

Testing a Structural Model of Managers' Professional Ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to test a structural model of managers' professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan by examining the effects of occupational, cultural, political, and organizational factors and the consequences of professional ethics.

Methods and Materials: This applied-developmental study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design based on partial least squares structural equation modeling. The statistical population included Afghan doctoral students in public administration and Islamic sciences, former and current political figures, and experts in Hajj and endowment affairs. Participants were recruited through purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. Of 120 distributed questionnaires, 100 complete questionnaires were analyzed. Data were collected using a researcher-developed 34-item questionnaire derived from a preceding qualitative thematic analysis. Content validity was assessed by five experts and face validity through pilot testing with 20 participants. Data were analyzed using SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 3. Measurement-model quality was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and factor loadings, while structural relationships were tested using path coefficients, t statistics, p values, R², and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Findings: Fear and job insecurity had a significant negative effect on managers' professional ethics ($\beta = -0.254$, $p = 0.036$), as did ethnic favoritism and partiality ($\beta = -0.297$, $p = 0.010$). Organizational climate positively predicted professional ethics ($\beta = 0.596$, $p < 0.001$), while political fluctuations and environmental instability negatively predicted organizational climate ($\beta = -0.817$, $p < 0.001$). Professional ethics strongly increased positive consequences ($\beta = 0.936$, $p < 0.001$) and reduced negative consequences ($\beta = -0.952$, $p < 0.001$). Religious-cultural values, monitoring-accountability weaknesses, structural-managerial weaknesses, and the direct effect of political instability on professional ethics were nonsignificant. The model explained 84.6% of organizational climate, 94.0% of professional ethics, 87.7% of positive consequences, and 90.6% of negative consequences.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that professional ethics among managers is strongly shaped by organizational climate and is adversely influenced by job insecurity and ethnic favoritism, while political instability appears to operate mainly through deterioration of the organizational climate.

Keywords: Professional ethics, managers, organizational climate, job insecurity, ethnic favoritism, political instability, Hajj and endowments, Afghanistan.

1. Introduction

Professional ethics has become a central concern in contemporary organizational and managerial scholarship because managerial decisions are rarely confined to technical or administrative considerations; rather, they frequently involve judgments about fairness, responsibility, accountability, public interest, integrity, and the legitimate exercise of authority. In both public and private organizations, professional ethics provides a normative framework through which managers determine not only what actions are legally permissible, but also what forms of conduct are morally defensible and professionally appropriate. This distinction is increasingly important in institutional settings where formal regulations alone cannot anticipate every ethical dilemma faced by decision-makers. Contemporary discussions of professional ethics therefore distinguish genuine moral commitment from mere regulatory compliance and emphasize the need to embed ethical reasoning within professional identity and everyday organizational practice (Saputra & Yusnaini, 2026). Research on professional ethics across occupational and institutional settings likewise suggests that ethical practice is shaped by practitioners' interpretations of professional duties, responsibilities, standards, and relationships with stakeholders rather than by written codes alone (Sam & Simmons Berwise, 2026). From this perspective, organizational ethics is not simply a collection of formal rules but a broader institutional phenomenon involving the ways organizations define, communicate, interpret, and enact moral expectations (Rhodes, 2023). Professional ethics should therefore be understood in relation to ordinary morality, professional obligations, institutional purposes, and the practical circumstances under which organizational actors make decisions (Sinnicks, 2023).

The conceptual foundations of professional ethics are closely connected to major traditions of moral philosophy. Deontological approaches emphasize duties, obligations, principles, and the intrinsic moral status of actions, suggesting that certain professional behaviors are required or prohibited irrespective of their immediate consequences (Dilbar, 2024). The distinction between deontological and utilitarian reasoning is particularly relevant to organizational decision-making because managers may encounter situations in which adherence to rules and professional duties conflicts with attempts to maximize collective benefits (Chukwuneke & Ezenwugo, 2022). Utilitarian reasoning, by contrast, focuses more strongly on the

consequences of decisions and the extent to which alternative courses of action produce desirable outcomes for the greatest number of affected individuals. However, moral judgments are not formed in an abstract environment; situational characteristics can substantially influence how individuals evaluate ethically difficult choices, as demonstrated by the broader literature on sacrificial and utilitarian dilemmas (Klenk, 2022). Recent attempts to examine alignment with utilitarian moral reasoning in artificial intelligence systems further demonstrate the continuing relevance of consequentialist thinking to contemporary ethical analysis (Marraffini et al., 2024). For organizational managers, these philosophical perspectives underscore that professional ethics may involve simultaneous consideration of duties, consequences, institutional norms, and the interests of different groups.

A further theoretical basis for understanding managerial ethics can be found in social contract and stakeholder perspectives. Social contract theories conceptualize legitimate authority and social cooperation in terms of reciprocal expectations, obligations, and accepted rules governing relationships among individuals and institutions (Colin-Jaeger, 2025). Violations of such rules may undermine trust and cooperation because individuals tend to interpret social relationships partly through expectations concerning reciprocity and adherence to shared norms (Farrelly, 2021). In organizations exercising public authority, this perspective is especially pertinent because managers occupy positions that entail responsibilities not merely to their immediate superiors but also to employees, citizens, service recipients, communities, and the wider institutional order. Stakeholder theory similarly emphasizes that organizational decisions must be understood in relation to multiple parties whose legitimate interests may be influenced by managerial choices (Mahajan et al., 2023). Studies of stakeholder engagement have consequently highlighted the importance of systematic strategies for recognizing and responding to different stakeholder groups rather than privileging a single organizational interest (Shah & Guild, 2022). In public and religious organizations, professional ethics can therefore be viewed as a mechanism for balancing multiple obligations while maintaining legitimacy, fairness, accountability, and public trust.

Professional ethics is also inseparable from organizational culture and the institutional environment within which managers act. Organizational culture influences how members interpret acceptable behavior, authority relationships, organizational priorities, and

informal expectations. Cultural analysis therefore provides an important framework for examining how shared assumptions and everyday organizational practices shape employee and managerial behavior (Driskill & Mirivel, 2025). Ethical values are also embedded in organizational processes, routines, and decision systems, making ethics relevant to the design and management of business and administrative processes rather than only to individual morality (Kern et al., 2024). Contemporary organizational environments introduce additional ethical dilemmas associated with technological change, digitalization, information management, surveillance, accountability, and new forms of decision-making, reinforcing the necessity of systematic ethical governance (Fülöp et al., 2025). At the leadership level, ethical recovery following organizational failures requires more than punitive responses; it depends on leadership practices capable of reconstructing moral responsibility, trust, and ethically meaningful relationships (Cullen, 2022). These perspectives collectively suggest that managerial ethics is simultaneously individual, relational, cultural, and structural.

The competence of managers is therefore not limited to technical knowledge, administrative expertise, or decision-making capacity. Contemporary competency frameworks increasingly encompass behavioral, interpersonal, value-based, and ethical dimensions. Research addressing general competency models for public-sector employees demonstrates the growing importance of multidimensional competency frameworks in government organizations (Dehghanpour Farashah et al., 2026). Likewise, efforts to develop competency models for managers have emphasized that effective management requires a combination of professional capabilities appropriate to organizational responsibilities and institutional expectations (Khadivi et al., 2025). Government organizations are also complex systems in which managers must respond to uncertainty, multiple actors, changing demands, and interactions across formal and informal structures; consequently, complexity-oriented leadership models have become increasingly relevant in public administration (Keyvani et al., 2025). The ethical leadership literature similarly positions leadership behavior as an important organizational mechanism through which standards, expectations, and interpersonal relationships are communicated and reinforced (Hoang et al., 2023). These lines of research indicate that professional ethics should be incorporated into broader conceptions of managerial competence rather than treated as an optional personal characteristic.

In Muslim societies and religiously oriented public institutions, the ethical responsibilities of managers may additionally be interpreted through religious values and indigenous moral traditions. Models of professional ethics developed from religious sources illustrate attempts to formulate managerial conduct in accordance with principles grounded in Islamic moral thought and culturally meaningful value systems (Jafari Rad et al., 2021). Related work has drawn on the ethical thought of Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi to develop professional ethics frameworks within specialized occupational domains, demonstrating the possibility of integrating classical moral philosophy with contemporary professional requirements (Sadeghi et al., 2025). Islamic work ethics has also been examined in relation to important organizational attitudes and behaviors, including organizational citizenship, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Riadi et al., 2025). These perspectives are particularly relevant to organizations whose missions explicitly combine administrative responsibilities with religious functions. In such contexts, professional ethics is likely to be evaluated not only according to formal administrative standards but also through expectations of honesty, justice, trustworthiness, impartiality, stewardship, respect for religious principles, and responsible service to the community.

The development of professional ethics within government organizations, however, requires supportive institutional capacity. A capacity-building approach to professional ethics emphasizes that ethical conduct cannot be sustainably strengthened solely by exhorting individuals to behave ethically; organizational structures, educational mechanisms, managerial processes, and institutional capacities must also facilitate ethical practice (Memarzadeh Tehran et al., 2023). Professional ethics has likewise been examined in relation to broader forms of organizational responsibility, including the disclosure of corporate social responsibility information, suggesting that managers' ethical orientations may have implications for institutional transparency and accountability (Rahmani et al., 2018). Earlier organizational research has also connected professional ethics with intellectual capital, knowledge sharing, and effective professional performance, indicating that ethical climates may intersect with knowledge-based and relational dimensions of organizational effectiveness (Ghasemzadeh Alishahi et al., 2018). Consequently, professional ethics should be considered both an ethical outcome in itself and a potential antecedent of desirable institutional consequences, such as greater trust,

cooperation, transparency, organizational commitment, responsible conduct, and public legitimacy.

At the individual level, ethical conduct is influenced by psychological processes associated with moral identity, moral disengagement, and moral judgment. Moral disengagement is particularly significant because it provides cognitive mechanisms through which individuals can justify behavior that conflicts with moral standards, while moral identity can operate as an important reference point for ethically relevant workplace behavior (Ke & Li, 2025). Moral orientations may also develop within broader socialization processes; research on the intergenerational transmission of moral decision-making inclinations highlights the potential role of family and relational environments in shaping patterns of moral judgment (Chen et al., 2024). Moreover, moral decision-making has been studied in connection with psychological well-being and behavioral differences across social and performance contexts (Özsarı & Görücü, 2023). These studies imply that organizational ethics emerges partly from personal moral dispositions but is unlikely to be adequately explained by individual characteristics alone. Ethical behavior is shaped through interaction between personal values and the institutional environment in which individuals experience incentives, threats, group pressures, expectations, and opportunities for action.

This interaction becomes particularly important in politically unstable or institutionally fragile environments. Political instability can alter organizational priorities, weaken continuity, increase uncertainty, intensify perceived vulnerability, and complicate the implementation of stable administrative and ethical standards. Research addressing political instability and organizational ethics in developing-country contexts underscores the relevance of political and environmental conditions to ethical functioning in public organizations (Habibi & Karimi, 2022). Under conditions of uncertainty, managers may experience heightened job insecurity and fear regarding their positions, while organizational decisions may become more susceptible to political intervention, informal influence, or rapidly changing expectations. Such environments can also affect organizational climate by reducing predictability and psychological security. Professional ethics in this context should therefore be studied not only as an individual commitment to ethical principles but also as an outcome potentially conditioned by political fluctuations, environmental instability, perceived employment insecurity, and the quality of the organizational climate.

Another important contextual concern involves favoritism and particularistic relationships. Public organizations are normatively expected to make personnel and administrative decisions according to principles of merit, equality, impartiality, and public responsibility. However, where organizational relationships are influenced by ethnic, factional, familial, political, or other forms of preferential affiliation, professional standards may come into tension with informal loyalties. Such tensions can weaken confidence in organizational justice and create conditions in which employees perceive ethical principles to be applied inconsistently. Organizational culture is particularly significant in this respect because repeated practices can normalize particular forms of behavior and gradually transform them into accepted informal rules (Driskill & Mirivel, 2025). Ethical leadership, conversely, can contribute to establishing expectations that professional standards should govern organizational relationships and decisions (Hoang et al., 2023). Accordingly, a culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality represents a theoretically important factor when investigating managerial professional ethics in a multicultural and politically complex organizational setting.

The concept of organizational climate is especially important for integrating these individual and institutional dimensions. Organizational climate reflects employees' and managers' perceptions of prevailing organizational conditions, practices, interpersonal relationships, expectations, and patterns of support. A favorable organizational climate can provide psychological and institutional conditions for responsible decision-making, whereas an environment characterized by insecurity, inconsistency, distrust, or instability may make ethical conduct more difficult to sustain. In this sense, organizational climate may function as an intermediary mechanism through which broader political and cultural conditions are translated into managerial behavior. The distinction between formal ethical expectations and actual everyday organizational experience is also consistent with arguments that professional ethics cannot be reduced to compliance with regulations alone (Saputra & Yusnaini, 2026). Understanding professional ethics therefore requires attention to whether the organizational environment enables managers to act consistently with formal and moral expectations.

These concerns acquire particular importance in organizations responsible for religious affairs, Hajj administration, and endowments. Such organizations

administer functions that are simultaneously administrative, financial, social, and religious, creating heightened expectations concerning integrity, stewardship, transparency, fairness, and accountability. The management of Hajj-related funds, for example, has been specifically discussed in relation to transparency and accountability to Muslim communities, demonstrating how ethical concerns are directly connected to the legitimacy of religious administrative institutions (Erni, 2025). When public or religious organizations manage resources held in trust, allocate opportunities and services, administer endowments, or make decisions affecting citizens' religious affairs, ethical failures may have consequences extending beyond routine organizational inefficiency. They can undermine public confidence, weaken institutional legitimacy, damage perceptions of religious stewardship, and create broader social dissatisfaction. Conversely, professional ethical conduct may strengthen trust, improve perceptions of fairness, reinforce accountability, and support more sustainable relationships between the organization and its stakeholders.

The Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan represents a particularly important setting for examining these relationships because its managerial responsibilities lie at the intersection of public administration, religious authority, social responsibility, and stewardship. In such a context, professional ethics should be examined as a multidimensional organizational phenomenon influenced by both internal and external forces. Although religious and cultural values may provide normative foundations for ethical conduct, the actual expression of professional ethics may also depend on organizational structures, systems of monitoring and accountability, employment security, informal cultural practices, political stability, and organizational climate. The distinction between normative ethical principles and their organizational implementation is essential because even strongly articulated moral values may fail to produce corresponding behavior where institutional conditions do not support ethical practice. Likewise, managers confronted with fear, instability, favoritism, or weak accountability may experience substantial tension between ethical expectations and perceived organizational realities.

The consequences of professional ethics are also central to the development of a comprehensive structural model. Ethical managerial behavior can theoretically generate positive outcomes through greater credibility, trust, fairness, cooperation, responsible decision-making, and institutional

legitimacy, whereas unethical conduct can generate negative outcomes through distrust, conflict, opportunism, disengagement, and weakened organizational effectiveness. Stakeholder theory provides a useful framework for understanding these consequences because managerial ethics affects multiple groups whose interests and expectations are connected to organizational decisions (Mahajan et al., 2023). Similarly, ethical leadership and moral recovery perspectives suggest that leadership conduct has implications for organizational relationships and the maintenance or restoration of ethical legitimacy (Cullen, 2022). Accordingly, a structural model of professional ethics should consider not only the antecedents of managerial ethics but also the positive and negative organizational consequences associated with ethical and unethical behavior.

Despite the expanding literature on professional ethics, ethical leadership, managerial competency, organizational culture, moral decision-making, and public-sector ethics, important contextual and empirical gaps remain. Much of the existing literature examines professional ethics within specific occupational groups, educational institutions, corporations, healthcare settings, or generalized public-sector environments (Ghasemzadeh Alishahi et al., 2018; Ke & Li, 2025; Sam & Simmons Berwise, 2026). Other studies focus primarily on normative ethical theories, competency frameworks, religious foundations, stakeholder relations, or particular ethical outcomes (Chukwuneke & Ezenwugo, 2022; Dehghanpour Farashah et al., 2026; Jafari Rad et al., 2021; Shah & Guild, 2022). Comparatively less attention has been directed toward empirically integrating political instability, job insecurity, ethnic favoritism, organizational climate, professional ethics, and organizational consequences within a single structural model tailored to the institutional realities of Afghanistan. This gap is especially important because ethical models developed in relatively stable administrative environments may not fully capture the organizational pressures experienced in contexts marked by political volatility, culturally embedded informal relationships, and institutional uncertainty.

Developing and testing a context-sensitive structural model can therefore contribute to both theory and practice. Theoretically, such a model allows professional ethics to be conceptualized as the product of interacting individual, organizational, cultural, and environmental forces rather than as an isolated personal attribute. Practically, identifying the variables most strongly associated with managers' professional ethics can assist policymakers and

organizational leaders in determining whether ethical improvement should primarily emphasize moral education, organizational climate, employment security, impartial administrative practices, institutional accountability, or broader environmental stability. Such an approach is consistent with capacity-building perspectives that conceptualize professional ethics as something that must be supported institutionally (Memarzadeh Tehran et al., 2023), as well as with competency approaches that situate ethical capability within the broader requirements of effective public management (Keyvani et al., 2025; Khadivi et al., 2025). It also recognizes that ethical governance in religious institutions requires a combination of moral legitimacy, managerial competence, transparency, stakeholder responsibility, and organizational conditions that enable managers to act according to professional standards.

Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to test a structural model of managers' professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan by examining the relationships among its organizational, cultural, political, and occupational antecedents, organizational climate, professional ethics, and its positive and negative consequences.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was applied-developmental in terms of its purpose and descriptive-survey and correlational in terms of its nature and data-collection method. A quantitative research approach based on structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to empirically test the proposed structural model of managers' professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the principal objective of this phase of the study was to examine the magnitude and statistical significance of the relationships among the constructs identified during the preceding qualitative phase and to assess the extent to which the proposed conceptual model could be supported by empirical data. The study was cross-sectional, and the quantitative data were collected at a single point within the 2025–2026 study period. The initial conceptual model was developed on the basis of findings obtained from the qualitative phase of the research, in which thematic analysis was conducted according to the six-stage procedure of Braun and Clarke. The initial structural framework comprised six independent variables, including

religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, weaknesses in the monitoring and accountability system, fear and job insecurity, a culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality, and political fluctuations and environmental instability. Organizational climate was conceptualized as a mediating variable, managers' professional ethics as the principal dependent variable, and positive and negative consequences as outcome variables. During the quantitative validation and statistical refinement of the model, constructs and indicators that did not meet the required psychometric and structural criteria were subsequently refined, resulting in a more parsimonious final model comprising five principal constructs.

The statistical population consisted of Afghan individuals possessing specialized academic, political, administrative, or professional knowledge relevant to the organizational context under investigation. More specifically, the target population included Afghan doctoral students in public administration and Islamic sciences, former and current Afghan political figures, and experts familiar with Hajj and endowment affairs. These groups were selected because their academic knowledge, professional experience, and familiarity with the administrative structure, organizational culture, religious functions, and managerial challenges of the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments enabled them to provide informed assessments of the proposed professional ethics model. Given the specialized nature of the population and the difficulties associated with establishing a complete sampling frame, probability sampling was not feasible. Consequently, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were combined with a snowball sampling strategy to facilitate access to qualified respondents and experts who met the inclusion criteria. Participants were considered eligible if they had sufficient academic, professional, political, or administrative knowledge of Afghanistan's public administration system, religious organizations, Hajj and endowment affairs, or organizational ethics and were willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

The required sample size was considered in relation to the analytical requirements of structural equation modeling, the complexity of the proposed model, the number of latent constructs and indicators, and the practical accessibility of the specialized target population. Although different sample-size recommendations have been proposed for SEM depending on model complexity, estimation technique, effect size, and measurement quality, a final sample of 100 valid respondents was considered adequate for the partial

least squares structural equation modeling approach employed in this study. To compensate for possible nonresponse and incomplete questionnaires, 120 questionnaires were initially distributed. Of these, 100 questionnaires were returned in a complete and usable form and were included in the final statistical analyses, representing a usable response rate of 83.3%. Recruitment was conducted through both direct access to eligible individuals and referrals from initial participants to other qualified experts. This combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball procedures was particularly useful for reaching individuals with specialized knowledge who might otherwise have been difficult to identify or contact through conventional sampling procedures.

2.2. Instruments

The primary instrument used for quantitative data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire constructed directly from the concepts, categories, and themes generated during the qualitative phase of the study. The development of the questionnaire therefore constituted a systematic conversion of qualitative findings into measurable quantitative indicators. In the preceding qualitative analysis, a total of 509 open codes had been identified and subsequently organized into eight axial codes and higher-order themes. These qualitative findings were reviewed and transformed into operational indicators capable of representing the conceptual dimensions of professional ethics and its organizational antecedents and consequences. For each principal indicator, several candidate items were initially developed to ensure adequate representation of the corresponding theoretical construct. Following expert review and item refinement, the final quantitative questionnaire comprised 34 items representing 10 initial constructs. All substantive items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, indicating “strongly disagree,” to 5, indicating “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicated a greater level of agreement with the content represented by the corresponding item and, depending on the construct, a stronger presence of the organizational condition or ethical characteristic being measured.

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section collected respondents’ demographic and background information considered relevant to describing the study sample. The second section contained the 34 substantive items designed to measure the constructs derived from the qualitative model, including religious and cultural

values, structural and managerial weaknesses, deficiencies in monitoring and accountability, fear and job insecurity, ethnic favoritism and partiality, political and environmental instability, organizational climate, managers’ professional ethics, and positive and negative organizational consequences. Particular attention was given during item construction to ensuring that individual statements were concise, conceptually focused, comprehensible to respondents with different professional backgrounds, and sufficiently specific to the organizational and sociocultural context of Afghanistan. The questionnaire was also designed to minimize ambiguity and unnecessary overlap between items so that each indicator could provide a meaningful contribution to the measurement of its intended latent construct.

Content validity of the researcher-developed instrument was evaluated by a panel of five university academics with expertise in public administration, organizational ethics, and related areas. The experts examined the relevance, representativeness, conceptual correspondence, clarity, and appropriateness of the proposed items in relation to the constructs generated during the qualitative phase. Their comments were used to revise the wording of ambiguous statements, eliminate unnecessary overlap, and improve the correspondence between the items and their intended dimensions. Face validity was subsequently assessed through pilot administration of the preliminary questionnaire to 20 individuals drawn from the target population. Participants in the pilot stage were asked to evaluate the clarity, readability, comprehensibility, lack of ambiguity, and contextual appropriateness of the items. Feedback obtained during this stage was incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The finalized instrument was distributed both electronically and in person to facilitate participation among geographically and professionally dispersed respondents. Completing the questionnaire required approximately 15–20 minutes. Only questionnaires with sufficiently complete responses for statistical analysis were retained in the final dataset.

The psychometric properties of the measurement instrument were additionally examined during structural equation modeling. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability, whereas convergent validity was assessed through standardized outer loadings and average variance extracted. Indicators and constructs that did not demonstrate satisfactory psychometric performance were examined during the measurement-model refinement process. This

procedure made it possible to move from the broader theoretically derived initial framework to a more statistically parsimonious measurement structure while retaining the conceptual dimensions that most adequately represented the phenomenon of professional ethics among managers in the organizational context under investigation. Thus, the instrument-development process integrated qualitative conceptual development, expert judgment, pilot testing, and quantitative psychometric assessment to strengthen the correspondence between the theoretical model and its empirical operationalization.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted at both descriptive and inferential levels using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 and SmartPLS version 3. Before the principal analyses were conducted, the returned questionnaires were screened for completeness and suitability for statistical analysis, and the 100 questionnaires meeting the required criteria constituted the final analytical dataset. Descriptive statistical procedures were first employed to characterize the respondents and summarize the distributions of the principal study variables. Measures of central tendency, including the mean and median, and measures of dispersion, including the standard deviation, variance, and range, were calculated where appropriate. Frequency and percentage distributions were also used to describe demographic and background characteristics of the participants. These analyses provided an initial understanding of the sample and the distributional characteristics of the observed variables before evaluation of the measurement and structural models.

The hypothesized relationships among the study constructs were examined using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3. PLS-SEM was selected because the primary purpose of the quantitative phase was prediction and validation of a theoretically developed model, because the model included multiple latent constructs and interrelated paths, and because the approach is suitable for analyses involving comparatively limited sample sizes and does not depend on the stringent multivariate normality assumptions associated with covariance-based structural equation modeling. Model evaluation was undertaken sequentially by first examining the measurement model and then assessing the structural model. Evaluation of the measurement model focused on the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Indicator reliability was assessed through the magnitude of the outer

factor loadings, while internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated through the average variance extracted (AVE), in conjunction with the magnitude and statistical adequacy of the item loadings. Indicators demonstrating inadequate psychometric performance were examined in relation to both statistical criteria and their theoretical relevance before refinement of the model.

Following establishment of an acceptable measurement model, the structural component of the model was evaluated to determine the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships. Standardized path coefficients (β) were calculated for the relationships among the latent constructs. The statistical significance of these coefficients was evaluated using *t* statistics and corresponding *p* values. The explanatory power of the endogenous constructs was assessed through coefficients of determination (R^2), which indicated the proportion of variance in each endogenous variable explained by its predictor constructs. Particular attention was given to the structural pathways through which the identified organizational, cultural, managerial, and environmental factors were related to organizational climate and managers' professional ethics, as well as to the pathways connecting professional ethics with its proposed organizational consequences. The quantitative evaluation was also used to identify statistically weak constructs and pathways and to determine whether refinement of the initial qualitative model produced a more parsimonious and empirically supported structural framework.

The statistical significance and stability of the estimated structural coefficients were examined using the nonparametric bootstrapping procedure available in SmartPLS. Based on the original sample of 100 respondents, 5,000 bootstrap subsamples were generated through repeated resampling with replacement. The resulting bootstrap distributions were used to estimate standard errors, *t* statistics, and significance levels for the model parameters, thereby enabling evaluation of the hypothesized relationships without reliance on assumptions of normal sampling distributions. Finally, the overall adequacy of the estimated model was examined using available model-fit and predictive-quality criteria. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI) were examined as indicators of the correspondence between the observed and model-implied relationships. In addition, the goodness-of-fit (GoF) criterion was considered as a

supplementary index combining aspects of measurement quality and explanatory performance. The results of the measurement-model assessment, structural-path analysis, coefficients of determination, bootstrapping procedure, and model-fit evaluation were considered jointly when determining the empirical acceptability of the final structural model of managers' professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan.

3. Findings and Results

The quantitative analysis was conducted in several sequential stages. First, the internal consistency of the ten constructs derived from the initial conceptual model was

examined using Cronbach's alpha. This preliminary reliability assessment was used to identify constructs with satisfactory internal consistency and those requiring further evaluation or removal from the structural model. Subsequently, the measurement model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, followed by examination of the structural paths and their statistical significance through the PLS-SEM procedure. Finally, the explanatory power of the endogenous constructs was evaluated using the coefficient of determination. Table 1 presents the preliminary reliability results for all constructs included in the initial measurement model.

Table 1

Summary of Reliability Statistics for All Constructs

No.	Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level	Status in Final Model
1	Religious and cultural values	3	0.568	Weak	Removed
2	Structural and managerial weaknesses	3	0.543	Weak	Removed
3	Weaknesses in the monitoring and accountability system	3	0.443	Very weak	Removed
4	Fear and job insecurity	3	0.675	Relatively acceptable	Retained
5	Culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality	3	0.668	Relatively acceptable	Retained
6	Political fluctuations and environmental instability	3	0.633	Relatively acceptable	Retained
7	Negative consequences of organizational unethical conduct	3	0.595	Weak	Retained*
8	Positive consequences of ethical conduct	4	0.700	Desirable	Retained
9	Managers' professional ethics	5	0.742	Desirable	Retained
10	Organizational climate	4	0.824	Excellent	Retained

As shown in Table 1, organizational climate demonstrated the highest internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.824, followed by managers' professional ethics with an alpha of 0.742. Positive consequences of ethical conduct also reached the desirable reliability threshold, with an alpha coefficient of 0.700. Fear and job insecurity, culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality, and political fluctuations and environmental instability produced alpha coefficients of 0.675, 0.668, and 0.633, respectively, indicating relatively acceptable reliability for an exploratory study. In contrast, religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, and weaknesses in the monitoring and accountability system showed comparatively weak internal consistency, with alpha values of 0.568, 0.543, and 0.443, respectively, and were therefore removed during refinement of the model. The

negative consequences construct also had a relatively low alpha coefficient of 0.595; nevertheless, it was retained because it represented an important theoretical consequence of managers' professional ethics and was considered necessary for preserving the conceptual completeness of the proposed model.

Following the preliminary reliability assessment, the measurement model was estimated using the partial least squares approach in SmartPLS 3. The quality of each latent construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. These indices were considered together rather than relying exclusively on a single reliability coefficient because PLS-SEM measurement assessment requires evaluation of both internal consistency and convergent validity. The results of this stage are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Measurement Quality Indicators of the Study Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Evaluation
Religious and cultural values	0.550	0.769	0.538	Needs improvement
Structural and managerial weaknesses	0.502	0.757	0.564	Needs improvement
Weaknesses in the monitoring and accountability system	0.448	0.740	0.500	Needs improvement
Fear and job insecurity	0.670	0.823	0.612	Acceptable
Culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality	0.654	0.816	0.605	Acceptable
Political fluctuations and environmental instability	0.652	0.800	0.597	Acceptable
Organizational climate	0.824	0.884	0.656	Excellent
Managers' professional ethics	0.740	0.833	0.509	Good
Positive consequences	0.677	0.808	0.538	Acceptable
Negative consequences	0.599	0.783	0.551	Acceptable

Table 2 indicates that organizational climate exhibited the strongest measurement properties, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.824, composite reliability of 0.884, and an AVE of 0.656. Managers' professional ethics also demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.740, CR of 0.833, and AVE of 0.509. Fear and job insecurity, ethnic favoritism and partiality, and political fluctuations and environmental instability all demonstrated composite reliability values of at least 0.800 and AVE values above 0.50, despite Cronbach's alpha coefficients being moderately below 0.70. Positive and negative consequences similarly showed adequate composite reliability and AVE values. In contrast, religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, and weaknesses in monitoring and accountability produced low Cronbach's alpha values of 0.550, 0.502, and 0.448, respectively. Although their CR and AVE statistics were

comparatively more acceptable, their weak internal consistency indicated that they required further examination. Consequently, their retention or removal was determined by considering these measurement statistics together with the magnitude and statistical significance of their structural path coefficients.

The structural model was subsequently examined using standardized path coefficients, bootstrap standard errors, t statistics, and p values. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to evaluate whether each proposed structural relationship differed significantly from zero. Relationships with p values below 0.05 were considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, whereas p values below 0.01 provided stronger evidence of statistical significance. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Structural Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation	t Statistic	p Value	Hypothesis Result
Religious and cultural values → Managers' professional ethics	-0.063	0.129	0.491	0.623	Rejected
Fear and job insecurity → Managers' professional ethics	-0.254	0.121	2.101	0.036	Supported
Weaknesses in monitoring and accountability → Managers' professional ethics	-0.048	0.093	0.518	0.604	Rejected
Structural and managerial weaknesses → Managers' professional ethics	-0.200	0.139	1.436	0.151	Rejected
Culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality → Managers' professional ethics	-0.297	0.115	2.589	0.010	Supported
Culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality → Organizational climate	0.108	0.113	0.955	0.340	Rejected
Organizational climate → Managers' professional ethics	0.596	0.107	5.558	<0.001	Supported

Political fluctuations and environmental instability → Managers' professional ethics	-0.246	0.204	1.205	0.228	Rejected
Political fluctuations and environmental instability → Organizational climate	-0.817	0.111	7.365	<0.001	Supported
Managers' professional ethics → Positive consequences	0.936	0.012	80.349	<0.001	Supported
Managers' professional ethics → Negative consequences	-0.952	0.009	101.837	<0.001	Supported

As reported in Table 3, six of the eleven tested structural relationships were statistically significant. Fear and job insecurity had a significant negative association with managers' professional ethics ($\beta = -0.254$, $t = 2.101$, $p = 0.036$), indicating that greater perceived job insecurity was associated with lower levels of professional ethics. A culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality also had a significant negative relationship with professional ethics ($\beta = -0.297$, $t = 2.589$, $p = 0.010$). Organizational climate emerged as a strong positive predictor of managers' professional ethics ($\beta = 0.596$, $t = 5.558$, $p < 0.001$). Political fluctuations and environmental instability had a particularly strong negative relationship with organizational climate ($\beta = -0.817$, $t = 7.365$, $p < 0.001$), although their direct effect on professional ethics was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.246$, $p = 0.228$). Professional ethics, in turn, demonstrated a very strong positive association with positive organizational consequences ($\beta = 0.936$, $t = 80.349$, $p < 0.001$) and a very strong negative association with negative organizational

consequences ($\beta = -0.952$, $t = 101.837$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, the direct effects of religious and cultural values, weaknesses in monitoring and accountability, and structural and managerial weaknesses on managers' professional ethics were not statistically significant. The proposed effect of ethnic favoritism and partiality on organizational climate was also unsupported. These results formed the principal empirical basis for statistical refinement of the initial conceptual model.

The explanatory performance of the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination, R^2 , and its adjusted form. These coefficients represent the proportion of variance in each endogenous construct accounted for by its predictor variables. Higher R^2 values indicate greater explanatory capacity of the structural model. The results for organizational climate, managers' professional ethics, and the positive and negative consequence constructs are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Coefficients of Determination for the Endogenous Constructs

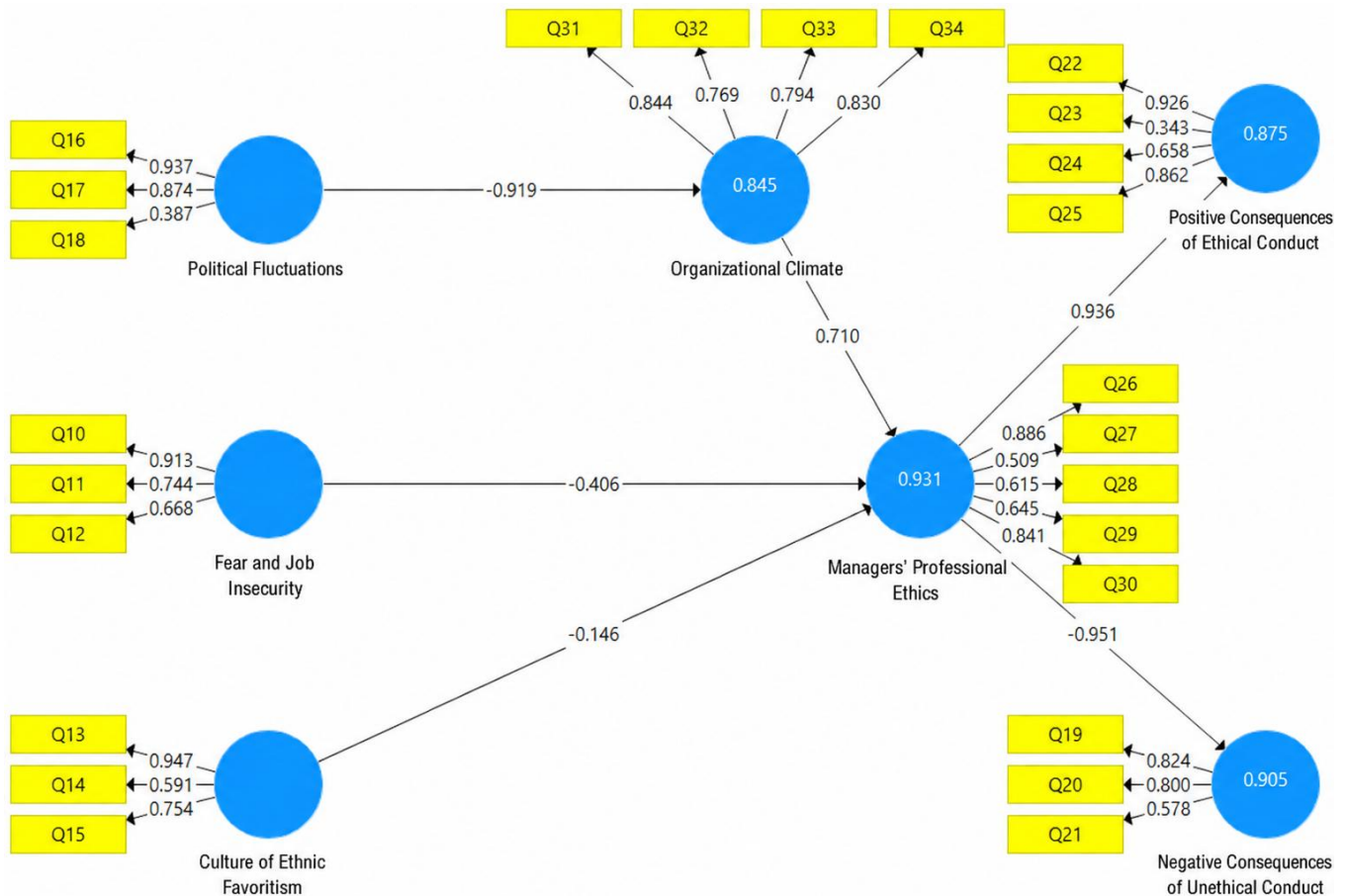
Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Evaluation
Organizational climate	0.846	0.843	Excellent
Managers' professional ethics	0.940	0.935	Excellent
Positive consequences	0.877	0.876	Excellent
Negative consequences	0.906	0.905	Excellent

As shown in Table 4, the structural model demonstrated substantial explanatory power for all endogenous constructs. The predictors included in the model explained 84.6% of the variance in organizational climate ($R^2 = 0.846$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.843$). An even larger proportion of variance was explained for managers' professional ethics, for which the R^2 value reached 0.940 and the adjusted R^2 was 0.935, indicating that approximately 94% of its observed variance was accounted for by the predictors incorporated into the

structural model. Managers' professional ethics explained 87.7% of the variance in positive consequences ($R^2 = 0.877$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.876$) and 90.6% of the variance in negative consequences ($R^2 = 0.906$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.905$). Taken together, these coefficients indicate very high explanatory performance for the endogenous variables and provide quantitative support for the central role of organizational climate and managers' professional ethics in the refined structural model.

Figure 1

Final Model of the Study



Overall, the measurement and structural analyses resulted in refinement of the initial conceptual framework. Religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, and weaknesses in the monitoring and accountability system exhibited weak internal consistency and did not demonstrate statistically significant direct relationships with managers' professional ethics; consequently, they were removed from the final structural model. In contrast, fear and job insecurity, culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality, political fluctuations and environmental instability, organizational climate, and managers' professional ethics were retained on the basis of their theoretical relevance, measurement quality, and/or significant structural relationships. The findings particularly identified organizational climate as a central mechanism within the model, with political instability exerting a strong negative effect on organizational climate and organizational climate, in turn, showing a substantial positive association with professional ethics. Professional ethics was also strongly associated with both desirable and undesirable organizational consequences, positively

predicting positive outcomes and negatively predicting adverse outcomes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study tested a structural model of managers' professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan, with particular attention to occupational insecurity, ethnic favoritism, political instability, organizational climate, and the positive and negative consequences of professional ethics. The findings showed that the initially proposed model required statistical refinement before an acceptable structural configuration could be obtained. At the measurement level, organizational climate and managers' professional ethics demonstrated the strongest internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.824 and 0.742, respectively. Positive consequences of ethical conduct also demonstrated desirable reliability, whereas fear and job insecurity, ethnic favoritism and partiality, and political fluctuations and environmental instability showed relatively acceptable reliability. In

contrast, religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, and weaknesses in monitoring and accountability showed weak internal consistency and were ultimately excluded from the final model. This pattern is consistent with the broader view that professional ethics is a multidimensional organizational phenomenon whose empirical manifestations may not always correspond neatly to theoretically distinct categories (Rhodes, 2023; Sinnicks, 2023). It also supports the argument that ethical conduct should be assessed not merely through formal normative expectations, but through the organizational and situational conditions within which ethical decisions are actually made (Sam & Simmons Berwise, 2026; Saputra & Yusnaini, 2026).

One of the principal findings was that fear and job insecurity had a statistically significant negative effect on managers' professional ethics ($\beta = -0.254$, $p = 0.036$). This result indicates that as managers perceive greater insecurity regarding their occupational position, their ability or willingness to maintain professional ethical standards may decline. Such a relationship can be understood in terms of the pressures that insecurity places on decision-making. Managers who perceive their employment as vulnerable may become more inclined toward self-protective behavior, conformity with powerful actors, avoidance of ethically risky decisions, or acceptance of practices that secure their position even when those practices conflict with professional standards. This interpretation is compatible with research emphasizing the importance of situational factors in shaping moral judgments (Klenk, 2022). Ethical choices are not made independently of perceived consequences, and conditions of fear may alter the balance between moral commitments and perceived threats. The finding is also broadly consistent with research on moral disengagement, which suggests that organizational pressures and individual psychological mechanisms may facilitate behavior that conflicts with moral identity (Ke & Li, 2025). From a public-sector perspective, the result further supports competency-based approaches that regard ethical conduct as dependent not only on personal capability but also on organizational conditions that allow managers to exercise judgment responsibly (Dehghanpour Farashah et al., 2026; Khadivi et al., 2025).

The significant negative effect of a culture of ethnic favoritism and partiality on managers' professional ethics ($\beta = -0.297$, $p = 0.010$) was another important finding. This suggests that when organizational relationships and decisions are shaped by ethnic preferences, personal

affiliations, or group-based loyalties, professional ethics may be weakened. Favoritism can conflict directly with central ethical principles such as impartiality, equality, merit, procedural fairness, and responsibility to the broader public. In organizations where particularistic relationships become normalized, managers may experience competing loyalties between professional standards and informal social obligations. This interpretation is compatible with organizational culture theory, which emphasizes that repeated practices and shared assumptions shape how organizational members define acceptable conduct (Driskill & Mirivel, 2025). It also aligns with social contract perspectives, according to which institutional legitimacy depends on adherence to shared rules and reciprocal expectations (Colin-Jaeger, 2025; Farrelly, 2021). When managers allocate opportunities or make decisions on the basis of ethnic or factional preferences, they potentially violate the implicit institutional contract that public decisions should be based on consistent and defensible criteria. From a stakeholder perspective, favoritism also privileges some groups over others and therefore conflicts with the expectation that legitimate stakeholder interests should be considered fairly (Mahajan et al., 2023; Shah & Guild, 2022).

Organizational climate emerged as one of the most influential variables in the model, showing a strong positive effect on managers' professional ethics ($\beta = 0.596$, $p < 0.001$). This result demonstrates that professional ethics is not simply an individual characteristic but is strongly associated with the environment in which managers work. A constructive organizational climate can strengthen ethical conduct through trust, predictability, psychological security, interpersonal respect, fair procedures, and clear expectations regarding appropriate behavior. Conversely, a negative climate characterized by distrust, fear, inconsistency, and instability may make adherence to ethical standards more difficult. This finding is consistent with research highlighting organizational culture and climate as important contexts for interpreting and enacting ethical behavior (Driskill & Mirivel, 2025). It also accords with work on ethical leadership, which emphasizes that organizational leaders influence ethical behavior through daily decisions, role modeling, communication, reinforcement, and the creation of supportive ethical environments (Hoang et al., 2023). Similarly, Cullen's discussion of moral recovery emphasizes that the rebuilding of ethical organizational functioning requires conditions that restore trust and responsible leadership rather than reliance solely on formal

rules (Cullen, 2022). The present result therefore supports an institutional understanding of professional ethics in which ethical behavior is reinforced when the organizational environment provides managers with coherent and credible ethical expectations.

A particularly strong result was the negative effect of political fluctuations and environmental instability on organizational climate ($\beta = -0.817$, $p < 0.001$). This was among the largest structural coefficients observed in the model. The finding indicates that instability in the broader political environment can substantially undermine perceptions of the internal organizational environment. Political volatility may lead to frequent managerial changes, uncertainty regarding policies, insecurity concerning appointments, shifts in authority, and inconsistent implementation of administrative rules. Such conditions can weaken confidence in institutional continuity and reduce the predictability required for a stable organizational climate. This interpretation is strongly aligned with the work of Habibi and Karimi, who emphasize the relationship between political instability and organizational ethics in developing-country contexts (Habibi & Karimi, 2022). The result is also compatible with complexity-oriented approaches to public-sector leadership, which emphasize that government organizations must operate in environments characterized by uncertainty, multiple interacting actors, and rapidly changing conditions (Keyvani et al., 2025). In the Afghan context, the magnitude of this relationship suggests that political instability is not merely an external background condition but an important organizational force capable of penetrating internal administrative relationships and perceptions.

Interestingly, political fluctuations and environmental instability did not have a statistically significant direct effect on managers' professional ethics ($\beta = -0.246$, $p = 0.228$), despite their very strong effect on organizational climate. This pattern suggests that political instability may influence ethical behavior primarily by altering the conditions under which managers work rather than through a simple direct pathway. In other words, managers may not automatically become less ethical because the political environment is unstable; instead, instability may produce an organizational climate characterized by uncertainty, weak trust, inconsistent expectations, or insecurity, which in turn affects professional conduct. Although a formal indirect-effect or mediation test was not separately reported in the present results, the pattern of coefficients is theoretically consistent with such an organizational mechanism. This interpretation

reinforces arguments that professional ethics should be understood as embedded within institutional processes rather than treated solely as a personal moral disposition (Rhodes, 2023). It is also consistent with capacity-building approaches to professional ethics, which emphasize the importance of institutional structures and organizational environments in enabling ethical behavior (Memarzadeh Tehran et al., 2023).

The direct effect of religious and cultural values on managers' professional ethics was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.063$, $p = 0.623$), and this construct also demonstrated weak internal reliability. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that religion or culture is unimportant for professional ethics. Rather, it may indicate that the specific items used in the quantitative model did not adequately capture the complexity of religious and cultural influences or that respondents interpreted these values differently. In a religiously oriented administrative institution, social desirability may also lead respondents to express uniformly favorable attitudes toward religious values, thereby reducing variability and weakening statistical relationships. Previous research has nevertheless shown that religious sources can provide a meaningful basis for conceptualizing managerial professional ethics (Jafari Rad et al., 2021), while Islamic ethical traditions have also been applied to professional models in specialized fields (Sadeghi et al., 2025). Islamic work ethics has further been associated with positive organizational attitudes and behaviors (Riadi et al., 2025). The present non-significant result therefore appears to concern the operationalization and direct predictive role of the construct in this particular structural model rather than the broader normative relevance of religion to professional ethics.

Likewise, structural and managerial weaknesses did not significantly predict professional ethics ($\beta = -0.200$, $p = 0.151$), and weaknesses in monitoring and accountability also had no significant direct effect ($\beta = -0.048$, $p = 0.604$). Both constructs showed relatively weak internal consistency and were removed from the final model. One explanation is that the indicators used within each construct represented multiple organizational phenomena that respondents did not perceive as manifestations of a single underlying concept. For example, personnel selection, reward and punishment systems, and hierarchical climate may affect professional conduct through different mechanisms. Similarly, monitoring, accountability, and institutional independence may be conceptually related but empirically distinct. The lack of significant direct effects therefore does not

necessarily mean that organizational structures or accountability mechanisms are irrelevant. Transparency and accountability are particularly important in religious and Hajj-related institutions, as demonstrated in research on Hajj fund management (Erni, 2025). Professional ethics has also been connected with social responsibility and disclosure practices (Rahmani et al., 2018). The present results instead imply that future models may need to represent these institutional mechanisms as more differentiated constructs rather than combining them into broad composite variables.

Another notable finding was that ethnic favoritism did not significantly predict organizational climate ($\beta = 0.108$, $p = 0.340$), even though it had a significant direct negative relationship with managers' professional ethics. This pattern indicates that favoritism may operate more directly through managerial decision-making and professional norms than through respondents' general perceptions of organizational climate. Managers may recognize preferential treatment as inconsistent with professional standards even when they do not interpret it as defining the overall climate of the organization. This distinction reflects the complexity of organizational ethics emphasized by Rhodes (Rhodes, 2023). Different organizational conditions may influence ethical conduct through different pathways rather than through a single overarching mechanism. Such complexity is also consistent with research examining ethical values within organizational processes, which indicates that multiple values and institutional mechanisms can coexist and sometimes conflict in practice (Kern et al., 2024).

The strongest outcome relationships in the model concerned the consequences of managers' professional ethics. Professional ethics had an exceptionally strong positive effect on positive organizational consequences ($\beta = 0.936$, $p < 0.001$) and a similarly strong negative effect on negative organizational consequences ($\beta = -0.952$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that higher levels of managerial professional ethics were strongly associated with desirable organizational outcomes while simultaneously reducing undesirable consequences of unethical conduct. This result is consistent with the broader ethical leadership literature, in which ethical managerial behavior is associated with stronger organizational relationships, responsible conduct, and positive employee and stakeholder outcomes (Hoang et al., 2023). It also corresponds with studies linking professional ethics to knowledge sharing and effective professional performance (Ghasemzadeh Alishahi et al., 2018), as well as research connecting managers' professional ethics with organizational social responsibility

(Rahmani et al., 2018). From a stakeholder perspective, ethical managerial conduct can strengthen institutional legitimacy by demonstrating that decisions take account of legitimate interests and responsibilities rather than narrow personal or factional interests (Mahajan et al., 2023).

The positive and negative consequence relationships can also be interpreted in light of moral identity and ethical consistency. When managers perceive professional ethics as integral to their role identity, they may be more likely to make decisions that promote trust, fairness, accountability, and organizational cooperation. Conversely, mechanisms of moral disengagement can permit harmful or counterproductive behavior when ethical standards become psychologically disconnected from action (Ke & Li, 2025). Moral decision-making is also influenced by broader processes of socialization and learned ethical orientation (Chen et al., 2024), while research across other settings has shown that moral attitudes can be associated with aspects of psychological and behavioral functioning (Özsarı & Görücü, 2023). These perspectives support the present finding that professional ethics has meaningful consequences extending beyond abstract moral evaluation to concrete organizational functioning.

The high coefficients of determination further demonstrated the explanatory strength of the structural model. The model explained 84.6% of the variance in organizational climate, 94.0% of the variance in managers' professional ethics, 87.7% of the variance in positive consequences, and 90.6% of the variance in negative consequences. These values suggest that the retained constructs captured a substantial proportion of the variation in the endogenous variables. In particular, the very high explained variance in professional ethics emphasizes the combined relevance of organizational climate, insecurity, and favoritism within this institutional context. The results support contemporary conceptions of professional ethics as a construct shaped through interaction among individual, occupational, cultural, and organizational conditions (Sam & Simmons Berwise, 2026; Saputra & Yusnaini, 2026). They also reinforce the value of competency and institutional-capacity perspectives that place ethical functioning within the broader system of public-sector management (Dehghanpour Farashah et al., 2026; Memarzadeh Tehran et al., 2023). Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening professional ethics in the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan requires attention not only to ethical instruction

or formal rules but also to the organizational conditions within which managers exercise authority.

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The cross-sectional design prevents definitive conclusions regarding causal direction, because all variables were assessed at a single point in time. The final sample consisted of 100 respondents selected through purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling, which was appropriate for accessing knowledgeable participants but limits the statistical representativeness of the findings. The use of self-report questionnaires may also have introduced common-method bias and socially desirable responding, particularly because professional ethics, religion, political instability, and ethnic favoritism are sensitive subjects. Several initially proposed constructs demonstrated relatively weak internal consistency, suggesting that some dimensions may not have been measured with sufficient precision. Finally, the study focused on individuals knowledgeable about a specific Afghan administrative and religious organizational context; therefore, the findings should not automatically be generalized to all Afghan public organizations or to religious institutions operating in substantially different political and cultural environments.

Future studies should test the proposed model with larger and more diverse samples drawn directly from managers, employees, religious officials, administrative personnel, and service recipients across different provinces and organizational levels. Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable for determining whether changes in political stability, organizational climate, or job security precede corresponding changes in professional ethics. Future researchers should also redevelop the measurement scales for religious and cultural values, structural and managerial weaknesses, and monitoring and accountability by using a larger pool of items and separating conceptually distinct dimensions. Formal mediation analyses should examine whether organizational climate mediates the effects of political instability and other contextual conditions on professional ethics, while moderation analyses could determine whether managerial experience, organizational rank, education, or employment status change the strength of these relationships. Comparative studies across ministries, public organizations, religious institutions, and different national contexts could further establish which components of the model are context-specific and which possess broader explanatory validity.

For practice, organizational leaders should prioritize the creation of a stable and supportive organizational climate in which managers can make decisions without excessive fear of arbitrary job loss or politically motivated replacement. Clear appointment, promotion, evaluation, and disciplinary procedures should be established and applied consistently so that professional conduct is rewarded independently of ethnic, political, or personal affiliation. Recruitment and advancement systems should emphasize competence, merit, impartiality, and transparent criteria, while mechanisms should be created through which managers and employees can raise ethical concerns safely. Professional ethics training should be linked to realistic managerial dilemmas rather than limited to abstract moral principles, and ethical expectations should be integrated into performance evaluation, leadership development, and organizational policies. Because managers' professional ethics was strongly associated with both positive and negative organizational consequences, strengthening ethical conduct should be treated as a central component of organizational effectiveness, public trust, institutional legitimacy, and responsible stewardship within the Organization of Guidance, Hajj, and Endowments of Afghanistan.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed 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

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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