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Ethical Leadership: Requirement of Today's Organisations, Employees and the Society

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Abstract: Many researches happening in the world of today establishes the fact that different types of leadership help in achieving different goals related to employee motivation. In this article, the importance of ethical leadership on employee motivation is assessed. With the review of many research articles and available secondary data, it has come into light that ethical leadership plays an important role in having positive perception of the employees towards the leader and the organisation. The society also looks upto such leaders with positivity. Drawing from existing studies and industry insights, this investigation will explore how ethical leadership interacts with skills, dedication, job satisfaction and motivation which will highlight its impact on performance. Based on the presented facts, the article will also offer recommendations for future research endeavours.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Business Environment, Organizational Performance, Business Excellences, Moral Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, many companies are reassessing their capabilities to establish a route towards leadership that can enhance efficiency and profitability. Ethical leadership has a prominent role in guiding organizations through making decisions that shape employees' attitudes and interactions. It embodies the connection between culture and business practices. This study delves into how ethical leadership behaviours impact employee performance, efficiency and productivity by drawing insights from available research, literature, empirical data and theories. By exploring the relationship between leadership and competencies, determination, job satisfaction and motivation, this paper aims to draw our attention towards how ethical leadership influences performance while providing practical recommendations, for future research endeavours.

II. WHAT IS ETHICAL LEADERSHIP?

The fundamental principles, values and moral compass that define what is right and wrong play a role, in shaping behaviour. They serve as the foundation upon which leaders exert their influence on employees to drive the organization towards its objectives (Al Sharafi & Rajiani 2013). Research on leadership has highlighted its growing significance in the world's organizational settings (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung & Dorjgotov, 2012). (Neubert, Wu, & Roberts, 2013) contend that the downfall of many companies serves as the significance of the criticality of leadership related conduct. Additionally, (Buble, 2012) describes leadership as the practice of guiding employees based on values, principles and beliefs that align closely with accepted norms and behaviour. The absence of ethics in operations can adversely impact employee morale, underscoring the necessity for oversight regarding ethical leadership standards. (Dunoon, 2002; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) points out the competitive landscape of today's business arena has spurred a rise in ethical practices, across industries.

A study conducted by (Caldwell et al., 2011) revealed that a key-challenges faced by organizations today is exercising fair conduct. This suggests that ethical principles are often overlooked, emphasizing the crucial role, trust plays in fostering employee motivation, productivity and organizational performance. Without leadership, the darker aspects of leadership such as misuse of power, inconsistency, deception, misplaced loyalties and irresponsibility are more likely to emerge (Giessner & Quaquebeke, 2010). This increases the risk of employees being influenced and losing trust and integrity in their leaders. The increasing range of concerns in businesses, highlights the significance of ethical leadership through right decision making, self-management and knowledge. (Hanna N., 2011). However, defining leadership can be complex due to its nuanced nature. Executives, within organizations may hold differing perspectives on what constitutes leadership. Their comprehension revolves around the concept of possessing characteristics and correct values. (Selladurai R., 2006). These supervisors acknowledge that adhering to laws and regulations forms the basis of leadership. Consequently, it is evident that ethical leadership stresses on managing conflicts among staff and setting a guiding example to instruct them on right kind of behaviour. Research indicates that ethical leaders prioritize honesty and align their actions with their values and beliefs



(Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & DeHoogh, 2011). Ethical leaders embody virtues that guide them in making decisions for the overall benefit of any entity.

A. The Development of Ethical Leadership

The unique essence of leadership should express the core values observed by an organization. In this context it is evident that leaders, within this framework exemplify a compelling story of ethics to showcase the practical foundation of ethical values. The challenging business environment in organizations today is characterized by a scenario where everyone seeks fulfilment. This has led to the rise of leadership amidst overlapping challenges that have shaped the landscape of leadership research. The definition of what constitutes leadership and the impact of globalization have influenced the evolution of leadership from traditional leadership models. As stated by McCann and Holt (2009) the fundamental question of what makes a good leader, highlights the importance that value based leaders get success. Consequently, the crucial theoretical intersection of ethics and leadership has become a principle that various organizations and disciplines emphasize, stressing the significance of transformational and visionary leadership rooted in ethics. The social science perspective on leadership gained traction in the 20th century with growing competition and its significant consequence on organizational performance. As per (Alshammari, Atiya & Almutairi, Naser & Thuwaini, Shebaib, 2015), the positive characteristics of an ethical leader are crucial in developing the goal of transforming the employees towards organisational goals by framing the necessary policies, strategies and procedures.

The impact of globalization is shown as shaping how managers view employees as stakeholders who should be valued through specific strategic approaches to enhance their productivity and job satisfaction (Nelson, Poms, & Wolf, 2012). Leaders are seen as a reflection of the organizations image emphasizing the importance of leadership, in upholding core values and creating a framework that aligns internal leadership qualities with organizational actions to benefit the organization as a whole. Studies and personal experiences have played a role in promoting leadership practices. According to (Resick et al., 2011) the focus on integrity has led to the establishment of leadership based on managers understanding their values and developing a vision that embodies the organizations goals. One model highlights how organizational values and principles shape leadership behaviors setting a foundation for leaders to guide the organization alongwith its members towards common ethical goals. (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009). Ethical leaders aim to unite objectives of the organisation with stakeholders' interest and internal staff, over time. Ethical leaders strive to establish a one-way management structure aimed at fostering an appreciation of perspectives, opinions and value system for the overall benefit of the organization.

B. Ethical Leadership: How it works?

Today's business world is filled with challenges and unethical behaviours, thus, the importance of values has become paramount in addressing the increasing instances of unethical mannerism. According to (Bass and colleagues, 2003) ethical leadership has become evident as leaders focus their efforts on guiding business processes with an emphasis on creating value. It is crucial for this approach to drive monitoring of business output and foster open communication where both managers and employees share a foundation of ethics that is straightforward yet embodies principles of values and integrity. (Gomez Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 2008) emphasize that ethical leadership stands out by embodying and communicating values effectively. In this context it is apparent that leaders present a narrative of ethics to illustrate the practical application of ethical values. (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005) highlight how ethical leadership encompasses the integration of ethics and values into a framework of leadership that leaders are obligated to follow.

In organizations today, a common business challenge is the pursuit of fulfilment that many people aspire to achieve. The prevalence of exposure has brought out numerous instances of unethical conduct and scandals revealing a self-centered approach to leadership in the business arena. To combat this issue, it is crucial for modern day CEOs to serve as role models within society as a whole. For instance, Enron's downfall and the conviction of several members of its leadership group, was a shocking incident as it reported the contradiction of ethical practices by the leaders. It destroyed Arthur Andersen, one of the largest audit firms in the world and led it towards bankruptcy. (Bondarenko, P.,2024). Furthermore, prioritizing the development of talent within the organization over gain, is a fundamental aspect of ethical leadership demonstrating an understanding of their role within a broad web of stakeholders and relevant constituents (McCray, Gonzalez, & Darling, 2012). (House, 2004) supports (Staceys, 2003) perspective by highlighting that ethical leaders prioritize the good of their organization over interests. This typically involves focusing on the organizations dreams and objectives. The advancements of employees, has a key role in achieving business excellence with leaders emphasizing it as a competency. Ethical leadership works on enhancing employee loyalty and satisfaction to drive success than just engaging in charitable activities or donations. It underscores the importance of developing employee capabilities, for sustainability following an ethical leadership framework as proposed by (McCray, Gonzalez & Darling, 2012). It's ingrained in our nature to seek out and nurture talent because its morally right to support leadership and bring added value to organization as well as individuals.

This practice includes leaders incorporating standards and elements into the establishment of enduring leadership. For example, many CEOs are now implementing initiatives that assess employees' experiences, skills and abilities with an emphasis, on integrity. (Stacey, 2013) highlights that many top executives have embraced compliance strategies to address mentoring challenges. To effectively implement this approach, it is crucial for all leaders to get into discussions about values and ethics as well as the process of value creation for stakeholders. These conversations should occur at prospective levels of business operations, where the concepts of value creation and stakeholder principles are regularly reviewed within the context of expectations. Organizations that prioritize discussions tend to adopt an accountable performance strategy (Tomescu & Popescu, 2013). Consequently, employees expect their leaders to demonstrate accountability, which fosters a model of business excellence and performance assessment where both internal and external stakeholders are informed about factors influencing business goals. Ethical leadership highlights the aspect of grasping the significance of value and ethics in guiding conduct. The strategy of resisting to prevent values from stagnating illustrates the conceptualization of values and ethics, in Johnson and Johnson. According to (Hassan et al., 2013) the recognition of authority plays a role in defining how employees collaborate to counter challenges related to maintaining ethical standards as an indispensable part of business processes. This aligns with (Stacey, 2013) principles, in shaping a culture, centered around teamwork. To illustrate numerous corporate leaders have organized skip level meetings to involve all stakeholders leading to an understanding of organizational dynamics. Ethical leaders increase employees' contentment in the workplace as suggested by (Guo K, 2022).

III. THE KEY FUNCTIONS

The main role of leadership is to establish value systems that impact the followers. It is obvious that putting the principles of ethics into practice depends on the leaders' ability to cultivate a sense of maturity to guide their followers towards achieving success and operational efficiency within the organization. According to (Rainey HG and Bozeman B, 2000), organizations, in today's market often face a disconnect between leaders' beliefs and actions especially when dealing with dilemmas in decision making processes. (Al sharafi & Rajiani, 2013) point out that trust among leaders and followers is a factor contributing to these challenges within an organizational setting. The discrepancy between a leader's actions and words can create quandaries for employees underscoring the importance, for ethical leadership approaches to bridge this gap by influencing followers through behaviour, moral integrity, appropriate actions and aligning their words with deeds. (Stacey, 2013) suggests that ethical leadership should focus on strategies related to the followers' roles and building trust, among employees. This approach emphasizes the importance of introspection to evaluate not the aspects of an organization but also the leader's ability to consider others perspectives. It is important for leaders to have insight about the outcome of their decisions balance competing considerations and navigate dilemmas effectively. By taking this approach, leaders can proactively address emerging challenges by establishing frameworks to prevent issues stemming from situational pressures and biases. Furthermore, it is crucial for ethics to be grounded in principles. (Al sharafi & Rajiani, 2013) highlight the significance of allowing employees to learn through observing their leader's actions. Ultimately ethical leaders play a role, in embodying the values of an organization and fostering relationships that promote harmony.

It is, without a doubt that the organizations goals can be achieved when leaders and their team work together to find solutions that benefit everyone involved. The practice of leadership involves creating beneficial situations, in the realm of finances to uphold gains in investments and respect. Ethical leaders as defined by a perspective, play a role in fostering a unified understanding and promoting liberation. According to (Hsin Kuang Chun Hsiung & Dorjgotov, 2012) leaders guide employees to discover their path and establish a connection with the Divine by easing tensions through paradoxes. This tension often stems from the nature of humanity highlighting the need for interpersonal relationships and advocating for less self-centered leadership approaches.

In this context effective ethical leadership hinges on leader's ability to influence followers by evaluating their actions and results. Employee feedback programs offer insights into the climate within an organization. The interplay, between connections and employees' behaviour influenced by leaders reveals outcomes of ethical conduct that underscore key aspects of ethical leadership. Consequently, leaders must continuously assess their proficiency in implementing value-based ethics within the organization.

A. Impact of Ethical Leaders on Employees

To truly grasp how ethical leadership impacts employee performance it's crucial to consider the process where this influence contributes to a shared benefit. (Resick et al., 2012) posit that the theoretical framework of leadership elucidates the principles of trait theory and event theory in positioning the functions of leaders. It becomes obvious that a leader attributes significantly to shape the objective of leadership focusing on articulating the organizations mission and establishing a groundwork, for leadership policies, strategies and procedures. By employing strategies and methods, leaders can effectively empower their followers. Greatly boost employees' self-confidence. This approach as highlighted by (Nelson, Poms, & Wolf, 2012) aims to shift norms, values and attitudes in alignment with the leaders' vision. Studies indicate that an

ethical leadership style mirrors a response to actions and interpersonal connections, within an organization. This endeavour aims to enhance employees' well-being to enable them to contribute towards achieving organizational objectives. (Stacey, 2013). Ethical leadership plays a role in motivating and inspiring employees focusing on attention. According to (Rainey HG and Bozeman B, 2000), embodying idealized influence leads to a business practice rooted in moral values of caring for oneself and others, and ethical demonstrations. (Nelson, Poms, & Wolf, 2012) emphasize the importance of vision creation and fulfilment as an aspect. Ethical leadership employs rewards, authority and sanctions to encourage employee compliance effectively. This method follows an approach where motivation enhances employee loyalty and dedication to goals. Encouraging behaviour among employees, involves reinforcement, communication and inclusive decision-making processes. Effective ethical leaders uphold values and integrity amidst challenges. (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung, & Dorjgotov, 2012). The essence of ethical leadership hinges, on a blend of integrity and the right set of values creating a foundation for guiding employees to actively engage in the organization. This core forms the basis on which the organizations mission, principles and aspirations embody standards. Within this framework leaders align the objectives of the organization with those of stakeholders and key team members. It is crucial to emphasize that ethical leaders must fully grasp the significance of fostering relationships within the organization. This serves as a benchmark for all endeavours emphasizing that building relationships, based on reliance and respect are factors for achieving success. According to (Silva A, 2015) ethical leaders play a role in nurturing organic relationships within an environment characterized by integrity, respect, trust, justice, equity and fairness. Consequently, echoing the sentiments of (Nelson, Poms & Wolf, 2012) in maintaining harmony with these principles, enhances the effectiveness of endeavours leading to sustainable growth and prosperity. Ethical leadership should prioritize values and transparency while taking decisions taking into account how these decisions will impact the organization. It's important to communicate with employees to establish a framework, that ensures their work contributes to the organization's success. Ethical leaders consistently strive to incorporate principles into their behaviour, values and beliefs demonstrating a commitment, to the organizations purpose through wisdom, determination and patience (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung, & Dorjgotov, 2012). (Stacey, 2013) presents a framework, for leadership that includes considerations of behaviour and hypocrisy. Similarly, (Rainey, 2003), suggests that leaders should be seen as individuals of character who care about their employees' well-being and are approachable.

B. Advantages of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership plays a significant role, by highlighting the states' involvement in various aspects of society through corporate social responsibility. Covering an array of areas such as security, education, urban planning, administration and health. It's clear that ethical leadership can add to service delivery with a focus on equality and fairness. According to (Borins, 2000; Sanders, 1998; Thompson, 1998) the inclusive nature of this leadership approach ensures that leaders are accountable to a set of stakeholders and citizens. It's important for leaders to uphold standards, in their service delivery process, which underscores the significance of ethical values in overall administration. Moreover, values associated with transforming and transacting in leadership, influence perceptions of ethics and employees' expectations paving the way for ethical considerations to be integrated into a leadership approach. (Dunoon, 2002; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) emphasizes the importance of encouraging behaviour that aligns with notions of efficiency and business excellence. By promoting ethical leadership, transparency and reduced corruption can be easily fostered in all sectors of the society. By the growing demand for leaders, the society adheres to a variety of standards and underscores the essence of leadership. In times marked by lapses in values within any sector, ethical leadership encourages regular use of moral judgment (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung, & Dorjgotov, 2012). (Dunoon, 2002; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) also argues that stakeholders now expect standards across a range of activities guided by moral principles. This heightened awareness regarding values and public interests, serves as an aspect of ethical leadership and management. Consequently, stakeholders can vent out their views in a firm way while advocating transparency and accountability.

C. The Challenges posed to Ethical Leadership

Successful ethical leadership should prioritize fairness, integrity and social responsibility. However, the unique environment of today, presents challenges in determining what is fair across areas of discrete activities. A prospective resolution to this issue involves boosting leaders' morale to uphold principles. The ongoing struggle lies in implementing leadership systems due to the prevalence of self-interest during decision making processes, necessitating sector leaders to overcome their inclinations. Consequently, ethical leaders may overlook the impact of their decisions on their followers. (Borins, 2000; Sanders, 1998; Thompson, 1998) argue that this dilemma questions whether an emphasis on leadership interferes with prioritizing service delivery and reducing harm in business processes. Leaders often exhibit personality conflicts leading to the establishment of power centers that prioritize the goals of individual leaders over those of the entire organization. This complexity raises such questions that hinder leaders from adopting a transactional leadership approach. It is obvious that the downfall of any organisational leader, stems from growing self-centeredness and lack of awareness.

According to (Rainey, 2003), such leaders, at times, feel exemption from obligations, viewing leadership as separate from their selves. Consequently, such leaders tend to justify their lack of management practices.

D. The Role of Ethical Leaders in improving Efficiency

The importance of leadership in enhancing efficiency is deeply rooted in ethical leadership practices. This is based on the concept of empowerment, where leaders play a role in balancing performance, expectations and relationships with employees. From an identity perspective (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung and Dorjgotov, 2012) suggest that ethical leadership significantly impacts efficiency through identity. According to (Dunoon, 2002; Saz-Carranza and Ospina, 2010) leaders are required to lead by example when it comes to trust and integrity to ensure that the activities align with values and meet needs effectively. If leaders are fair in their conduct, they can motivate their followers to do what is right and just. This approach raises the consciousness of followers resulting in a motivated workforce, increased job satisfaction, self-fulfilment and improved service delivery effectiveness. In line with this thinking, (Singh P, Singh J, Azman A., 2017) offer insights into management by emphasizing the importance of consistent efforts to promote ethical behaviour through ethical leadership. By focusing on this fact, (Borins, 2000; Sanders, 1998; Thompson, 1998) highlight that ethical leadership has played a role in driving business activities and initiatives towards expansion and innovation, leading to increased productivity. Ethical leaders are seen as contributors to fostering a culture of success, transparency and accountability by creating a conducive environment for their teams. This not only promotes development among employees but also boosts overall productivity levels.

The implementation of leadership has been centered on strategic reassessment. By maintaining standards, leaders are able to gain an understanding of their organizational environment and implement programs focused on administrative ethics. This approach aims to enhance competence and decision-making processes that align with interests and societal expectations.

The integration of quality of leadership within a positive framework, meets the needs of leaders (Hsin Kuang, Chun Hsiung, & Dorjgotov, 2012). By embracing nuances such as risk bearing and commitment, it becomes evident that a systematic approach to risk taking sustains a culture of commitment within a sound environment. In this context, it's clear that ethical leaders have emphasized elements of transformational leadership to implement a straightforward approach that enhances the broad scope of service provision.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A systematic approach was efficiently employed to select and examine the studies already done. The emphasis on peer reviewed literature ensured that the study obtained information regarding leadership and how it impacts employees' performance. The researchers got through different websites and available databases to get access to peer reviewed journals and previous and present studies conducted on leadership. Inclusion criteria was based on all documents, journals and previous research related to leadership and organizational behavior for providing an understanding of the positive impact, ethical leaders exert on employees' performance. However, literature published more than ten years ago was excluded from the review.

To gather information, past studies from databases and descriptive search terms such as ethical leadership, business environment organizational performance, business excellence and moral responsibility fame were utilized. The incorporation of ethical leadership strategies in the sector was deeply rooted in the literature review, previous studies, evidence which can be cross checked as well as in theoretical concepts applied to research design, strategy formulation and philosophical orientation.

The research framework encompassing transactional theories highlighted how ethical leadership affects performance management within public sector organizations. This theoretical foundation served as a basis for developing a research methodology for this study.

The research framework delved into the aspect of how ethical leadership influences performance. By examining studies and existing literature the paper incorporated a range of perspectives. Drawing from both objectivist and subjectivist philosophies, the research utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the positive effect of leadership on practices. By analyzing leadership theories through interpretive and humanist lenses, the study aimed to gather comprehensive insights into how ethical leaders affect employees' performance. The data viability and reliability were established to support the verdict that ethical leadership influences employee performance in a positive way within organizations. The alignment, between the framework and study results further reinforced this conclusion.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it has come to light that ethical leadership has an impact, on how organizations perform. Past studies and models of leadership demonstrate that ethical leadership influences performance. Essentially the characteristics of a leader are crucial in shaping the objective of leadership, which involves articulating the organizations mission and establishing the essential groundwork for leadership policies, strategies and procedures. Leaders' use of varied strategies and novel methods enhances their ability to empower followers and significantly boost employees' self-confidence. Categorizing ethical leadership in management involves recognizing a connection that potentially exists based on moral values leaders' responsibilities and expectations related to various leadership aspects. The interaction of these factors offers insights into incorporating considerations within the broad framework of integrated leadership. The challenges faced by leaders when implementing leadership are mainly adaptive and present an opportunity to integrate transactional and transformational elements of leadership. Today's expectations for leaders emphasize responsibility and contribute to fostering a broader environment where a leader can exert his knowledge and skills to bring forth a conducive environment.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The unique essence of leadership should express the fundamental values of an organization. Within this context, it is a proven fact that leaders in a framework like that represent an elaborated yet informed conduct ethics to showcase the foundation of ethical values. The complex challenge faced by organizations in today's society is reflected in a system where everyone seeks fulfilment. While this has resulted into a culture of display that exposes unethical conduct and events that reveals the self-centered nature of business leadership. To tackle this issue, it is apparent that chief executive officers in companies must serve as examples for business leadership within the society. Furthermore, the prevailing trend of leadership lies in the growing emphasis on nurturing the organizations capital. Prioritizing success over ego is a crucial aspect of ethical leadership recognizing their position within a widespread network of stakeholders and other constituents. Ethical leaders should focus on something than themselves specifically the aspirations and objectives of the organization. Consequently, achieving business excellence hinges on employees' success as a component within leadership. Ethical leadership becomes effective if it involves in recognizing and leveraging factors that boost employee loyalty and satisfaction using these to drive the success of the organization.

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