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Parenting as an Antecedent to Ethical Leadership: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

The need for ethics and ethical leadership cannot be overemphasized in modern-day society. Individuals, organizations, communities, and nations at large have come to the realization that their long-term sustainability and progress are secure only when founded on ethical practices. In spite of the consensus regarding the need for ethical leadership, past studies have mainly focused on approaches to developing ethical leaders while these leaders are already in the positions of influence, disregarding that many factors could have come into play before a leader starts wielding influence that may result in their being ethical or unethical. This paper constitutes a review of the extant conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature and raises a number of issues that are a case for a new conceptual model related to the connection between parenting and ethical leadership. The new model advances that parenting is a major antecedent to ethical leadership. Further, the paper highlights that the effect of parenting on ethical leadership is through the mediating effects of morality development. In addition, environmental factors such as hereditary considerations, culture, peer influence, and education moderate the relationship between parenting and ethical leadership. Further, a number of the dimensions within environmental factors could also trace their origin to parenting as a construct in a self-repeating and cyclical fashion.

Keywords: *Parenting, Morality, Moral development, Ethics, Ethical Leadership*

1. Introduction

Leadership has been practiced throughout human history but its systematic study started within the 19th and 20th centuries. At the core of leadership from the many attempts at defining are the influence and relational aspects which introduce the complexity and contingent nature of the discipline. This has led to the evolution of leadership into situational and contingent perspectives. Many other approaches have been advanced over time with the conclusion being that leadership is a complex phenomenon that has no single and simple approach that would apply in all situations. The central need for leadership to be caring and just in its practice and hence leadership ethics is an issue where there is general agreement among many scholars (Northouse, 2016). In spite of the consensus, there are relatively few studies regarding ethical leadership and especially its development. According to Brown *et al.* (2005), ethical leadership

is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal action and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”(p. 120). Ciulla (1998) documented some of the earliest writings in relation to ethics of leadership. The interest in understanding the nature of ethical leadership both in the academic and non-academic circles has been buttressed by many occurrences that have been cast doubts on the values and morals of leaders in relation to what society deems appropriate.

According to Northouse (2016), ethics in leadership concern what they do and who they are; their actions and decisions will essentially be informed by their ethics, their rule, and principles of what constitutes right and wrong. Ethics are closely related to the leaders’ moral development. Hereditary factors have been shown to influence the development of morals such that some people out of their genetic connections, for example, certain lineages appear more inclined to act ethically or unethically (Baumrind, 1967; Groenendyk & Volling, 2007; Neiderhiser *et al*, 2007; Ramos *et al*, 2019; Reiss *et al*, 2000). Hereditary factors have been seen to be part of environmental factors in some cases while in others they are seen as distinct. Cowell and Decety (2015), Martinez *et al* (2020), and Ramos *et al* (2019) advance that environmental factors including culture influence the development of morality. Role models have also been shown to shape morality (Seroussi & Yaffe, 2020; Van Stekelenburg, 2020). It is noticeable that parenting can be attributed across all the possible influencers or factors of morality development. First, parents convey the genetic code to their children so that children are likely to display the dispositions that parents exhibit (Avolio *et al*, 2009; Kohlberg, 1971; Ozbag, 2016; Ramos *et al*, 2019). Secondly, parenting is a basic and the most-initial form of role-modeling for the vast majority of children across the world and hence a strong influence on the moral schema that then informs the lens upon which the child and consequently the adult evaluates ethical dilemmas (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Augustine & Stifter, 2015; Avolio *et al*., 2009; Dahl, 2016; Dahl & Killen, 2018; Dahl & Kim, 2014; Ferguson *et al*., 2006; Hammond *et al*, 2017).

2. Statement of the Problem

Ethical issues have become pervasive across the world. Northouse (2016) asserts that due to leadership being a process where the followers are engaged towards mutual goals and individual and organizational values influenced by the leader, ethics are central to the exercise of leadership. Despite this centrality, many issues need to be addressed in regards to ethical leadership. First, it has been seen to be a new area of research that lacks strong research findings to substantiate it owing to being in its early stages of development. Northouse notes that there is a need for more research studies to establish theoretical foundations and dimensions of the discipline. Secondly, the few available writings have been seen to be highly influenced by the writers’ personal opinions with most being descriptive and lacking the empiricism that should characterize human behavioral theories. Thirdly, there have been contentions as to whether ethical leadership should be understood as a uniquely distinguishable leadership approach on its own. Shakeel *et al* (2019) advance the need for ethical leadership to be understood as a process because ethics play a critical role in all forms of leadership regardless of theories or styles in question. The process and developmental aspect of ethical leadership necessitate exploring its antecedents. Lastly, according to Northouse, families, and communities are the main source of teaching to most people on morally appropriate behavior and being. Further, in a self-reinforcing cycle, ethical leadership not only influences through role-modeling but also is perpetuated through the same means. Parents are often the first role models from where individuals learn appropriate behavior vicariously; once they observe what gets rewarded,

punished, attracts attention, and what does not (Bandura, 1986).

Unfortunately, many attempts at addressing the challenge of leaders' unethical behavior and further developing ethical leadership are often focused at formal institutional levels where unethical behavior might have already concretized and hence harder to change. Since ethics and ethical leadership are intertwined with the leaders' morality, an exploration of parenting as an antecedent to ethical leadership is justified. Northouse asserts that good values often become part of somebody and habitual when they are practiced over time, for example, from youth to adulthood.

In view of the scanty literature that links ethical leadership with its development process from an antecedents' perspective, this study presents a consolidated review of the extant conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature with a goal of consolidating the diverse perspectives on ethical leadership, its antecedents, outcomes, and contingent factors. Secondly and beyond the consolidation, the study aims to highlight the gaps in past studies related to ethical leadership and its development so as to not only inform leadership studies but also the practice of leadership development. By exploring parenting as an antecedent of ethical leadership, a long-term preventative approach can be adopted by the society at large, to inculcate ethics into leaders in their young age where parents and those involved in shaping the early life experiences are the most strategic persons to do so; consequently, in jurisdictions where values and character development have been neglected, ethics can be entrenched into programs dealing with young people, for example through character development curricula in schools. Thirdly, the study provides scholars with additional building blocks for the development of theoretical foundations for ethical leadership given the nascent stage of the discipline. Finally, this study proposes a new conceptual model aimed at advancing research in the area of ethical leadership in relation to the suggested key antecedent, parenting.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the paper were first to review the extant conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature on ethical leadership and parenting as its antecedent. The second objective was to identify knowledge gaps related to ethical leadership and parenting as its antecedent drawing from the reviewed literature. The third and final objective of the paper was to propose a suitable theoretical model for advancing research in the area of ethical leadership as it relates to parenting as an antecedent.

4. Methodology

This review was designed to identify scholarly articles that have explored, discussed, or described theories or ideas on the key constructs under consideration in this study, that is, parenting and its antecedent relationship to ethical leadership. The search was broad and aimed at the identification of a wide range of articles and designs. The search yielded a high number of retrieved articles with the main databases searched being Emerald, SAGE, JSTOR, Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and NCBI. The keywords used for the search were ethical leadership, parenting, moral development, and ethics. The search was filtered to articles published from 2001 onwards (within the last 20 years) which are also marked as "open access". All materials were examined within the articles identified using the database search. A three stages approach was taken: first, the titles of the materials were examined before an in-depth of selected abstracts. The titles had to contain any of the following keywords: parenting, morality, moral development, ethics, and ethical leadership. Once it had been established that an article is relevant, an in-depth review of the abstract was conducted. Finally, the selected articles based on an in-depth review of the abstracts would be read in full. This process, including checking the reference lists for key papers or articles that could lead to further articles being sourced,

was done iteratively. A cross-cutting consideration was that for the article to be considered, it had to be a peer-reviewed publication. A total of 137 peer-reviewed journals were reviewed. Figure 1 below shows the publications that were reviewed having followed the outlined criteria.

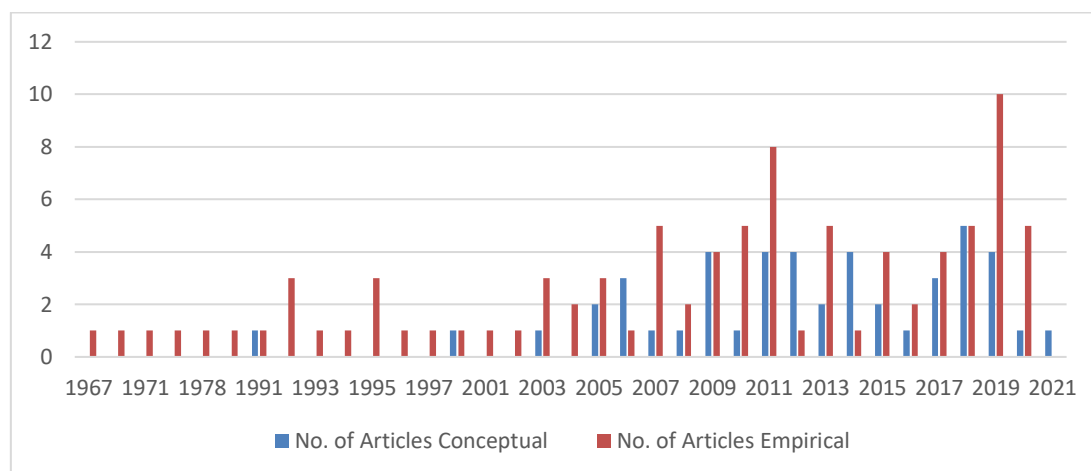


Figure 1: Reviewed articles by year and type

Generally, more empirical articles were reviewed when compared with the conceptual ones. Further, 2019 saw the highest number of empirical publications that were reviewed. It is worth noting that the multi-disciplinary application of ethical leadership and morality development makes the publications appear in different outlets. Table 1 on the next page shows selected journals that had at least two of the reviewed articles.

Table 1: Selected journals publishing ethical leadership and parenting

Journal	Number of articles
Academy of Management	5
Business Ethics Quarterly	2
Business Ethics: A European Review	2
Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	2
Development Psychology	5
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	2
Frontiers in psychology	12
Human Relations	2
Applied Psychology	5
Business Ethics	12
Management	2
Organizational Behaviour	2
Personality and Social Psychology	2
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	5
Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes	6
Personnel Psychology	2
PLoS ONE	2
The Leadership Quarterly	14

4. Conceptual Literature Review

Drawing on the study objectives, the author reviewed the extant conceptual and theoretical literature that relate to ethical leadership, its origin, nature, dimensions, outcomes, and antecedents. The author also reviewed key constructs within parenting as one of the key antecedents of ethical leadership. The conceptual and theoretical issues were identified for consideration.

4.1 Ethical leadership

There are diverse perspectives as to what constitutes ethical leadership. While some studies depicted ethical leadership to entail who ethical leaders are, others focus on what they do while yet others espouse ethical leadership to be the outcomes it affects, and still, others relate to the reasons or justifications assigned by leaders for their actions (Brown et al, 2005; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; Price, 2008; Sharma et al, 2019; Van Wart, 2014). Brown et al provided one of the most common definitions of ethical leadership in which they define ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making”(p.120). Van Wart (2014) propounds that ethical leadership is comprised of six leadership styles which he advances as contemporary theories of ethical leadership. The six styles are characterized in leadership that is (a) virtuous, (b) authentic and positive, (c) moral management, (d) professionally grounded, (e) espouses social responsibility, and (d) transformational. Shakeel et al (2018) in their definition of ethical leadership bring out the fact that the desired ethical behavior for both the leader and the followers are both implicit and explicit, the observance of standards and requirements that promote learning, optimism that is healthy, clarity of purpose, empowerment, servitude, upholding of human rights, improvement, societal duties, concern for future generations, the environment and the need for sustainability.

From the explored literature, ethical leadership thus concerns itself with not only what the leader does but also who they are, their motivations, behavior, basis in making decisions, and their focus on developing others. The salient issue that seems not to be conclusive and which the author aims to contribute to in regards to ethical leadership conceptualization is a focus on justice and commitment to sustainability. While the common conceptualization fits the overarching dimensions of ethical leadership into moral person and moral manager constructs, the authors suggest a third and distinct construct of justice orientation. This is in line with past arguments on the need for ethical leadership paying attention to issues related to empowerment, power-sharing, human rights, building community, sustainability, and positive reinforcement apart from the negative reinforcement as implied by previous conceptualizations (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Kalshoven et al, 2011; Rahaman et al, 2019; Shakeel et al, 2019).

4.2 The moral person

One of the main dimensions in which ethical leadership is depicted is in the construct of a moral person. The moral person is characterized by perceived traits of altruistic motivations, honesty, fairness, a trustworthy character, modesty, sociability, generosity, justice, courage, and temperance (Brown & Treviño, 2006). It is these ethical traits that not only cause the ethical leader to uphold high standards of ethics but also to model and influence the followers towards ethical behavior, thus leading to the next dimension of ethical leadership; that of a moral manager.

The author upholds this dimension of ethical leadership and further promotes that influencing the followers through role-modeling open communication and accountability mechanisms as covered under the moral manager perspective remains critical.

4.3 The moral manager

This dimension of ethical leadership entails the encouragement of open communication that is two-way, ensuring accountability among members, punishing unethical behavior while rewarding ethical behavior, making ethical decisions, and constantly providing opportunities to discuss ethical issues with members of the organization hence conveying the importance of ethics as far as the leader is concerned (Brown & Treviño, 2006). The essence of the moral manager's dimension is that ethical leadership is not just the leaders' demonstrating ethical behavior but it also entails their influence on their followers through demonstrating sensitivity to others' feelings, examining their motivation, being responsive to diverse situations would demand, ethical evaluation when faced with ethical dilemmas, positively influencing the well-being and emotions of followers and creation of an environment of trust and transparency (Avey et al, 2012; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Odongo & Wang, 2018).

The author further upholds the moral manager dimension of ethical leadership. However, the author posits that sustainability, human rights, and environmental concerns should be central to ethical leadership. The author thus suggests a third but distinct dimension, justice orientation.

4.4 Justice orientation

The principles of honesty, justice, and impartiality in decision making while dealing with others, respect, servicing others, and building community as advanced by Northouse in Sharma et al (2019) can be viewed as part of the moral manager dimension. However, Brown et al (2005) conceptualization of the moral manager has been criticized for lacking a focus on sustainability and advancing negative reinforcement of ethics (Shakeel et al, 2019). Shakeel et al posit that empowerment and environmental sustainability are critical components of ethical leadership. Eisenbeiss (2012) advances that ethical leadership has two orientations: a humane and justice one. It is therefore the researcher's proposition that apart from the moral person and moral manager dimensions of ethical leadership, a third and distinct dimension should be justice orientation under which there are justice and sustainability considerations.

4.5 Parenting and morality development

Parents ordinarily refer to a biological father and a mother to a child however in this study, parenting would also encompass the role of guardians that take the parental responsibilities of nurturing, direction, control, and affection to children when they are young and delicate. There is evidence that parenting plays a major role in the moral development of their children being the first authority figure that the child interacts with (Augustine & Stifter, 2015; Avolio et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2006). Dahl and Killen (2018) advance that key components of morality emerge during the initial four years of life. While the children may not process acts as right or wrong from a moral perspective at that early stage due to their level of cognition, in their later childhood, they critically evaluate the norms observed in their early life experiences as derived from parents and others (Dahl, 2016; Dahl & Kim, 2014). Dahl and Killen, Hammond et al (2017) to mention but a few concur that the acts of help and comfort like being fed or receiving attention when they cry received by most children right from birth are morally relevant experiences in whose absence a child would then not develop at all. The constructivist view also postulates that children form additional concepts to evaluate actions by learning about

socially accepted behaviors and norms that may emanate from religion from their parents and other members of their communities (Killen & Smetana, 2015). The learning of children about acceptable behaviors and norms informs their morality development including shaping their moral identity. Mayer et al (2012) posit that moral identity is “a self-schema organized around a set of moral trait associations like honest, caring, and compassionate” (p.152). Moral identity comprises symbolization (the outward and visible aspect) and internalization (an inward and invisible expression of moral identity) as advanced by Aquino and Reed (2002). These two dimensions have been positively associated with ethical leadership. Nunn and Avella (2015) advance that the moral identity not only shapes the children’s capability for ethical decisions but also influences their ethical judgment and reasoning and consequently has a positive relationship with ethical leadership.

From the reviewed literature, the author is of the view that there is a clear demonstration that bearing in mind the influences of environmental factors, the influences of parenting on moral development and consequently ethical leadership are overarching. Parenting styles, control, role-modeling, and behavior all work together to influence children’s moral intuition, concern and attributions, conscientiousness, self-regulation, and sense of ethics; all of which are explicit and implicit elements of ethical leadership (Leenders et al, 2017; Martinez et al, 2020; Sengsavang et al, 2015; Seroussi & Yaffe, 2020; Wagers & Kiel, 2019).

4.6 Behavioural control

According to Grolnick et al (2009), parents’ influence is critical in a child’s motivation and their feeling of being competent. Grolnick et al further posit that parents’ expectations of their children influence their perceptions on the value of the tasks they are involved in as well as their attitudes towards their capacity for achievement. Hanson et al. (2006) assert that through positive inter-role facilitation, there are a propensity for skills, behaviors, affect, and/or values being transferred from the originating domain (which in this study are the parents) to the receiving domain (the child who becomes a leader in future). Parenting styles like authoritative when balanced with affirmation and responsiveness have been associated with generally positive outcomes and healthy development of young people (Smith, 2011). It has been found that destructive leaders who propagate hatred in their ideologies, rhetoric, and worldviews often come from a background with negativity and childhood characterized by trauma (Padilla et al., 2007). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), perceived behavioral control is a strong determinant of whether one exercises ethical behavior or not. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) advance that perceived behavioral control denotes people’s belief that they can perform a given behavior and that they have control over its performance. The author thus promotes that the parent’s control of the behaviors of the children could be critical in determining whether they end up being unregulated, indulgent, and destructive or healthy and self-controlled individuals.

4.7 Role-modelling

Brown and Trevino (2006) found out that employees that had proximal ethical role models were more inclined to demonstrate ethical behavior than those who did not. This finding is in concurrence with the social learning theory as advanced in Bandura (1986). Bandura’s social learning theory postulates that observation, modeling, and imitation are major ways in which people learn. The author thus concludes that the parents’ legitimate and natural authority over their children makes them influential in the lives of their children.

5. Theoretical Review

The conceptual discussion has provided a comprehensive understanding of some key constructs on ethical leadership and its key antecedents. These constructs are underpinned by various theories and perspectives related to ethical leadership and those that touch on constructs of parenting. The perspectives of ethical leadership covered are the Burns' and Heifetz perspectives of ethical leadership as well as the social learning, attachment, planned behavior, and resource-control theories.

5.1 Burn's perspective of ethical leadership

The perspectives of ethical leadership as advanced by Burns (1978) are closely related to his transformational leadership theory which strongly emphasizes the needs, values, and morals of followers (Northouse, 2016). Northouse posits that transformative leaders will nudge and influence their followers to uphold high standards of morality. Burns' perspective places the responsibility of engaging followers so that they can face their struggles with conflicting values on the leaders. Consequently, the followers and leaders stir and motivate one another to high levels of morality. Burns asserts that ethical leadership is demonstrated by people rising to a high level of morality and holding themselves to ethical standards and thereby pooling their energies and resources for institutional reformation (Yukl, 2013). Northouse provides a criterion to determine if leaders' use of power and politics is ethical through five principles. The five principles are that an ethical leader respects others through decisions and actions of leaders treating others as ends and not means; serves others thus making decisions that benefit rather than harm their follower's welfare; are just (fair and equitable in dealing with others); are honest (reliable and trustworthy as to appropriately influence the followers) and builds community (there is a leader-follower agreement on the direction to be taken in matters that pertain to the followers' welfare). The author uses these principles as the critical dimensions of ethical leadership under the moral person, moral manager, and justice orientation sub-constructs.

5.2 Heifetz's perspective of ethical leadership

Heifetz (1994) postulated an ethical leadership perspective that views the role of leaders as being to help their followers to face and address conflicts by effecting changes (Northouse, 2016). Heifetz's perspective and ethical leadership converge at the values of workers, their organizations, and the communities of their operations. Heifetz further asserts that leaders can use their authority to support their workers face values that may conflict as is characteristic of the environments that are changing fast societal cultures that are highly dynamic. Yukl (2013) further posits that leaders possess authority that they can use to motivate and mobilize their constituents to face tough situations. Heifetz posits that leaders should create a supportive and safe environment where followers are motivated to confront tough issues; a context of trust, where they feel nurtured and empathized with. Heifetz asserts that "specifically, leaders use authority to get people to pay attention to the issues, to act as a reality test regarding information, to manage and frame issues, to orchestrate conflicting perspectives, and to facilitate decision making. The author notes that the ideas that Heifetz promotes are in tandem with the dimensions and constructs that underpin ethical leadership with an underscore for reinforcement and the welfare of communities which straddle the moral manager and justice orientation.

5.3 Social learning theory

According to Bandura (1986), individuals will be influenced and learn appropriate behavior vicariously when they observe role models. Bandura further asserts that people's internalization of what is good is based on the actions being rewarded, punished, attracting attention and those that do not. Bandura advances that credibility and attractiveness, phenomena that are enhanced by power and status, in the eyes of another is what makes one a role model. Hence parents who are in positional power are likely to elicit replication of the behaviors they model to their children since their behaviors communicate what they expect and approve of their children (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Bandura's social learning theory, in essence, postulates that observation, modeling, and imitation is the major way in which people learn (Fuhrmann, et al, 2014). Like the role-modeling aspect, the author posits that this theory further buttresses the influential position of the parents over their children due to the legitimacy of their authority over the children.

5.4 Attachment theory

This theory was advanced by Bowlby (1988) having been reviewed from previous versions of 1973 and 1977. It conceptualizes how human beings can develop strong bonds with others through "an innate, biosocial behavioral system in an infant" to ensure its survival by being close to his or her primary caregiver (Popper & Mayseless, 2003). According to this theory, the infants who survive are those that observe proximity and obtain protection from a stronger and wiser figure, who in this case is the parents. Parents are the attachment figures to whom children look up to for safety and protection. Popper and Mayseless further posit that good parents like transformational leaders provide motivational, empowerment, and moral support to their children as part of the outcomes of the attachment. The author advances that morality is the basis of ethical leadership and from a parenting, perspective will entail introducing expectations and demands, trustworthy and communicative relationships, inductive methods, communication regarding feelings, and modeling empathetic and prosocial behaviors.

5.5 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The TPB as was advanced by Ajzen (1991) suggested that the behavior that an individual exhibits are dependent on their behavioral intentions. The behavioral intentions are in turn determined by the attitude that the person has about the particular behavior, the subjective norm that they possess, and their perceived behavioral control in the situation within which the behavior is or needs to occur. The attitude means whether a person's evaluation towards a behavior is favorable; the subjective norm refers to the individual's assessment of whether a behavior is right or wrong and is highly related to perceived social pressure while the perceived behavioral control is a person's belief about their capability of performing or being in control of a certain behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). When a person's attitude towards ethical behavior is favorable, their subjective norm in favor of ethical behavior, and their perceived behavioral control high, they are likely to exhibit ethical behavior while the converse is true. However, Rahaman et al (2019) found subjective norms to be unrelated to ethical intention and consequently to perceived ethical leadership by followers. The author is of the view that behavioral intentions and the sub-constructs are all influenced by parenting and subsequently influence ethical leadership or the lack of it.

5.6 Resource control theory

Hawley (1999) in advancing the resource control theory (RCT) notes that leadership starts in childhood. According to RCT, coercive and prosocial strategies are the two distinguishable strategies that are used in acquiring resources (Clark et al, 2020). Although RCT has mainly been used in understanding bullying behaviors in adolescence, it also illustrates the process of prosocial or antisocial behavior formation in childhood. Further, Hawley et al (2009) advance that resource-control strategies start in people's first social relationships that begin in infancy, and consequently these first relationships can be construed as the situations where learning about the roles of others in accessing resources is. The author notes that the assertion by Hawley et al raises pertinent linkages between parenting, viewed from being part of the very first relationships infants come into contact with, and the formation of strategies towards access to resources and social dominance which have substantial implications on ethical leadership.

6. An Emerging Case for a New Theoretical Model

From the perspectives on ethical leadership, it is clear that ethical leadership is a moral concept and further morality and its development are influenced to a great extent by the relationships that a leader is exposed to right from their early stages of life. Thus, the moral person and moral manager dimensions advanced by various authors like Brown et al (2005), Brown and Trevino (2006), Van Wart (2014), and Shakeel et al (2019) are worth upholding. The author observes that there are several criticisms raised regarding the inadequacy of these two dimensions in describing appropriate dispositions to ethical leadership. While most of the suggested perspectives could be construed to be implied and overlapped under these two dimensions, the author proposes a model where a third dimension of justice orientation is added to the conceptualization of ethical leadership focusing on the constructs of justice (human rights) and sustainability (including from an environmental sustainability perspective).

From the theories related to parenting, it is clear that the first interactions and contexts of children influence their dispositions towards what is ethical or unethical. The social learning, attachment, and resource-control theories all concur in advancing the place of role-modeling, observation, reinforcement, and nurture right from childhood in shaping ethical or unethical dispositions in the children and the likelihood that these will manifest in later life. Montroy et al (2016) posit that parental input is a major determinant of how leaders make decisions in later life. Lastly, there is a consensus that morality develops over a process where children begin with a self-centered and hedonistic view of life and then increasingly develop prosocial behaviors in conformity to environmental and societal norms, parenting is the most proximate norming mechanism; this process perspective aligns very well with Shakeel et al (2019) propositions of ethical leadership being a process which begins with a self-focus and grows on a continuum towards external orientation.

7. Proposed Conceptual Model

From the reviewed literature and in line with the objectives of this study, a conceptual framework that is based on three key constructs; parenting, environmental factors, and ethical leadership, with each playing a critical role in the relationship Figure 2 below summarizes the model.

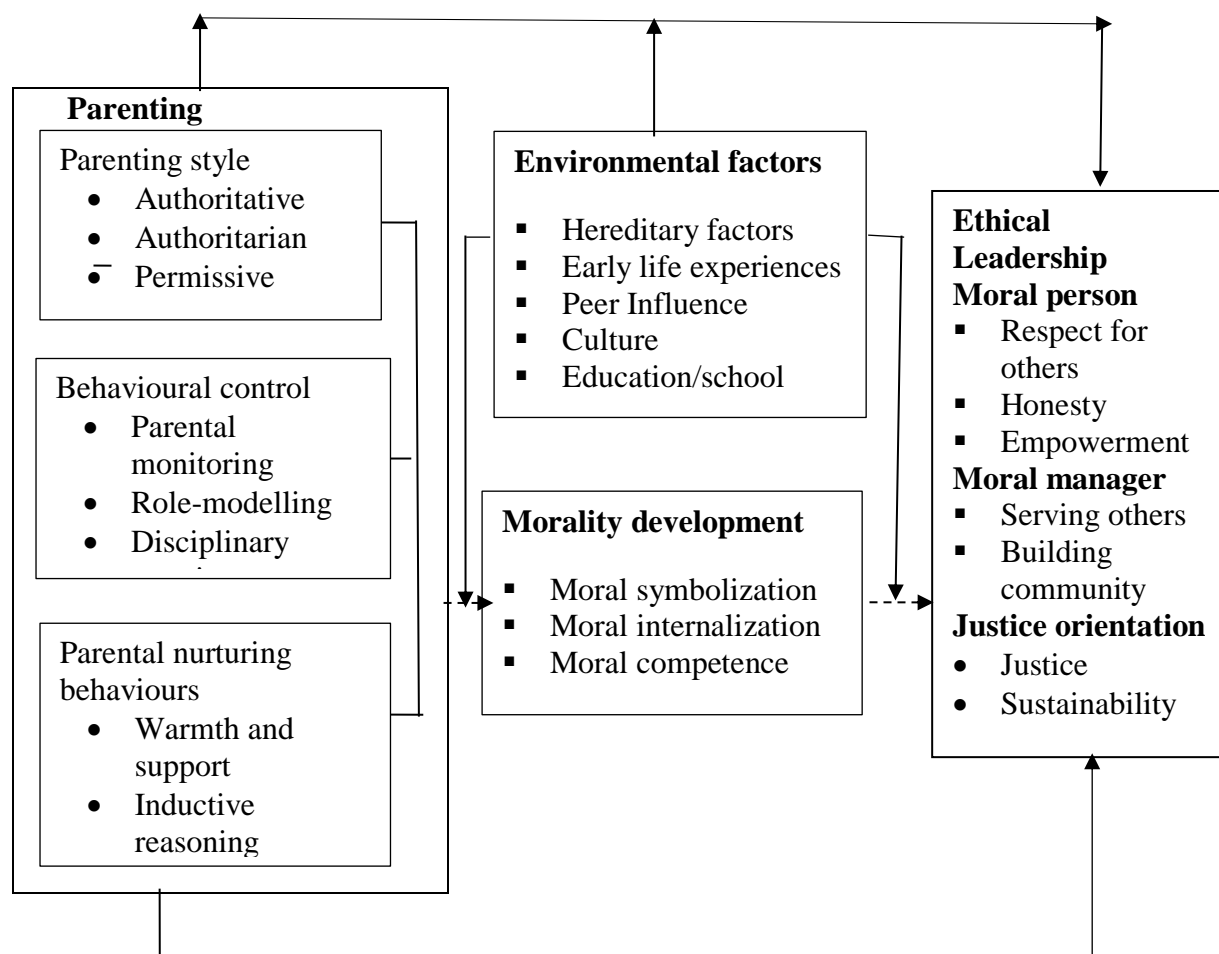


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

7.1 Propositions

7.1.1 Parenting and Ethical Leadership

Parenting is expressed through various parenting styles, behavioral control, and parental nurturing behaviors. The researcher foresees parenting as an antecedent to the development and emergence of ethical leadership. While noting that it is rare to find a parent who strictly uses one style, Seroussi, and Yaffe (2020) note that to the extent a parent is authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive, the development of self-regulation of the child will be influenced. Where there is clear parental communication of expectations and rules in regards to what constitutes appropriate behavior, as well as monitoring of the child’s behavior in alignment with these expectations and rules, the moral compass of the child, is set (Wong et al, 2018). The constructivist view also postulates that children form additional concepts to evaluate actions by learning about social conventions or norms that may emanate from religion from their parents and other members of their communities (Killen & Smetana, 2015). The level of control, warmth, strict, instilling of discipline, parent-child communication, allowance for reasoning and emotional support that parents afford their children define their schema about right or wrong, their perceived behavioral control, and their attitudes as to their ability to make ethical choices (Alzola, 2008; Avolio et al, 2009; Bandura, 1986; Blustein, 2011; Mayer et al, 2012; Rahaman et al, 2019).

The effects of parenting will thus influence how a person in the future exhibits ethical leadership in its dimensions of the moral person (respect for others, serving others, honesty), moral manager (role-modeling, empowerment, building community), and the justice orientation (justice and sustainability) (Brown et al, 2005; Engelbrecht et al, 2017; Northouse, 2016; Ozbag, 2016; Virlena, 2014;). Consequently, the researcher makes the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Parenting will positively affect the development of ethical leadership.

7.1.2 The role of morality development

The parenting phenomenon works to induce morality development. For example, a parent's authoritativeness, indulgence, authoritarianism, or neglectfulness in their parenting style has been shown to have consequences in internalization of social values and self-esteem of adolescents which in turn has effects on their morality; indulgent and authoritative parenting as characterized by parental warm has the highest level of internalization (Martinez et al, 2020). Ranging from self-regulation (Seroussi & Yaffe, 2020), the interplay between parental behavior and a child's development of empathy (Wagers & Kiel, 2019), the evaluation of moral dilemmas in later life (Dahl & Killen, 2018) to the formation of the moral schema of a child (Aquino & Reed, 2002), it is demonstrable that parenting influences morality development. Consequently, the researcher makes the following propositions:

Proposition 2: There is a correlation between parenting and morality development.

Proposition 3: Even though parenting affects the development of ethical leadership, the extent of its effect is dependent on the nature of moral development that happens in the child.

7.1.3 Environmental factors and ethical leadership

Undoubtedly, leadership develops from childhood (Dahl, 2016; Dahl & Killen, 2018; Dahl & Kim, 2014; Hammond et al, 2017). Dahl and Killen (2018) advance that important components in relation to a child's morality develop during the first four years of life and further that while the children may not process acts as right or wrong from a moral standpoint at that early stage due to their level of cognition, in their later childhood, they critically evaluate the norms observed in their early life experiences as derived from parents and others influences. The other influences range from hereditary/genetic factors (Baumrind, 1967; Dahl & Killen, 2018; Dworazik et al, 2019; Groenendyk & Volling, 2007; Neiderhiser et al, 2007; Ramos et al, 2019; Reiss et al, 2000;). Other environmental factors that influence morality development, and could affect the effect of parenting on ethical leadership development, include culture (Cowell & Decety, 2015; Martinez et al, 2020; Ramos et al, 2019), the effects of peers and influential figures in the society and education/schooling (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Brown & Trevino, 2014; Kalshoven et al, 2011; Seroussi & Yaffe, 2020; Van Stekelenburg, 2020). Early life experiences have also been shown to be a major determinant of the ethical disposition of a leader (Avolio et al, 2009; Brummelman et al, 2021; Montroy et al, 2016). The interesting part which is the emphasis of this study is that parents and parenting straddle across all these influencers of morality.

Owing to the research findings that establish a relationship among parenting, morality development, environmental factors, and ethical leadership, the researcher suggests the following propositions:

Proposition 4: Environmental factors mediate the relationship between parenting and ethical leadership.

Proposition 5: The mediated effect of morality development on the relationship between parenting and ethical leadership will be moderated by the influence of environmental factors.

Proposition 6: The relationship between parenting and the nature of morality development exhibited will be moderated by the influences of extant environmental factors.

7.2 Implications for Theory and Future Research

The conceptual, theoretical, and empirical reviews point to several areas that require future research. First, while it is clear that ethical leadership is a moral phenomenon, and that moral development is highly influenced by the initial exposure that a leader has in their childhood hence the connection to parenting, it is also clear that there are environmental factors that mediate this relationship. The complex nature of the relationships between these variables and the potential overlap of indicators such as between parenting styles and behaviors call for empirical research so as to provide clarity among the relationships. Secondly, ethical leadership development is a dynamic phenomenon that requires longitudinal studies to clearly establish causation hence such studies are recommended. By tracking leaders from their childhood to demonstrate how the influence of parenting with its indicators such as behavioral control and nurturing affects future ethical or unethical dispositions, other contingent factors can be established especially where misnomers are identified i.e. where ethical leaders develop in spite of a parenting background that appears not to espouse ethical leadership and where unethical leaders develop in spite of parenting that appears supportive of appropriate moral development. Thirdly, there is a possibility that the environmental factors could potentially interact among themselves, for example, where culture influences education and dictates the peer influence likely to impact the outcomes of parenting on ethical leadership; these internal interactions among variables could render the determination of regression coefficients impossible and their estimates unreliable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Empirical studies are thus recommended to clearly highlight which environmental factors are overarching. Fourthly, there is parallelism observed between moral development and the stages of ethical leadership as advanced by writers such as Kohlberg (1970), Van Wart (2014), and Shakeel et al (2019) whereby it appears that ethical leadership is a continuum that begins at a point where a leader right from childhood is inward-looking and in a way self-centered and grows in their external orientation and others-centredness; from a moral person to a justice orientation. The researcher observes that there could be a potential wealth of knowledge that can be revealed through longitudinal studies in this observed parallelism. Finally, several of the empirical studies showed that as the children developed, and increased in their cognitive ability to make social-moral evaluations of actions, they tended to be more others-oriented than when younger (Neldner et al, 2018; Sengsavang et al, 2015); the influence of age in behavior change is another critical component for further research given that ethical or unethical leadership will manifest later in life much more than in childhood.

7.3 Conclusion

The objectives of this paper were to review the extant conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature on ethical leadership and parenting, identify knowledge gaps from the reviews and propose a suitable theoretical model for advancing research in the area of ethical leadership. The review showed that parenting is an antecedent of ethical leadership that works through morality development as a mediating variable. Further, the moderating role of environmental factors on the effect of parenting through morality development on ethical leadership has been explored in this study. The environmental factors that have been highlighted include hereditary considerations, culture, and peer influence within the context where parenting is exercised.

The researcher argues that while the development of ethical leadership may have other antecedents, parenting underpins most of them given that all leaders were once children who in most instances grew and were influenced in their formative stages by early life models derived from their experiences of being parented. The paper has articulated the conceptual understanding of each of the constructs and its respective dimensions by discussing the relevant indicators as identified and anchored on theories and perspectives such as the Burns and Heifetz perspectives, Social learning theory, Attachment theory, Planned Behaviour, and the Resource Control theory. Consequently, the researcher has added a third and distinct dimension to the conceptualization of ethical leadership by demonstrating that apart from the more common moral person and moral manager perspectives, ethical leaders should also possess or demonstrate a justice orientation through their concern for justice and sustainability. Further, the proposed conceptual model can be used to explain the relationship between parenting and ethical leadership in a way that attempts to connect past varying schools of thought regarding ethical leadership.

It is acknowledged that just like in many studies, this study was not without limitations. First, the literature was drawn from a few disciplines that are considered relevant to the key constructs of ethical leadership and parenting which could be partly explained by the nascence of studies in ethical leadership that trace leadership from childhood stages. It is therefore recommended that future extant reviews can broaden the range of disciplines considered so as to increase comprehension of the main phenomena under consideration. The other limitation of the study is that its propositions require empirical validation and hence the researcher calls on future researchers to consider adopting the propositions and the conceptual model to test them through empirical studies. Generally, the fact that the studies were based on desktop reviews could be assumed to be a limitation, noting that different methods may have yielded different results. Finally, the review of the literature reveals that owing to the fact that ethical leadership is a moral phenomenon, it is highly culturally nuanced; consequently, the fact that objectives of the paper could not allow an in-depth inquiry into the cultural factor within this relationship not only poses a limitation to this study but also an opportunity for future research.

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