Short Paper

School Heads' Ethical Leadership and Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Motivation

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy and motivation. The research involved a sample group of 60 classroom teachers, and data was collected using the Ethical Leadership Scale, Teacher Self-efficacy Scale, and Teacher Motivation Questionnaire. The reliability of these instruments was established, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.87, 0.9, and 0.86, respectively. The findings of the study revealed a significant correlation between ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy in general. However, when investigating specific aspects of self-efficacy, it was observed that ethical leadership was primarily associated with student engagement and classroom management, but not instructional strategies. This suggests that ethical leadership may have a greater impact on certain dimensions of teacher self-efficacy than others. Furthermore, the results demonstrated a significant relationship between ethical leadership and teacher motivation. This implies that teachers who perceive their leaders as ethical are more likely to be motivated in their work. Ethical leadership may play a crucial role in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing teacher motivation. Findings have implications for school administrators and policymakers, emphasizing the significance of promoting ethical leadership behaviors to support and empower teachers in their professional development and enhance overall educational outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

School leadership is dynamic and ever-changing. The dynamic nature is tied to its undeniable influence on many school factors, especially teacher behavior and performance. Literature proves that specific leadership styles yield different outcomes. Leadership style is a leader's ability to direct, influence, encourage, and manage members to work on their consciousness and voluntarily achieve specific goals (Buil et al., 2019).

Researchers have begun to consider ethical leadership as a distinct style rather than paying close attention only to the moral elements of other leadership styles. In ethical leadership, the leader is thought to portray a pivotal role in social influence through which the members gather situational cues from their working environment that influence their attitude and behaviors towards the job. It is evident in an instance where ethical leaders trust their employees and motivate them by giving responsibility to increase the job's importance, understand the individual's developmental needs, and motivate them. Along the process, the employees are likely to respond by exerting more effort in their tasks, more remarkable job dedication, and actively engaging in the work (Brown et al., 2005).

In the same vein, the increasing attention ethical leadership is getting is attributed to its ability to influence employees' positive attitudes toward everyday tasks at the workplace. The extent of influence that the leadership creates on the attitudes and behaviors of employees is not limited to the managerial aspect. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) consider the prominence of a leader as the bearing of a powerful position that can impact employees' work attitudes and behavior in mainly, but not limited to, two domains. First, the ethical perspective of an honest, credible leader gives autonomy and opportunities to workers to make employees feel indebted to reciprocate the respect, care, and support with positive attitudes related to the job. Second, fairness in job evaluations, performance, and promotions creates optimism and commitment in employees, making them more efficient.

Through the previously mentioned arguments, the researchers aimed to explore the relationship between the ethical leadership of school heads and teachers' self-efficacy and motivation. Also, there needs to be more local studies and literature exploring the concepts. This study aims to understand the relationship between the ethical leadership of school heads and teachers' self-efficacy and motivation and contribute to the growing literature on the concepts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical Leadership

Literature review shows that the most widely used description of ethical leadership is that of Brown et al. (2005). Their definition suggests that ethical leadership is the portrayal of usually appropriate conduct through personal action and interpersonal relationships. It is also embracing the promotion of the previously mentioned conduct to subordinates via two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. It could be seen that the definition reveals two dimensions of ethical leadership – being a moral person and being a moral manager (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) expressed that as ethical leaders maintain clarity in all their actions, especially in their expectations, responsibilities, and communications, they are expected to be reciprocated with a more engaged and committed workforce. A growing number of studies have supported the significance of ethical leadership and its positive effects on the behavioral outcomes of followers. It is, therefore, interesting to know how ethical leadership specifically relates to self-efficacy and motivation among teachers.

Ethical Leadership and Self Efficacy

Taken from the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1999), self-efficacy initiates personal achievements and also builds up employee motivation and well-being (Ashfaq et al., 2021). It could be noted that idea is based on an individual's belief rather than what is true in the objective sense. Further, it is observed that employees' consistency, choices, and efforts are significantly influenced by their self-efficacy. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) expressed that belief in one's capabilities sets forth the feeling that one can achieve goals, enabling oneself to perform the appropriate actions. Given the preceding claims, it is clear that self-efficacy leads to positive changes in the personal initiatives of a person.

Dirks and Ferrin (2002) argue that the stature of a leader given the power directly influences an employee's work attitude and behavior. An ethical leader inflicts the propensity to reciprocate respect and ethical treatment among members. This translates to an increased drive and belief in one's ability to perform better. In the study of Muliati et al. (2022), they found that leader behaviors positively affected teacher performance and self-efficacy. Several other studies support the same claim; however, they focused on general leadership characteristics than ethical leadership. This study reveals, more specifically, the influence of ethical leadership on self-efficacy.

Ethical Leadership and Motivation

It was observed in several studies that organizational success is attributed to individual members' performance. In other words, the success of an organization highly depends on the members working to achieve goals (Akob et al., 2020; Haerani et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019). Chen et al. (2012) stated that it is imperative to understand motivation as it directly affects overall performance. With high work motivation, employees will work harder in carrying out their work. On the contrary, with low work motivation, employees do not have morale; they seem to give up rather quickly and struggle to complete their work (Haryono et al., 2020). Motivated employees are more oriented towards autonomy and freedom and are more self-motivated than less motivated employees, which causes development opportunities to benefit them (Demircioglu & Chen, 2019; Arshadia, 2010). Arshadia (2010), in his study, confirmed a positive influence between motivation and performance.

Engelbrecht et al. (2017) discussed that when employees are treated fairly and respectfully by their leaders, they are likely to think about their relationship with reciprocity. Employees are likely to reciprocate by putting extra effort into their work through enhanced job dedication. They also become willing to become more actively engaged in work. When an employee is free to make decisions and act without consulting the supervisor, it can result in work engagement. Ethical leaders want to empower employees through training and support and provide freedom to their employees to show initiative through responsibility and authority.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This quantitative correlation study aims to delve into the intricate relationship between ethical leadership exhibited by school heads, teacher self-efficacy, and motivation. By analyzing the data, the study aims to shed light on how ethical leadership influences and interacts with teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy and motivation in the educational setting.

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 60 public school teachers from a specific district in the Division of Leyte, located in the Eastern Visayas Region of the Philippines. The participants were selected using a random sampling technique, ensuring that each teacher had an equal chance of being included in the study. This approach enhances the representativeness of the sample and allows for generalizations to be made about the population of public-school teachers in that particular district.

Data Collection

The researchers used the Ethical Leadership scale of Brown et al. (2005) developed to measure ethical leadership. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was determined to be 0.87. The ELS combines leadership behaviors such as acting reasonably, rewarding ethical conduct, ethical visioning, and ethical practices of ethical leaders. The researchers used the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TES) of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) to measure self-efficacy. Specifically, the long form of the instrument was used. The form was designed to portray the richness of teachers' work by focusing specifically on three constructs of teacher efficacy that impact effectiveness in the classroom: (1) efficacy in student engagement (ESE), (2) efficacy in instructional strategies (EIS), and (3) efficacy in classroom management (ECM). The general reliability of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale is high, with Cronbach Alpha 0.9. Meanwhile, the Teacher Motivation Questionnaire by Chung (2012) was used to measure work motivation among teachers. TQM's reliability is known to be 0.86.

Data Analysis

For the statistical analysis of this study, SPSS version 28 was utilized. This software provides a comprehensive platform for data analysis and is widely used in the field of social sciences. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was specifically employed to examine the relationship among variables in this study. This statistical technique measures the strength and direction of the linear association between two continuous variables. By employing the Pearson correlation, the study aims to determine the extent to which ethical leadership is correlated with teacher self-efficacy and motivation. This method allows for a quantitative assessment of the relationships between these variables, providing insights into the nature and magnitude of the associations observed in the data.

Ethical Consideration

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards for research. Prior to their involvement in the study, all participants were provided with an informed consent form, which outlined the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. It was explicitly stated in the informed consent that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any point without facing any consequences. This ensured that participants had full autonomy and control over their involvement in the research.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused exclusively on the responses gathered through the specified instruments. The research design and data collection method were designed specifically to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy and motivation. While this approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the targeted variables, it also implies that other aspects or factors related to teacher self-efficacy and motivation were not directly investigated in this study. The study's scope was limited to the specific constructs of ethical leadership and their impact on teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

RESULTS

The study sought to determine the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the possible connection. The result of the correlation statistics for ethical leadership and self-efficacy is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Teacher Self-Efficacy

		Teacher Self-efficacy	Ethical Leadership
Teacher Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.512 (***)
	Significance	.	.000
	N	60	60
Ethical Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.512 (***)	1
	Significance	.000	.
	N	60	60

It could be gleaned from Table 1 that there is a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and ethical leadership. It could then be inferred that when the school head demonstrates ethical leadership, the likelihood of the teachers believing in their capability to do things increases. Meanwhile, Table 2 shows the relationship between ethical leadership and the different aspects of teacher self-efficacy : (1) efficacy in student engagement (ESE), (2) efficacy in instructional strategies (EIS), and (3) efficacy in classroom management (ECM).

Table 2. Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Aspects of Teacher Self-Efficacy

		ESE	EIS	ECM
Ethical Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.401(***)	0.031	0.334(***)

As shown in Table 2, ethical leadership is directly related to the different aspects of teacher self-efficacy, except for efficacy in instructional strategies. It could be assumed that as a leader exhibits ethical leadership, the teacher's belief in her ability to engage students and employ classroom management increases. However, ethical leadership is not significantly related to efficacy in instructional strategies.

To address the question of whether there exists a relationship between ethical leadership and motivation, both variables were correlated. The results of the correlation are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Teacher Motivation

		Teacher Motivation	Ethical Leadership
Teacher Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.317 (***)
	Significance	.	.000
	N	60	60
Ethical Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.317 (***)	1
	Significance	.000	.
	N	60	60

It can be seen from Table 3 that, like teacher self-efficacy, ethical leadership is also highly correlated with teacher motivation. That means as leaders portray ethical leadership, teachers become more motivated to do schoolwork and tasks.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy and motivation. This study specifically investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher motivation and ethical leadership and teacher self-efficacy. The literature review provided insight that leadership significantly affects teacher behavior and performance. Studies looked at leadership in general and other specific types of leadership styles and how they affect teacher behavior and performance, like work engagement, organizational commitment, and performance in general. Only a few studies delve into ethical leadership, more so its relationship with motivation and self-efficacy among teachers.

This study found that ethical leadership is highly correlated to teacher self-efficacy. This claim is supported by several foreign studies (Ren & Chadee, 2017; Ashfaq et al., 2021), which claimed the same relationship with employees from companies. The results show

that positive behavior of education leaders, like showing ethical conduct, affects employee engagement. The credibility and support of ethical leaders augment employees' learning and confidence, increasing their self-efficacy. It could be inferred that the more leaders show behavior with an ethical propensity, the more teachers believe in their beliefs about getting things done. It is however interesting to note that one aspect of self-efficacy among teachers showed an insignificant relation with ethical leadership. Efficacy in instructional strategy was discovered to be not significantly related. Dilekli and Tezci (2016) reported that personal characteristics affected teaching styles and abilities more than other external factors. Through this result, administrators would see the need to intensify teacher training.

Like teacher self-efficacy, the study also revealed a considerably high and significant relationship between ethical leadership and teacher motivation. As claimed and argued in this study, leadership characteristics influence, to an extent, employee motivation. Employees are seen to reciprocate fair and ethical treatment by putting extra effort into their work through enhanced job dedication. This sends a message to leaders, not just in education, to consider how they treat employees.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study uncovers valuable insights into how ethical leadership impacts teachers' confidence and motivation. The findings emphasize the significant link between ethical leadership and both teacher self-efficacy and motivation. However, it is worth noting that ethical leadership seems to have a greater influence on certain aspects of teacher self-efficacy, particularly in fostering student engagement and maintaining effective classroom management, while not significantly impacting instructional strategies.

It would be beneficial for future studies to explore specific aspects of ethical leadership and delve deeper into the various leadership styles adopted by school leaders. Additionally, investigating how ethical leadership influences teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities would provide further understanding of the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher effectiveness.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings have important implications for school administrators and policymakers. By embracing ethical leadership practices, they can create a supportive and positive work environment that boosts teacher motivation and fosters their professional growth. Encouraging ethical leadership behaviors among administrators cultivates a culture of trust and integrity, which has a positive ripple effect on teacher self-efficacy and motivation. Ultimately, this can contribute to improved educational outcomes and student success.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

We declare that there are no conflicts of interest present in this study.

Informed Consent

All participants in this study have willingly and voluntarily participated. Prior to their involvement, they were provided with an informed consent form that clearly outlined the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. They were given ample opportunity to ask questions and were provided with the necessary information to make an informed decision about their participation.

Ethics Approval

The research design ensures that the study involves minimal risk to participants. As per the specific guidelines or exemptions for ethics approval in educational research studies, it has been determined that this study does not require formal ethics approval.

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