

The Role Of Humanistic Leadership in Improving Employee Performance with Ethical Behavior as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance, the effect of humanistic leadership on ethical behavior, the effect of ethical behavior on employee performance, and the mediating role of ethical behavior in the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance. A quantitative approach with a causal design was employed in this research. Data were collected from 86 sales clerk employees of PT Ramayana Lestari Sentosa Tbk (Ramayana Square) Cirebon using purposive sampling and analyzed with SPSS. The findings show that humanistic leadership has a positive and significant effect on both employee performance and ethical behavior. Ethical behavior also has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Furthermore, the Sobel test indicates that ethical behavior significantly mediates the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance. The results suggest that leadership practices characterized by empathy, effective communication, and concern for employees can encourage ethical behavior and improve employee performance. Ethical behavior therefore functions as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance.

Keywords: Humanistic Leadership, Ethical Behavior, Employee Performance

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Introduction

Organizations are encouraged to adopt leadership methods that prioritize humanistic aspects in response to changes in modern work dynamics. To meet current psychological needs, ethical expectations, and the complexity of workplace relationships, approaches that are overly focused on control and hierarchy are becoming increasingly irrelevant. Humanistic leadership demonstrates that it contributes to the development of friendly and supportive workplace relationships, as well as improved professional behavior among employees Chou et al. (2020).

The Indonesian retail sector continues to grow and demands that employees achieve high targets, maintain service quality, and work at a fast operational pace. This issue has attracted increasing attention because the retail sector serves as one of the main pillars of the continuously growing national economy. Competition among retail companies is not only centered on price and product quality, but also on the quality of the company's workforce. In the retail industry, employees are at the frontline of service because they interact directly with customers Satoding et al. (2026). Therefore, companies are required to create a work environment that supports the improvement of employee performance in order to maintain customer loyalty and win the business competition. One retail company that continues to grow in Indonesia is Ramayana Department Store, including its branch in Plered, Cirebon Regency. As a retail company engaged in the service sector, the operational success of Ramayana Department Store is strongly affected by the quality of leadership and employee work behavior.

One leadership approach is humanistic leadership. Humanistic leadership emphasizes respect for humanistic values, empathy, interpersonal communication, fairness, and concern for employee well-being. Leaders who apply a humanistic approach tend to be able to create harmonious work relationships, thereby boosting employee morale and loyalty Zebua et al. (2025). For retail companies like Ramayana, a humanistic leadership style is considered relevant because the company's operational activities heavily depend on team coordination and the quality of interactions among employees.

In addition to leadership factors, ethical behavior is also an important aspect in improving employee performance. Ethical behavior plays a role in building a healthy work culture, increasing trust among employees, and minimizing conflict within organizations Mulyadi et al. (2026). Employees who demonstrate ethical behavior tend to work more disciplined, honest, and responsible, thereby improving the company's work effectiveness. In the retail industry, ethical behavior is very important because employees interact directly with customers and influence the company's image.

Leadership that emphasizes ethical values positively influences employee performance and the development of ethical behavior in the workplace. Saifudin et al. (2025) explain that leadership influences employee performance through organizational mediating variables. Asmara et al. (2024) explain that leaders who pay attention to employees' emotional needs can increase both commitment and work outcomes. Meria et al. (2023) explain that leadership can improve the quality of employee performance and reduce work stress. Pio et al. (2015) explain that ethical behavior significantly influences performance improvement through various organizational aspects. Sihaloho et al. (2023) also affirm that ethics-based leadership shapes more constructive work behavior. Wahyuni et al. (2025) also show that humanistic leadership can encourage innovative behavior and work engagement. One aspect of performance quality, including work accuracy, discipline, and service precision, is often affected by pressure. Dewi et al. (2023) high levels of stress and excessive workload contribute significantly to the decline in employee performance quality.

Although research on leadership and employee performance continues to grow, studies that specifically examine the role of humanistic leadership in influencing employee performance through ethical behavior as a mediating variable remain relatively limited in Indonesia. Many studies focus on transformational leadership or ethical leadership, but have not yet examined the mechanism of how a leader's humanistic values shape ethical behavior as a link toward performance improvement. Furthermore, research on humanistic leadership in the retail sector is also still minimal, even though work pressure in retail is much higher compared to other industries.

Ramayana Cirebon is a relevant context for research due to its strict target demands, high intensity of customer service, and the need for consistent performance. In other words, this situation can be used to examine the relationship between humanistic values in leadership and ethical behavior, which leads to an improvement in performance quality.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Humanistic Leadership

In this approach, humanistic leaders show genuine concern for their subordinates, maintain warm interpersonal relationships, and build a workplace atmosphere that makes employees feel appreciated. Mayo found that sympathetic attention can increase employee effort and engagement, a phenomenon known as the Hawthorne effect. This viewpoint explains that productivity is not only affected by financial rewards, but also by employees' feelings of appreciation, belonging, and comfort within their social surroundings.

Permadi (2019) notes that humanistic leadership, based on Mayo's theory, consists of four core tasks that form the foundation of a leader's attitude: the ability to communicate, provide motivation, accept responsibility and lead others, and demonstrate empathy and sensitivity toward subordinates' issues.

The study also indicates that the application of humanistic leadership can enhance workplace comfort, foster positive interpersonal relationships, and promote intrinsic motivation. When leaders understand employees' social conditions and provide emotional support, a work environment conducive to improving ethical behavior and performance is created. Employees who feel valued tend to work more diligently, maintain integrity, and exhibit behavior aligned with organizational norms.

Employee Performance

Performance refers to the extent to which an employee executes their duties effectively the task and responsibility assigned by the company to fulfill organizational aims, while still adhering to the ethical and moral values applied in the workplace Killok et al. (2025). Busro (2018:87) explains that employee performance is the achievement obtained by an individual within a specific timeframe, usually one year, which is assessed based on the quality and quantity of work completed. The dimensions of employee performance, according to Mangkunegara as cited in Putri et al. (2023), include: quality of work output, quantity of work output, responsibility, cooperation, and initiative.

Ethical Behavior

Killok et al. (2025) define ethical behavior as actions that align with prevailing values, rules, and norms to support organizational goals. Ethical behavior can be examined through four dimensions: attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and operational ethical behavior Ajzen (1991); Afriani in Sanjiwani et al. (2024)

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance

Ineffective leadership may disrupt the operational activities of an organization. On the other hand, effective leadership can motivate employees to improve their work performance and contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives Luthfia et al. (2025). Leaders who establish positive relationships with employees are also believed to enhance employee performance effectiveness Yuriyidillah et al, (2025). Research conducted by (Sahidi & Waskito, 2025) revealed that leadership has a significant direct effect on employee

performance. These findings indicate that higher-quality leadership practices are associated with better employee performance in completing their responsibilities. The aforementioned explanation leads to the formulation of the proposed hypothesis:

h1: Humanistic leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Ethical Behavior

Humanistic leadership has a positive effect on employees' ethical behavior in the workplace. This shows that the better the leadership applied within the organization, the more positive and ethical the employees' work behavior becomes (Firmansyah et al., 2025). Humanistic leadership has a significant positive relationship with employees' ethical behavior. This indicates that employees who perceive effective and supportive leadership tend to exhibit better ethical conduct within the work environment (Karma et al., 2025; Sandi et al., 2026). The aforementioned explanation leads to the formulation of the proposed hypothesis:

h2: Humanistic leadership has a positive and significant effect on ethical behavior

The Effect of Ethical Behavior on Employee Performance

The implementation of ethical behavior in the workplace can enhance employees' professionalism and sense of responsibility. This condition also contributes to the creation of a positive work environment, making ethical behavior one of the factors that influence the improvement of employee performance (Killok et al., 2025). Ethical behavior has an influence on employee performance. Employees who apply ethical values in their work tend to demonstrate better responsibility, discipline, and professionalism, which can improve work results optimally (Dwinuari et al., 2025; Maghfiroh & Bisifa, 2025). The aforementioned explanation leads to the formulation of the proposed hypothesis:

h3: Ethical behavior has a positive and significant effect on employee performance

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance Mediated by Ethical Behavior

Humanistic leadership exerts a positive and significant influence on employee performance, with ethical behavior functioning as a mediating variable. Leaders who treat employees with respect and humanity can directly encourage motivation, commitment, and an ethical work environment. This condition motivates employees to perform better and carry out their responsibilities more effectively (Hasanah et al., 2026)

Ethical behavior play a pivotal role by serving as an intermediary connecting humanistic management with staff output. Leadership which emphasizes humanity, fairness, and concern for employees can encourage the creation of a positive work environment. When leaders consistently demonstrate ethical values and moral conduct, employees tend to respond with higher dedication and stronger work engagement. Therefore, ethical behavior to function protectively as an intervening element within the impact derived from humanistic leadership toward organizational performance (Prihatin et al., 2021). The aforementioned explanation leads to the formulation of the proposed hypothesis:

h4: Ethical behavior mediates the effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance

Referring to the hypothesis that has been presented, the research framework is designed as follows:

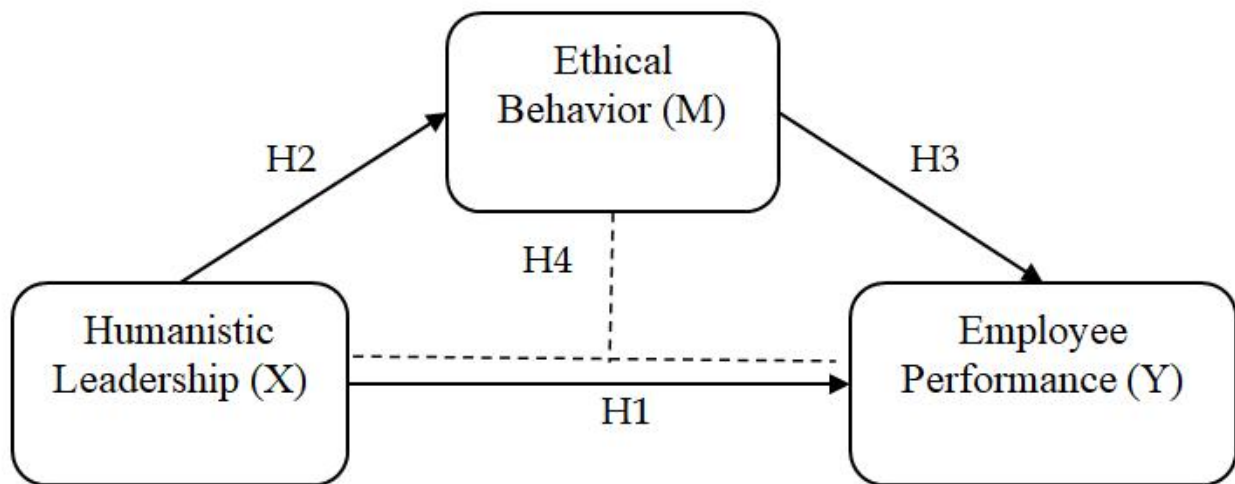


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: processed by the authors (2026)

Research Methods

This study applies a quantitative methodology with a causal research design to analyze the cause-and-effect relationships among the investigated variables Sugiyono (2021). The primary focus of this study is to test the hypotheses through numerical data processing using statistical methods to draw scientific conclusions regarding the influence of humanistic leadership on employee performance, with ethical behavior positioned as a mediating variable. Primary data were obtained by distributing questionnaires to respondents. To measure the respondents' answer preferences, the questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale instrument, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (score 1) to "Strongly Agree" (score 5).

This research was conducted on the sales clerk employees of PT Ramayana Lestari Sentosa Tbk (Ramayana Square) Cirebon. The population in this study comprises the sales clerk employees, totalling 110 people. The sample selection was carried out using a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling method, which involves selecting respondents based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives. The criteria for respondents in this study include: (1) being an employee of PT Ramayana Lestari Sentosa Tbk (Ramayana Square) Cirebon, (2) working in the sales clerk department, (3) having a minimum tenure of one year, and (4) being willing to complete the research questionnaire. Based on these selection criteria and the results of the data completeness screening, a final sample size of 86 valid respondents who met all the requirements was obtained for use in the final analysis.

The empirical data obtained from the field were subsequently processed electronically using SPSS software. The data analysis process was executed through a series of systematic statistical testing phases, including validity and reliability tests for the research instruments, classical assumption tests (normality,

multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity tests), as well as hypothesis testing. The testing of the mediating variable in this study was conducted using the Sobel test to generate valid and accurate research conclusions.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics

Tabel 1 Description of Respondent Data

Category	Characteristic	Frequency (n)		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	13		15%
	Female	73		85%
Age	20-35 Years	82		95%
	36-45 Years	4		5%
	>45 Years	0		0%
Tenure	1-2 Years	62		72%
	3-4 Years	15		17%
	>6 Years	9		10%

Based on the questionnaire data, the respondents' characteristics are categorized into gender, age, and tenure. Regarding gender, the sample was predominantly female, totaling 73 respondents (85%), while males accounted for only 13 respondents (15%). In terms of age distribution, the respondents were significantly concentrated in the young and early productive age group; the 20–35 cohort comprised 82 individuals (95%), followed by the 36–45 cohort with 4 individuals (5%), and no respondents exceeded 45 years of age. Finally, concerning tenure within the organization, the majority were relatively recent hires, with the 1–2 years group representing 62 individuals (72%), followed by 3–4 years of service at 15 individuals (17%), and those with over 6 years of service at 9 individuals (10%)

Validity Test

Table 2. Questionnaire Validity Test Result

Item Variables	r count	r table	Information
Humanistic Leadership			
X1	0.766	0.212	Valid
X2	0.851	0.212	Valid
X3	0.767	0.212	Valid
X4	0.803	0.212	Valid
X5	0.858	0.212	Valid
X6	0.862	0.212	Valid
X7	0.885	0.212	Valid
X8	0.851	0.212	Valid
X9	0.864	0.212	Valid
X10	0.858	0.212	Valid
Employee Performance			
Y1	0.776	0.212	Valid
Y2	0.787	0.212	Valid
Y3	0.753	0.212	Valid
Y4	0.864	0.212	Valid
Y5	0.787	0.212	Valid
Y6	0.752	0.212	Valid
Y7	0.829	0.212	Valid
Y8	0.931	0.212	Valid
Y9	0.873	0.212	Valid
Y10	0.850	0.212	Valid

Y11	0.852	0.212	Valid
Y12	0.829	0.212	Valid
Ethical Behavior			
M1	0.620	0.212	Valid
M2	0.667	0.212	Valid
M3	0.771	0.212	Valid
M4	0.721	0.212	Valid
M5	0.912	0.212	Valid
M6	0.890	0.212	Valid
M7	0.841	0.212	Valid
M8	0.811	0.212	Valid
M9	0.831	0.212	Valid
M10	0.825	0.212	Valid

Source: Primary Data Processing Result (2026)

The outcome of the validity test on the variables of humanistic leadership, employee performance, and ethical behavior indicate that all questionnaire statements used to measure each indicator were declared valid because they fulfilled the required standard criteria. The results presented in Table 1 reveal that all items of each research variabel meet validity criteria. humanistic leadership had calculated r values > 0.212 ; variable employee performance has a calculated r value > 0.212 ; and variable ethical behavior has a calculated r value exceeding 0.212. Therefore, all items in the tested variables are considered valid.

Reliability Test

Table 3. The Reliability Test Result Humanistic Leadership, Employee Performance, and Ethical Behavior

Variabel	Score Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Status
Humanistic Leadership (X)	0.951	0.70	Reliabel
Employee Performance (Y)	0.956	0.70	Reliabel
Ethical Behavior (M)	0.932	0.70	Reliabel

Source: Primary Data Processing Result (2026)

The composite reliability value was used to evaluate the reliability level of the variables examined in this research. Reliability testing was conducted through the use of Cronbach's Alpha, where a study instrument is deemed reliable when the value > 0.70 Ghozali (2021). Based on the findings in Table 2, humanistic leadership variable achieved a Cronbach's Alpha score of $0.951 > 0.70$, employee performance variable reached $0.956 > 0.70$, while the ethical behavior variable resulted in $0.932 > 0.70$. These findings indicate that all variables have composite reliability > 0.70 . Thus, all research variables can be considered reliable and demonstrate good consistency in measurement.

Classical Assumption Test Result

Table 4. Classical Assumption Test Results

Classic Assumption Test	Test Name	Qualification	Outcome	Conclusion
Normality Test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	> 0.05	0.134	Satisfy Normality Test
Multicollinearity Test	Tolerance VIF	$T > 0.01$ $VIF < 10$	T 0.684 VIF 1.462 T 0.684 VIF 1.462	Satisfy Multicollinearity Test
Heteroscedasticity Test	Glejser	> 0.05	0.446 0.744	Satisfy Heteroscedasticity Test

According to the results obtained from the classical assumption test, all prerequisites have been met, indicating that this model is valid and can be used to make credible predictions. The normality test above

indicates that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov value of $0.134 > 0.05$. Therefore, the residual data are identified as normally distributed and meet the normality assumption. Next, a multicollinearity test was carried out to identify whether a strong linear relationship exists among the independent variables. The findings indicate that the tolerance value of 0.684 exceeds 0.01, while the VIF value of $1.462 < 10$. These values suggest that the model no multicollinearity problem. In conclusion, the heteroscedasticity test carried out through the use of Glejser method yielded values of 0.446 and 0.744; these values indicate that there is no pattern of heteroscedasticity.

Hypothesized Test Result

Table 5. Partial Test Result

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.709		5.838	.000
	Humanistic Leadership	.578	.082	.612	.000
	a. Dependent Variable : Employee Performance				
2	(Constant)	2.203		9.590	.000
	Humanistic Leadership	.399	.064	.562	.000
	a. Dependent Variable : Ethical Behavior				
3	(Constant)	-.114		-.352	.726
	Humanistic Leadership	.248	.075	.263	.001
	Ethical Behavior	.827	.106	.621	.000
a. Dependent Variable : Employee Performance					

Source: SPSS Output Results (2026)

Furthermore, according to the regression analysis findings in Model 1, the regression equation is expressed as follows: $Y = 1.709 + 0.578X + e$. The constant value of 1.709 signifies that when humanistic leadership equals 0, employee performance is 1.709. The regression coefficient of 0.578 for humanistic leadership demonstrates that each one-unit rise in humanistic leadership increases Y by 0.578, provided that the other variables are held constant. The outcome of the partial test indicate that variable humanistic leadership has a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$; therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This indicates that humanistic leadership partially affects on employee performance.

On the basis of the regression analysis results of Model 2, the regression equation takes other following form: $M = 2.203 + 0.399X + e$. The constant value of 2.203 shows that when humanistic leadership is equal to 0, the ethical behavior value remains at 2.203. The regression coefficient value of 0.399 for humanistic leadership demonstrates that each one-unit improvement in humanistic leadership will increase ethical behavior by 0.399, provided that the other variables are kept constant. The partial test results show that the humanistic leadership variable has a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. These findings indicate that humanistic leadership partially affects on ethical behavior.

Referring on the regression analysis outcomes in Model 3, the regression equation can be formulated as follows: $Y = -0.114 + 0.248X + 0.827M$. The constant term of -0.114 indicates that when humanistic

leadership and M are both equal to 0, the value of employee performance is -0.114. The regression coefficient value of 0.827 for ethical behavior signifies that a one-unit improvement in ethical behavior enhances employee performance by 0.827. The partial test results show that the ethical behavior variable with a significance value $0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. These findings indicate that ethical behavior partially affects on employee performance.

Table 6. Anova Test Result

Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.421	1	50.225	.000
	Residual	2.377	84		
	Total	3.799	85		
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Leadership					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
2	Regression	.677	1	38.812	.000
	Residual	1.465	84		
	Total	2.141	85		
a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Behavior					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Leadership					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
3	Regression	2.424	2	73.152	.000
	Residual	1.375	83		
	Total	3.799	85		
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical Behavior, Humanistic Leadership					

The ANOVA test results for Model 1, 2, and 3 presented in Table 6 show significance values below 0.05. Therefore, all regression models can be considered appropriate and feasible to be applied in this study.

Table 7. Determination Coefficient Test Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.612	.374	.367	.16823
a. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Leadership				
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	.562	.316	.308	.13204
a. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Leadership				
b. Dependent Variable: Ethical Behavior				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
3	.799	.638	.629	.12871
a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical Behavior, Humanistic Leadership				
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance				

Referring to table six, the r square value in model 1 is 0.374, indicating that humanistic leadership contributes to explaining 37.4% of the variation in employee performance. In model 2, the R square value of 0.316 shows that humanistic leadership is able to explain 31.6% of the variation in ethical behavior. After ethical behavior was entered as a mediator in model 3, the R square value increased to 0.638, meaning that humanistic leadership and ethical behavior together explain 63.8% of the variation in employee performance.

This increase in the R square value indicates that ethical behavior acts as a mediator that strengthens the effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance.

Furthermore, considering that once ethical behavior has been included in the model, the direct effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance is 0.263, derived from the beta coefficient of x on y in model 3 (the mediation model). Meanwhile, the indirect effect is 0.349, obtained from the product of 0.562 and 0.621, which are the standardized coefficient from model 2 (the effect of humanistic leadership on ethical behavior) and the standardized coefficient from model 3 (the effect of ethical behavior on employee performance). Thus, ethical behavior not only mediates the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance but also strengthens the effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance, as shown by the magnitude of the indirect effect being larger than the direct effect.

Mediation test

The Mediation test or Sobel test is utilized to determine whether the Ethical Behavior variable can mediate the effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance. A variable is defined as a mediating variable if it influences the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. According to Ghazali (2021), the Sobel test is used to examine the significance of the indirect effect of the Humanistic Leadership variable (X) on Employee Performance (Y) through the mediating variable, Ethical Behavior (Z). The calculation is conducted using the path coefficients and standard errors of each variable relationship.

The formula for the Sobel test is as follows:

$$(a \times b) / \sqrt{(b^2 Sa^2 + a^2 Sb^2)}$$

Where:

α : Regression coefficient of X → M

b : Regression coefficient of M → Y

$Se\alpha$: Standard error of coefficient a

Seb : Standard error of coefficient b

The mediating effect is declared significant if the Z-value is > 1.96 at a 5% significance level. Conversely, if the Z-value is < 1.96, the mediating variable is declared non-significant.

Table 8. Sobel Test Result

Sobel Test Calculation Reference

Variable	Unstandardized	Std. Error
Humanistic Leadership → Ethical Behavior	0.415 (a)	0.068 (Sa)
Ethical Behavior → Employee Performance	0.899 (b)	0.137 (Sb)

Source: Processed SPSS data, 2026.

Sobel Test Calculation Results

Component	Test Statistic	P-Value	Result
a	0.415		
b	0.899	4.468	
Sa	0.068		
Sb	0.137	0.000	Significant

Source: Calculated Sobel test results, 2026.

Based on the Sobel test calculation results, a Test Statistic (Z) value of 4.468 was obtained with a p-value of 0.000. Since the Z-value is greater than 1.96 and the significance value is less than 0.05, Ethical Behavior is proven to significantly mediate the effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance. This result indicates that the implementation of humanistic leadership can enhance employees' ethical behavior, which subsequently contributes to the improvement of employee performance. In other words, the influence of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance occurs not only directly but also through the cultivation of Ethical Behavior. In addition, the regression analysis results show that the direct effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance has a significance value of 0.051, indicating that it is not significant at the 5% significance level. Meanwhile, the paths for Humanistic Leadership Ethical Behavior and Ethical Behavior Employee Performance yield significant results. This condition indicates that Ethical Behavior acts as a full mediating variable (full mediation) in the relationship between Humanistic Leadership and Employee Performance.

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance

Testing of the hypothesis findings reveal that humanistic leadership there is a significant on employee performance. This is supported by a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, along with a positive regression coefficient showing that the regression model is suitable for use in this research. These results indicate that leadership practices that prioritize humanistic values, including empathy, concern, and respect toward employees, can improve employee performance, as stated by Artha et al. (2026). this means that stronger implementation of humanistic leadership tends to be followed by higher employee performance, although other contributing factors still influence the results.

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Ethical Behavior

The outcome of the test demonstrate that humanistic leadership exerts a positive and significant effect on ethical behavior. These findings strengthen the view that leadership emphasizing humanistic values and exemplary behavior can encourage the development of employees' ethical conduct. Leaders who act fairly and show appreciation toward employees are able to foster behavior that is consistent with workplace ethics and organizational norms Arifin et al. (2025). Therefore, humanistic leadership contributes significantly to improving ethical behavior among employees.

The Effect of Ethical Behavior on Employee Performance

According to the partial hypothesis test, ethical behavior was proven to exert a positive and significant effect on employee performance. These results show that ethical behavior has a more dominant effect on employee performance. The simultaneous test showing that the regression model involving the ethical behavior variable is appropriate and valid. These findings support the idea that employees who display good ethical behavior are likely to achieve better performance because such behavior encourages responsibility, discipline, and compliance with workplace regulations. This result is consistent with the studies conducted by Nuraeni al. (2026) and Adhelya et al. (2025). Therefore, ethical behavior can be considered one of the important factors in improving employee performance.

The Effect of Humanistic Leadership on Employee Performance Mediated by Ethical Behavior

The regression analysis results indicate that ethical behavior partial mediates the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance. This is shown by the humanistic leadership continuing to significantly affect on employee performance even after the ethical behavior variable was added to the regression model. In addition, the regression coefficient of ethical behavior is higher than that of humanistic leadership, indicating that ethical behavior exerts a more dominant effect on employee performance. These findings strengthen the view that leadership effectiveness can increase when it is supported by employees' ethical conduct Budiman et al. (2025). In other words, humanistic leadership influences employee performance directly as well as indirectly via ethical behavior, which functions as a partial mediating variable.

Conclusion

This study concludes that humanistic leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT Ramayana Lestari Sentosa Tbk (Ramayana Square) Cirebon. Humanistic leadership also positively and significantly influences employees' ethical behavior, while ethical behavior has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. The Sobel Test results indicate that ethical behavior significantly mediates the relationship between humanistic leadership and employee performance. Since the direct effect of humanistic leadership on employee performance remains significant after ethical behavior is included in the regression model, ethical behavior acts as a partial mediating variable. These findings indicate that the implementation of humanistic leadership can improve employee performance both directly and indirectly through the enhancement of ethical behavior.

Based on these findings, the company is advised to strengthen the application of humanistic leadership by improving interpersonal communication, providing motivation, demonstrating empathy, and supporting employees' work needs. The company should also develop a work culture that upholds ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compliance with organizational rules. Employees are expected to maintain and improve ethical behavior in carrying out their duties in order to create a more productive and harmonious work environment. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to expand the research object to different companies or sectors and to include additional variables such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work motivation, or work stress to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting employee performance.

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