



Ethical Leadership: Being Transparent in Differing Belief Systems

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Ethical leadership (EL) "motives, values, and behaviors (e.g., honesty, trustworthy, altruistic, fairness)" (Yukl and Gardner, 2020, p. 231) lay the foundation for transparent communication, leading to a work environment conducive to a platform for dialogue between differing opinions. Organizational culture mirrors the expectations and values demonstrated by leaders who design the mission, objectives, and vision, but followers must meet these parameters to execute their tasks. "Being self-aware, transparent and vulnerable" (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019, p. 4) are constructs that form the principled leadership scale (PLS) that lends to the leader comprehending their interaction with their followers having an impact and demonstrating humility, exhibiting inner moral character. Downe et al. (2016) asserted that good governance within government organizations demonstrates a standard for ethical conduct when managers at all levels and politicians exemplify value-based attributes, which can gain public trust. Examining interaction and reaction among cohorts, experiencing comradery within a structured context, their discussion of workplace challenges, environmental work culture, and relational differences in beliefs, values, and professional roles recognized that it shaped their workplace culture. Baker and Power's (2018) emphasis on Spiritual Capital (SC) empowers leaders to exert their beliefs and faith in the public realm bringing a stance before those who have different belief systems to recognize that Kingdom Principles have operational validity correlated to value-based doctrine. Clarity of meaning is imperative to effective communication (Konopaske et al., 2018) and accurate interpretation. The follower's mindset is influenced and changed from self-serving to the ethical leader's illustration of what they observe and experience.

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The businessman's position as a leader within his organization and representing ethical and moral consciousness to the community will garner a reputation of trustworthiness and humility that will glorify GOD. For example, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Peter submitted a question "to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (I Peter 1:1) of submission, living before Father

GOD, suffering, serving and resisting evil. The context of representing the principles of the Kingdom of GOD in behavior, spoken Word of GOD, and deed apply now as then. Therefore, the same demonstration of ethical values and behavior asked by Peter to the pilgrims is the same context of the businessman or politician representing Christ to their community to spark a perpetual principled change in their sphere of influence.

Ethical leadership (EL) "motives, values, and behaviors (e.g., honesty, trustworthy, altruistic, fairness)" (Yukl and Gardner, 2020, p. 231) lay the foundation for transparent communication that leads to a work environment conducive to a platform for dialogue between differing opinions. The contention between opposing belief systems, whether in business, government, or religious organizations, stems from mistrust, and not being accepted or listened to by the other party. Therefore, this presentation aims to identify and bring to the forefront the critical factors between those who represent opposing social topics with the fundamental doctrine of GODLY principles. Ethical and cultural diversity has brought societal ideas, concepts, and beliefs to the limelight.

By identifying the underlying factors exposed in a literature review, the societal change of thought from traditional to more liberal behaviors can be pinpointed, and the deviation tracked. According to McDaniel (2016), religious belief helps individuals become aware of the "fundamental problems of human existence" and "prescribes the process of their solution" (p. 289). Downe et al. (2016) emphasized that the social demographic between races influences the disparity in perception in attitude, traditional experiences, "self-expressed liberalism and democratic identification" (p. 288). Furthermore, researcher Glock (1972) argued that purposive beliefs, such as images of God, are vital contributors to social organization and provide the "maintenance of social solidarity and stability" (McDaniel, 2016, p. 289).

Organizational culture mirrors the expectation and values demonstrated by its leaders. Although the executive leadership designs the mission, objectives, and vision, the execution of the tasks to meet these parameters is influenced by hierarchical management. Konopaske et al. (2018) recognized the underlying theoretical influencers of "shared expectations, attitudes in individuals, groups and organizational processes" (p. 35). Nonetheless, the organizational climate bolsters the supportive aspect of employee-employer interaction, giving credence to morale within the organization and whether contention is evident. The belief systems govern the agreement to participate in the collective mentality of interest groups that no longer operate covertly, thereby fully expressing their position in the marketplace and the political arena. Therefore, the believer in Christian principles, values, and behavior that demonstrates Christ's way of reaching people in confusing times must employ the virtue of LOVE which covers a multitude of humanity's shortcomings (I Peter 4:8).

Literature Review

Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) sought to discover, using a new methodology, a leadership scale, "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)" (p. 3), based upon the integration of valued-based behaviors that is instinctive in leadership theories having authentic, transformational, servant, and ethical characteristics. The research design consisted of data collected from the MLQ scale representing three subscales (58 items used): (1) Idealized Influence Behaviors, (2) Intellectual Stimulation, and (3) Individualized Consideration using four-dimensional constructs (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019). These scales are a conglomerate of universal inner moral character attributes such as Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019), p. 2; Kinnear et al. (2000); Schwartz (2005): (1) responsibility to a greater good; (2) trustworthiness; (3) appreciation for others, self, environment, and humanity; (4) self-discipline; (5) fairness; (6) caring; and (7) social citizenship, compiled within the four-dimensional constructs considered as "Trustworthiness, Empowerment, Self-Mastery, and Accountability," (p. 5) by answering questions through the Likert scale having the standard range of five-points between 5=strongly agree, down to 1=strongly disagree. Therefore, the amalgamation of these constructs formed the principled leadership scale (PLS) as "being self-aware, transparent and vulnerable" (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019, p. 4) lends to the leader comprehending that their interaction with their followers has an impact and humility leads to the characteristics of inner moral character.

Hendrikz and Engelbrecht's (2019) motivation stemmed from asking the following hypothetical questions: (1) What is the frame of reference for an example of morality?; (2) What defines the standard of universal morality?; and (3) How is universal morality a necessary standard? The research method used to discover the validity of the questions by using a quantitative research design gathered data through paper, and electronic methods (questionnaire) using a "purposive, non-probability sampling" (p. 5) of three hundred (300) completed data sets. The industry spectrum of companies included "consulting services, software development, construction, retail, wineries, and public service" (p. 5). Testing the fifty-eight (58) items, confirmatory and exploratory bi-factor findings were conducted within the structural equation modeling construct, reflecting a "strong factor measurement for general principled leadership" (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019, p. 8). Principled leaders demonstrate behaviors that are aligned to the inner moral attributes, whether through ethics training or belief systems; human resources that have an ethical framework within their workforce culture consider "top management holding the best caliber as role models of principled behaviors influence subordinates" while building trust and enhance effectiveness within the organization. Therefore, effective, transparent communication becomes the foundation on which bilateral interaction builds healthy relationships are identified using the Principled Leadership Scale (PLS).

Results anticipate a strong correlation between PLS factors measuring leadership, "trustworthiness, empowerment, self-mastery, and accountability" (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019, p. 9), whose effect translates through the hierarchy of the organization providing an effective measurement tool to be used for further research. Moreover, the assessment tool is recommended for candidates in the initial stages of employment in the hiring process.

Downe et al. (2016) asserted good governance within government organizations demonstrates a standard for ethical conduct when managers at all levels and politicians exemplify value-based attributes, which can gain public trust. Therefore, the interest of Downe et al. (2016) sought to measure the correlation between leaders and "systems of ethics regulation" that can create a standard where the cause and effect result in an evident change in behavior within the workplace. The best sequence was determined through empirical research between value-based and compliance-based strategies that exposed and cultivated ethical behavior within the organizational culture (Downe et al., 2016). The qualitative approach to measuring the effectiveness of implementing procedures that develop ethical behavioral parameters for a governmental workforce becomes the purpose of this research.

The research questions examined by Downe et al. (2016, p. 899): (1) How do the leader's activities demonstrate alignment with ethics regulations that are "more formally codified provisions promoting good behavior?"; (2) How can leaders extend influence into their workforce demeanor through ethic codes?; and (3) How can leaders integrate "formal regulatory processes with social learning?" (p. 900). Ethics regulations (codes) are used to demonstrate, within the workplace, a standard of behavior that exemplifies acceptable interaction between co-workers within an organization's hierarchical framework, and usually, "senior managers are responsible for designing and implementing ethic codes. The research resolves that empirical studies show that the ethics codes affecting the workplace culture environment are limited. Nevertheless, a meta-analysis measuring ethical leadership (EL) results effectively detailed the "transactional dimensions of moral management" (Downe et al., 2016, p. 900) into categories defining management as having an active, passive, or laissez-faire technique in demonstrating ethical attributes within their workforce. The senior management position creates a unified organizational climate through strategically implementing ethical policies across multiple levels and departments (Downe et al., 2016).

In the case study of engaging leaders and followers at all levels of government within the British local and political spheres, 353 participants, including local councils ranging from departments supported by grants, business, or taxation revenue, evaluated to identify patterns of ethical or non-ethical attitudes within their administration (Downe et al., 2016) collected data from 2008 and 2010 from semi-structured interviews with essential leadership comprised councils, party groups, officers, executives, chairs, and non-executive counselors. Nine local councils over two specific time frames, a total of 129, were interviewed, "the transcripts were recorded and transcribed" of the 18

conducted via telephone. Thematic coding from an analytical framework provided continuity across the scope of the case studies focusing on causal mechanisms for more profound assessments of broader consistent patterns that shaped standard ethical policies.

Findings suggested that the ethical conduct exemplified by leaders within the governmental administration did shape their followers' perspectives, and they "accepted responsibility for their conduct" (Downe et al., 2016, p. 902). However, the complexity in which leaders sought to achieve their results found in the designed ethics policies and procedures created cause and effect congruency occurred through the following (Downe et al., 2016): (1) resolution of complaints before reaching the formal reprimand stage; (2) liberty to discuss potential ethical risk; (3) one-on-one discussion with those at risk of crossing the proverbial ethics line; (4) managers and politicians collaborated on maintaining an organizational culture of ethical behavior; (5) bold initiative for the workforce to engage in ethical training. Therefore, compelling, transparent communication alleviated potential issues presented to compliance officials because of the workforce culture's willingness to confront differences in an amenable manner. Although further research is suggested to test additional value-based principles, the researchers were confident that the PLS assessment tool authenticated "discriminate and convergent validity" regarding the value-based attributes in the current research.

Baker and Power (2018) analyzed the findings of the grounded theoretical approach (GTA) in their research, determining the cause and effect of structured religious beliefs and values that affected worldviews and leadership through Spiritual Capital (SC) in the workplace. The focus of the study, conducted by the Knowledge Transfer program, supported by Good Works (a charity supporting ethical practices in the work environment), encapsulates the definition of SC as the motivational impetus of belief and faith, empowering the person's action and viewpoint in the public realm (Baker and Power, 2018). The research involved Roman Catholic employees and managers in a retreat in understanding and navigating the diverse worldly viewpoints and motivations that collide with religious beliefs and values (e.g., Belief-Values-Worldviews) (BVW@Work) in work environments, thereby discovering a correlation between the believer and non-believer stance regarding workplace culture. Baker and Power (2018) implemented a mixed-method technique through GTA and a data-driven approach to discover the effect of "BVW@Work, ethical, relational, and leadership practices" (p. 487) depicted in consultancy and research companies, both public and private, using a multi-stranded methodology based on qualitative data and quantitative designed surveys. The context of the study emphasized the system of BVW@Work reflecting the synergy between (Baker and Power, 2018, p. 475): (1) comparing the workplace environment (Physicality) and theological belief engaged in the workplace (Externality); (2) workplace interaction concerning BVW (Affect); (3) the interaction when negotiating through external situations and the praxis of BVW when responding

to others; and (4) effective strategies of leadership and change management responses to BVW that is perceived as a challenge to a global and diverse work environment. Baker and Power (2018) consider the BVW@Work system's context as a means to bring a "consistent template" (p. 475) of awareness that creates a line of communication between opposing beliefs within the workplace.

The four day retreat evaluated the interaction of participants in five sessions concentrating on the elements of the BVW as "listening, interaction, challenge, discernment, and reflection" (Baker and Power, 2018, p. 478). Furthermore, the data collected from the interview process consisted of initial consultation to start the process before the retreat, reflection discovery during the retreat, and a follow-up observation to discuss the implementation of learned experiences. The examination of interaction and reaction among cohorts, as they are experiencing the comradery within the structured context, their discussion of workplace challenges, environmental work culture, and relational differences in beliefs, values, and professional roles, recognized that it shaped their workplace culture. The study results deemed a strong correlation between BVW and the public workplace as an emerging theoretical groundwork for understanding the hidden influence of EL attributes, role modeling, and the formation of relational networks despite challenging differences. The suggestion of further research stems from gaining additional insight into the influential aspects of belief, value, and workplace (BVW) attributes extended into other organizational spheres of influence which can detect the potential for a conclusive contribution of positive transformative societal change within the workplace culture.

Ethical Leadership – Transparent Attributes of the Kingdom of GOD

The intentional belief system of those leaders who practice (1) ethical behaviors, (2) transparent conversations, (3) listen to the voice of their followers and cohorts, and (4) seek to demonstrate Godly attributes when contention arises in their workplaces, are found in the "Kingdom Principles of Righteousness, Peace, Joy, and the Fruit of The HOLY SPIRIT is LOVE" (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22-23). Prescribing moral conduct when confronted with challenging behaviors, maintaining mutual goodwill, and leaders determined to speak comfort to their followers describe the demeanor of a confident, ethical leader. The research examples are framed as follows: (1) Hendrikz and Engelbrecht's (2019) use of the membership leadership questionnaire (MLQ) scale showing the correlation between inner moral attributes and transparent communication measured by principled leadership scale (PLS) factors; (2) Downe et al.'s (2016) study of value-based versus compliance-based strategies where the leader's influence circumvents the reporting or action of unethical behavior that would fail compliance expectations; and (3) Baker and Power's (2018) emphasis of Spiritual Capital (SC) empowering the leader to exert their beliefs and faith in the public realm brings a stance before those who have different belief systems to recognize that Kingdom Principles have operational validity correlated to value-based doctrine.

Societal Change - Entitlement Mindsets and Ethical Leadership Exchanged

Workplace Engagement Theory (WPET) suggests an inverse correlation between employees' entitlement mindset (EEM) and ethical leadership (EL), stating that when EEM is high, then EL is low in asserting the adverse effects on workplace engagement and job performance. Unique or exclusive consideration for not fulfilling job expectations or employment requirements leads to a dysfunctional perception of reward, corporate culture deviance, "political behavior, and co-worker" (Joplin et al., 2021, p. 813; Yam et al., 2017; Harvey and Harris, 2010) exploitation. Furthermore, counterproductive job performance emerges when tension, conflict, and frustration occur when special treatment is not rewarded to the employee, thereby resulting in lower motivation and morale. Joplin et al.'s (2021) study identified the "why" behind employees' expectation of unearned privileges, how strong ethical leadership impacts the entitled mindset of the employee, and pinpoint correction that positively influences their behavior.

Leaders' value-based behaviors influence followers to make quality decisions that enhance work environments, mutual cohesiveness among workers and establish reciprocal trust between leader and follower. Transparent communication between leaders and followers is essential to building trust and integrity within the work environment as candid conversations open to a platform that discusses genuine concerns that affect the exchange of quality ideas that could bring forth prompt resolutions and the organization's financial stability. Expectations from a workforce with an entitlement mindset necessitate changing the employer-employee relational posture. Open communication clarifies job performance objectives, effective listening to the employee's concerns, and leaders establish parameters against unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviors (Joplin, 2021, p. 814), creating a foundation for mutual job satisfaction and higher morale in the workplace. Listening gives a sense of each party being heard, respected, meaningfulness, equity, and trust that the employer has invested in the employees' well-being. Joplin et al.'s (2021) research examined the inverse correlation between employee entitlement and the ethical leadership's lack of influence (low) to affect the employees' behavior, discovering the entitled mindset's reasoning. Therefore, emphasizing the organization's leadership to demonstrate confidence in value-based attributes through training becomes a change agent to entitlement behaviors.

Opposing Perspectives: Differing Beliefs and Backgrounds

McDaniel's (2016) study of religious beliefs through the lens of political science drew on a connotation of ideology found in the prosperity message of the Gospels as if it is all-encompassing of the tenant of the entire Kingdom of GOD without giving context to the value-based attributes that establish the relational connection between GOD and the well-being of humanity. Clarity of meaning is imperative to effective communication (Konopaske et al., 2018) and accurate interpretation. The entitlement mentality that

McDaniel (2018) expressed through the analysis of the "prosperity gospel or social gospel" (p. 288) concluded that the receipt of blessings and favor by faith (good things) should be scorned. However, GOD asks the question regarding good things, "How much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Mat 7:11). Exploring the correlation between the "social and prosperity gospel support and political behavioral ramifications" (McDaniel, 2018, p. 288) causes an imbalance in the research conclusions.

McDaniel's (2018) research design was based upon a study conducted in 2012 from Religious Worldview and a survey from Baylor Religion Survey and Pew Form - 2006 Survey of Pentecostals, stating the measurement was inadequate for the context of religious ideologies under investigation and social and prosperity gospel measurements. The ethnos and cultural diversity of the participants ranged from "599 white and 547 black with a 60% completion rate" (McDaniel, 2018, p. 293). Given its specific time, the ideologies and concepts measurements portrayed in the survey, the researcher concluded by thorough factor analysis and a two-tailed test that traditional religious symbolism supports belief systems and shows differences between ethnic groups based on race, income, and denominations. Furthermore, the political aspect of the results correlates religious ideologies with political attitudes, social issues, and conservative perspectives.

Conclusion

Societal, cultural, and religious ideologies coupled with political attitudes create viewpoints in which researcher biases sometimes infiltrate empirical and theological studies. The vantage point of unbiased research recognizes a phenomenon and seeks to validate the posed research question through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. The literature review in this paper examined the context of Ethical Leadership from a transparent communication value basis, having a consciously moral perspective where the leader's strength in GODLY principles influences the followers' behavior with the employee's well-being in mind.

The Kingdom of God introduces transparent communication in Jesus beginning His earthly ministry through the leading of the Holy Spirit by Glorifying God in humility (Mat 4:1-11; 6:33; Mar 1:14; Joh 5:19). The common ground to build foundational communication that bridges gaps that have caused infractions of misconceptions, Jesus Christ exemplifies seeking reconciliation in the bond of peace, love, and joy in the Holy Spirit shall portray to others that resolution comes with a willing heart (2 Co 5:18; Jud 1:21). Therefore, ethical leaders practicing the concepts of value-based characteristics with their followers, giving them direction through modeling transparent communication, a sense of care for their well-being, validates quality decision-making with integrity. The follower's mindset is influenced and changed from operating in a self-serving manner and transforming into the ethical leader's image they observe and experience.

About the Author

Gladys M Monroe is a third-year Ph.D. student at Regent University, studying organizational leadership with a focus on ecclesial studies. As a professional tax accountant, financial analyst and realtor for over 18 years, she has assisted sellers, and buyers, in obtaining real estate investments. Furthermore, as an ordained minister participating in evangelistic outreaches, her pursuit of integrating ministry and organizational leadership principles' creates the opportunity to assist non-profit organizations in achieving fiscal responsibility as a consultant.

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