



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Head Teachers' Ethical Leadership Behaviours and Teachers' Motivation: A Correlational Study at Elementary Level**

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**ABSTRACT**

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Leadership is considered as one of the major factors and sometimes the only factor to determine the success or failure of an educational organization. Ethics is central to leadership because leaders consistently influence their followers' lives as well as their work place motivation either positively or negatively. In this context, the present study examined elementary school teachers' perceptions to determine the degree of association between head teachers' ethical leadership behavior and teachers' motivation. To achieve the objective, this study used explanatory correlational design and collected views of 587 randomly selected teachers working in public elementary schools of district Multan. Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) developed by Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan and Prussia (2013) and 23 items from teacher motivation scale developed by Gokce (2010) were adapted to collect the requisite data. Data were analyzed by calculating percentage of responses, mean score, SD, Pearson's r and Standard Multiple Regression. Results suggest that teachers' perceived correlation between head teachers' ethical leadership behaviors and their level of motivation was although positive but very low positive and insignificant. This research finally recommends increasing the standards of head teachers' ethical leadership to positively influence teachers' motivation.

**Introduction**

In addition to socialization, another substantial and noticeable function of the school is inculcation of ethical values in new generation. In view of this context, the head teacher establishes the most important link in the educational system in general and in the school in particular. The head teacher supervises several key areas in

school and performs a wide range of managerial as well as academic responsibilities. The head teacher plans the school resources, its climate, internal processes and relationships (Korkmaz, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Law, Galton, Kennedy & Lee, 2016) and, therefore, affects indirectly the students' learning as well as school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). A number of studies supported the notion and declared that school leader's role is central in everyday school operations (Fullan, 1991); in improving school's outcomes (Ibrahim, Ghavifekr, Ling, Siraj & Azeez, 2014) as well as in motivating teachers for taking initiatives to solve school related problems (Cansoy, Parlar & Polatcan, 2020).

However, school improvement and effectiveness does not simply depends upon leader's role and efforts alone (Ling, Abdullah & Ismail, 2016) but school teachers as motivators also play an equally important role in realizing the school goals and improving the quality of education (Abdullah, Ling & Sufi, 2018). Teachers' motivation, therefore, is a primary driving force and contributes significantly to the high quality production i.e. students (Ames, 1990). In this case, the head teachers' leadership style is perceived as a process that needs teachers' collaboration to achieve the intended learning goals (Abdullah et al. 2018) as well as to execute the deliberate activities for school improvement. Head teachers, therefore, must communicate clear goals to teachers, align school resources with goals and resolve managerial issues to motivate teachers (Wasserman, Ben-eli, Yehoshua & Gal, 2016). Moreover, head teachers should be responsible for the welfare of school teachers so that teachers do not exhibit unwillingness with the tasks allocated by the school management (Cansoy et al. 2020) and feel committed as well as motivated (Abdullah et al. 2018).

Motivation as defined by Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1988) refers to the driving force that causes a person to act in a certain way or to be oriented towards it and/or a dynamic set of factors that describes individual behavior (Chisiu, 2013). Motivation influences every person's enthusiasm as well as efficiency (Thahier, Ridjal & Risani, 2014) but to different extents and in different ways (Ucar & İpek, 2019) and this effect may vary in relation to internal or external factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Internal motivation is exclusively linked with task performance while external motivation with several external factors required for the achievement of task goals (Basaran, 2004). As regards teaching-learning process and education system in general, teachers' role is still substantial in spite of all the facilities provided by technological advancements. Teachers have to perform their role with great wisdom and expertise while considering the needs, interests and individual differences of students (Saban, 2002). School success, students' performance and goal accomplishment, therefore, mainly depend on teachers' job satisfaction and motivation.

Highly motivated teachers perform outstandingly to achieve the set targets (Ucar & İpek, 2019) while less motivated ones' compromise on service quality. Teachers' motivation involves internal values related with teaching and preferences

to continue teaching as well as teaching efforts that are influenced by diverse external factors (Han & Yin, 2016). In this context, both the internal as well as external causes of motivation are significant in teachers' motivation (Yazıcı, 2009). Internally motivated teachers perform their responsibilities for job satisfaction, love for teaching and for satisfaction of their feelings of self-fulfilment whereas externally motivated teachers carry out their responsibilities to earn some reward (Wu, 2015) such as salary increase, administrator's social support and/or encouragement from students or their parents (Yazıcı, 2009).

Rapid changes in education system worldwide are a challenge and source of constant stress for teachers. High stress can decrease teachers' motivation and they may be less dynamic in performing their academic responsibilities at school (Abdullah et al. 2018). This situation, according to Karsenti and Collin (2013) affects the focus of teachers in executing routine tasks, students' learning process and relationships with staff members at school. This situation also demands that head teachers as effective school leaders should encourage and motivate teachers to use their available capacities and resources to the maximum possible extent (Eyal& Roth, 2011). Governments take various steps for improving the efficiency level of school heads i.e. transparency in selection and appointment process, induction training and refresher courses, performance evaluation and professional development to ensure school success (Leithwood et al. 2004). The head teachers, therefore, are responsible for mobilizing, guiding and motivating teachers by adopting fitting leadership behaviors.

Research scholars have focused on various leadership styles and several dimensions of leadership behaviors throughout the years that are adopted by organizational leaders i.e. servant leadership (Hale & Fields, 2007), trait approach to leadership (Hogan, 2005), skilled approach to leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1995). But the current study concentrated on ethical dimension of leadership which is a contemporary area of research. The concept of ethical leadership emerged in 20th century as a direct result of the monetary scandals in some of the international corporations and attained much attention because of its positive effects on employees' performance (Almandeel & Dawood, 2019).

Ethical behavior in any organization is a benchmark to make the right decisions and apply the rules and regulations (Almandeel&Dawood, 2019). Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) describe ethical leadership behavior as a "two-way communication" with subordinates through interpersonal relationships by increasing their involvement in decision-making as well as engaging them in organizational actions (Kanungo&Mendonca, 1996). Writing in the same vein, Northouse, (2013) proclaims that ethical leaders act positively and take everyday decisions ethically to build a positive environment. Ethical leadership shows honesty, dignity, consideration and trust towards employees' commitment and efforts for organization (Almandeel&Dawood, 2019). Likewise, ethical leaders

distinguish themselves by signifying abilities in agreement with basic ethical principles such as trustworthiness, honesty and fairness along with balanced decision-making (Okana&Akyuz, 2016). Moreover, ethical leadership brings evident ethical consequences and not driven by their self-interests and internal motivations (Almandeel & Dawood (2019).

There are numerous motives for implementing ethical leadership style in today's organizations. For example, ethical behavior is a key to long-term success (Fritzsche, 2005); increases teachers' commitment to the school (Cansoy et al. 2020); and leads to improved cooperation within the staff (Almandeel&Dawood, 2019).Likewise, ethical leadership behaviors of school head teachers improve the teamwork among teachers (Blase&Blase, 2000) and enable teachers willingly take responsibilities to solve school related problems (Cansoy et al. 2020). Furthermore, head teachers' shared decision-making with teachers inspires cooperation among fellow workers; contributes to their professional development and positively influences teachers' motivation as well as commitment (Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, &Jantzi, 2003; Hallinger, 2015). These behaviors of head teachers towards academic staff also increase their willingness to take initiatives for school improvement and dedication to responsibilities (Heck &Hallinger, 2014).

Review of the leadership literature suggests that ethical leadership behaviors of head teachers and motivation of teachers both are essential to increase students' achievement, school effectiveness and teachers' performance. A number of empirical studies (Almandeel&Dawood, 2019; Avidav-Unger & Friedman, 2011; Avolio et al. 2004; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Eyal& Roth, 2010; Park & Rainey, 2008; Wasserman, et al. 2016) found positive relationship between leadership styles of head teachers and teachers' motivation. Alternatively, there are scholars (Eres, 2011; Gallmeier, 1992) who found that leadership style of school principal does not affect teachers' motivation. Review of literature further suggests that studies on the association of ethical leadership behaviors and teachers' workplace motivation are still limited particularly in the context of Pakistan. Considering this background, the main purpose of this study was to examine elementary school teachers' views about their head teachers' ethical leadership behaviors in relation to their work place motivation.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Research Design, Population and Sample**

This study used explanatory correlational research design (Creswell, 2012). The population in the present study consisted of all the2442male and female teachers teaching in all grades and serving in 214government elementary schools of district Multan (Punjab School Census, 2018). The researchers used proportionate stratified random sampling technique to select the sample in this study. The sample size was decided with the help of a formula established by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining sample size. Consequently, 658 (312 male and 346 female) teachers

representing both the primary portion teachers (i.e. PSTs/ESEs) and middle portion teachers (i.e. ESTs/SESEs) were included in the representative sample.

### **Research Tool, Administration and Data Analysis**

The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) developed by Yukl et al. (2013) was adapted to measure essential aspects of ethical leadership. The Teacher Motivation Scale (TMS) used in this study was constructed based on the scale developed by Gokce (2010). The ELQ consists of 15 items and measures essential aspects of ethical leadership independently of other types of leadership behavior (Yukl et al. 2013). The TMS comprises 23 items and two sub-scales including intrinsic motivation dimension with 11 items and extrinsic motivation dimension having 12 items. Items/statements were adapted and/or selected from aforementioned tools and minor modifications were made to make them culturally compatible in the context of Pakistani sample.

The validity of the scales and sub-scales was censured by taking experts' opinion from 3 senior teachers serving in the field of education as well as conducting a small scale pilot study. Changes suggested by the specialists were incorporated in the relevant items. Forty one elementary school teachers took part in the pilot study. Participating teachers were requested to pinpoint any ambiguities and difficulties in understanding the items of both the scales and sub-scales. All the participating teachers of pilot study showed their satisfaction with the face validity as well as content validity of the scales and sub-scales. Cronbach Alpha coefficient values of both the scales and their sub-scales ranged from .69 to .81 which is in line with Cronbach (1951) who indicated that reliability coefficients above 0.6 are desirable. Finalized instrument was administered to 658 sample participants and 587 (89%) finally responded. Data were analysed by calculating percentage of responses, mean score, standard deviation, Pearson correlation and Standard Multiple Regression.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results have been presented in four sub-sections in response to main objective and research questions.

#### **Demographic Findings**

This section presents analysis of demographic information of sample elementary school teachers. The analysis was done by using descriptive statistical techniques. Analysis revealed that 48.6% were male and 51.4% were female elementary school teachers. Moreover, 52.6% were selected their designation as PST/ESE and 47.4% as EST/SESE respectively. Likewise, in age group 14.5% age was between 21-30 years, 43.4% age was between 31-40 years, 30.5% age was between 41-50 years and 11.6% age was between 51-60 years. Furthermore, 14.5% respondents selected their age in between 0-5 years, 11.6% were between 6-10 years, 45.5% age was

in between 11-15years and 28.4% age was in between 16years or more. Similarly, 14.5% teachers were selected their teaching experience between 0-5years;11.6% teaching experience were between 6-10years;45.5% teaching experience were between 11-15years and 28.4% teaching experience were 16 years or more.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Head Teacher's Ethical Behavior**

This section presents the descriptive statistical analysis of teachers' perception of head teachers' ethical leadership behavior. Table 1 presents mean score and standard deviation for all the 15ethical leadership behaviors of head teachers as perceived by teachers.

Table 1  
Statement-wise descriptive statistics for ethical leadership behavior scale

Sr. no.	Items/themes	Mean	SD
1	Shows strong concern for ethical and moral values.	4.19	0.43
2	Communicates clear ethical standards	3.37	0.29
3	Sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions.	4.17	0.38
4	Honest and trusted to tell the truth	4.19	0.40
5	Keeps actions consistent with stated values ("walks the talk").	3.82	0.40
6	Fair and unbiased in assigning tasks	3.66	0.40
7	Trustworthy for carrying out promises	4.07	0.26
8	Insists on fair and ethical doings	4.14	0.37
9	Acknowledges mistakes and takes responsibilities	4.00	0.36
10	Regards honesty and integrity	4.14	0.35
11	Dedication and self-sacrifice	3.57	0.30
12	Opposes the use of unethical practices	4.39	0.40
13	Fair and objective in evaluating and rewarding	3.21	0.38
14	Puts the needs of others above own self-interest	3.63	0.33
15	Holds teachers accountable for unethical practices	3.99	0.30
Overall		3.90	0.35

Note: Low Mean = (Less than 3.00), Moderate = (3.00 to 4.00), High = (4.01 to 5.00)

Table 1 shows the analysis of elementary school teachers' perceptions of their head teachers' 15 substantial ethical leadership behaviors. Table 1 further display that participating teachers rated eight behaviors of their head teachers as highly positive, seven behaviors as moderately positive and none was perceived as low and/or negative. The overall level of ethical leadership behaviors of head teachers as perceived by sample teachers was moderately positive (M = 3.90, SD= 0.35). It can be inferred that participants believed that ethical leadership behaviors of elementary school head teachers were positive.

### **Teachers' Perception about their Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

This section presents the analysis of data to examine the teacher's perceptions about their level of motivation. Motivation scale was further divided into two

dimensions i.e. intrinsic motivation (11 items) and extrinsic motivation (12 items). Analysis of participants' responses on both the dimensions was performed separately and presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation**

Sr. no.	Items/themes	Mean	SD
1	Freedom to make own choices	2.66	0.89
2	Professional competence	4.17	0.43
3	Interest in ongoing experiences	3.83	0.34
4	Mastery in new skills and topics	3.79	0.39
5	Ability to change mind in light of new evidence	3.64	0.47
6	Confidence in ability to complete tasks	4.26	0.44
7	Feelings of acceptance in institution	3.92	0.44
8	Feelings of professional, satisfying relationships	4.39	0.44
9	Professional collaboration with other members of institution	4.43	0.46
10	Feelings of recognition for professional contributions	4.26	0.45
11	Sense of achievement and reward	4.28	0.45
Overall		3.97	0.47

Note: Low Mean = (Less than 3.00), Moderate = (3.00 to 4.00), High = (4.01 to 5.00)

Table 2 shows the analysis of elementary school teachers' perceptions of their level of intrinsic motivation. Table 2 further displays that participating teachers rated their level of motivation on six indicators as highly positive, moderately positive on four indicators and low positive and/or negative on one indicator. The overall level of teachers' perceived motivation was moderately positive ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ). It can be inferred that participants believed that their level of motivation was positive. The next section presents the analysis of data to examine the teacher's perceptions about their extrinsic motivation and the results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive statistics for teachers' perception about extrinsic motivation**

Sr. no.	Items/themes	Mean	SD
1	My salary is adequate.	3.02	0.91
2	I have job security.	4.39	0.01
3	Suitable workplace conditions	3.54	0.30
4	Efficient workplace administration	3.22	0.23
5	My classes are not overcrowded.	3.05	0.28
6	Academic level of students is acceptable	3.04	0.21
7	Discipline within the norm in my field	4.07	0.26
8	Active participation of students in class	3.14	0.33
9	Institutionally-mandated assessment	4.04	0.21
10	Assessing teachers helps to increase their efficiency.	4.12	0.33
11	Strong relationships and feelings of acceptance	4.12	0.33
12	Consideration of opinions by colleagues	4.09	0.35
Overall		3.65	0.31

Note: Low Mean = (Less than 3.00), Moderate = (3.00 to 4.00), High = (4.01 to 5.00)

Table 3 shows the analysis of elementary school teachers' perceptions of their level of extrinsic motivation. Table 3 further displays that participating teachers rated their level of motivation on six indicators as highly positive, moderately positive on six indicators and no item was rated as low positive and/or negative. The overall level of teachers' perceived motivation was moderately positive ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ). It can be inferred that participants believed that their level of extrinsic motivation was positive.

### **Relationship between Head Teachers' Ethical Behavior and Teachers' Motivation**

This section presents the results of Pearson correlation coefficient method and multiple regression analyses used to determine the association between head teachers' ethical leadership behavior and teachers' motivation. The results are shown in Table 4 and Table 5 followed by interpretation.

**Table 4**  
**Relationship between head teachers' ethical behavior and teachers' motivation**

Variable	EB	IM	EM	TM
Ethical Behavior (EB)	1			
Internal Motivation (IM)	.029	1		
External Motivation (EM)	.070	.153**	1	
Total Motivation (TM)	.060	.882**	.593**	1

Table 4 presents the results of Pearson correlation coefficient method that was used to analyse the association between head teachers' ethical leadership behavior and teachers' level of motivation. It was found that value of correlation coefficient between ethical leadership behavior dimension and teachers' level of motivation reached 0.060 which is although positive but very low positive and insignificant. Likewise, the values of correlation coefficient between head teachers' ethical leadership behaviors and internal motivation dimension along with teachers' external motivation dimension are .029 and .070 respectively which are also positive but very low positive and insignificant. This means that both the variables under analysis i.e. head teachers' ethical leadership behavior and teachers' motivation was not substantially related. It can, therefore, be inferred from these findings that head teachers ethical leadership behavior has no considerable effect on teachers' motivation.

**Table 5**  
**Multiple Regression Analyses for the Dimensions of Teacher Motivation**

Variable	Total Motivation <sup>a</sup>			Intrinsic Motivation <sup>b</sup>			Extrinsic Motivation <sup>c</sup>		
	$\beta$	t	p	B	T	P	$\beta$	t	P
(Constant)		12.32	.000		7.46	.000		13.43	.000
Ethical Behavior	.061	1.49	.137	.030	.73	.464	.070	1.71	.087

a  $R = .097$ ,  $R^2 = .009$ ;  $F = 2.82$ ,  $p < .05$ .

b  $R = .029$ ,  $R^2 = .001$ ;  $F = 0.50$ ,  $p < .05$ .

c  $R = .070$ ,  $R^2 = .005$ ;  $F = 2.94$ ,  $p < .05$ .



Table 5 presents the results of standard multiple regression analyses for independent and dependent variables predicting the total motivation along with intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of teacher motivation. A multiple R of .097 explained only 0.9% of the variance in total motivation scores. These values suggest that head teachers' ethical leadership behavior ( $\beta = .061$ ,  $p > .05$ ) was not significant in predicting teachers' total motivation. Likewise, for intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation dimensions 0.1% and 0.5% of the variance was explained respectively by head teachers' ethical leadership behavior. These values also suggest that head teachers' ethical leadership behavior was neither significant in predicting teachers' intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = .030$ ,  $p > .05$ ) nor in predicting teachers' extrinsic motivation ( $\beta = .070$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Overall, the results of the analyses in Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that the effect of head teachers' ethical leadership behavior as perceived by the teachers as a predictor of their motivation is although positive but very low positive and insignificant.

## Discussion

The main intent of the present study was to analyse elementary school teachers' perceptions to determine ethical leadership behaviors of their head teachers and their own motivation level and to investigate the extent of relationship between head teachers' ethical leadership behavior and teachers' motivation. Based on the findings, level of ethical leadership behaviors of head teachers as perceived by teachers was "moderately positive". As regards the degree of internal and external motivation level of participating teachers, it was inferred that teachers were not absolutely satisfied with the leadership behaviors of their head teachers as well as abstract and concrete settings of elementary schools within the context of Pakistan. This study also found insignificant differences in teachers' perceptions regarding their motivation level. Furthermore, the participating teachers found internal and external motivation sources i.e. communication of clear ethical standards, freedom to make own choices, overcrowded classes, low academic level of students, the financial benefits they receive and fairness in rewarding inadequate. These findings of this study are in line with (Unal, 2000 as cited in Eres, 2011; Wu, 2003).

The study also found that there was no significant relationship between elementary school head teachers' ethical leadership behaviours and teachers' motivation. This result is in agreement with Eres (2011) and Gallmeier (1992) who found that leadership style of school principal does not affect teachers' motivation. This result, however, is in contradiction with the findings of a number of scholars (i.e. Almandeel&Dawood, 2019; Avidav-Unger & Friedman, 2011; Avolio et al. 2004; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Eyal& Roth, 2010; Park & Rainey, 2008; Wasserman, et al. 2016). They found positive relationship between leadership styles of head teachers and teachers' motivation.

It is believed that centralized control of education system (as in case of Pakistan) negatively impacts school managers' leadership behaviors and teachers' motivation (Leithwood, Steinbach&Jantzi, 2002). It is because central and

bureaucratic control on education system restricts the leadership behaviours of school head teachers/managers (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Furthermore, Leithwood (1995) states that ethical leaders take into consideration merely the reformist role of a manager with particular emphasis on shaping the organizational culture. Although the individual capabilities of school leaders in this form play an important role in improving group efficiency and in achieving organizational goals, it has no substantial effect on teacher motivation (Eres, 2011). Marks and Printy (2003) recommend that integration of instructional leadership and ethical leadership in schools might be effective to enhance teacher motivation and improve school success.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Leadership style of the head teachers and teachers' motivation are two significant elements in the successful working of an elementary school. Research has constantly documented that ethical school leadership builds a healthy environment within school and has a considerable impact on their teachers' motivation. Consequently, teachers feel themselves more secure, more committed and more motivated towards the school. This study, however, concluded that teachers' perceived correlation between head teachers' ethical leadership behaviors and their level of motivation was although positive but very low positive and insignificant. It was essential to further improve the practices of head teachers' ethical leadership behaviors in Pakistani elementary schools in order to bring about positive changes in teachers' commitment and motivation. It would be useful for educational policy makers as well as school head teachers to improve the working conditions that contribute to make teachers feel committed and motivated. To improve head teachers ethical leadership behaviors in the working environment, schools need such leadership who acts ethically and is competent enough to implement ethical values among their subordinates. This research finally recommends increasing the standards of head teachers' ethical leadership to positively influence teachers' motivation.

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