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Abstract

The aim of this research is to develop and examine a model on leadership (dis)agreement on followers' voice behaviour and the moderating influence of followers' moral identification. We hypothesises that ethical leadership will affect followers' voice when (dis)agreement about ethical leadership between supervisor and followers is lower (vs. higher). We are currently collecting data through a multilevel and multisource feedback (MSF) from a large Malaysian multinational organisation to test the hypotheses. Data will be examined through a cross-level analysis using HLM. As social learning alone does not account for every social dynamic that governed the transfer of ethical values, the perspectives of role theory is draw upon to extend the influence of leader-subordinate (dis)agreement on followers' voice behaviour. Ethical leaders are meant to provide followers the opportunity to speak up. However, recent research on ethical leadership (dis)agreement argues that leader that rate themselves more favourably can lead to an increase in organisational deviance. Therefore, this research will extend prior knowledge on (dis)agreement about ethical leadership through a three-way interaction and introducing the construct of followers' moral identification as a condition on the relationship. Moreover, the finding of this research will inform the impact of follower's morality on voice behaviour in organisation. On the practical implication, leaders are expected to uphold moral standards and encourage voice to embed ethical standards within organisation. Taken together, this is the first research that examines followers' morality through a three-way interaction on supervisor and subordinate (dis)agreement about ethical leadership and voice in organisation.

26 **Introduction**

27 Voice is defined as “discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or
28 opinions about work related issues with the intent to improve organisational or unit
29 functioning” (Morrison, 2011, p. 375). Literature have coined voice as a form of challenge-
30 oriented citizenship behaviour that is likely to manifest during stronger cooperation. For
31 example, Van Dyne and LePine (1998) suggested that “voice is making innovative
32 suggestions for change and recommending modification to standard procedures even when
33 others disagree” (p. 109). In other words, voice behaviour will challenge the status quo to
34 promote positive changes in the organisation (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Maynes, &
35 Spoelma, 2013). Existing studies have shown that voice will emerge under ethical leadership
36 because leader encourage dialog through “a two-way communication” (Lam, Loi, Chan, &
37 Liu, 2016 p. 280). Although employee proactive behaviour like voice, can affect the
38 organisation’s ability to adapt and survive in times of uncertainty (Aryee, Walumbwa,
39 Modejar, & Chu, 2017; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007; Parker & Collins, 2010). Attention has
40 always been given to the ethical behaviour of leadership because of their ethical stance, with
41 limited understanding on followers’ motivation to voice (Huang & Paterson, 2017; Lam et
42 al., 2016). However, recent published studies found the (dis)agreement of ethical leadership
43 to affect organisational deviance (Kuenzi, Brown, Mayer, & Priesmuth, 2019), while the
44 perception of ethical leader can be affected by the incongruency of leader and follower’s
45 moral identity (Qin, Huang, Hu, Schminke, & Ju, 2018). Therefore, this paper will extend
46 this perspective to look at the role of ethical leadership (dis)agreement on followers’ voice.

47 Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate
48 conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationship, and the promotion of such
49 conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making”
50 (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Although ethical leader will promote proactive behaviour

51 through empowerment and buffer unethical dwellings in organisation (Bedi, Alpaslan, &
52 Green, 2016; Fehr, Yam, & Dang, 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2015). Many published studies have
53 only considered its influence through followers' perspective, making it important for research
54 to understand why voice will emerge under ethical leader (Lam et al., 2016). Consequence
55 studies have not always considered the perspective of supervisor own ethical leadership.
56 Despite recent studies have found incongruency to increase negative sentiment and promote
57 organisation deviance (Kuenzi et al., 2019; Qin et al., 2018). To perplex the issue on
58 (dis)agreement about ethical leadership, voice is particularly vulnerable because followers
59 will always evaluate the risk of speaking up (Burris, 2012). Hence, supervisor overestimating
60 their own ethical leadership may attribute to a cognitive blind spot that silence followers
61 altogether.

62 (Dis)agreement of leadership behaviour can impact the leader's influence (Fleenor,
63 Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010). Because integrity and honesty of ethical
64 leadership cannot be easily observed (Kuenzi et al., 2019; Moor & Small, 2007).
65 (Dis)agreement on supervisor's behaviour can be associated with a decrease in favourable
66 attitude and behaviour (see Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal, 1995). Leader with enhanced self-
67 perception are more resistance towards feedback from others, which is an unlikely behaviour
68 for social learning (Bandura, 1977; 1986). However, role theory (see Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn,
69 Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) argue that followers who disagree about ethical leadership
70 behaviour may associate a higher risk with speaking up. Therefore, this research sets out to
71 answer two questions. First, how is followers' voice behaviour affected when supervisor and
72 followers (dis)agree about ethical leadership? The research will pay attention to followers'
73 voice behaviour through social learning and role theory and submit that dissimilarity in
74 perception can affect the willingness to voice. Since followers' moral cognition can affect

75 their perception of ethical leadership, we address the second research question by examining
76 the effect of followers' moral identification on (dis)agreement.

77 Qin et al (2018) has shown that incongruent moral identity between supervisor and
78 followers can increase followers' negative sentiment. However, not much is known about the
79 (dis)agreement of ethical leadership and followers' moral cognition on their willingness to
80 voice. Since (dis)agreement research on ethical leadership is only starting to emerge in
81 literature. Knowledge is still limited about its implication on ethical biases and blind spot
82 (Tenbrunsel, Diekmann, Wade-Benzoni, & Bazerman, 2010). Therefore, we aim to extend
83 knowledge by examining the social mechanism that drive followers' willingness to voice
84 during (dis)agreement. Social learning is an important theoretical foundation for ethical
85 leadership. However, we argue that role theory will provide a meaningful explanation that
86 links (dis)agreement on followers' voice. As voice has implication on organisational
87 functions (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). The motivation to voice
88 may be attended through other social influence mechanism. To realise this objective, a review
89 on the theoretical foundation will underline the discrepancy of supervisor's own ethical
90 leadership rating in comparison to their followers. This relationship will be examined through
91 the ethical leadership ratings of supervisor and followers on voice behaviour. Finally, we will
92 investigate the social mechanisms to add on to the growing literature on ethical biases on
93 (un)ethical leadership (Kuenzi et al., 2019).

94

95 **The foundation of ethical leadership and role theory**

96 The theory of ethical leadership is built on two pillars, which are moral person and
97 moral manager. The moral person component focuses on the moral qualities of the leader,
98 such as honesty, fair and trustworthiness, while the moral manager component focuses on
99 their ability to reinforce these desirable behaviours (Trevino, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). Both

100 pillars are important to ethical leadership theory because followers will rely on them to learn
101 the appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Brown et al., 2005). At the same time, these
102 qualities will reinforce followers' perceptions on the normative context (Ashforth & Anand.
103 2003; Podsakoff, Bommer, Podsakoff, & Mackenzie, 2006). Because social learning has
104 often taken a one-sided perspective through followers. Why ethical leader will influence
105 followers' motivation, role, and responsibilities when they exhibit both moral person and
106 moral manager remain limited (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012; Moore, Mayer,
107 Chiang, Crossley, Karlesky, & Birtch, 2019; Paterson & Huang, 2018).

108 Although ethical leadership will actively motivate follower's proactive behaviour in
109 organisation through role-modelling (Brown et al., 2005; Kuenzi et al., 2019). Role theory
110 (see Kahn et al., 1964) argued that followers will demonstrate proactive behaviour due to
111 their role-consensus agreement (Matta et al., 2015). For example, in varied context (i.e.,
112 agreement vs disagreement), followers' role-making can pattern their behaviour according to
113 the social expectation that resulted in different relationships. Role theory describe this social
114 phenomenon as a role-making process that can create disagreement between supervisor and
115 followers as it differentiates between sent and receive (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Since
116 disagreement can happen in dyads because of different role identities, needs, and goals that
117 may not be fulfilled by the leader's resources. The misalignment of role is often ignored once
118 the role-making process is completed despite disagreement can persist and affect important
119 organisational outcome (Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015). Thus, role theory may
120 account for the social dynamic of social learning on followers' willingness to speak up.

121

122 **Supervisor-followers (dis)agreement and moral identification on voice behaviour**

123 We submit that ethical leader is more likely to listen when having followers' best
124 interest in mind (Moore et al., 2019). To continue this argument, moral identification that

125 represents the degree one associate with context that exhibit ethical traits (see May, Chang, &
126 Shao, 2015) is likely to influence voice behaviour in (dis)agreement situation. For example,
127 supervisor who see themselves as highly ethical may silence their followers, which puts their
128 authentic ethical nature in question even if they will set a standard on doing things the right
129 way. In this instance, follower's moral identification may act as a buffer on this relationship
130 between disagreement and voice. Therefore, followers with high (vs. low) moral
131 identification are likely to display higher ethical sensitivity that influence voice behaviour.

132 Ethical leader must be consistent when displaying ethical leadership behaviour to
133 make the expected behaviour salient. Because voice behaviour is a proactive act of role
134 expectation, followers who voice are likely to perceive higher contextual fairness in
135 comparison to when they're not allowed too. This perception is also linked to procedural
136 fairness (i.e., the extend leader uses fair procedures to allocate outcomes and in decision-
137 making process) that may impact the long-term organisational effectiveness. Therefore,
138 followers' demonstration of voice may signify their satisfaction and compliance with the
139 leadership (Hoogervorst, De Cremer, & van Dijke, 2013). This behaviour is particularly
140 important in time of uncertainty where followers' cooperation may positively impact the
141 organisational effectiveness. As voice is a voluntary behaviour that will positively improve
142 organisational functions (Morisson, 2011; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011). The
143 extent where followers will make constructive suggestion for improvement is likely to
144 increase through a higher association with the organisation.

145 We predict that moral identification will explain the motivation to voice through the
146 role of organisation (May et al., 2015). Although ethical leadership is most effective in
147 driving down deviant behaviour (Hoch, Boomer, & Dulebohn, 2018). The relationship
148 between ethical leader and important social influence mechanism can impact proactive
149 behaviour (Moore et al., 2019; Walumbwa, Morrison, & Christensen, 2012). It is important to

150 link (dis)agreement with frequency of prosocial behaviour (Kuenzi et al., 2019). Because the
 151 underlining process that govern followers' voice is far more complex than previously
 152 understood. Thus, we submit that high moral identification may buffer low role-consensus on
 153 the affected behaviour.
 154

Supervisor ratings	Subordinate ratings	
	Low	High
High	Overestimation	Agreement: Stronger ethical leadership
Low	Agreement: Weaker ethical leadership	Underestimation

155
 156 **Figure 1: Types of supervisor-follower (dis)agreement with corresponding ethical leader**
 157

158 This research extends the perspectives of Kuenzi et al (2019) to examine the effect of
 159 moral identification on followers' voice. Members from the same group are exposed to the
 160 same social context where consistent presentation can affect the behaviour of the group as a
 161 whole (Bandura, 1986). However, disagreement can happen when supervisor overestimate or
 162 underestimate their own ethical leadership behaviour (see *Figure 1*). It is proposed that when
 163 supervisor overestimated their own ethical behaviour, lower role-consensus (categorise
 164 through negative mean difference) will be buffered by followers with higher moral
 165 identification and causes them to voice more. At the same time, supervisor underestimation
 166 of own ethical behaviour may not affect followers with lower moral identification. In short,
 167 when supervisor underestimate their ethical behaviour, followers who are high in moral
 168 identification are more likely to associate with the leader's humility and this is categorised
 169 through their willingness to voice. Therefore, we hypothesises that (dis)agreement may affect

170 role-consensus and this positive and negative relationship is buffered by follower's moral
171 identification that impact voice;

172 *Hypothesis 1:* The mean differences between supervisor and followers rating will
173 moderate the positive relationship between ethical leadership (i.e., supervisor and
174 followers' ratings) and followers' voice (two-way interaction): The relationship is
175 stronger when the mean difference is low, whereas relationship is weaker when mean
176 level of ethical leadership ratings between supervisor and follower is high.

177

178 *Hypothesis 2:* The mean differences between supervisor and followers rating of
179 ethical leadership and followers' moral identification jointly moderates the positive
180 relationship between ethical leadership and followers' voice (three-way interaction).
181 The relationship is strongest when mean differences is low and moral identification is
182 high, whereas relationship is weaker when mean differences is high and moral
183 identification is low.

184

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Methods

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Participants and Procedures

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The following research will utilise data collected from its on-going survey across two subsidiaries of a large Malaysian multinational organisation. Multisource feedback (MSF) data were collected at two intervals between November to December 2018 and then again between March to April 2019. Supervisors are asked to provide the ratings of their ethical leadership, while supervisor is asked to provide the ratings of their supervisor's ethical leadership, own moral identification, and voice behaviour. The final sample will compromise data collected from two different operating offices at two countries (i.e., Malaysia and the United Kingdom). The research will control for age, gender, and nested variance on the data.

195 **Measures**

196 Ethical leadership is measured using Brown et al's (2005) ten-item ethical leadership
197 scale (ELS). Voice is measured using Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) six-item voice scale.

198 Moral identification is measured using May et al's (2015) five-item moral identification scale

199 To observe (dis)agreement, the raw scores of supervisors and followers' ratings are
200 subjected to a square root transformation (see Clegg, 1983). The skewness and kurtosis of
201 both ratings will be determined by the frequencies as suggested by Hammer and Landau
202 (1981). The transformed data will be used to compute the mean difference between
203 supervisor and followers' ratings. Finally, the interclass-correlation (ICC) will be calculated
204 to justify the mean aggregation of the ratings.

205 The research will adopt Chan's (1998) dispersion model that usage within-group
206 variation for consistency. As moral identification in the work-unit can be operationalise due
207 to shared understanding, differences in position along a continuum will represent
208 dissimilarity in behaviour (Harrison & Klein, 2007). Therefore, the differences will meet the
209 requirements to address the situational strength systematically that is varied across the
210 conditions of the study (Cooper & Withey, 2009).

211 Lastly, dummy coding will also be used to distinguish overestimation (i.e., supervisor
212 rating is higher than followers) and underestimation (i.e., supervisor rating is lower than
213 followers). Hierarchical linear modelling (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) will be used to
214 test both hypotheses because the model predicts cross-level effects and the data will have a
215 nested structure. Moderation will align with the principles of moderated regression (see
216 Aiken & West, 1991) to highlight the contextual variances in high (vs. low) levels of moral
217 identification.

218

219

Conclusion

The present development paper will extend knowledge on the ethical leadership literature by examining the ethical bias phenomenon. Specifically, Tenbrunsel et al. (2010) argued that leader may not be as ethical as they thought and how this association may impact followers' willingness to voice. To date, studies have mainly focused on the impact of ethical leadership through followers' perception. However, with the emergence of paper from Qin et al (2018) and Kuenzi et al (2019), both studies results have provided a very different narration on the ethical leadership process. Therefore, by examining how (dis)agreement affect followers' voice behaviour through moral identification. We extend the prior work on ethical leadership and followers voice (see Mayer, Nurmohamed, Treviño, Shapiro, & Schminke, 2013; Walumbwa et al., 2016) to shed light on the consistency between supervisor and followers' perception of ethical leadership and how moral identification can buffers this disagreement.

(Word Count: 2347).

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