality. With a considerable effect size (β=0.49, SE=0.05, p=0.009, R2=0.24), ethical leadership had a significant and beneficial impact on employees' normative commitment. This suggests that employees' demonstration of ethical leadership impact is linked to and predictable of a 24.9% variance in the meaningful growth in employees' normative commitment in their leaders. Normative organizational commitment had a significant and favorable direct impact on perceived service quality (β=0.39, SE=0.05, P=0.009, R2=0.15). This suggests that employees' normative commitment related to 15.3% of change in perceived service quality was influenced by leaders' ethical guidance, people orientation, role clarification, fairness, integrity, and concern for sustainability. This represents a moderate effect size, indicating a practically significant relationship (Ben Shachar et al., 2020). The study looked at employees' normative commitment as a mediating factor in the relationship between ethical leadership and perceived service quality in addition to the direct influences. The variance explained by each path was estimated by breaking down the mediated influences into the individual contributions of each employee using the squared standardized indirect influences. Organizational commitment was significant and positive, indicating a practically meaningful association. This demonstrates that, in addition to having a direct impact, ethical leadership also

indirectly predicts 3.8% of PSQ improvement by raising employee normative commitment. In both cases, the standardized beta coefficient between the direct influence (β=0.47) and the indirect one (β=0.19) was significant, and the direct influence is still larger than the indirect.

This implies that the relationship between ethical leadership and the perceived service quality in urban land service delivery in Bahir Dar city is partially explained by employee normative commitment, suggesting that normative commitment plays a mediating role in this relationship. Although the direction and strength of the link varied, the overall impact of ethical leadership, including both direct and indirect factors, on perceived service quality was significant. The perceived service quality is positively and significantly impacted by the standardized total (direct and indirect) effects of ethical leadership (β=0.67, 95% CI [0.59, 0.73], SE=0.04, P=0.01, R2=0.45). This indicates that both the direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of leaders' use of ethical leadership account for nearly 45% of the variation in normative commitment. These findings demonstrate the connection between meaningful perceived service quality and ethical leadership.

Discussion

This research is the day-to-day reference of urban land practitioners and managers embedding the basic strands of normative ethics in serving people. Ethical leadership can sew the seeds of ethical guidance, people-orientation, fairness, integrity and concern for sustainability in the employees and managers mental setup whereas the strands of normative organizational commitment plants the roots of moral obligation that approves legitimacy and operational efficiency in the psychic setups of actors of urban land service delivery instigating quality to satisfy the service needs of the tax-paying customers.

In order to improve the overall urban development practices in the study area and spread the best practical experiences to similar urban landscapes, this research practically injects Brown's theory of ethics, the public value theory, Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, and Meyer Allens's model of commitment into the practical operations of urban land administration. Therefore, based on the predetermined goals of the study, the research findings are thoroughly addressed as follows:

Relationship between Ethical Leadership and the Perceived Service Quality

This study shows that the perceived quality of urban land services is most positively impacted by leaders' employment of ethical leadership behaviors in their service delivery leadership. This viewpoint is in line with Brown et al. (2005)'s ethical leadership framework, which calls for leaders to exhibit normatively appropriate behaviors through their actions and interpersonal interactions, as well as to transmit these behaviors to urban land service employees through appropriate decision-making, two-way communication, and reinforcement. Ethical leaders can create an environment that influences followers to put forth extra effort. A comparison of the findings of the current study with those of related studies indicates mixed and sometimes contradictory results. On the one hand, several studies such as, Mahohoma and Sihlangu (2024)

demonstrate a strong and favorable correlation between the perceived service quality of urban land administration procedures and ethical leadership. The results of Wijesekera's (2023) study, which looked at how ethical leadership and employee engagement affected Sri Lankan consumers' perceptions of service quality, further demonstrate this. The study found a strong correlation between ethical leadership and employee engagement. Conversely, Aydemir and Kıpçak (2024) found that, with the exception of a few aspects like job clarity and fairness, ethical leadership negatively impacts worker performance. Nevertheless, their study's ethical leadership aspects do not align with the current study's ethical leadership dimensions. In order to increase the quality of urban land service delivery, both in the research area and throughout urban Ethiopia, this study may help Ethiopian urban land administration reconsider how to systematically assist land governors in adopting ethical skills.

Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Normative Commitment

Through service and normative commitment, ethical leaders have an impact on civil servants' job performance (Syahrani et al., 2022b). Employees become more discouraged and emotionally distant from the benefits of moral leadership and work self-efficacy when they feel stuck in a company and feels obligated all the time (Santiago-Torner, 2025). According to Saleh et al. (2022), ethical leadership has a significant impact on staff turnover rates in the Malaysian banking industry. According to Princy and Rebeka's (2019) research, normative commitment aligns with an employee's sense of obligation to remain with a company because of the opportunity for professional growth that the company provides. According to Olufemi et al. (2024), employees' normative commitment depends on their leaders' ethical ideals because it has been shown that ethical leaders are green lights that forecast the future. This study demonstrates that, regardless of ethical leadership, normative commitment has a significant favorable impact on the perceived quality of services. This demonstrates that when normative commitment is instilled in workers, they may feel more self-assured and motivated to remain with their particular companies and provide long-term service to their valued urban land clients.

Workers provide services that can meet the needs of urban land clients while avoiding bias and injustice that exacerbates their social complaints. They typically provide dependable, compassionate, and responsible service. The results of this study support similar research by Hossain and Rahman (2022), which found that organizational normative commitment, is positively correlated with the same aspects of ethical leadership: people orientation, fairness, power-sharing, integrity, ethical guidance, role clarification, and concern for sustainability. Several investigations (Atteya, 2018; Basnet & Neupane, 2025; Olufemi et al., 2024; Syahrani et al., 2022b; Tangkawarow & Tanoto, 2023) also demonstrate this.

The study's findings, which focus on Ethiopian land management in particular, contribute some evidence to the body of knowledge that aims to explain our understanding of this link, which has rarely been addressed before. The current study also demonstrates that employees' judgments of the normative organizational commitment are raised when leaders practice ethical leadership. Employees' perceptions of normative commitment increased when leaders used

ethical leadership behaviors in the workplace, according to some related studies (Basnet & Neupane, 2025; Hakimi, 2025; Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2024), which partially supports the existing theoretical frameworks like Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-dimensional commitment model. Employees' normative commitment improves the quality of their service delivery by supporting leaders' vision and future decisions, motivating them to provide intelligent and high-quality services, and providing them with extra time or attention.

Relationship between Normative Commitment and Perceived Service Quality

Organizational commitment, according to many organizational behavior experts, is an employee's emotional disposition toward the objectives and ambitions of a formal organization (Nassar et al., 2022; Raza et al., 2023). It has been demonstrated that organizational commitment (OC) in all three of its aspects raises organizational customer satisfaction (Amoah et al., 2022). From this angle, the research's findings align with those of Tangkawarow and Tanoto (2023), who emphasized normative organizational commitment as a crucial PSQ indicator since it improves organizational performance. Furthermore, Hakimi (2025) noted the significance of a higher degree of NC in workers in forecasting shifts in workers' PSQ operational efficiency and improvements in service quality dimensional values. Building normative organizational commitment in employees can therefore be a powerful lever for improving the quality of urban land service delivery in Ethiopian urban land administration, where there are stark regional differences in service quality due to the decentralization principle (Ghebrehiwet, 2021).

Mediation Role of Normative Commitment between Ethical Leadership and Perceived Service Quality

The current study's other findings indicate that employees' normative commitment is crucial in mediating the effects of ethical leadership on the perceived quality of services in urban land service practices in Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia. The study demonstrates that the impact of ethical leadership on the perceived quality of services in urban land offices was significantly mediated by employees' normative commitment. This suggests that the methods by which ethical leaders improve perceived service quality seem to function through the development of normative commitment in addition to direct persuasion. The study's findings align with those of (Olufemi et al., 2024; Syahrani et al., 2022b), which emphasis that leaders who demonstrate ethical leadership enhance perceived service quality through normative commitment in urban land services, despite their limited coverage in the empirical literature. Therefore, the study's findings suggest that employees' normative commitment plays a somewhat mediating function in changing the impact of leaders' moral actions to improve the quality of urban land services.

This suggests that morally upright leaders could contribute more to improving the quality of urban land services in the research area. As a result, corruption associated with urban land service delivery would be significantly reduced on the ground, and citizens' satisfaction with the services would be realized. Performance incentives, for instance, may promote a decrease in

compliance, but they do not have the emotional resonance necessary to establish NC as a mediator in this relationship (Ul-Abideen et al., 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study showed that employee normative commitment acts as a partial mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and perceived service quality in Ethiopia's urban land service sector. Higher levels of trust, justice, and integrity are fostered by leaders who act morally on a regular basis. This strengthens organizational commitment and enhances service delivery results. The results show that the best method to improve the quality of urban land services is through ethical leadership, which operates through normative commitment. This emphasizes the necessity of redefining leadership as a relational activity that empowers staff and satisfies citizen clients. Furthermore, the development of an ethical society that can maintain responsible and superior service delivery in intricate urban settings depends heavily on the larger social environment, which includes parental influence, school curricula, religious teachings, and formal institutions through laws and enforcement.

Recommendations

With normative commitment appearing as a crucial mediating mechanism, this study emphasizes the vital role of ethical leadership in establishing trust, justice, and integrity to improve Ethiopia's urban land service delivery. Leaders of this sector should be chosen based on their ethical standing as well as their technical proficiency. They should be role models that encourage staff members and provide high-quality services to please citizens. In order to develop an ethical society that is capable of providing and receiving services in a responsible manner, early ethical teaching must be reinforced by parents, schools, religious organizations, and formal legislation. While systemic initiatives by legislators, educators, and researchers to address underlying reasons are necessary for long-term change, legal enforcement, performance monitoring, and focused training can reduce ethical gaps in the short term. Future research should employ the whole RATER scale, expand geographically to include national and cross-national comparisons, thoroughly analyze how ethical leadership interacts with all three commitment components, and extend analysis to industries like banking and transportation. Deeper insights and practical advice for improving service quality in emerging economies can be obtained by integrating digital technologies as mediating variables, placing ethical leadership within Ethiopia's constitutional framework, and using mixed-method approaches under a post-positivist paradigm.

Statement of Disclosure

Authors confirm that there is no any competitive interest in this article

Statement of data availability

Data will be avail based on reasonable request

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