

A Virtue-Based Approach to Ethical Leadership

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Adding Ethics to Leadership

- ✦ Concern over ethics in business, government, nonprofits
- ✦ Most leadership theories do not take into account ethics/morality
- ✦ Leadership ethics tends to be behaviorally-focused rather than theoretically based

Ethics in Transformational & Charismatic Leadership

- ✦ Burns (1978) concept of “morally uplifting” leaders
- ✦ Conger’s (1990) notion of the “dark side” of charisma [the “Hitler Question”]
- ✦ Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) ethics and “authentic” transformational leadership

Components of Transformational Leadership

- ✦ *Idealized Influence* - serving as positive role models for followers ("walking the talk").
- ✦ *Inspirational Motivation* - motivate and inspire followers by providing meaning and challenge.
- ✦ *Intellectual Stimulation* - stimulate followers to be creative/innovative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and devising new solutions.
- ✦ *Individualized Consideration* - paying special attention to followers' needs and concerns; developing followers via mentoring/coaching

New Leadership Theories Incorporating Ethics

- ✦ Authentic Leadership Theory (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, et al)
 - ✦ **Self-Awareness** (understanding of strengths/weaknesses)
 - ✦ **Relational Transparency** (presenting an authentic self; control emotions)
 - ✦ **Balanced Processing** (objectivity)
 - ✦ **Internalized Moral Perspective** (holds to internal moral standards)

New Leadership Theories Incorporating Ethics (cont.)

- ✦ Fry's "Spiritual Leadership" Theory
 - ✦ Shared vision
 - ✦ Altruistic love/values (wholeness, harmony, sense of well-being)
 - ✦ Hope/Faith (fostering motivation and trust)
- ✦ These impact "Calling" and a sense of "Membership"

Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

- ✦ **Prudence** - wisdom; using good judgment, taking counsel
- ✦ **Fortitude** - courage; perseverance and persistence (for a noble cause)
- ✦ **Temperance** - moderation; humility; knowing one's deficiencies
- ✦ **Justice** - fairness; unselfishness

Development of the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire

- ✦ Began with detailed descriptions of the virtues (Marroosis)
- ✦ Creation of items (Riggio & Reina)
- ✦ "Q-sort" by philosophers
- ✦ Item analyses/factor analyses
- ✦ "Known groups" analysis
- ✦ Convergent & Discriminant Validity

Sample Items: Ethical Leadership Questionnaire

- ✦ Does as he/she ought to do in a given situation (P)
- ✦ Learns from past..makes effort to improve...(P)
- ✦ Will put job on line to do the right thing (F)
- ✦ Maintains strong moral judgment ... in face of adversity (F)
- ✦ Is concerned about the good of the entire group...not just for him/herself (T)
- ✦ Successfully regulates personal desires...makes the best decision for the organization as a whole (T)
- ✦ Gives credit to others when credit is due (J)
- ✦ Respects the rights and integrity of others (J)

Intercorrelations Among Ethical Leadership Measures

- ✦ ELQ correlates highly ($r = .83-.88$) with Transformational, Authentic, and Ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino)
- ✦ ELQ correlates negatively ($r = -.56$ to $-.68$) with narcissism and laissez-faire leadership
- ✦ Unrelated to leadership “level” and tenure

Other Results

- ✦ Interestingly, there is “robustness” to ethical leadership measures; subscales intercorrelate, unitary factor structures persist
- ✦ ELQ correlates highly with follower sense of empowerment and organizational identity (same source)

Implications for Research and Leader Development

- ★ Uses existing (ancient) theory to drive measurement of ethical leadership; merges philosophy and management psychology
- ★ Results suggest that general impressions of leader ethicality are important and affect follower outcomes
- ★ 360-feedback on ethicality might be an important component of leader development (although controversial)
- ★ Character can be developed (Aristotle)