

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE****Modeling an Ethics-Based Human Resource Management Model at Payame Noor University**Saeed Besharati Kivi\* 

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Receive Date: 23/Apr/2025

Revise Date: 01/Oct/2025

Accept Date:

**How to cite**

Besharati Kivi, S. (2025) Modeling an Ethics-Based Human Resource Management Model at Payame Noor University. *Public Organization Management*, 13(4), 181—196.

**EXTENDED A B S T R A C T****Introduction**

In today's dynamic organizational environment, ethics has emerged as a fundamental element of sustainable management and effective human resource practices. Universities, as learning and value-driven institutions, play a key role in promoting ethical behavior through their managerial and human resource systems. However, in many Iranian universities, including Payame Noor University, HRM processes remain primarily administrative rather than value-based. The lack of systematic attention to ethical principles in recruitment, evaluation, promotion, and reward mechanisms has resulted in challenges such as reduced trust and weakened organizational commitment among employees.

Given the nationwide structure of Payame Noor University and its mission to provide equitable educational opportunities, the integration of ethical principles into HRM processes is of strategic importance. Previous research has discussed professional ethics and organizational justice, yet no comprehensive, empirically tested model exists that embeds ethics into HRM within the context of Iran's higher education system.

Accordingly, this study seeks to develop and validate an Ethics-Oriented Human Resource Management (E-HRM) Model tailored to Payame Noor University. The research aims to identify key ethical dimensions influencing HRM, explore causal and contextual factors affecting ethical behavior, and propose strategies for institutionalizing ethics across HR functions. Through a quantitative approach grounded in prior qualitative findings, the study endeavors to bridge the gap between ethical theory and managerial practice, providing a framework that fosters fairness, transparency, and professional integrity in Payame Noor University.

**Methodology**

The study employs an applied, quantitative, and correlational research design. This article is written based on the quantitative phase of the author's doctoral thesis, which is a combined, qualitative-quantitative work. The population comprises all full-time faculty members of Payame Noor University with at least five years of service. According to the Krejcie and Morgan table, the minimum sample size was determined as 347 individuals. A total of 352 valid questionnaires were collected using a cluster random sampling method across 31 provincial universities and approximately 500 affiliated centers.

The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire derived from the qualitative findings. Initially, 100 items were developed based on the grounded theory analysis of expert interviews. After refinement, 80 items were retained, grouped under six dimensions. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

The validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed using several indices: Cronbach's alpha ( $>0.7$ ), composite reliability ( $CR > 0.8$ ), average variance extracted ( $AVE > 0.5$ ) and Fornell-Larker criterion for discriminant validity. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23 and SmartPLS version 3, using structural equation modeling (SEM) through the partial least squares (PLS) approach. Significant level  $p < 0.05$  was determined.

### Findings

The results of SEM analysis demonstrated that the proposed ethics-oriented HRM model had an excellent fit ( $GOF = 0.561$ ) and All path coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

Causal Conditions  $\rightarrow$  Functional Category:  $\beta = 0.692$ ,  $t = 28.316$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Functional Category  $\rightarrow$  Strategies:  $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $t = 10.241$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Contextual Conditions  $\rightarrow$  Strategies:  $\beta = 0.119$ ,  $t = 14.874$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Intervening Conditions  $\rightarrow$  Strategies:  $\beta = 0.590$ ,  $t = 8.221$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Strategies  $\rightarrow$  Consequences:  $\beta = 0.651$ ,  $t = 20.140$ ,  $p < 0.001$

These results confirm that causal conditions—including leadership ethics, environmental, cultural, and technical factors—significantly influence functional HRM components. Functional and contextual factors further shape strategic approaches, which ultimately lead to desirable ethical and organizational outcomes. The model indicates that ethical leadership and justice are the strongest predictors of ethics-oriented HRM. Additionally, organizational culture and professional commitment act as mediators linking ethical leadership to HR outcomes. The final model demonstrates a coherent and interdependent structure in which each component reinforces the others.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The findings validate the theoretical proposition that ethical behavior and value-based management are integral to sustainable HRM in Payam Noor University. Causal factors such as ethical leadership, technical competence, and cultural sensitivity were found to significantly influence the ethical functioning of HRM systems. Managers who respect fairness and moral responsibility have more ground to build trust and cohesion among employees.

Functional and strategic dimensions of the model emphasize that ethics should permeate all HR processes, including recruitment, performance appraisal, promotion, and reward systems. An ethical HR strategy involves transparent decision-making, equitable evaluation, and merit-based promotion. Ethical values also encourage self-regulation and accountability, thereby reducing organizational misconduct and internal conflicts.

Contextual and intervening factors, such as ethical climate, code of ethics, and reward systems, create the necessary environment for embedding ethical practices. The presence of a well-documented ethical charter helps align individual and organizational goals. Likewise, reward mechanisms that recognize ethical behavior foster motivation and reinforce positive norms.

The study's implications are particularly relevant to the Iranian higher education system, where universities like Payame Noor are expected to model integrity and fairness. Implementing ethics-oriented HRM enhances not only the internal harmony of the institution but also its external credibility and social legitimacy. Ethical HRM thus becomes a driver of institutional excellence and national development.

This research provides an empirically validated model for ethics-oriented human resource management tailored to the context of Payame Noor University. The study confirms that ethics is not merely a complementary aspect but a foundational element of HRM. Ethical leadership, justice, professional responsibility, and cultural values collectively form the backbone of sustainable HRM practices.

By institutionalizing these values, Payame Noor University can achieve the following outcomes:

Strengthened internal relationships and communication;

Enhanced trust and transparency in managerial decisions;

Improved organizational performance and job satisfaction;

Increased employee commitment and reduced turnover intentions;  
Promotion of a healthy, value-driven academic environment.

The proposed model can serve as a benchmark for other public universities and governmental organizations seeking to align HRM with ethical and humanistic principles. Future research can expand this model through longitudinal and comparative studies in diverse cultural and institutional environments.

**KEY WORDS**

Human Resource Management, Professional Ethics, Payam Noor University, Strategies, Consequences.



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