

Relative Importance Index (RII) of Ethical Leadership Practices Among Academic Staff in Public Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

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Abstract: The pinnacle of every country's literacy and the foundation of knowledge creation and management are Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs). Widespread ethical problems are threatening HLIs. Accepting payment or presents in return for grades, utilizing other forms of academic fraud, harassing faculty, staff, and students in a sexual manner both inside and outside of the classroom, abusing power, and plagiarizing are all examples of academic fraud. These moral issues put HLIs in danger and result in the hiring of students who lack the necessary skills. Tanzania's public HLIs were the subject of this study's investigation of ethical leadership practices. The study's target population consisted of 4863 academic staff members at public HLIs in Tanzania. A sample of 350 respondents was drawn from this group using a stratified simple random sampling technique. The input provided by the respondents was examined using the Microsoft Excel application. Relative index analysis was used in this study to order the criteria according to their relative importance. The calculation of the Relative Relevance Index (RII) is important to this study because the outcome shows the ranking level of relevance. It is especially useful for surveys using a Likert scale. The overall findings demonstrate that ethical leadership behaviors in all areas (role clarity, power sharing, integrity, ethical guidance, and fairness) scored Medium-High (M-H), with the highest overall ranking of 0.7 and above. None of the moral behavior received a Higher (0.8) or higher rating. Seven (7) factors received a Medium (0.6) ranking.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Higher Learning Institutions, Academic Staff

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INTRODUCTION

A growing number of unethical incidents and cases that occurred in our society occasionally come to our attention. Scandals involving unethical behavior might take the form of fraud, bribery, or corruption (Heyneman, 2015). Although the severity may vary from one area to another, these three widespread malpractices can occur in any industry. Previous research has shown that one of the issues facing higher education around the world is academic dishonesty or unethical behavior (Ishak et al., 2019). Numerous types of academic dishonesty and cheating behavior in education have been examined in prior studies (James & Keenan, 2019; Denisova-Schmidt, 2018; Chapman, & Lindner, 2016; Ishak et al., 2019). A number of issues with higher education around the world, including academic dishonesty or unethical behavior have been revealed. Examples include receiving cash or gifts in exchange for grades, engaging in various forms of cheating, sexually harassing faculty, staff, and students in and outside of the classroom, abusing power, and plagiarizing (Robie & Keeping 2004). In order to promote global citizenship and a sustainable world, Poff (2010) suggested that ethical leadership and values in HEIs are essential for the development of ethical leaders. Universities also have a role in educating the next generation of leaders in moral principles. The duty of the professors and teachers in this situation is crucial in order to overcoming academic dishonesty,

The importance of ethical leadership has been emphasized more recently, according to academics, as a way for leaders to capitalize on their workforce's positive attitudes toward their work, including excellent academic performance, job satisfaction, and good work performance (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). According to earlier studies (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Zhang et al., 2013; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2010), ethical leadership is a significant predictor of decreased deviant behavior, reduced job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, improved leaders-follower relationships, innovation, and organizational optimism.

Human values like compassion, sharing, and respect for life and one another are some of those connected to ethical leadership. Along with these values, academic institutions should uphold integrity and justice for all people. When considering ethical leadership in African colleges, both private and public, commitment and accountability are other desirable characteristics of any leader, and these cannot be left out. Academic institutions may only provide students and other stakeholders with high-quality services based on moral principles and good moral judgment when making decisions that have an impact on their lives by applying ethical principles.

In the United Republic of Tanzania's public sector, the words honesty, ethics, righteousness, morality, fairness, uprightness, principle, sincerity, and reliability have all been used interchangeably with the concept of integrity. The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) has been implementing public sector reforms since the 1990s. Improved public service efficiency, effectiveness, quality, timeliness, and integrity were the goals of the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRPF) of 1991–1999, the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) of 1997, and the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) of 2000–2012. As part of public reforms aimed at enhancing integrity in the conduct of public service, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania passed the Public Service Act (Cap 298 R.E, 2019), the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act (CAP 398 R.E, 2020), and the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Public Servants of 2005. As part of the integrity assessment process, public sector executives sign a statement of property ownership in their individual positions.

To enhance the ethical leadership of persons in positions of responsibility in Tanzanian public HLIs, a lot of work has been done. These include the adoption of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Cap 398 and the Code of Ethics and Conduct 2005, both of which were passed by the government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Other initiatives taken by the government of the

United Republic of Tanzania include encouraging ethics education and establishing commitments to ethics in government leadership. However, there is a lack of sufficient factual information regarding the moral conduct of government employees in HLIs. Therefore, this study looked at ethical leadership practices in Tanzanian public HLIs

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The theory of social conduct is called the Social Exchange Theory (SET). According to this view, ethical leadership involves social exchange. This theory's fundamental premise holds that followers can respond to a high-quality relationship depending on whom they interact with and how they interact with them (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Reciprocity is the underlying tenet of this ideology. The concept of reciprocity refers to the practice of rewarding kindness and punishing cruelty. According to the hypothesis, we return favors received from others (Su et al., 2021). The behavioral reaction to an action that is viewed as either kind or unkind is what the social exchange theory models as reciprocal action. In accordance with this idea, results are obtained when a self-interested person exchanges with other parties. The exchange connection would end if the two parties discovered that the exchange was not reciprocal. The positive reciprocity principle states that people often try to build social connections based on cooperative behavior and reciprocal standards (Miles et al., 2017). Social exchange theory and moral leadership have been linked, according to Brown et al. (2005). Employees view ethical leaders as admirable individuals who can be relied upon and respected. According to this idea, upholding proper conduct is viewed as a social exchange since workers will perceive social gains from HLIs leaders who act in a kind, fair, caring, and trustworthy manner toward their subordinates. Employees in HLIs who receive financial and emotional support from HLI leaders will feel obligated to repay the HLIs, which will improve performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to earlier research, when an ethical leader demonstrates high levels of

honesty, compassion, and respect, employees are more likely to show high levels of commitment and better performance (Shafique et al., 2018). According to many academics (Brown et al., 2005; Hassan et al., 2016; Su et al., 2018), moral leadership improves workers' work results through the process of social exchange.

Ethical Leadership Dimensions

Fairness

Fairness entails acting with honesty and integrity, making moral decisions, and treating employees with respect. Fairness is regarded as a crucial component of moral leadership. According to Trevino et al. (2003), De Hoogh & Den Hartog (2008), Brown et al. (2005), and other authors, a leader is considered to be ethical when he makes principled and fair decisions, doesn't discriminate against his subordinates, doesn't show favoritism, is honest and trustworthy, and accepts responsibility for his deeds. Based on the premise that fairness is established when leaders treat employees fairly and with regard, SET analyzes ethical leadership from a social exchange perspective (Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2009; Su et al., 2021). When workers are treated equitably, they believe their leaders are moral and care about them (Kalshoven et al., 2013). According to Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) and Ng & Feldman (2015), this motivates workers to give their all to the boss and the task and feel obligated to reciprocate by putting in the significant extra effort.

Role Clarification

The act of articulating the roles through which employees' sets of activities are defined is known as role clarification (Onuoha et al., 2016). The ethical leader's responsibility in this area is to make performance objectives and goals clear to the workforce. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) confirmed, based on this dimension, that role clarification is a crucial component of ethical leadership because it explains performance goals and expectations (open communications between leaders and employees) and draws a contrast between the duties of employees. Based on SET,

ethical leaders will influence positive behavior and ethics-related outcomes if they provide clear performance goals and expectations for their team members and differentiate between their various job functions. An ethical leader explains roles, performance objectives, and expectations so that employees are aware of what is expected of them. Additionally, open communication between managers and staff members enables workers to understand how they may significantly contribute to the achievement of objectives, thereby enhancing both personal and organizational performance. This study makes the case that if HLI executives have clear performance goals and expectations, they will also help staff members understand their roles. Employees learn the details of the duties, tasks, and responsibilities they must carry out in the course of their work. HLIs leaders should participate in open communication and transparency regarding the performance goals, duties, and expectations in order to ensure that staff are aware of their tasks. Employees in HLIs will be aware of expectations if aims and objectives are made clear to them. Employee performance will improve as a result of the ability to complete duties more successfully.

Power Sharing

Power sharing is the practice of including and empowering employees to take part in decision-making on issues that have an impact on their work. Making wise decisions for the organization is the duty of leaders. Power sharing, according to the literature on ethical leadership, is giving employees the chance to participate in decision-making and hearing their opinions (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009). It gives workers a voice (Brown et al., 2005) and gives them greater control so they are less reliant on their managers (Yukl et al., 2006). According to Judge & Gennard (2010), power-sharing refers to how much a leader involves subordinates in important organizational decisions. Participatory decision-making is another name for power sharing. According to the theory of ethical leadership, when leaders exhibit particular behaviors, attributes, and decision-making patterns, they are viewed as moral people. The

relevant actions demonstrate care for the morality and openness of the personnel. According to De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2009), moral leaders should provide their staff members more opportunities to engage in decision-making, listen to their opinions, give them a voice, and give them more autonomy so they are less reliant on them. The sharing of power in HLIs will encourage improved decision-making since employees will express their ideas and opinions (Akram, 2015). Power sharing will also help employees perform their jobs more effectively and get more experience. It will also help to break up the monotony and raise commitment and efficiency (Oyebamiji, 2018). When establishing how strongly participatory decision-making affects performance, it is vital to take into account the extent to which employees feel they or their work departments can participate effectively (Akram, 2015).

Integrity

Being truthful and honest is the definition of integrity. It involves upholding one's word, earning trust, and remaining true to oneself in good times and bad (Brown et al., 2005; Caza et al., 2015). Based on SET, it is considered that when their leaders treat them fairly and with integrity, employees are willing to respond to positive behavior (Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2009; Su et al., 2021). Employees who believe their managers have good moral character are more likely to be dedicated to them and their work and feel obligated to give their all, which improves performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2015). According to literature by Fulmer & Gelfand (2012), when followers have confidence in the leader, it increases employee satisfaction. According to a study by Simons et al. (2015), there is a strong correlation between behavioral integrity and employees' performance because it fosters employees' faith in their leaders, which in turn motivates them to perform well in their roles. Employees who believe their leaders have high integrity report clearer communication with their leaders, which helps them grasp what is required of them and increases in-role performance, according to a study by Palanski &

Yammarino (2011). This study makes the case that when HLI executives behave honorably, employees will become more committed to the leader and the job and feel obligated to reciprocate by putting in substantial extra effort, which will improve performance. Additionally, the study contends that staff members who regard their managers as having good moral character are more likely to support their goals and vision and, as a result, are better able to contribute to performance.

Ethical Guidance

According to Yukl (2013), Trevio et al. (2003), Brown et al. (2005), and other authors, ethical guidance entails discussing ethics with subordinates, outlining ethical principles, and encouraging and rewarding moral behavior. Rules, standards, and codes of conduct are established by leaders and serve as guidelines for moral conduct (Yukl, 2013). Through communication, leaders help their followers become more conscious of these rules. According to Trevio et al. (2003), moral leaders employ rewards and penalties to make sure their followers take responsibility for their conduct. According to SLT, employees learn not just from their own experiences but also from seeing the acts of others and the results of those activities. As followers imitate their leaders, ethical behavior is presumably diffused throughout the organization as leaders serve as role models, drawing followers' attention to their ethical practices and standards of decision-making. Additionally, Brown et al. (2005) claimed that moral leaders should establish moral norms, commend moral behavior, and punish indiscreet behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the ethical leadership practices of academic staff in public Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) in Tanzania. Quantitative methodologies were adopted in this study. Specifically, the study adopted a quantitative survey. Quantitative methodology was used to test the applicability of ethical leadership in public HLIs in Tanzania. For the study, eleven (11) fully operational, accredited public HLIs were used. The institutions are; the University of Dodoma (UDOM), Mzumbe

University (MU), University of Dar-es-Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), State University of Zanzibar (SUZA), Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), Ardhi University (ARU), Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST), Moshi Cooperative University (MoCU). The researcher requested a list of every member of the academic staff at each HLI in order to obtain a representative sample of the population. Purposive and stratified simple random sampling methods were used to sample a total of respondents. Three hundred and fifty (350) members of the academic staff were collected using stratified simple random sampling. To gather primary data, closed-ended questionnaires were employed. A 5-point Likert scale was utilized in conjunction with the closed-ended survey that included an attitude scale. The Ethical Leadership Work (ELW) Questionnaire by Kalshoven et al. (2011) was used by the researcher as the ethical leadership questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Using the Microsoft Excel tool, the respondents' feedback was analyzed. Two portions of the analysis—demographic and relative importance index analysis—were created based on the information provided in the questionnaires. In order to rank the criteria according to their relative importance, relative index analysis was chosen for this study. Last but not least, the Relative Relevance Index (RII) calculation is significant to this study because its result indicates the ranked degree of relevance. It is particularly beneficial for surveys that employ a Likert scale. To calculate the relative index, apply the formula below.

$$RI = \sum \frac{W}{A \times N}$$

Where w represents the weighting that each respondent assigned, using a scale of one to five, with five representing the highest

weighting. A carries the most weight and the sample's overall count is N. The weighted average for the two groups will be established using the ranking (R) of relative indices (RI). Five significant levels are derived from RI values, according to Akadiri (2011): high (H) (0.8 RI 1), high-medium (H-M) (0.6 RI 0.8), medium (M) (0.4 RI 0.6), medium-low (M-L) (0.2 RI 0.4), and low (L) (0 RI 0.2).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

The distribution of the sampled academic staff, by working experience and title, is shown in Table 1. In public HLIs, 41% of the academic staff had worked there for more than ten (10) years, 22% had worked there for between four and six years, and 22% had worked there for between seven and nine years. With only 15.4% of the overall sample, academic staff performance with three (3) years of job experience was comparatively low. Additionally, Table 1 demonstrates that the sample was primarily made up of academic personnel with ten or more years of professional experience. Additionally, the sampled respondents' percentage of academic staff with three years of experience in the workforce was quite low.

The distribution of the sampled academic personnel by designation is also shown in Table 1. Full professors and associate professors make up around 3% and 6% of the academic personnel, respectively. Table 1 also reveals that lecturers and assistant lecturers, who made up about 31% and 37% of the sampled academic personnel, had higher proportions. Additionally, the sample of academic staff members showed that just 10.3% of them were tutorial assistants.

Working Experience in Years	Frequency	Percentage
3 years	54	15.4
4-6 years	77	22.0
7-9 years	76	21.7
10 and above	143	40.9
Total	350	100
Designation		
Tutorial Assistants	36	10.3
Assistant Lecturer	129	36.9
Lecturer	108	30.9
Senior Lecturer	48	13.7
Associate Professor	20	5.7
Full Professor	9	2.6
Total	350	100

Relative Importance Index Analysis

All predictor factors (power sharing, role clarity, ethical advice, integrity, and fairness) and outcome variables (achievement in teaching, research, and consulting) were evaluated for Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients. All variables have internal consistency values of at least 0.7, according to Table 2. This demonstrates that the data have strong internal consistency reliability and that every variable was suited for analysis and none of the variables were discarded. As defined by Cronbach's alpha, the variable is only acceptable if more significant than 0.7, making = 0.7 and above in this circumstance reliable (Siswaningsih, 2017). The internal consistency reliability is determined by Cronbach's alpha, which uses the following criteria: Excellent (>0.9), Good (0.70.9), Acceptable (0.60.7), Acceptable (0.60.7), Poor (0.50.6), and Unacceptable (0.5).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Table

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Power Sharing	6	0.830
Role Clarification	7	0.934
Integrity	4	0.937
Ethical Guidance	7	0.923
Fairness	6	0.874
Teaching	8	0.921
Research	5	0.832
Consultancy	8	0.868

A relative index analysis was used to estimate the relative significance of ethical leadership behaviors among HLLs leaders. According to the analysis of the relative

index, Table 3 shows the rankings for each category. The overall findings demonstrate that ethical leadership behaviors in all areas (role clarity, power sharing, integrity, ethical guidance, and fairness) scored Medium-High (M-H), with the highest overall ranking of 0.7 and above. None of the moral behavior received a Higher (0.8) or higher rating. Seven (7) factors received a Medium (0.6) ranking. Multiple significant theoretical implications are made by this study's findings. Given that the ethical leadership standards used in public HLLs rely on the nature of the university, information can have an impact on the personality of HLL leaders. Assessing the ethical leadership methods used by public figures in HLLs in Tanzania could give HLLs insight into how to raise their ethical standards

Table 3: Ranking of ethical leadership practices in public HLLs in Tanzania

Ethical Leadership	RII	Rank	Importance Level
Role Clarification			
Explains responsibilities and his expectation to the employees'	0.762	1	H-M
Clarifies priorities.	0.761	2	H-M
Explains what is expected of each group member	0.759	3	H-M
Clarifies who is responsible for what	0.759	4	H-M
Indicates what the performance expectations of each employee	0.753	5	H-M
Indicates performance expectations of each group member	0.751	6	H-M
Explains what is expected of me and my fellow staff members	0.750	7	H-M
Power Sharing			
Allow others to participate in decision making	0.787	1	H-M
Permits me to set my own performance goals	0.753	2	H-M
Will reconsider decisions on the basis of recommendations given	0.727	3	H-M
Seeks advice from subordinates concerning organizational strategy	0.711	4	H-M
Allows subordinates to influence critical decisions	0.698	5	M
Delegates challenging responsibilities to subordinates	0.645	6	M
Integrity			
Can be trusted to do the things he/she says	0.783	1	H-M
Keeps his/her words	0.775	2	H-M
Can be relied on to honor his/her commitments	0.774	3	H-M
Keeps his/her promises	0.750	4	H-M
Ethical guidance			
Explains what is expected from employees in terms of behaving with ethics	0.758	1	H-M
Clearly explains ethical-related codes of conduct	0.739	2	H-M
Clarifies ethical guidelines	0.737	3	H-M
Ensures that employees follow codes of conduct	0.737	4	H-M

Clarifies the likely consequences of possible unethical behavior to subordinates	0.735	5	H-M
Stimulates the discussion of code of conduct issues among employees	0.689	6	M
Compliments employees who behave according to the ethical guideline	0.685	7	M
Fairness			
Does not hold me responsible for work that I have no control over	0.772	1	H-M
Does not manipulate subordinates	0.745	2	H-M
Does not pursue his/her own success at the expense of others	0.725	3	H-M
Does not hold me responsible for things that are not my fault	0.693	4	M
Does not hold me accountable for problems over which I have no control	0.680	5	M
Is focused mainly on reaching the organizational own goals	0.645	6	M

CONCLUSION

This describes the ethical leadership practices in public HLIs in Tanzania. A total of 30 ethical leadership behavior under five ethical leadership dimensions were identified. The item questionnaire was adopted from Kalshoven et al. (2011). The relative ranking of ethical leadership behavior was calculated using a relative index analysis, which transformed all of the discovered ethical behaviors' numerical scores. These rankings allowed the researcher to compare how respondents viewed the relative relevance of ethical behavior. According to a ranking analysis, all moral behavior in Tanzania's public HLIs was emphasized at "high-medium" or medium-important levels. There were seven ethical behaviors emphasized at the "medium" important level and a total of 23 ethical behaviors marked at the "high-medium" important level. The results from this study can be used by education experts and higher education leaders to improve ethical leadership practices for better HLI service delivery.

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