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The Effect of Ethical Leadership on the Employees' Work Ethics

Damianus Abun^(a)  Mary Joy Encarnacion, PhD^(b)  Egdonna A. Quinto, PhD^(c)  Fredolin P. Julian, PhD^(d)  Theogenia Magallanes

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the effect of ethical leadership on the employees' work ethics. To support the theory of the study, literature was reviewed. The study used a descriptive assessment and correlational research design. The population of the study was the employees of the two colleges in Region 1. It used questionnaires to gather the data. The study found that the administrators' ethical leadership and employees' work ethics are high. However, the correlation test result suggests no correlation between ethical leadership and the employees' work ethics. It further asserts that ethical leadership is not necessarily a main predictor of work ethics of the employees because the work ethics can be caused by other factors. Thus, the hypothesis of the study is rejected. It recommends that further study needs to be undertaken to identify other factors that influence the work ethics of the employees.

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Introduction

Ethical business practices significantly contribute to business success, as evidenced by various studies (Stark, 1993; McMurrian, 2006; Webster, 2023; Albu et al., 2017; Samak, 2017; Joseph, 2023; Al Armoti et al., 2022; Vic & Domicic, 2016). These studies highlight the impact of ethics on profitability, employees' performance, trust-building, productivity, and overall organizational growth.

Ethics indirectly influences business success through employee behavior. Ethical conduct fosters customer trust and repeat purchases (Kethan & Basha, 2022; Tanveer et al., 2021; Yang, 2019; Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019), while unethical behavior erodes trust, damages customer experience, and harms brand reputation (Leonidou et al., 2013; Hyken, 2019).

Establishing an ethical environment falls within a leader's role, shaping employees' behavior. Ethical leadership positively impacts employee behavior, job satisfaction, and ethical conduct (Guo, 2022; Al Halbusi, 2021; Yang & Liu, 2022). This leadership style influences work ethics and reinforces positive employee attitudes (Al Halbusi et al., 2022).

Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9693-1541

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This investigation focuses on how administrators' ethical leadership influences employee work ethics. The study's sections include rationale, literature review, research methodology, data presentation and analysis, and result discussion with conclusions.

Literature Review

The Concept of Leadership and Management

The distinction between leadership and management is often blurred, leading to confusion in roles and behaviors (Abun, 2018). Leadership involves providing a vision, implementing it through cooperation, and empowering employees (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Handy, 1993; Conger, 1992; Herrenkohl et al., 1999). Management, on the other hand, encompasses planning, organizing, leading, and controlling to achieve organizational goals (Stoner, 1995; Koontz & Weihrich, 1988; Fayol, 1984; Haimann & Scott, 1970).

Managers focus on executing tasks efficiently, while leaders concentrate on influencing and inspiring change (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Wajdi, 2017; Liphadzi et al., 2017). Boynton (2016) identified key leadership traits like vision clarity, inspiring others, fostering change, setting an example, idea stimulation, experimentation, and attentive listening. Both leadership and management entail working with people, but leadership emphasizes change and vision, while management centers on achieving objectives (Baker, 2014).

Ethical Leadership and Its Dimensions to be Measured

Achieving high organizational performance requires not only knowledge, skills, and great financial capital but also ethical behaviour or ethical leadership as pointed out by Yukl, et al., (2013) to be effective, a leader must demonstrate ethical leadership behaviour in addition to task, relations and change-oriented leader behaviour. But what ethical leadership is about is not even clear. The definition of ethical leadership and its dimensions to be measured are varied from one author to another. Kanungo (2001) argued that ethical leaders engage in ethical behaviour that considers its good effect on others which allows them to avoid behaviours that cause harm to others. Kanungo's (2001) concept of ethical leadership is driven by accepted beliefs and appropriate judgment rather than self-interest which is beneficial for followers, organization and society (Kalshoven, et al., 2011). A similar idea about ethical leadership is also pointed out by Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005). They suggested that a combination of integrity, ethical standards, and fair treatment of employees are considered important elements of ethical leadership. According to Kanungo (2001) and Aronson (2001), a major concern of ethical leadership is the effect of their behaviours on others. This is emphasized by Brown, et al. (2005) that an ethical leader behaves appropriately in dealing with others and promotes good conduct through a way of communication, reinforcement and decision-making. Brown, et al. (2005) and Trevino, et al. (2003) further argued that ethical leader plays role model for their followers and use reward and punishment to promote ethical behaviour. Followers will behave similarly to their leader through imitation and observation learning. Ethical leadership is expected to have a positive effect on employees' behaviour which results in good organizational performance (Trevino, et al, 2003).

The effect of many different definitions of ethical leadership is concerning the dimensions of ethical leadership to be measured. The authors present different ideas. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), initially conducted a study measuring ethical leadership for top management teams and three years later, a follow-up study was done by De Hoogh and Den Hartog, Kalshoven, (2011) which was revised and called Ethical Leadership Work Questionnaires (ELWQ) and suggested that ethical leadership is a multidimensional construct which extended from three dimensions of the original study (fairness, power sharing and role clarification) to seven dimensions. Four additional dimensions are people-oriented behaviour, integrity, ethical guidance and concern for sustainability.

These dimensions are also found in Brown, et al (2005). Based on the literature review, Brown, et al. (2005), and De Hoogh, Den Hartog, and Kalshoven, (2011) identified several dimensions. The first dimension is *fairness* as part of ethical leadership behaviour. An ethical leader treats others fairly and has no favouritism. The second is also *power sharing*. An ethical leader will allow subordinates to participate in decision-making, listen to their ideas and concerns and at the same time, empower employees to make decisions on their own related to their work problems (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009, Resick, et al, 2006). The third dimension of ethical leadership is *role clarification*. An ethical leader clarifies responsibilities, expectations and performance goals so that followers know what is expected of them. The fourth dimension is *people orientation*. An ethical leader shows concern for people. This fourth dimension was also revealed by the study of Trevino, et al. (2003) when they interviewed people to describe an ethical leader and based on the people's description, an ethical leader must be concerned for people which is shown through ethical behaviours like caring, respecting, supporting subordinates and ensuring their needs are met (Kanungo & Conger, 1993). The fifth dimension of ethical leadership is *ethical guidance*. An ethical leader must communicate ethical or moral values to be followed by others explain those values to followers and reward those who behave ethically. The sixth dimension is *integrity* which suggests that an ethical leader must align with what he/she says and what he/she does. Yukl (2006) pointed out that an ethical leader keeps his/her promises and behaves consistently.

The seventh dimension is a *concern for sustainability* which recommends that an ethical leader tend to work in an environmentally friendly and encourage people to recycle materials to be used for saving the environment. These multidimensional measures suggest that ethical leadership is not only about traits such as integrity and honesty but also about efforts to make subordinates accountable for behaving ethically. Another researcher who viewed ethical leadership as a multidimensional construct is Walumbawa, et al (2008). In their study measuring authentic leadership, there are four dimensions identified namely self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspectives and balanced processing. Adding to the existing dimensions, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed questionnaires to measure servant leadership and identified five scales which include altruism, organizational stewardship, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and emotional healing. The overlapping dimensions presented by different authors lead to the loss of focus on which dimensions are related to ethical leadership. Yukl, et al., (2011) criticized those dimensions proposed by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), Brown, et al (2005) and Kalshoven, et al (2011) by pointing out that there are only three dimensions that are relevant to measuring ethical leadership which are fairness, integrity and ethical guidance, while others are not relevant to measure ethical leadership. Even the four dimensions that are found in the authentic leadership measurement of Walumbawa, et al.(2008), there are only two dimensions that are relevant to measuring ethical leadership which are internalized moral perspective and relational transparency. Internalized moral perspective means a leader's behaviour is guided by internal moral standards and personal moral values. Relational transparency refers to a leader who reveals his/her values and beliefs accurately (Yukl, et al, 2011). Criticizing the dimensions proposed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Yukl, et al. (2006) pointed out that there is only one dimension in their proposed scale that is relevant to ethical leadership which is altruism, while the other three dimensions are not relevant to measure ethical leadership. Further Yukl, et al.(2013) accused the prior theory and research on ethical leadership as the main cause of the conceptual confusion about the scope of the ethical leadership construct domain and the appropriate way to measure it. According to Yukl, et al (2006), the most important dimensions that are relevant to ethical leadership are (a) honesty and integrity (including consistency of actions with espoused values), (b) behavior intended to communicate or enforce ethical standards, (c) fairness in decisions and the distribution of rewards (no favoritism or use of rewards to motivate improper behavior), and (d) behavior that shows kindness, compassion, and concern for the needs and feelings of others (rather than attempts to manipulate, abuse, and exploit others for personal gain). Based on the review of the different dimensions of ethical leadership presented in different studies (ethical leadership survey of Treviño, Brown, and Hartman, 2003, ethical leadership work questionnaires or ELWQ of De Hoogh & Den Hartog (2008), Kalshoven, De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2011), authentic leadership questionnaires of Walumbawa, 2008, servant leadership questionnaires of Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006, and perceived leadership integrity survey or PLIS), Yukl, et al, (2006) developed ethical leadership questionnaires (ELQ) which contain 10 items that describe ethical leadership. The 10 items represent honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency of behavior with espoused values, communication of ethical values, and providing ethical guidance which was found in those different studies. Yukl, et al, (2006) developed ELQ as a *uni-dimensional* construct and not a multi-dimensional construct as recommended by different researchers, and from 10 items becomes 8 items only that we use in the current research.

Based on the evaluation of the current researcher concerning the several dimensions of ethical leadership presented by Kalshoven, et al, (2011), Walumbawa, (2008), Barbuto & Wheeler, (2006), Craig and Gustafson (1998), the current researcher agrees with the Yukl, et. al., (2013) that other dimensions of ethical leadership are not relevant to measuring ethical leadership, except honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency of behaviour with espoused values, communication of ethical values, and providing ethical guidance which was all found those studies. Therefore, the current study adopts the uni-dimensional ethical leadership questionnaires of Yukl, et al. (2013).

The Effect of Ethical Leadership on the Organization

There are many studies have been done concerning the effect of ethical leadership on various outcomes for the organization. For instance, Bhatti, et al., (2021) measured the effect of ethical leadership on project success and their study confirmed that ethical leadership affects project success with the mediating role of trust and knowledge sharing. The study suggests that ethical leadership affects trust and knowledge sharing which consequently affects the success of the project. A similar study by Ashfaq, et. al. (2021), and Chinwe, et. al. (2017) shows a related output about the effect of ethical leadership on the work engagement and commitment of employees. The study found that ethical leadership affect work engagement with the mediating role of self-efficacy and organizational commitment. The result of such a study indicates that ethical leadership does not affect directly work engagement but is through self-efficacy and organizational commitment. The same finding was also offered by the study of Malik, et 2016), and Nauman and Qamar (2018) which recommended that ethical leadership can improve employee performance and productivity. These results were also found in previous studies by Qing, et al., (2020), and Yozgat and Mesikiran (2016), who also found a positive correlation between ethical leadership and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Working within the same topic, Kim and Brymer (2011), and Guo (2022) signified the effect of ethical leadership on manager job satisfaction, commitment, behavioral outcome, and firm performance. The study stressed that ethical leadership is positively related to the middle manager's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and firm's competitive performance. Rantika and Yustina (2017) indicated the relationship between ethical leadership and employee well-being with the mediating role of psychological empowerment.

The above findings suggest that the absence of ethical leadership may lead to job dissatisfaction which consequently affects organizational outcomes negatively. Several studies are pointing out the negative impact of bad leadership on the organization. For example, the study by Schyns and Schilling (2013) found a correlation between destructive leadership and counterproductive behavior. The result of the study indicates that the more destructive the leadership style is, the more counterproductive the behavior of employees becomes. Many researchers have discovered the negative effects of counterproductive behavior. It produces negative outcomes for the organization, the employees, and the stakeholders as suggested by Shen & Lei, (2022), Sypniewska (2020), and Bagyo (2018). Bagyo (2018) specifically indicated the negative effect of counterproductive behavior on employee engagement and performance. This is also found in the study by Kilic and Gunsul (2019) that bad leadership results in decreased workplace performance and productivity as emphasized by the same study that bad leadership behaviour affects the behaviour, psychology and ability of employees to perform their job.

The Philosophy of Work

Understanding work ethics often stems from comprehending the philosophy of work, which relates to one's attitude and approach to work (Cholbi, 2022). Definitions of work from sources like Dictionary.com and Britannica (2020) portray it as mental or physical effort directed toward achieving goals. Philosophers like Plato highlighted work's role in societal welfare and personal development (Cholbi, 2022; Ward & King, 2017). Totalitarianism and capitalism contrastingly view work as a means for societal gain or personal wealth accumulation (Little, 1948; Richard, 1998).

This varied perspective leads to misconceptions about work, impacting job satisfaction (Schwartz, 2022). Little (1948) offers a distinct view, defining work as both manual labor and deliberate production, emphasizing its intrinsic value beyond mere wages. Little also contends that work serves the purpose of self-improvement, aligning with human nature's inclination towards productive endeavors (Little, 1948; Sharma & Rai, 2015).

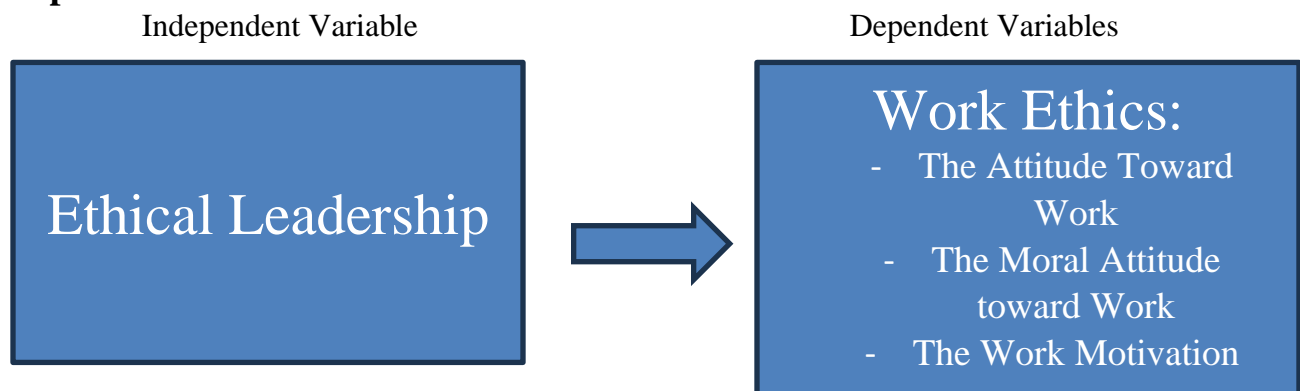
This concept diverges from contemporary notions linking work solely to employment and paychecks (Cholbi, 2022). Aristotle's perspective, echoed by Clark (2017), underscores work as an exercise of human rationality, contributing to personal growth and rational development (Elster, 1989; Sayers, 2005).

The Concept of Work Ethics

Understanding work ethics requires delving into the philosophy of work, which views work as integral to human nature and a means for self-perfection (Little, 1948). Various definitions of work ethics by Bazy (2018), Bouma, and Nelson (1973), and Lessnoff (1994) offer perspectives on attitudes toward work, ranging from valuing work for its sake to economic fulfillment (Petrovic, 2008; Cholbi, 2022). The concept of work ethics influences outcomes such as job performance, satisfaction, and commitment, as evidenced by studies from Bazy (2016), Mudrack (1997), Marri et al. (2012), Ud Din et al. (2019), Athar et al. (2016), Aflah, et al. (2021), Salahuddin (2011) and Salahudin, et al. (2016).

There is disagreement among researchers regarding the dimensions of work ethics, whether it's multidimensional or single-dimensional (Miller, 2002; Bazy, 2018; Van Ness et al., 2010; Sharma & Rai, 2015). Sharma and Rai (2015) advocate for a single-dimensional approach, emphasizing work centrality, moral approach, and intrinsic motivation, aligning with the secular nature of work ethics (Sharma & Rai, 2015; Cholbi, 2022). Adopting their validated 10-item Work Ethics Scale ensures consistency with this philosophical standpoint.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Yukl, et al. (2006) and Sharma and Rai (2015)

Figure 1: The conceptual framework reflects the relationship between ethical leadership and work ethics. The framework suggests that ethical leadership influences work ethics.

Statement of the Problems

The study aims to determine the influence of ethical leadership on employees' work ethics. It specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the ethical leadership of administrators of Divine Word Colleges in Region 1?
2. What is the work ethics of employees in terms of:
 - 2.1 the attitude toward work;
 - 2.2 the moral attitude toward work; and
 - 2.3 the work motivation?
3. Is there a relationship between the ethical leadership of administrators and the work ethics of employees?

Assumption

The study assumes that ethical leadership of leaders affects the work ethics of employees and it can be measured.

Hypotheses

Studies have been conducted concerning the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction (Guo, 2022), and work engagement (Wibawa and Takahashi, 2021). In the same vein, the current study hypothesizes that ethical leadership affects the work ethics of employees.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The current study limits its investigation to the effect of ethical leadership, on individual work ethics along with three dimensions: the attitude toward work, the moral attitude toward work, and the work motivation. It limits its population only to the employees of the Divine Word College of Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

Research Methodology

A crucial aspect of scientific research involves selecting the appropriate research methodology. This section details the study's process, encompassing research design, data collection instruments, the study's population and locale, data gathering procedures, and the statistical analysis applied to the collected data.

Research Design

The study employs a quantitative approach utilizing descriptive assessment and correlational research design. Descriptive research focuses on portraying characteristics without delving into the 'why' of the subject. This methodology is applied to assess ethical leadership's impact on individual work performance among Divine Word Colleges employees in the Ilocos Region. It serves to depict profiles, distributions, and defining characteristics, highlighting the essence of the data.

The Locale of the Study

The locale of the study was Divine Word College of Laoag and Divine Word College of Vigan. These two colleges are located in two different provinces which are Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte.

Population

The population of the study was composed of all employees and faculty of Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region. The total enumeration sampling was used and 250 faculty and employees were taken as respondents of the study.

Data Gathering Instruments

The study adopted validated questionnaires of Yukl, et al. (2013) on ethical leadership, and Sharma and Rai (2015) on individual work performance.

Data Gathering Procedures

During data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the College Presidents to distribute questionnaires. They personally met with both Presidents and employees to request questionnaire completion. Retrieval of the questionnaires was coordinated by the President's representative, the researcher, and the college staff.

Ethics Review

The study did not include human subjects; nonetheless, it adhered to appropriate procedures before distributing the questionnaires.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Consistency with the study as a descriptive assessment and correlational research design, therefore descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. The weighted mean is used to determine the level of ethical leadership, and individual work performance and Pearson r was used to measure the correlation between ethical leadership, and the work ethics of employees.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

| <i>Statistical Range</i> | <i>Descriptive Interpretation</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4.21-5.00 | Strongly agree/Very High |
| 3.41-4.20 | Agree/High |
| 2.61-3.40 | Somewhat agree/Moderate |
| 1.81-2.60 | Disagree/Low |
| 1.00-1.80 | Strongly disagree/Very Low |

Data Presentation and Analysis

This part presents the data that were gathered through research questionnaires. The presentation of data follows the statement of the problem of the study.

Problem 1: What is the ethical leadership of administrators of Divine Word Colleges in Region 1?

Table 1: Ethical leadership of administrators of Divine Word Colleges in Region1 (n=160)

| Ethical Leadership | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values. | 3.48 | A/H |
| 2. Communicate clear ethical standards for members. | 3.40 | SWA/M |
| 3. Set an example of ethical behaviour in his/her decisions and actions. | 3.35 | SWA/M |
| 4. Is honest and can be trusted to tell the truth | 3.44 | A/H |
| 5. Insists on doing what is fair and ethical even when it is not easy. | 3.39 | SWA/M |
| 6. Talks about the importance of honesty and integrity | 3.36 | SWA/M |
| 7. Can be trusted to carry out promises and commitments. | 3.43 | A/H |
| 8. Holds members accountable for using ethical practices in their work | 3.42 | A/H |
| Composite Mean | 3.40 | SWA/M |

Source (Yukl, et al., 2013).

Legend:

| <i>Statistical Range</i> | <i>Descriptive Interpretation</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4.21-5.00 | strongly agree/Very High |
| 3.41-4.20 | Agree/High |
| 2.61-3.40 | somewhat agree/Moderate |
| 1.81-2.60 | Disagree/Low |
| 1.00-1.80 | Strongly disagree/Very Low |

The table data indicates an overall composite mean of 3.40 for administrators' ethical leadership, signifying a "somewhat agree/moderate" rating. This suggests a moderate level without leaning towards either high or low ethical leadership. Individually, most items show moderate ratings, especially in the respondents' perception of administrators' moderate concern for ethical and moral values. Lasakova and Remisova (2015) highlighted the detrimental impact of unethical leadership, causing employee anxiety, helplessness, frustration, low job satisfaction, loss of trust, and work alienation. In essence, Hetrick et al. (2022) argue that unethical leadership significantly affects employee well-being.

2. What is the work ethics of employees in terms of:

- 2.1 the attitude toward work;
- 2.2 the moral attitude toward work; and
- 2.3 the work motivation?

Table 2: Work Ethics

| Work Ethics | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. The Attitude toward work (ATW) | | |
| I consider my occupational career to be one of the most important activities in my life | 4.12 | A/H |
| I believe that a person is known in society by the work he does | 3.88 | A/H |
| I believe that one's work provides the best source of achieving perfection in life. | 4.12 | A/H |
| Even if I don't have to work to earn a living, I would still prefer to continue working. | 4.24 | A/H |
| I believe that work provides a powerful channel to express one's knowledge, ability and creativity. | 4.33 | SA/VH |
| Composite Mean | 4.14 | A/H |
| The Moral Attitude toward Work (MAW) | | |
| Even in this fast-changing world, sincerity, hard work and integrity continue to be the golden keys to success in one's work life. | 3.80 | A/H |
| I feel a moral obligation to give a full day's work for a full day's pay. | 4.16 | A/H |
| I believe that one should never be last for work unless there is some real emergency | 4.22 | SA/VH |
| Composite mean | 4.06 | A/H |
| The Work Motivation | | |
| I believe that a job well done is a reward in itself | 4.40 | SA/VH |
| I welcome jobs that involve greater responsibility and challenge as they contribute to my learning and growth. | 4.39 | SA/VH |
| Composite Mean | 4.40 | SA/VH |
| Overall Mean Rating (The ATW, MAW and MW) | 4.20 | A/H. |

Source: Sharma and Rai (2015).

The table data reveals an overall mean rating of 4.20 for employees' work ethics, indicating an "agree/high" level. This suggests a notably high rating without leaning towards low or moderate levels. Specifically, work ethics and motivation individually received very high ratings. Employees strongly agree that a job well done is its own reward and welcome challenges that contribute to their learning and growth. Moreover, they highly value their work as a means of achieving perfection, expressing knowledge, ability, and creativity, and emphasizing sincerity, hard work, and integrity as keys to success. Abun et al. (2022) emphasized the impact of good work ethics on individual work performance, motivation, and job performance (Aini et al., 2021).

Problem 3: Is there a relationship between the ethical leadership of administrators and the work ethics of employees?

Table 3. Correlation coefficients obtained on the test of the relationship between the ethical leadership of administrators and the work ethics of employees

| WORK ETHICS OF EMPLOYEES | ETHICAL LEADERSHIP OF ADMINISTRATORS | |
|--|---|-------|
| Attitude Towards Work | r | -.032 |
| | (Sig. 2 - tailed) | .702 |
| Moral Attitude Towards Work | r | -.009 |
| | (Sig. 2-tailed) | .912 |
| Work Motivation | r | -.097 |
| | (Sig. 2-tailed) | .253 |
| *Significant at .05 level of significance (2-tailed) | | |

Ethical Leadership of Administrators and Attitude toward Work of Employees

The correlation coefficient of -.032 between administrators' ethical leadership and employees' work ethics and attitude towards work is not significant, suggesting no meaningful relationship between these variables. Consequently, the ethical leadership displayed by administrators does not appear to influence employees' attitudes toward work. This indicates that regardless of the administrators' ethical leadership level, employees' attitudes toward work remain unaffected.

Ethical Leadership of Administrators and Moral Attitude towards Work of Employees

The correlation coefficient of -.009 indicates a non-significant relationship between administrators' ethical leadership and employees' moral attitude toward work, failing to meet a .05 level of significance. Consequently, administrators' ethical leadership does not appear to influence employees' moral attitudes toward work. Thus, variations in administrators' ethical leadership are not associated with changes in employees' moral attitudes toward work.

Ethical Leadership of Administrators and Work Motivation of Employees

The computed correlation coefficient of -.097 between ethical leadership and work motivation of the employees indicates that these variables tested are not significantly related. Thus, regardless of the degree of ethical leadership exhibited by the administrators, the employees' work ethics and work motivation remain the same.

Results and Discussion

The study's findings reveal high ethical leadership among administrators and commendable work ethics among employees. Administrators demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical and moral values, providing standards, setting ethical examples, and being perceived as honest and possessing integrity. Alshammari et al. (2015) emphasizes ethical leadership's impact on organizational performance and employees' moral identity, while Copeland (2015) highlights its role in enhancing leadership effectiveness.

However, organizational success does not solely hinge on leadership; it also relies on employees' work ethics. The study underscores employees' favorable attitudes, moral perspectives, and robust work motivation. Sharma and Rai (2015) stress the significance of these aspects in boosting employees' performance, while Abun et al. (2021) link the right work attitude to work self-efficacy, influencing performance. Meriac et al. (2015) argue that individuals with heightened moral standards tend to yield more outcomes. Additionally, proper work motivation significantly contributes to individual performance (Taghipour & Dejbani, 2013; Paais et al., 2020).

Despite this, the correlation test reveals no association between ethical leadership and employees' work ethics. The high mean rating for employees' work ethics doesn't align with administrators' ethical leadership, suggesting other factors like organizational structure, control, selection, and training might be influential (Kero & Tadesse, 2020). This resonates with Nikkhah-farkhani et al.'s (2017) findings on various factors impacting employee work ethics, including ethical personnel selection, compensation, empowerment, socialization, career, team building, work environment, justice, motivation, commitment, leadership style, structure, and monitoring.

Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the impact of administrators' ethical leadership on employees' work ethics. While both were rated highly, the correlation test surprisingly indicated that ethical leadership is not a predictor of employees' work ethics. This suggests that the strong work ethics observed among employees might not stem directly from the ethical leadership displayed by administrators. Other environmental factors not explored in this study might contribute significantly to employees' high work ethics. Consequently, further investigation is warranted to understand these factors that potentially shape employees' work ethics.

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