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Investigating the Relationship between Job Characteristics and the Growth of Professional Ethics among Employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company. For this purpose, job characteristics were defined based on the theory of Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham across five dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and freedom, and job feedback. Professional ethics were defined based on the code of ethics of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company. Accordingly, one main hypothesis and five sub-hypotheses were formulated. The statistical population of this study consists of all employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company, totaling 380 individuals. The statistical sample size was estimated to be 192 individuals based on the Cochran formula, and participants were selected using stratified random sampling. Data collection tools included two questionnaires: the Hackman and Oldham Job Characteristics Questionnaire and a Professional Ethics Questionnaire based on the code of ethics of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company. After assessing and confirming their validity and reliability, the questionnaires were distributed to the statistical sample. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data. Specifically, descriptive statistics were employed for classification, summarization, and interpretation of the data, while the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Spearman's correlation test were used at the inferential level to test the research hypotheses. The results of hypothesis testing confirmed all hypotheses, indicating that there is a significant relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Keywords: *Job Characteristics, Skill Variety, Task Identity, Task Significance, Autonomy and Freedom, Job Feedback, Professional Ethics*

1. Introduction

The growing complexity of organizational environments, coupled with intensified global competition and heightened societal expectations, has significantly increased the importance of professional ethics as a foundational pillar of organizational sustainability and effectiveness. Professional ethics, understood as a system of values, norms, and standards guiding individual and collective behavior within organizations, plays a critical role in shaping decision-making processes, enhancing accountability, and fostering trust among stakeholders. In contemporary organizations, ethical conduct is no longer perceived as merely a normative obligation but rather as a strategic resource that contributes to long-term organizational success and legitimacy (Shaukat et al., 2024; Shrestha, 2024). The historical evolution of ethical thought, from classical philosophical traditions to modern organizational ethics frameworks, demonstrates that ethical behavior has always been intertwined with social order, institutional stability, and human well-being, although its manifestations and applications have evolved in response to changing socio-economic contexts (Shaukat et al., 2024).

In modern organizational settings, professional ethics is increasingly linked to performance outcomes, including employee productivity, organizational commitment, and overall effectiveness. Empirical evidence suggests that adherence to ethical principles enhances organizational performance by improving employee morale, reducing conflicts, and strengthening stakeholder relationships (Chinwe & Chukwuemeka, 2025). Ethical organizations are more likely to cultivate a positive work environment characterized by mutual respect, transparency, and fairness, which in turn fosters higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. Conversely, unethical behavior within organizations can lead to significant negative consequences, including reduced well-being, reputational damage, and organizational decline (Giacalone et al., 2023). This dual impact underscores the necessity of embedding ethical considerations into organizational structures and processes.

Strategic management literature emphasizes that ethics is not an isolated construct but is deeply integrated into organizational strategies and leadership practices. Ethical leadership, for instance, plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and guiding employee behavior through role modeling and value-based decision-making (Amayreh, 2020; Chou, 2024). Leaders who demonstrate ethical integrity influence employees to align their actions with organizational values, thereby creating a cohesive and ethically responsible organizational climate. Moreover, the integration of ethical principles into strategic management practices enhances organizational adaptability and resilience in dynamic environments (Ongaro & Ferlie, 2020). This perspective highlights the strategic significance of ethics as a driver of organizational excellence.

At the organizational level, ethical behavior is influenced by a range of structural and contextual factors, including organizational culture, governance systems, and institutional frameworks. The concept of "organizational moral structure" suggests that ethical behavior is shaped by the interaction between individual values and organizational norms, policies, and practices (Roszkowska & Mele, 2021). Organizations that establish clear ethical guidelines, promote transparency, and enforce accountability mechanisms are more likely to foster ethical conduct among employees. Additionally, institutional factors such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives contribute to the development of ethical organizational environments by aligning organizational goals with societal expectations (Ghazinoori et al., 2024).

One of the critical challenges facing organizations today is the increasing prevalence of unethical practices, including conflicts of interest, corruption, and unethical pro-organizational behavior. Such practices not only undermine organizational integrity but also erode public trust and hinder sustainable development (Sewsankar, 2024). In response to these challenges, there has been a growing emphasis on promoting ethical governance and accountability in both public and private sectors. Public administration ethics, for example, is essential for ensuring transparency, fairness, and efficiency in service delivery, thereby contributing to good governance and societal well-being (Syadiyah et al., 2024). Similarly, organizations are increasingly adopting competency-based approaches to enhance ethical decision-making and align employee behavior with organizational objectives (Wardiyanto et al., 2025).

In addition to organizational and institutional factors, individual-level variables also play a significant role in shaping ethical behavior. The concept of moral quotient (MQ), which reflects an individual's capacity to make ethical decisions and act in accordance with moral principles, has gained attention as a key determinant of ethical conduct in organizations (Xu et al., 2024). Employees with higher levels of moral awareness and ethical sensitivity are more likely to engage in responsible behavior and resist unethical pressures. However, individual ethical

behavior is not solely determined by personal values; it is also influenced by organizational context and job-related factors.

Among the various determinants of ethical behavior, job characteristics have emerged as a particularly important factor. Job characteristics theory suggests that specific attributes of a job, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Omar et al., 2022). These characteristics not only affect work outcomes but also shape employees' attitudes and behaviors, including their ethical conduct. Jobs that provide meaningful work, autonomy, and opportunities for skill utilization are more likely to foster a sense of responsibility and ethical awareness among employees. Conversely, poorly designed jobs may lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and increased likelihood of unethical behavior.

The relationship between job characteristics and ethical behavior can be understood through multiple theoretical perspectives. From a psychological standpoint, meaningful and autonomous work enhances intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes ethical behavior by aligning individual actions with internal values (Omar et al., 2022). From a sociological perspective, job design influences the social context of work, shaping interactions, norms, and expectations that guide ethical conduct. Furthermore, technological advancements, particularly the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in organizational processes, have introduced new dimensions to job design and ethical considerations. AI-driven decision-making systems can enhance efficiency and accuracy but also raise ethical concerns related to transparency, accountability, and bias (Keding, 2021; Rajagopal et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023).

In the context of globalization and digital transformation, organizations are increasingly required to balance efficiency with ethical responsibility. Manufacturing flexibility, for example, is essential for achieving competitive advantage in dynamic markets, but it must be aligned with ethical practices to ensure sustainable growth (Ujam, 2025). Similarly, the adoption of advanced technologies necessitates the development of ethical frameworks to guide their implementation and mitigate potential risks. These developments highlight the need for a holistic approach to organizational ethics that integrates individual, organizational, and technological dimensions.

Cultural and philosophical perspectives also play a significant role in shaping ethical behavior in organizations. Ethical frameworks derived from religious and cultural traditions, such as Islamic Sharia principles and Confucian virtue ethics, provide valuable insights into moral decision-making and leadership practices (Yuan et al., 2023; Zahiri & Sahal, 2025). These perspectives emphasize values such as justice, integrity, and social responsibility, which are essential for fostering ethical organizational cultures. The integration of such values into organizational practices can enhance ethical awareness and promote responsible behavior among employees.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of professional ethics, organizations continue to face challenges in effectively promoting and sustaining ethical behavior. One of the key challenges is the phenomenon of moral licensing, where individuals justify unethical actions based on prior ethical behavior, thereby undermining ethical standards (Kong et al., 2022). Additionally, the complexity of organizational environments and the pressure to achieve performance targets may lead employees to engage in unethical practices to meet organizational goals. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that address both structural and behavioral aspects of ethics.

Another important consideration is the role of organizational ethics management in embedding ethical values into daily operations. Effective ethics management involves the development of ethical policies, training programs, and monitoring systems that promote ethical behavior and prevent misconduct (Martinez et al., 2021). Organizations that adopt a proactive approach to ethics management are better equipped to identify and address ethical issues, thereby enhancing organizational performance and sustainability. Furthermore, the alignment of ethical practices with organizational goals and strategies ensures that ethics becomes an integral part of organizational identity rather than a peripheral concern.

In this context, understanding the factors that influence the development of professional ethics among employees is of paramount importance. While previous studies have examined the impact of organizational culture, leadership, and institutional factors on ethical behavior, there is a need for further research on the role of job characteristics in shaping professional ethics. Given that job design directly affects employees' daily experiences and interactions, it is likely to have a significant impact on their ethical attitudes and behaviors. Investigating this relationship can provide valuable insights for organizations seeking to enhance ethical conduct through job design and human resource practices.

Moreover, the interplay between job characteristics and professional ethics is particularly relevant in organizations operating in complex and dynamic environments, where employees are required to make decisions under uncertainty and pressure. In such contexts, well-designed jobs that promote autonomy, responsibility, and meaningful engagement can serve as a foundation for ethical behavior. Conversely, jobs that lack clarity, feedback, and significance may create conditions that facilitate unethical practices. Therefore, examining the relationship between job characteristics and professional ethics is essential for developing effective strategies to promote ethical behavior in organizations.

The present study contributes to this line of research by investigating the relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees, with a focus on understanding how specific job attributes influence ethical behavior. By integrating insights from organizational behavior, strategic management, and ethics literature, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which job design affects professional ethics. The findings of this research are expected to have important implications for organizational policy and practice, particularly in the areas of job design, human resource management, and ethical governance.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population of this study consisted of all permanent employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company, totaling 380 individuals. The Cochran formula was used to calculate the statistical sample size, which resulted in a sample of 192 individuals. Stratified random sampling was employed to select the statistical sample from the population. Accordingly, the East Azerbaijan Gas Company was first divided into 60 strata based on administrative units (Table 1). Then, proportional allocation was used to determine the share of each stratum in the sample. After calculating the share of each stratum in the statistical sample, the required number of individuals was selected from each stratum using simple random sampling.

Table 1

Statistical sample by share of each stratum in the sample

Row	Department/Unit	Total Number	Share in Sample	Row	Department/Unit	Total Number	Share in Sample
1	Headquarters	111	56	31	Zonuz	1	1
2	District 1	16	8	32	Sarab	5	2
3	District 2	11	5	33	Sahand	4	2
4	District 3	14	7	34	Sardroud	5	2
5	District 4	12	6	35	Sis	2	1
6	Training	5	2	36	Siah Rud	1	1
7	Shadabad	44	22	37	Shabestar	8	4
8	Warehouse	10	5	38	Sharafkhaneh	0	0
9	Azarshahr	7	3	39	Shandabad	2	1
10	Aghkand	0	0	40	Sharbiyan	0	0
11	Osku	5	2	41	Sufian	4	2
12	Ahar	6	3	42	Ajab Shir	3	1
13	Ilkhchi	2	1	43	Qarah Aghaj	1	1
14	Basmenj	4	2	44	Kolvanaq	1	1
15	Bakhshayesh	1	1	45	Kaleybar	3	1
16	Bonab-e Marand	1	1	46	Koshksaray	2	1
17	Bonab	5	2	47	Gogan	1	1
18	Bostanabad	4	2	48	Lilan	1	1
19	Torkamanchay	2	1	49	Miyaneh	8	4
20	Tark	1	1	50	Maragheh	14	7
21	Tasuj	3	1	51	Mamqan	1	1
22	Tikeh Dash	2	1	52	Malekan	4	2
23	Kharvana	0	0	53	Mehraban	2	1
24	Jolfa	2	1	54	Marand	11	5

25	Khajeh	2	1	55	Heris	4	2
26	Kharaju	1	1	56	Hurand	1	1
27	Khameneh	1	1	57	Hashtrud	6	3
28	Khosrowshahr	3	1	58	Hadishahr	4	2
29	Duzduzan	1	1	59	Varzaqan	2	1
30	Zarnaq	1	1	60	Yamchi	2	1

To collect data from the statistical sample and to test the formulated hypotheses of this study, a questionnaire was developed based on the research variables and their operationalization. The research questionnaire consisted of two sets of questions. The first set, coded with letters, was designed to determine the demographic characteristics of the statistical sample, including gender, marital status, age, education level, and work experience. The second set was designed to test the research hypotheses and was divided into two sections.

The first section included questions on job characteristics based on Hackman and Oldham's theory, measured using a seven-point Likert scale. This section of the questionnaire contained 15 questions. It should be noted that in this questionnaire, questions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 14 were reverse-scored; therefore, their scoring method was opposite to that of the other questions.

In the present study, face validity was used to determine the validity of the data collection tool. Specifically, the initial questionnaire was given to university professors and experts to provide their opinions on the questions. Subsequently, the professors' and experts' feedback were incorporated into the questionnaire, and necessary modifications were made to the questions.

Cronbach's alpha test was used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire. Based on this method, a preliminary study was conducted on 40 members of the target population, and using SPSS statistical software, the reliability coefficients for the job characteristics and professional ethics questions were found to be 0.75 and 0.92, respectively. These values indicate, firstly, that the questionnaire items have a high correlation with each other, and secondly, that the research questionnaire has high reliability.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data obtained from the collected questionnaires. Specifically, frequency distribution tables and percentage responses were used to describe the sample's answers to the questions. Bar charts were used to visually present the statistical data from the general questions. At the inferential level, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Spearman's correlation test were used to test the research hypotheses, employing SPSS software.

3. Findings and Results

The responses obtained from the questionnaires indicated that out of the total sample of 192 participants, 153 (79.7%) were male and 39 (20.3%) were female. Furthermore, 27 participants (14.1%) were single, and 165 (85.9%) were married. In terms of educational level, 35 participants (18.2%) held a high school diploma, 25 (13%) held an associate degree, 92 (47.9%) held a bachelor's degree, and 40 (20.9%) held a master's degree or higher.

The responses obtained from the questionnaires regarding the work experience of the respondents are presented in Table 2. As observed, the highest frequency belongs to the 5-10 years of experience group with 123 participants (64.1%), and the lowest frequency belongs to the 16-20 years group with 2 participants (1%). The frequency distribution and percentages are detailed in the following Table 2.

The frequency distribution and percentage of sample responses to the age question are presented in Table 3. According to the findings, the highest frequency belongs to the 25-35 years age group with 108 participants (56.3%), and the lowest frequency belongs to the over 55 years group with 2 participants (1.0%). Details are provided in the Table 3.

Table 2

Frequency and percentage distribution of sample responses to the work experience question

Work Experience	Less than 5 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	More than 25 years	No response	Total
Frequency	15	123	30	2	13	7	2	192
Percentage	7.8	64.1	15.6	1.0	6.8	3.7	1.0	100

Table 3

Frequency and percentage distribution of sample responses to the age question

Age	Less than 25 years	25-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	More than 55 years	No response	Total
Frequency	20	108	42	19	2	1	192
Percentage	10.4	56.3	21.9	9.9	1.0	0.5	100

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for 15 items from a Job Characteristics Questionnaire administered to a sample of 192 respondents. Table 5 provides the frequency distribution and percentage of responses to the Professional Ethics Questionnaire items, measured on a five-point scale from "Very Low" to "Very High." According to Table 5, most respondents rated their professional ethics at high or very high levels across several items.

Table 4

Frequency distribution and percentage of sample responses to job characteristics items

	Completely False		Mostly Not True		Somewhat Incorrect		Undecided		Somewhat True		Mostly True		Completely True		
Items	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Total Freq
1	0	0.0	72	37.5	25	13.0	0	0.0	41	21.4	32	16.7	22	11.5	192
2	33	17.2	51	26.6	42	21.9	0	0.0	54	28.1	11	5.7	1	0.5	192
3	4	2.1	43	22.4	17	8.9	0	0.0	65	33.9	44	22.9	19	9.9	192
4	21	10.9	78	40.6	49	25.5	8	4.2	28	14.6	0	0.0	8	4.2	192
5	3	1.6	19	9.9	14	7.3	21	10.9	44	22.9	68	35.4	23	12.0	192
6	1	0.5	0	0.0	8	4.2	10	5.2	104	54.2	13	6.8	56	29.2	192
7	5	2.6	3	1.6	0	0.0	12	6.3	96	50.0	48	25.0	28	14.6	192
8	70	36.5	20	10.4	81	42.2	10	5.2	2	1.0	5	2.6	4	2.1	192
9	1	0.5	9	4.7	9	4.7	23	12.0	27	14.1	107	55.7	16	8.9	192
10	42	21.9	65	33.9	22	11.5	25	13.0	36	18.8	0	0.0	3	1.6	192
11	1	0.5	46	24.0	6	3.1	41	21.4	38	19.8	43	22.4	17	8.9	192
12	2	1.0	45	23.4	1	0.5	21	10.9	74	38.5	44	22.9	5	2.6	192
13	1	0.5	0	0.0	30	15.6	24	12.5	68	35.4	59	30.7	10	5.2	192
14	0	0.0	25	13.0	56	29.2	49	25.5	54	28.1	4	2.1	4	2.1	192
15	3	1.6	46	24.0	51	26.6	6	3.1	41	21.4	27	14.1	18	9.4	192

Table 5

Frequency distribution and percentage of sample responses to professional ethics questions

	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High		
Items	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Total Freq
1	2	1.0	42	20.9	17	8.9	104	54.2	27	14.1	192
2	1	0.5	24	12.5	34	17.7	89	46.4	44	22.9	192
3	1	0.5	7	2.6	54	28.1	102	53.1	28	14.6	192
4	1	0.5	29	15.1	51	26.6	78	40.6	33	17.2	192
5	2	1.0	38	19.8	42	21.9	87	45.3	23	12.0	192
6	0	0.0	32	16.7	43	22.4	94	49.0	23	12.0	192
7	0	0.0	13	6.8	65	33.9	78	40.6	46	24.0	192
8	0	0.0	24	12.5	38	19.8	107	55.7	23	8.9	192
9	0	0.0	24	12.5	88	45.8	56	29.2	25	13.0	192
10	1	0.5	2	1.0	92	47.9	64	33.3	33	17.2	192

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for the main research variables, including feedback, autonomy and freedom, task significance, task identity, skill variety, overall job characteristics, and professional ethics. The table reports the number of respondents (N = 192 for all variables), with no missing responses. The minimum and maximum values further illustrate the dispersion of responses across the seven-point scale.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of research variables

Statistic	Feedback	Autonomy & Freedom	Task Significance	Task Identity	Skill Variety	Job Characteristics	Professional Ethics
N	192	192	192	192	192	192	192
Mean	4.252	4.877	4.319	4.425	3.902	4.169	3.634
Median	4.333	4.000	4.333	4.333	4.333	4.266	3.600
Mode	3.67	4.00	4.67	4.00	4.33	4.27	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.916	0.946	0.506	0.741	1.059	0.557	0.739
Variance	0.840	0.896	0.257	0.550	1.123	0.310	0.546
Range	5.00	4.67	3.00	5.33	4.33	3.40	3.00
Minimum	1.33	1.67	2.33	1.67	1.67	2.53	2.00
Maximum	6.33	6.33	5.33	7.00	6.00	5.93	5.00

To assess the normality of the data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted at a 95% confidence level, i.e., a significance level of 0.05. Based on the obtained results, the calculated p-value for the variables was less than the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the normality assumption. Consequently, non-parametric methods were used to test the hypotheses, and in this study, the Spearman correlation test was applied.

As shown in Table 7, the significance level of the Spearman test is 0.000, which is smaller than the minimum significance level of 0.05. Furthermore, the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient is 0.501, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Table 7

Spearman test for determining the correlation between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics

Job Characteristics	Growth of Professional Ethics		
Job Characteristics	Spearman correlation	1	0.501
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.501	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	192	192

As shown in Table 8, and considering the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.298, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom, there is a significant relationship between the characteristic of skill variety in the job and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Table 8

Spearman test for determining the correlation between skill variety in the job and the growth of professional ethics

Skill Variety in the Job	Growth of Professional Ethics		
Skill Variety in the Job	Spearman correlation	1	0.298
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.298	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	192	192

As shown in Table 9, and considering the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.302, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom, there is a significant relationship between the characteristic of task identity and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Table 9

Spearman test for determining the correlation between task identity and the growth of professional ethics

Task Identity	Growth of Professional Ethics		
Task Identity	Spearman correlation	1	0.302
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.302	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	192	192

As shown in Table 10, considering the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.291, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom, there is a significant relationship between the characteristic of task significance and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Table 10

Spearman test for determining the correlation between task significance and the growth of professional ethics

Task Significance	Growth of Professional Ethics		
Task Significance	Spearman correlation	1	0.291
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.291	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	192	192

Considering the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.454, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom, there is a significant relationship between the characteristic of autonomy and freedom in the job and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company (Table 11).

Table 11

Spearman test for determining the correlation between autonomy and freedom in the job and the growth of professional ethics

Autonomy and Freedom in the Job	Growth of Professional Ethics		
Autonomy and Freedom in the Job	Spearman correlation	1	0.454
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.454	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	192	192

The calculated Spearman correlation coefficient in Table 12 is 0.328, which is greater than the critical Spearman value of 0.279 with 191 degrees of freedom. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the characteristic of job feedback and the growth of professional ethics among employees of the East Azerbaijan Gas Company.

Table 12

Spearman test for determining the correlation between job feedback and the growth of professional ethics

	Job Feedback	Growth of Professional Ethics	
Job Feedback	Spearman correlation	1	0.328
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192
Growth of Professional Ethics	Spearman correlation	0.328	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	192	192

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between job characteristics and the growth of professional ethics among employees. Specifically, the overall correlation coefficient between job characteristics and professional ethics was reported at a moderate level, indicating that improvements in the structural and psychological features of jobs are associated with meaningful increases in ethical behavior. Among the individual dimensions of job characteristics, autonomy and freedom demonstrated the strongest relationship with professional ethics, followed by job feedback, task identity, skill variety, and task significance. These findings suggest that employees who experience greater independence in their roles, receive clearer feedback about their performance, and perceive their tasks as meaningful and identifiable are more likely to exhibit higher levels of professional ethics. The consistency of significance across all sub-hypotheses indicates that job design plays a comprehensive and multifaceted role in shaping ethical behavior within organizations .

The positive association between job characteristics and professional ethics can be interpreted within the broader framework of organizational behavior and ethical theory. Jobs that are enriched with autonomy and meaningful engagement tend to enhance employees' intrinsic motivation, which in turn fosters a stronger internalization of ethical values. When employees perceive that they have control over their work and that their contributions are significant, they are more likely to act responsibly and align their behavior with organizational norms and ethical standards. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptual framework suggesting that job characteristics influence psychological states, which subsequently affect behavioral outcomes, including ethical conduct (Omar et al., 2022). In this regard, the findings of the present study reinforce the argument that job design is not only a determinant of performance and satisfaction but also a critical driver of ethical behavior.

The strong relationship observed between autonomy and professional ethics is particularly noteworthy. Autonomy allows employees to exercise discretion and make decisions independently, which increases their sense of responsibility and accountability. This heightened sense of ownership over work outcomes can lead to more deliberate and ethically conscious decision-making processes. Ethical leadership and strategic management literature also emphasize the importance of empowering employees as a means of fostering ethical climates within organizations (Amayreh, 2020; Ongaro & Ferlie, 2020). When employees are entrusted with autonomy, they are more likely to internalize organizational values and demonstrate ethical integrity in their actions. Furthermore, autonomy reduces the likelihood of blind compliance with unethical directives, thereby promoting moral agency and ethical resistance.

Similarly, the significant relationship between job feedback and professional ethics highlights the role of communication and performance evaluation in shaping ethical behavior. Feedback mechanisms provide employees with information about the consequences of their actions, enabling them to adjust their behavior in line with organizational expectations. Transparent and constructive feedback fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, which are essential components of ethical organizations. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that ethical behavior is reinforced through organizational systems that promote transparency and clear communication (Martinez et al., 2021). In environments where feedback is absent or unclear, employees may lack the necessary guidance to evaluate the ethical implications of their actions, increasing the risk of unethical conduct.

The relationships identified between task identity, task significance, and professional ethics further emphasize the

importance of meaningful work in promoting ethical behavior. Task identity, which refers to the extent to which a job involves completing a whole and identifiable piece of work, enhances employees' sense of ownership and responsibility. Task significance, on the other hand, reflects the perceived impact of a job on others and on the organization. When employees recognize that their work has meaningful consequences, they are more likely to adhere to ethical standards and consider the broader implications of their actions. These findings are consistent with the notion that ethical behavior is influenced by employees' perceptions of their role within the organization and the value of their contributions (Roszkowska & Mele, 2021). Meaningful work creates a moral context in which ethical behavior becomes a natural and integral part of job performance.

The significant association between skill variety and professional ethics also provides important insights into the role of job complexity in shaping ethical behavior. Jobs that require a diverse set of skills and competencies encourage employees to engage more deeply with their work, fostering a sense of personal growth and professional development. This engagement can enhance ethical awareness by exposing employees to different perspectives and encouraging critical thinking. Moreover, skill variety reduces monotony and disengagement, which are often associated with unethical behavior due to lack of motivation and oversight. The relationship between job complexity and ethical behavior can also be understood in light of research on moral development, which suggests that exposure to diverse experiences enhances individuals' ability to make ethical judgments (Xu et al., 2024).

The overall findings of the study are consistent with the broader literature on professional ethics and organizational performance. Previous studies have demonstrated that ethical practices contribute to improved organizational outcomes, including increased productivity, enhanced employee satisfaction, and stronger stakeholder relationships (Chinwe & Chukwuemeka, 2025). By establishing a link between job characteristics and professional ethics, the present study extends this line of research by identifying job design as a key mechanism through which ethical behavior can be promoted. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary organizations, where ethical challenges are becoming increasingly complex due to globalization, technological advancements, and evolving societal expectations.

The results of this study also align with research on organizational ethics management, which emphasizes the importance of integrating ethical values into organizational structures and processes. Ethical behavior is not solely a function of individual values but is also shaped by the organizational environment in which employees operate. The concept of organizational moral structure suggests that ethical behavior emerges from the interaction between individual characteristics and organizational systems (Roszkowska & Mele, 2021). In this context, job characteristics can be seen as a critical component of the organizational environment that influences ethical behavior. By designing jobs that promote autonomy, meaningful engagement, and clear feedback, organizations can create conditions that support ethical conduct.

Furthermore, the findings can be interpreted in light of ethical impact theory, which posits that unethical behavior has negative consequences for individual well-being and organizational performance (Giacalone et al., 2023). By enhancing job characteristics, organizations can reduce the likelihood of unethical behavior and its associated negative outcomes. For example, increasing autonomy and feedback can help employees identify and avoid unethical actions, thereby improving both individual and organizational outcomes. This perspective highlights the preventive role of job design in mitigating ethical risks.

The study's findings are also relevant to discussions on corporate social responsibility and institutional ethics. Organizations that prioritize ethical behavior are more likely to engage in socially responsible practices and contribute to sustainable development (Ghazinoori et al., 2024). By fostering professional ethics through job design, organizations can enhance their social legitimacy and build trust with stakeholders. This is particularly important in sectors where ethical considerations are closely linked to public trust, such as energy, healthcare, and public administration.

In addition, the results resonate with cultural and philosophical perspectives on ethics, which emphasize the importance of values such as responsibility, integrity, and social harmony. For instance, Confucian virtue ethics highlights the role of moral character and social responsibility in shaping ethical behavior (Yuan et al., 2023). Similarly, Islamic ethical frameworks emphasize accountability and justice as fundamental principles of ethical conduct (Zahiri & Sahal, 2025). The alignment of job characteristics with these values can enhance ethical

awareness and promote responsible behavior among employees.

Despite the robust findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single organizational context, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other organizations or industries. The reliance on self-reported data may also introduce bias, as respondents may have provided socially desirable answers regarding their ethical behavior. Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for causal inferences, and the observed relationships may be influenced by unmeasured variables.

Future research should explore the relationship between job characteristics and professional ethics in diverse organizational contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the causal mechanisms underlying this relationship and to assess changes in ethical behavior over time. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the moderating effects of variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, and individual differences on the relationship between job characteristics and professional ethics. The integration of qualitative approaches may also provide deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of employees regarding ethical behavior.

From a practical perspective, organizations should prioritize the design and implementation of jobs that promote autonomy, meaningful engagement, and effective feedback mechanisms. Human resource policies should be aligned with ethical objectives to ensure that job design supports the development of professional ethics. Training programs focusing on ethical awareness and decision-making should be integrated with job design initiatives to reinforce ethical behavior. Additionally, organizations should establish transparent communication systems and accountability mechanisms to support ethical conduct and prevent unethical practices.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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Declaration of Interest

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In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were considered.

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