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Ethical Leadership as a Driver of Supervisor Technical and Social Effectiveness: A Triple Helix for Cultivating Employees' Sense of Purpose

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ABSTRACT

A sense of purpose is generated when individuals perceive an authentic connection between their work and a broader transcendent life purpose beyond the self. Academics have shown significant positive effects of this driving force in life for employees and organizations, and thus the literature demands studies that analyze its antecedents, i.e., the potential factors that shape an individual's sense of purpose in life. Following an Aristotelian approach to virtue ethics in business, we analyze (1) whether ethical leadership enhances the technical and social effectiveness of supervisors, and (2) whether this moral asset of leaders enhances employee sense of purpose, either directly or by interacting with their technical and social effectiveness-related dimensions. Using data from 395 employees in the Iraqi insurance and health care industry, structural equation modeling analysis revealed that, as expected, the ethical dimension of supervisors can influence employees' sense of purpose, both directly and by improving their technical and social effectiveness as leaders. Our findings thus encourage managers to practice ethical leadership to become more effective in leadership and in encouraging employees to have a sense of purpose in what they do.

1 | Introduction

In recent years, the pursuit of purpose has been gaining ground in the academic literature on flourishing and happiness (Blocker, Cannon, and Zhang 2024; Huta and Ryan 2010; Wiedemann 2019). As work occupies an increasingly larger part of human life, academics and professionals recognize work activity is one of the main sources of sense of purpose (Demirtas et al. 2017; Kosine, Steger, and Duncan 2008; Lleo et al. 2021). Furthermore, the leaders' challenging quest for meaning and purpose in organizations (cf., Blocker, Cannon, and Zhang 2024; By 2021; Kempster, Jackson, and Conroy 2011; Ko et al. 2018; Kristjánsson 2017; Lysova et al. 2019) has been enlivened with

the so-called “great resignation” that followed the COVID-19 pandemic (Jiskrova 2022; Lysova et al. 2023), making the search for more transcendent reasons for working even more relevant (Good, Hughes, and Wang 2022; Scalzo, Akrivou, and Fernández González 2023; Weston, Hill, and Cardador 2020).

Defined as an “enduring, personally meaningful commitment to what one hopes to accomplish or work toward in life” (Bronk 2011, 32), it fuels a sense of directedness and intentionality in life (Ryff 1989) and a desire to contribute to the greater good (Staples and Troutman 2010). It is not surprising, therefore, that cultivating a sense of purpose among employees is a source of value generation for organizations. First, because employees

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who see their organizations as sources for them to build their own sense of purpose are likely to have greater identification with and commitment to their organization (Weston, Hill, and Cardador 2020), which may, in turn, promote their well-being (Chen et al. 2020), job satisfaction, and performance (Christian, Garza, and Slaughter 2011), as well as encouraging greater effort and citizenship behavior (He and Brown 2013). Second, because employees with a sense of purpose are likely to direct their efforts to a greater purpose in terms of a common good, as well as to an improvement of the organization's community of people in terms of unity and friendship (Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Llesma 2022). Despite the positive effects of employee sense of purpose in organizations (Lleo et al. 2021; Florez-Jimenez et al. 2024), its antecedents remain understudied (Chen et al. 2020). According to Cai and Lian (2022), the factors affecting one's sense of purpose include personality characteristics, self-identity, and health (Weston, Lewis, and Hill 2020). From an environmental perspective, they also include growth background, social support, and social culture (Cai and Lian 2022). Even though empirical research has provided evidence on a wide range of potential antecedents for a sense purpose in life (e.g., Chen et al. (2020) evaluated some of those predictors, including psychosocial well-being, psychological distress, employment characteristics, lifestyle, and physical health factors), its ethical grounds are still unexplored.

A recent stream of studies has emerged assigning management boards an important role in helping employees build a sense of purpose in their lives (Frémeaux and Pavageau 2020; Michaelson et al. 2014), and in response to this call, recent research has suggested ethical leadership as a potential positive influence on employee work meaningfulness (Demirtas et al. 2017; Wang and Xu 2019), i.e., “the degree to which the individual experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile” (Hackman and Oldham 1976, 256). As a type of leadership that entails demonstrating ethical behavior, caring for others, setting and enforcing ethical standards, and fostering a broad ethical awareness to serve the greater good (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003; Brown and Treviño 2006; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005), ethical leadership has been notably linked to multiple and varied benefits in organizations (Lemoine, Hartnell, and Leroy 2019; Ko et al. 2018; Ahmed 2023). However, few studies have delved into understanding the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' perceptions of sense of purpose, which is surprising given that the ethical grounds attributable to this concept (Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Ferrero 2021) should augur well for a significant connection between the two. A sense of purpose extends beyond mere work meaningfulness, encompassing a deeper sense of transcendence and interconnectedness with others in striving towards a greater objective (Dik et al. 2013), the attainment of which “moves people closer to achieving their true potential and brings them deep fulfillment” (Kosine, Steger, and Duncan 2008, 133). As such, the practice of ethical leadership, which entails the projection and cultivation of virtues (e.g., honesty, justice, integrity, caring for others, and listening (with empathy), Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a) in their work environment and the broader society (Argandoña 1998), should help subordinates perceive their work has a broader moral purpose (Freeman 2005) and cultivate their sense of purpose in the work realm.

To fill this gap, our model hypothesizes technical effectiveness, social effectiveness, and ethical leadership as situational antecedents of employees' sense of purpose (Ko et al. 2018; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, and Kish-Gephart 2024), drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics to explain “how” the practice of ethical leadership by managers can instill a sense of purpose among employees. Founded on Aristotle's moral philosophy (Russell 2013), virtue ethics has garnered significant attention in recent decades in management science (Ferrero and Sison 2014; Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Ferrero 2021; Scalzo and Fariñas 2019; Meyer and Hühn 2020; Hühn and Meyer 2023), especially because it provides a robust framework for understanding business in terms of contributing to human development and the common good (Sison and Fontrodona 2012; Hühn, Meyer, and Racelis 2018). In this sense, Aristotle made much effort to understand how one could reach a flourishing life (eudaimonia), especially through the practice of virtue (Aristotle 2004, *Nicomachean Ethics, henceforth NE*), and how it was key to the purpose of all human beings. He himself associated it with the development of human beings' natural capacities in community towards achieving a good life (NE, 1097b-1098a) and linked it with the acquisition or reception of three kinds of goods, including useful, pleasant, and moral goods (NE, 1178a).

Indeed, for Aristotle, to achieve a good life, all these three goods are necessary (NE, 1178a) and desirable (for themselves or for the sake of something else) (NE, 1097). Even though moral good is the most complete, each type of good properly acts as a telos that guides human inclination and voluntary search toward a good life or eudaimonic happiness (Kempster, Jackson, and Conroy 2011). Aristotle's anthropological idea of human nature and his notion of human function—*ergon*—which underpin his teleological ethics illustrate what a purposeful and eudaimonic (flourishing) life (Sison and Fontrodona 2011) would be in Aristotelian terms. Accordingly, the sense of purpose may be interpreted as a component or expression of *eudaimonia* (Kristjánsson 2017) or as a meaningful happiness related to eudaimonic well-being (Sison and Ferrero 2015).

Aligned with this tradition of Aristotelian virtue ethics, authors such as Guillén (Guillén 2006; Guillén and González 2001; Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015) have built a proposal that serves as the basic framework for our research. For Guillén, relationships based mostly on utility or pleasure are of a fragile kind since they depend on the benefit obtained (technical or affective), creating a permanence or emotional commitment, respectively (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015). However, Guillén, in line with Aristotle (NE, 1098b-1099b), establishes that relationships should also be based on the acquisition and reception of moral good because moral good is not only the most perfect but also the most shareable (NE, 1097a; 1097b; 1169a). For Guillén (see Guillén 2006; Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), the presence and provision of moral goods, which is an essential feature of the practice of ethical leadership (Guillén and González 2001; Hühn and Meyer 2023; Redín, Meyer, and Rego 2023), can create an ethical long-lasting commitment between people and organizations, beyond emotional or transactional reasons. This is because providing and obtaining moral good is key for people to be able to flourish, as “people can reach flourishing only with others around them who also flourish, not by limiting them” (Hühn and Meyer 2023, 10). Thus, drawing on Guillén's work,

which relies on Aristotelian thinking, it is feasible to suppose that the provision of each of these types of good, and especially moral good, is critical for raising employees' awareness and alerting them to the importance of attaining their purpose in life, one that can be considered a kind of flourishing because it serves a greater common good (Sison and Frontrodona 2011). Specifically, we rely on this theory to interpret how ethical leadership should enhance a supervisor's technical effectiveness (where useful or technical goods are provided) and social effectiveness (where pleasant or social goods are provided), as well as directly providing a sense of purpose among employees.

In all, we seek to contribute to the existing literature by offering evidence of the positive impact of ethical leadership on employee sense of purpose and the different mechanisms it uses to achieve that end. Thus, this study aims to test whether the practice of ethical leadership by supervisors (whereby moral goods are provided): (a) directly increases employee sense of purpose (Hypothesis 1) and (b) enhances their technical effectiveness (whereby useful or technical goods are provided) (Hypothesis 2) and social effectiveness (where pleasant or social goods are provided) (Hypothesis 3). More importantly, based on Aristotle's rationalizing on the preponderance of moral good in attaining human flourishing in the realm of civic friendship, this study will test whether the practice of ethical leadership (c) enhances the positive impact of both the technical (Hypothesis 4a) and social effectiveness (Hypothesis 4b) of these leaders in cultivating a sense of purpose among employees. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model to be tested in this study, which is intended to reveal the triple helix (i.e., ethical leadership, technical effectiveness, and social effectiveness) on which supervisors must rely to cultivate a sense of purpose among subordinates.

2 | Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The idea of purpose is associated with self-reported life satisfaction (Bronk et al. 2009) and positively affect, hope, and happiness (Burrow and Hill 2011; Burrow, O'Dell, and Hill 2010). Typically related to meaningfulness, moral elevation, moral identity, vocation, calling, meaningful work, or meaning in life, the terms "purposefulness," "purpose in life," and "sense of purpose" are used almost interchangeably in the literature. Nevertheless, there are subtle conceptual differences and, more

prominently, differences regarding scales used to gauge a person's sense of purpose perception (By 2021). Purpose may be described as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self" (Damon 2008, 33), while sense of purpose can be defined as "the belief that one is making a contribution to a cause greater and more enduring than oneself" (Good, Hughes, and Wang 2022, 273), which is linked to personal flourishing in common with others (Sison and Frontrodona 2011; Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019).

The factors that affect one's sense of purpose include both personal (e.g., self-identity and personal growth) and environmental elements (e.g., social support and culture) (Cai and Lian 2022; Weston, Lewis, and Hill 2020), with "leadership" being a principal factor of the latter group (Quinn and Thakor 2014). Ideally, leaders help inspire a sense of purpose among workers "by moving employees to deeper intrinsic orientation, a heightened awareness of purpose, and a commitment to the collective good" (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019, 395). Thus, given the strong "service to others" characteristic of ethical leaders (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003; Brown and Treviño 2006; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005), we believe that the ethical leadership of supervisors may help cultivate a sense of purpose among employees; the process and conditions under which this human good is obtained will be described below.

2.1 | Supervisor Ethical Leadership and Employee Sense of Purpose

Understanding ethical leadership through the lens of virtue ethics requires recognizing the importance of character, values, and moral principles in guiding leadership behavior (Hühn and Meyer 2023; Meyer and Hühn 2020). Indeed, from a virtue ethics approach, an ethical leader is a person who does "what is right, correct, or best" (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019, 392) by performing and acquiring virtuous actions and habits (Meyer and Hühn 2020). Furthermore, ethical leaders are associated with the role of institutionalizing "virtuousness in organizations, through actions and language as well as through systems and routines" (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019, 392). As such, ethical leadership is built upon two pillars: living as a *moral person* and exercising the role of a *moral manager* (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003; Brown and Treviño 2006; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005), as described below.

Indeed, being an ethical leader explicitly involves *living as a moral person* (with moral principles, traits, and behaviors) on a day-to-day basis (Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green 2016; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b), which, from a virtue ethics approach, means developing and exercising virtues, the substantive content of ethical leadership (Bischak and Woiceshyn 2016). Hence, this approach relies on the notion that to be considered ethical, leaders need to develop virtues, i.e., ethical leaders are said to be fair, honest, caring, and trustworthy (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b), and to practice what they preach from a moral perspective (Brown and Treviño 2006), in accordance with a higher purpose worthy of a "good life" (i.e., happiness, Kempster, Jackson, and Conroy 2011, 321). In addition to living as a moral person, being

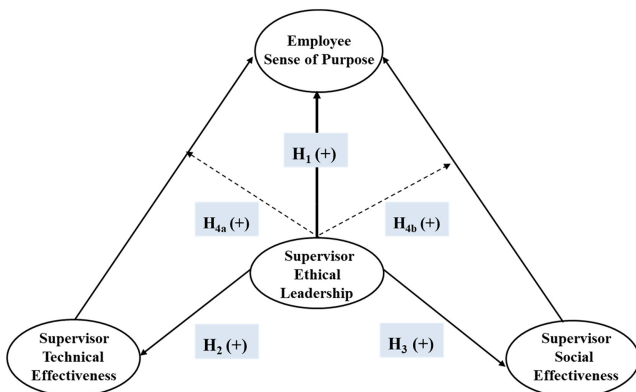


FIGURE 1 | Hypothesized model.

an ethical leader is also associated with *exercising the role of a moral manager* (Ruiz-Palomino and Linuesa-Langreo 2018), that is, promoting and communicating ethics in a two-way direction and holding employees accountable for ethical behavior (Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green 2016; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b), as well as setting ethical standards and establishing intolerance of unethical behavior. In other words, the practice of ethical leadership also actively involves the creation of an ethical work environment (Al Halbusi et al. 2021) through which to promote ethical values and communicate the reason and value of being ethical and serving the greater good, all of which serves to make employees feel proud of pursuing the right goals using the right approach (Wang and Xu 2019). Thus, the practice of ethical leadership involves living as a *moral person* and exercising the role of *moral manager* in a way that, as Table 1 shows, privately and publicly demonstrates ethical behavior and care for the growth of others, as well as setting and enforcing ethical standards with the goal of encouraging employees to have a broad ethical awareness of their role in serving the greater good. Thus, with an ethical leader, moral good is extrinsically endowed on employees (i.e., a climate in which serving the greater good is a priority and justice, truth, or goodness prevail in interrelationships and treatment received) and intrinsically received by others (i.e., practicing ethics in daily tasks as a way to reach flourishing) (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), which should cultivate their sense of purpose in life.

Indeed, by acknowledging the needs of multiple stakeholders, among which are humanity and the planet (Lips-Wiersma, Haar, and Wright 2020; Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003), as well as communicating to followers how their tasks are bound to a larger moral purpose, ethical leaders endow a purpose among their employees. In fact, under ethical supervisors, individuals are likely to assume they belong to an ethical organization oriented towards the attainment of the common good, a good for the organization itself and for others, which implies living virtuously and helps one to reach and share human flourishing with the broader community (Sison and Frontrodona 2011; Sison and Frontrodona 2012; Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Lluesma 2022). More importantly, supervisors' ethical leadership helps followers to perceive broader meaning and purpose in their work from a moral and social responsibility perspective (Demirtas et al. 2017) and leads employees to live up to

the same principles their supervisors aspire to in life. Indeed, exemplary leaders generate trust in their followers (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b), which, in turn, generates positive outcomes (Stouten, van Dijke, and De Cremer 2012): observing attractive role models such as ethical supervisors, who communicate, reward acceptable behaviors, and punish unacceptable ones, should lead employees to experience a life-learning process oriented towards achieving the highest goods – i.e. moral ones (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), including serving the greater good (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003). This is also likely to occur because, under the self-concept theory (van Knippenberg et al. 2004; Akrivou, Orón, and Scalzo 2018), an ethical leader will lead employees to internalize moral identity and their leader's purpose as central to their self-concept (Brown and Treviño 2006; Akrivou and Scalzo 2020), which should answer questions about what their purpose in life is (Frémeaux and Pavageau 2020).

In summary, as Table 1 reflects, the strong people-orientation of ethical leaders, their strong inclination towards setting and enforcing ethical standards, their role modeling behavior via perceptible ethical behavior, traits, and decision making (Brown and Treviño 2006; Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003), and their focus on accountability and service to the greater good—which includes taking into account the needs of stakeholders (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003)—should lead employees to be aware of and awaken their sense of purpose. Since ethical leaders understand “purpose as a meaning-generating cause capable of motivating” (Leo et al. 2021, 3), these employees will, therefore, be more likely to be motivated to be “on the way to reach” something that is worthy in life (sense of purpose, Liu et al. 2019). Indeed, thanks to their modeling of ethical behavior, caring, and service to others as well as the promotion of such examples of moral good in the workplace, the role of ethical leadership is critical for raising employees' awareness and alerting them to the importance of reaching their purpose in life. When this style of leadership is practiced by supervisors, employees note from their communicative efforts and daily behavior that acting in a noble manner, striving also to meet the needs of others, is highly encouraged, which generates an environment that provides moral good. Furthermore, they are likely to intrinsically obtain such moral good, as they are more likely to practice virtues (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), which, in line with Aristotle (NE, 1097b-1098a), leads them on the path to attaining a flourishing life in common (Sison and Frontrodona 2011;

TABLE 1 | Characteristics of ethical leadership.

Characteristics	Description
Ethical role modelling	Perceptible ethical behavior and ethical traits (integrity, honesty, fairness) and ethical decision-making to promote ethical behavior
Orientation to People	Care and fair treatment of other people. Concern for other people's growth and developmental needs
Settler and enforcer of ethical standards	Setting of ethical standards and intolerance of unethical behavior. Sanctioning of (un)ethical behavior to promote ethics. Two-way communication of ethics and its importance in workplace decision-making and behavioral routines
Broad ethical awareness/ Awareness of serving to the greater good	Service to the greater good and acknowledgment and accountability for complying with multiple stakeholders' needs

Note: Adapted from Trevino, Brown, and Hartman (2003), Brown and Treviño (2006), and Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005).

Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), i.e., a good that is shared by all members of society both as a community and individually, that is the highest, self-sufficient, and worthwhile good one can pursue (Sison and Frontrudona 2011; NE, 1097b). Overall, ethical leaders possess a moral compass that enables them to guide their group or organization, including employees, toward a noble, good purpose in their lives (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019), as revealed in previous research (Trachik et al. 2022). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Supervisor ethical leadership relates positively to employee sense of purpose.*

2.2 | Supervisor Ethical Leadership: Supervisor Technical and Social Effectiveness

Systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses have reported that personal values impact ethical leadership (Ko et al. 2018), which, in turn, has a direct positive impact on *leader effectiveness* (Lemoine, Hartnell, and Leroy 2019), an important outcome for our research. Following an Aristotelian virtue ethics approach to business ethics, we firstly relate the practice of ethical leadership by supervisors—i.e., the moral person and the moral manager's dimensions—to the provision of moral good, as these supervisors have “practical wisdom (*phronesis*, *the ability to see and achieve what is good for all*, Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019, 396), virtue (*arête*), and good will” (Rhetorics, Rh 1378a, cf. Murcio and Scalzo 2021), all of which is key to being trustworthy and therefore persuasive enough to be an “*effective and successful leader*” (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019, 396). This Aristotelian virtue ethics approach also leads us to relate ethical leaders to the production of useful and pleasant types of goods. Moreover, taking into account that each of these types of goods is attractive and gives direction and purpose to human life (Aristotle, NE, 1155b), we will relate such goods to the technical and social dimensions of work, respectively, each to cultivate a sense of purpose among employees. First, we will relate ethical leaders to the provision of useful goods (goods needed for practical reasons) as they lead their groups and employees to do the right things right and excel in their function (cf. Redín, Meyer, and Rego 2023), thereby leading them to gain useful types of goods, such as safety, money, job security, as well as competence and skill learning (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015). Second, these leaders will be related to the provision of pleasant goods (desired for their own sake, being satisfying, pleasing, and enjoyable), such as esteem, social interpersonal relationships and relatedness (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015), as these leaders have social abilities that include empathy, communicativeness (Guillén and González 2001), thankfulness, joyfulness, and inclusive relationship-enacting (Redín, Meyer, and Rego 2023).

Finally, based on the aforementioned framework, the provision of each useful (technical) and pleasant (social) good will be described as critical for raising employees' awakening and awareness of a sense of purpose in their lives when the provision of moral good is also present. Thus, we contend that the positive influence of the supervisor's technical and social effectiveness in conveying a sense of purpose among employees will be stronger when the supervisor practices ethical leadership; the moral good provided by these supervisors is the most complete (NE, 1156b) and shareable

(NE, 1169a), and therefore the most likely to build in employees a sense of purpose aimed at achieving the common good.

2.2.1 | Ethical Leadership and Supervisor Technical Effectiveness

According to Aristotle, “every virtue causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well” (NE, 1105a) and “makes a man good and makes him do his own work well” (NE, 1106a). As such, it is of no surprise that the practice of ethical leadership makes a manager become technically effective. Practical wisdom, or *phronesis*—the wisdom an individual recruits to recognize the virtues that are appropriate to a specific situation, so that action leads to that good life (Kristjánsson et al. 2021, 242)—is one of the virtues an ethical leader possesses (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019), which presupposes that the ethical leader is expected to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right purpose, and in the right circumstances (Aristotle, 1985, NE, 1126b). In addition, beyond this intellectual virtue (Bredillet, Tywoniak, and Dwivedula 2015), ethical leadership entails the exhibition of a broad set of ethical virtues, according to which one becomes a good manager (Wang and Hackett 2016). For example, ethical managers, by adopting virtues such as honesty, service to others' needs, and care for other's needs, which are internally linked to the excellent practice of their managerial role (see Giles 2016; Kouzes and Posner 2017), are more than likely to perform with excellence in their day-to-day managerial work (Hassan et al. 2013). According to Yukl (2012, 66), what makes the managerial function technically effective is “influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”, and thus being honest and behaving with integrity are virtues and internal goods that may make leaders highly effective (Kouzes and Posner 2017). First, because such virtues allow managers to be open to employees' opinions as well as to express honest concern about their employees' needs, all of which should increase employee participation in the issues of the work unit (De Hoogh and Den Hartog 2008). Second, because these virtues are attractive in employees' eyes (Al Halbusi et al. 2021), when managers develop them, employees' levels of trust in the manager and their willingness to cooperate for the benefit of the work unit will be improved (Avolio et al. 2004). Thus, the practice of ethical leadership should lead to supervisors being perceived as agents who communicate a worthy vision that attracts and captivates and with which employees identify (Lee 2016; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, and De Hoogh 2011), thus likely eliciting behaviors that are aligned with the supervisor's vision as well as conducive to meeting team or organizational goals (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Piccolo et al. 2010).

As proof of how ethical leadership leads managers to be effective, the literature reports positive effects of managers' ethical leadership on several valuable outcomes (Ko et al. 2018; Stouten, van Dijke, and De Cremer 2012). First, at the worker level, the modeling and promotion of a range of virtues by ethical leaders (e.g., accountability, Liu et al. 2013; fairness, Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; group-oriented skills such as listening or service to others, Piccolo et al. 2010; ethical behavior, Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019), is likely to lead employees to intrinsically obtain useful goods to

do their job in a competent, excellent way (cf., Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015). Relatedly, ethical leadership has positive effects on positive attitudes and behaviors among employees (e.g., taking charge to be more effective at work, Lee 2016; job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work effort, voice behavior, self-efficacy, job engagement, psychological well-being, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance, Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green 2016), through which their team or organization is likely to gain in effectiveness. Second, at the group level, ethical leadership also produces positive results (e.g., group in-role performance, group helping behavior, Peng and Lin 2017), which are key elements for a team's or organization's optimal functioning.

In all, the positive outcomes of ethical leadership described above suggest ethical leadership practice enables the supervisor to get the most from their relationship with their employees (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a; Liu et al. 2013), thus achieving a highly effective work unit. This should ultimately make the supervisor successful in leading employees' efforts to the effective production of goods and services that are truly useful and destined to meet people's legitimate needs (Sison, Ferrero, and Guitián 2018; Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Ferrero 2021). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *The practice of ethical leadership relates positively to a supervisor's technical effectiveness.*

2.2.2 | Ethical Leadership and Supervisor Social Effectiveness

Aristotle's assumption on the social nature of human beings—i.e., as a “political animal” (*zoon politikon*) (Aristotle, Politics, 1253a)—makes a flourishing life only achievable in the context of a community, i.e., socially (Hühn and Meyer 2023). Certainly, the positive communication (Aristotle's *Rhetoric, Rh*) ethical leaders provide is crucial to achieving the former (Hühn and Meyer 2023). Indeed, by expressing gratitude and institutionalizing forgiveness, among other aspects (Redín, Meyer, and Rego 2023; Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019), the positive communication these leaders engage in is essential to create a sense of fellowship (Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Ferrero 2021), bring people together (Hühn and Meyer 2023), and improve interpersonal relationships (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019), which makes them highly socially effective.

Indeed, ethical leaders are socially effective because they are able to foster a community of work in their groups or organizations, by building high-quality social relationships (Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green 2016; Walumbwa et al. 2011) and providing pleasant goods to their employees, such as esteem, recognition, and relatedness, among others (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015). In practical terms, being socially effective therefore means inspiring trust and building strong, meaningful interpersonal social exchanges with and between employees (cf. Magnusen and Perrewé 2016; Trevino, Brown, and Hartman 2003; Walumbwa et al. 2011), and this is likely to arise when managers are empathetic, treat their employees as ends themselves, act in their best interests, and offer trustworthiness in their relationships with their followers. All these aspects are

nuclear in ethical leadership (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b; Den Hartog 2015; Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005), and, by deploying them, managers foster strong ties in their social relationships with employees (Pastoriza and Ariño 2013), as well as social cohesiveness within their units, all of which makes them excellent providers of pleasant goods. Indeed, these leaders are unique in putting themselves in other people's shoes as well as in providing caring treatment and having a high concern for others' needs (Table 1), removing obstacles that can lead to the frustration of their employees (Guillén and González 2001), thus favoring the obtaining of pleasant goods, such as esteem and relatedness (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015). In addition, these leaders are concerned to cultivate ethical practice in the workplace, such that satisfying, enjoyable, and/or pleasant goods, like self-actualization and growth, may also be intrinsically obtained by employees (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015; Guillén and González 2001). This is because, by fostering moral virtue among employees, ethical leaders facilitate their personal growth and achievement of happiness (Ruiz-Palomino, Sáez-Martínez, and Martínez 2013), which resonates with Aristotle's notion that “a complete life is one that is lived virtuously” (NE, 1098b), with virtuous activities being the most enduring achievements in human endeavor (NE, 1100b).

All in all, with supervisors who practice ethical leadership, employees feel they are part of a social relationship with their supervisor and the work unit, beyond perceiving mere contractual or economic relationships with the supervisor or the team (Pastoriza and Ariño 2013), which makes such a practice a source of social effectiveness. Ethical leaders are caring, empathetic, and helpful (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Ruiz-Palomino and Linuesa-Langreo 2018), and so are excellent providers of a pleasant environment conducive to obtaining goods such as esteem, positive social interpersonal relationships, and relatedness (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015; Guillén and González 2001). They are also good at setting and enforcing ethical standards (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005), thus making subordinates likely to achieve pleasant goods such as self-actualization and growth (Guillén, Ferrero, and Hoffman 2015; Guillén and González 2001). Thus, the practice of ethical leadership should lead supervisors to be providers of pleasant goods, therefore being socially effective in the workplace. In fact, ethical leaders are especially likely to be socially effective because, compared to other leadership styles, they pay greater attention to the social (versus self-oriented) use of power (Den Hartog 2015), which fosters strong bonds and effective social relationships aimed at meeting team members' affective needs (Malik et al. 2020). Accordingly, then, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *The practice of ethical leadership relates positively to a supervisor's social effectiveness.*

2.3 | Supervisor Technical and Social Effectiveness and Employee Sense of Purpose: The Strengthening Role of Practicing Ethical Leadership

Leaders are effective from a technical perspective when they are able to impact their employees (Yukl 2012) so that they perform their roles with positive results for their work unit's operation

(Douglas and Ammeter 2004). Employees see effective leaders as having high capacities (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, etc.) (Yukl 2012). They also see them as providing useful goods (i.e., money, safety, and job security; Guillén and González 2001) and as conveying passion for work (Marques 2007). As such, the technical effectiveness of supervisors is likely to represent a role that can be emulated for success in life (Lips-Wiersma, Haar, and Wright 2020) and that conveys a sense of purpose among the employees.

Certainly, in line with Aristotle, the acquisition of useful goods is worthy (NE, 1155b) and has the potential to drive individuals' actions. Additionally, according to Kristjánsson (2017), for one to flourish, external necessities or useful goods are needed. Therefore, supervisors who demonstrate technical effectiveness by offering useful goods are likely to instill a sense of purpose in their employees. However, even though external necessities represent a condition that is necessary for a good life (NE, 1099a, 1153b), there is a partial instrumental side to this. Whereas the acquisition of useful goods is worthy of love (NE, 1155b), these goods are intended for the sake of something else (NE, 1156a), so employees' sense of purpose is likely to be more positively impacted by the technical effectiveness of their supervisors when it is paired with the provision of virtues or moral goods, which are the most perfect and complete goods of all (NE, 1097a,b, 1169a). For example, in a study conducted by Ruiz-Palomino, Sáez-Martínez, and Martínez (2013) to analyze whether the motivating potential of a job enhances employees' satisfaction with pay, it was revealed that, for this enhancement to reach its maximum potential, employees also required their supervisors to be ethically exemplary, which could be attributed to the need of every human being to live and obtain moral goods in their pursuit of a purposeful life. Thus, given that following moral standards in everyday actions is a likely antecedent of purpose in life (Weziak-Białowolska and Białowolski 2022), or that virtues are constitutive and conducive to deliberate choices aimed at actively pursuing flourishing (Meyer and Hühn 2020), leaders who can combine technical skills (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, etc.) with communicating, enforcing, and living clear ethical standards, are highly likely to convey a sense of purpose to their employees (Wang and Hackett 2016). Supervisors who demonstrate technical effectiveness while exercising ethical leadership—by showing honesty and concern for the needs of their employees, organization and broader society—are worthy of imitation (Al Halbusi et al. 2021; Frémeaux and Pavageau 2020) and are highly likely to convey a sense of purpose to their employees (Akdoğan, Arslan, and Demirtaş 2016). Technical effectiveness may have that effect itself, but since it is more related to the provision of useful goods—that is, goods that have instrumental value (NE, 1097)—it is likely to need to be complemented with the provision of other goods that are proper ends in themselves—such as moral goods—to more strongly enhance the employees' motivation and internalization of a sense of purpose (Lleo et al. 2021). Drawing on Aristotelian thought, the technical effectiveness of leaders and the useful goods employees may obtain as a result may limit employees in achieving a complete flourishing life shared in common, since they will never “obtain as much [usefulness] as they require and [believe] they deserve” (NE, 1162b) and because the motive behind obtaining useful goods is instrumental and calculating, mainly based on the technical gain obtained (NE, 1157a). It is through

virtue that employees “direct their efforts to others' well-being (common good)” (Meyer and Hühn 2020, 269). Thus, it is in combination with the provision of moral goods that the supervisor's technical effectiveness instills in employees a greater sense of purpose linked to the pursuit of the common good, as employees “[guided] by virtue are eager to benefit one another [and others] [per se]” (NE, 1162b, NE, 1163a) and “[act] for the common good” (NE, 1169a). Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4a. *Ethical leadership moderates the positive relationship between supervisor technical effectiveness and employee sense of purpose, such that this relationship is stronger when ethical leadership is high rather than low.*

By leaders being socially effective, we mean that strong, meaningful interpersonal social exchanges are built between them and their employees (Magnusen and Perrewé 2016), which is likely to help awaken employees' sense of purpose and make them aware of a sense of purpose shared with others, one oriented towards attaining the common good. Indeed, the search for a sense of purpose cannot be understood without the social dimension of life (Weston, Lewis, and Hill 2020), which previous research suggests, by revealing that social support contributes to people's sense of purpose (Cai and Lian 2022; Chen et al. 2020) and collective social connectedness (i.e., a sense of belonging to a larger community), provides meaning in life, even after controlling for other aspects of social connectedness (Stavrova and Luhmann 2016; Shiba et al. 2017). In fact, according to Aristotle, friendship “is an absolute necessity in life” (NE, 1155a) and is a constituent of, and can help achieve, the worthiest and most complete of the goods to be pursued: human flourishing in common (NE, 1097b, 1098a).

For Aristotle, there are incomplete kinds of friendship, specifically those based on utility or pleasure only (NE, 1156a–1157b). He reasons that complete friendship or “character friendship” takes place when people “wish good things to [someone else] for their own sake... and are disposed in this way towards each other because of what they are” (NE, 1156b). As Kristjánsson (2022, 46) highlights, “friendship of this kind educates by being, in various ways, knowledge-enhancing, virtue-enhancing, and life-enhancing.” As such, for managers to be socially effective, a climate needs to be shaped in which complete friendship can exist. This requires the provision of moral goods, as complete friendship “is that of good people, those who are alike in their virtue [and] wish good things to each other” (NE, 1156b). Accordingly, by practicing ethical leadership, managers can be more socially effective since the moral goods at stake in friendship represent the necessary conditions for creating a relationship based on trust and mutual correction, and such friendship not only increases an employee's sense of purpose but also opens up space for greater contributions to the work realm's common good in terms of making useful and pleasant goods shareable to all. An Aristotelian approach to ethics builds on this idea when it understands organizations as a community of people oriented toward improvement through achieving better ends (to be attained in common, Pies, Beckmann, and Hielscher 2014) that provide meaning and purpose to their lives.

Thus, we can say that the social relationships maintained within a work unit and so the social effectiveness of managers must be

conducted under high ethical standards for them to be considered of high quality and helpful to awaken and raise awareness of a sense of purpose in employees (Bailey et al. 2017). Indeed, goodwill, “the first principle of friendship” in fact “develops because of some virtue and excellence” (NE, 1167a), so ethical supervisors, by providing moral goods to their subordinates, will make it more likely for complete friendship to be generated in every corner of the organization, which is key for the latter to be aware of their sense of purpose, one consisting of achieving self-perfection with others (NE, 1155a) and being on the path to a flourishing life shared with others (NE, 1094b).

In all, when supervisors are ethical, their social effectiveness will activate a greater number of stronger social exchanges with and between employees, which should ultimately convey the purpose of “going above and beyond” for their supervisors, the organization, and broader society. Supervisors being ethical leaders entails pointing out that the rights and claims of others, such as stakeholders, must be taken seriously; it also entails communicating a purpose to employees that is compelling and morally rich, and that achieves social legitimacy (Freeman 2005). Thus, the social effectiveness of the supervisor, together with the practice of ethical leadership, is likely to convey to employees a worthy sense of purpose in achieving the organization's goals. This can be posited as follows.

Hypothesis 4b. *Ethical leadership moderates the positive relationship between supervisor social effectiveness and employee sense of purpose, such that this relationship is stronger when ethical leadership is high rather than low.*

3 | Method

3.1 | Sample and Procedure

To test our hypothesized relationships, we used data from a large Iraqi sample of employees working in the insurance and health care industry. A pilot test of the survey with a convenience sample of 50 workers confirmed the clarity, comprehension, readability, and suitability of the items. The survey was distributed to 550 employees in multiple branches (work units) of 33 Iraqi corporations, after gaining the consent of the different work unit managers. In total, we received 424 surveys. After eliminating 29 questionnaires with invalid data, we finally obtained 395 valid responses (71.8% of response rate), which is considered more than acceptable in research on a delicate topic (i.e., supervisor's ethical leadership) such as that studied here (Ruiz-Palomino and Linuesa-Langreo 2018).

Because our research design used self-reported measures, evaluation apprehension and social desirability bias were potential concerns (Conway and Lance 2010). Accordingly, we designed the questionnaire using procedural remedies to mitigate all these issues (i.e., Conway and Lance 2010; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2012). For example, we included a cover letter in which we emphasized there were no right or wrong answers so that social desirability bias and evaluation apprehension could be reduced. To further reduce social desirability bias, we guaranteed anonymity for both individuals and the organization; specifically, respondents were not asked to reveal their names, job positions, or employer.

We also used an important strategy to mitigate common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2012), namely, collecting data in two phases. In Phase 1, participants completed a survey containing one of the predictors, supervisor ethical leadership. Additionally, they were asked about the sociodemographic variables used in the study (e.g., gender, age, length of service, and education level). In Phase 2, three months later, participants completed the other two predictor measures, supervisor technical effectiveness and supervisor social effectiveness, as well as descriptions of their own sense of purpose in life. The surveys were coded so that subordinates' responses in Phases 1 and 2 could be matched.

Table 2 shows most employees were relatively young (68.9% aged 40 or younger), highly educated (71.1% had college degrees), and had worked for their companies a long time (72.9% had been employed for more than 5 years). In addition, the majority of respondents (75.2%) that indicated their gender identified as male.

3.2 | Measures

We used valid, reliable scales to measure each of the variables in our research model. Since the respondents spoke Arabic and the survey questions were originally developed in English, we followed the Brislin (1980) back-translation procedure; the items

TABLE 2 | Sample characteristics ($n = 395$).

Variable	Frequency	% of total
Gender		
Male	297	75.2
Female	98	24.8
Age (years)		
< 25	20	5.1
25–30	82	20.8
31–40	170	43.0
41–50	88	22.3
> 51	35	8.8
Length of service (years)		
< 2	19	4.8
3–5	88	22.3
6–10	149	37.7
11–15	49	12.4
> 26	90	22.8
Education level		
High school graduate	56	14.2
Diploma	58	14.7
Bachelor's degree	218	55.2
Master's degree	34	8.6
Doctorate degree	29	7.3

were translated into Arabic, and then two bilingual speakers compared the translation to the original to ensure semantic equivalence. Using Hair et al.'s (2017) criteria for distinguishing between reflective (Mode A) composites (containing highly correlated indicators thought to be caused by a targeted latent construct) and formative (Mode B) composites (containing indicators that may determine the construct without necessarily being highly correlated), our survey only contained Mode A composites. With the sole exception of one variable (the employee sense of purpose), all variables were first-order Mode A composites. The scales used five-point Likert response formats (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree") and showed good internal consistency (Table 4).

3.2.1 | Supervisor Ethical Leadership

We measured supervisor ethical leadership using Brown, Treviño, and Harrison's (2005) reliable ten-item Likert-type scale. Respondents assessed their most immediate supervisors on the extent to which the dimensions of being a moral person (e.g., integrity, concern for others, justice, trustworthiness) and a moral manager (e.g., communicating ethics, holding followers accountable to comply with ethical norms, emphasizing ethical standards, being a role model) characterized their leadership (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005). Higher scores indicated stronger ethical leadership in supervisors.

3.2.2 | Supervisor Technical Effectiveness

We used the three-item scale developed by Douglas and Ammeter (2004) to assess the subordinates' perception of how effectively their supervisor performed leader roles for all members, the work unit, and the organization. The three items were: "This supervisor is effective in meeting the job-related needs of their work unit members", "This supervisor is effective in representing the work unit to upper management," and "This supervisor is effective in meeting the needs of the organization". Higher scores on this scale show stronger technical effectiveness.

3.2.3 | Supervisor Social Effectiveness

We used three items from the scale developed and validated by Bernerth et al. (2007) to indicate the strength of the social exchanges created between supervisor and employees. The three items selected were those that best reflected the existence of trust and social exchange between the supervisor and the employees (Bernerth et al. 2007): "My efforts are reciprocated by my supervisor", "My relationship with my supervisor is composed of comparable exchanges of giving and taking," and "When I give my best effort at work, my supervisor will return it". Higher scores on this scale indicated stronger social effectiveness.

3.2.4 | Employee Sense of Purpose

We used Sharma, Yukhymenko-Lescroart, and Kang's (2018) classification to measure employee sense of purpose because Sharma, Yukhymenko-Lescroart, and Kang's (2018) scale

reveals a more transcendent or common good orientation than other existing scales in the literature (i.e., Purpose in Life subscale, Ryff and Keyes 1995). Our scale is similar to Steger et al.'s (2006) classification and consists of a 17-item scale that distinguishes three highly correlated categories: awareness of purpose, awakening to purpose, and altruistic purpose. Because these three dimensions made the construct somewhat complex, we operationalized it at higher levels of abstraction, and so a second-order mode A construct with these three dimensions was created. Sample items of each dimension are: "I can describe my life's purpose" (awareness), "I have started thinking about what I truly want to achieve." (awakening), and "Through my career I aim to make the world a better place" (altruistic). Higher scores indicated an employee's stronger sense of purpose.

3.3 | Control Variables

In our analysis, gender (0 = male, 1 = female), age (1 = under 25; 5 = over 51), length of service (1 = less than 2 years; 5 = more than 26 years), and education level (1 = high school; 5 = doctorate degree) served as control variables (Collins 2000). However, given that the incorporation of control variables has the potential to diminish statistical power and the amount of explainable variance in the outcomes of interest, it becomes imperative to assess whether their inclusion is truly necessary (Becker 2005). Following a rigorous three-step process (see Bernerth and Aguinis 2016), our investigation concluded that the inclusion of control variables was unnecessary, as the significance of the path coefficients in our model remained unchanged regardless of whether the variables were included or not. Indeed, the first step required all control variables to be included in the model. In a second step, only the control variables that significantly correlated with the dependent variable were included, although, in our specific case, none of the control variables had a significant correlation. Finally, a third step consisted of not including control variables in the analysis. Our 95% confidence interval bootstrap tests using Smart PLS 3.2.8 (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015) revealed no statistically significant differences (among the three models) in the path coefficients of the main hypothesized relationships in our study (see Table 3). Consequently, following Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), the inclusion of control variables in our analysis was deemed unnecessary.

3.4 | Data Analysis

We used SPSS v.24.0 to generate descriptive statistics for our sample. To test our hypotheses, we used partial least squares (PLS), using Smart PLS 3.2.8 (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015). This powerful, robust statistical procedure is a fully-fledged structural equation modeling approach requiring no demanding assumptions about the distribution of the variables (Hair et al. 2017). The power analysis developed with G*Power 3 (Faul et al. 2007) for regressions with three independent variables confirmed this point: our post hoc calculations yielded a power of 99%, indicating that the number of informants was large enough to test our relationships without incurring a Type II error. As recommended, our PLS analysis used 5000 subsamples to generate standard errors and bootstrap *t*-statistics with $n-1$ ° of freedom (where *n* is the number of subsamples) to evaluate the

TABLE 3 | Bernerth and Aguinis' (2016) three-step process to test for the need to include control variables.

Main hypothesized relationships in the study	Path coefficient (Step 3) Model without control variables	Path coefficient (Step 1) Model with all control variables	Path coefficients difference	95% CI (bootstrapping using 4999 subsamples)	
				Lower limit	Upper limit
SEL → Employee sense of purpose	0.226	0.264	0.038 ns	−0.180	0.102
SEL → Supervisor social effectiveness	0.581	0.580	0.001 ns	−0.089	0.093
SEL → Supervisor technical effectiveness	0.573	0.573	0.000 ns	−0.093	0.091
Supervisor social effectiveness → employee sense of purpose	0.334	0.371	−0.037 ns	−0.165	0.104
Supervisor technical effectiveness → Employee sense of purpose	0.269	0.263	0.006 ns	−0.126	0.138

Note: As no significant correlations were found between the control variables and the dependent variable, we only compared a model including all control variables (Step 1) to one without control variables (Step 3). As the 95% CI (two-tailed test) does not include zero, the differences between path coefficients are not significant. Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; ns, not significant difference between the path coefficients; SEL, supervisor ethical leadership.

statistical significance of the path coefficients (Hair et al. 2017). We also used the bootstrapping technique (5000 re-samples) via PROCESS v3.4 (Hayes 2017) to test our hypothesized interaction effects.

4 | Results

4.1 | Measurement Model

Following Conway and Lance's (2010) recommendations on ruling out potential CMB effects, we present the reliability and validity information for our reflective measures. Table 4 provides evidence of individual and construct reliability and convergent validity, and Table 5 reveals the good discriminant validity of all our measures. Table 5 also provides the correlations across all study variables, including the control variables.

Table 4 shows the individual items that constitute supervisor social effectiveness, supervisor technical effectiveness, and sense of purpose are reliable, mostly above the desired level of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2017). For ethical leadership, eight items exhibited standardized loadings above the desired threshold of 0.70, but the loading of two items was slightly below that threshold (EL1 = 0.62; EL2 = 0.63). However, we retained these items because they were higher than 0.60 (Hair et al. 2017), part of a widely used, well-researched scale, and because their inclusion did not adversely affect any of the other measurement criteria (see Ruiz-Palomino and Linuesa-Langreo 2018). Cronbach's alphas and composite reliabilities (ρ_c , ρ_A) indicated good reliability and internal consistency (Table 4), with values above the 0.70 threshold (Hair et al. 2017). The AVE for each construct was also greater than 0.50 (Table 4), indicating convergent validity for the constructs (Hair et al. 2017).

Finally, the discriminant validity of our measures was good: the AVE for each construct was greater than the variance each construct shared with other latent variables, and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values were different from 1 and below the threshold of 0.85 (Table 5).

4.2 | Hypothesis Testing

In terms of our hypothesis-testing results, Figure 2 shows support for all our hypotheses. In relation to direct hypotheses, the results reveal a positive, direct effect of supervisor ethical leadership on employee sense of purpose, in support of Hypothesis 1 ($\beta = 0.268$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, supervisor ethical leadership had a positive and significant influence on both supervisor technical effectiveness ($\beta = 0.573$, $p < 0.001$) and supervisor social effectiveness ($\beta = 0.580$, $p < 0.001$), allowing us to confirm Hypothesis 2 and 3, respectively.

The findings also provided support for Hypothesis 4a, the enhancing role of supervisor ethical leadership in the relationship between supervisor technical effectiveness and employee sense of purpose. The results revealed that, after mean-centering the independent variable and the moderator (Aiken and West 1991), the resulting interaction term was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.074$, $p < 0.05$; Figure 2). The graph resulting from plotting high versus low supervisor ethical leadership regression lines (+1SD and −1SD, Aiken and West 1991) shows that the positive impact of supervisor technical effectiveness was stronger in high (the slope is more pronounced) than in low supervisor ethical leadership conditions (Figure 3). Thus, Hypothesis 4a can be confirmed.

We proceeded similarly in the analysis of Hypothesis 4b, and, as predicted, the relationship between supervisor social

TABLE 4 | Item loadings and weights, construct reliability, and convergent validity.

Construct	Item/ First order construct	Loading	Construct reliability			AVE
			Cronbach's Alpha	Dillon-Goldstein (ρ_c)	Dijkstra-Henseler (ρ_A)	
Supervisor social effectiveness			0.78	0.87	0.78	0.70
	LSE1	0.81				
	LSE2	0.86				
Supervisor technical effectiveness			0.71	0.81	0.71	0.59
	LTE1	0.79				
	LTE2	0.80				
Supervisor ethical leadership			0.91	0.92	0.91	0.54
	EL1	0.62				
	EL2	0.63				
	EL3	0.73				
	EL4	0.80				
	EL5	0.71				
	EL6	0.73				
	EL7	0.77				
	EL8	0.80				
	EL9	0.79				
Employee sense of purpose			0.72	0.84	0.75	0.64
	Awareness	0.82				
	Altruistic	0.87				

Abbreviation: AVE, average variance extracted.

effectiveness and employee sense of purpose was strengthened by supervisor ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.059$, $p < 0.05$; Figure 2). In Figure 4, we plot high versus low supervisor ethical leadership regression lines (+1 and -1 standard deviation from the mean) (i.e., Stone and Hollenbeck 1989), showing the positive relationship between supervisor social effectiveness and employee sense of purpose is stronger (the slope is more pronounced) when supervisor ethical leadership is high rather than low.

As a definitive test to confirm both Hypothesis 4a and 4b, we ran bias-corrected bootstrap analyses via PROCESS v.3.4 (using 5000 subsamples; Hayes 2017) to test whether the direct effects of supervisor technical and social effectiveness vary at different levels of the moderator (e.g., supervisor ethical leadership, see Table 6). In particular, concerning Hypothesis 4a, our findings revealed that at -1 standard deviation (low supervisor ethical leadership), the direct effect of supervisor technical effectiveness was lower ($B = 0.32$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI = 0.25, 0.39) than at +1 standard deviation (high supervisor ethical

leadership) ($B = 0.52$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI = 0.44, 0.60), but significant in both cases (Table 6). The same effect was found for Hypothesis 4b, as our results showed that at -1 standard deviation (low supervisor ethical leadership) the direct effect of supervisor social effectiveness was lower in size ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.04$, and 95% CI = 0.18, 0.32) than at +1 standard deviation (high supervisor ethical leadership), ($B = 0.49$, $SE = 0.05$, and 95% CI = 0.41, 0.61), although it was significant in both cases (Table 6).

Finally, in order to address the issue of endogeneity and reflect that the relationships raised in the model follow the direction we proposed, we used a two-stage least squares approach (Bascle 2008; Larcker and Rusticus 2010) using STATA v. 14. We used employee intrinsic religiosity as the instrumental variable (IV), which correlates significantly with our dependent variable but not with the error term of the proposed model. In a first stage, the IV is used to determine the endogenous independent variables: ethical leadership, leader

TABLE 5 | Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix. Square root of AVE in the diagonal.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Supervisor social effectiveness	4.02	0.48	0.84	0.75 [0.53;0.96]	0.66 [0.32;0.91]	0.77 [0.57;0.96]	0.08 [0.03;0.15]	0.14 [0.08;0.21]	0.09 [0.04;0.14]	0.11 [0.05;0.19]
2. Supervisor technical effectiveness	4.25	0.53	0.59	0.78	0.73 [0.49;0.97]	0.76 [0.55;0.94]	0.18 [0.10;0.25]	0.06 [0.02;0.11]	0.08 [0.03;0.12]	0.18 [0.11;0.26]
3. Supervisor ethical leadership	4.21	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.74	0.73 [0.51;0.95]	0.08 [0.03;0.13]	0.09 [0.05;0.14]	0.09 [0.04;0.13]	0.07 [0.02;0.12]
4. Employee sense of purpose	4.19	0.55	0.64	0.61	0.63	0.80	0.10 [0.05;0.16]	0.07 [0.03;0.11]	0.14 [0.09;0.20]	0.08 [0.04;0.13]
5. Age	3.09	0.99	0.05	-0.03	0.04	0.01	n.a	0.02 [0.01;0.04]	0.07 [0.03;0.12]	0.27 [0.16;0.39]
6. Gender	0.25	0.43	0.12	0.05	0.04	0.05	-0.01	n.a	0.04 [0.01;0.08]	0.08 [0.04;0.12]
7. Length of service	3.26	1.18	0.08	-0.06	0.01	-0.09	0.66	-0.04	n.a	0.17 [0.08;0.25]
8. Education level	2.87	1.20	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.08	0.24	-0.07	-0.17	n.a

Note: Bold values in the diagonal are square roots of AVE. Off-diagonal elements below the diagonal are correlations; correlations above 0.17 are significant at $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed) and between 0.12 and 0.17 are significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed). Italics values in off-diagonal elements above the diagonal are the heterotrait-monotrait ratios of correlations (HTMT) and their respective confidence intervals at the 99% significance level. Abbreviations: n.a., not applicable; SD, standard deviation.

technical effectiveness, and leader social effectiveness. In a second stage, the forecast values derived from the initial stage are used as autonomous variables. Following Larcker and Rusticus (2010), we used the weak identification test (“first-stage” Cragg–Donald Wald F statistic) to analyze the adequacy of the IV (Cragg and Donald 1993). The results (see Table 7) confirmed the validity of our IV (Bascle 2008) because the 2SLS estimator shows that the null hypothesis of weak instruments can be rejected in each of the evaluated models since they exceed the critical values of Stock and Yogo (2005): Model 1 ($19.22 > 16.38$), Model 2 ($17.45 > 16.38$), and Model 3 ($22.03 > 16.38$). We then carried out the Durbin and Wu–Hausman tests; the null hypothesis of both tests is that the examined variable is exogenous. Both test statistics were non-significant for each of the proposed models: Model 1 (Durbin $\chi^2 = 2.44593$, $p > 0.05$; Wu–Hausman $F(1,390) = 2.44629$, $p > 0.05$), Model 2 (Durbin $\chi^2 = 2.73949$, $p > 0.05$; Wu–Hausman $F(1,390) = 2.73335$; $p > 0.05$), and Model 3 (Durbin $\chi^2 = 0.81928$, $p > 0.05$; Wu–Hausman $F(1,390) = 0.80908$; $p > 0.05$). We can thus accept the null hypothesis and can affirm that the causality direction between the variables incorporated in the model is likely that proposed and tested in our investigation.

5 | Discussion

In short, to recapitulate, our study shows that ethical leadership directly and positively impacts employee sense of purpose in life, understood as being consistent with one’s self-transcendent aspirations (mission) in life (Wiedemann 2019) and contributing to a cause greater than oneself, i.e., the greater good (Damon 2008; Good, Hughes, and Wang 2022; Staples and Troutman 2010). The findings also revealed that ethical leadership is important for managers to attain greater levels of technical and social effectiveness. Finally, the results evidenced that practicing ethical leadership strengthens the relationship between the technical and social effectiveness of managers in the awareness and awakening of a common good-oriented sense of purpose among employees. The latter confirmed the importance for leaders of acting as providers of moral goods to awaken and make employees aware of their purpose in life, i.e., living a good life in common, shared with others (i.e., local community and society in general). These findings have various theoretical and practical implications.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

The recent literature shows an increased focus on the role of ethics in attaining sense of purpose or meaning at work (Michaelson et al. 2014), but little research (Demirtas et al. 2017; Frémeaux and Pavageau 2020; Lips-Wiersma, Haar, and Wright 2020; Wang and Xu 2019) has focused on whether managers’ ethical leadership can lead to meaning at work, and further to a broader concept such as sense of purpose (Wiedemann 2019). A closer analysis of the complexities of this relationship has often been demanded (Demirtas et al. 2017; Wang and Xu 2019), and this study—coinciding with previous qualitative research (Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2006)—suggests that, when individuals work in a firm whose vision is to contribute to the overall good of society, or where trust and

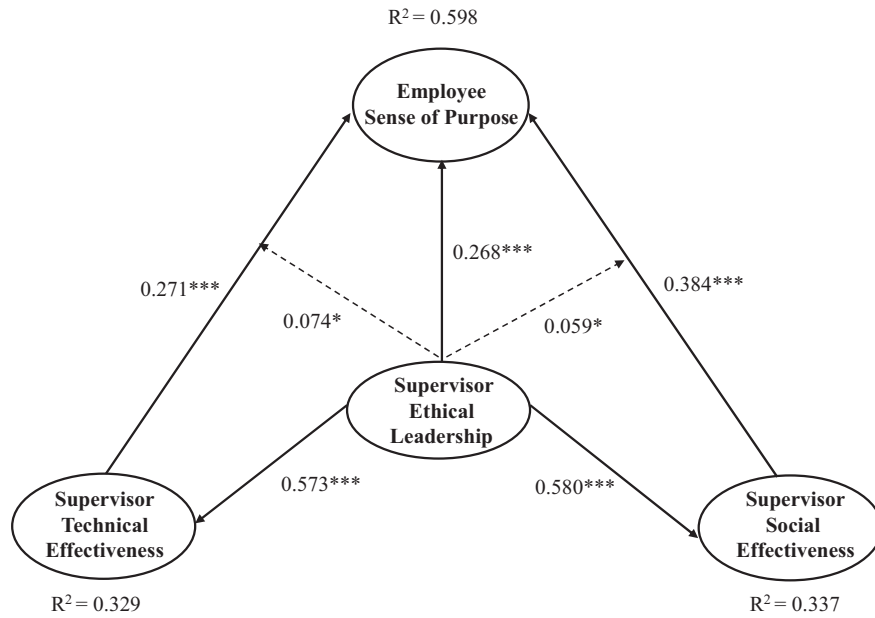


FIGURE 2 | Structural model. *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed test). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range between 1.41 and 2.23, far below the 5.0 cut-off, so path coefficients do not suffer from multicollinearity problems (Hair et al. 2017).

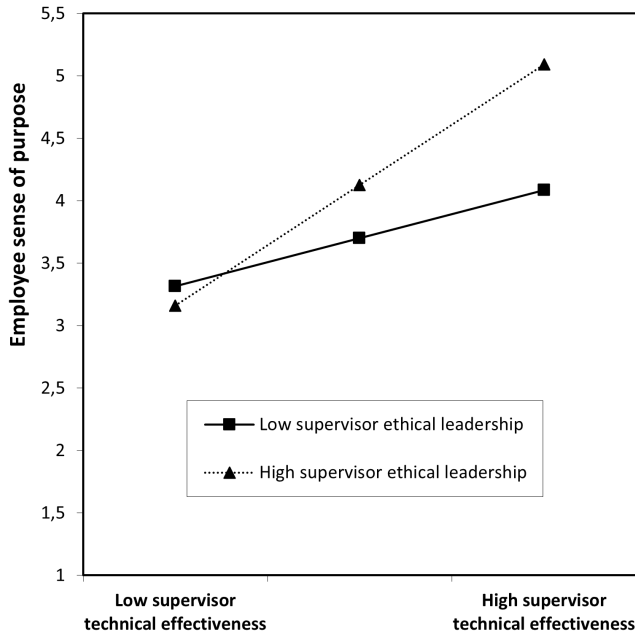


FIGURE 3 | Interactive effect of supervisor ethical leadership and supervisor technical effectiveness on employee sense of purpose.

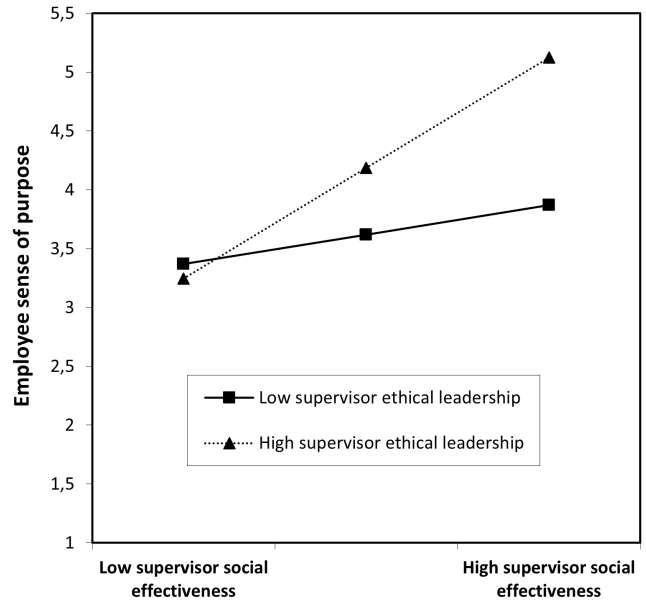


FIGURE 4 | Interactive effect of supervisor ethical leadership and supervisor social effectiveness on employee sense of purpose.

integrity are fostered, they are more likely to find meaning and purpose in life. Additionally, our findings complement other studies that have found a positive relationship between ethical leadership and work meaningfulness (Demirtas et al. 2017; Frémeaux and Pavageau 2020; Lips-Wiersma, Haar, and Wright 2020; Wang and Xu 2019) by revealing potential processes (i.e., supervisor technical and social effectiveness) and conditions (i.e., the provision of moral goods) for work meaningfulness to emerge as a result of the practice of ethical leadership. Although purpose is an integral element of work meaningfulness, the latter is not the same as sense of purpose. Meaning is related to the cognitive process of making sense of one's life at work, and how the job is one that is meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile, whereas purpose implies

a more motivational approach comprising the aspirations that give a sense of mission to life (Wiedemann 2019). Thus, our findings add to previous literature by revealing how ethical leadership helps motivate or spur actions at work towards making employees connect with something larger than self, with others, and with serving the broader community (Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2006). Furthermore, our findings corroborate Aristotelian virtue ethics by showing that ethical leadership helps employees to find sense of purpose in contributing to a common good in productive and cooperative terms, contributing to employees' human flourishing (Hühn and Meyer 2023; Hühn, Meyer, and Racelis 2018) through conveying meaningful and purposeful narratives of life at work (Pinto-Garay, Scalzo, and Lluésma 2022).

TABLE 6 | The strengthening effects of supervisor ethical leadership on the positive effects of supervisor technical effectiveness and supervisor social effectiveness.

Moderator: Supervisor ethical leadership	Effect	SE	Bias and corrected bootstrap 95% CI	
			Lower level	Upper level
Supervisor technical effectiveness on employee sense of purpose				
1 SD below the mean	0.32	0.04	0.25	0.39
The mean	0.42	0.03	0.36	0.49
1 SD above the mean	0.52	0.04	0.44	0.60
Supervisor social effectiveness on employee sense of purpose				
1 SD below the mean	0.25	0.04	0.18	0.32
The mean	0.37	0.03	0.31	0.49
1 SD above the mean	0.49	0.05	0.41	0.61

Note: Based on a bootstrap test with 5000 re-samples, the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (lower and upper levels) does not contain zero for the three different values of supervisor ethical leadership (−1SD, the mean, +1SD). Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; SE, standard error.

TABLE 7 | Results of the endogeneity analysis.

	Model 1 with SEL as endogenous variable and EIR as IV	Model 2 with SSE as endogenous variable and EIR as IV	Model 3 with STE as endogenous variable and EIR as IV
First-stage regression summary statistics			
R^2	0.4048	0.4273	0.4650
R^2 adjusted	0.4003	0.4229	0.4609
R^2 partial	0.0011	0.0013	0.0533
$F(1,391)$	19.22	17.45	22.03
Prob > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Weak identification test			
Minimum eigenvalue statistic	19.2166	17.4503	22.0337
Tests of endogeneity			
H0: Variables are exogeneous			
Durbin (score) $\chi^2(1)$	2.44593 ($p=0.1309$)	2.73949 ($p=0.1137$)	0.81928 ($p=0.6747$)
Wu–Hausman $F(1,390)$	2.44629 ($p=0.1317$)	2.73335 ($p=0.1143$)	0.80908 ($p=0.6762$)

Note: Stock and Yogo's (2005) critical values of “2SLS Size of nominal 5% Wald test” and “LIML Size of nominal 5% Wald test”: 16.38 ($p=0.10$); 8.96 ($p=0.15$); 6.66 ($p=0.20$); 5.53 ($p=0.25$).

Abbreviations: EIR, employee intrinsic religiosity; IV, instrumental variable; SEL, supervisor ethical leadership; SSE, supervisor social effectiveness; STE, supervisor technical effectiveness.

Indeed, in line with Aristotelian thinking on the important role of being virtuous to excel in any practice (Aristotle, NE, 1098a), this study reveals how the practice of ethical leadership is key to promoting manager's technical and social effectiveness, thus expanding previous findings (e.g., Hassan et al. 2013; Walumbwa et al. 2011). Furthermore, as a novelty, this study also sheds light on how these two effectiveness-related dimensions of a manager can convey a sense of purpose to employees, especially if the manager also practices ethical leadership. Specifically, our findings corroborate those of other qualitative studies, namely,

that aspects such as continuous learning and development (which a technically effective manager may foster) as well as personal relationships (which a socially effective manager may promote), are critical to perceive meaning in life (Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2006). Furthermore, our findings extend Kinjerski and Skrypnek's (2006) findings by revealing that the positive effects of these two effectiveness-related dimensions of a manager or supervisor can be strengthened if they also practice ethical leadership. Indeed, as we have shown, following an Aristotelian virtue ethics approach, the development and sharing of the

moral goods that characterize ethical leadership is the key element in achieving an employee sense of purpose. In this sense, our findings corroborate Aristotelian theory in that they show that the search for, or the realization of, *eudaimonia* (i.e., what makes one realize their purpose in life) is more related to virtue development and practice (moral goods) than to obtaining the goods that are likely received when supervisors are technically and socially effective, that is, useful or pleasant goods (NE, Book VIII). Thus, in line with others (Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019; Hühn and Meyer 2023), our study reveals that ignoring morality in favor of pursuing whatever goals we wish, and therefore, being amoral in daily activities, is not an option for managers who are willing to be leaders who inspire employees' directionality of their efforts in their lives toward the common good.

5.2 | Practical Implications

One clear implication of our findings is that by displaying core features of an ethical leader, such as those that make someone a moral person (e.g., honesty, justice, integrity, caring for others, etc.) and a moral manager (e.g., ethical role modeling, use of reinforcement systems to promote ethical behavior, use of techniques to communicate ethics and their importance, etc. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011b), managers are likely to convey a direction and purpose oriented towards attaining the common good. Thus, encouraging ethical leadership in all managerial positions is a direct implication of our findings, meaning that human resource (HR) managers should pay special attention to activating formal HRM procedures to achieve this (e.g., recruitment, training, rewards systems, etc.). Among the various HRM procedures available, recruitment and training emerge as robust and suitably fitting options for hiring supervisors who exhibit a strong propensity for ethical leadership or for developing existing ones within the organization in this leadership style. Through different techniques (e.g., interview, focus groups, personality tests, etc.), HR managers can identify the candidates with the most ethical leadership characteristics possible, thus enabling firms to have supervisors with the ability to implement ethical leadership within their groups. In addition, training initiatives might be developed for managers to learn ethical leadership skills. For example, CEOs could require their managers to enroll in either offline or online training initiatives, such that ethical leadership talents could be learned at all levels. In this regard, a training course in which the importance of a virtuous life is taught using a community-based pedagogy oriented to improve the civic and global awareness of leaders (Furco and Norvell 2019; Sabbaghi, Cavanagh, and Hipskind 2013) could be a more than adequate option to turn them into levers for building a sense of purpose rooted in the common good among employees. It is true that for cost-effectiveness reasons, CEOs rather than middle and lower-level managers, could be the ones to participate in these training initiatives to cultivate ethical leadership skills, since, through social learning (Bandura 1977) or trickle-down processes (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011a, 2011b), the ethical leadership of CEOs could be transmitted to lower-level managers. However, this learning process could only be by imitation, and not because middle or lower managers “know what they are doing or do it from a well-grounded disposition” (NE, 1105a), i.e., not because they practice virtue,

which is a critical element in developing genuine ethical leadership (Meyer and Hühn 2020). Finally, other techniques HR managers can use for this purpose are job rotation, performance assessment, and/or coaching. For example, job rotation techniques could help many employees with a strong possibility of being promoted to managerial positions to spend time in jobs in which they must interact with and learn from people (i.e., managers, peers or subordinates) that are excellent ethical role models. HR managers could also use ethical criteria to assess whether managers do the right thing in their roles and could use techniques such as coaching to cultivate aspects including empathy, listening, concern for the broader society, and/or abilities to communicate ethics (cf. Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia 2010), all of which are indicative of the practice of ethical leadership (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison 2005; Brown and Treviño 2006).

A strong second implication of our findings is related to promoting an ethical climate within the organization. Because the promotion of an ethical climate is an important outcome of practicing ethical leadership (Al Halbusi et al. 2021), HR managers have multiple options through which they might do their best to enhance an ethical work climate. For example, if all work procedures and practices are embedded in ethics, an ethical work climate is likely to be created, which should play a similar role to that of ethical leadership in conveying a sense of purpose rooted in the common good to employees. HR managers should therefore ensure that ethical processes and procedures are commonplace in order for formal mechanisms, such as a code of ethics or the presence of ethics officials or ethics hotlines, to be correctly implemented.

Finally, HRM procedures should also help in hiring and training technically and socially skilled individuals in managerial positions. In accordance with the Aristotelian theory that useful goods are important to achieve final ends (NE, 1155b), leaders who are technically effective may allow their team members to attain useful goods (e.g., skills, expertise), which is part (but not all) of what is needed to achieve human flourishing (one's potential as a person) (cf., Ruiz-Palomino, Sáez-Martínez, and Martínez 2013). In the same way, socially skilled leaders are likely to generate strong and meaningful interpersonal social exchanges and relationships within their teams, which, according to Aristotelian thinking, contribute to the development of friendship, a key element in team members finding a sense of purpose in their lives. Thus, individuals who are to occupy management positions should be hired on the basis of their level of technical and social effectiveness, as the possession of these aspects seems to be key in conveying their employees a worthy sense of purpose, one leading towards a flourishing life shared in common.

5.3 | Limitations and Future Research Directions

First, our study was conducted in a single cultural context, namely, Iraq, and in a specific industry (insurance and health care). Iraq is closely linked to the Islamic culture, where religion and spirituality are of fundamental importance (Marr and Al-Marashi 2018), which in itself could foster the development of a greater sense of purpose in life. Additionally, employees in the health and insurance industry, in general terms, may tend to show greater

concern for the well-being of people and their care and protection (cf. Maingi 2014), which can offer a sense of purpose rooted in the common good. Nevertheless, evidence shows a cross-cultural generalization and transferability of the meaning of the ethical leadership construct (Ahmad, Fazal-E-Hasan, and Kaleem 2020) as well as a good and similar functioning across occupations and industries (Wang and Xu 2019, 934). Furthermore, in addition to the acknowledged influence of Aristotelian thought in Muslim's philosophers and cultures (Alwishah and Hayes 2015), for the purpose of this study, we rely on the Aristotelian assumption that human nature is defined by their function—or *ergon*, *qua* human beings, which provides an ontological basis for testing the generality and validity of the Aristotelian virtue ethics approach. In any event, future studies could seek to generalize our findings by conducting research in other industries and cultures.

Second, although our study has led to a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the positive link between ethical leadership and employee sense of purpose, further work is needed. For example, it would be interesting to analyze the mediating role of a socio-moral climate in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee sense of purpose (Lysova et al. 2019). The presence of a positive socio-moral climate oriented towards social responsibility and the common good can help understand this complex relationship. In parallel, future studies might analyze the consequences of having employees with high levels of sense of purpose. In this sense, it would be interesting to determine whether there is a positive relationship between employee sense of purpose and variables such as employee performance or psychological well-being.

Third, we focused on the ethical leadership of managers, because managers work closely with their employees, engage in high levels of interaction with them, and have sufficient power to shape reinforcement systems. However, interactions with peers or even subordinates who behave in an ethical manner might also be frequent and instrumental in establishing an ethical work climate and providing a sense of purpose among employees. In fact, many peers could actually be conceived of as leaders with a great influential power over other peers' adoption of practices and values (Ruiz, Ruiz, and Martínez 2011b). Future studies should attempt to assess the relative influence of various levels of ethical leadership, such as those represented by peers or subordinates, in co-fostering employee sense of purpose.

Fourth, the complexity of measuring “ethical leadership” with a Likert format instrument poses a challenge, as it may not fully capture subtle aspects of virtue enactment, particularly in virtues that are challenging to quantify, such as phronesis (Meyer and Rego 2020). Indeed, leading scholars in the field agree that “no valid measure of a leader's practical wisdom exists” (Rego et al. 2024, 1; also Kristjánsson et al. 2021). For this work, we employed Brown, Treviño, and Harrison's (2005) widely recognized benchmark instrument in global research on ethical leadership. Nonetheless, future research might harness more qualitative ways to more accurately measure this variable. Of particular interest is the measure of leader-expressed practical wisdom recently proposed by Rego et al. (2024), philosophically rooted in the sound Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of practical wisdom. Furthermore, by focusing on leaders' behavioral manifestations of practical wisdom as perceived by employees, i.e., as

a component of the leaders' outer personality from the observer's perspective, this measure could also help overcome the third limitation mentioned above.

Finally, other leadership styles, of which servant leadership is an example, might also influence this relationship (Greenleaf 1977). Servant leaders, as the name suggests, reflect their “other” focus as opposed to a “self” focus by serving others, not only their followers but also the broader society (Ruiz-Palomino et al. 2021). Prior work has suggested the potential influence of servant leadership on several flourishing-related outcomes linked to the attainment of the common good (virtuous OCB, resourceful social relatedness, Ruiz-Palomino, Linuesa-Langreo, and Elche 2023). It has also confirmed the superiority of servant leadership in prompting positive outcomes among employees (cf. Eva et al. 2019). Thus, further interesting research could assess whether, compared with ethical leadership, the practice of servant leadership can foster a greater altruistic sense of purpose among employees.

6 | Conclusions

Professionals and organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of giving direction and purpose to everything they do and how to convey this to their employees. The search for higher or more transcendent reasons for doing what one does than individual interest is a premise that has been gaining ground in the academic literature related to flourishing and happiness (Huta and Ryan 2010; Meyer, Sison, and Ferrero 2019) and has permeated public policies, education, organizations, and leaders in the search for meaning and purpose (cf. Blocker, Cannon, and Zhang 2024; Ko et al. 2018; Kristjánsson 2017). However, the contribution that ethical leaders can make to their employees' development of purpose is still little known (Trachik et al. 2022). Moreover, even though ethical leadership is a consolidated theoretical construct that has been shown to positively affect multiple valuable outcomes (Ko et al. 2018), surprisingly few studies have delved into understanding the relationship between ethical leadership, its social and technical effectiveness, and employees' sense of purpose. To fill this gap, and with the aim of providing evidence of the positive impact of ethical leadership on employee sense of purpose, we used Aristotelian virtue ethics as the basic theoretical framework for our research, specifically on the three kinds of good that are necessary for a good life (Guillén and González 2001) and how they are related to ethical leadership.

Undoubtedly, ethical leadership helps subordinates perceive their work as having a broader moral purpose and cultivate it in the work realm. However, this study, by addressing employees' sense of purpose in light of virtue ethics, enhanced this theoretical concept with an intrinsic value, which partially constitutes the telos of a flourishing life (Kristjánsson 2017; Scalzo, Akriou, and Fernández González 2023). We leveraged this theory to argue that the provision of moral good by ethical leaders is essential for employees to build their sense of purpose of flourishing in common, but also how this personal dimension of ethical leadership can help strengthen the positive impact of the managerial dimensions related to a supervisor's technical effectiveness (by providing technical, *useful goods*) and social effectiveness (by providing social, *pleasant goods*) on instilling a sense of purpose (flourishing life in common) among employees.

In summary, our findings tested the validity of our conceptual model's reliance on this triple helix (i.e., ethical leadership, technical effectiveness, and social effectiveness) to convey a sense of purpose among subordinates, thus offering empirical evidence supporting the Aristotelian approach to virtue ethics, a classical approach that has gained ground recently as a key reference for advancing issues related to business ethics and leadership (Hühn and Meyer 2023).

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Disclosure

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Statement

All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Peer Review

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://www.webofscience.com/api/gateway/wos/peer-review/10.1111/beer.12750>.

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