Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

Andani Nethavhani; Brian Kwazi Majola

Department of Business Management, University of Limpopo, South Africa

E-mail: andani.nethavhani@ul.ac.za; kwazi.majola@ul.ac.za

Abstract

Perceived ethical leadership and organisational justice have been a challenge for organisations in both developed and developing countries. The organs of the state including municipalities, are not an exception in South Africa, although the systems and processes tend to be structured than in the private institutions. However, it is a common belief that employees are more likely to perceive fairness if ethical leaders lead them. Perceived ethical leadership by employees often leads to fairness in the distribution of resources, rewards, information communication and the interaction between employees and their immediate supervisors. Employees who are likely to perceive fairness in the workplace, tend to be loyal to the organisation and their turnover rate is improved. The paper aims to examine the perceptions of employees regarding ethical leadership and organisational justice in a selected municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The paper is exploratory, and a quantitative approach was used. A self-administered questionnaire was utilised to collect data where 107 respondents were simply randomly sampled. Data was analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 27.0 version. Descriptive statistics were used during data analysis. An ethical clearance letter was obtained via the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo together with the permission to conduct the study. The findings indicated a positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational justice. However, the results also revealed that employees do not perceive fairness in the workplace, and they do not see the existence of ethical leadership. It is recommended that municipalities establish and enforce ethical codes of conduct, provide leadership with training and development programmes, and implement transparent and fair performance management. Furthermore, municipalities must foster a culture of accountability, open communication, and employee participation which contributes to the perceptions of ethical leadership and organisational justice.

Keywords: *Distributive Justice; Ethical Leadership; Interactional Justice; Organisational Justice; Procedural Justice*

Introduction

Perceived ethical leadership and organisational justice have been a challenge for organisations in both developed and developing countries. These concepts play a crucial role in the functioning of public service organisations in any country. According to Baer (2023), ethical leadership is defined as the process of influencing others to act following ethical principles and values. It involves a leader's ability to make decisions and act in a way that aligns with moral and ethical standards (Baer, 2023). One can state that perceived ethical leadership refers to employees' perceptions of their leaders' ethical behaviour, integrity, and moral character. Organisational justice refers to the perception of fairness in the workplace. Indradevi (2022) defines organisational justice as the perception of employees on the relationship between the organisation's behaviour, decisions and actions, employee behaviour and the attitude of employees at work. Various researchers in their studies stressed the importance of ethical leadership, and organisational justice (Fatima & Siddiqui, 2020; Unterhitzenberger & Moeller, 2021). According to Yaung and Wei (2018), ethical leadership is seen very positively both in research and in practice and predicts organisational justice as well as the overall employee's well-being. It is ethical leaders who influence the well-being of their employees by considering their decisions and treating their followers trustfully and fairly (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2014). In that way, ethical leaders are honest and trustworthy (Brown & Treviño, 2006). They care about people and the broader society and behave ethically in their personal and professional lives (Usman, et al., 2019).

Tende and Amah (2021) stated that previous research has acted as an example to show how ethical leadership is valued and its importance in organisations. The South African public sector is always faced with financial constraints, corruption, maladministration, unethical leadership, unfair treatment of employees and less motivated public servants (Igwe, Egbo, Nwakpu, HoveSibanda, Saif, & Islam, 2021). According to the King IV Report (2016), ethical leadership is demonstrated by integrity, competence, responsibility, accountability, fairness, and transparency. Considering the King IV Report fairness has also been ranked high, which means that employers in organisations must in all cases treat employees with fairness and in the process aim to ensure equity and relate more to organisational justice. The King IV report also alluded that fairness should be upheld in corporations and organisations to avoid unjust treatment towards employees. This is prevalent in South African municipalities; civil servants are not treated equally, and they are not given or distributed the same working resources (Dzansi, 2014). Civil servants then perceive unjust negative organisational justice according to Dzansi and Dzansi (2010).

Madzivhandila, Babalola, and Khashane (2019) argued that at the local government level, municipal managers and employees must operate within the parameters of a just and fair organisational setting for harmony to prevail in their municipalities. Most employees within the public sector have noted that they experience unfair treatment when performing their duties and it prevents them from performing optimally (Bwowe & Marongwe, 2018). Furthermore, Dzansi and Dzansi (2010) in their study noted that there is a lack of justice in South African municipalities. They stated that most employees do not perceive fairness when performing their duties. Authors such as Rego and Cunha (2010) and Bwowe and Marongwe (2018) also stated that when employees perceive organisational justice and harmony, they tend to be good organisational citizens who go beyond to ensure that organisational goals are achieved. Therefore, this study aims to examine the perceptions of employees regarding ethical leadership concerning organisational justice in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The paper first part of the paper deals with the literature review covering the theoretical and empirical literature. The paper then covers ethical leadership in the public sector and the understanding of local government and municipalities in South Africa. The research methodology is then discussed followed by results and discussion as well as conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

It is important to present a theoretical framework which underpins the study. This section details some of the established theories on ethical leadership and organisational justice followed by the empirical literature.

Theoretical Literature

The study applied two theories to unfold the perceptions regarding ethical leadership and organisational justice of employees in municipalities, namely, the social exchange theory and equity theory.

The Social Exchange Theory

The study employed the social exchange theory to comprehend the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational justice. Mitonga-Monga, et al., (2023) defined the social exchange theory as "the voluntary actions of persons who are driven by the anticipated and normal benefits they obtain from others". The theory is well-known in the body of knowledge, and it helps to understand and explain workplace behaviour (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). The theory alludes to the exchange of resources, the theory explains that the exchange of resources happens via two or more parties. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) explained that social exchange occurs when the interactions between employees lead to an emergence of a sense of obligation to reciprocate each other.

The social exchange is promoted when one party in the employer-employee relationship takes the initiative to portray kindness and offer benefits, while the other reciprocates by returning the favour (Mitonga-Monga, et al., 2023). It is believed that ethical leaders who treat employees fairly, and equally, and delegate power, normally initiate the social exchange process. When employees perceive their leaders to be ethical, they find the organisation a desirable entity with which to affiliate (Mitonga-Monga, et al., 2023). Employees who perceive ethical leadership are more likely to engage in social exchange transactions.

The Equity Theory

The equity theory was coined in the 1960s by behavioural psychologist John Adams. He mentioned that the equity theory is concerned with defining and measuring the relational satisfaction of employees (Eib, 2015). Adams suggested that employees try to maintain a balance between what they give to an organisation against what they receive (Hatfield, Salmon, & Rapson, 2011), and base satisfaction with their balance on perceptions of the same balance in colleagues. Equity theory is based on the principle that people's actions and motivations are guided by fairness and that discrepancies in this fairness in the workplace will encourage them to try and recompense it (Bakhshi, Kumar, & Rani, 2009).

Historically, Adams's (1965) equity has been the main focus of organisational scientists interested in issues of justice and organisation. Greenberg (2001) mentioned that the equity theory claims that employees compare the ratios of their own perceived work outcomes to their own perceived work inputs with corresponding ratios of a colleague, be it in the same department (Bakhshi, Kumar, & Rani, 2009), doing similar work. Greenberg (2001) further extended his explanation by stating that if ratios are unequal, the employee whose ratio is higher is theorised to be inequitably overpaid, whereas the person whose ratio is lower is theorised to be inequitably underpaid. Employees believe that they deserve to be paid as per their contributions to the organisation and they believe that they should be equally rewarded as their co-workers.

Empirical Literature

Studies on different aspects of ethical leadership and organisational justice are reviewed. Some studies have revealed a positive relationship between the variables. A study by Banks, Patel, and Moola (2012) that leaders who act ethically within the organisation are often regarded as fair and just. Previous research also noted that when leaders exercise ethical leadership behaviours, the three dimensions of organisational justice are likely to be considered. The three dimensions are distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice.

The three dimensions of organisational justice can be seen as tangled with ethical leadership, as many of the decisions that ethical leaders make concern issues of fairness. The leaders of the organisation should assume responsibility for the distribution of outcomes and workloads provided to their employees, this is related to distributive justice (Mehmood, Norulkamar, Attiq, & Irum, 2018). Wolmarans (2014) explained that employers should furthermore utilise fair formal processes and procedures to determine employees' outcome decisions, which explains procedural justice. Wolmarans (2014) further explained that ethical leaders should treat their employees with politeness, dignity, and respect in performing procedures or determining outcomes, which explains interactional justice. Ethical leaders' decisions must be fair, and they must always put the welfare of their employees first.

Ethical Leadership and Distributive Justice

Jasso, Tornblom, and Clara (2016) defined distributive justice as the perceived fairness of the outcomes received by the employees. A study by Alkane, et al. (2021) revealed that ethical leadership influences distributive justice, they further alluded that when employees perceive distributive justice in the workplace, they are more likely to believe that they are working with ethical leaders (Poff, 2010). Ethical leaders must be at the forefront of ensuring that a fair and equitable distribution exists in their organisations. In a study by Shab (2010) it was explained that for most government institutions especially municipalities, for them to excel in service delivery, they must ensure that their employees have the right resources to perform their duties and match their inputs with their rewards.

Ethical Leadership and Procedural Justice

Hough, Jackson, Bradford, Myhill, and Quinton (2010) described procedural justice as the fairness of the process that is used to arrive at decisions. Studies done by different authors and scholars over the years proved that there is a relationship between procedural justice (Yildiz, 2019) and ethical leadership (Shah, Anwar, & Irani, 2017). They explained that indeed there is a link between procedures that are followed to decide on the organisation and how ethics are honoured in that organisation (Ye, Liu, & Tan, 2022). Colquitt (2011) mentioned that procedural justice can build or disengage the organisation if it is not coupled with transparency and, accountability. He further pointed out that fair procedures are a good characteristic of an ethical leader in an organisation (Eib, 2015).

Ethical Leadership and Interactional Justice

Ledimo (2015) presented interactional justice as the feelings of the employees about how they were treated in the process of procedure execution. Studies done by different authors and scholars over the years proved that there is a relationship between procedural justice (Yildiz, 2019) and ethical leadership (Shah, Anwar, & Irani, 2017). They explained that indeed there is a link between procedures that are followed to decide on the organisation and how ethics are honoured in that organisation (Ye, Liu, & Tan, 2022). Research further alluded that ethical leaders often follow procedures that are free of bias, and they often give employees a chance to comment on the procedures that are being followed in the organisation (Vermunt & Steensma, 2016).

Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

239

Previous research further alluded that fairness and equity as dimensions of ethical leadership have been heavily linked with distributive justice (Mo & Shi, 2017). Previous research has shown that ethical leaders who act fairly and equitably in an organisation are likely to make their employees perceive distributive justice (Novitasari, Riani, Suyono, & Harsono, 2021). Research proved that the distribution of resources in an organisation should be done fairly and equitably (Dewantoro, Eliyana, Gunawan, & Pratama, 2022). It is crucial to understand the South African context concerning ethical leadership and organisational justice as countries differ in their employment policies, strategies, programmes, and procedures.

Ethical Principle and Leadership in the South African Public Sector

In South Africa, like many other countries, there have been instances of ethical misconduct and corruption within the public service. However, it is important to note that not all public service leaders or organisations in South Africa are unethical, and there are ongoing efforts to address these challenges. For instance, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2030) states that corruption undermines democracy and negatively impacts service delivery, human and socio-economic development, job creation and public trust in government, as well as investor confidence in the country. Corruption manifests in all spheres of society and occurs in the public sector and the private sector (NACS, 2023). Furthermore, the Public Management Act (11 of 2014) promulgated in terms of section 195(1) of the Constitution, has been implemented to strengthen accountability, transparency, and integrity in the public sector. There are many perceptions that ethical leaders in the public sector automatically translate to good leaders and effective public service delivery (Naidoo, 2012). Leaders in the public sector must show up when needed, they must render services to the citizens they are serving (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2014). Leaders are key role players in establishing moral standards among the employees in the public sector. They must encourage ethical behaviour that is favourable in communities and organisations. The Batho Pele principles, namely, consultation, access, service standards, information, courtesy, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money, serve as a code of conduct for South African public servants irrespective of the position (DPSA, 2023).

Ethical leadership in municipalities is a critical foundation for fostering trust, accountability, and effective governance within local communities (Naidoo, 2012). It involves making decisions that prioritize the welfare of the community over personal or political interests and ensuring that public resources are used responsibly and for the benefit of all residents (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy, & Fagbadebo, 2020). Ethical leaders in municipalities create a culture of integrity, where employees are empowered to act ethically and responsibly (Naidoo, 2012). This not only enhances the municipality's reputation but also encourages citizens to actively participate in local government, promoting democratic values and civic engagement. In essence, ethical leadership in municipalities serves as a cornerstone for building stronger, more resilient, and prosperous communities.

Understanding Local Government and Municipalities in South Africa

In April 1994, the first non-racial democratic elections were held in South Africa which led to the promulgation of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). Chapter 7, section 152 of the Constitution states that local government should provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; and encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government. The White Paper on Local Government (1998) which is regarded as the 'mini' constitution at the local government level commits the local government to meet citizen needs through people-driven participatory methods (SALGA Women's Commission 2017). Furthermore, Section 19(2) (c) and 3 of the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998), directs municipalities towards a new culture of governance that complements representative democracy through participation. The South African government ensured decentralization by introducing three main types of municipalities, namely

Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

240

metropolitan, district and local in terms of the Municipal Structures Act (117 of 1998). This was done to bring the government closer to the people.

They provide key infrastructure, facilities and services to residents and are integral to improving the lifestyle and amenities of local communities (Power2her, 2019). They are tasked with providing services like water and sanitation, waste management, housing, and local economic development to name a few. However, local governments are struggling to provide basic public services (Frodin, 2011) and this has led to an increase in violent service delivery protest action in South Africa. Communities display their anger by destroying buildings and burning them down as well as attacking local government officials for example councillors in their homes (Hamhill, 2015). The councillors whether ward or proportional representatives, are on the political side of the municipality nominated by the political parties and elected by their communities. The administrative side of the municipality involves the municipal manager and the employees. The political wing via the municipal councils makes decisions concerning the exercise of all the powers of the municipality in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000.

The challenge is that in most cases, there is a shortage of staff members on the administrative side. Sometimes those that are there are not trained properly to effectively perform their duties. Koelble and Siddle (2013) stated that a civil service, rather than a cadre of political appointees, must be put in place to enable the municipalities to operate adequately and fulfil the myriad requirements placed upon them. It must be noted that cadre deployment is used to award those loyal to the political party with strategic positions in all spheres of government which is prevalent at the local government level. Therefore, ethical leadership has a significant impact as it affects municipal employees negatively or positively. Once municipal employee's morale is low it permeates into providing poor service delivery to the communities.

Research Methodology

Research design is described as a plan detailing how the research will be implemented (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2007). This study is exploratory and adopts a quantitative approach. For this study, a local municipality in the Limpopo Province was selected. This municipality falls under Vhembe District Municipality comprised of 4 local municipalities namely, Musina, Thulamela, Makhado, and Collins Chabane Local Municipalities. The population consisted of all employees excluding truck drivers, road workers, mechanics, EPWP workers, and waste pickers. The municipality consists of different units (departments), namely, the corporate services unit, community services unit, and technical services unit. The total size of the population was 174 ($n=174$). A simple random sampling method which involves a method through which the researcher selects a sample based on the participants' willingness and availability to participate in the study was chosen for this study. To determine the sample size, the Raosoft sample size calculator was used, which calculates sample size based on a 95% confidence interval, 5% margin of error and with the assumption of a 50% response rate. Based on the Raosoft sample size calculator the sample size for the municipality is 120. About 107 of the 120 questionnaires distributed were returned. This represents a return or response rate of about 89%. The following employees participated in the study, administrators (68), junior managers (23), heads of departments (8), and senior managers (8). The majority of 52% ($n=56$) of the respondents were males while 48% ($n=51$) were females. The majority of the respondents were between 41-50 years (48.6%, $n=52$), followed by 29% ($n=31$) who were between 31-40 years, then 15.9% (7) at the age of 51 and above, and lastly 6.5% ($n=5$) were between 20-30 years. The majority of 57.9% ($n=62$) had postgraduate qualifications while 42.1% ($n=45$) had undergraduate qualifications.

An ethical clearance letter was obtained from the University of Limpopo before data collection. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the selected municipality. The researchers used a

standardised questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into different sections where the variables under the study were measured. Section A dealt with the demographic profile of the respondents, section B measured organisational justice, and section C measured ethical leadership. The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) developed by Yukl (2010) was used to measure the perceptions of employees towards ethical leadership. The 15-item questionnaire measures how employees perceive their ethical leaders and how they view their conduct in the workplace. The items are measured using a six-point Likert-Scale varying from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scale is valid and reliable, reporting a reliability of 0.922. The Organisational Justice Scale comprised 20 items measuring organisational justice on a 7-point scale, seven (7) items were used to measure procedural justice. Four (4) items were used to measure distributive justice and nine (9) items were used to measure interactional justice. A seven-point Likert-type scale is used, varying from 1 (*to a small extent*) to 7 (*to a great extent*). The questionnaire consists of different items used to measure three dimensions of organisational justice, namely distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. The scale is valid and reliable developed by Colquitt (2001), reporting a reliability of 0.895. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 27.0 published by International Business Machines (IBM). The data was coded and captured in a way that allowed interpretation and analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to make sense of both demographic information and responses relating to ethical leadership and organisational justice. Data was presented in the form of frequency tables, graphs, and charts.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the results and discussions of the analysis.

Reliability of Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice Scales and Dimensions

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of all the scales. The correlation coefficient ranges from plus or minus one. A high Alpha coefficient means that the reliability is also high. The recommended Alpha coefficient should have a value of 0.70, a coefficient above 0.70 is acceptable whereas one that is below 0.70 has limited applicability (Ewing, Monsen, & Kielblock, 2018). Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) explained that an item's total correlation should be greater than 0.30. If the total is lower than 0.30 then it would suggest that the item is measuring a different thing altogether. Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) believe that reliabilities with less than 0.60 are deemed poor while those in the range of 0.70 are deemed acceptable and those above 0.80 are considered good.

The reliability of the ethical leadership scale had 15 items and Cronbach's Alpha obtained was 0.922. It must be noted that a Cronbach Alpha of 0.70 and higher is an acceptable value. Therefore, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.922 indicates that the ELQ is reliable, and it is consistent in measuring ethical leadership.

The reliability of the organisational justice scale and its dimensions were computed consisting of 20 items divided by 3 constructs: procedural justice (7), distributive justice (4), and interactional justice (9). After the presented Cronbach Alpha of 0.895, one can therefore safely say that the organisational justice scale is reliable because the reliability is above 0.70. The results obtained from the iterative item of the Procedural Justice Questionnaire yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.848 based on the 7 items. This is supported by Ye, Liu, and Tan's (2022) study which yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.718. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient result obtained is 0.801 for 4 items that were used for distributive justice. In a study conducted by Ye, Liu, and Tan (2022) a Cronbach Alpha of 0.703 was achieved, which is higher than 0.70. In addition, the Cronbach Alpha for interactional justice is 0.818 which is higher than the acceptable 0.70. This is supported by Mehmood, Nadarajah, and Akhtar's (2021) study which produced a Cronbach Alpha of 0.722. The measure used 9 items to gather the results. Therefore, one can safely say that the interactional justice scale is reliable.

Descriptive Statistics Results

Descriptive statistics in the form of arithmetic means and standard deviations were computed. The table in the discussion indicates the specific descriptive relating to the means score of all components of organisational justice (procedural justice, distributive justice, and interactional justice), and ethical leadership. It should be noted that for this study, each item with a mean of above 4 is considered as being perceived positively, and each item with a mean of below 4, is considered as being perceived negatively. From the findings Table 1 indicates that the standard deviation score for procedural justice is 4.10 (1.16), distributive justice is 4.83 (1.14) and interactional justice is 4.72 (0.93). The standard deviation for ethical leadership is 3.63 (0.89).

The responses of participants on procedural justice revealed a mean of 4.10 which is above 4 and is acceptable. This means that employees perceive justice when it comes to the processes and procedures of the organisation. Responses of participants on distributive justice have shown a mean of 4.83 which is above 4, thus deeming it as acceptable. This means that employees perceive justice when it comes to the distribution of resources, rewards, and outcomes in the organisation. The responses of participants on interactional justice showed a mean of 4.72, which is above 4. This reveals that employees positively perceive the access to information as fair and the distribution of information and decisions. Also, employees perceive communication with their superiors as just and fair. It can further be stated that the majority of items scored above mean values. Organisational justice was measured on a 7-point. The scale was divided into 3 parts, procedural justice had 7 items, distributive justice had 4 items and interactional justice had 9 items.

Ethical leadership was measured using a 6-point scale with 15 items. The responses of the participants on ethical leadership revealed a mean of 3.63 which is below 4. This reveals that employees do not perceive any ethical leadership measures in the organisation.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Procedural Justice	107	4.1015	1.16008
Distributive Justice	107	4.8318	1.14244
Interactional Justice	107	4.7259	.93789
Ethical Leadership	107	3.6343	.89931
Valid N (listwise)	107		

Correlations

The relationship between ethical leadership and organisational justice is presented in Table 2 based on the r= 0.656 and p-value =0.000, a statistically positive relationship does exist between ethical leadership and organisational justice, it is given that the p-value > 0.05. These findings are in line with a study that was done by Engelbrecht, Janneke, and Mahembe (2018) which indicated that ethical leadership and organisational justice are positively related. It is believed that when leaders act ethically in the municipality, the employees tend to perceive justice in existence.

Table 2: Person correlation between ethical leadership and organisational justice

		Ethical Leadership	Organisational Justice
Ethical Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.656[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	107	107
Organisational Justice	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	107	107

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Distribution of Organisational Justice Dimensions

There is a need to draw comparisons to identify which organisational justice component is dominant and determine the difference between the justice models. The three organisational justice components, namely, procedural, distributive and interactional, were analysed using the Friedman rank test. The results indicated that there was a slight difference among the distributions of the three organisational justice components, procedural justice scored a mean = 1.56 which is the 77 lowest, distributive justice scored a high mean = 2.22 and interactional justice also scored the same mean = 2.22. Looking at the results, it can be argued that both distributive and interactional justice models scored significantly high compared to the procedural justice model.

Chi-Square Value and Regression Analysis

Table 3 below presents the chi-square value of the three organisational justice components.

Table 3: Test Statistica

N	107
Chi-Square	31.861
Df	2
Asymp.	Sig. .000

Table 3 above indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the three organisational justice components since the chi-square value is 31.861, df=2, p<0.000. The result implies that the municipality employees hold different views about the type of justice that exists within the organisation. The multiple regression analysis results for organisational justice and ethical leadership indicate that perceived organisational justice does significantly predict ethical leadership (B = 0.707, sig = 0.000).

Significance and Limitations

The primary contribution of the study is that it contributes to the body of knowledge relating to ethical leadership and organisational justice. However, this study was limited to employees of one municipality in the Limpopo province. Therefore, the study findings cannot be generalised to all local

Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

244

municipalities in the province or South Africa. The researcher also noted that some participants were not open and free to participate in the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper aims to examine the perceptions of employees regarding ethical leadership and organisational justice in a selected municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The findings indicate that employees at the selected municipality in Limpopo Province perceive ethical leadership and organisational justice positively. This is in line with Fatima and Siddiqui (2020) who revealed that most employees in municipalities feel better and perform better when their leaders are ethical. However, the results revealed that some municipal employees do not perceive fairness in the workplace. They do not see the existence of ethical leadership especially how their leaders and employers conduct themselves within their municipality. In the South African public service, including the municipalities, relevant criteria must be adopted to ensure that decisions related to promotions, salary increases, and resource distribution are fair and transparent. Employees must be involved in decision-making, providing them with a voice, ensuring consistency in procedures, and providing explanations for decisions. Employees' perception of the fairness of interpersonal treatment ensures that they are provided with adequate information and explanations and remain engaged. The study revealed that employees were also concerned about how information is conveyed or disseminated and how they are not encouraged enough to do more for the municipality. To promote perceived ethical leadership and organisational justice in the municipalities, it is important to establish and enforce ethical codes of conduct, provide leadership with training and development programmes, and implement transparent and fair performance management. It is also recommended that municipalities foster a culture of accountability, open communication, and employee participation which contributes to the perceptions of ethical leadership and organisational justice. By doing this, municipalities would appreciate the efforts that employees bring into the organisation, especially when they are treated fairly, given the right resources and when decisions and procedures are fairly communicated with them.

References

Alpkan, L., Karabay, M., Sener, I., Elci, M., & Yildiz, B. (2021). The mediating role of trust in the leader in the relations of ethical leadership and distributive justice on internal whistleblowing: A study on the Turkish banking sector. *Kybernetes, 50*(7), 2073-2092.

Baer, (2023). The Importance of Ethical Leadership in Today's Business Environment. *Kuwait Journal of Management in Information Technology*, 1(1), 9.

Bakhshi, A., Kumar, K., & Rani, E. (2009). Organisational justice perceptions as a predictor of job satisfaction and organisational commitment. *International Journal of Business and Management, 4*(9), 145-154.

Banks, J., Patel, C. J., & Moola, M. (2012). Perceptions of inequity in the workplace: Exploring the link with unauthorised absenteeism. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 10*(1), 1-8.

Brown, M., & Trevino, L. (2006). Ethical Leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly* (17), 595-616.

Bwowe, P. W., & Marongwe, N. (2018). Implementing a total reward strategy in selected South African municipal organisations. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management, 16*(1), 1-9.

Coughlan, M., Cronin, P., & Ryan, F. (2007). Step-by-step guide to critiquing research. Part 1: quantitative research. *British journal of nursing, 16*(11), 658-663.

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(1), 479-516.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, *31*(6), 874-900.

DPSA (2023). Batho Pele Principles Vision. The Department of Public Service and Administration, Republic of South Africa. Retrieved from: https://www.dpsa.gov.za/documents/Abridged%20BP%20programme%20July2014.pdf, Accessed (16/07/2023).

Dewantoro, N. K., Eliyana, A., Gunawan, D. R., & Pratama, A. S. (2022). Organisational justice: A literature. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies, 5*(2), 66-73.

Dzansi, D. Y., & Dzansi, W. L. (2010). Understanding the impact of human resource management practices on municipal service delivery in South Africa: An organisational justice approach. *African Journal of Business Management, 4*(6), 995-1005.

Dzansi, W. L. (2014). *An organisational perspective on the impact of human resource management practices on the quality-of-service delivery in municipalities in the Free State province of South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, Bloemfontein: Central University of Technology, Free State).

Eib, C. (2015). *Processes of organisational justice: insights into perception and enactment of justice*. (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Psychology, Stockholm University).

Engelbrecht, A. S., Kemp, J., & Mahembe, B. (2018). The effect of altruism and integrity on ethical leadership and organisational justice. *Management Dynamics: Journal of Southern African Institute for Management Scientists, 27*(4), 2-11.

Fatima, T. A., & Siddiqui, D. A. (2020). Ethical leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour: the Mediating role of ethical climate, trust, and justice. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies, 10*(1), 70-103.

Greenberg, J. (2001). Studying organisational justice cross-culturally: Fundamental challenges. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 12*(4), 365-367.

Hatfield, E., Salmon, M., & Rapson, R. L. (2011). Equity theory and social justice. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, 8*(2), 101-121.

Hough, M., Jackson, J., Bradford, B., Myhill, A., & Quinton, P. (2010). Procedural justice, trust, and institutional legitimacy. *Policing: a journal of policy and practice, 4*(3), 203-210.

Igwe, P. A., Egbo, O. P., Nwakpu, E. S., Hove-Sibanda, P., Saif, A. N., & Islam, M. A. (2021). Content analysis of ethics of governance, maladministration, and political corruption. *International Journal of Public Sociology and Sociotherapy (IJPSS), 1*(2), 15-32.

Jasso, G., Tornblom, K. Y., & Clara, S. (2016). Distributive justice. In *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research* (pp. 201-218). New York: Springer.

King IV (2016). *King IV: Report on corporate governance for South Africa.* Institute of Directors Southern Africa.

Ledimo, O. (2015). An exploratory study of factors influencing organisational justice among government employees. *Journal of Applied Business Research, 31*(4), 1594-1562.

Madzivhandila, R., Babalola, S. S., & Khashane, K. (2019). Perceived organisational justice and climate on counterproductive work behaviour among public employees. *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics, 8*, 1086-1096.

Mbandlwa, Z., Dorasamy, N., & Fagbadebo, O. (2020). Ethical leadership and the challenge of service delivery in South Africa: A discourse. *TEST Engineering & Management magazine*.

Mehmood, N., Norulkamar, U., Attiq, S., & Irum, S. (2018). Relationship between distributive justice, ethical leadership, and turnover intention with the mediating effects of ethical climate. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7*(2), 429-435.

Mitonga-Monga, J., Mokhethi, M. E., Keswa, B. S., Lekoma, B. S., Mathebula, L. X., & Mbatha, L. F. (2023). Ethical leadership in relation to employee commitment in a South African manufacturing company. *Acta Commercii-Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences*, *23*(1), 1046.

NACS (2023). National Anti-Corruption Strategy, Republic of South Africa. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202105/national-anti-corruption-strategy-2020-2030.pdf, Accessed (04/06/2023).

Naidoo, G. (2012). The critical need for ethical leadership to curb corruption and promote good governance in the South African public sector. *Journal of Public Administration*, *47*(3), 656-683.

Novitasari, D., Riani, A. L., Suyono, J., & Harsono, M. (2021). The moderation role of ethical leadership on organisational justice, professional commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour among academicians. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion, 12*(4), 303-324.

Poff, D. C. (2010). Ethical leadership and global citizenship: Considerations for a just and sustainable future. *Journal of Business Ethics, 93*(1), 9-14.

Rego, A., & Cunha, M. P. (2009). Organisational Justice and Citizenship Behaviors: A Study in the Portuguese Cultural Context. *Applied Psychology, 59*(3), 404-430.

SALGA (2017). SALGA Women's Commission, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.salga.org.za/Womens%20Commission%20Web/Home.html#:~:text=The%20National%20Summit%20will%20be,female%20political%20leaders%20in%20local, Accessed (16/05/2023).

Shab, N. (2010). A study of the relationship between organisational justice and employee readiness for change. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 24*(3), 224-236.

Tende, F. B., & Amah, E. (2021). Ethical leadership: A prerequisite for actuating employee loyalty. *Research Journal of Management Practice*, 91-102.

Unterhitzenberger, C., & Moeller, D. (2021). Fair project governance: An organisational justice approach to governance. *International Journal of Project Management, 39*(6),683-696.

Usman, A., Hashim, M. H., Salim, I., Shariff, A. R., & Bakar, Z. A. (2019). Ethical leadership in the automotive industry. *Asian Journal of Research in Business and Management, 1*(2), 40-48.

Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

247

Vermunt, R., & Steensma, H. (2016). Procedural Justice. In *Handbook of social justice theory and research* (pp. 219-236). New York: Springer.

Yaung, Q., & Wei, H. (2018). The impact of ethical leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour: The moderating role of workplace ostracism. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal, 39*(1), 100-113.

Ye, P., Liu, L., & Tan, J. (2022). The influence of organisational justice and ethical leadership on employees' innovation behaviour. *European Journal of Innovation Management, 25*(6), 143-156.

Yildiz, M. L. (2019). Ethical leadership and organisational justice: The mediating effect of communication satisfaction. *Is Ahlaki Derigisi, 12*(1), 101-112.

Copyrights

Perceived Ethical Leadership and Organisational Justice at a Selected Municipality in the Limpopo Province in South Africa

248