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The Importance of Ethical Organizational Leadership in Public Organizations: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for ethical leadership in public institutions, with a focus on creating a multidimensional scale to measure it. A review of the literature revealed significant variation in the definitions and measurement tools of ethical leadership across 120 prior studies, indicating that the dimensions of ethical leadership directly impact the overall performance of organizations. Factors influencing the adoption of ethical leadership, such as organizational culture, structure, internal policies, and training and development programs, were analyzed. Furthermore, a comprehensive scale for ethical leadership was developed by comparing existing tools and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. This research contributes to advancing the theoretical understanding of ethical leadership and provides a foundation for developing reliable measurement tools for future research and practical applications. Additionally, it addresses a knowledge gap on ethical leadership in public organizations by presenting a theoretical and practical framework for developing leadership training programs and promoting ethical behaviors within public institutions.

Research Type: Review Article

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Public Organizations.

1. Introduction

Ethical leadership is essential for the long-term success of institutions, yet the lack of a standardized measure for assessing it hinders research and practical applications. This study aims to bridge this gap in understanding ethical leadership within public institutions by developing a comprehensive framework and scale. A literature review identified the key dimensions and factors influencing ethical leadership. The proposed scale seeks to provide a valuable tool for assessing and enhancing the level of ethical leadership in organizations, contributing to building more just and transparent institutions. The primary objective of this research is to understand the role of various ethical dimensions in the practice of ethical leadership. The study aims to describe the different aspects of ethical leadership in public institutions. Public-serving organizations require effective management, as leadership significantly influences their ability to achieve good governance. Public institutions are among the most complex entities to manage due to the nature of their services, which demand highly competent and distinguished personnel to serve citizens. However, many instances indicate a shortfall in services compared to beneficiaries' expectations. According to Beauchamp and Bowie (2000), ethical behavior is defined as conduct that is deemed right or wrong and guides what can and cannot be done. Accordingly, "rules, standards, or principles that provide guidance for morally correct behavior" govern this conduct. Based on numerous recent studies on corporate management and individuals' ethical behavior within organizations, the importance of ethical behavior in institutions has become increasingly evident (Lewis, 1985). Many researchers point to a link between ethics and the 2008 global financial crisis, underscoring the need for a comprehensive review of previous research to understand the various dimensions of leadership in this context.

In business practices, several factors influence ethical behavior, including: (1) an individual's personal code of ethics; (2) the behavior of colleagues; (3) the attitudes and actions of supervisors; (4) an individual's financial situation; (5) company policies regarding ethical issues; and (6) the ethical standards of the industry (Bowie, 1986). To promote ethical behavior, institutions must address these aspects. This study aims to bridge the gap by developing an integrated approach to fostering an ethical environment within organizations through mutual respect, autonomy, ethical guidelines, and clear policies (Biyu & Lingkong, 2020). Studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between ethical leadership and productive practical practices, suggesting that leaders who prioritize ethics foster a more efficient and effective work environment (Mayer et al., 2009; Brown &

Mitchell, 2010; Loi, Lam, & Chan, 2012). Research has also found a positive correlation between ethical leadership and employees' trust in management (Jordan et al., 2013). According to previous studies (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Loi, Lam, & Chan, 2012; Steinbauer et al., 2014), employees' perceptions of ethical leadership may influence their ethical behavior. Given the critical role of loyalty in workplace ethics (Brown & Mitchell, 2010), it is expected that loyalty is related to employees' experiences with ethical leadership. However, no studies have yet explored the mechanism by which ethical leadership operates. In conclusion, the researchers propose a research objective to conduct a review of studies related to the leadership of public organizations, identify research gaps, and suggest future directions.

2. Research Problem

The research problem lies in identifying the knowledge gap in previous studies on ethical leadership. A knowledge gap is defined as unexplored or insufficiently understood areas within a specific research domain. In the context of ethical leadership, this pertains to aspects that have not been adequately studied or questions that remain unresolved. Identifying the knowledge gap is crucial as it forms the foundation for directing research efforts, helping to determine future research directions, and identifying the most significant and original topics. This contributes to expanding current knowledge in the field of ethical leadership and can help address practical challenges faced by institutions. To identify the knowledge gap in ethical leadership research, a literature review was conducted on the latest studies related to ethical leadership. The findings were analyzed to identify gaps, unanswered questions, untested hypotheses, and the effectiveness of current theories in explaining phenomena related to ethical leadership.

The following potential gaps in ethical leadership were identified:

- What are the dimensions and theoretical models of leadership in public organizations discussed in previous studies?

- What factors influence the effectiveness of leadership in public organizations?

- What are the research gaps in current studies?

- How can leadership in public organizations be developed to address future challenges?

3. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions and identified knowledge gaps, the research aims to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for ethical leadership in public institutions. This involves delving deeply into the concept of ethical leadership and identifying its various dimensions within the general context. It also seeks to pinpoint aspects that have been inadequately addressed in previous studies, propose new theoretical frameworks, or modify existing ones. Additionally, the research aims to construct a multidimensional scale for measuring ethical leadership in public institutions by developing a measurement tool grounded in a thorough literature review and designing a comprehensive instrument to capture the diverse dimensions of ethical leadership.

4. Research Significance

Research on ethical leadership holds great value at the organizational level in helping them understand the relationship between ethical leadership and performance, allowing informed decisions to be made to improve efficiency, and promoting a culture of trust and transparency, which reduces stress and conflicts. Finally, it helps organizations attract and develop ethical leaders, which enhances the organization's reputation and credibility. At the academic level, it expands knowledge about ethical leadership and identifies research gaps for further research. It also contributes to developing new theories or modifying existing theories about ethical leadership. And developing reliable measurement tools that facilitate further research in this field.

This research represents a significant positive impact on many levels, from improving the performance of public organizations to enhancing community trust and advancing academic knowledge.

5. Literature Review

Siola (1998) emphasizes that the essence of good leadership lies in ethics (King et al., 2023). Ethical leadership is therefore central to contemporary life and issues. Numerous high-profile scandals in business and politics have highlighted the profound impact of organizational leadership, particularly regarding leadership ethics. The repercussions of these scandals have been significant, leading to the collapse of some of the world's largest and most successful institutions, the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, and the destruction of individuals' savings and retirement accounts. Moreover, these scandals have eroded public

trust in executive leaders. A clearer picture has emerged of the importance of leadership ethics: institutions wield immense social power, often concentrated in the hands of their leaders (Emler & Cook, 2001). How leaders use this power affects society and the stakeholders served by the institution. Ethical leadership focuses on the character and integrity of leaders and their use of social power. Ethical leadership requires a sense of care for others, including considering the rights and needs of followers, demonstrating character, integrity, broad ethical awareness, and making decisions that prioritize the group's interests over personal or leader-centric gains (Resick et al., 2009). Ethical leaders exhibit appropriate ethical behavior and reinforce it by setting standards and holding others accountable (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Additionally, perceptions of ethical leadership play a crucial role in influencing its acceptance, promotion, or practice—or its neglect (Trevino et al., 2003).

According to Cho and Lee (2018), ethical leaders are those who act with honesty, trust, and fairness while persuading their followers. Ethical leaders play a significant role in shaping employees and entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of social, professional, and ethical development (Fahri, 2019).With businesses increasingly operating in competitive global economic environments, "the global arena will increasingly become the primary stage for ethical debates in the future" (Carroll, 2004). Consequently, leaders and their organizations are likely to face ethical leadership challenges across cultural boundaries. Employees often encounter situations requiring ethical guidance from their leaders. The literature suggests that ethical leadership provides this guidance, which is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships" (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Based on social learning theory, ethical leaders are believed to foster ethical behavior in their followers "through mutual interaction, reinforcement, and decision-making." Umphress and Bingham (2011) were the first to demonstrate that unethical behavior can be a potential negative outcome of social relationships and identity within an organization. Drawing on their findings, as well as social identity theory and social exchange theory, it can be argued that in cases where organizational norms conflict with societal norms, ethical leadership may result in behavior that contradicts societal standards (Karianne, 2016). While Resick and colleagues (Rusk et al., 2006; Kotting et al., 2007) provided some evidence that the importance of ethical leadership varies across societal cultures, little is known about the social and contextual

factors that influence ethical leadership, either by encouraging or hindering the promotion of ethical leadership within organizations.

5.1. Definition of Ethical Leadership

Ethics can be broad and encompassing, dealing with human behavior aimed at being right or good. However, ethics are undoubtedly linked to codes of conduct that vary depending on contexts, cultures, or background characteristics. Culture serves as the foundation of ethical behavior, determining what is considered ethical. Values and norms are culturally inspired and can vary significantly between societies, as can ethical priorities, which may shift across contexts (Truong & Hallinger, 2015). Ethical dimensions are social and cultural products of the society in which they are defined. Individuals' perspectives on what is right, wrong, or appropriate behavior are shaped by culture, which influences attitudes and actions (Reybold et al., 2008). Ethical considerations are not static; they continually evolve in response to changing trends (Landau & Osmo, 2003). For instance, a study of ethical values among university graduates in Jordan revealed a relationship between ethical leadership, culture, and religious influences (Jarrar, 2013). The concept of ethical leadership has been discussed in philosophical and managerial literature since the 20th century (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). However, there remains disagreement over its definition and dimensions. Despite growing interest in ethical leadership in recent years, studies aiming to define it precisely are still limited. For example, Gini (1997) suggested that ethical leadership is concerned with how leaders use their social power, including the decisions they make, actions they take, and the ways they influence others. This definition focuses heavily on the theoretical aspect of ethical leadership without giving sufficient attention to practical and applied aspects. Furthermore, it does not address the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational performance, which is a critical area in this field.

Ethical leadership can be defined as the process of guiding others toward achieving shared goals by modeling ethical values and positive behaviors, with a focus on building relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Starratt (1991) developed a framework for ethical leadership, defining it as the values and principles that guide a leader's behavior. Ethical leaders emphasize trust, respect, collaboration, and accountability in building relationships. Sergiovanni (1992) highlighted the importance of balancing group and individual interests in ethical leadership. Since then, researchers such as Burns and James Austin have expanded studies on ethical leadership and its practical applications. Bass and

Steidlmeier (1999) stressed the importance of the leader's character, values, and actions in achieving effective ethical leadership. Meanwhile, Brown and colleagues (2005) proposed a social learning approach to ethical leadership, focusing on modeling and reinforcing ethical behavior.

Although these models represent significant contributions to the field, they face some criticisms, such as an overemphasis on the individual dimensions of leadership while neglecting contextual factors. Moreover, further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these models across different cultures and organizations. Cumbo (2009) focuses on the leader in defining ethical leadership, suggesting that a leader becomes ethical when internal values guide their decision-making process, with followers benefiting as a byproduct of the leader's virtuous life. The leader's primary motivation is not to influence others but to live according to their own values and virtues. The author argues that virtues are enhanced when the leader demonstrates "imagination, empathy, understanding, and insight" (Mohahan, 2012). Recent studies on ethical leadership heavily rely on social learning theory, as seen in the work of Brown and colleagues (2005). This theory suggests that individuals learn ethical behavior through observation, imitation, and experience. Thus, ethical leaders act as role models, demonstrating desirable ethical behavior and encouraging their subordinates to adopt the same approach.

5.2 Trait Theory and Behaviors Associated with Ethical Leadership

Research indicates that employees working under ethical leadership experience higher job satisfaction and greater organizational commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Wu, 2012; Colquitt et al., 2001). Similarly, studies by Kim and Brymer (2011) and Ofori (2009) suggest that job satisfaction resulting from ethical leadership enhances organizational citizenship behavior and fosters ethical decision-making.

Criticisms of Social Learning Theory: Some studies argue that personal factors and individual moral values play a significant role in determining ethical behavior. Furthermore, the impact of ethical leadership may vary across cultures and organizations (Piccolo et al., 2010). Ethical leadership serves as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable success for institutions and businesses. It extends beyond merely achieving objectives to fostering trust-based relationships, promoting a positive work environment, and generating a positive societal impact. In this context, understanding the traits and behaviors that distinguish

ethical leaders is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of ethical leadership (Al Halbusi et al., 2024).

The following are the most relevant traits associated with ethical leaders (Al Halbusi et al., 2021; Banks et al., 2021; Dey et al., 2022; Zaim et al., 2021):

A. Integrity and Honesty: Ethical leaders serve as models of integrity and honesty in all interactions, whether with subordinates, partners, or clients.

B. Justice and Fairness: Ethical leaders strive to treat everyone fairly and equitably, avoiding discrimination or favoritism.

C. Empathy and Compassion: Ethical leaders are characterized by their ability to understand and empathize with others' emotions, fostering strong and enduring relationships.

D. Courage: Ethical leaders face challenges with courage and make difficult decisions—even if unpopular—when in the best interests of the organization and its employees.

E. Humility: Despite their leadership roles, ethical leaders remain humble and respect others' opinions.

F. Self-Awareness: Ethical leaders recognize their strengths and weaknesses and continually work on self-improvement.

J. Vision: Ethical leaders possess a clear vision for the organization's future and inspire others to achieve that vision.

These traits and behaviors highlight the pivotal role of ethical leadership in driving sustainable organizational success, fostering a culture of trust and fairness, and building resilience in the face of challenges.

5.3 Impact of Ethical Leadership on Various Performance Aspects

Ethical leadership is a critical factor in organizational success, transcending material objectives to foster a positive work environment, strengthen relationships, enhance job satisfaction, and drive productivity and innovation (Zaim et al., 2021; Saha et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated that ethical leadership significantly influences multiple aspects

of performance (Yang et al., 2023; Alabdullah & Al Qallaf, 2023; Limpo & Junaidi, 2023; Sanchez-Famoso et al., 2023; Udin, 2024; Mariyani, 2024; Al Halbusi et al., 2024):

A. Efficiency and Productivity: When employees feel valued, they become more motivated and committed, which drives them to work diligently and complete tasks efficiently. Furthermore, ethical leadership promotes open and transparent communication, enabling employees to collaborate effectively in solving problems and achieving shared goals. Additionally, the positive work environment fostered by ethical leadership reduces stress and psychological pressure, leading to improved focus and higher productivity.

B. Innovation and Creativity: Ethical leaders foster innovation by encouraging ideas and suggestions from employees and creating a supportive environment for creativity. When employees feel supported by leadership, their fear of failure diminishes, motivating them to experiment with new ideas. Moreover, ethical leadership enhances the decision-making process by actively listening to and objectively evaluating all perspectives, ensuring fair and inclusive solutions.

C. Job Satisfaction: Ethical leadership fosters strong and enduring relationships between leaders and employees, enhancing employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. Ethical leaders prioritize employee well-being and strive to achieve a balance between work and personal life. Additionally, recognizing and appreciating employees' efforts and accomplishments significantly increases their job satisfaction.

D. Organizational Loyalty: Increased employee commitment leads to greater effort and stronger loyalty in achieving the organization's goals. Loyal employees actively enhance the organization's positive reputation. Furthermore, job satisfaction and loyalty are associated with reduced absenteeism and lower turnover rates, contributing to a stable and dedicated workforce.

E. Financial Performance: Ethical leadership enhances productivity, innovation, and job satisfaction, resulting in increased revenues and improved financial performance. It also improves operational efficiency and reduces waste, leading to cost savings. Furthermore, ethical leadership helps organizations attract and retain top talent, ensuring long-term success and sustained competitive advantage.

5.4 Factors Influencing the Strength of the Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Performance in Public Institutions

The relationship between ethical leadership and performance in public institutions is complex and influenced by internal and external factors (Santiago-Tornor et al., 2024; Faliza et al., 2024; Qing et al., 2024; Lim, 2024; Asif et al., 2019; Shareef & Alan, 2019; Oc, 2018; Quakouak et al., 2020; Mostafa & Abed, 2020):

5.4.1. Internal Factors:

a) **Organizational Culture:** A strong organizational culture that supports ethical values and behaviors enhances the impact of ethical leadership.

b) **Decentralized Organizational Structure:** A decentralized structure, supported by ethical leadership, can amplify its effects by empowering employees and encouraging ethical practices.

c) **Linking Rewards to Ethical Behaviors:** Encouraging employees to adopt ethical behaviors by tying performance-based rewards to ethical conduct strengthens the relationship between leadership and performance.

d) **Commitment of Senior Leadership:** The commitment of senior leaders to ethical values and their effective implementation significantly influences the behavior of leaders at lower levels.

e) **Employee Ethical Awareness:** The ethical awareness of employees determines how they respond to ethical leadership, shaping its impact on performance.

5.4.2. External Factors:

a) **Organizational Environment:** Ethical leadership is influenced by external factors such as government regulations, competitive pressures, and social demands, which affect its ability to achieve positive outcomes.

b) **Challenging Economic Conditions:** Difficult economic conditions can pressure leaders to make decisions that conflict with ethical values, weakening the link between ethical leadership and performance.

c) **Government Policies:** Policies related to governance and transparency play a critical role in shaping the practice and effectiveness of ethical leadership in public institutions.

5.5. The role of organizational structure and internal policies in enhancing ethical leadership

Organizational structures and internal policies play an essential role in supporting ethical leadership, as they provide the foundation for ethical behavior and the necessary framework for support (Şengüllendi, et al., 2024; Yuan et al., 2023). Regarding the role of the organizational structure, the clear organizational structure defines responsibilities and powers, which reduces confusion and enhances responsible decision-making. This contributes to effective communication channels between administrative levels to facilitate the exchange of information and enhance transparency and accountability, to enable employees to make decisions within the scope of their work, which encourages Innovation, initiative and sense of responsibility. The organizational structure also helps in forming multidisciplinary work teams to enhance cooperation, integration and exchange of ideas, which supports knowledge sharing. In conclusion, the organizational structure forms the culture of the organization, which reinforces ethical values and positive behaviors. As for the role of internal policies, the presence of written policies will define ethical values and behaviors, providing a clear framework for employees. The presence of internal policies contributes to increasing the transparency of organizations in making decisions, such as reporting violations, to enhance openness and accountability. These policies help in establishing strict anti-corruption and anti-bribery policies to protect the organization from unethical behaviour. It helps protect whistleblowers to ensure the safety of employees who report violations of laws or internal policies. Finally, work to link performance evaluation with ethical behavior to encourage desired behaviors. The importance of organizational structure and policies in supporting ethical leadership is embodied through:

a) **Promoting Ethical Behavior:** Creates a work environment that supports ethical decision-making, encouraging employees to act in alignment with organizational values.

b) **Clarity in Policies:** Clearly defined policies set employee expectations, reducing ambiguity and simplifying the decision-making process.

c) **Whistleblower Protection:** Ensures a safe environment for reporting unethical behavior without fear of retaliation, fostering transparency and accountability.

d) **Fair and Transparent Work Environment:** Enhances employee trust in leadership and colleagues, strengthening collaboration and teamwork.

5.6. The role of training and development in developing ethical leaders:

Training and development contribute to improving the skills of ethical leaders, and providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to make the right decisions (Fulmer, 2005; Wright, 2006; Knight, 2022; Fulmer, 2004; Sharma et al., 2019; Dzuranin et al. al., 2013; Wong et al., 2020): Identifying the organization's core ethical values helps communicate the importance of training These values and how to apply them. Enhancing ethical awareness by identifying potential ethical issues in the workplace and dealing with them effectively. Also working on developing the necessary skills, which include critical thinking, problem solving, and ethical decision-making through topics such as ethics, negotiation, and participatory management, building self-confidence, as leaders' confidence in their ability to make difficult decisions, even if they are uncommon, enhances their self-confidence. It also encourages leaders to continuously learn to keep pace with changes in the work environment, and the trainer can also be a role model for leaders by focusing on behavioral modeling, to show how to apply ethical values in the work environment.

6. Tools Used for Constructing an Ethical Leadership Scale

Measuring ethical leadership is essential for assessing leaders' adherence to ethical values and identifying areas for improvement. Each tool has its own advantages and limitations. Commonly used tools include behavioral assessments, 360-degree feedback, and employee surveys (Treviño et al., 2000; d'Amato et al., 2024; Kalshoren et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2005; Galli et al., 2016; Shafique et al., 2020; Rathore & Singh, 2018; Starratt, 2004; Emery, 2016; Yazdanshenas & Mirzaei, 2023; Cheffi et al., 2023; Su et al., 2024).

Due to the unique nature of objectives in the public sector, the tools employed often differ from those used in the private sector (Zahari et al., 2024; Roy et al., 2024; Jensen et al., 2023; Musenze & Mayende, 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Spitale et al., 2024).

Proposed Dimensions of Ethical Leadership:

Based on the study by Resick et al. (2006), four key dimensions of ethical leadership were identified:

1. Character and Integrity: Personal qualities such as honesty and credibility that build trust with subordinates.

2. Altruism: preferring the interests of others over the leader's personal interests.

3. Group motivation: The leader's ability to motivate the team to achieve common goals.

4. Encouragement: supporting positive initiatives and developing the capabilities of subordinates.

   Table No. (1) shows a set of proposed dimensions based on a literature review that supports the work of this research:

1. The leader's commitment to honesty, impartiality and integrity in all situations.

2. Treating individuals fairly and providing equal opportunities without discrimination.

3. Show concern for others, including employees, to build strong relationships based on trust and respect.

4. The leader's commitment to serving the public interest, achieving the organization's goals, and contributing to society.

5. The leader's openness to information and sharing it with others to enhance the culture of transparency in the organization.

6. The leader demonstrates social responsibility by taking into account the social and environmental impact of his decisions and working towards sustainable development.

Table (1) Questionnaire to Measure Ethical Organizational Leadership

Variable	Dimension	Focus	Paragraphs
Ethical leadership	Integrity and honesty	Commitment to Truth	Does the leader always tell the truth, even when it is uncomfortable? Does he or she avoid misleading or deceiving?
		Transparency	Does the leader share information openly and transparently with his or her team? Does he or she

			answer questions honestly and clearly?
		Credibility	Do employees trust the leader's promises and statements? Do employees see the leader as practicing what he or she preaches?
		Impartiality	Does the leader make decisions based on facts and evidence, without being influenced by personal opinions or relationships?
		Commitment to Ethical Values	Does the leader adhere to a set of core ethical values, such as respect, fairness, and responsibility?
	Justice and fairness	Equal Treatment	Does the leader treat all employees fairly, regardless of their gender, race, or religion?
		Equal Opportunity	Does the leader provide equal opportunities for everyone to develop and grow professionally?
		Procedural Justice	Do employees feel they are treated fairly in decisions that affect them?
		Non-Discrimination	Does the leader avoid any form of discrimination, whether gender, race, or religion?
		Distributive Justice	Are resources and rewards distributed fairly among employees?
		Focus on employee well-being	Does the leader care about the health and happiness of employees? Does he create a positive and supportive work environment?
		Building relationships	Does the leader build strong relationships based on trust and respect with his employees?
		Empathy	Does the leader understand the feelings and needs of others? Does he empathize with them in times of

			distress?
	Concern for others	Encouragement and support	Does the leader encourage his employees and provide them with the necessary support to achieve their goals?
		Appreciation and recognition	Does the leader recognize his employees' achievements and appreciate their contributions?
	Public Services	Public Interest	Does the leader put the interests of the organization and society at large first?
		Social Responsibility	Does the leader encourage participation in community activities?
		Commitment to Laws and Customs	Does the leader abide by the laws and customs of the community?
		Achieving Strategic Goals	Does the leader contribute to the achievement of the organization's strategic goals?
		Customer Service	Does the leader focus on meeting customer needs and providing the best possible service?
	Transparency	Open information	Does the leader share information openly and transparently with his team?
		Clarity in communication	Does the leader use clear and direct language in communicating with others?
		Avoid secrecy	Does the leader avoid hiding important information from employees?
		Build trust	Does the leader contribute to building a culture of trust and transparency in the organization?

		Listen to different opinions	Does the leader listen to and take into account the different opinions of employees in making decisions?
	Social Responsibility	Sustainability	Does the leader strive to achieve sustainable development in the organization?
		Environmental Conservation	Does the leader commit to taking actions to preserve the environment?
		Social Responsibility	Does the leader encourage participation in community activities?
		Business Ethics	Does the leader commit to ethical practices?
		Positive Impact	Does the leader seek to positively impact society as a whole?

7. Possible areas of use of the scale:

The development of a new scale opens up broad horizons for its research and applied applications. Believing in the importance of this scale, researchers have studied the feasibility of using it in various fields, and have presented a set of promising proposals:

A. The Ethical Leadership Evaluation Scale assesses the level of ethical leadership among organizational leaders.

B. The scale can identify the strengths and weaknesses of leaders' ethical leadership, helping them self-reflect and improve.

C. The results of the scale can be used to develop training programs aimed at improving ethical leadership.

D. The scale is used to study the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational performance in scientific research.

E. The framework helps organizations evaluate and improve ethical leadership.

8. Ethical Leadership and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior

Integrity, accountability, consistency, adherence to principles, recognition of ethical behavior, and demonstrating care for others are fundamental traits of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011). According to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, ethical leaders influence their followers through strategies such as reciprocal communication, ethical incentives, and sanctions (Brown et al., 2005). To foster ethical behavior, ethical leaders employ reward systems and convey clear messages about expected actions. Additionally, ethical leaders act as role models for their followers, who tend to emulate and identify with them (Brown et al., 2005). The social learning hypothesis posits that followers are less likely to engage in disruptive social behaviors when their leader exemplifies ethical conduct (Karianne, 2016: 3). Several studies have demonstrated that ethical leadership is positively associated with various pro-organizational behaviors, such as helping others (Kalshoven et al., 2013), which can be considered ethical actions (Ehrichsberg et al., 2013). Ethical leadership is also negatively associated with followers' unethical behaviors, such as workplace deviance or counterproductive actions. However, instances of unethical follower behavior can sometimes harm the organization, raising the question of how ethical leadership affects actions that are unethical but beneficial to the organization. If ethical leadership encourages followers to act more ethically, it should reduce followers' support for actions that are socially harmful, even if they benefit the organization (Karianne, 2016). According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), Miao et al. (2012) found that high levels of ethical leadership are negatively correlated with unethical pro-organizational behavior. This theory suggests that ethical leaders model moral behavior, which followers observe and imitate. Furthermore, followers learn ethical behavior by observing how ethical leaders reward other followers for their ethical actions (Brown et al., 2005).

Tynbrunsel and Smith-Crow (2008) argue that while ethical leadership enhances followers' moral awareness through social learning, this increase in knowledge does not always translate into better ethical behavior by followers. In fact, Stouten et al. (2013) suggest and demonstrate that followers may feel diminished by ethical leaders: when leaders act in an extremely ethical manner, employees may feel as though they are not (or are perceived as not being) ethical enough. This feeling is likely to translate into compliant actions due to the principle of behavioral affirmation (Snyder & Swann, 1978). As a result, we see that social learning theory provides a strong justification for why and how ethical

leadership raises followers' moral awareness, but it does not offer a sufficient explanation for why and how ethical leadership is associated with followers' ethical behavior.

According to Brown et al. (2005), "demonstrating appropriate behavior in accordance with standards through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, reinforcing this behavior with followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" are all components related to the concept of ethical leadership. This definition contains two important aspects: demonstrating ethical behavior and promoting ethical behavior. The first part of the definition, where the leader embodies ethical behavior, indicates that ethical behavior goes beyond mere presentation; it involves sharing and disseminating attitudes, values, and actions that focus on ethical considerations and principles (Kalyar et al., 2020). By observing and experiencing the same behavior from their leaders, this action allows individuals to develop their cognitive abilities and influence their behavior and actions in an ethical manner. The second part of the ethical behavior concept, as emphasized by Brown et al. (2005), focuses on the proactive role of leaders in encouraging ethical behavior among their followers, in addition to leading by example.

Furthermore, "normatively appropriate behaviors" refer to generally accepted and considered ways of performing a task or engaging in an activity. If a leader engages in actions deemed inappropriate or unethical, these actions will be considered "unethical," potentially placing the leader in challenging situations or, at the very least, causing dissatisfaction among individuals within or outside the organization. Consequently, actions considered good are those that a leader are encouraged to perform and communicate to their followers—not only through their actions but also through other means such as directives, decisions, and communication channels. Ensuring ethical leadership behavior provides followers with opportunities for enthusiasm, motivation, creativity, and innovation, ultimately improving the performance of followers (Duan et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2013). Hence, leaders' identity, morale, followers' perception of them, decision-making ability, and capacity for innovation intersect with ethics and values, as public service plays a fundamental role in managing complexity and interconnectedness (Li et al., 2017). Ethical leadership, unlike other leadership styles, is characterized by its focus on ethical behaviors, individual principles, and fostering these behaviors among followers. Ethical leadership is also assumed to be closely linked to employees' creativity through cognitive and motivational aspects (Qian et al., 2017). These focus on employees' tendencies to recognize the significance of their work and generate ideas when the leader emphasizes the potential

importance of their tasks to other employees, the team, and/or organizational goals (Ma et al., 2013; Qu et al., 2017). Leaders who make balanced decisions and demonstrate greater commitment to the organization are likely to influence followers' psychological safety, encouraging them to voice creative ideas (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Ethical behaviors, fair treatment, and ethical decision-making energize followers, encouraging them to engage in creative activities that enhance the significance and impact of their contributions (Kirrane et al., 2017). Ethical leaders foster transparent and strong relationships through open communication, building trust in their leadership and enabling employees to express their ideas and concerns confidently (Kalyar et al., 2020). Furthermore, ethical leaders demonstrate concern for others (e.g., their performance, achievements, and the significance of their work), ensuring that employees are treated with respect and dignity. They provide opportunities for employees to acquire new knowledge and relevant experiences aligned with their roles and the organization's goals. Employees enjoy the freedom to gain and share knowledge, make independent decisions, and generate and implement new ideas, opening new avenues for creativity (Duan et al., 2018). Thus, ethical leaders significantly enhance creativity among employees.

9. Conclusions

This study developed a comprehensive theoretical framework for ethical leadership in public organizations, identifying key dimensions and their interrelations. A multidimensional scale was created to measure ethical leadership, encompassing its various aspects. This scale can serve as a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners to evaluate ethical leadership, particularly in the public sector.

Ethical leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational performance by improving employee satisfaction, boosting productivity, fostering innovation, and building a positive work culture. Factors influencing the adoption of ethical leadership in public organizations include organizational culture, structure, policies, and development programs. A comparison between the newly developed scale and existing measures revealed strengths and weaknesses, which reinforced the validity and effectiveness of the new scale.

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to the field of ethical leadership. It provides a foundation for designing leadership training programs, creating policies that encourage ethical behavior, and improving the performance of public organizations. This, in

turn, contributes to building organizations that are more equitable, transparent, and effective.

Practical Applications:

The study provides practical recommendations for organizations to enhance ethical leadership, including:

- **Establishing Specialized Training Programs:** Develop targeted training initiatives to build and strengthen ethical leadership competencies.

- **Designing Reward Systems to Encourage Ethical Behavior:** Implement reward structures that recognize and promote ethical practices within the organization.

- **Building a Strong Organizational Culture Grounded in Ethical Values:** Foster an environment where ethical principles are embedded in the organizational culture, guiding behaviors and decision-making processes.

Additionally, the research explores the potential implications of applying these findings at the public policy level, emphasizing the broader impact of ethical leadership on governance and societal trust.

Limitations:

The study is limited to focusing on public organizations, necessitating further research to generalize the findings across all public organizations.

Future Research Directions:

This study paves the way for future research in several areas, including:

- **Exploring the Impact of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Innovation:** Investigate how ethical leadership influences the development of innovative practices within organizations.

- **Developing More Complex Models:** Create advanced models that establish connections between ethical leadership and contextual factors.

- **Applying the Developed Scale in Comparative Studies:** Use the newly developed scale in cross-cultural and cross-sector comparative studies to understand its applicability and

robustness in different contexts.

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