

Ethical leadership and its relationship to achieving administrative creativity

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Abstract :The research dealt with the role of ethical leadership as an independent variable with its dimensions (availability of ethical behavior, practicing ethical behavior, and enhancing ethical behavior) on creative performance as a dependent variable with the following dimensions (quality of performance, volume of performance, and performance procedures). The scope of application of this study on a sample of state departments was (Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate) was considered a purposive sample by the researcher because it is one of the most important organizations concerned with leadership in various specialties. Our study adopted a procedural plan that expresses the logical relationship between the main variables.

Keywords: Availability of ethical behavior; practice of ethical behavior; promotion of ethical behavior; ethical leadership; administrative creativity.

Jel codes: M14; M12

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Introduction:

Leadership is a superior characteristics and abilities that enable the leader to influence others to achieve common goals according to an inspiring vision within a specific situational framework (Al-Kabeer, 2016, p. 41). Saddam (2010, p. 541) defined it as: "The leader's ability to identify the right things before thinking about how to accomplish them, i.e. the leader asks himself what are the right things that should be accomplished before asking about the right way to accomplish them". Al-Raqab (2010, p. 22) sees it as: "The process of bringing about the desired change by leaders and subordinates, by improving the needs, motivations, and vision of subordinates; in order to improve the outcomes of the work that is to be achieved". Al-Masoud (2010, p. 11) defined it as: "Managing individuals, groups, and work resources towards goals in an effective and advanced manner based on developing commitment and loyalty to the leader; in order to achieve the best results". Safhi (2013, p. 13) defined it as: "The process of influencing managers of private organizations on employees within the organization, and urging them to perform their assigned tasks".

The researcher believes that leadership can be defined as: "The capabilities that the leader possesses to influence the team, to be able to achieve the desired goals of the organization." In order to establish and confirm the above, leadership is a social process, as the leader derives his strength from the cooperation of his subordinates with him, and the subordinates derive their strength from their leader whom they trust.

Ethical leadership requires different standards and systems; in order to be able to exercise its role effectively and perform its duties to the fullest extent. We must not forget that we are dealing with a human resource in this context, and that the human resource is always subject to influences that may be positive or negative, and this is due to the nature of the culture in effect within the organization to which the individual belongs. We find that organizational culture intervenes in a way that cannot be ignored in making administrative decisions and the standards that may govern these decisions. The researcher will discuss here the most important of what has been mentioned regarding ethical leadership standards. Al-Tarawneh (2012, p. 114) indicated that there are several ethical rules that control the behavior of the majority of workers in professions, which are: Being honest and truthful with the recipient of the service, and providing the service to him without the goal of providing it being to obtain benefit; the motto raised in dealing with all segments of society when practicing the profession is justice and equality.

Ikrim (2012, p. 559) also indicated that "all employees in any organization must adhere to the ethical standards of behavior at work, and these standards (credibility, honesty, justice, mercy, and altruism) because these standards have a positive role and a fundamental impact in building mutual trust, because the organization in which such trust exists makes members have the ability to work under the worst conditions, and thus solve work problems collectively." Al-Shattawi (2016) pointed out that ethical leadership included several criteria, including set of standard behaviors and practices that have specific principles and controls; works to achieve a high level of mutual trust with all parties related to the organization; in accordance with the specified laws and regulations, contributes to creating a productive and positive organizational climate; and works to build distinguished human relationships in line with the desired goals of the organization. The ethical leader must have the personal skills that enable him to work to promote positive behavior in the organization.

It can be said that the leader who governs matters within the organization in an ethical manner must possess a number of important qualities, and must establish for himself a binding ethical charter, and one of the most important qualities of this leader is to judge matters logically; that is, not to follow his whims in assessing situations, and the leader must also have the ability to bring the opponents within the organization closer together, in order to reduce tension and conflict between employees, and work to develop positive ethical trends. Al-Anqari (2014, p. 240) summarized the characteristics of ethical leadership in three dimensions: administrative characteristics; personal characteristics and characteristics related to human relations such as dealing with others, respect, humility, as Trevino and Brown (2003, p. 15) stated.

The importance of ethical leadership emerges when there are no laws, regulations, and instructions, and the leader here needs to work hard, and use conscience in any decision that may be issued by management, and to know that this decision may help in the dedication of workers to work, and obtain the best possible achievement from them, and this will not come from a vacuum, but by treating workers well, working to understand their feelings, understanding their problems, working to contribute to solving them, and working to achieve familiarity between workers and each other, and all of this strongly requires ethical

leadership. Al-Tarawneh (2012, p. 109) indicated that "it is necessary to have an ethical charter that administrators adhere to based on several foundations, including: right, logic, justice, and reason. This charter governs administrative decisions at all levels, as adherence to this charter works to reduce conflict and tension within the organization, and this is reflected in transforming the organizational climate into a climate dominated by cooperation and the desire for production.

The dimensions of ethical leadership are of particular importance, as they are a message from the leader that ethical dimensions contribute directly and indirectly to the success and continuity of the organization. The researcher addresses the most important things mentioned by researchers about the dimensions of ethical leadership through the following:

Dimensions of ethical leadership through the following:

- Good treatment, understanding the other opinion, honesty, and justice. Kalshoven et al (2011) quoted from Al-Anqari (2014, p. 240) identified seven dimensions of ethical leadership, which are:
- Justice, through equal treatment, and presenting fair options.
- Sharing in power, through consultation, and respecting ideas and interests.
- Clarity of role, through clarity of responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals.
- Orientation of people, through caring for people and respect.
- Moral guidance, through advocacy of ethics, reward, and punishment.
- Integrity, through clean hands, and consistency between words and actions.

In the other hand, for the administrative creativity, researchers have provided many definitions of administrative creativity, but they all revolve around concepts close to each other. We will mention below the most important concepts and definitions of administrative creativity, where: Al-Salmi (2010, p. 54) defined it as practicing administrative work with different thinking and methods, which forms a positive and favorable work climate and environment for individuals, workers, and work groups, each in his field of work; for the continuous generation of good ideas, distinguished performance, and going beyond the norm in those achievements, and going beyond the traditional in thought and work in an effort to increase the internal and external efficiency of the organization, its growth, its survival, and increase its competitive ability. Al-Salmi (2010, p. 54) and Al-Ajez and Shaladan (2010) explained administrative creativity as follows: finding new ideas; discovering approaches and creative methods; the ability of organizations to adopt creative ideas and benefit from them.

Al-Sakarna (2011, p. 80) found that the most important obstacles that affect administrative creativity is the cognitive obstacles that are represented by a person adopting one way of looking at things and matters, as he does not perceive the thing except through dimensions determined by the restricted view that hides the other characteristics of this thing from him.

The psychological barriers also are represented by the fear of failure, and this is due to the individual's lack of confidence in himself, and his ability to invent new ideas, and convince

others of them. To overcome this obstacle, a person must support his self-confidence, and his ability to innovate, and that he is no less in his abilities and talents than many scientists who innovated, invented, and discovered.

From above discussion we find that few studies highlight the relationship between ethical leadership and administration creativity, so is ethical leadership one of the most important reasons for the success of any organization, whether educational, service, or industrial? Is the most important element of leadership that it works to achieve the organization's goals that were planned and determined in advance? It is very important to shed light in this research on the importance of ethical leadership and its contribution to the development of creativity.

The primary aim of this study is to underscore the significance of ethical leadership within organizations. It seeks to identify specific practices associated with ethical leadership and to explore leaders' capacity for fostering administrative creativity. Additionally, the study will investigate strategies for enhancing administrative creativity and will clarify the relationship between ethical leadership practices and administrative creativity.

This research is crucial as it focuses on human resources, which are the backbone of any organization. In the context of business, a leader plays a pivotal role in influencing subordinates and followers. A leader's commitment to ethical behavior can have a profoundly positive impact on the behavior and creativity of employees, as they often serve as role models. This study is particularly noteworthy for its exploration of ethical leadership practices and their relationship to fostering administrative creativity, shedding light on an essential administrative concept that can drive organizational success.

Methodology:

1. Description of the research community and sample:

The questionnaire form was distributed to all employees working in the Electricity Distribution Directorate of Babylon in Iraq, numbering (98) employees. Table 1 shows the numbers of questionnaire forms that were distributed and that were retrieved in their correct form. Table 2 includes the demographics characteristics of our sample.

Table 1: the numbers of questionnaire forms that were distributed

	N	%
Distributed questionnaires	120	100%
Non-refundable questionnaires	22	18.34%
Analyzable questionnaires	98	81.66%

Source: SPSS output

The demographic characteristics outlined in Table 2 provide valuable insights into the composition of the study's participants, which can influence the interpretation of the results.

The sample consists of 34.69% male participants and 65.31% female participants, indicating a significantly higher representation of females. This gender imbalance may reflect broader

trends in the workforce within the public sector, where women often hold a larger proportion of roles, especially in administrative capacities. The implications of this gender distribution should be considered when analyzing attitudes toward ethical leadership and administrative creativity, as gender may influence perspectives and behaviors in these areas.

The age distribution reveals that the largest cohort (43.88%) falls within the 36-45 age range, followed by 31.63% of participants who are under 25 years old. Notably, only 1.02% of respondents are aged 26-35, which may suggest that this age group is either underrepresented in this sector or that positions become more stable and filled with older individuals over time. The presence of a significant percentage of younger employees indicates potential for fresh ideas and perspectives, particularly regarding administrative creativity. Conversely, the higher percentage of older employees (over 36) suggests a wealth of experience, which could contribute positively to ethical leadership practices.

In terms of academic qualifications, the majority of respondents (53.1%) hold a Bachelor's degree, followed by those with a Diploma (20.4%) and preparatory school education (16.1%). A small percentage possess Master's degrees (3.1%) or lower levels of education (3.1% primary and 4.1% medium). This relatively high level of educational attainment may correlate with a greater understanding of ethical principles and administrative practices, potentially enhancing the effectiveness of ethical leadership within the organization.

The data on years of service shows that a significant majority (61.22%) have 16 years or more of experience, while only 17.35% have between 1 to 5 years of service. This indicates a workforce rich in experience, which is likely to contribute positively to the practice and promotion of ethical behavior and administrative creativity. The long tenure of many employees may also lead to a strong organizational culture regarding ethical leadership, as seasoned employees are often more attuned to the values and norms of their workplace.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics

Gender	N	%
Male	34	34.69
Female	64	65.31
Age		
Less than 25	31	31.63
35_26	1	1.02
45_36	43	43.88
55_46	16	16.33
65_55	7	7.14
Academic achievement		
Primary	3	3.1
Medium	4	4.1

Preparatory school	16	16.1
Diploma	20	20.4
Bachelor's	52	53.1
Master's	3	3.1
Number of years of service		
5 – 1	17	17.35
6 - 10	9	9.18
11 - 15	12	12.24
16 years and over	60	61.22

Source: SPSS output

2. Validity and reliability of the study tool:

We adopted the cronbach's alpha coefficient method to calculate the reliability of the scale using SPSS and the results are in table 3.

Table 3: Cronbach's alpha values

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability estimation
Ethical behavior and its availability	0.75	Acceptable
Practicing ethical behavior	0.71	Acceptable
Promoting ethical behavior	0.72	Acceptable
Ethical leadership	0.85	Good
Performance quality	0.73	Acceptable
Performance size	0.75	Acceptable
Performance procedures	0.73	Acceptable
Creative performance	0.91	Excellent

Source: SPSS output

3. Descriptive analysis of the ethical leadership variable:

To know the extent of awareness of the availability of the dimensions of the independent variable (ethical leadership), the weighted arithmetic mean, the intensity of the response, and the standard deviation were calculated and the results were analyzed at the level of each question and sub-dimension first, and then for the main dimension second.

3.1. Ethical behavior and its availability:

The results of Table 1 show that the dimension of ethical behavior and its availability achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of 3.5 which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate possesses the capabilities of ethical behavior and its availability at a high level. It is also noted that the individuals of the study community largely agreed on this dimension, as the value of the standard deviation reached (0.653), and the intensity of the response was good, as it reached (70%). The second question was the most contributing question to strengthening the dimension, as the weighted arithmetic mean value reached (3.76) with a response intensity of (75.2%) and a standard deviation of (1.056) and a high response level, which indicates the strength of the agreement of the study community members regarding this question. As for the fifth question, it achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (1.3) with a response intensity of (62.2%) and a standard deviation of (1.217) and an average response level, which indicates the necessity for the directorate to carry out several activities and provide a good organizational climate in order to motivate and attract human resources.

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of the ethical behavior dimension and its availability:

T	Weighted arithmetic mean	Severity of answer %	standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.64	72.8	0.803	High
2	3.76	75.2	1.056	High
3	3.44	68.8	0.996	High
4	3.56	71.2	0.996	High
5	3.11	62.2	1.217	Middle
6	3.50	70	0.653	High

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

2. Practicing ethical behavior:

It is noted from the results of table 5 that the dimension of practicing ethical behavior achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of (3.16), which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate has the capabilities to practice ethical behavior at an average level, as the value of the standard deviation was (0.806) and the intensity of the response was average, reaching (% 63.2). The second question was the most contributing question in the dimension, as the value of the weighted arithmetic mean reached (3.29) with an intensity of response (% 65.8) and a standard deviation of (1.218) with an average response level, which indicates that the members of the study community agree on an average level regarding this question. As for the fourth question, it achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (3.07) with a response intensity of (61.4%) and a standard deviation of (1.212) with an average response level. This indicates the necessity for the directorate to give employees the opportunity to perform their work in their own way.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of the dimension of practicing ethical behavior:

T	Weighted arithmetic mean	Severity answer %	of standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.21	64.2	1.096	middle
2	3.29	65.8	1.218	middle
3	03.08	61.6	1.224	middle
4	03.07	61.4	1.212	middle
5	3.15	63	1.187	middle
6	3.16	63.2	0.806	middle

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

3. Enhancing ethical behavior:

It is noted from the results of table 6 that the dimension of enhancing ethical behavior achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of (3.28), which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate has the capabilities to practice ethical behavior at an average level. The standard deviation value reached (0.746) and the response intensity was average, reaching (%65.6). The first question was the most contributing question to the dimension, as the weighted arithmetic mean value reached (3.40) with a response intensity of (%68) and a standard deviation of (1.091) and a high response level. This indicates that the members of the study community largely agree on this question. As for the third question, it achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (3.22) with a response intensity of (64.4%) and a standard deviation of (1.070) with an average response level. This indicates the necessity for the directorate to rely on talented individuals within it to fill job vacancies.

Table 6: Descriptive analysis: Enhancing ethical behavior.

T	Weighted arithmetic mean	Severity answer %	of standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.40	68	1.091	high
2	3.23	64.6	1.092	middle
3	3.22	64.4	1.070	middle
4	3.28	65.6	1.191	middle
5	3.29	65.8	1.210	middle
6	3.28	65.6	0.746	middle
7	3.316	66.3	0.648	middle

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

3. Descriptive analysis of the creative performance variable

3.1. Performance quality

The performance quality dimension achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of (3.5), which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate has a wide interest in improving the quality of employee performance at a high level, and the intensity of the response was good as it reached (70%). It is noted that the members of the study community agreed to a certain extent on this dimension, as the value of its standard deviation reached (1.416). The fourth question was the most contributing question to strengthening the dimension, as the value of the weighted arithmetic mean reached (3.57) with an intensity of response (71.4%) and a high level of response. It is also noted that the value of the standard deviation reached

(1.121), which indicates that the members of the study community agreed to some extent on this question. The third question achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (3.33) with a response intensity of (66.6%) and a standard deviation of (1.023) with an average response level. This indicates the need for the directorate to carry out several activities to avoid errors and increase focus on essential decisions to improve the quality of the directorate's performance. Table 7 shows the results of the performance quality dimension.

Table 7: Descriptive analysis of the performance quality dimension

T	Weighted arithmetic mean	Severity of answer %	standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.49	69.8	1.416	high
2	3.55	71	1.150	high
3	3.33	66.6	1.023	middle
4	3.57	71.4	1.121	high
5	3.51	70.2	1.086	high
	3.50	70	1.086	high

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

3.2. Performance Size:

The performance size dimension achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of (3.24), which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate has an interest in improving the size of employee performance at an average level, and the response intensity was (64.8%). It is noted that the members of the study community agreed on this dimension, as the value of its standard deviation reached (0.796). The fourth question was the most contributing question to strengthening the dimension, as the value of the weighted arithmetic mean reached (3.31) with a response intensity of (66.2%) and an average response level. It is also noted that the value of the standard deviation reached (0.989), which indicates that the members of the study community agreed on this question. The fifth question achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (3.18) with a response intensity of (63.6%) and a standard deviation of (1.125) with an average response level. This indicates the need for the directorate to analyze the performance to know what the employee needs to change or replace. Table 8 shows the results of the performance size dimension.

Table 8: Descriptive analysis of the performance size dimension.

T	Weighted arithmetic mean	Severity of answer %	standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.24	64.8	1.131	middle
2	3.19	63.8	1.172	middle
3	3.29	65.8	1.184	middle
4	3.31	66.2	0.989	middle
5	3.18	63.6	1.125	middle

6	3.24	64.8	0.796	middle
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Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

3.3. Performance procedures:

The performance procedures achieved a weighted arithmetic mean of (3.43), which indicates that the Babylon Electricity Distribution Directorate has an interest in improving employee performance procedures at a high level, and the response intensity was (68.6%). It is noted that the members of the study community agreed on this dimension, as the standard deviation value reached (0.767). The second question was the most contributing question to strengthening the dimension, as the weighted arithmetic mean value reached (3.58) with a response intensity of (71.6%) and a high response level. It is also noted that the standard deviation value reached (1.074), which indicates that the members of the study community agreed to some extent regarding this question. The fifth question achieved the lowest weighted arithmetic mean of (3.32) with a response intensity of (66.4%) and a standard deviation of (1.080) with an average response level, which indicates the necessity for the directorate to follow modern procedures for contemporary management. Table 9 shows the results of the performance procedures dimension.

Table 9: Descriptive analysis of the performance procedures dimension.

T	Weighted mean	arithmetic %	Severity of answer %	standard deviation	Answer level
1	3.49		69.8	1.018	High
2	3.58		71.6	1.074	High
3	3.39		67.8	1.012	Middle
4	3.38		67.6	1.162	Middle
5	3.32		66.4	1.080	Middle
6	3.43		68.6	0.767	High
7	3.40		68	0.720	Middle

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS program

Results and discussion:

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of various dimensions of ethical leadership in fostering administrative creativity among public sector employees. Notably, personal ethics of leadership emerged as the most influential factor affecting administrative creativity, closely followed by relational ethics. In contrast, administrative ethics exhibited the least influence on creative processes within the administration. This suggests that the personal qualities and relationships of leaders play a more critical role in stimulating innovative thinking than formal ethical guidelines.

Furthermore, the analysis confirmed that administrative creativity is fundamentally and statistically significantly affected by all dimensions of ethical leadership. This underscores the

essential nature of ethical considerations in promoting innovative practices in administrative settings. Public sector employees recognize the critical importance of ethical leadership practices, as evidenced by a statistically significant relationship between the three areas of ethical leadership—personal, administrative, and relational—and the enhancement of administrative creativity. This finding indicates that employees value ethical leadership as a catalyst for creativity in their work environment. Additionally, the study found a positive impact of personal, administrative, and relational ethics on administrative creativity. Leaders who embody these ethical principles are likely to inspire innovative thinking and practices among their teams, creating a conducive atmosphere for creativity.

The results of this study present several implications for both theory and practice in the realm of ethical leadership and administrative creativity. The dominance of personal ethics in influencing administrative creativity suggests that leaders who demonstrate integrity, authenticity, and moral responsibility significantly inspire their teams. This reinforces the idea that leadership is not just about positional authority but also about personal character and ethical commitment. Moreover, the importance of relational ethics highlights the value of trust, respect, and positive interpersonal relationships in fostering a creative environment. Leaders who prioritize relational aspects create a supportive atmosphere conducive to collaboration and innovative thinking. While administrative ethics were found to be the least influential, their presence remains critical, encouraging further examination of how structured ethical guidelines can be integrated into organizations to support creative initiatives.

The appreciation of ethical leadership practices among public sector employees indicates a need for training and development programs focused on ethical decision-making and leadership styles. Organizations should cultivate leaders who embody ethical principles to enhance creativity and overall organizational performance.

Conclusion:

In summary, this study highlights the critical importance of ethical leadership in fostering administrative creativity within the public sector. The findings reveal that personal ethics of leadership are the most influential factor, followed by relational ethics, while administrative ethics play a lesser role. This underscores the notion that leaders who exemplify integrity, authenticity, and strong interpersonal relationships can significantly inspire creativity among their teams. The recognition of ethical leadership practices by public sector employees emphasizes the need for organizations to prioritize ethical frameworks and training. By cultivating leaders who embody these ethical principles, organizations can create a supportive environment that encourages innovative thinking and enhances overall performance.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between ethical leadership and administrative creativity, suggesting that a focus on personal and relational ethics can lead to more dynamic and effective public administration. Future studies should further explore these relationships and their implications across various organizational contexts to continue advancing the field of ethical leadership.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance ethical leadership and promote administrative creativity in the public sector:

Foster a Spirit of Fair Competition: Leaders should actively work to create an environment that supports and enhances fair competition. This approach can help unlock the latent potential of subordinates and direct their energies toward achieving organizational goals. Encouraging cooperation among employees and providing equal opportunities for recognition will contribute to a more dynamic and engaged workforce.

Disseminate Research Findings: The results of this research should be widely shared within the public sector to evaluate and improve the level of ethical leadership practices. This dissemination can raise awareness and prompt discussions about the significance of ethical leadership in fostering creativity.

Integrate Ethical Leadership in Evaluations: Management should emphasize the importance of ethical leadership by incorporating ethical practices into the evaluation and promotion processes of officials. Recognizing ethical behavior as a fundamental criterion for leadership succession will ensure that future leaders are committed to upholding these values.

Training on Ethical Leadership: It is essential to transfer ethical values and practices across all levels of the organization. Training courses for decision-makers and those in leadership positions should be implemented to clarify the nature of ethical leadership, its principles, and its role in enhancing administrative creativity. Such training will empower employees and encourage them to practice good ethics. Additionally, establishing a committee with the authority to monitor and evaluate the application of ethical practices will help ensure accountability and prompt action against any violations.

Cultivate a Culture of Constructive Criticism: Organizations should work to enhance the culture of accepting criticism from employees. Encouraging open dialogue and constructive feedback will create an atmosphere of trust and continuous improvement.

Empower Subordinates: Leaders should foster confidence in their subordinates by providing opportunities for them to express their opinions without fear or hesitation. Acknowledging and addressing the needs of employees will significantly impact their motivation and creativity. Furthermore, adopting principles of integrity and transparency in all employee-related reports will promote fairness and justice within the organization.

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