

Article type:
Original Research

1 Ph.D Student, Department of Psychology, Zarand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zarand, Iran.

2 Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Zarand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zarand, Iran.

3 Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

Corresponding author email address:
Hamid.molayi@gmail.com

The Mediating Role of Professional Ethics in the Relationship Between Career Resilience, Emotional Schemas, and Organizational Performance in Bank Employees



Article history:

Received 12 Jul 2025

Revised 28 Jul 2025

Accepted 20 Sep 2025

Published online 01 Oct 2025

How to cite this article:

Babaloee, A., Molayi Zarandi, H., & Kamyabi, M. (2025). The Mediating Role of Professional Ethics in the Relationship Between Career Resilience, Emotional Schemas, and Organizational Performance in Bank Employees. *International Journal of Body, Mind and Culture*, 12(7), 113-120.



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Introduction

Organizational performance is a key indicator of an institution's success in achieving its goals, influencing both productivity and long-term sustainability (Li et al., 2025; Shrestha et al., 2024). While traditional approaches

Alireza. Babaloee¹, Hamid. Molayi Zarandi^{2*}, Mitra. Kamyabi³

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the mediating role of professional ethics in explaining the relationships between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance in bank employees.

Methods and Materials: A descriptive-correlational research design with structural equation modeling was employed. The study's population consisted of 430 employees from bank branches in Western Tehran in 2023, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using Ander de Waal et al.'s organizational performance questionnaires (2017), Morgan Lyon's career path resilience (2001), Leahy's emotional schemas (2002) and Kaduzier's professional ethics (2002). Data analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling by SPSS.26 and AMOS.26.

Findings: Structural equation modeling analysis revealed that professional ethics negatively mediates the relationship between emotional schemas and organizational performance, while positively mediating the relationship between career resilience and organizational performance. The total variance explained (R^2) for organizational performance was 0.55, indicating that emotional schemas, career resilience, and professional ethics together account for 55% of the variance in organizational performance.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the critical role of professional ethics in influencing organizational performance. Professional ethics serves as both a negative mediator between emotional schemas and organizational performance and a positive mediator between career resilience and organizational performance. These results suggest that promoting professional ethics can enhance organizational performance by improving employees' emotional resilience and better handling emotional challenges in the workplace.

Keywords: Professional ethics, career resilience, emotional schemas, organizational performance.

have primarily focused on financial metrics, recent studies emphasize the role of non-financial factors such as workplace ethics, employee adaptability, and psychological well-being in shaping organizational outcomes (Kamyabi, 2024). Particularly in the banking sector, where ethical decision-making and employee

resilience are critical, understanding how these factors interact can provide valuable insights for enhancing performance (Oyemomi et al., 2019).

One of the most influential factors affecting organizational performance is career resilience, which refers to an individual's ability to adapt and thrive in dynamic work environments despite challenges (Davoudi-Monfared et al., 2023; Maree & Venter, 2017). Employees with high career resilience exhibit proactive behavior, greater job engagement, and adaptability, which ultimately enhance workplace productivity (Waterman et al., 1994). Career resilience is conceptually linked to Holland's theory of vocational personality, which highlights the role of adaptability and professional identity in shaping career trajectories (Liu, 2004). However, resilience alone does not fully explain variations in organizational performance, suggesting the need to explore other contributing factors (Golparvar & Parsakia, 2023).

Another critical factor is emotional schemas, which influence how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to workplace challenges. Emotional schemas, as conceptualized by Leahy (2002), consist of deep-seated cognitive structures that shape emotional regulation and decision-making (Leahy, 2002). Research indicates that maladaptive emotional schemas—such as rumination, self-blame, and suppression—are associated with job burnout, reduced motivation, and workplace dissatisfaction (Simpson et al., 2019; Zarei & Ghazi Kermani, 2019). Conversely, adaptive emotional schemas promote psychological flexibility, resilience, and constructive problem-solving (Leahy et al., 2011). Given the growing emphasis on workplace mental health, understanding how emotional schemas interact with career resilience and organizational performance is essential.

Professional ethics serves as a moderating force that shapes employees' attitudes and behaviors in organizational settings. Ethical behavior in the workplace fosters trust, accountability, and long-term organizational stability (Hosseini Ali Abadi et al., 2022). Ethical work environments have been linked to higher employee engagement, lower turnover rates, and improved overall performance (Prakash Tripathi, 2014). Furthermore, studies suggest that ethical leadership can buffer the negative effects of emotional distress and enhance employees' resilience to workplace challenges

(Rahmani & Rajabdoi, 2016). Despite these insights, limited research has examined the role of professional ethics as a mediator between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance.

While previous studies have independently explored career resilience, emotional schemas, and professional ethics, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining their interconnected impact on organizational performance. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the mediating role of professional ethics in the relationship between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance among bank employees. Specifically, it aims to address the following research question: Does professional ethics mediate the relationship between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance in the banking sector?

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employs a descriptive-correlational research design using structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the mediating role of professional ethics in the relationship between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance. SEM was selected due to its capability to analyze complex relationships among multiple variables, including direct, indirect, and mediating effects within a unified framework. This approach allows for a more precise examination of causal pathways compared to traditional regression analysis.

The study population consists of bank employees working in various branches in Western Tehran in 2023. A total of 430 participants were selected through convenience sampling. Despite its limitations in representativeness, this method was chosen due to accessibility constraints and the need to gather data efficiently. To reduce potential bias, efforts were made to include employees from diverse roles, departments, and experience levels. Participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: Minimum one year of work experience to ensure familiarity with the organizational structure, employment in a full-time position within a bank branch in Western Tehran and willingness to participate voluntarily after receiving study information and consent forms. Exclusion criteria included:

Employees in temporary or internship positions and participants who provided incomplete questionnaire responses.

The sample size was determined based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines for SEM, requiring at least 10-15 participants per estimated parameter. Given the complexity of the model, a minimum of 350 participants was recommended. With 430 respondents, the sample size exceeded this threshold, ensuring robust statistical power.

Instruments

The Organizational Performance Questionnaire, developed by Andre de Waal et al. (2017), assesses four dimensions of organizational performance: continuous improvement, action orientation, management quality, and employee quality. This questionnaire consists of 12 standard items, measured on a Likert scale. Its reliability was confirmed in Soleimani's (2019) study, with a total Cronbach's alpha of 0.907, demonstrating high internal consistency.

The Career Resilience Questionnaire, designed by Morgan Lyon (2001), consists of 25 items and is used to assess an individual's ability to persist and adapt in their career path. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicate greater career resilience, while scores below 28 suggest very low resilience. The reliability coefficient in Lyon's (2001) study was reported as 0.88, and additional research by Pardelan et al. (2013) confirmed its reliability using split-half and Cronbach's alpha tests (Pardelan et al., 2013).

The Emotional Schema Questionnaire, developed by Leahy (2002), includes 28 items designed to measure 14 types of emotional schemas. It is rated on a 6-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate a greater tendency toward negative emotional experiences. Some items require reverse scoring. Research by Leahy, Napolitano, and Tirch (2011) demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability for this questionnaire, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. Additional studies by Khanzadeh et al. (2013) and Erfan et al. (2017) further supported its internal consistency and construct validity (Khanzadeh et al., 2013; Erfan et al., 2017).

The Professional Ethics Questionnaire, designed by Kadozier (2002), consists of 25 items and measures various aspects of ethical behavior in the workplace,

including adherence to values, honesty, empathy, responsibility, justice, loyalty, excellence-seeking, and respect for others. This questionnaire is rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The validity of this questionnaire was evaluated in the study by Mohammad Davoudi et al. (2018), where it was deemed appropriate, and its Cronbach's alpha was reported as above 0.91, indicating high reliability (Mohammad Davoudi et al., 2018).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 for preliminary analysis and AMOS 26.0 for SEM modeling. The following analytical steps were conducted: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for all study variables, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), normality testing using skewness and kurtosis, confirming values within the ± 2 range, multicollinearity assessment via Variance Inflation Factor (VIF < 3) and Tolerance (> 0.30), ensuring no severe collinearity among predictors and less than 5% of responses were missing, and missing values were addressed through mean imputation.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Evaluated the fit of latent constructs. Examined direct, indirect, and total effects among career resilience, emotional schemas, professional ethics, and organizational performance.

Model fit indices: Chi-square/df (χ^2/df) ≤ 3.0 (acceptable fit), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ≥ 0.90 , Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) ≥ 0.90 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.08 .

Mediation Analysis: The indirect effect of career resilience and emotional schemas on organizational performance via professional ethics was tested using bootstrapping (5,000 samples, 95% confidence interval).

Findings and Results

The study included 430 bank employees, consisting of 154 women and 276 men, with a mean age of 36.49 years and a standard deviation of 7.13 years. Among the participants, 116 individuals (27%) were single, and 314 individuals (73%) were married. Regarding educational background, 10 participants (2.3%) held a diploma, 69 participants (16%) had an associate's degree, 205 participants (47.7%) held a bachelor's degree, 119 participants (27.7%) had a master's degree, and 27 participants (6.3%) held a doctorate. The mean job tenure among the participants was 9.98 years, with a

standard deviation of 4.78 years. In the next section, Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients among the research variables.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Research Variables (N = 400)

Table 1. The mean and standard deviation values for the research variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Emotional Schema	76.68	16.97
Career Resilience	95.56	15.55
Professional Ethics - Responsibility	9.53	2.62
Professional Ethics - Honesty	9.42	2.92
Professional Ethics - Justice/Fairness	9.21	2.72
Professional Ethics - Loyalty	9.49	2.92
Professional Ethics - Excellence-Seeking	9.54	2.60
Professional Ethics - Respect for Others	9.89	2.71
Professional Ethics - Empathy	12.88	3.58
Professional Ethics - Adherence to Values	10.17	2.69
Organizational Performance - Continuous Improvement	9.44	2.82
Organizational Performance - Action Orientation	9.00	2.73
Organizational Performance - Management Quality	9.24	2.95
Organizational Performance - Employee Quality	9.34	8.89

According to Table 2, the skewness and kurtosis values for all research components are within the ± 2 range, confirming that the assumption of univariate normality is met. Additionally, multicollinearity was assessed, and the tolerance values exceeded 0.10, while the VIF values remained below 10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. To examine multivariate normality, the Mahalanobis distance test was applied. The initial skewness and kurtosis values for Mahalanobis distance were 1.41 and 3.17, indicating a violation of multivariate normality. However, after identifying and removing two multivariate outliers, the values adjusted to 1.04 and 0.98, thereby satisfying the multivariate normality assumption. A scatterplot of standardized residuals was analyzed, confirming the homogeneity of variance assumption. These findings support the validity of using structural equation modeling (SEM) for further analysis in this study.

Before performing Pearson correlation and Structural Equation Modeling analyses, all necessary assumptions were examined and confirmed. The data met the assumption of normality as skewness and kurtosis values for all key variables ranged between -1.21 and +1.06, within the acceptable threshold of ± 2 . Multicollinearity was not a concern, with Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for all predictors falling below 2.5 and Tolerance values exceeding 0.40. The assumption of linearity was confirmed through scatterplots, and homoscedasticity was validated based on standardized residual plots. Additionally, Mahalanobis distance values revealed no extreme multivariate outliers (all p-values $> .001$), and the sample size was adequate for SEM according to recommended ratios of participants to estimated parameters.

Table 2

Normality and Multicollinearity Assumptions

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Emotional Schema	-0.22	-0.39	0.64	1.57
Career Resilience	-0.79	0.65	0.86	1.17
Responsibility	-0.18	-0.46	0.67	1.49
Professional Ethics - Honesty	0.09	-0.73	0.54	1.86
Professional Ethics - Justice/Fairness	-0.05	-0.76	0.71	1.40
Professional Ethics - Loyalty	0.03	-0.76	0.42	2.41
Professional Ethics - Excellence-Seeking	0.02	-0.45	0.52	1.92
Professional Ethics - Respect for Others	-0.22	-0.60	0.43	2.33

Professional Ethics - Empathy	0.01	-0.77	0.47	2.15
Professional Ethics - Adherence to Values	-0.10	-0.12	0.58	1.72

Table 3 demonstrates that the correlation coefficients align with theoretical research perspectives. To evaluate the assumption of variance homogeneity, the scatter plot of standardized error variances was examined. The results indicated that this assumption holds across the dataset. As previously mentioned, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed in this study. The SEM approach consists of two main stages: Evaluating the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model based on the

collected data. Assessing the goodness-of-fit of the structural model with the dataset. In this method, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the measurement model, and SEM was applied to test the structural model. The study considers Professional Ethics and Organizational Performance as latent variables, forming the measurement model. The AMOS 26.0 software and the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method were used to assess model fit.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix Between Research Variables

Research Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Emotional Schema	-													
Career Resilience	-0.12	-												
Responsibility	-0.36	0.15	-											
Honesty	-0.30	0.21	0.37	-										
Justice/Fairness	-0.28	0.17	0.30	0.38	-									
Loyalty	-0.39	0.30	0.47	0.58	0.37	-								
Excellence-Seeking	-0.37	0.32	0.41	0.49	0.43	0.58	-							
Respect for Others	-0.40	0.30	0.48	0.53	0.41	0.65	0.55	-						
Empathy	-0.37	0.26	0.40	0.57	0.37	0.61	0.53	0.62	-					
Adherence to Values	-0.29	0.24	0.41	0.50	0.33	0.56	0.50	0.54	0.47	-				
Continuous Improvement	-0.43	0.13	0.21	0.13	0.24	0.24	0.22	0.20	0.26	0.20	-			
Action Orientation	-0.44	0.23	0.28	0.22	0.32	0.39	0.43	0.29	0.31	0.23	0.43	-		
Management Quality	-0.43	0.25	0.24	0.31	0.36	0.38	0.38	0.35	0.37	0.23	0.42	0.47	-	
Employee Quality	-0.37	0.27	0.35	0.39	0.38	0.52	0.42	0.46	0.43	0.40	0.41	0.50	0.59	-

Table 4 shows that all model fit indices derived from confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) support an acceptable fit between the measurement model and the collected data. The results demonstrate strong support for model adequacy with values such as $\chi^2/df = 2.30$, CFI = 0.967, GFI = 0.955, AGFI = 0.934, and RMSEA = 0.055. In the measurement model, the highest factor loading belonged to Employee Quality ($\beta = 0.915$), while the lowest factor loading was associated with Justice and Fairness ($\beta = 0.523$). Given that all factor loadings exceeded 0.32, it can be concluded that all indicators

were sufficiently capable of measuring the study's latent variables. After confirming the acceptable fit of the measurement model, the structural model was tested using SEM. The structural model hypothesized that Career Resilience and Emotional Schemas predict Organizational Performance through the mediating role of Professional Ethics. The analysis was performed, and as **Table 4** demonstrates, all fit indices confirm an acceptable fit for the structural model with the collected data ($\chi^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = 0.958, GFI = 0.946, AGFI = 0.923, RMSEA = 0.056).

Table 4

Model Fit Indices for Measurement and Structural Models

Fit Index	Measurement Model	Structural Model	Cutoff Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	122.12	170.86	-
Degrees of Freedom (df)	53	73	-
χ^2/df	2.30	2.34	< 3
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	0.955	0.946	> 0.90
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	0.934	0.923	> 0.85
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.967	0.958	> 0.90

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055	0.056	< 0.08
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Table 5 presents the structural model path coefficients. The total effect between Emotional Schemas and Organizational Performance was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.548$, $p = 0.001$), while the total effect between Career Resilience and Organizational Performance was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.262$, $p = 0.001$). Additionally, the direct path from Professional Ethics to Organizational Performance was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.473$, $p = 0.001$). Furthermore, the indirect effect of Emotional Schemas on Organizational Performance through Professional Ethics was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.215$, $p = 0.001$), while the indirect effect of Career Resilience on Organizational

Performance was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.143$, $p = 0.001$).

Based on these results, it can be concluded that Professional Ethics mediates the relationship between Emotional Schemas and Organizational Performance negatively while positively mediating the relationship between Career Resilience and Organizational Performance. Finally, finding illustrates that the total multiple correlation squared (R^2) for Organizational Performance is 0.55, indicating that Emotional Schemas, Career Resilience, and Professional Ethics together explain 55% of the variance in Organizational Performance among bank employees.

Table 5

Path Coefficients in the Structural Model

Path	b	S.E.	β	p
Career Resilience → Professional Ethics	0.027	0.005	0.302	0.001
Emotional Schemas → Professional Ethics	-0.044	0.006	-0.454	0.001
Professional Ethics → Organizational Performance	0.497	0.085	0.473	0.001
Career Resilience → Organizational Performance	0.011	0.006	0.120	0.040
Emotional Schemas → Organizational Performance	-0.034	0.008	-0.333	0.001
Career Resilience → Organizational Performance	0.013	0.003	0.143	0.001
Emotional Schemas → Organizational Performance	-0.022	0.004	-0.215	0.001
Career Resilience → Organizational Performance	0.025	0.005	0.262	0.001
Emotional Schemas → Organizational Performance	-0.056	0.007	-0.548	0.001

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of Professional Ethics in explaining the causal relationships between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance among bank employees. The results showed that Professional Ethics negatively mediates the relationship between Emotional Schemas and Organizational Performance while positively mediating the relationship between Career Resilience and Organizational Performance.

No previous studies were found that directly support these findings. However, some related studies can be referenced. For example, Rahimaghaei et al. (2017), Salehi (2020), and Edwards (2022) found that schema therapy significantly impacts job burnout (Edwards, 2022; Salehi, 2020; Rahimaghaei et al., 2017). Similarly, Zarei et al. (2019) examined the relationship between maladaptive schemas and job burnout, concluding that maladaptive schemas have a negative correlation with

job burnout (Zarei & Ghazi Kermani, 2019). To interpret these findings, it can be stated that schemas play a role in career decision-making. Schemas consist of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, and when activated, they trigger emotional responses that may directly or indirectly cause disruptions in an individual's performance (Anisi et al., 2013). The more flexible an individual's schemas are, the higher their organizational performance.

In this regard, Leahy (2002) presents a cognitive-social perspective on emotional phenomena, defining emotional schemas as specific beliefs and dysfunctional strategies used to cope with emotional experiences (Leahy, 2002). Similarly, Greenberg et al. (1998) argue that emotional schemas, based on their emotional content, meanings, and cognitive structures, create an organizational framework (Greenberg et al., 1998). According to these models, emotional schemas affect how individuals conceptualize emotions and how they

act (or react) when experiencing unpleasant emotions (Leahy, 2002, 2010).

In practice, individuals with positive emotional schemas tend to have healthier underlying beliefs, emphasizing acceptance and expression of emotions, social approval, higher values, and agreement with others. These individuals cope more effectively with workplace stress and exhibit higher resilience, which ultimately enhances organizational performance. On the other hand, Professional Ethics is a set of principles and behavioral standards that guide individuals and groups, representing a rational thought process to identify and maintain organizational values over time (Hosseini Ali Abadi et al., 2022). Employees with strong professional ethics respond more effectively to workplace tensions and challenges. Thus, it is evident that higher levels of Professional Ethics reduce reliance on maladaptive emotional schemas, enhance resilience, and ultimately improve organizational performance.

Every study faces limitations, and this research is no exception. Some of the key limitations include: There is a possibility that participants provided biased or inaccurate responses due to the self-reporting nature of the questionnaires. This study was limited to Western Tehran, and future research should expand the study area to enhance the generalizability of findings. The sample lacked diversity in terms of roles, including employees and managers, as well as differences in responsibilities and job types. Future research should ensure a more homogenous participant group and examine its impact on findings. The present study was cross-sectional, meaning that longitudinal studies are needed to make stronger causal inferences about the relationship between these variables and their role in predicting Organizational Performance. Additionally, it is recommended that organizations focus on training employees in Professional Ethics and Career Resilience, as these factors contribute to enhancing organizational performance. Moreover, the role of Emotional Schemas should be considered in career counseling sessions to improve employees' workplace experiences and job satisfaction.

This study highlights the critical role of professional ethics in mediating the relationship between career resilience, emotional schemas, and organizational performance. The findings demonstrate that career resilience enhances workplace performance, reinforcing

its importance for employee development and job retention. Maladaptive emotional schemas negatively impact professional ethics and job performance, highlighting the need for emotional regulation strategies. Professional ethics serves as a partial mediator, reducing the negative effects of emotional distress while enhancing career resilience and ethical decision-making. These insights emphasize that organizations should invest in ethical training, resilience-building initiatives, and emotional well-being programs to foster a productive, ethical, and high-performing workforce. Future studies should explore longitudinal effects and industry-wide variations to further validate these findings.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their gratitude and appreciation to all participants.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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