

Full Length Research Paper

Compliance toward ethical leadership among school principals: A synthesis of qualitative research-based evidences

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Ethical leadership has proven to be pivotal in fostering efficiency and effectiveness across various organizations. It cultivates employees' confidence, commitment, job satisfaction and enhances their performance, thereby contributing to organizational stability and competitiveness. Given its significance, ethical leadership has become a global priority, garnering attention from both organizations and educational institutions. This study conducts a literature review on the adherence to ethical leadership among school principals in primary and secondary schools. Specifically, it examines whether these leaders demonstrate ethical leadership attributes in their daily practices. Employing a systematic qualitative review design, the exploration unfolds through three stages: searching, reviewing, and synthesizing existing literature. The findings unveil instances of both compliance and noncompliance towards ethical leadership among school principals. On the positive side, school principals are depicted as exhibiting attributes such as integrity, fairness and justice, concern for others (people orientation), ethical guidance, responsibility, role modeling, and openness. Conversely, instances of deviation from ethical leadership attributes are also noted, including actions such as undermining the dignity of others, displaying favoritism, indiscreet information sharing, prioritizing personal gain, and irresponsibility. Based on these findings, the study advocates for a comprehensive approach to nurture ethical leadership among school principals. By addressing both compliance and noncompliance, the paper contributes to advancing knowledge relevant for enhancing leadership practices that not only align with educational goals but also establish a foundation for sustained school effectiveness.

Key words: Ethical leadership, unethical leadership, school principals.

INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in managing and supervising teachers is paramount for school development and transformation (Garza et al., 2014). Effective leadership fosters a community of teachers who are motivated to contribute their efforts, skills, talents, and innovations

toward the school's future trajectory. Moreover, Vikaraman et al. (2020) suggest that while competent and responsible teachers significantly influence student achievement, the quality of leadership also plays a crucial role in determining teacher motivation, effectiveness, and practice. In

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essence, strong leadership contributes significantly to enhancing teachers' work morale and engagement, while poor leadership can have the opposite effect (Assiri, 2018).

School administration is central to the effectiveness of the institution, and its positive manifestation can bolster the school's success, whereas negative manifestations can lead to its deterioration (Eyal and Roth, 2011; Lunenburg, 2011).

Therefore, school principals, as overseers and supervisors of the entire school, must employ appropriate leadership styles when collaborating with teachers to further contribute to student success.

Ethical leadership has emerged as a highly effective style for promoting reform, change, and innovation across various fields, including education (Ali, 2018; Brown and Treviño, 2006; Campbell, 1997; Khan and Bauman, 2020; Treviño et al., 2000). It entails leaders integrating ethics into their personal lives and organizational management roles. Ethical leaders go beyond mindful office management; they lead with empathy and compassion. They are characterized as kind-hearted, people-focused, civic-minded, fair problem-solvers, honest communicators, trustworthy individuals who act in alignment with their words, and guides for ethical behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Treviño et al., 2000).

Ethical leaders also reward and appreciate those who produce genuine results, provide guidance to those who may be misled, and do not tolerate ethical violations (Treviño et al., 2000). The demonstration of ethical leadership in schools contributes to organizational stability and competitiveness by fostering joint motivation among teachers, increasing job satisfaction, and enhancing overall performance. Social theorists posit that employees are directly influenced by their supervisors and prefer managers who are credible, fair, honest, respectful, and demonstrate concern for others (Davidson, 2007).

Other studies have emphasized that social organizations, such as schools, are moral communities, where every aspect has an ethical dimension (Kocabas and Karaköse, 2009). This suggests that in schools, teachers have the opportunity to work under truly responsible and ethical supervisors when they are committed to determined educational goals. Conversely, defiance of ethical standards among school principals can lead to negative emotional, psychological, and physical responses, impacting teachers' well-being and morale (Sam, 2021). Moreover, mistreatment of teachers by their leaders can result in teacher absenteeism, intentions to leave, decreased likelihood of attracting new employees, and reduced job satisfaction (Brown and Mitchell, 2010). These factors contribute to demoralized teachers, diminishing their performance and productivity and ultimately undermining the achievement of educational goals.

While the influence of ethical leadership has been

extensively studied in various organizational contexts, its contribution to school administration and leadership has received comparatively little attention. Drawing from literature in educational settings, this study aims to delve deeper into how ethical leadership is integrated into educational leadership practices. Specifically, the study review addresses the question: "Do school principals adhere to ethical leadership in their daily practices?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a related literature on ethical leadership. Accordingly, the chapter consists of eight parts namely, conceptualizing ethics, conceptualizing leadership, conceptualizing ethical leadership, and school principals as ethical leaders.

Conceptualizing ethics

Ethics, originating from the Greek word "ethos" meaning custom or character, pertains to describing and prescribing moral requirements and behaviors, delineating acceptable and unacceptable ways of behaving based on philosophical principles (Lee and John, 2003). Ethical behavior is defined as actions deemed morally acceptable, "good," and "right" in a given situation, as opposed to those considered "bad" or "wrong" (Mayled et al., 2018). It encompasses a code of values and moral principles guiding individual or group behavior with regard to what is deemed right or wrong, both legally and morally, within the larger community (Deigh, 2010). Ethical dilemmas arise in uncertain situations where conflicting interests, values, and beliefs of multiple stakeholders intersect, prompting individuals to reevaluate their ethical stances (Skovdal and Campbell, 2015, Sinha, 2013).

In organizational settings, ethics entail frank discussions about values and issues significant to stakeholders and the activities being pursued, fostering continuous discovery, reaffirmation, and evaluation of one's values and principles (Grigoropoulos, 2019). In educational institutions such as schools, ethical issues are pervasive in daily operations, often arising from decisions necessitating value judgments about the right course of action or the most appropriate communication in a given context.

Conceptualizing leadership

Leadership is a compelling subject across various organizations, with the concept itself described in multiple ways. It can be seen as interpersonal influence aimed at achieving specific goals: a process of guiding others to comprehend and agree on what needs to be accomplished and how, and facilitating individual and collective efforts to

achieve shared objectives, or the process by which one individual influences other group members toward the achievement of defined organizational goals (Lunenburg, 2012; Yukl et al., 2013). Upon analyzing numerous definitions, four common themes emerge in describing leadership: it is a process, involves influence, occurs within groups, and entails goal attainment. Building on this interpretation, leadership can be defined as the art of convincing followers to willingly engage in activities and tasks set by the leader as goals (Mihelič and Lipičnik, 2010). Thus, the role of leaders lies in directing individuals' behavior toward desired objectives. Leadership styles vary based on individual characteristics and personality traits. Some leaders, such as charismatic and transformational ones, possess personal power that allows them to engage employees, while others rely on positional or legitimate power (Berkovich and Eyal, 2019). Leaders exhibit diverse values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, habits, and practices, often influenced by the organizational, professional, or institutional culture. Leadership transcends mere management; it involves inspirational activities that address interpersonal aspects of a manager's role, such as change, motivation, inspiration, and influence (Sinha, 2013). Effective leadership skills are essential for successful execution of managerial functions across various organizations and levels. Therefore, educational institutions, like other social organizations, require leaders who go beyond mere managers to ensure effective functioning.

Conceptualizing ethical leadership

Ethical leadership is a multifaceted concept that has garnered significant attention from scholars, researchers, and practitioners worldwide, leading to various interpretations and perspectives. While some studies focus on ethical leadership within specific industries like manufacturing, others examine it across diverse contexts and circumstances. As such, ethical leadership is often regarded as a broad term that encompasses different viewpoints rather than a specific leadership theory.

At its core, ethical leadership revolves around the principles, beliefs, and values of right and wrong, serving as the foundation for organizational behavior and influencing how leaders guide employees toward achieving organizational goals (Campbell, 1997). This perspective suggests a shared understanding among organizational members regarding the organization's ethical values, with reinforcement of perceived right behaviors and discouragement of unethical ones.

Consequently, ethical leadership can be defined as the process of influencing employees through values, principles, and beliefs aligned with accepted norms in organizational behavior (Ko et al., 2018).

Similarly, Northouse (2016) notes that ethical leadership entails leading in a manner that upholds ethical beliefs and

values, respecting the rights and dignity of others. This involves embodying concepts such as trust, integrity, honesty, consideration, equal treatment, charisma, and fairness in leadership practices.

In this study, ethical leadership is defined following Brown and his associates as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, along with the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). According to this interpretation, ethical leadership is seen as a social learning process where followers perceive leaders who exhibit normatively appropriate conduct, such as fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, and care for others, as role models for their own behavior.

Furthermore, four components of ethical leadership have been identified based on this interpretation. The first component involves the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005:120). The authors argue that leaders perceived as ethical should exemplify behaviors considered normatively appropriate by their followers. Such behaviors, including honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and care for others in decision-making and relationships, enhance a leader's legitimacy and credibility. In the context of schools, when principals exhibit these behaviors, teachers are likely to view them as credible and trustworthy role models, encouraging emulation among teachers and other staff members.

The second component of the definition involves the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication (Brown et al., 2005:120). This suggests that ethical leaders not only highlight ethics and make them prominent in the social environment by explicitly discussing them with followers but also provide followers with a voice, ensuring a procedurally or interpersonally just process (Richmon, 2004; Howell and Avolio, 1992). In a school setting, this means that school principals should create favorable avenues for communicating ethical goals to teachers and also allow teachers to express their goals and expectations regarding ethical behavior.

The third component, "reinforcement," implies that ethical leaders establish ethical standards, reward ethical conduct, and discipline those who fail to adhere to the standards (Treviño et al., 2000), thereby contributing to vicarious learning. Applied in a school context, this suggests that school principals are responsible for establishing ethical standards, rewarding teachers and other followers who demonstrate ethical behavior, and disciplining those who violate ethical standards.

The final element of the definition pertains to "decision-making." This reflects the idea that ethical leaders consider the ethical consequences of their decisions and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others. In the school context, this emphasizes that leader such as school principals should carefully

consider and make fair and transparent decisions for better outcomes.

Ethical leadership dimensions

Basing on the foregoing ethical leadership descriptions, the key aspects of ethical leadership include integrity, people orientation, ethical guidance, fairness and justice (Brown and Treviño, 2006). They also include power role clarification, power sharing, and concern for sustainability (Shakeel et al., 2020). *Integrity* means the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. It involves features like keeping and fulfilling promises, aligning with what is said and what is done, being true and authentic to the existing code of beliefs or worldview, being loyal, sincere and trustworthy. Indeed leaders who behave consistently are trusted by their followers (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). *Fairness and justice* is practiced by avoiding biasness or favoritism in handling issues, treating people equally and in a way that is reasonable, listening without being judgmental or discriminating and being responsible for one's action (Klebe et al., 2000). *People orientation* is sometimes referred to as caring for others, it means treating the followers well with respect, caring, considering their dignity and ensuring that their needs of followers are met (Vikaraman et al., 2018). School principals found this aspect as very important in their management and administration practices in order to enable teachers follow their instructions without problems.

Ethical guidance means that leaders communicate extensively with followers about ethics. They adjust a set of behavior rules, standards and codes which are used as guidelines for ethical behavior (Pepper, 2010) and leaders also use reward and punishment for making their subordinates responsible for their actions (Brown and Treviño, 2006). In other words ethical leaders guide their subordinates in determining ethical priorities and explain the ethical rules. *Role clarification* means that ethical leaders clarifies the responsibilities, expectations and performance goals to ensure subordinates know what is expected of them (Vikaraman et al., 2018). *Power sharing* aspect implies that ethical leaders listens to ideas and concerns of their subordinates and allows to participate in decision making (Kooskora, 2010). This in turn makes subordinates to have less dependency on their leaders. Lastly *Concern for sustainability* which implies meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholders including the society and the environment (Shakeel et al., 2020). In other words it is the extent to which the leader is concerned about impacts on stake holders and society (Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers, 2016, Richmon, 2004).

The dimensions of ethical leadership can be broadly categorized into two main categories: moral person and moral manager. The moral person aspect focuses on the individual traits and character of the leader, embodying qualities such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness,

openness to input, respect, principled decision-making, and concern for others.

Followers often use these traits as a reference when evaluating their leaders. On the other hand, the moral manager aspect of ethical leadership pertains to how leaders leverage their managerial power and position to promote ethical standards and behaviors in the workplace. This involves articulating and communicating ethical principles transparently, and using rewards or punishments to influence followers' behavior.

Ethical leadership entails visible behaviors that stem not only from the leader's personal traits (moral person) but also from their efforts to instill these behaviors in subordinates. This includes holding followers accountable for ethical conduct and consistently communicating an ethics message. Subordinates look to their leaders for guidance, and a leader's ethical behavior sets the tone for their followers. Effective ethical leadership involves responsibly discharging duties, clarifying and communicating roles for subordinates, and managing performance to achieve organizational goals.

To establish a reputation for ethical leadership, individuals must excel in both dimensions of moral person and moral manager. A reputable ethical leader is not only ethically sound personally but also prioritizes ethics and values as integral aspects of their leadership approach. This conceptualization remains prevalent in the literature and has informed numerous empirical studies in the field of leadership ethics.

School principals as ethical leaders

Schools serve as institutions aimed to foster change and establishing social norms, primarily for the well-being of children and students. However, students typically do not control the dynamics within schools. Hence, the presence of a leader is imperative to ensure the moral integrity of educational activities. School principals, in carrying out their duties, are expected to exhibit virtuous behavior, prioritizing the welfare of teachers and students as the paramount value in all actions, conducting professional responsibilities with honesty and integrity, safeguarding the rights of all individuals, adhering to laws and administrative policies, rectifying problematic regulations inconsistent with educational objectives, refraining from using their position for personal gain, obtaining academic credentials from accredited institutions, and endeavoring to enhance the profession through research and ongoing professional development. These ethical obligations are integral to the advancement of quality education. Given the significance of these ethical principles in schools, understanding how school members perceive ethical behavior in school principals and how such principles are enacted in educational contexts is essential. This review thus aims to elucidate the conceptualization of ethical leadership in schools and its realization in practice,

Table 1. Selected articles included in the review.

S/N	Author	Year	Title	Country
1	Blasé	2004	The dark side of school leadership: Implications for administrator preparation	U.S.A
2	Fidan and Koç	2020	Teachers' opinions on ethical and unethical leadership	Turkey
3	Göçen	2021	Ethical leadership in educational organizations: A cross-cultural study	Eastern and Western Countries
4	Oduol	2021	Ubuntu and the perceptions of unethical leader conduct: a case study of public secondary school leaders in Kenya	Kenya
5	Oduol and Cornforth	2019	Ethical dilemmas in education: a case study of challenges faced by secondary school leaders in Kenya	Kenya
6	Sam	2021	What are the practices of unethical leaders? Exploring how teachers experience the "dark side" of administrative leadership	U.S.A
7	Vikaraman et al.	2020	Understanding the practice of ethical leadership amongst school principals: Evidence from Malaysia.	Malaysia
8	Waheed et al.	2018	Ethical leadership and change: A qualitative comparative case study in selected Malaysian transformed schools.	Malaysia
9	Tyler	2014	Today's challenges and dilemmas for ethical school leaders	U.S.A
10	Mthiyane et al.	2021	The causes of ethical turpitudes in schools: evidence from four schools in Gauteng, South Africa	South Africa

drawing insights from various empirical studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic qualitative review design, utilizing systematic criteria to enable rigorous analysis, critique, and synthesis of related literature. The literature review process comprised three main steps: searching, reviewing, and writing the literature review.

Searching the literature/ articles

To search for relevant studies, online authoritative databases such as ERIC, Education Research Complete, and SSCI were utilized. Key terms used included ethical leadership, ethics in educational administration, ethical leaders, ethics in school leadership, perceptions of ethical leadership among teachers, aspects of ethical school leaders, and the practice of ethical leadership. Relevant articles were then searched from various journals. A total of forty-seven peer-reviewed articles were identified as relevant, although the extent of their relevance varied in relation to the themes they captured. The search process continued until no new relevant articles were found. Retrieved articles were clustered to enable a systematic review.

Reviewing the articles

During the literature review, a systematic approach was undertaken to assess and organize selected articles. To ensure that the literature aligns with the predefined purpose of the study, articles were categorized based on their publication date and the research themes outlined earlier. Thus, articles published from the year 2000 onwards were considered, with an emphasis on studies presenting empirical data and published in reputable international journals, specifically focusing on the practice of ethical leadership among principals in primary and secondary schools. Additionally, preference was given to articles employing a qualitative research approach, consistent with

the methodological framework of our study. Utilizing these criteria, the review process systematically evaluated forty-seven articles. Through a consensus-based approach, ten articles were identified as more central to this review (Table 1). Each of these ten key empirical studies underwent a thorough revisitation and in-depth review to exhaustively explore the key focus of the study. Detailed notes were taken during this process to capture the nuances of how ethical leadership is conceptualized and practiced within the context of the selected articles. This comprehensive examination of the key studies forms the basis for the subsequent analysis and synthesis of findings.

Writing the literature review

This stage involved reexamining the drafted short notes and then referring back to the selected key empirical studies to write a detailed review. The first step was to critically analyze the methodological approaches, strengths and weaknesses, key findings, implications, and conclusions of each empirical study. Additionally, the relevant themes and implications for practice emerging from the other reviewed articles were carefully considered, critiqued, and integrated within the central themes derived from the key empirical studies. These ideas were systematically developed to inform the central themes and implications presented in this review.

FINDINGS

Ethics must indeed start at the top. Administrators cannot shy away from their responsibilities to set moral examples for their followers; formal ethical codes and ethics training have little chance of success unless the ethical actions and behavior of top management are consistent with what they teach (Bhana and Suknunan, 2019). Efforts to promote ethical leadership practices in organizations, particularly schools, must begin and be visible at the top of the

organization (Brown et al., 2005). In doing so, ethical leaders positively influence many important employee outcomes by inspiring favorable behaviors among employees, encouraging a high level of pride and commitment to the organization, and shaping the way employees perceive the work content (Amisano, 2017; Bhana and Suknunan, 2019). However, how school principals adhere to ethical leadership in their daily tasks remains problematic in the real school setting. This section presents a review of empirical studies examining whether school principals comply with ethical leadership in their practices. Participants from the 10 studies provided their experiences and stories on school principals' compliance with ethical leadership by disclosing the ethical practices of those school principals who adhere to ethical leadership and unethical practices for those who do not adhere to ethical practices. These are presented in the subsequent sections.

Compliance towards ethical leadership among school principals

These are ethical practices that are essential for the well-being of teachers and other school members. Out of the ten studies, six studies identified several ethical practices exhibited by school principals. These include integrity, fairness and justice, concern for others (people orientation), ethical guidance, responsibility, role modeling, and openness. The following subsections describe each of them.

Integrity

The first ethical practice is integrity, characterized by honesty and strong moral principles. It encompasses qualities such as keeping promises, remaining true to one's beliefs or values, demonstrating loyalty, sincerity, and trustworthiness. In the school context, principals are expected to uphold integrity in spiritual matters, financial management, and decision-making processes (Vikaraman et al., 2020). They manage finances ethically, adhere to directives, and allocate funds equitably where most needed in their schools. When making decisions, principals adhere to decisions made in meetings, demonstrating commitment to their words. Similarly, teachers have witnessed acts of integrity displayed by their school leaders (Göçen, 2021), such as refraining from unethical behavior despite pressure, maintaining consistency between words and actions, and adhering to rules and regulations.

People orientation

The second ethical practice is people orientation, also known as caring for others. It involves treating people with respect, care, and consideration for their dignity. School

principals consider this aspect crucial in their management and administration practices to facilitate teachers' compliance with instructions (Oduol and Cornforth, 2019). Practices associated with this dimension include active listening, handling teachers' cases calmly, assisting teachers, students, and parents in resolving conflicts, showing empathy toward teachers facing challenges such as health issues, advocating for teachers' rights, encouraging and supporting teachers to succeed, and ensuring teachers' needs are met (Fidan and Koç, 2020; Göçen, 2021; Vikaraman et al., 2020). Furthermore, school principals cultivate friendships and trusting relationships with teachers, staff, parents, and other school members through ethical practices such as warmth and humility. In one study (Waheed et al., 2018); field observations revealed that the school principal greeted everyone warmly, irrespective of whether they were students, teachers, parents, staff members, cafeteria workers, or janitors.

Similarly, teachers from another school noted that the headmistress, despite coming from a well-known and respected family, remained down-to-earth and humble while interacting with parents, teachers, staff, and students.

Fairness and justice

The third aspect is fairness and justice. Fairness and justice are practiced by avoiding bias in handling issues, treating people equally and reasonably, and listening without being judgmental or discriminatory. In schools, principals provide equal opportunities for each teacher to share ideas, knowledge, talent, skill, and space to achieve personal goals (Vikaraman et al., 2020). Studies (Göçen, 2021) suggest several fairness acts by leaders as experienced by teachers: they include choosing the best teacher for a new position regardless of personal connections, refraining from favoritism in hiring decisions, avoiding discrimination against individuals with weaknesses, and maintaining impartiality toward all teachers.

Warranting ethically appropriate conducts in schools

Warranting ethically appropriate conduct in schools was the fourth ethical practice. This involves emphasizing and promoting ethical behavior in schools while preventing unethical behavior. To create a culture that promotes ethical conduct in the school, school principals used rewards to appreciate ethically appropriate behavior and punishments to deter unethical behavior (Waheed et al., 2018). They would not compromise on ethical issues and might take actions to minimize such practices. Initially, leaders used soft approaches such as suggestions, consultations, and counseling to prevent unethical behavior (Göçen, 2021; Vikaraman et al., 2020; Waheed

Table 2. Compliance and non-compliance towards ethical leadership among school principals.

Leadership practices	
Ethical	Unethical
Integrity	Undermining the dignity of others
Caring for others	Indiscrete information sharing
Justice and fairness	Display of favoritism
Warranting ethical conducts.	Prioritizing personal gain
Being open.	Irresponsibility
Responsibility.	
Role modeling	

et al., 2018).

Responsibility

Fifth is being committed to their profession (Responsibility). Commitment to the job is a moral obligation of leaders who dedicate their full effort and energy to the tasks at hand. The findings also indicated that ethical leaders were fully dedicated to their profession as leaders, guides, and managers (Waheed et al., 2018). They could be seen arriving early and staying late at their schools. They were committed to bringing out the best in teachers, staff, and students through empowerment, sharing, problem-solving, and feedback. In some schools, teachers considered the principal as someone who doesn't rely on complaining; instead, they begin to search for a solution and try to handle the problem (Göçen, 2021).

Openness

Sixth is being open to teachers and other school members. School principals were also considered as being open. For instance, a study on ethical leadership and change (Waheed et al., 2018) revealed teachers regarding their headmistress as being less autocratic and more open; in case a teacher is having a problem, he/she can take it to her.

Some practices of openness and transparency include leaders keeping their doors open for school members so they could approach them in need, school members sharing with their leaders comfortably, listening to personal problems affecting their work or their work-related problems, and providing suggestions on how to overcome those problems (Fidan and Koç, 2020; Waheed et al., 2018).

Role modelling

The seventh and last practice is acting as a role model through visible actions. Role modeling entails

demonstrating ethical behavior through personal exemplification. Effective ethical school principals recognize that they live in a fishbowl of sorts, and employees are watching them for cues about what's important (Treviño et al., 2000). Studies revealed that ethical leaders demonstrated what they wanted their school members to do and have. They had developed trust and earned respect from the school members by trusting and respecting them. This is evident from the quotations observed from the teachers who showed that they liked the principal's way of leadership and that it "is helping other teachers by doing it first and showing them how to do it afterwards" (Waheed et al., 2018). Other role-modeling acts include keeping promises, showing sympathy, and practicing equality.

Non-compliance towards ethical leadership among school principals

Unethical leaders often engage in inappropriate behaviors and conduct in human relations. Among the unethical behaviors exhibited by school principals, teachers were most disturbed by the abuse of their position in human relations. From the five literatures reviewed, unethical practices included undermining the dignity of others, displaying favoritism, indiscrete information sharing, prioritizing personal gain, and irresponsibility. Table 2 shows the compliance and non-compliance towards ethical leadership among school principals. These practices are described in the subsequent sections:

Undermining the dignity of others

Teachers reported experiencing offensive nonverbal behaviors, such as being ignored or snubbed, especially in public places (Blase and Blase, 2004). Additionally, teachers expressed experiencing a wide range of abusive acts by school principals, including insensitivity to personal matters, lack of respect towards them as professionals and individuals, and disrespectful behavior. Examples of such

acts include yelling at teachers, engaging in sexual harassment, and displaying rudeness (Sam, 2021).

Display of favoritism

Favoritism refers to the unfair treatment of individuals. Teachers reported instances of preferential treatment given to certain teachers, students, and parents (Fidan and Koç, 2020; Tyler, 2014). This included providing advantages to some teachers over others based on personal relationships, such as friendship or family ties, between the teacher and the principal. Examples of favoritism displayed by school principals include excusing tardiness, applying different standards of teaching to different teachers, prioritizing their own projects or initiatives, and assigning favored teachers fewer duties (Blase and Blase, 2004; Sam, 2021).

Indiscrete information sharing

This indicates a breach of confidentiality and/or engaging in gossip. Studies have revealed instances where teachers experienced administrative leaders sharing private information about students and teachers. This includes discussing classroom observations, sharing teacher ratings, disclosing information from emails from parents, and engaging in unnecessary gossip (Mthiyane et al., 2021; Sam, 2021). Additionally, some school principals have been reported to spy on teachers by positioning themselves near classroom doors, covertly listening to classroom activity via the intercom, and monitoring telephone conversations (Blase and Blase, 2004; Fidan and Koç, 2020). Such practices could undermine trust between teachers and principals and discourage teachers from sharing important information with their school leaders.

Irresponsibility

Studies have revealed instances of irresponsible principals during their tenure at the school. This irresponsibility manifested in various forms, including being physically unavailable during the school day, being present but not fulfilling their responsibilities, treating the school like a business establishment, and exhibiting poor communication practices (Blase and Blase, 2004; Fidan and Koç, 2020; Tyler, 2014). Such tendencies indicate that these principals were not adequately investing in the school and its stakeholders.

Prioritizing personal gain

This refers to making decisions and implementing policies that prioritize the needs of the administrative leader over those of the school. Teacher experiences reported such

actions as engaging in or requesting illegal transactions and introducing programs lacking evidence of success (Fidan and Koç, 2020). In some instances, teachers mentioned principals using the budget to purchase items for themselves instead of fulfilling the school's needs for other supplies (Mthiyane et al., 2021; Sam, 2021). Others sought their own financial gain at the expense of teachers through schemes such as merit pay bonuses. All of these practices undermine school effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to review the literature on compliance towards ethical leadership among school principals, revealing both ethically and unethically practiced behaviors. Ethical leadership practices experienced by participants include integrity, caring for others, fairness and justice, ensuring ethically acceptable behavior throughout the school, being open, role modeling, and taking responsibility. Taken together, these results indicate that participants perceived the practice of school principals positively. In another study by Karaköse (2007) on educational administrators' ethical behaviors, it was determined that principals generally behaved in compliance with ethical principles regarding tolerance, justice, and respect, according to teachers' opinions. Indeed, such practices are instrumental in contributing to the improved work habits and work engagement of teachers (Bhana and Suknunan, 2019; Mohsin et al., 2021).

On the other hand, as a result of non-compliance with ethical leadership, several unethical practices were observed by the participants in the reviewed literature. These include disregard for the dignity of others, displays of favoritism, prioritizing personal gain, irresponsibility, and indiscrete information sharing. These unethical behaviors have negative implications on the work habits and performance of teachers (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Purwoko et al., 2020). A critical review of ethical and unethical practices suggests that ethical practices are more common in eastern countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, while unethical practices are more common in western countries, especially the USA, and some African countries, with Kenya among those cited in the literature. There is an urgent need for a study on the reasons for variations in compliance with ethical practices to uncover this gap. Furthermore, despite ethically compliant practices, some ethical behaviors such as communicating ethics, reinforcing ethics, and power sharing are not observed and listed. Therefore, the extent to which these school principals behave in full compliance with ethical leadership is controversial.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ethical leadership in schools is highly significant for

achieving and managing improved work habits of teachers and other crucial outcomes within the school. This analysis broadens our understanding of ethical leadership in the educational community, particularly in areas where such studies are scarce. By doing so, it enables the development of strategies to cultivate ethically equipped school principals. This, in turn, can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of school principals, thereby improving educational quality. The study recommends various strategies, including implementing professional development programs, fostering mentorship and peer support, incorporating ethical education into leadership training, promoting transparent communication, establishing ethical codes and policies, and encouraging continuous self-reflection. These measures aim to empower school leaders with the skills and mindset needed to effectively navigate ethical challenges, ultimately contributing to increased effectiveness and efficiency in educational leadership and the enhancement of overall educational quality.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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