Ethical leadership at work questionnaire (ELW): Development and validation of a multidimensional measure

Karianne Kalshoven a,⁎, Deanne N. Den Hartog b, Annebel H.B. De Hoogh c

a Utrecht University Ethics Institute, Heidelberglaan 8 3584 CS Utrecht, The Netherlands
b University of Amsterdam Business School, The Netherlands
c University of Amsterdam, Work and Organizational Psychology, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development and validation of the multi-dimensional Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire. Based on theory, interviews and a student sample, we developed seven ethical leader behaviors (fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, people orientation, power sharing, role clarification, and concern for sustainability). We then tested the factor structure in two employee samples (first common-source, EFA; next multi-source, CFA). To establish construct validity we related ethical leader behaviors to other leadership styles and employee attitudes in Study 1. The expected pattern of relationships emerged, e.g., positive relationships with satisfaction and commitment, and negative ones with cynicism. The results suggest that the ELW scales have sound psychometric properties and good construct validity. In Study 2, using a multi-source sample, the ELW behaviors explained variance in trust, OCB, and leader and follower effectiveness beyond a uni-dimensional measure of ethical leadership. Ethical leadership was also related to OCB (supervisor-rated). Employees who rate their leader higher on power sharing and fairness show more OCB. Taken together, the results suggest that the ELW is a useful new multidimensional measurement tool that can help further our understanding of the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership.

Keywords:
Ethical leadership
Scale development
Construct validation
Organizational citizenship behavior

Recent fraud scandals have put ethical leader behavior high on the priority list of organizations as ethical problems break down the trust and reputation of both leaders and organizations (Mendonca, 2001; Waldman, Siegel, & Javidan, 2006). Ethical leadership is expected to have positive effects on the attitudes and (ethical) conduct of employees and ultimately even on business unit or organizational performance (Aronson, 2001; Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Kanungo, 2001; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003).

Research on ethical leader behavior at all levels in the organization is increasing. Ethical leadership is often seen as a multi-dimensional concept, yet with a few exceptions (e.g., De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008, 2009; Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006), previous studies have not measured multiple ethical leader behaviors. Rather, uni-dimensional measures tend to be used. For instance, Brown et al. (2005) developed the 10-item Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) that is currently often used to measure ethical leader behavior. This scale combines different leader behaviors, including acting fairly and honestly, allowing followers’ voice, and rewarding ethical conduct in a single scale. Although such a short scale is useful for certain research purposes, theoretically the underlying behaviors seem rather different and they may have different antecedents and consequences. Combining such different behaviors into a single undifferentiated construct could make it harder to uncover the different mechanisms through which ethical leadership develops and may be effective.

⁎ Corresponding author. Department of HRM-OB, University of Amsterdam Business School, Plantage Muidergracht 12, 1018 TV Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel.: +31 20 525 5284.
E-mail address: K.Kalshoven@uu.nl (K. Kalshoven).

1048-9843/$ – see front matter © 2010 Published by Elsevier Inc.
doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.007
In a newly emerging research field, developing valid measures is of great importance. Here, we aim to contribute to the emerging field of ethical leader behavior through developing a questionnaire to measure different forms of ethical leader behavior (the Ethical Leadership at Work Questionnaire [ELW]). Drawing on a literature review, we distinguish seven ethical leader behaviors. In Study 1, we first describe the item generation and scale development process based on interviews and a pilot study. Next, we investigate the ELW factor structure and measurement properties in a single-source employee sample. To start establishing construct validity, we examine relationships of the ethical leader behaviors with transformational leadership and work-related attitudes. Specifically, we look at perceived leader effectiveness, job and leader satisfaction, trust, cynicism and commitment. In Study 2, we test the factor structure and psychometric properties of the ELW scales and further address construct validity by examining the relationship between ethical leader behaviors and perceived leader effectiveness, trust, employee effectiveness and employee organizational citizenship behavior in a multi-source sample. In this multi-source field study, we also contribute to the literature by examining the extent to which the ethical leadership behaviors explain variance in employee behavior (Study 2).

1. Ethical leader behavior

In the last few years, ethics and integrity have received a growing amount of attention in the leadership field. Both transformational and authentic leadership have been described as containing an ethical component. Related to this, Craig and Custafson (1998) developed a leader integrity measure that focused more on the negative rather than the positive side of integrity. Integrity shows some conceptual overlap with ethical leadership, yet is only one element of ethical behavior (e.g., Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). Bass (1985) argued that transformational leaders could behave either ethically or unethically and distinguish between such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making.

In addition to this social learning approach, others view ethical leadership from a social exchange approach (e.g., Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Turner et al., 2002). Researchers using a social exchange approach focus more on the norm for reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and hold that followers are willing to reciprocate when treated fairly and with concern by their leaders (e.g., Mayer et al., 2009). Both views help understand individuals’ reactions to ethical leader behavior. Other perspectives on ethical leadership are also found. For example, Dickson, Smith, Grojean, and Ehrhart (2001) focus on the role leaders have in creating an ethical climate and Resick et al. (2006) focus on how leaders use their power in decisions and actions. Similarly, De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2009) emphasize ethical leaders’ socially responsible use of power and see ethical leadership as the process of influencing in a social responsible way others’ activities toward goal achievement.
دریافت فوری
متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات