

Lecturers' Perception of Deans' Ethical Leadership and its Impact on Lecturers' Engagement at Public Universities in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This study found out lecturers' perception of deans' ethical leadership and its relationship with lecturers' engagement at public universities in Afghanistan. The study used a quantitative method and correlational research design. The data was collected from 152 respondents from ten public universities through an electronic questionnaire. The study used descriptive statistics to obtain the deans' ethical leadership perception and inferential statistics to determine the correlation between the variables. The result of the study showed that deans of the faculties at public universities in Afghanistan are moderate ethical leaders, and has a significant relationship with instructors' emotional engagement and social engagement (colleagues) and no significant relationship with cognitive engagement and social engagement (students).

Keywords- Lecturers' Engagement, PLIS, Ethical Leadership, Public Universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a process whereby a leader influences followers to reach a shared goal. Likewise, a leader must have the power to impact the lives of those being led. Without proper leadership, the organization is unable to achieve a common goal. Leadership is the most crucial element for work engagement and practical creativity due to creating a robust work environment where subordinates feel self-satisfied and motivated (Asif et al., 2019; George, 2007; Strom et al., 2014).

The most popular approaches to leadership include situational and behavioral theories. These theories are studied in terms of a particular situation and behavior (Sabir, 2020). Generally, leadership is the power of a person to influence other people. Concerning ethics, leadership is defined to determine what is good and evil or what is right and wrong for achieving shared goals (Bolat and Seymen, 2003; Sabir, 2020). This definition implies that ethical leadership is mostly concerning making wise decisions because right and wrong or good and bad are considered when individuals

tend to take action or make a decision. Bennis (2007) opined that unethical leadership is one of the causes that make humanity face threats. Therefore, ethics are the precondition for a human's life and social engagement (Vadastreanu et al., 2015).

Previous studies have investigated various factors that impact teachers' or lecturers' engagement. In recent years, ethical leadership has hooked the attention of many researchers because many empirical studies proved that this type of leadership yields employees' positive outcomes such as higher satisfaction and commitment, willingness to report problems to supervisors, more significant job dedication, more organizational citizenship behaviors, and improved performance (Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2011).

In an organization, employee's work engagement is pivotal for the organization's survival, and organizational culture is influenced by ethical and unethical behavior (Mendonca and Kanungo, 2007). Individuals are more likely to exert extra efforts, to be

innovative and tactical if they are more engaged in their work (Adnan et al., 2020; Orth and Volmer, 2017).

Moreover, Ethical leadership is recently considered a prominent approach in which a leadership style is defined under the shadow of ethics (Ko et al., 2018). Ethical leadership encompasses a vast domain: altruism, integrity, distributing rewards fairly, honesty in dealing, being supportive, open and clear communication, considering ethical values, and setting transparent and ethical standards (Hassan et al., 2013).

Problem statement

Teaching is an essential job in today's society, but many teachers feel extreme stress, and some suffer from depression (Kidger et al., 2016; Titheradge et al., 2019). As Afghanistan has been inflicted in the war for nearly four decades, educational sectors have been badly impacted. There are several reasons that teachers in Afghanistan feel disappointed. First, the teachers' weak financial situation makes teachers disappointed and think about a secondary job. Afghan teachers are paid a meager amount of salary as compared to neighboring countries. Ethical leadership has been widely studied in the last couple of decades. There is a dearth in the literature discussing how the ethical leadership of deans of the faculties impacts instructors' engagement, particularly in a war-torn country like Afghanistan. However, some studies address similar issues in business organizations and primary education institutions. The context and climate of colleges and universities differ from that of primary schools. For instance, in school, students rely on their parents and teachers to set tasks and stick them to their responsibility while students are mostly independent and prioritize their tasks without the intervention of their parents or teachers at universities. Besides, in the higher education context, the students are accountable for the consequences of their decisions. On the other side, pupils in a school are controlled and corrected if their behaviors and attitude are not consistent. Therefore, the study is crucial to determine the relationship between ethical leadership and the instructor's work engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study aims to determine the relationship between perceiving ethical leadership of deans and instructors' engagement at public universities in Afghanistan. Ethical leadership centers on respect, services, justice, honesty, and community. As these characteristics are not measured by the Ethical Leadership Scale-ELS explicitly, this study utilized the Perceived Leadership Integrity Scale (PLIS) developed by Craig and Gustafson (1998) to measure the extent of ethical behavior of deans at public universities in Afghanistan. The study also utilized Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen's (2013) engagement theory. They conceptualized engagement theory in four constructs, namely: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement with colleagues, and social engagement with students.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is comprised of Craig and Gustafson (1998) ethical leadership model and work engagement theory (Klassen, Yerdelen & Durksen, 2013).

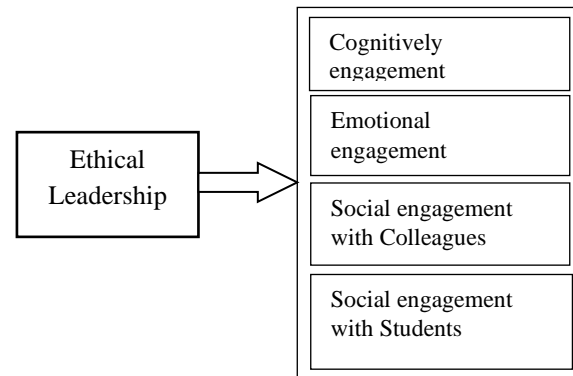


Figure1: Conceptual Framework

Research Questions

The following questions guide the current study:

1. What is the lecturers' perception of deans' ethical leadership at public universities in Afghanistan?
2. What is the relationship between ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement?

Research Objectives

This study aimed to obtain the following two research objectives:

1. To find out the lecturers' perception of deans' ethical leadership at public universities in Afghanistan?
2. To find out the relationship between ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the lecturers' perception of deans' ethical leadership, and the correlation between the perceived ethical leadership of deans and the individual dimension of instructor's engagement, which are: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement (students), social engagement (colleague). The study has been conducted in public universities in Afghanistan. The study used the perceived leadership integrity scale (PLIS) developed by (Craig & Gustafson, 1998), and the teachers' engagement scale was developed by (Klassen & Tracy., 2013). The data has been collected from full-time lecturers who are currently employees in Afghanistan public universities.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative research method and correlational research design. The quantitative paradigm of research is more generalizable as compared to the qualitative research method. The study also used an electronic questionnaire to collect data from lecturers

at Afghanistan public universities. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections. In the first section, the participant responded to the items to report their gender, age, teaching experience, and the host institution. The second section contained 30 items that asked the participants' perception of their respected deans' ethical leadership behavior. The last section has 16 items that measured instructors' engagement through cognitive engagement items), emotional engagement (4 items), social engagement with students, and social engagement with colleagues. Each of the engagement constructs has four items. Furthermore, both of the last two sections have four points Likert's type items. The perception instrument is ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (well), while the engagement instrument ranged from 1 (strongly disagree to 4 (strongly agree). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, researchers first found Cronbach's alpha to prove the internal consistency of the items of ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement. Cronbach's alpha of ethical leadership was (0.72), and the lecturer's engagement was 0.79. The following table showcases the value of Cranbach's alpha of the questionnaires.

Table 1: Questionnaire Reliability

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.727	30
.798	24

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Construction of the Variables

Ethical Leadership, Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Likewise, Craig and Gustafson (1998) highlighted five principles of ethical leadership which are the center of this study. The five principles are respect, service, justice, honesty, and community.

Respect, ethical leaders respect their subordinates' views and give credence to their ideas, they also accept others as human beings. Likewise, Burn (1978) suggested that the leader needs to encourage the followers to become aware of their own needs, values, and purpose and help the followers to join them with the leaders' needs, purposes, and values. It also means that leaders hearken to the followers, tolerate opposing opinions, and understand the feeling of the opposite.

Service, ethical leaders spend most of their time serving others and place their subordinate's welfare at the top of their plan. Likewise, this principle is observed in the leader's behaviors such as mentoring, team building, empowerment behaviors, and organizational citizenship behavior (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996).

Justice, ethical leaders consider all the followers equally. They give equal consideration to their subordinates unless there are special circumstances. The ground of different treatments need to be specified and reasoned and must be based on moral values.

Honesty, ethical leaders must be truthful. Their action and saying need to be identical to be known as reliable. Similarly, ethical leaders do not promise what they cannot deliver (Dalla Costa 1998).

Community, ethical leaders must consider their own and followers' purposes while working for a shared goal. Likewise, ethical leaders do not impose their views and will on followers. Rather, they are seeking out the goals that are appropriate for everyone.

Lecturers' Work Engagement

Work engagement is a relationship of a worker with his or her duty, and it is conceptually different from commitment to a position or organization, different from job satisfaction, and different from continuing or giving up intentions (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). When teachers are engaged in work, they voluntarily dedicate their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources to activities related to teaching (Kahn, 1990; Klassen et al., 2012).

This study uses the (Kalshoven et al., 2013) work engagement model. They came up with four constructs through Teacher Engaged Scale (ETS) for teacher engagement: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement: students, and social engagement: colleagues. Likewise, cognitive engagement represents the extent to which a teacher devotes extra effort and attends to tasks. Emotional engagement unveils positive emotional reactions to their job or tasks. Finally, social engagement is two folds with colleagues and students. They represent to what degree teachers are connected to their colleagues and concerned with their students' welfare.

Previous studies on Ethical leadership and Work Engagement

Brown et al. (2005) opined that ethical leaders consider strengthening interpersonal relationships, taking personal action, and promoting moral conduct to their followers to display their appropriate behavior. Ethical leaders deal ethically with people in their personal and professional lives because they are hone, fair, and credible (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Likewise, ethical leadership is positively related to knowledge-sharing behavior (Tang et al., 2015). It has been proved that followers under an ethical tend to suppress a motivational propensity in expressing their views or thoughts (Avey et al., 2012; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009), helping their co-workers in accomplishing task-related goals and paying extra efforts during work (Eisenbeiss and Van Knippenberg, 2015; Kalshoven and Boon, 2012; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015). Richter et al. (2014) stated that engagement is related to continuing professional development and embodying activities that facilitate

teachers' careers. Continuing professional development is defined to enhance teachers' professional development which includes three significant undertakings: reflection, update, and collaboration (de Vries et al., 2013). As a moral supervisor, an ethical leader makes fair-minded and rational decisions, reinforces the subordinates' prosperity, and gets through expected links with the achievement of organizational goals (Asif et al., 2019; Stouten et al., 2012).

When teachers are engaged in work, they voluntarily dedicate their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources to activities related to teaching (Kahn, 1990; Klassen et al., 2012). Likewise, (Klassen et al., 2013) theorized teacher engagement into four dimensions. Cognitive engagement represents the extent to which a teacher devotes extra effort and attends to tasks. Emotional engagement unveils positive emotional reactions to their job or tasks. Finally, social engagement is two folds with colleagues and students. They represent to what degree teachers are connected to their colleagues and are concerned with their students' welfare.

Agha. Nwekpa. and Eze (2017) conducted a correlational study to examine the impact of ethical leadership on employee commitment. The researcher applied the social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1977) for assessing ethical leadership. His study suggested that integrity has a strong negative and significant impact on the employees' continuance commitment, while equal treatment positively impacts active commitment.

Zeng and Xu (2020) carried out a quantitative study to investigate the mediating role of organizational trust in the relationship between ethical leadership and the work engagement of young teachers and the moderating effect of supervisor-subordinate interpersonal relationships. Their study sample-sized was comprised of 204 young teachers from 15 universities in China. Their study showed that the supervisor-subordinate relationship bolsters the positive relationship between trust in the organization and

teachers' work engagement and strengthens the indirect effect of ethical leadership on young teachers' work engagement through organizational trust.

Asif et al. (2019) conducted a correlational study to determine the relationship between ethical leadership, affect commitment, work engagement, and employee creativity. The study results through confirmatory analysis and structural equation model showed that ethical leadership is positively related to affective commitment and employee creativity.

An ethical leader is both a moral person and a moral manager simultaneously. As a moral person, ethical leader manifests moral traits (e.g., trustworthy, honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness) and behaviors (e.g., openness, concern, fairness, and ethical decision-making) in their personal and professional lives (Treviño et al., 2003). However, as moral managers, they practice value-based management (e.g., setting ethical standards through communication and rewards) (Treviño et al., 2003).

IV. RESULT

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the study found out the demographic information such as teaching experience, gender and age, and the lecturers' perceptions of deans' ethical leadership.

Teaching Experience

A total of 152 respondents, including male and female, responded to the questionnaire from 10 different public universities in Afghanistan. Forty-four of the respondents who make up around 29 percent of the whole respondents had 1 to 5 years of teaching experience in their respected universities, and 108 respondents or around 71 percent of the respondents had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. The following table shows the teaching experience of the respondents of the study.

Table 2: Finding of Teaching Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	44	28.9	28.9	28.9
	6-10 years	108	71.1	71.1	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Age

Likewise, a total of 152 respondents were categorized as 5.8 percent aged (25-30 y), 80.3 percent

aged (31-35 y) which is the bulk of the respondents, and 13 percent were aged 36-40. The following table shows the level of the age of the study respondents.

Table 3: Finding of Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25- 30	9	5.9	5.9	5.9
	31-35	122	80.3	80.3	86.2
	36-40	21	13.8	13.8	100.0
	41-45<				
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Gender

The frequency table indicates that 116 respondents or 76.3 percent of the respondents were

male and 23.7 percent were female. The following table shows the extent of male and female participation in the study.

Table 4: Finding of Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	116	76.3	76.3	76.3
	Female	36	23.7	23.7	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Lecturer Perception of the Deans' Ethical Leadership

The first objective of the present study is to find out lecturers' perceptions of deans' ethical leadership. According to Craig and Gustafson (1998), leaders are perceived as high ethical when they receive 30 to 32 scores, perceived as moderate ethical leaders when

receive 33-45 scores, and perceived as low ethical when they are given 46-120 scores. The finding of the first objective of the study showed that deans of Afghanistan public universities are perceived as moderately ethical by lecturers as their mean score is 40.3. The following table shows lecturers' perceptions of deans' ethical leadership

Table 5: Ethical Leadership Perception

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Ethical Leadership_Sum_score	152	40.32	6.089	5.96	.391
Valid N (listwise)	152				

Inferential Statistics

The inferential statistics of the study showed the correlation between ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement in terms of their social engagement with colleagues, social engagement with their students,

cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. As the table shows that the $p=.084$ which is greater than $.05$ ($p>.05$), it indicates there is not enough evidence to show the significant relationship between the dean's ethical leadership and lecturers' cognitive engagement.

Table 6: Correlation between ethical Leadership and Cognitive Engagement

			EL	Cognitive_Engagment
Spearman's rho	Ethical_Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.084
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.304
		N	152	152
	Cognitive_Engagment	Correlation Coefficient	.084	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.304	.
		N	152	152

Likewise, the deans' ethical leadership and lecturers' social engagement with colleagues are significantly correlated as the p-value is $.016$ which

means $p<.05$. It presents enough evidence to prove the significant relationship between deans' ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement with colleagues.

Table 7: Correlation between ethical leadership and Social Engagement (Colleagues)

			EL	Social_Engagment (Colleagues)
Spearman's rho	Ethical_Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.016
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.841
		N	152	152
	Social_Engagment (Colleagues)	Correlation Coefficient	.016	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.841	.
		N	152	152

However, spearman's correlation analysis about the relationship between lecturers' ethical leadership and

lecturers' social engagement with students showed $p=.243$ which is greater than $.05$. It indicates that deans'

ethical leadership has a non-significant relationship with lecturers' social engagement with students. Table 8 visualizes the finding for the correlation between deans'

ethical leadership and lecturers' engagement with students.

Table 8: Correlation between ethical leadership and Social Engagement(students)

		EL	Social_Engagment_S
Spearman's rho	Ethical_Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.243**
		N	152
	Social_Engagment(students)	Correlation Coefficient	.243**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.003

The p-value for the correlation between deans' ethical leadership and lecturers' emotional engagement is (p=-.029) it is lesser (0.5). it indicates that there is a

strong relationship between deans' ethical leadership and lecturers' emotional engagement. The following table showcases the relationship between the variables.

Table 9: Correlation between ethical Leadership and Emotional Engagement

		EL	Emotional_Engagment
Spearman's rho	EL	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	-.029
		N	.722
	Emotional_Engagment	Correlation Coefficient	-.029
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.722

Limitations and suggestions for future study

This study is also associated with several limitations. First, the study collected the data only from 152 respondents which may restrict the generalizability of the study. Future studies should collect more comprehensive data. Secondly, the study was collected only from a single source (only the lecturer). Future studies should collect data from different parties in order to strengthen the validity. Next, the study used a single method. Future studies need to use mixed-method research and triangulate the data.

V. CONCLUSION

Despite the considerable significance of ethical leadership and its influence on employees' work engagement and satisfaction, limited studies have disclosed the impact of ethical leadership employees' engagement particularly in educational sectors. This study found out the level of deans' ethical leadership and its impact on lecturers' engagement which are cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement with colleagues and social engagement with students at public universities in Afghanistan. The deans at public universities of Afghanistan are perceived moderate ethical leaders. Also, Instructors' emotional engagement

and social engagement with.

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