MORAL LEADERSHIP AMONG HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AT SELECTED PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN KLANG VALLEY

Nurul Qistina Binti Abu Bakar
Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy Faculty of Education, University Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Muhammad Faizal Bin A. Ghani
Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy Faculty of Education, University Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Abstract—This research is to study the moral leadership among heads of department at selected private institution in Klang Valley. The first objective of this study are to determine the level of effectiveness of moral leadership; the second objective is to identify the domain attribute of moral leadership among heads of department at selected private institutions in Klang Valley. To answer the research objectives, questionnaires were distributed to 260 academic and administrative staff at two selected private institutions in Klang Valley. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The descriptive statistical methods, such as percentage, mean and standard deviation, were used to identify the effectiveness and to find the dominant attributes of moral leadership among heads of department. The findings showed that the effectiveness and the dominant attribute of moral leadership among heads of department are high level for trustworthiness and communication dominants with the mean for both dominants are more than 3.50, while for criticism and dissent, fairness, employee’s development, empowerment and employee’s job performance in average level when the mean is below than 3.00. This research implication indicates that, it is importance for heads of department to practice and implemented moral leadership in their leadership styles to achieve the goals of the institutions.

Keywords—Moral Leadership, Head of Department, Private Institutions

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a general term that is difficult to describe and define. However, most experts in the leadership field believe that leadership is an important aspect for institutional excellence. Leadership can be seen in a person who encourages, persuades and influences people to work diligently to achieve a common vision and mission. According to [1], many studies have discussed the differences between the roles of “manager” and “leader” and there is a lot of literature on the differences between managers and leaders in leadership management. In this study, we will focus on leaders for institutions. Effective leaders in institutions are crucial in leading employees. [2] stated that the role of leaders in institutions includes that of being motivators, trainers, teachers, counselors and in particular situations, as parents to employees in guiding them to achieve the goals of the institution. The effectiveness of that role depends on the leadership style adopted by the leader.

According to [3], while leadership is an essential topic that needs to be discussed, at times, it appears to be a controversial topic in institutional research studies. [4] added that the common argument in leadership studies revolves around the definition of the main characteristics or factors that produces leadership. [5] emphasized that “an acceptable definition of leadership needs to be sound both in theory and in practice, able to withstand changing times and circumstances, and be comprehensive and integrative rather than atomistic and narrow focus”. [6] stated that leadership is commonly known as the process of an individual creating influence on any individual towards working together in achieving common goals. This is supported by [7] who described leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”.

Moral leadership refers to a leadership style that involves the process of understanding employees’ feeling and needs. Leadership refers to those who have the exact characteristics that can lead a group of people. Leaders should reflect morality in their leadership styles. This is because a leader is a person who has the power to control, give instructions and influence his followers. Most of the time, followers’ attitudes are a reflection of their leader’s attitude. This is supported by [8]; who highlighted that most institutions implement the ethical leadership concept in their institutional structures. Leaders who practice moral leadership not only have to shoulder responsibilities by giving instructions but they must also be able to meet needs, give aspirations and impart values to their employees. Furthermore, most people assume leadership only applies to top management. However, leadership is applicable to everyone irrespective of qualification, title, background or position. Besides that, one of the hardest challenges a leader must face is being able to prove that he can lead followers and give instructions in the right track.

[9] concurred that leadership is about guiding and imparting knowledge to followers and towards this end, a leader must have the strong ability to influence and gain the trust of their followers. Only by being able to gain followers’ trust, can specific targeted goals be accomplished.
II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study was conducted using descriptive research to analyze Moral Leadership among Heads of Department at Selected Private Institutions in Klang Valley. [10],[11] and [12] pointed out that descriptive studies will produce results that are more accurate and clear because these studies are usually done in detail. This research study was conducted using social survey research and the method used was quantitative research. Quantitative method emphasizes on structured and predetermined ways of collecting data.[13] This type of research describes aspects in numbers and measures instead of words as it focuses more on statistical summary and analysis. Moreover, social survey research also helps us to find out more about employees’ opinions on their leaders’ style of leaderships in workplaces.

In addition, this method was used because the researcher wanted to explore if there are any significant relationship between the effectiveness of moral leadership and employee’s performance and to identify whether there are any significant differences between gender and moral leadership among heads at selected private higher institutions in Klang Valley. A quantitative method is suitable for this study because this study involves many respondents. Through quantitative methods, the information obtained could help to explain some aspects that are required as the number of respondents is large and their view and feedback are suitable in this research study.

The data was collected through questionnaires that have been created and administered by the researcher. According to [14], questionnaire is the most effective way of obtaining information from respondents. Each question outlined in the questionnaire was created to get feedback related to the objectives of the study. The questionnaires were distributed at two selected private institutions in Klang Valley. Nominal scale was also used in this research, as it is the most suitable level of measurement especially in answering questions.

B. Population and Sampling

Population in the context of this study is defined as employees in institutions, a community and as a group of people that has been chosen by the researcher to conduct a research study on them. For this research study, the researcher selected two private institutions to distribute the questionnaires. The two private institutions are Taylor’s University, and Sunway University. At both universities, the respondents were selected randomly without biases and consisted of officers, executives, senior executives, assistant managers and academic staff. Respondents included employees who have been working less than five years, five years and above, ten years and above, fifteen years and above and twenty years and above. A total of 300 academic and administrative employees from both universities were targeted as respondents for this study. According to [15], the appropriate sample size is 269 respondents.

The sampling technique used in this research study was purposive sampling. According to [16], purposive sampling refers to the random selection of sampling units in the segment of a population that contains ample information regarding the essential characteristics of the study. The selection of sampling units in the form of purposive sampling is subjective because the researcher relies on experience and judgment. Purposive sampling is the common form of sampling used by researchers in social sciences research studies. In purposive sampling, the researcher who understands the nature of the study population can help determine in advance the distribution and basis for selection of sample.

C. Instrumentation

The study used questionnaire as the instrument. Questionnaires from [17] and [18] were combined and used in this study to create the questionnaire for moral leadership. Questionnaires were used for this study because questionnaires can measure the level of effectiveness of moral leadership among heads of department in six dimensions, which are trustworthiness, communication, criticism and dissent, fairness, employee development and empowerment. The questionnaire can also be used to determine if there any significant relationships between the effectiveness of moral leadership and employee’s job performance. The questionnaires were distributed to two different private institutions in Klang Valley.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Effectiveness of Moral Leadership

In this section, the researcher discussed on the seven dimensions that contribute to the moral leadership based on the trustworthiness, communication, criticism and dissent, fairness, employee’s development, empowerment and employees job performance among heads of department at private higher institutions. The first research objectives are to determine the level of the effectiveness of moral leadership among heads of department at selected higher institutions in Klang Valley. The second research objectives are to identify dominant attribute of moral leadership among heads of department at selected private institutions based on ranking in Klang Valley. In this section, the researcher has analyzed this study using the descriptive statistic which consists of mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage which involved 260 respondents.

B. Dominant Attribute of Moral Leadership

In second research objective, is to identify the dominant attribute of moral leadership among heads of department at selected private institutions in Klang Valley. The dominant attribute has been discussed as in the table below:
Table above shows the level of dominant attribute of moral leadership among heads of department at private institutions in Klang Valley. The highest dominant attribute is trustworthiness dimension where the total mean score is 3.5025 and the total standard deviation score is 1.0293. The level of mean interpretation is “High”. Next the second highest dominant attribute is empowerment with the total mean score is 2.8830 and the standard deviation is 0.8776. The level of interpretation is “Average”. The third highest is employee’s job performance with the total mean is 2.9641 and standard deviation is 0.8994. The level of interpretation is “Average”.

This follow by communication dimension with the total mean score is 2.8830 and standard deviation is 0.8776. The level of interpretation is “Average”. The fifth dimensions are employee’s development with the total mean is 2.8743 and standard deviation is 0.8206. The level of interpretation is “Average”. The sixth dimensions are fairness, criticism and dissent with the total mean score is 2.6493 and the standard deviation is 0.8449. The level of interpretation is “Average”. The last is fairness dimension with the total mean score is 2.6493 and standard deviation is 0.8237. The level of interpretation is “Average”.

This study was carried out to examine moral leadership among heads of department in private institutions in Klang Valley. Two private universities were selected for this research and seven dimensions were used to measure the level of effectiveness of moral leadership (first research question). In addition to measuring level of moral leadership, this study also aimed to identify the dominant attribute of Moral Leadership (second research question). For the third research question, the researcher looked at the significant differences between gender and moral leadership among heads of department, while for the fourth research question, the significant relationship between the effectiveness of moral leadership and employee’s performance at selected private higher institutions in Klang valley were examined. For the last research question, the researcher examined significant differences between highest level of education and employee’s job performance.

The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to derive the mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage (descriptive statistics). Each section was analyzed and the results measured. For the first section, section B, which looked at the trustworthiness dimension, six questions was utilized. The average mean for section B is 3.4903. The results show that most of the employees agreed that the HOD can be relied on to honor their commitments. This shows that, in both institutions, the employees trust their HOD to deliver their work commitments successfully. In the second section, section C which looked at communication, respondents answered six questions. The average mean for section C is 3.5025. The highest mean score was for when employees agreed that the HOD is approachable and friendly. This shows that employees can easily communicate with the HOD on any arising problems. HODs who implement open door policy can make employees feel they are important and able to share any work-related problems. Many problems can be resolved when communication between HOD and employees is strong. The next section, section D looked at criticism and dissent. In this section, four questions were asked. The average mean for section D is 2.8663 and the average standard deviation, 0.8449. The highest mean score for this section was for when employees agreed that the HOD listens to ideas and suggestions for improving the department. Accepting ideas and suggestions from employees is very important as this may indirectly help improve a department or the institution. Brainstorming ideas and suggestions on different aspects of tasks can help a department or institution reach its mission and vision.

The next section is section E which looked at the fairness dimension. In this section, six questions were forwarded to respondents. The average mean for section E is 2.6493 and the average standard deviation is 0.8236. In this section, many respondents agreed that the HOD always holds employees accountable for problems that the employees have no control over. This shows that there is no fairness for employees who cannot be held accountable for problems outside their position’s jurisdiction. The HOD can only hold employees accountable to matters that fall under the employee’s job description. In addition, the HOD should guide employees in facing and handling challenging task as the HOD may be more experienced or has more expertise. The next is section F which looked at employee development. In this section, respondents answered six questions and the result shows that employees agreed that the HOD should encourage employees to attend trainings related to their career development. Employee development is very important for the employees as well as the institution. HODs should always encourage and give opportunities to employees to develop themselves by undergoing trainings related to their expertise. When employee development is supported, employees will feel motivated and they will not only be inspired to increase their knowledge but also personal development. The average mean for section F is 2.8743. This is followed by section G which examined empowerment. In this section, respondents answered five questions. The average mean for section G is 2.8831. In this section, respondents agreed that the HOD should provide opportunities for employees to handle more challenging responsibilities that are related to their expertise. By giving employees a chance to handle challenging tasks related to their expertise, this will help employees learn new things and be more confident in facing new challenges and in dealing with
higher position people. The last section is section H which looked at employee’s job performance. In this section, six questions were asked to respondents. The average mean for section H is 2.9641. In this section, the highest mean was scored for my colleagues are very helpful and supportive in performing individual or grouping tasks. Respondents agreed that their colleagues are very supportive to each other in delivering tasks either group-based or individual tasks. Having supportive colleagues will help employees feel motivated and happy in their working environment. Having healthy relationship with colleagues will also build a harmonious workplace and strong teamwork.

IV. CONCLUSION

The first objective of this study was to examine the level of effectiveness of moral leadership among heads of department at selected private institutions in Klang Valley while the second objective of this study was to find the dominant attributes of moral leadership among heads of department at selected private higher institutions based on ranking in Klang Valley. Based on past studies, researchers identified the dominant attributes of moral leadership as trustworthiness, communication, criticism and dissent, fairness, employee development, empowerment and employee’s job performance. [19] concurred that moral leadership requires any leader to display the following: trust, integrity, transparency, accountable, responsible and most importantly, innate honesty and kindness that make employees look up to them. This present study found that the level of effectiveness of moral leadership among heads of department at both private institutions as high. Most of respondents agreed that their head of department practiced moral leadership in leading the department.

The mean score of trustworthiness is high which implies that employees agreed that the head of department can be trusted in handling the department and in dealing with employees. They also responded that the head of department can keep their promises and words in work-related matters. The heads of department also trust their employee’s credibility in handling the tasks given and have faith in their subordinates rather than those outside of their department. The result on trustworthiness is similar with past research [20],[21], whereby trust, job satisfaction, team and organizational commitment and leader effectiveness are related to moral leadership. They also found that leaders, who always showed consistent behavior towards employees, can guide moral behavior in employees and able to clarify the job roles were always perceived as more effective than those who did not. This clearly shows that moral leadership is strongly related to trust.

For communication, the mean score is high, which indicates that the head of department practice an open communication with their employees by being friendly and approachable to employees. In addition, the head of the department also listened to the frustration of their subordinates and try their best to help them with the problems. Besides that, the heads of department also encourage their employees to build an effective and efficient communication culture among each other to build a harmonious workplace. According to [22] and [23], leaders who practice openness in communication, build enormous influence among employees and practice good culture is good moral leadership built on social communication.

Motivating employees to voice out their ideas or suggestions in formal meetings is one way to build effective communication. This correlates with [24] and [25] who stated that effective communication practiced by heads of department can be used to give an order, express feelings, as a tool to motivate and to deliver information. Giving clear instructions and communicating clearly to employees will help them understand what is required of them and the department goals that they need to accomplish. [26] stated that success and improvement of an institution depends on the effectiveness of heads of department effectiveness in handling any arising challenges or circumstances. [27] added that successful institutions depend on the efficiency of communication. From there, employees would be able to measure how good a leader is.

The third dimension that was examined in this study is criticism and dissent. In this section, the ability of heads of department to accept criticism and dissent from their employees was examined. The study looked at things such as would heads of department be willing to listen to ideas and suggestions given by employees, if heads of department are open-minded by accepting dissent from employees, if heads of department are willing to accept constructive criticism from employees and if they are willing to consider a decision on the basis recommendation comes from their employees. The result of this study shows that most of the respondents partially agreed on this dimension. This shows that some of the heads of department accepted criticism and dissent positively from employees for department improvement. Additionally, [28] also admitted that a leader who practices moral leadership will mostly respond to criticism and dissent positively. They can accept criticism and dissent from employees for improvement purposes and they will try their best to avoid any negative criticism and dissent.

Next, this study also looked at the fairness dimension. In the fairness dimension, the researcher focused on how heads of department treat their employees. The questions asked in this study includes if heads of department practice favoritism among employees especially when it comes to staff evaluation performance, if heads of department held employees accountable for problems over which they have no control and if heads of department investigated instead of blindly blaming when something goes wrong. Besides that, do heads of department use their employees for their own benefit such as for a moral leader, being fair to all employees is very crucial.

For the employee’s development dimension, the researcher wanted to know if the heads of department pay heed to their employees’ potential and credibility for career development and if heads of department feel employee growth is important. Do the heads of department give opportunities to employees to show their ability to improve and develop themselves by
encouraging them to undergo training that is related to their career development. Most importantly, do heads of department reward and give recognition to deserving employees. The results show that most employees partially agreed that heads of department do support employee development.

According to [30], by rewarding employees, they will feel positively happy and this helps to increase good behavior in employees. This is supported by [31], [32] and [33] who stated that when heads of department focus rewarding and developing their employees, this will help to increase employee motivation who would then be very willing to deliver good service.

Employee development is very important in any institution as by rewarding and developing employees, they will feel motivated and feel positive in doing their job. Besides that, they will also feel more confident in delivering their tasks and feel more appreciated. [34] highlighted that development is important for employees. One way of developing employees is by providing training to them as this will indirectly help institutions grow as well.

Empowerment is another dimension that was discussed in this study. The researcher intended to find out if heads of department empower their employees in critical decisions, give opportunity to employees to handle challenging responsibilities, give opportunity to them to do their own planning, organizing and executing projects without any interference and trusting them in decision making. According to [35] and [36] one of the dimensions in leadership is empowerment. Empowerment is very crucial for employees in their work engagement. When leaders empower employees, there will be some changes in the employees such as increased self-efficiency and self-confidence in delivering the tasks given. The study results show that the employees partially agreed which indicated that that most heads of department rarely empower their employees especially in decision-making. [38] stated that one way of making employees feel motivated in doing their tasks, is by empowering them through actions such as encouraging employees to participative in decision making, giving them opportunities to lead meetings, sharing information with them, and coaching them [38] added that increased level of empowerment among the employees is a key factor in developing an institution.

The last dimension that was examined in this study was employee’s job performance. In this study, the researcher attempted to find out if heads of departments are very supportive and if the employees are happy working with their current head of department. Have the employees been given sufficient opportunities to perform in their job and career by getting full support from HODs? The results show that most respondents chose to partially agree and this shows that most employees are not really motivated in their job and this can contribute to their poor job performance. According to [39], by empowering employees, this will help contribute to the success of institutions as this increases job performance. [40] added that employee performance is reflected in improved production, open-mindedness in using the modern technology and highly motivated workers will appreciate being trusted by their heads of department in decision-making.

REFERENCES


