Original Research

Valence–Instrumentality–Expectancy Model of Motivation as an Alternative Model for Examining Ethical Leadership Behaviors

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Abstract

Incessant occurrences of character failure of people in leadership positions that have characterized organizations in recent years call for critical examination of leadership behaviors. The Social Learning Theory and Trickle-Down Model are some of the common approaches previously used to analyze ethical leadership behaviors. However, the challenges with how these models inspire ethical behaviors call for further examination of the issue. Using a multidisciplinary integrative literature review, we present Vroom's Valence–Instrumentality–Expectancy (VIE) Model of Motivation as an alternative model for examining ethical leadership behaviors. The VIE Model provides clarity regarding how leaders are motivated to behave ethically. We utilize ideas from the VIE model in conjunction with Starratt's Three-Step Approach to develop a unique framework for examining ethical leadership behaviors. Our model highlights the importance of a leader's values in creating organizational ethical values that eventually translate into professional ethical values. Using the motivational approach to inspire ethical leadership will drive organizational members to internalize ethical behavior as a conviction rather than complying with a set rule.

Keywords

character failure, ethical leadership, ethical behavior, trust, motivation

Introduction

There is a history of leadership character failures in organizations. Typical examples that have inspired a clarion call to intensify research into ethical leadership behaviors (ELBs) include scandals that shook organizations such as Enron, Exxon, Johnson & Johnson, Peanut Corporation of America, Tyco, WorldCom, Madoff's Wall Street Investments firms, and Barclays LIBOR, among several others. Johnson (2018) describes how even the best-intentioned leaders can go down the wrong path because of internal or external pressures and often disastrous for them and/or their organizations as a result of character failure. Besides the mortifications associated with leadership character failures, the financial impact on the affected organizations is enormous. For example, the Brooklyn Institute estimated the Enron and WorldCom scandals alone to have cost the United States' economy between \$37 and \$42 billion (Graham et al., 2002). Although it is easy to estimate the economic impact of ethical violations in business institutions, there is also an intangible cost resulting from leadership character failures. Consider the effects of leadership character failures related to scandals such as the

Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse and murder of noncombatant civilians in Fallujah (Entman, 2006), and perjury conviction of a vice president's Chief of Staff (Harriger, 2008). Even though challenging to put a monetary value on such behaviors, their negative impact on the organizations involved cannot be ignored.

In addition to the negative impact from these types of leadership lapses, the regularity at which they occur stoke interest in identifying models that will examine ELBs and find ways by which leaders can be motivated to appraise ethical practices as an implicit conviction rather than a set of rules to be followed.

Leadership ethical orientation can provide the impetus for establishing organizational cultures. For example,

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organizations can suffer from poor ethical cultures when there is a misalignment between ethical values and employee reward systems (Benjamin & Fine, 2018). Typically, the incessant occurrence of poor ethical behaviors within an organization can potentially influence employees' perception of the work environment and may negatively affect productivity and effectiveness (Hultman, 2019). Also, once leadership engages in poor ethical behavior, they use additional company resources to prevent them from being caught resulting in increased cost to the organization (Benjamin & Fine, 2018). It is also important to note that the complexity and pressures regarding rules, norms, and regulations influence the interactions and decision-making among top-level leaders in the workplace (Seijts et al., 2019). For these reasons, leaders are expected to exercise ethical judgment because it is the cornerstone of good leadership. For a leader in employing ethical competence, they must fundamentally possess courage as a quality of their moral identity. Ethical prowess demonstrates the leaders' cognitive decision-making—moral awareness, reasoning, and understanding and affective pre-behavioral disposition competence—to act on ethical choices (Johnson, 2018). Moral courage is to take action on personal values despite the risk, which is supported by exhibiting positive leadership virtues (Johnson, 2018).

In support of the flow of ethical values through an organization, managers need to align their expectations and reward systems with the organization's ethical standards (Benjamin & Fine, 2018). When ELBs are practices within organizations, managers hold their employees accountable to ethical standards (Yıldız, 2019). These managers also treat employees with honesty and trust, which can translate into organizational justice, better communication, and stronger information flow (Yıldız, 2019). When employees' ethical values are properly aligned with those of the organization, higher levels of trust, superior customer value, and long-term relationships are developed with customers (Schwepker, 2019).

Scholars have long expressed the importance of ethics and leadership. For example, Goodpaster (1991, p. 89) asserted that attention to ethics "is a valuable precondition to positive intellectual and social change and to improve practice." ELB can be challenged by technological advancement and economic competition; however, it is linked to organizational effectiveness and other positive employee behavioral outcomes that are essential in leadership, management, and social science research and practice (Bandura, 1977; Benjamin & Fine, 2018; Brown et al., 2005; Yıldız, 2019). These behaviors include honesty, trust in leadership, and job satisfaction, among others (Brown et al., 2005; Schwepker, 2019). Employees will emulate leader behaviors; fair and honest leaders will strongly encourage employee adherence to ethical codes (Schwepker, 2019; Yıldız, 2019). Trust within an organization is essential for decision-making such that managers utilize trust to mobilize employees toward executing organizational goals to enhance business operations (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2008; Karlsen et al., 2008). In

addition, job satisfaction and performance are positively influenced when personal values and organizational ethical principles are aligned (Schwepker, 2019).

Organizational ethics and justice shape employee behaviors and influence organizational performance (Yıldız, 2019). Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) can potentially compromise organizational effectiveness, fiscal strength, external stakeholders, and employee safety (Benjamin & Fine, 2018). In addition, unethical pro-organizational behaviors (UPBs) may be widespread and hard to uncover because of the intent to promote organizational ends while deviating from ethical standards (Castille et al., 2018). To be successful and effective, leadership should be ethical (Ofori, 2009). Leaders have the power to influence subordinate behaviors and perceptions of the work climate (Benjamin & Fine, 2018; Schwepker, 2019; Yıldız, 2019) such that ELBs are potential precursors for subordinates' orientation toward organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Leaders who behave ethically inspire other organizational members to emulate such behaviors. ELBs within a leadership team can lead to the creation of norms and expectations of appropriate conduct that become ingrained in the organization's climate (Grojean et al., 2004). On the contrary, continuous occurrences of negative workplace behavioral outcomes such as leadership character failures (Fischer et al., 2010), theft (Greenberg, 2002), and sexual harassment (Willness et al., 2007) call for more effort to be expended on studying and continuously examining ELBs. In summary, the justification for this study is that several researchers have used different models to examine ELBs. However, the challenges with how these models inspire ethical behaviors call for further examination of the issue. We present Vroom's Valence–Instrumentality–Expectancy (VIE) Model of Motivation as an alternative model for examining ELBs.

Purpose

The purpose of this work is to utilize the ideas presented in *Vroom's Expectancy Theory* (*VIE of Motivation*) to examine ELBs and how the VIE model relates to other models that have previously been used in similar analysis.

Research Questions and Method of Inquiry

We shaped our inquiry and conceptualization around the following questions:

1. How can the VIE model be used to explain why people are more likely to be motivated to behave ethically?
2. Conceptually, does the VIE model present a more practical approach to inspiring ELB?

In addressing these questions, we considered some of the common models used by scholars and practitioners to

understand ELB, including the *Social Learning Theory* (SLT), *Moderated/Mediated Model*, and the *Trickle–Down Model*. We followed a multidisciplinary integrated literature review approach in our attempt at moving beyond simply summarizing the literature but substantially contributing new and valuable knowledge to the fields of leadership, management, and human resource development (HRD; Osafo & Yawson, 2020; Snyder, 2019). The literature search covered a broad range of academic fields, including HRD, business ethics, organizational behavior, psychology, and other related social science fields of study. We discussed some definitions of ethical leadership and the importance of studying ELBs. We then proceeded with a brief introduction of the VIE model, emphasized its continuous utility in HRD, leadership, management, and social science research, and utilize the model to examine ELBs. Finally, the implications of our study and conclusions were outlined as a guide to future research and practice.

Review of Literature

Defining Ethical Leadership

Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) defined ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal action and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcements, and decision making." According to Brown et al. (2005), ethical leadership emerges from characteristics related to integrity, consideration, and accountability. Leaders who exhibit a high sense of integrity are considerate to employees and treat them fairly and hold themselves and their subordinates accountable for ethical conduct (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders are people with the inherent conviction to translate their moral intentions into overt ethical behaviors, contrary to any intense demands to do otherwise (May et al., 2003). De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008, p. 341) adopted a social influence approach to defining ethical leadership as "the process of influencing in a socially responsible way the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement." It is important to note that this research relied on external factors that could vary with changes in the external environment in defining ethical leadership. As a result, De Hoogh and Den Hartog's study did not consider the need for inherent conviction to behave ethically. Given that external factors could impact governance, Seijts and colleagues (2019) concluded that the complexity of factors that influence senior leaders makes the ethical character of such leaders essential in fostering ethical behavior.

Researchers such as Sama and Shoaf (2008, p. 41) defined ethical leadership in the realms of "achieving moral good," based on "integrity, trust, and moral rectitude." According to these researchers, ethical leaders inspire other organizational members to behave ethically and instigate change in a positive moral direction. Ethical leaders must devote themselves to moral rules as part of a social contract rather than merely obeying moral laws. Zhu et al. (2019) recognize the intersection of moral management and the moral person as a comprehensive foundation for ethical leadership in organizations. Ethical leaders must be consistently engaged in ethical conduct and have an aptitude to predict the moral consequences of their decisions (Sama & Shoaf, 2008). This definition of ethical leadership focuses on the individual leader's moral development and their ability to inculcate such ethical values in other organizational members. This approach does not address other potential factors that could motivate leaders to behave ethically. Gaps in these definitions of ethical leadership call for further examination of ELBs to help identify a holistic approach to inspire more research and practice interest in ELBs. Some models previously used will be discussed next.

Models Used in Examining ELBs

ELBs have long been discussed abstractly by philosophers and theologians; however, in recent years, empirical approaches, including motivation models, have been used to examine ELBs. Models previously used by researchers to examine ELBs include the *SLT*, (Bandura, 1977); *Trickle-Down Model* (Mayer et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2011), and the *Moderated Mediation Model* (Neubert et al., 2009). The selection of these models was based on how broadly they have been used to study some critical dimensions of leadership behaviors and other organizational components.

Social learning theory. The SLT was proposed by Bandura (1977) to augment existing theories of learning, such as the reinforcement theory of learning. The fundamental tenets of SLT are that people learn through observation and that in addition to extrinsic reinforcements, intrinsic reinforcements inspire learning. For reinforcements to effectively facilitate learning, SLT stipulates the need for attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1977), human beings learn vicariously; therefore, modeling can be as effective a means of learning as a direct experience. For example, followers are more likely to model the behaviors of a leader who they perceive as ethical. Thus, such leaders attract the attention of their followers who observe them, desire to emulate them, and are likely to retain and reproduce their behaviors under normal circumstances.

Brown et al. (2005) studied ELBs using the social learning perspective and concluded that ethical leaders make conscious efforts to inspire their followers to behave ethically by clarifying the standards and expectations for ethical conduct (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Treviño et al., 2003). To be able to inspire ethical conduct among their followers, leaders must gain legitimacy and credibility as ethical role models whose pronouncements are reliable (Brown et al., 2005). Brown and Mitchell (2010) posited that for learning to occur with this model, the credibility of the role model regarding moral behavior should not be in doubt.

Brown et al. (2005) used three main concepts to examine ELBs. These are role modeling through visible action, the use of rewards and discipline, and communication about ethics and values. The findings from this study show that a leader's normative appropriate behavior is defined by their actions, their relationship with other people, and the decisions they make. Furthermore, how these behaviors are communicated and reinforced stimulate ethical behavior in followers.

Other researchers (e.g., De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) used approaches similar to the SLT to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and effectiveness. According to De Hoogh and Den Hartog, leaders who communicate openly and are perceived to make fair decisions regarding issues critical to employees' welfare are more likely to inspire individuals to be optimistic and involving in organizational goal achievement. These researchers asserted that "through role modeling, ethical leaders promote altruistic behaviors among organizational members" (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008, p. 300). Thus, employees behave in more positive ways and are encouraged, committed, and put more effort into organizational goal achievement when they perceive their leaders as ethical. Babalola et al. (2018) use SLT to examine ethical leadership and conflict. Babalola et al. (2018) considered how SLT contributed toward employee behaviors in terms of relationship, task, and process conflict. This study found that ethical leadership related positively to employee resolution efficacy, which the researchers suggested was facilitated through SLT. SLT has been used to study other behavior dimensions at the workplace, and these include aggressive behaviors (Bandura, 1978), employee self-management (Manz & Sims, 1980), and deviant behaviors (Akers, 2011). These research findings reiterate the strong relationship between modeling and many workplace behavioral outcomes.

The successful application of SLT to influence ELBs is reliant on a leader's ability to communicate effectively (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). In addition, the ability of the leader could be influenced situationally or by the follower's attitudes, competencies, and behaviors (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Manz & Sims, 1980). Some research (Feng et al., 2018) even suggests that SLT cultivates a prescriptive working environment that could unintentionally stifle innovation and creativity. The SLT is based on the leader's ability to influence the ethical behaviors of followers and therefore it is important, but almost impossible to regulate exactly how the leader's influence is translated. One risk to applying the SLT to ELBs is that existing research shows that employees perceive their leader's behavior through emotions; however, there is little understanding for how the display of emotion from a leader during a crisis could influence how ethical or unethical employees perceive such leader (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). The effect of how emotions influence leader behaviors as they pertain to ethics is also unclear. As a leader's values can shape an organization, there is an additional need for research to understand the importance of a leader's moral values and its impact on ethical decision-making (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Both theory and empirical research identify the importance of an individual's moral identity; however, in terms of SLT, there is no understanding of how ethical or unethical a leader is, due to their moral identity. Some of these potential gaps could affect the effective use of SLT in examining ELBs.

Trickle-down theory. The Trickle-Down Theory (TDT) emanated from U.S. socioeconomic politics to refer to how incentives given to businesses and the upper-class members of society help to improve the economy and benefit the poor (e.g., Mayer et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2011). Ideas from the TDT have been utilized by some scholars to examine ethical leadership–follower relationships. Masterson (2001) developed and tested a trickle-down model of organizational justice that indicated that employees' perceptions of fairness affect their attitudes toward the organization, subsequently influencing their behaviors. Mayer et al. (2009) asserted that top management ethical behaviors flow through a trickle-down effect from one organizational level to another. These researchers posited that top management ethical behaviors influence group-level behaviors mediated by supervisory ethical leadership (Mayer et al. 2009). Ruiz et al. (2011, p. 592) suggested that "top managers ethical quality may reflect in other leaders in the organization," to the extent that a trickle-down effect of ELB influences follower job response.

A study by O'Keefe et al. (2020) found that the TDT was highly relevant when organizational cultures were less ethical. In fact, when in situations where organizations are less ethical, levels of leadership were stronger (O'Keefe et al., 2020).O'Keefe et al. (2020) posit that leaders play a significant role influencing ethics within their organizations, which is especially important in weaker organizations. In a related but contrary study, Mawritz et al. (2012) used the trickle-down model to study abusive supervision and posited that supervisors' model the abusive behavior of their senior managers and engage in similar abusive behaviors with their employees. Thus, in a trickle-down fashion, employees who witness or experience their supervisors' abusive behaviors will emulate these behaviors and engage in CWBs directed at other organizational members (Mawritz et al., 2012). ELBs can potentially moderate deviant workplace behavior and consequently create harmony among organizational members in a trickle-down fashion.

In a contrary study by Mawritz et al. (2012), there was an understanding that the work environment could play a role in how the TDT affects ELBs. This study also considered the limitation that more experienced and skilled employees might be less likely to seek direction from leaders (Mawritz et al., 2012). Thus, the trickle-down pathway runs from top managers through the more experienced supervisors to their subordinates (Mawritz et al., 2012). Another risk to the TDT is that working individuals have shown that they take

behavioral cues from those with whom they have the most access, mostly their peer workgroups rather than those above them (Mawritz et al., 2012; Ruiz et al., 2011). Detert et al. (2007) suggested that, rather than leadership, the skill and wage level of workers could influence deviant behavior. Also critical is the leaders' orientation toward ethics; thus, leaders who are expected to enlighten organizational members about the organization's ethical orientation are influenced by their ethical orientation (Mayer et al., 2009). This consideration also acknowledged that ethics training should focus on middle managers and supervisors who have the most day-to-day impact on employees (Mayer et al., 2009). Thus, because of the higher level of interaction between employees and direct supervisors, how they interpret and filter organizational policies and expectations influence organizational members' behavior (Ruiz et al., 2011). In addition, a manager's personal buy-in toward deliberate ethical modeling can influence the way the leaders identify themselves (Mayer et al., 2009). Wang et al. (2018) discussed the existing gap in TDT literature between a manager's ability to make ethical judgments and employ ethical behaviors. Finally, it was also recognized that the TDT is often theorized and challenging to measure in practice (Wang et al., 2018).

Moderated mediation model. The moderated mediation model stipulates the presence of a mediator that links the independent variable to the dependent variable; however, the process goes through a moderator that determines the strength of the outcome. To contribute to the ethical leadership literature, Ng et al. (2008) developed a moderated mediation model to examine the precision of the trait theory of leadership. These researchers used their model to study leadership self-efficacy as it relates to a leader's personality traits, such as neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion, to determine leadership effectiveness. Leadership self-efficacy is the leaders' perceived capabilities to perform leadership roles, which includes ethical decision making. These leadership traits were used to ascertain the mediating role of job demands and autonomy (Ng et al., 2008) on leadership effectiveness. In this model, leadership self-esteem played the mediating role while job demand and job autonomy were the moderators in determining leadership effectiveness (Ng et al., 2008). These researchers asserted that leaders with higher self-esteem are more likely to be effective because they are more autonomous, resilient in times of continued difficulty, and likely to exert more effort in achieving goals (Ng et al., 2008). Such leaders are more likely to exhibit ELBs in adverse situations.

Other researchers have used ideas similar to those used by Ng et al. (2008) to study ELBs. Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) examined the mediating role of ethical leadership and workgroup psychological safety. These researchers identified two of the *Big-Five Personality Traits*, thus, conscientiousness and agreeableness as having positive relationships with ELB. Also, Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) identified other factors such as socialization, ethical organizational climate, and autonomy as having a positive impact on ELBs.

Using Schein's cultural dimensions, Schaubroeck et al. (2012) emphasized the mediating role of ethical culture in the relationship between ethical leadership and subordinate ethical behavior. According to Schaubroeck et al. (2012), ELBs encourage shared understanding that inspires followers' ethical behavior. Thus, "ethical leadership is expected to be associated with ethical culture, which in turn promotes more positive beliefs among members about their personal capacity to act as moral agents, as well as reduced ethical transgressions and increased exemplary ethical behavior" (Schaubroeck et al., 2012, p. 1057). This shows the significance of ethical culture in the link between ELBs and followers' ethical behavior. Leaders who are perceived to be ethical are more likely to inspire the establishment of ethical cultures and consequently influence follower ethical behaviors than those who are seen to be unethical.

Researchers who orient toward the moderated mediation model acknowledge the need for additional research to understand which leadership behaviors are promoted by leaders with specific personality traits (Ng et al., 2008). There is the "who came first, the chicken or the egg" dilemma in discussions about how developmental goals and leader personality traits relate (Ng et al., 2008). Further research needs to concentrate more on situational variables that have the potential to create variability between behaviors exhibited by leaders with similar personality traits. Situational variables that are organizationally specific could influence how the mediated moderation model is used for modeling ELBs from higher level leaders through to lower level followers (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Also, rather than a simple intervention technique, researchers who orient toward the mediated moderation model suggest further investigation into the influence of goal setting, motivation, and other psychological mechanisms on ELBs (Ng et al., 2008).

Vroom's VIE Model of Motivation

Vroom indicated that performance is a function of an individual's knowledge, skills, abilities, personality, and experiences. Furthermore, the theory assumes that behavior is a result of deliberate choices from alternatives aimed at maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. The VIE model, usually referred to as the Expectancy Theory, postulates that motivation is a product of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Vroom, 1964). According to Vroom (1964), human actions and choices are driven by their desires and affection for certain outcomes, their belief that specific actions produce these outcomes, and that certain primary outcomes are associated with secondary outcomes (Vroom, 1964). The VIE model is a process theory of motivation that views motivation as a function of an individual's perception of the environment and expectations based on these perceptions (Fudge & Schlacter, 1999). In

simple terms, the VIE Model is represented as motivation = valence × instrumentality × expectancy.

The four main assumptions of the VIE Model are as follows:

- Interest in an organization depends on individual expectations, needs, motivation, and experiences. These factors dictate how individuals respond to the demands of the organization.
- Individuals are free to make conscious choices regarding the behaviors in which they display. The choices they make are mainly driven by their expectations from the organization.
- Different individuals expect different outcomes from the organization based on the choices they make. For example, some people expect good salaries, while others expect job security for good performance and job dedication.
- The choices people make, compared to the alternative options, are focused on those behaviors that optimize their desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964).

Usability of the VIE Model

Many other studies have confirmed the validity of the VIE model in examining various behaviors. For example, Hu and Gill (2000) conducted a study on faculty expectancy of tenure and motivation to do research and posited that research productivity increases in the pre-tenure academic career and eventually declines after attaining tenure. In another study, Estes and Polnick (2012) conducted an analysis of tenured faculty productivity and suggested that, rather than believe in their ability to publish, the decline in tenured faculty research is more related to valence because the ability of tenured faculty to conduct research cannot be disputed. Rather, the affective orientation of tenured faculty to conduct research reduces because the outcomes of such efforts do not affect their position or promotion (Estes & Polnick, 2012). It is important to observe the potency of all three components of the VIE model—*valence, instrumentality*, and *expectancy* in determining the strength of motivation.

Ellingson and McFarland (2011) used the VIE model to examine faking behavior on a test and posited that individuals are motivated to engage in faking behaviors when they presume improved performance as an incentive for engaging in such behaviors. For instance, when an opportunity is presented that requires high score on the test, individuals utilize resources available to them to ensure success (instrumentality), especially when that opportunity is estimated to bring personal satisfaction relative to others (valence), and these individuals are convinced that they have the ability to fake successfully (expectancy) (Ellingson & McFarland, 2011).

Other researchers have used the VIE model to study important organizational issues such as self-determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005), workplace injustice (Stecher & Rosse, 2007), students motivation to rate peers (Friedman et al., 2008), nascent entrepreneurship behaviors (Renko et al., 2012; Sperber & Linder, 2019), workplace stress (Foy et al., 2019), and performance appraisal (Suciu et al., 2013). These identified recent application of the VIE model produce convincing evidence regarding the continued utility of the model for investigation into various workplace behaviors, including ELBs.

Discussions and Conceptual Framework

The VIE Model and Ethical Leadership

Three factors postulated by the VIE model are as follows: motivation is a consequence of the psychological value people place on desired outcomes of their actions (valence); people put effort into tasks or behaviors that they believe to have the ability to accomplish (instrumentality); and that effort is intensified where people expect to receive reciprocal reward for their behaviors (expectancy). People do not behave ethically because they are "spontaneous self-agents nor . . . automatic transmitters of environmental influences" (Bigley & Steers, 2003, p. 127). Rather than being self-motivators, leadership ethical behavior results from a mutual association between their unique personal characteristics, such as ability, their expectation, and the value they place on the outcomes of such behaviors (Bigley & Steers, 2003).

It is not enough to encourage people to behave ethically but also to ensure that the prevailing conditions enhance their ability to behave ethically and assures them that effort spent in achieving such outcomes will be rewarding. The VIE model espouses the need to create an environment that encourages and assures that indulgence in ethical behaviors are rewarding. When all three components of the VIE model are present and actively linked with one another, people are more likely to be motivated to behave ethically than merely encouraging them to do so or model a leader's ethical behaviors. Deliberately focusing on the three fundamental components of the VIE model—*valence, instrumentality*, and *expectancy*—can collectively inspire ethical behaviors.

The VIE Model is simplified in terms of effort to performance (E–P), performance to outcome (P–O), and the value attached to the outcome. All the components of the theory work together to ensure high levels of motivation. Any weakness in the link, thus E–P, P–O, and the value placed on the outcome, can potentially reduce motivation levels (Isaac et al., 2001). The VIE model is critical in discussing ethical leadership.

Valence and ELBs

Valence refers to the propensity to which individuals desire specific rewards (Vroom, 1964). Thus, individual preferences are diverse and based on the value they place on the

rewards they perceive to obtain from engaging in particular behaviors. These may range from increased salary, improved relationship, or job satisfaction. Valence is positive when individuals have strong preference for the perceived rewards; thus, they exert more effort in achieving the outcomes that are associated with these rewards (Vroom, 1964).

Valence, as postulated by the VIE model, relate to ELB such that the value a leader ascribes to the anticipated outcome of a particular behavior serves as a motivating factor to engage in such a behavior. Leaders who ascribe high value to behavior outcomes related to honesty, integrity, reciprocity, trustworthiness, reliability, and accountability (Ciulla, 2014) are more likely to behave ethically when one or more of these values are the anticipated outcomes for indulging in such behaviors. Similarly, leaders who value the trust of others will be motivated to behave ethically when they expect trust from others as an outcome of ethical behavior (Caldwell et al., 2010).

Instrumentality and ELBs

Instrumentality refers to the belief that good performance will result in a certain work outcome. Individuals expend more effort to achieve goals when expectations for the desired rewards are high. For example, the effort put into achieving a particular performance level should correspond to a salary increase for an individual who expects to receive increased monetary compensation for engaging in that behavior (Vroom, 1964). Conversely, individuals who expect increased salaries are not inspired to expend much effort in achieving organizational goals where there are no expectations of increased monetary compensation.

Zhu et al. (2004, p. 20) asserted that "a strong set of personal ethical standards (e.g., the virtues of honesty and fairness) should stimulate a higher level of trust and loyalty in an organization." Therefore, leaders who attribute high value to trust and loyalty from their subordinates will most likely be motivated to behave ethically when they believe that the outcomes of their involvement in ethical behaviors are trust and loyalty from subordinates. Thus, a leader's belief that behaving ethically will result in various performance outcomes related to trust will be inspired to put more effort into behaving ethically to achieve such performance goals.

In addition to belief in effort leading to a desired outcome, other environmental factors are important in motivating leaders to behave ethically. For instance, Brown and Treviño (2006) asserted that ethical decision-making related to attitudes toward individual job and attachment to organization are influenced by the perception of the organizational climate as virtuous and ethical. Thus, leaders are motivated to exhibit positive work attitudes and stronger attachment to the organization when they perceive the organizational climate as wholesome and humane. Such leaders show virtue by promoting good character and "taking account of the situation and the specific people involved, giving a role to good

judgment as opposed to just following the rules" (Fortin & Fellenz, 2008, p. 419). Thus, the presence of an ethically charged organizational climate inspires ethical behavior.

Expectancy and ELBs

Expectancy refers to the likelihood that effort will result in high-performance outcomes. Individuals exert more effort if the probability of achieving a particular performance goal is high (Vroom, 1964). Conversely, when the likelihood of achieving performance goals is low, individuals are not motivated to expend effort in achieving unlikely goals (Vroom, 1964). Low expectancy is usually common with tasks where the individual has little or no expertise. Expectancy emphasizes the extent to which a belief in the ability to achieve a desired result inspires involvement in context-appropriate behavior (Isaac et al., 2001).

When individuals have confidence in themselves and understand that the outcome of a particular behavior will be rewarding enough, they invest more effort into fulfilling the requirements of such behaviors. Conversely, when individuals lack confidence in their ability to accomplish a task, they denigrate the feasibility of getting the desired rewards and will therefore invest little effort into accomplishing such a task (Gatewood et al., 2002). Gatewood et al. (2002) conducted a study of the entrepreneurial expectancy of 179 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern University in the United States and concluded that feedback of an individual's entrepreneurial ability was positively related to their future expectancy regarding their ability to start up a business. Thus, individuals who received positive feedback regarding their entrepreneurial ability were more likely to start up a business than those who receive negative feedback. Similarly, individuals who believe in their ability to behave ethically and expect a particular outcome from such behaviors will be motivated to invest more effort into attaining such behavioral outcomes.

Comparison of the VIE Model With Other Theories/Models

In this section, we compare the VIE model with the selected theories/models that have been used to examine leadership and other workplace dimensions. We begin with descriptions of ethical leadership as posited by some researchers and conclude with reasons why the VIE is a more appreciable model to use in ELBs compared with others.

The SLTs perspective on ethical leadership posits that "leaders influence the ethical conduct of followers through modeling" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 119), thus, by observing, imitating, and identifying with the ethical behavior of a leader who is perceived as a model, followers exhibit ethical behaviors as well. In an attempt to elucidate their definition of ethical leadership, Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) asserted that, "those who are perceived to be ethical leaders model

conduct that followers consider to be normatively appropriate." Interestingly, these scholars admit that *normatively appropriate* is vague because context determines what is deemed appropriate behaviors. This shows that context can potentially mediate modeling ELBs, and consequently influence ethical decision-making of the imitator of these behaviors. Deducing from this perspective, followers are seen as passive observers of leadership behaviors and will emulate them based on their subjective appraisals of these behaviors as ethical.

Another classical model to affirm claims regarding the tendency of subordinates to misinterpret a leader's adverse behavior as ethical is the *Attraction-Selection-Attrition* (ASA) *Model* (Schneider, 1987). The ASA model postulates that people join work groups based on a fit between their interest and personality, and the work environment. According to Schneider (1987), people attract one another based on this interest. In an organization, people whose interest and personality diverge from the attributes of the environment and the people present do not stay for long. Inferring from this idea, people may judge a leader's behavior as ethical based on attractiveness, even though the contrary is true, and wrongfully model such behaviors.

Ethical leadership is a concept that postulates the importance of the relationships between leaders and their followers through social interaction (Van Den Akker et al., 2009). One major view on ethical leadership–subordinate relationship stipulates that, because of their proximity to employees and their ability to punish and reward, supervisors have more influence on employee behavior than top-level management (Davis & Rothstein, 2006). In congruous with the above claim, Mayer et al. (2009) asserted that even though all levels of leadership are critical in determining employee behavior, top management influence is realized through supervisory leadership. According to Mayer et al. (2009, p. 2), "because social interactions between leaders and employees differ at varying levels of leadership, as do the distinct functions of leaders at different levels, the influence of top management will be mediated by supervisory ethical leadership." Thus, in a trickle-down fashion, top management behaviors are modeled by supervisors who then pass them on to their subordinates. The irony of this argument is that supervisors may wrongfully interpret a top manager's behavior as ethical and pass it on to subordinates. Using the Trickle-Down Model in examining ELBs requires further explanation of the intensity of the impact top leadership ethical behavior transmits through mid-level supervisors to subordinates.

Other researchers have used the Moderated Mediation Model to postulate the propensity of a leader's personality traits to moderate his or her effectiveness. For example, Ng et al. (2008) posited that leadership self-efficacy is a central motivational construct that predicts leadership effectiveness. These researchers admit the importance of motivation in examining the relationship between work and leadership behaviors; however, using leadership personality traits to predict behavior may not be sufficient in measuring leadership motivation under different situations. Mischel (2013) stated that the individual is a cognitive-affective being who construes, interprets, and transforms incentives for behavioral outcomes in a dynamic reciprocal interaction with the social world. Therefore, situational factors can potentially weaken the mediating role of personality traits in inspiring ELBs. Also, even if subordinates possess a personality trait that inspires them to behave ethically, situational variables can constrain their desire to behave in such a manner.

Some scholars (e.g., Hollander, 2012) argued that ethical leadership is an inclusive form of leadership to the extent that a leader's behavior should motivate followers to behave ethically for mutual benefit. Motivating leaders to behave ethically can be more effective when they are conscious of the existence of a valuable outcome, their belief that they have the ability, and the willingness to invest effort into achieving such outcomes. When people perceive their personal expenditure of effort will lead to acceptable behaviors that are expected to achieve valuable results, they are motivated to expend more effort into achieving such behavior outcomes (Mendonca, 2006). The VIE model provides logical reasons that view leaders (e.g., supervisors) as active participants in their ethical decision-making rather than passive observers of a superior's ethical behavior. Inspiring ethical behavior requires motivation that goes beyond merely observing and modeling others, trickle-down effect, or the mediating role of some personality factors. The VIE model presents a unique case of motivation theory to examine ELBs because it answers the fundamental questions of how people are motivated to behave ethically. Thus, the VIE model emphasizes ability, effort, and the value placed on behavioral outcomes as the main components of motivation to indulge in specific acts. Table 1 summarizes the behavioral influence, level of organizational control, and risk to models.

Elucidating the Strength of the VIE Theory

One major strength of the VIE model is the practicality of its three components when used independently in examining workplace behaviors. Thus, each of the three components has been empirically tested and confirmed as having positive influence on motivation. For example, research has proven the relationship between organization's mission valence and job satisfaction (Wright & Pandey, 2011). Instrumentality has been found to correlate strongly with OCB (Hui et al., 2004), and employees' self-efficacy with performance expectancy (Schwoerer et al., 2005). Researchers such as Lunenburg (2011) showed how the VIE model differs from other motivation theories. According to Lunenburg (2011, p. 1), the VIE model "provides a process of cognitive variables that reflect individual differences in work motivation." Thus, the VIE model affects motivation explicitly by aligning effort to performance (expectancy), performance to reward (instrumentality), and reward to the

Table 1. A Summary of the Behavioral Influence, Organizational Control, and Risk by Model.

Model	Description of model	Behavioral influencer	Level of organizational influence on outcome of ELB	Risks to model
Social Learning Theory	"leaders influence the ethical conduct of followers through modeling" (Brown et al., 2005)	How the follower perceived the behavior	Low	Misinterpretation of leaders behavior
Trickle-Down Model	Top management behaviors are subjectively interpreted and modeled by supervisors who pass them onto subordinates.	How the mid-level supervisor perceived the behavior top manager	Low	Misrepresentation of leaders behavior by supervisor
Meditated/Moderated Model	Leaders with identified personality traits can inspire ethical behaviors	The given organizational situation	Low	Situational variables can constrain ethical leadership behaviors
Vroom's Valence–Instrumentality– Expectancy Model of Motivation	Motivation is an outcome of the interplay between valence, instrumentality, and expectancy	The intentional organizational emphasis to align effort to performance, performance to reward, and reward to the behavior	High	Requires active participation by the organization in events leading to ethical behaviors. This results in internalization of ethics as a conviction rather than following a set of rules

ELB = ethical leadership behavior.

satisfaction of a desire (valence) (Lunenburg, 2011). The VIE model is unique such that "it combines perception aspects of equity theory with the behavioral aspects of other theories" (De Simone, 2015, p. 19).

Merging the VIE model with a model that emphasizes the importance of core values and beliefs, which are critical in inspiring ethical behaviors, will help to further enhance the viability of the VIE model in examining ethical leadership and other workplace dimensions. Starratt (2010) proposed a three-step approach to guide ethical leadership development. Starratt (2010, p. 27) posited that "building a strong personal foundation for ethical practice through articulation of core beliefs and values; developing formal ethical perspectives; and developing specific professional ethical perspectives for guiding practice" are crucial in inspiring ethical behaviors. According to Starratt (2010), leadership ethical decisions making is enhanced by reflecting on their experiences and relating them to the formal conceptual framework explicated in these steps. The power of a leader's personal values on organizational ethical climate was reiterated by Starratt (2010) in his model for ethical leadership development. Also, Grojean et al. (2004) indicated that a leader's personal values have the likelihood of influencing the trajectory of an organizational ethical climate. We utilize ideas from the VIE model in conjunction with Starratt's Three-Step Approach to develop a unique framework for examining ELBs.

A Motivational Approach to Ethical Leadership Development

Figure 1 depicts a proposed model that integrates the VIE Model and Starratt's Three-Step Approach in examining ethical leadership:

  a. Building a strong personal foundation for ethical practice is a logical equivalence of effort (Expectancy).

  b. Building a formal ethical foundation is a logical equivalence of anticipated outcome (Instrumentality).

  c. Advancing to the ethics of the profession is a logical equivalence of valued outcome (Valence).

- Examining ELBs requires analyzing the strength of the individual leaders' ethical values as determined by their belief that effort will lead to performance; thus, the level of confidence in their ability to utilize such values to inspire other organizational members to behave ethically.
- Leaders believe that high performance will lead to some valued outcome and will inspire them to work hard to achieve such performance outcomes. Thus, a leader will expend more effort to inspire organizational members to actively participate in establishing an organization-wide formal ethical foundation when there is high anticipation that such efforts will elicit ethical behavior in the organization.
- The value placed on the organizational ethical values by the organization and its members will determine the level of compulsion with which these ethical values will be advanced into the professional setting and its acceptance as a professional ethical practice guide. Thus, when valence is high, more effort will be expended on instituting organization-wide professional ethical values. Conversely, when the value placed on ethics is low, less effort will be expended in instituting organization-wide professional ethical values.

Implications for HRD and Leadership Research and Practice

Efforts to identify models to examine ELBs present a challenge to leadership and HRD professionals regarding the
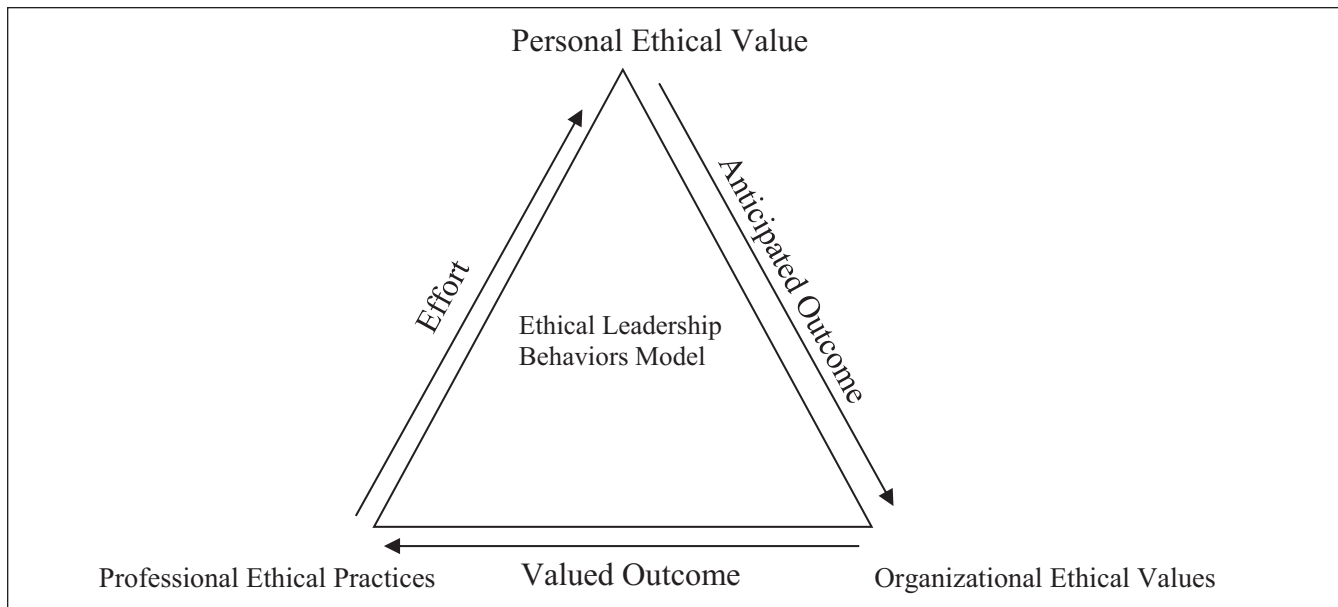
Figure 1. Integration of the VIE Model and Starratt's Three-Step Approach in examining ethical leadership.
VIE = Valence–Instrumentality–Expectancy.

best approach to inspire and examine ELBs in organizations. We suggest the utilization of ideas from motivational theories to help inspire ELBs that go beyond simply observing others, code of ethics, or merely obeying rules. Compared with the other models examined in this study, the SLT, the Trickle-Down Model, and the Moderated Mediation model, the VIE model presents a more logical approach to inspiring ethical behavior. The ELB Model that resulted from integrating the VIE Model and Starratt's Three-Step Approach presents a new direction for leadership and HRD research and practice to examine ELBs. Behaving ethically requires motivation that is implicit and accepted by individual leaders as a conviction rather than a set of rules to follow. This kind of motivation extends beyond observing other peoples' behaviors and modeling them, inspiring subordinates to behave ethically based on ELBs in a trickle-down fashion, or the mediating factors of some personality attributes.

The VIE model relates effort to performance and performance to reward such that actors are seen as active participants in shaping their ethical behavior rather than some passive agents whose behaviors are determined by some remote causes. Thus, offering these actors the opportunity to assess the situation based on the value they place on the outcome of engaging in particular behaviors, their expectations that expending effort will lead to favorable results, and the belief that they can accomplish these performance goals will most likely motivate them to behave ethically.

Leaders and HRD professionals interested in ELBs should consider utilizing a motivational approach such as the one described in the *ELBs Model* above to create an ethically charged work environment that inspires employees to want to behave ethically even beyond the workplace. Creating an ethically charged work environment requires strict adherence to a step-by-step motivational approach that begins with ensuring that individual organizational members uphold high ethical values that in aggregate translate into organization-wide ethical values.

Careful application of motivational models such as the VIE to examine ELBs will postulate ethical leadership from the standpoint of active participation in events leading to ethical behaviors rather than passive observation of other peoples' behaviors, or slothful agents whose indulgence in such behaviors are determined by some control mechanisms such as personality traits. Leaders and HRD professionals must ensure that resources invested in developing the people who collectively make the organization productive adhere to ethical principles. This can be achieved by stringently controlling frequent cases of character failure and engagement in CWBs. Using the motivational approach to inspire ethical leadership will drive organizational members to internalize ethical behavior as a conviction rather than complying with a set rule. The limitation of this study is that not all theories and models previously used to analyze ELBs were reviewed in this article. However, the objective is to present VIE as an alternative and a more practical way of analyzing ethical leadership.

Conclusion

ELB is important to leadership and HRD scholars and professionals because leadership behaviors have been found to correlate highly with many expected positive outcomes of the

activities that organizations are involved. Many models have been used to examine ELBs; however, very little attention has been drawn on motivation theories. This research utilized ideas espoused by the VIE model and Starratt's Three-Step Approach to present an approach that seeks to inspire ELBs through motivation rather than observation or a trickle-down effect. Our model highlights the importance of a leader's values in creating organizational ethical values that eventually translate into professional ethical values. In this model, leaders are seen as actors in shaping their ethical behavior and that of organizational members rather than passive observers of other peoples' behaviors or agents whose ethical behaviors are determined by some personality factors or as a result of a trickle-down effect from top-level leadership behaviors. When examining ELBs, leadership and HRD researchers and practitioners are encouraged to focus more on motivational approaches rather than approaches that postulate leaders as mere observers in shaping their ethical behaviors.

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