



Relationship between Ethics, Rule of Law and State Leadership

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Abstract: *The study of what is ethically good and bad, as well as what is morally correct and wrong, is known as ethics, also known as moral philosophy. A moral value system or theory is commonly used to refer to any system or theory of moral values or principles. Individuals who lead ethically act in accordance with a set of principles and values that the majority recognizes as a sound foundation for the common good. Integrity, respect, trust, fairness, transparency, and honesty are among them.*

Integrity is a crucial determinant of trust and a crucial concept for an understanding of governance. Ethics and state leadership policies should be focused on eliminating corruption and establishing strong ethical standards, which will serve to strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of people participating in state decision-making while also protecting the public interest.

This paper will analyze the role of personal ethics in leadership and how ethics helps people become more effective leaders. Understanding ethics, integrity, and motivation in order to act as a role model and build a plan of action for state leadership will be discussed, as well as the value of excellent leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionable integrity. Without it, no real success is possible.” – Dwight Eisenhower

According to history, the interest in leadership ethics is not a new phenomenon, People have always been interested in the ethics of leaders because, like it or not, leadership matters since it has the capacity to dramatically help or hinder people’s well-being. This is due to the fact that leadership is an essential component of the human experience and how we live and work together. History and philosophy shed light on the subject by revealing certain patterns of leadership behavior and themes about leadership and morality that have existed throughout history. They serve as a reminder that some of the most fundamental issues concerning the nature of leadership are inextricably linked to the human condition (Ciulla, 2018, p.303).

2. UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS ETHICS AND MORALITY

To really comprehend ethical leadership, it is necessary to first define the concepts of ethics and morality. Some people like to distinguish between these two concepts, stating that ethics is related to society ideals and morality is related to personal values. In practice, moral philosophy courses cover the same material as ethics courses. Regardless of their origins in different languages, these terms have a long history of being used interchangeably (Ciulla, 2020, p.5).

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In the online *Merriam Webster Dictionary* the word *moral* is defined as “of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior: ethical moral judgments”, “expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior”, “capable of right and wrong action” and the term *ethics* very similar to the term *moral*, is defined as “involving or expressing moral approval or disapproval *ethical* judgments” or “conforming to accepted standards of conduct *ethical* behavior” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

To summarize, morality and ethics are concerned with what is right or wrong, good or terrible. They are about values and standards that people care deeply about because there are important interests at stake that influence the community of which they are a part. Values and standards serve as the foundation for judgment and decision-making. However, the responsibilities they serve are distinct. A “value” is a notion or attribute that helps us make decisions about what is good, right, attractive, or praiseworthy. Thus, values influence individual and societal action choices. (Huberts, 2018).

The study of ethics and the history of ideas assist us in understanding two overarching and overlapping questions that drive the major part of leadership research. They are as follows: What is leadership? And what exactly is good leadership? One is a question about what leadership is, and the other is a descriptive question. The other is a normative question about what leadership should be. In the literature, these two questions are sometimes mixed up. The ability of scholars in the field to integrate the answers to these questions is critical to the advancement of leadership studies. American philosopher, Joanne Ciulla says that “the moral triumphs and failures of leaders carry a greater weight and volume than those of nonleaders.” The study of ethics is concerned with human relationships. It is about what we should do and how we should act as human beings, members of a group or society, and in the various roles, we play in life. It is about what is right and wrong, what is good and what is evil. Leadership is a special kind of human relationship. Power and/or influence, vision, obligation, and responsibility are some attributes of this relationship (Ciulla, 2018, p.302).

History is replete with leaders who did not believe they were held to the same moral standards as the rest of society in terms of honesty, propriety, and so on. One explanation is so obvious that it has become cliché: power corrupts. The first and most obvious feature of the power-virtue relationship is that leaders typically have more power or a different type of power and influence than followers. A leader’s position, expertise, personality, or charisma can all provide him or her with power. Leaders use persuasion, personal or political networks, coercion, or rewards to influence others. Power has the potential to cause a slew of ethical quandaries, ranging from what it is used for to how it is wielded. The more power leaders wield, the more accountable they are for what they do and do not do.

Consider, for example, Plato’s ‘Ring of Gyges.’ When given a ring, a shepherd named Gyges becomes invisible. The story literally and figuratively raises the transparency question: would you be moral if you had the power to be invisible? Plato’s ‘Ring of Gyges’ is telling a story of how a just man if given a ring that makes him invisible starts to act unjustly with no fear of reprisal. Would you be moral if no one was watching? Leadership is slightly like having the ring of Gyges. No one can deny, that even the justest man would behave unjustly if he had this ring (Plato, 1992).

3. THE RULE OF LAW AND LEADERSHIP

The rule of law is a crucial political moral ideal. It is, however, solely one of many principles, such as sovereignty and human rights, social fairness and social protection, economic freedom, or democracy. The rule of law literally means that the law should govern. Everyone is obligated to obey it, and everyone is held accountable to it: the law is the supreme authority. The rule of law tries to limit and restrain political power by making the government and official authorities accountable to the law. General, explicit, and relatively consistent norms must be used to implement the state's political acts and actions (Deinhammer, 2019).

People in a rule-of-law state can rely on the fact that political action is bound by promulgated, future, and relatively unchanging laws. As a result, politics becomes more predictable. One can predict how the state will react to one's own decisions and actions. This element of predictability is essential for making long-term planning and developing a life strategy. According to this viewpoint, the rule of law, as Hayek pointed out, is beneficial to individual and economic liberty (Hayek, 1960).

4. TOWARDS A DEFINITION FOR INTEGRITY

Integrity is paramount in leadership. A discussion paper from the Smith School of Business Centre for Social Impact written by Katheryn Christie and Kehoe Fellow found out that a consistent theme in the downfall of the many senior leadership executives who have been in the media for scandal and illegal activity has been their lack of integrity and their inability to lead according to a moral set of values. For years, the definition of integrity has been hotly debated in theory and practice. The definition of integrity is beginning to take shape as researchers and practitioners work to bridge the gap between Merriam-Webster and what happens in practice (Christie & Fellow, Smith School of Business Centre for Social Impact).

Merriam-Webster defines integrity as: "a firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values". Integrity is much more than a value. Values, as a essential components of successful leadership are defined by Merriam-Webster as "a person's principles or standards of behavior and one's judgments of what is important in life" (Choi & Wang, 2007).

With this knowledge, we can consider integrity to be the missing piece of the puzzle that gives meaning to one's values. It is one thing to have a strong set of core values as a leader, but it is quite another to have strong moral values, share them, and act consistently in accordance with them on a daily basis. As a result, the latter is the true embodiment of integrity.

Three key methods in which followers assess their leader's integrity are laws, codes of conduct, and ethical standards, as well as informal norms and values. Ethical behavior is a process of contemplation and collective activity that concerns an individual's moral behavior based on an established and articulated set of personal ideals. (Bishop, 2013). There has been a lot of research done on the effectiveness of ethical leadership. However, in comparison to the outcomes of ethical leadership, we still don't know enough about the mechanisms that underpin ethical leadership (Zhang, Zhou and Mao, 2018).

"Integrity" is becoming an increasingly prominent notion in government and governance studies, as well as in policymaking at all levels. A variety of basic problems about integrity are

addressed in this contribution to the magazine *Public Integrity*, whose name reflects the importance of the topic. What is the meaning of the intriguing idea of “integrity?” is the key question.

Everybody desires it, but what exactly is being longed for and talked about? As noted previously, integrity is an essential concept in understanding governance. Not as a replacement for many challenging “ethics theories and approaches” in the field, but as a complement to existing “approaches” and theory development. This assumes the importance of moral values and norms in describing and explaining governance actors’ behavior. That should be a challenging topic for future research that presumes an “empirical turn” in research that already focuses on ethics and integrity.

Even though leaders usually bring about change or are successful in their endeavors, the ethical questions lurking in the shadows are those found in the various definitions mentioned earlier. What were the intentions of the leader? What was the leader’s strategy for bringing about change? Was the change itself beneficial? A successful leader is both ethical and effective (Ciulla, 1995). Though this may appear to be obvious, the problem would be that we do not always find ethics and effectiveness in the same leader.

In-depth interviews with 121 local political leaders from 65 local authorities in the UK were conducted as part of a qualitative study to determine how ethical leadership practices can restore public trust in political leaders. According to the findings of the study, being a moral person, an ethical political leader sets good examples of behavior, sets the tone at the top, challenges those who do not behave ethically, and encourages, supports, and rewards those who perform and conduct themselves well. As a result, public trust in political leaders is likely to grow gradually. The study also examined ethical leadership practices in the context of a code of conduct, being a moral person, and being a moral leader, taking a three-pillar approach to ethical leadership. Because morality can refer to personal, social, and religious values, a code of conduct or social mores (or norms) from society, or a standard (goodness and rightness) that an individual believes, accepts and applies, the terms ethics and morality are used interchangeably. They employed qualitative analysis in the study to explain how distinct characteristics of ethical leadership (code of conduct, moral person, and moral leader) affect public trust. Without other social processes, ethical codes appear to be insufficient to effect change. The study establishes how the moral person dimension has an influence on the moral leader dimension of ethical leadership (Mozumder, 2021).

Studies on public leadership (e.g., Downe et al., 2013; Mozumder, 2018) have begun to uncover a link between value-based leadership practices and codes of conduct and the impact they have on followers’ behaviors and cognitions. The codified framework specifies how a government and its society operate, as well as the behaviors and acts that individuals are required to follow, whereas ethics dictate what individuals should do. Ethical leadership stems from a person’s moral sensibility. The study also discovered that ethical leadership is more than just following the regulations (and rules); it also requires a personal moral framework to act as a role model by establishing an example and a tone at the top. The study’s findings show how ethical leaders can integrate personal moral frameworks and formal regulatory systems with social learning processes, demonstrating the explanatory potential of moral leadership (Mozumder, 2021).

The study’s main results are that ethical leadership is important in politics and that ethical leadership principles like honesty, honoring promises, caring for others, and connecting with the

public can help recover some of the trust that has been lost. Role modeling (setting positive examples) is one way for political leaders to influence the behavior of their colleagues and citizens. This is especially true for individuals who are new to politics. Public perceptions of political leaders' qualities such as honesty, candor, honoring commitments, fairness, and concern for others are likely to have an impact on public trust.

Trust is an important component of political capital (Kjaer, 2013). When our words and actions do not coincide, trust erodes. When politicians promise the public something in order to get elected, and it later becomes clear that they can't or won't do what they promised, it has a significant impact on trust.

Political philosophers and scientists have elaborated their thoughts about the relationship between ethics and politics. Walzer in his article "Political action: The problem of dirty hands" says that, "both dirty hands and moral dilemma challenge the idea that moral values are absolute." "The question is whether we need extremely moralized politics, which tends to utopianism, or extremely politicized morality, which tends to abandon authentic morality entirely. We need to strike a balance by identifying the essential elements of an ethical standard; understanding this could help us reduce tensions between morality and politics" (Walzer, 1973, p 170).

Ethical political leadership in a democracy can be characterized as a sociopolitical process in which leaders are duly elected, led by principles, motivated by public ideals and trust, and acting within the socio-legal framework to influence citizens' lives. Two crucial components of ethical political leadership are public values (or public interests) and trust. Trust is defined as a "psychological state characterized by the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's intentions or behavior." (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). The level of trust citizens have in their elected representatives to act appropriately and honestly in the public interest rather than self-interest is referred to as trust in political leaders (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). For a democratic government to function effectively, citizens must have faith in its leaders (Beerbohm, 2015).

In Elderman Trust Barometer Report in 2022, titled "The Cycle of distrust" it is shown that, there have been a number of high-profile cases of allegedly unethical leadership behavior and procedures recently. The public's trust in political leaders and government has been eroded as a result of these events across the globe. Although faith in government is regarded as essential for the successful functioning of democracy, trust in political leaders and government is at an all-time low. The public's lack of trust in politicians is well documented.

Gardner (1989) in his working paper "The Moral Aspect of Leadership states, and we should all agree that "We should hope that our leaders will keep alive values that are not so easy to embed in laws—our caring for others, about honor and integrity, about tolerance and mutual respect, and about human fulfillment within a framework of values" (Gardner, 1990, p. 77).

In a variety of different ways, a state leader can have a big impact on how their integrity is judged. As a state leader, you can proclaim and practice integrity that will develop enduring trust by knowing your values and what is expected of you, by showing your values, and by leading through your principles.

5. CONCLUSION

In his book “Nicomachean Ethics” Aristotle in 350 B.C. wrote that “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence” or in short “happiness is the end to which we aim in life”. Aristotle’s Greek word for happiness is *eudaimonea*. It refers to happiness as flourishing rather than pleasure or comfort. A happy life is one in which we flourish as human beings, both materially and personally, as well as morally. The concept of *eudaimonea* provides us with two broad issues that can be utilized to evaluate the overall ethics and efficiency of leadership.

We will have a better understanding of state leadership if we investigate how ethics and morality are closely linked. Ethics as a philosophic subject provides a critical lens through which we can investigate the assumptions that underpin governmental leadership.

When we evaluate all of the definitions and studies undertaken by different researchers on this topic, we conclude that ethical state leadership comprises the ability of leaders to uphold essential moral ideals such as care and respect for others, fairness, and honesty.

John C. Maxwell said that “A leader is one who knows the way, shows the way and goes the way”. State Leaders should be driven by the so called moral compass. Cambridge dictionary defines moral compass as “a natural feeling that makes people know what is right and wrong and how they should behave” or as it is defined in dictionary.com “the person’s ability to judge what is right and wrong and act accordingly”. Another definition that is also relevant to the topic is that moral compass is also “a set of values that guides our decision-making, affects our actions, and defines us as a person“ (Ponio, 2021).

In essence, a moral compass is just as its name suggests. All human beings are born with a moral compass. We all have that innate sense of what is right and wrong. It points us in the right direction. Maybe some of us, or some of our state leaders have different definitions of right and wrong, but our moral compass should defiantly provide an objective standard and help them see what is right and wrong.

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