

## Factors that Influence Followers to Be a Future Ethical Leader

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### Abstract

*This literature review study connects such elements to relevant ethical theories (such as utilitarianism, libertarianism, Kant's ethical theory, and fairness and justice), focusing on the characteristics that empower people to become future ethical leaders. This research attempts to investigate the idea of ethical leadership, the significance of ethical leadership in an organization, determining components to be an ethical leader, and strategies to turn followers into ethical leaders from the intersection of the literature reviews on ethics and leadership. A major research question directed the study: what are the factors that inspire followers to become future ethical leaders? Based on data found from the various books and articles, different databases and a list of keywords used during the search. According to the research outcomes, two key influences—(a) an individual's moral worldview and (b) organizational culture and ethics—can motivate followers to become moral leaders. Family influences, religious conviction, educational institutions, peer influences, and culture have an impact on an individual's moral philosophy. Besides organizational culture and ethics consists of code of conduct, work-life balance, recruitment procedure, compensation plan, role model, training, and further development. The influencing factors were discussed and recommended further research area. The relevant elements were explored, and further research area was suggested.*

**Keywords:** Ethical Leader; Followers; Leadership; Organizational Ethics.

### 1. Introduction

Technological breakthroughs and industrialization have changed organizations more than ever before, and their structure, content, and process of work will change more dramatically in the decades ahead. Every organization requires capable executives who are dedicated to achieving the highest levels of technical and professional excellence with ethical standards (Barendsen and Gardner, 2007; Newstead *et al.*, 2021).

Organizational success cannot be achieved by leaders alone or by followers without leaders. They work together closely to dedicate themselves to getting the job done and succeeding. By offering inspiration, and guidance, and serving as a self-reflective leadership role model, a good leader (one who is both effective and ethical) always nurtures those who follow them. However, a good follower (effective and ethical) is not just someone who blindly obeys their leader; rather, they have their own moral standards that allow them to determine what is right or wrong and take the appropriate action in accordance with the organizational culture.

Furthermore, in the last few decades, technological advances have brought a change in our lives and in organizations: change in terms of the way employees work, process, communication, and transformation. Needless to say, “these technological changes are playing a vital role in the survival of an organization but also for maintaining its ethics, competitive edge, and growth” (Kandula, 2001, p. 23). On the other hand, technological advances continue to challenge organizational strategies and individual values (Tushar, 2017). Therefore, ethical leadership is inherently needed in the organization in order to overcome these challenges.

Ethics is at the core of leadership within the three elements such as excellence, engagement, and ethics (Johnson, 2012). When someone rises to the position of leadership, they begin to disregard the ethical obligations that go along with it. This argument is more clearly defined from an organizational standpoint than it is in any other field (Johnson, 2012). Recent prominent scandals have involved companies globally including Tesla, Uber, HealthSouth, Enron, Medical Devices, Fannie Mae, World Savings, WorldCom, Galleon Hedge Funds, Guidant

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Qwest, and even religious institutions whose leaders violated moral principles (Bello, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Kim, and Vandenberghe, 2021; Miheli, *et al.*, 2010; Northouse, 2012).

Because of these scandals, people and followers are losing faith in their leader, which raised the question: Do our leaders have moral leaders? Everybody wants moral leadership, but if researchers examine corporate scandals, they may find examples of leaders who engage in immoral behavior and encourage their followers to do the same (Johnson, 2012). What's wrong with our leader? will be a question to ask again when those followers grow up to become future leaders. The topic of this study is what motivates followers to follow an ethical leader. In the organization, leaders and followers both play an important role in achieving organizational success.



Fig.1: Three elements of good leadership (Barendsen and Gardner, 2007)

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research Question

In order to design the path to the future ethical leader and identify potential factors that could influence that individual to be an ethical leader, the objective of this study is to examine literature from numerous articles and books about the fields of ethical leaders and leadership. This article is guided by one main research question: “what are the factors that influence followers to be a future ethical leader?”

### 2.2 Methodology

The methodology includes selecting some keywords such as: ethical leader, followers, leadership, and organizational ethics which are relevant to our topic. These keywords are used to search in different databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, different library databases, and some selected journals. This search process in these databases is used to get relevant literature for further study. After that, it examines the notion of ethical leadership, the significance of ethical leadership in an organization, potential influencing aspects to be an ethical leader, the foundations of ethical leadership, and finally, strategies for developing an ethical leader from the collected literature. Different ethical issues in the context of ethical dimensions of leadership are discussed, and further research area is recommended at the end of this paper.

### 3.1 What is Ethical Leadership?

At present, ethical leadership has become a very important issue in the corporate world (Dey, *et al.*, 2022). Every profession uses the word "ethics," including those in business and management. The importance of ethical leadership came to light because of the numerous scandals that have impacted the corporate world over the past few decades (Trevio, *et al.*, 2003). There is no universally agreed-upon definition of ethics. However, ethics are typically thought of as the norm for how people interact with one another. Ethics is "a study of interpersonal and social values, and the rules of conduct that derive from these values," according to Gilbert (2016). It concerns the good and bad intentions of dealing with other people (p. 28). "Ethics is about how a person distinguishes between right and wrong, or good and evil in relation to the actions, volition, and characters of human beings," stated Ciulla (2004). All human relationships, including those between leaders and followers, are based on ethical principles (p. 303).

It is usually seen that ethics play as a key element of any successful leader in society (Costa *et al.*, 2022). However, this might not always be the case. There are many effective leaders who have accomplished their goals but did not conduct themselves ethically while doing so. Consequently, it is essential to comprehend the distinctions between a leader and an ethical leader. Trevino and colleagues (2003) interviewed several executives from various American industries as part of an explanatory study to determine what ethical leadership is. They concluded that developing one's reputation as an ethical person is necessary for becoming an ethical leader rather than simply being an ethical person. They discovered two crucial characteristics of an ethical leader through this research. They are the (a) "moral person" and (b) "moral manager" aspects, respectively. A person must possess both the moral manager and moral person traits to be an ethical leader. The aspect of a moral person concerns the person's character qualities (integrity, honesty, and dependability) and behavior (openness, personal morality, etc.). The leader's efforts to persuade followers to act morally are included in the moral manager component (Meng and Neill, 2022). Examples of how to achieve this include setting an ethical example for subordinates, expressing the ethical norms consistently, and employing rewards and penalties to promote ethical behavior within subordinates.

Brown *et al.*, (2005) proposed a definition that incorporates the findings of the study. According to their definition, ethical leadership 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" (p. 120). In this definition, the term "normatively appropriate" refers to characteristics of a role model leader that are generally acknowledged to exist, such as honesty, intelligence, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, and care. "Promotion of conduct" is a concept that an ethical leader will inspire followers to adhere to a moral code of conduct and will facilitate organizations in implementing ethical policies and processes (Huang *et al.*, 2021). Finally, "reinforcement" describes rewards and penalties for moral and immoral action, respectively. The decision-making part suggests that ethical leaders reflect utilitarianism which addresses the ethical values of their decision that indicates to the greatest happiness or good for the greatest no of people in their organizations.

### 3.2 Importance of Ethical Leadership for an Organization

Why do leaders need to practice ethical behavior in their line of work is a common question. Avoiding legal ramifications might be the most obvious solution. Even though it is not the only one, this may be the primary justification for leaders to act morally. Numerous studies have demonstrated how ethical leadership improves workplaces and boosts worker performance in a variety of ways.

To determine how other elements of the job characteristic model and ethical leadership relate to one another, Piccolo and colleagues (2010) conducted a study. (For example, job significance and autonomy). They discovered that by giving followers and subordinates a say in decision-making and employing rewards to encourage moral behavior, an ethical leader positively influences them. An ethical leader also aims to increase autonomy and significance of work for followers, as well as ethical values in all business activities. Therefore, these elements improve followers' efforts and the citizenship component of their job performance.

According to Mize's (2000) research, there is a strong correlation between ethical leadership conduct and workers' dedication. A logical conclusion was drawn by Kim (2011), who noted that middle level managers' commitment and job satisfaction are increased by ethical leadership at the executive level. Furthermore, according to Zhu (2004), an ethical leader will always be transparent in their actions and listen to all business stakeholders. These actions earn the respect of the staff and lay the groundwork for enduring organizational performance. According to Walumbwa and colleagues (2011), ethical leadership is crucial for the smooth operation of any organization. It not only improves employee performance but also their sense of self-efficacy and organizational identification. According to Ofori (2009), ethical leadership promotes transformational leadership and a transformational culture within the organization while also improving employee satisfaction with the leaders.

A study by Stouten and colleagues (2010) sought to determine the connection between workplace harassment and moral leadership. In this study, it was discovered that moral leaders try to maintain a harmonious workplace by allocating the proper amount of work to each employee and making ongoing efforts to enhance those conditions. These admirable traits of moral leaders lessen bullying in the workplace, which enhances employee productivity. Any organization can benefit indefinitely from ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is critical to avoiding legal

costs and improving organizational performance by building positive employee-manager relationships, increasing employee engagement, and creating a sense of trust (Schwepker and Dimitriou, 2021).

### 3.3 Influencing Factors to Be an Ethical Leader

The reviewing of relevant articles has identified those factors influencing followers to be a future ethical leader. According to Kant’s theory, it is our duty to be ethical when an individual achieves the role as a leader. There are some other factors that influence a person to be an ethical leader, such as organizational culture, characteristics of a leader, peer influences, religious influences, personal values and morals, trust and integrity, and family influences. Northouse (2012) stated in his book about six factors that are directly related to influencing followers to build ethical leadership in an organization. Those factors are character, actions, goals, honesty, power and personal values of the leader. The author summarized these six factors in a sentence, “to be an ethical leader, you need to pay attention to who you are, what you do, what goals you seek, your honesty, the way you use power, and your values” (p. 245).

A minor difference between what a leader says and what that person actually does, according to Moreno's (2010) research, causes an ethical dilemma for followers. As a result, the author established that an ethical leader does not have a mismatch between their words and their deeds. Ethical managers can encourage followers by fairness and integrity, moral behavior, and appropriate actions (Monahan, 2012). Sandel (2009) introduced three common historical approaches in his paper to influence followers to be an ethical leader. The first approach is characterized by the Utilitarianism theory (Greatest happiness or greatest good) that means the leader will take care of followers by maximizing the welfare. The second is defined as the Libertarianism theory which means a leader will take responsibility for protecting the freedom of individuals. The third and last one is Kant’s ethical theory; a leader is focused only to do the right things with the respective followers.

Based on a review of various articles and books, this finding of this study has divided into two major factors that are formally and informally influence followers to be an ethical leader: (a) individuals’ moral worldview, and (b) organizational culture and ethics. This paper will not argue about whether ethical leaders are born or made. It will focus on the factors (Fig. 2) that influence a person to be an ethical leader, where followers’ moral philosophy is constructed by family, religious belief, educational institution, culture, and peer influences; furthermore, followers get inspiration to act ethically from organizational culture and ethics which consist of code of conducts, work life balance, recruitment procedure, compensation plan, role model, and training. These major factors are discussed below.

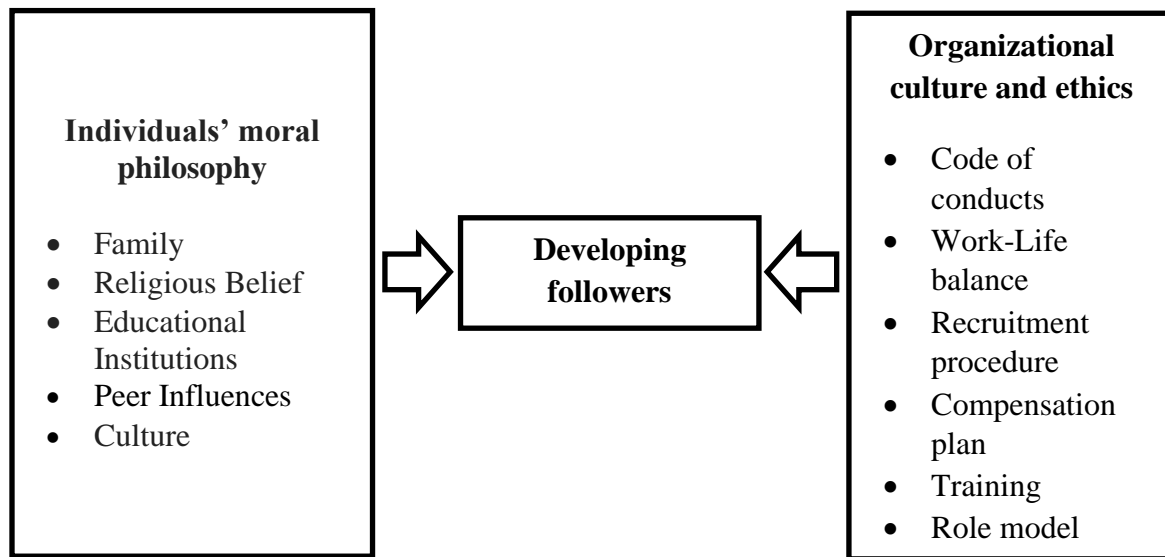


Fig. 2: Influencing factors of developing followers into ethical leaders.

### 3.4 Personal Moral Philosophies

Humans have a moral sense which helps them to decide right and wrong (Gilbert, 2016). Forsyth (1980) argued that there are two basic personal philosophies that affect moral action; these are relativism and idealism. Relativism implies the extent that someone ignores generally accepted rules when making ethical decisions. Idealism is the extent of someone's belief that desirable outcome will be attained only by doing right. Individuals who are more relativists are more prone to unethical behavior than less relativist individuals (Singhapakdi *et al.*, 2000).

Countercurrent moral philosophers reject the notion of independent reality by giving force to moral judgments. Rather, their force is constituted by their use, which is the expression of our moral responsibilities as shaped in our common life (Hertzberg, 2022).

Another approach to look into personal moral philosophy is the level of individual locus of control. Locus of control is the individual belief about the extent of control of his or her life. Individuals with internal locus of control believe the outcomes of their life depend upon their actions and efforts. While individuals with external locus of control believe that their life events are not in their control, and it is influenced by luck, fate, or destiny. Managers who have an internal locus of control often take responsibility for their actions and are more consistent in taking ethical decisions when compared to managers who have an external locus of control (Trevino, 1986).

The moral sense of the individual is developed with the age and experiences faced by the individuals. There are many factors other than experience and age that influence the moral sense of individuals. This includes family, culture, educational institutions, religious beliefs, and influence from peers (Bommer, *et al.*, 1987; Gilbert, 2016). Interaction with the family influences the moral development of the person from a young age, and these influences affect their moral behavior in adulthood (Dunn, 2006). A different perspective of the family influence on behavior can be the result of stress that is due to the individual's family role. This could have potential influence on the ethical behavior of individuals in their work life. But there was not much empirical research done in this area, hence the degree of influence of family on individual ethical behavior is not clear (Bommer *et al.*, 1987).

Religious belief and culture are also an important determinant in the development of individual moral sense. According to Yıldırım and Özdemir (2022) religiosity is related to customers' attitudes in relation to personal moral philosophies. The effect of religiosity on professional ethical behavior depends upon the integration of religious values into their work life. But several people treat religious belief separate from their corporate work life and in such cases, there could be little or no influence of religion on their ethical behavior (Tavanti, and Tait, 2021; Weaver and Agle, 2002).

Another formal factor, educational institutions help to develop moral philosophy of individuals. All of the educational institutions have an important role to train students in developing personal moral values which will result as a future ethical leader (Millar and Poole, 2010). Besides, friends are a big part of our journey from childhood to adulthood (Sherman *et al.*, 2000). Friends and colleagues are always around us in conducting our daily activities. In the meantime, they are also a big influencing factor to develop our moral philosophy. McIntosh and Luecke (2011) discussed about three essential personal attributes to get influence from others, i.e., trustworthiness, reliability, and assertiveness; each of us consciously or unconsciously always look for these attributes among our peers which have a great impact on our moral values.

In addition, individuals' moral development depends on their own culture, which is basically socially constructed, and such culture influences organizational cultures as well (House *et al.*, 1999). An individual is being taught what to do and what not to do by the socially constructed culture, which might be different from region to region. Importantly, the cultures of different nations also made different from one organizations' culture to another organizations' culture, even in case of multinational companies (Trompenaars and Turner, 2004).

### 3.5 Organizational Culture

One of the most important factors influencing ethical leadership practice is the organizational culture or climate. Placing and implementing formal ethical systems (such as policies and practices, moral standards, corporate ethics audit, etc.) across the organization is one way to foster ethical behavior (Neubert *et al.*, 2009). This calls for commitment from all business stakeholders, which in and of itself is a significant obstacle to maintaining ethical

leadership in a business. It appears that a company with low ethical standards and a lot of unethical activity will influence its employees' actions and promote unethical decisions. Contrarily, a company with strict ethical standards and a low tolerance for unethical activity will dissuade its employees from acting unethically. A company with a strong normative culture will have goals and a clear vision, and it will also convey its expectations for its employees effectively. Consequently, when compared to a company with a weak culture and unclear goals, vision, and conduct requirements, employees find it easier to make moral decisions (Trevino, 1986). Managers who work for firms with greater levels of ethical values are more concerned about ethical issues than managers who work for organizations with lower levels of ethical values, according to Singhapakdi and colleagues (2000). There are number other studies that support the argument that- organizational culture and climate have a strong relationship with the employees' ethical behavior or decision making. The work environment is one of the important parts of an individual's daily life; thereby work colleagues also have significant impact on individual sense of morality (Gilbert, 2016). An organization with high unethical behavior with unethical individuals will significantly impact the ethical behavior of new employees (Trevino, 1986).

The remuneration and benefits plan are another important aspect that affects ethical behavior through organizational culture (Paine, 1994). Employee remuneration plans affect an organization's ethical climate (Madhani, 2014). For market driven organizations, leaders and followers both are influenced by the compensation plan of the organization. Rewards, incentives, and a fair pay structure consistently motivate followers to perform morally (Mitchell *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, another important factor in the organizational culture is work-life balance which helps followers and subordinates to act ethical behavior in the workplace. If an organization provides a work-life balance for employees, it will increase job satisfaction and retention and create an ethical environment (Worthington, 2007). The employees (leaders and followers) of an organization behave more ethically, when they have a better balance between job and personal life (Verschoor, 2007).

### 3.6 Ethical Principle of Leadership Role Model

People can learn the rules that govern the behavior they observe, employees can learn the behavioral principle of morality by observing the leaders (Lian *et al.*, 2022). According to (Wang *et al.*, 2022) ethical leadership is culturally ingrained, and the same leaders' efforts to promote ethical behavior can be interpreted differently and lead to different results in different cultural contexts.

The five guiding principles of ethical leadership have been described by Northouse (2015). These guiding principles assist individuals become ethical leaders who can serve as self-reflective role models within an organization. Additionally, respect, service, justice, honesty, and community enable leaders and followers to develop strong ethical leadership in an organization. More information on these is provided in the section below:

#### 3.6.1 Respect others

Kant Immanuel (1724–1804) argued that an individual should constantly treat other people with respect (Gilbert, 2016). Treating others as ends rather than as means demand respecting their choices and values, as doing otherwise would suggest that an individual is using others as a means to further his or her own ends (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1988; Northouse, 2015). A complex ethic that is similar to but deeper than the kind of respect that parents teach young children is respect for others (Northouse, 2015). Respect implies that a leader pays attention to his subordinates. It entails acting in a way toward others that supports their attitudes, values, and worldviews. To respect the followers' suggestions, the leader should pose questions rather than providing them with answers. When a leader respects their subordinates, the subordinates may feel confident in their abilities. Simply put, respected leaders treat others like respectable human beings. Respecting people, not pressuring them to change, and having original goals and priorities are all characteristics of ethical leaders (Kitchener, 1984).

#### 3.6.2 Serve others

Numerous ethical theories emphasize consideration of others' interests (ethical altruism). The few activities that make up altruistic service behavior in the workplace include teamwork, training, motivating others to work toward a common goal, citizenship behavior, empowerment behaviors, and a few others (Greenleaf and Spears, 2002;

Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996). The leader's moral duty is to serve others, and that duty includes assisting others in pursuing their own rightful interests and objectives (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994). Such services are performed with the intention of improving the lives of others. The concept of pursuing the "greater good" is widely used in business. In order to uphold the principle of service, every ethical leader must be prepared to work on developing a follower-centered mindset, prioritize the needs of others in their work, and act in ways that will be advantageous to others.

### 3.6.3 Demonstrate justice

All moral leaders are deeply concerned with issues of justice and fairness. They want to treat all of their subordinates and followers equally; if any decisions must be made on the basis of inequality, those decisions will be based on the character or competence of the relevant individual (Gilbert, 2016). "Ethical actions should treat all human beings equally, or if not, fairly based on some standard that is defensible," according to Kishore and Santosh (2015). (p. 18). Nobody will typically receive special treatment or consideration unless their unique circumstance requires it. People constantly have a limited supply of goods and resources, and there is frequently competition for them. In this situation, the leader is crucial in allocating resources, rewards, and punishments. People should treat others fairly in interactions with them if they want others to treat them fairly in return.

### 3.6.4 Display honesty

Parents drilled this lesson into us as children: "Never tell a lie." Being honest is necessary if you want to be good. The lesson for the leaders is still the same: an honest person makes a good leader. Being a leader involves taking on the responsibility of being honest (Gilbert, 2016). If a follower considers the opposite of honesty, dishonesty, they will gain a better understanding of the necessity of being honest (Jaksa and Pritchard, 1988). Dishonesty generates a lot of untrustworthy conundrums (Northouse, 2015). When leaders are dishonest, followers may also commit similar dishonest acts because they have lost faith and trust in the leader. According to Northouse (2015), being truthful entails more than just not lying. Being honest means, for those in positions of authority within organizations, "doing not promise what you cannot deliver, not misrepresent, not hide behind spin-doctored evasions, not suppress obligations, not evade accountability, and not accept that the 'survival of the fittest' pressures of business release any of us from the responsibility to respect another's dignity and humanity" (Northouse, 2015). Everyone will follow a leader who is morally upright because they can rely on him to act honorably and because morally upright people are always truthful.

### 3.6.5 Build community

A leader motivates a team of people to accomplish a common objective. Because it refers to a shared objective, this statement has a clear ethical dimension. What Aristotle referred to as "the common good of all" can be found as the ultimate objective of this ethical dimension (Knapp and Carter, 2007). The phrase "common good of all" denotes that decision-makers cannot impose their choices on subordinates. They must come up with other, more universally acceptable objectives. When it comes to taking the initiative to achieve shared objectives, ethical leaders serve as role models for other organizations and the community. The company can progress from narcissism and consumerism to community focus and creativity, which places a greater emphasis on sustainable organization (Carter and Donahue, 2012).

The core of ethical leadership is centered on these five values. By adhering to these five rules, leaders can create a reflexive role model. It goes without saying that followers will be influenced to be ethical leaders if a leader respects others, serves others, exhibits justice, is honest, and fosters community.

## 3.7 Ways to Develop Followers into Ethical Leaders

Developing followers into ethical leaders is a continuous process which is about personal traits, education, training, and experience. To develop future ethical leader, every organization should have a clearly defined code of conduct and proper guidelines to make sure that all individuals understand what is expected of them through organizational value (Bello, 2012). Brown and Treviño (2006) recommended four approaches to develop ethical leadership in an organization. The four approaches are: to attract ethical leaders (selection), to encourage (role modeling), to support (training) and further to develop ethical leadership. This study will not discuss broadly the first approach (selection) because in this paper, researchers intend to develop followers (already selected) into ethical leaders. To develop

followers into an ethical leader in the organization, the process starts from the very first before selection by integrating individuals' moral values which factors (family, friends, religious influences, and personal traits) have already been discussed in the above influencing factors section. Another important issue: almost all business schools around the world teach ethics courses as well as leadership which indicates the business school has a great impact on developing ethical leaders.

In the above pages influencing factors were discussed, along with five principles which could be used as a role model for developing followers to be an ethical leader. In the organization, the leader should set an example through their behavior. The leaders' behaviors in which followers are encouraged to act ethically and respond as their specified role models do in similar situations. Followers take cues from a range of behaviors displayed by the leaders, both consciously and subconsciously (Ingram, n.d.). A leaders' work ethic may have extensive effects on the organizational cultures and influence followers (subordinates) to do the same behavior. Followers model the behavior of their leaders when it comes to acting ethically, taking action for greater good, and displaying honesty to make decisions. In contrast, if a leader consistently does all of the unethical activities without caring for the organizational value, for example, it is very likely that these behaviors will develop unethical followers which will result in future unethical leaders. Effective communication styles of leaders are also modeled by their followers when leaders speak politely and professionally by always respecting professional ethics, especially in conflict situations (Andreas, 2015). Hollander (1995) stated, "a major component of leader-follower relationship perception of himself or herself relative to followers, and how they in turn perceive the leader. This self-other perception implicates important ethical issues concerning how followers are involved, used, or abused, especially in a relationship favoring a leader's power over them" (p. 48).

According to Northouse (2012), the skills of leadership are learned competencies. Therefore, training is a formal way to learn leadership skills. Then, ethical training is needed to be an ethical leader. The ethical training program helps followers to know more about organizational code of conduct, which can support followers in raising concerns about ethical practices (Mihelic *et al.*, 2010). This program is a two-way process which enhances individual values, spirit, and positive traits as well as ensure organizational sustainability. It also creates a positive impression between leaders and followers. To develop followers, both formal training and informal learning contribute a lot, but especially informal learning is important because it may lead to the individuals' development of tacit knowledge, which can be contrasted with explicit knowledge (Gerhart *et al.*, 2015; Markey *et al.*, 2021). Many organizations have leadership development programs. Certainly, they should add the idea of ethical leadership to these programs (Freeman and Stewart, 2006). The authors also indicated that, "leaders can develop shared conversations and conceptions within the followers about how 'ethical leadership' can be implemented in their particular organization" (p. 11). Consequently, followers will be developed into an ethical leader in this organization climate.

#### 4. Discussion

The study has found that there is a strong association between ethical leadership and workers' dedication. Several factors have been identified after reviewing the relevant literatures that influence the followers to be an ethical leader in future, such as, personal moral philosophies that includes, family and religious belief, culture, educational institutions, and peer influences. In addition to that, organization culture and ethics which includes code of conduct, recruitment process, compensation plan and training help to develop the followers' ethical viewpoint to be a future leader. Moreover, it is found that respect, service, justice, integrity, and community enable leaders and followers to develop strong ethical leadership within the organization. This study also found some ways to develop followers into future leaders. The factors shown in Figure 2 may influence followers to become ethical leaders. In addition, Northouse (2015) lists the above-discussed five ethical leadership principles. These guidelines assist individual leaders to become ethical, self-reflective role models to their followers. A great regard for principles is displayed through ethical leadership. Honesty, justice, respect, community, and integrity are some of the fundamental values of ethical leadership (Lee *et al.*, 2021). Any organization's success depends on ethical leadership.

#### 5. Future Research Direction

At present, either business school or any organization, everyone wants to know how to become an ethical leader. There are still many undefined gray areas in the area of ethical leadership and further study is required to uncover these areas. As a result of this conceptual study, the following research areas are presented for consideration. The



unrealistic demands for quality and productivity that exist in the business world of today put constant pressure on executives both internally and externally. According to Bennett (2002), these demands can cause uncertainty and dissatisfaction at work, which heightens the desire for unethical business practices. These results indicate that more research should be done to determine the shortfall of short-term and long-term goals. Future research should investigate the development of personal moral values. It is believed that if researcher shows more interest in developing personal ethics, family will do a better job to prepare their children to be ethical; educational institutions will also be conscious of training their students to be an ethical leader; and organization will also value ethical dimension to recruit any personnel. Organizational culture, on the other hand, differs from nation to nation and is influenced by social construction or national culture. Therefore, more research about the influences of various national cultures on organizational culture is required. Additionally, the framework in Figure 2 highlighted a variety of factors influencing the advancement of potential leaders. There should be research done to look at each of the factors separately or in combination. This research will assist in determining the elements that are most crucial for the advancement of leaders. However, longitudinal study should consider in the area of followers and their development into ethical leaders.

## 6. Conclusion

Every leader has a moral or ethical side, and they always make good decisions with an eye toward the long term while also taking care of their followers and fellow employees. They set a good example and high ethical standards by behaving in an ethical way. This is how they get people to follow the rules of behavior in an organization. Effective and ethical leaders care more about the greater good than their own needs. They are obsessed with fairness and see their actions as steps toward a common goal, which is a win-win for both their fellow employees and the organization. In this unsteady world, a company needs a good leader who devotes his or her time and efforts to generating value that enables an organization to survive. To build a strong, long-lasting organization, ethical leaders cultivate followers with an understanding of the needs, values, and goals of the company. Every individual's moral philosophy is cultivated from their family and surroundings; and sooner after individuals become more enthusiastic to behave ethically in the organization based on their own value with organizational culture and code of conduct. Therefore, this individual can set a self-reflective role model to their followers. This paper suggests, if every organization follows the aforesaid ways to develop follower into a leader, it will result a high level of organizational integrity which will motivate every individual to act transparently in order to make a decision and to take an action.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work.

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