Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals in Relation to Organizational Commitment of BEd College Teachers

Savitha Misra Puri* and Tarasabapathy†

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate the ethical leadership behaviour of principals in relation to organizational commitment of BEd college teachers. A sample of 200 BEd College teachers was selected by stratified random sampling technique. Due representation was given to male and female teachers and type of management namely private aided and private unaided colleges. Appropriate tools were administered and the data collected was analyzed by using 't'-test and co-efficient of correlation. It was found that there was a significant positive correlation between ethical leadership behaviour of college principals and organizational commitment of BEd college teachers also revealed that teachers working under principals with high and moderate ethical leadership behaviour had higher levels of commitment than teachers working under principals with low ethical behaviour. Teachers working in private aided colleges, teachers on permanent basis and more experienced teachers had higher levels of organizational commitment. The study implies the need for principals to practice ethical behaviour.

Keywords: Organization, commitment, ethical, leadership behaviour of principals

* Reader, New Horizon College of Education, Bangalore-560038. savitapuri@gmail.com
† Associate Professor, Department of Education, Bangalore University, Bangalore-560038
Introduction

Ethical behaviour is critical to a leader’s credibility and his or her potential to have meaningful influence. In the last decade, models of ethical leadership have been the subject of several academic studies (Detert, Trevino, Burris, & Andiappan, 2007) and a number of practitioner oriented, popular press books (Kanungo & Mendoza, 1996). By emphasizing fair treatment, shared values, and integrity in common personnel and daily transactions, ethical leaders inspire favourable behaviours among employees, encourage high levels of pride and commitment to the organization, and shape the way employees perceive the work context (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Much has been written about ethics and leadership from a normative or philosophical perspective, suggesting what leaders should do. But, a more descriptive and predictive social scientific approach to ethics and leadership has remained underdeveloped and fragmented, leaving scholars and practitioners with few answers to even the most fundamental questions, such as “what is ethical leadership?” Therefore, a comprehensive review of the relevant social scientific literatures that have linked ethics and leadership in order to clarify current understanding and point the way for future research is very necessary. The concept of organizational commitment of teachers has attracted considerable interest as an attempt to understand the intensity and stability of employee dedication to work organizations. The emotion-based view of organizational commitment emphasizes the employee's sense of unity and shared values with the organization. The perception of being valued and cared about by the organization would encourage the incorporation of organizational membership and role status into the employee's self-identity and thereby increase pro-social acts carried out on behalf of the organization.

The body of literature in industrial/organizational psychology represents a potentially fruitful domain of theory and research that may be applied to understanding the relationship between teachers and the schools in which they are employed. Work within this perspective includes the constructs of organizational commitment and perceived organizational support, both of which focus on the
connection between an individual and the organization or profession with which he or she is associated.

**Operational Definition** Ethical Leadership Behaviour In the present study, Ethical Leadership Behaviour is operationally defined as "a leader who is committed to a set of principles, honest, sincere and trustworthy. He takes into account the purposes of everyone involved in the group and is attentive to the interest of the community and the culture. He demonstrates an ethic of caring towards others and does not force others or ignore the intentions of others." Gilligan, Bass & Steidlmeler (1999)

**Organizational Commitment**: In the present study the definition of Organizational Commitment given by has been used by the investigator. Organizational Commitment comprises of three components Affective Commitment: Affective commitment is defined as the teacher’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization. Teachers with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so.

**Continuance Commitment**: Continuance is defined as an awareness of the costs associated with the leaving the organization. Teachers whose primary link to the organization based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so.

**Normative Commitment**: Normative commitment is defined as a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Teachers with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with their organization values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing."

The dependent variable considered for the present study is Organizational Commitment (Affective, Continuance, Normative). The independent variables are Ethical Leadership Behaviour and background Variables such as Gender, Type of Management, Marital Status, Nature of Appointment, Salary and Teaching Experience.

Research has shown that organizational commitment is greater for employees whose leaders encourage their participation in decision making (Jermier & Berkes, 1979; Rhodes & Steers, 1981), who treat
them with consideration (e.g. Hackett & Allen, 1995; Decotiis & Sumjmers, 1987), and fairness (e.g. Allen & Mayer, 1995; Decotiis & Summers, 1987), fairness (e.g. Allen & Mayer, 1990; Mottaz, 1988; Witnhey, 1988).

It is expected that leaders who exhibit ethical behaviour would be more likely to consider the individual needs and rights of teachers and treat them fairly, which are core characteristics of transformational leadership behaviour. Butcher and Milner (2002) concluded that there is a positive relationship between ethical behaviour and employees' level of commitment. The present study is focused on Ethical Leadership Behaviour of principals in relation to Organizational Commitment of BEd College teachers.

**Review of the Related Literature**

Review indicated that ethical leadership remains largely unexplored, offering researchers' opportunities for new discoveries and leaders opportunities to improve their effectiveness. Riggio et al (2010) conducted a virtue-based measure of ethical leadership: the leadership virtues questionnaire. Approaching ethical leadership from a character logical perspective, this study reports on the creation of the Leadership Virtues Questionnaire (LVQ). Defining an ethical leader as one who adheres to the four cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, as discussed in the ancient texts of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, we developed a rating instrument for assessing leader virtues. A series of studies with managers examined the psychometric properties and correlates of the LVQ. Factor analyses suggested that one factor best captured the construct, not inconsistent with philosophers' notions of the "unity" of the cardinal virtues. The LVQ was shown to be highly positively correlated with transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and another recently developed measure of ethical leadership, and there was evidence of discriminant validity. The LVQ, used with the virtues approach to ethical leadership, should prove to be a valuable tool for the assessment and development of leader virtues and ethics. Although many articles and books have been published on effective leadership, only a small portion of this work has focused on ethical leadership. Even less attention has been devoted to the
definition and measurement of ethical leadership. A little more than a decade ago, Ciulla (1998) stated, “It’s remarkable that there has been little in the way of sustained and systematic treatment of the subject [ethical leadership] by scholars.”

Avolio et al (2004) conducted a study to address the following two questions. First, what role does psychological empowerment play in the relationship between ethical leadership behaviour and employees’ attitudinal outcomes (i.e., organizational commitment and trust in leaders)? Second, how do employee perceptions of the authenticity of leaders’ ethical behaviour influence the relationship between ethical leadership behaviour and employee outcomes?

Results revealed that when ethical behaviour was aligned with authentic moral intentions, employees will respond in an overwhelmingly positive manner (Lucas, 2000) such authentic leaders engage in authentic moral behaviours (May et.al. 2003) that were consistent with their transparent moral evaluations. Employees were able to trust and commit such leaders because they can rely on them to do what they say they will do and believed them to be individuals with high moral development. Such authentic ethical leaders inspire employees to feel psychologically safe and be authentic themselves at work (Kahn, 1990; May et.al., 2004) such leaders display undistorted communication of the moral intentions which encourages trust among associates (Mishra, 1996). Authentic ethical leaders display the highest level of integrity, which serves as the strongest determinant of trust among its antecedents. (Butler, 1991). Results further revealed that employees respond more positively to a leader’s ethical behaviour when that behaviour was perceived as genuine or authentic. However, when the moral intention behind a leader’s ethical behaviour became suspicious, the strength of the relationship between such behaviours and employees’ Sabapathy, Drinkman, & Thomas (2009) conducted a study on the relationship of organisational commitment of secondary school teachers and ethical leadership behaviour of school principals. The sample comprised of 180 teachers working in private aided, unaided and government secondary schools. Organizational Commitment Scale and Ethical Leadership Behaviour scales were used. The study revealed that there was significant positive relationship between
organizational commitment of teachers and ethical leadership behaviour of Principals.

Avolio et al (2004) conducted a study to address the following two questions. First, what role does psychological empowerment play in the relationship between ethical leadership behaviour and employees’ attitudinal outcomes (i.e., organizational commitment and trust in leaders)? Second, how do employee perceptions of the authenticity of leaders’ ethical behaviour influence the relationship between ethical leadership behaviour and employee outcomes?

Results revealed that when ethical behaviour was aligned with authentic moral intentions, employees will respond in an overwhelmingly positive manner (Lucas, 2000) such authentic leaders engage in authentic moral behaviours (May et.al. 2003) that were consistent with their transparent moral evaluations. Employees were able to trust and commit such leaders because they can rely on them to do what they say they will do and believed them to be individuals with high moral development. Such authentic ethical leaders inspire employees to feel psychologically safe and be authentic themselves at work (Kahn, 1990; May et.al., 2004) such leaders display undistorted communication of the moral intentions which encourages trust among associates (Mishra, 1996). Authentic ethical leaders display the highest level of integrity, which serves as the strongest determinant of trust among its antecedents (Butler, 1991). Results further revealed that employees respond more positively to a leader’s ethical behaviour when that behaviour was perceived as genuine or authentic. However, when the moral intention behind a leader’s ethical behaviour became suspicious, the strength of the relationship between such behaviours and employees’ responses would weaken.

Need and Rational of the Study

Ethical leader behaviour is attracting a growing amount of research attention. Recently, rather than focusing only on ethical aspects of other leadership styles, research has focused on ethical leadership as a set of behaviours or a behavioural style in itself. Indeed, researchers have shown that ethical leadership is empirically
related, but distinguishable from transformational and other leadership styles (Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Brown and colleagues (2005, p. 120) define ethical leadership as a leadership style that entails “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”. Ethical leader behaviours include acting fairly, allowing voice, demonstrating consistency and integrity, taking responsibility for one’s actions, promoting ethical conduct, being concerned for others, and rewarding ethical conduct (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Kalshoven et al. 2011; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2005). Ethical leaders use different ways to influence ethics-related behaviours among followers, such as communication, rewards, and punishment (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders send clear messages about what is expected and use reward systems to hold subordinates accountable (Treviño et al., 2003). In addition, ethical leaders act as role models and promote ethical behaviour among followers (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2003). The goal of the research was to help establish the causal links between ethical leadership behaviour of principals and organizational commitment of B.Ed college teachers. In light of the above discussion the researcher felt an imperative need to undertake the present study.

Does the ethical leadership behaviour of Principals relate to organizational commitment of Teachers? The major objectives of the present study was to find out the ethical leadership behaviour of principals and its linkages to organizational commitment of B.Ed College teachers.

Sample Size and Technique

A total of 200 B.Ed College teachers were selected by stratified random sampling technique. This sample included 100 male and 100 female totalling 200 B.Ed College teachers working in 2 types of school management namely private aided (70) and private unaided (130) B.Ed Colleges of Bangalore city.
Tools of Research

The Organizational commitment questionnaire by Allen and Meyer (1990) was adapted and standardized by Mathew (2003) was used to measure the organizational commitment of B.Ed College teachers. The scale measures the three types of organizational commitment (24 items) namely affective (8 items), continuance (8 items), and normative (8 items). Test retest reliability was established. The test was given and repeated on a group of 200 college teachers and correlation was computed between the first and second sets of scores by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The obtained 'r' was found to be 0.82 with time gap of one month between the two administrations. The tool was content validated by experts in the specialized fields. The positive items were scored on a seven point scale, ranging from strongly disagree, moderately disagree, slightly disagree, neither disagree, nor agree, slightly agree, moderately agree and strongly agree while the negative items were scored in reverse direction.

Ethical Leadership Behaviour questionnaire by Victor and Cullen (Ethical Climate scale where one of the components is ethical leadership) (1988) adapted and standardized by Sabapathy (2008) was used to measure the ethical leadership behaviour of principals by the B.Ed college teachers. The questionnaire consists of 18 items, all of which are negatively oriented. To test the reliability of the questionnaire the list of 18 items was administered twice on 200 B.Ed college teachers with a time gap of one month between the two administrations. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.88. The tool was content validated by experts in the specialized field. The scoring of the ethical leadership questionnaire is done on a 4 point scale following the summated rating technique of Likert. The total score range may be anywhere between 4 to 72. The levels of Ethical Leadership Behaviour derived from quarter deviation method such as the low group (22-58), moderate (59-67) and high level (68-72) were considered in the present study.

A Performa was used to collect the biographical details of B.Ed college teacher
Results and Discussion

There is no significant relationship between Organizational Commitment viz. Affective, Continuance and Normative and Total Organizational Commitment of BEd College Teachers and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals.

The data is analyzed by computing coefficient of correlation and 't' test.

Table 1

Table showing N, degrees of freedom, co-efficient of correlation ‘r’ and its significance at 0.05 and 0.01 level of Organization Commitment of BEd College Teachers (Affective, Continuance, Normative and Organizational Commitment) and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals (N=200, df=198)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>‘r’</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Affective Commitment and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Continuance Commitment of BEd College Teachers and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Normative Commitment of BEd College Teachers and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Organization Commitment of BEd College Teachers and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level

The above table revealed that the obtained ‘r’ values 0.316, 0.212, 0.355 and 0.461 are more than the table value 0.181 at 0.01 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypotheses formulated that “there is a significant positive relationship between Organization Commitment i.e. Affective, Continuance Normative and Organizational Commitment There is no significant difference in the Organizational Commitment of BEd College Teachers having
high and low; high and moderate; and moderate and low Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals. There is no significant difference in the Organizational Commitment of male and female BEd College Teachers and across demographics of BEd college teachers (Gender, Type of Management, Marital Status, Nature of Appointment and Teaching Experience

**Table 2**

Table showing the Number (N), Mean, Standard Deviation (S.D.), 't'-value and its level of significance of the Organization Commitment scores of BEd College Teachers due to variations in Ethical Leadership Behaviour, Gender, Type of Management, Marital Status, Nature of Appointment and Teaching Experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable and Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>'t' Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>115.450</td>
<td>11.375</td>
<td>8.733 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>97.229</td>
<td>10.976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>115.450</td>
<td>11.375</td>
<td>3.002 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>109.753</td>
<td>12.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>109.753</td>
<td>12.003</td>
<td>6.047 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>97.229</td>
<td>10.976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>108.800</td>
<td>12.875</td>
<td>0.0032 NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>108.740</td>
<td>14.027</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Aided</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>112.257</td>
<td>12.177</td>
<td>2.839 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Unaided</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>106.892</td>
<td>13.738</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>109.000</td>
<td>13.495</td>
<td>0.688 NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>107.000</td>
<td>13.059</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Appointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>110.446</td>
<td>12.951</td>
<td>2.387 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>105.657</td>
<td>13.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>107.095</td>
<td>14.023</td>
<td>2.183 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>111.254</td>
<td>12.763</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at 0.01 level; NS = Not Significant**

76
Table 2 reveals that null hypothesis is not supported for ethical leadership behaviour. Principals having high ethical leadership behaviour (M=115.450) had higher levels of teachers Organization Commitment than teachers working with moderate (M=109.753) and low ethical leadership behaviour (M=97.229).

The above table also reveals that null hypothesis is not supported for type of management. Teachers working in private aided schools (M=112.257) had higher levels of teachers Organization Commitment than teachers working in private unaided schools (M=106.892).

The above table further also reveals that null hypothesis is not supported for nature of appointment. Teachers working on permanent basis (M=110.446) had higher levels of teachers Organization Commitment than teachers working on temporary basis (M=105.657).

The above table further also reveals that null hypothesis is not supported for teaching experience. Teachers having more experience (M=111.254) had higher levels of teachers Organization Commitment than teachers working having less experience (M=107.095).

Table-2 reveals that null hypothesis is supported for gender and marital status.

**Major Findings**

The following were the major findings of the study there was a significant positive relationship between Organization Commitment of BEd college teachers and Ethical Leadership Behaviour of Principals. There was a significant difference in Organization Commitment of BEd College Teachers having different levels of ethical leadership behaviour of Principals. There was a significant difference in Organisation Commitment of BEd college teachers due to variations in their type of management, nature of appointment and teaching experience. There was no significance difference in Organization Commitment of BEd College teachers due to variations in their gender and marital status.
Educational Implications

The study clearly implies the need for ethical leadership behaviour on the part of the BEd college principals in order to increase commitment levels of their teachers. Today there is a high demand for moral leadership in our society. Leadership is a process of influencing others. It has a moral dimension that distinguishes it from other types of influences such as coercion of despotic control. College principals should show respect for their teachers and should also be fair in their behaviour towards them. It is necessary that training programmes are arranged periodically for college principals who should include modules on morality, ethics, and leadership. One cannot be a leader without being aware of and concerned about one’s own values. This implies that principals should be just, and honest in their dealings with their teachers, thereby building a healthy community of committed teachers.

The results of the study imply the need for job security and permanency which is absolutely essential for enhancing commitment levels of BEd college teachers. Temporary teachers lack commitment because of instability and insecurity of job status and as a result become de-motivated and demoralized and loose interest in the teaching profession itself. College managements should definitely take steps to make all their teachers permanent in their colleges.

Conclusion

This study found that there is strong relation between ethical leadership behaviour of principals and organizational commitment of B.ED college teachers. The study implies the need for principals to practice ethical behaviour.

Limitation of the Study

As time available to the investigation was limited, the present study was limited to the teachers of selected B.ED College in Bangalore city only.
References


