Special Issue for "Asia International Conference (AIC 2015), 5-6 December 2015, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia"

Ethics and Morality: Comparing Ethical Leadership with Servant, Authentic and Transformational Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to review a scholarly research on several leadership approaches and its development. This study also provides a comparison of ethical leadership with servant, authentic and transformational leadership styles in the perspective of ethics and morality. This study suggests to the top-management of organizations to adopt and exhibit ethical leadership behavior, because the concept of ethical leadership specifically focuses upon moral and ethical aspects of leadership behavior. Whereas, servant, authentic and transformational leaders do not specifically focus on ethical behavior, thus these leaders may or may not always be ethical depending upon their moral values. Lastly, suggestions for advancing research on ethical leadership in the future are provided.

Keywords: Leadership Development, Ethics and Morality, Ethical Leadership, Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership and Transformational Leadership
JEL Classification: M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been a central but sometimes appears to be a controversial topic in organizational research (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). This controversy is mostly related to its definition as previous literature shows no consensus on what constitutes leadership (Allio, 2012). Avery (2004) asserts that "an acceptable definition of leadership needs to be sound both in theory and in practice, able to withstand changing times and circumstances, and be comprehensive and integrative rather than atomistic and narrow focus" (p. 7). Leadership is widely known as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). Yukl (2002) defines leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 7).

Early research studies on leadership emphasized the importance of leader's characteristics. It was a traditional view that great leaders possess characteristics that distinguish them from others. This approach was initiated in 1930s, which described leadership as the individuals having inherited qualities that differentiate them from the non-leader; such as birth order, intelligence, honesty and courage. Therefore, trait approach is limited to the innate characteristics of individuals only (Northouse, 2001). But, the attempts for defining the common individual traits concluded that there is no single trait or characteristic that could distinguish leader from a non-leader. As Stogdill (1948) claimed that an individual does not become a leader by virtue of having combination of some specific traits.

Due to unsatisfactory results of trait theory, focus of the research shifted towards behavioral theories of leadership. Behavioral approach focuses on what actually leaders do instead of what qualities or traits they possess. This approach suggests that it is the leader's behavior, not the leader's personal traits that influence followers (Shriberg et al., 1997). It implies that leadership is available to everyone and can be learned (Northouse, 2001). In this approach researchers classified leader's behavior in two attributes;

initiating structure and consideration (Fleishman, 1973). Initiating structure is comprised of concern for accomplishing and organizing tasks. On the other hand, consideration consists of behaviors like helping followers, being open to their advices and being friendly towards them. However, much debate exists over the weak theoretical foundation of this leadership approach (Yukl, 2002).

With the weak results of behavioral leadership approach, research on leadership shifted towards the situational leadership approach. Situational leadership theories posit an interaction between leadership behavior and the situation. The theory assumes that in different situations, different leadership behavior are better, and that the leader should be flexible to adapt certain leadership styles to the situation they are confronted with (Mullins, 2007). Hersey and Blanchard leadership model (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) is one of the well-known situational leadership model. This approach characterizes leadership styles in terms of relationship behavior and task behavior that leader presents to their followers. Task behavior is the degree to which a leader assigns responsibilities and duties to employees. Whereas, relationship behavior is the degree to which a leader is involved in a two-way communication with the followers, by facilitating, listening and supportive behaviors (Hersey et al., 2001). Likewise, several other researchers provided their conceptualization of situational leadership (Fiedler and Chemers, 1967; House, 1971; Vroom and Yetton, 1973).

Objective of this study is to provide a review of the scholarly research on several leadership approaches and its development. This study further intends to provide a comparison of ethical leadership with servant, authentic and transformational leadership styles in the perspective of ethics and morality.

2. ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

Leaders play a pivotal role in determining the moral quality of a society and organization by influencing them negatively or positively. As Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) identified that when leader's actions and behavior fail to be in line with the shared moral values, it causes moral cynicism, which is "like a cancer, corrodes the moral health of society" (p. 6). Derr (2012) also highlighted that "ethics and leadership can be an important contribution to an organization and society. Without ethics in leadership, organizations may take on a role that could negatively impact the entire world" (p. 66).

Scholars describes morality as the ability to differentiate between right and wrong conduct at the individual level (Wart, 2003), whereas, ethics are principles and values that guide right and wrong behavior (Menzel, 2007). Previous literature has identified that ethics can be taught to individuals if the method of that instruction is tailored for those being taught (Derr, 2012; Maxwell, 2007). Moreover, Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) view that morality and ethics are two interchangeable terms "what is ethical is moral, and what is moral is ethical" (p. 33).

In the previous literature, scholars have paid great attention to study the relationship between leaders and followers. Their efforts lead towards establishing several well-known leadership

approaches like situational theory, path-goal theory, contingency theory, leader-member exchange, transformational leadership, authentic leadership and servant leadership. However, servant leadership and transformational leadership theories are considered among the most popular and highly studied leadership theories in leadership literature (Smith et al., 2004), which point towards ethical orientation of leadership approach (Northouse, 2007). Some researchers view Burns' leadership study as the first theory that signifies ethics as a core characteristic of leadership behavior (Northouse, 2007). Whereas, Wart (2003) identified servant leadership theory by Robert Greenleaf as the first theory that pointed towards ethical orientation of leadership. Recently, the concept of ethical leadership has emerged which specifically focuses upon moral and ethical aspects of leadership behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006). In order to compare ethical leadership with other leadership styles in the perspective of ethics and morality. The following section provides a review of relevant literature regarding transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership and ethical leadership approaches.

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is the most extensively studied leadership theory for the last 30 years. As the theoretical work on leadership in 1970s was limited to traits, behaviors and situational theories and were failed to address qualities of effective leadership properly. In 1978 James MacGregor Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership and explained that it is not only related to a specific set of behaviors but as a process through which leaders and followers mutually uplift themselves to a higher level of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). Soon after, Bernard M. Bass in 1985 expanded the work of Burns transformational leadership idea to build a more refined theory known as Bass Transformational Leadership Theory. Therefore, in 1980s the transformational leadership emerged as a new and influential theory of leadership (Kotter, 1990).

Transformational leadership is most widely known for change oriented leadership at organizational, group and individual level of analysis with positive outcomes (Conger, 1999; Judge and Piccolo,2004; Khan et al., 2014; Lowe et al., 1996). These leaders are also able to improve organizational performance (Yasir et al., 2013). However, one of the main concern of a transformational leader is employees' moral development (Zohar and Tenne-Gazit, 2008). These leaders challenge their employees' ways of thinking, motivates them and inspire them by keeping in mind high moral standards and values that guide their performance (Bass et al., 2003). Consequently these leaders gain respect, trust, and admiration from their followers (Bass, 1985).

Currently, scholars continue to observe the core constructs of leadership and describe useful methods that may influence leadership success, and to decrease the level of unethical behavior in organizations (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Dinh et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Several scholars view ethical behavior to be the base of transformational leadership (Treviño et al., 2003), such as considering moral and ethical values while formulating an ideal vision for organization (Mendonca, 2006). Transformational leadership is also identified as a process through which leaders

and followers mutually uplift themselves to a higher level of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). These leaders act as a role model (Avolio and Bass, 2004) and if these leaders have ethical conduct, their followers will also have an ethical conduct (Calabrese and Roberts, 2001; Trevino et al., 2000). Therefore, transformational leaders must ensure that their subordinates are engaged in a behavior that looks beyond their self-interest and focuses upon a collective sense of mission.

Burns (1978) described transformational leadership based on four dimensions; charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and communication. Whereas, the most influential model by Bass (1985) describes transformational leadership into four main components as idealized influence or charismatic leadership, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. Podsakoff et al. (1990) model of transformational leadership consist of six components that are, articulating a vision, providing an appropriate role model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high-performance expectations, providing individualized support and intellectual stimulation.

Scholars also categorized transformational leadership into five components (Avolio and Bass, 2004): (a) Idealized influence (attributed) refers to whether a leader is perceived as ethical, confident, trust worthy, idealistic and charismatic; (b) idealized influence (behavior) refers to the charismatic actions of the leader that focuses on a collective sense of mission, beliefs and values; (c) intellectual stimulation comprises of critical thinking about solution of problems, and stimulating creativity; (d) individualized consideration is identified by providing supportive climate for individual development, growth and considering individual needs of followers; (e) inspirational motivation refers to leadership behavior that motivates followers by portraying optimism, inspires commitment to a shared vision, and communicates high expectations.

Carey (1992) identified that transformational leaders are likely to promote equality and justice and ensure that fairness exists in the organization. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) assert that transformational leaders must focus on the need to promote ethical procedures and policies, an organizational culture that encourages ethical practices and enforcement of ethical conduct. These authors identified that authentic-transformational leaders are different from pseudo-transformative leaders. Pseudo-transformational leaders are "deceptive and manipulative" and use their power primarily for their self-interest (p. 186). They are exploitive, power oriented, and self-consumed with warped moral values (Northouse, 2007). Whereas, authentic transformational leaders are genuine and honest, use their power to serve others and are more concerned about the welfare of their followers (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999).

2.2. Servant Leadership
It was Greenleaf (1977) who formulated and explained the concept of servant leadership theory. This approach view leaders as servant to their followers as Greenleaf asserts that the servant-leader is a servant first. The author also highlighted that a servant leader puts the needs, well-being and welfare of the followers first. Therefore, the main focus of servant leadership is to serve the interest of the followers first. In this regard, moral integrity has been identified central to servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Mittal and Dorfman, 2012; Wong et al., 2007). Scholars identified that servant leadership focuses on the well-being and collective human development of the followers rather than self-interest (Smith et al., 2004; Stone et al., 2003). Therefore, this leadership style has gained reputation in both public and private sector organizations because of its ethical component (Reinke, 2004).

Previous literature reveals several models of servant leadership (Parolini, 2004; Patterson, 2003; Russell and Stone, 2002; Winston, 2003; Wong and Page, 2003). Patterson (2003) asserts that servant leadership is a leadership process which is based on virtue. The author developed a model of servant leadership that encompasses seven virtuous constructs, which are: Vision, humility, agapao love, altruism, service, empowerment and trust. Based on Greenleaf's findings, Spears (2004) posits 10 characteristics that are central to servant leadership, which are: Empathy, healing, listening, persuasion, awareness, stewardship, foresight, conceptualization, building community and commitment to the growth of people. Therefore, these characteristics make servant leadership distinct from other leadership approaches.

According to Liden et al. (2008), servant leadership encompasses nine components: (a) Emotional healing refers to the act of exhibiting sensitivity to followers personal concerns; (b) empowering includes facilitating and encouraging followers; (c) creating value for the community refers to a genuine concern for helping the community; (d) helping subordinates grow and succeed includes showing genuine concern for followers development and growth by providing support; (e) servanthood refers to a desire to be known by followers as an individual who serves others first; (f) conceptual skills includes having adequate knowledge of the tasks and organization in order to effectively assist followers; (g) with relationships a servant leader makes a genuine effort to understand and support others, with an emphasis on fostering long-term relationships with followers; (h) behaving ethically refers to interacting honestly, openly and fairly with followers; (i) with putting subordinates first, a servant leader uses words and actions and makes it clear to the followers that satisfying their work needs is a top priority.

2.3. Authentic Leadership
The concept of authentic leadership has emerged nearly a decade ago (Gardner et al., 2011; Gill and Caza, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2008) which is mainly in response to numerous high-profile corporate scandals like WorldCom, Tyco and Lehman Brother, etc. Avolio et al. (2004) asserts that authentic leaders "act in accordance with deep personal values and convictions, to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers" (p. 806). Authentic leadership is an ethical, genuine and transparent form of leadership approach which is identified as a positive development in organizational research(Walumbwa et al., 2008) and is known as the root construct that serves as the base for all form of positive leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

Walumbwa et al. (2008) define authentic leadership as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive

psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (p. 94). Authentic leadership comprises of four components i.e., self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and an internalized moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Self-awareness refers to leaders understanding of their own values, weaknesses and strengths and their impact on others (Gill and Caza, 2015; Ilies et al., 2005). In relational transparency, a leader is supposed to express their genuine selves to others and openly share information (Gardner et al., 2005; Gill and Caza, 2015). While balanced processing refers to a leaders objectively analyzing all relevant information before making any decision (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Finally, the internalized moral perspective refers to a leader conduct which is being guided by internal morals and aligning their behavior with these values (Gill and Caza, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Authenticity has been identified as the base for all the four components of authentic leadership (Caza et al., 2010). Authenticity involves self-awareness and presenting one true self by expressing what an individual genuinely think and believes (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Starratt (2011) further highlighted that "being authentic does not mean being perfect; rather, it means owning and accepting oneself with whatever talents and whatever limitations and imperfections one has. It also means being 'up-front' in one's relationships, being present to the other person, being there in the now of the moment" (p. 91).

2.4. Ethical Leadership
The concept of ethical leadership is relatively new, but substantial amount of research on the notion is emerging (Bedi et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2005; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Yukl et al., 2013). This importance is mainly in response to several corporate scandals like Enron, Nortel, and AIG, etc. which has attracted scholars' attention to this topic. Brown et al. (2005) defines ethical leadership 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" (p. 120). These leaders are honest and fair individuals who use various forms of communication, rewards and punishment mechanisms to influence followers' behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders make it clear to their subordinates that upholding of ethics is an important organizational outcome (Mayer et al., 2010). These leaders influence ethical conduct of their followers by encouraging ethical behavior (Treviño et al., 2003). Ethical leaders consider ethics in mind while making any decisions, and are likely to enforce policies, procedures and practices that serve to uphold ethical behavior (Mayer et al., 2010). Thus, ethical leaders seek to influence subordinates by managing their ethical behaviors and attitudes (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

According to Brown et al. (2005) ethical leadership has two main components: (a) Moral person and (b) moral manager. As a moral person, ethical leaders demonstrates fairness, integrity, honesty, and fosters ethical awareness and are respectful of others; as a moral manager, ethical leaders hold subordinates accountable to comply with laws and regulations, establishes ethical expectations and make decisions in the best interest of employees and organization. Moreover, Resick et al. (2006) conceptualization of ethical leadership includes four components i.e., altruism, motivating, character and integrity, encouraging and empowering. Whereas, Kalshoven et al. (2011) conceptualization of ethical leadership includes seven components such as integrity, people oriented behavior, ethical guidance, concern for sustainability, role clarification, power sharing and fairness.

Kaptein et al. (2005) identified that ethical leaders can influence followers more positively by measuring the results of their actions and recommended surveying followers which will present the overall ethical condition of an organization. They further identified that "surveys can reveal the extent and possible consequences of unethical behavior in organizations and illuminate the characteristics of ethical leadership" (p. 303). Therefore, an ethical leader will then be able to determine their effectiveness of implementation of ethics. Moreover, Yukl (2010) suggested criteria for determining what type of leadership will be known as ethical (Table 1).

Yukl (2010) further argue that this criteria may not take into account all the dilemmas and complexities in evaluating ethical leadership. Therefore, it remains a question of debate that how various criteria can be applied in evaluating ethical leadership.

3. DISCUSSION

The current body of knowledge regarding ethical leadership is not the first to underline the importance of ethics for organizational leaders. Studies on transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) and authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) have previously focused on the significance of ethics for organizational leaders as discussed in the previous section. Moreover, this section will analyze transformational, servant, and authentic leadership approaches with ethical perspective and compare it with ethical leadership.

Scholars argue that transformational leaders can behave ethically or unethically and termed it as authentic (ethical) transformational and pseudo (unethical) transformational leadership (Barling et al., 2008). Authentic-transformational leaders functions with morality and emphasizes serving the organization. Whereas, pseudo-transformational leaders have intentions that are not legitimate and are egotistic (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). However, distinguishing between pseudo and authentic transformational leadership is difficult for the followers (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Because both can show the same behaviors but their intentions may vary (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002). Therefore, transformational leaders can be unethical if the power is misused (McClelland, 1975), if values do not match behaviors adequately (Price, 2003) or if the motivation is selfish (Bass, 1985). Moreover, ethical leaders use reward and punishment mechanisms, which is unlike transformational leadership style.

Table 1: Criteria for evaluating ethical leadership

Criterion	Unethical leadership	Ethical leadership
Use of leader power and influence	To satisfy personal needs and career objectives	To serve followers and the organization
Handling diverse interests of the multiple stakeholders	Favors coalition partners of who offer the most benefits	Attempts to balance and integrate them
Development of a vision for the organization	Attempts to sell a personal vision as the only way for the organization to succeed	Develops a vision based on follower input about their needs, values, and ideas
Integrity of leader behavior	Does what is expedient to attain personal objectives	Acts in a way that is consistent with espoused values
Risk taking in leader decisions and actions	Avoids necessary decisions or actions that involve personal risk to the leader	Is willing to take personal risks and actions to accomplish mission or achieve the vision
Communication of relevant information operations	Uses deception and distortion to bias follower perceptions about problems and progress	Makes a complete and timely disclosure of information about events, problems, and actions
Response to criticism and dissent by followers	Discourages and suppresses any criticism or dissent	Encourages critical evaluation to find better solutions
Development of follower self-confidence and skills	De-emphasizes development to keep followers weak and dependent on the leader	Uses coaching, mentoring, and training to develop followers

Source: Yukl (2010)

Servant leadership is also known to have focused on the significance of ethics for an organizational leader. Greenleaf (1977), who theorized servant leadership asserted that, "service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership" (p. 20). Yukl (2010) identified the differences between servant leadership and ethical leadership. The author asserts that the main concern of servant leaders is to develop, empower and protect followers. Whereas, the main concern of ethical leaders is to act and make decisions ethically, including rewarding ethical conduct and punishing or criticizing unethical conduct. Servant leadership focuses on the development and empowerment of followers, therefore, preferring their goals to those of organization (Graham, 1991). While, ethical leadership promotes a comprehension which focuses upon the ethical awareness not only towards the interaction with followers but also towards organizational strategies and goals (De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008).

Authentic leadership is described as knowing oneself and to behave in line with one true self (Sparrowe, 2005). Authentic leadership has emerged most recently, which some scholars assert to have ethical component (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; May et al., 2003). On the other hand, some scholars do not view ethics as an important element of authentic leadership (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). Hinojosa et al. (2014) identified that authentic leadership is positively related to, but empirically distinct from ethical leadership. One major distinction between ethical and authentic leader is that ethical leaders use transactional forms of leadership approach, whereas, authentic leaders don't (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Because, ethical leaders uses punishment and rewards mechanisms, which is unlike authentic leadership approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Transformational leaders, servant leaders and authentic leaders may or may not always be ethical depending upon their moral values. As ethics is not their central focus. Whereas, ethical leadership approach specifically emphasizes on ethics and morality; they ensure that ethical practices are carried out throughout the organization. Ethical leaders are fair and honest

individuals who use various forms of communication, punishment and rewards mechanisms to influence subordinates behavior which is unlike other (understudy) leadership styles. Therefore, scholars have started to consider ethical leadership as a separate leadership style rather than focusing only on ethical aspects of other leadership styles (Brown et al., 2005; Den Hartog and De Hoogh, 2009; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Yukl et al., 2013). Thus, it is recommended for the top-management of organizations to adopt and exhibit ethical leadership behavior.

Lastly, given the importance of the topic, further research is needed to understand the potential effectiveness of leadership in promoting ethical workplace behavior and preventing unethical and deviant behaviors in organizations. More importantly, further research is needed to assess the effects of ethical leadership in public sector organizations and how it can manage and reduce the occurrence of misconducts in government organizations (Hassan et al., 2014), there exists little empirical evidence in this context (Beeri et al., 2013; Huberts et al., 2007; Kolthoff et al., 2010). Moreover, in future a comparative study is recommended to investigate the effects of ethical leadership on subordinates' behavior in public and private sector counterparts. Lastly, followership plays a crucial role in the leadership process (Carsten and Uhl-Bien, 2012; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Thus, ethical followership will play an important role in ethical leadership process. Therefore, future research is needed to shed more light on the notion of ethical followership.

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