

CONCEPT ANALYSIS: PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

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Abstract

Introduction and Purpose: In today's world, one of the most important factors in determining an organization's status is following ethics as a regulatory force for human relationships. Professional ethics is a set of behavioral principles and norms that govern the actions of individuals or groups. In fact, professional ethics is a rational process that identifies organizational ideals. To put it another way, each organization's professional ethics reflects its values and views, as well as its organizational culture. Regarding this, the present research aims to systematically explore the professional ethics among educational leaders. **Research Method:** The present study is a Concept Analysis using a 4-step method. The data was provided from Irandoc, Sid-Scopus, ERIC, PubMed, Cochrane, and Web of Science. The keywords Ethics, Professional Ethics, Management, Leadership, and Educational Leaders, as well as their English equivalents, were searched in these databases (from 2015 to 2021). 65 papers out of a total of 723 were qualified for inclusion in the research. The data analysis approach was a 3-step qualitative and inductive method. **Findings:** The data retrieved from the text content analysis identified 70 primary codes, 14 sub-themes or categories, and 4 themes. **Discussion and Conclusion:** Certain professional qualities and skills are required for educational managers. Employees need a healthy ethical environment, which the manager must supply. This necessitates a leader with good professional ethics, implying that educational management cannot be regarded without this fundamental quality. As a result, the educational managers of the organization must adhere to their professional ethics. On the one hand, this helps the organization avoid causing tension in society, while on the other hand, by making intelligent decisions, the organization's long-term interests are ensured.

Keywords: Ethics, Professional Ethics, Management, Leadership, Educational Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Professional ethics is a set of human character principles and norms that govern the behavior of individuals and groups. Each profession has its own set of rules and requirements, which have been codified in its bylaw. Depending on the level of sensitivity and the commitment to serve society, various professions have different ethical requirements. Universities, as educational-research institutions, are obligated to follow professional ethics at all levels; in their interactions with students, professors, staff, and the non-academic environment.

Furthermore, focusing on the university's strategic role in fostering professional ethics in other professions and workplaces shows the importance of adhering to ethics in this organization. On the other hand, no organization or profession can survive without the ethics that determine the limits of normal behavior. Professional, ethical discussions have considerably evolved in the last 15 years, and the number of research on this subject is still expanding (Maryam A et al, 2021). Furthermore, standards for professional ethics have been established in a variety of professions or vocations.

Following professional ethics has a substantial effect on organizational performance. The value system serves as a reference point for managers' actions, but a lack of ethics in management hinders communication and causes organizational destruction (Lawton, translated by Rabiee and Gioruian, 2002). Managers' behaviors are also affected by ideas and practices that are a blend of work objectives and professional ethics. As a result, ethics is described as a set of ideals as well as do's and don'ts. Managers can differentiate between what is good and what is bad by using these concepts (Maroufi SS et al, 2021). In this regard, the institutionalization of professional ethics in academic institutions, as well as the strict adherence of staff and workforces to them, will improve educational system quality and promote more professional ethics in the academic context and thus society.

Because of its pervasive aspects, ethics in higher education leadership is doubly crucial. The characteristics of this institution's clientele represent the most significant distinction between higher education management and other organizations. Higher education is for those who are typically at the top level of scientific, cultural, and professional achievements. Furthermore, in many societies, higher education is responsible for the development of human resources, and these human resources may impact all levels of society once they graduate. As a result, those in charge of higher education are responsible for the well-being of others. In other words, the educational administrator is responsible for the well-being of professors, staff, students, parents, and the education community in a participatory and task-sharing setting. Educational administrators must be professionals who follow ethical values since moral beliefs enable them to accompany and divide tasks. Hence, in order to foster trust, managers must act in accordance with ethical principles so that others understand the link between their actions and moral standards (Shapiro and Pierre, 2005).

On the other hand, one of the essential roles of educational and scientific institution managers is to promote ethics inside the organization. As a set of principles, professional ethics seems to be a framework for directing individuals and giving a paradigm for action. Professional ethics is like a two-edged sword, with one side representing risk and the other side providing opportunity. Defects in the ethical system result in decreased communication and higher organizational losses. Because no actual knowledge is available in this circumstance, the administration will depend more on retrospective management, and the organization's morale will change negatively. In other words, instead of being spent on goals, the energy of the personnel will be wasted on rumors and gossip, or they may spend their time aimlessly. The other side of this sword, though, is opportunity. In this case, professional ethics substantially influences the organization's activities, procedures, and achievements because it increases

communication and productivity (Beykzad, Sadeghi, and Ebrahimpour, 2012). This organization's members are university administrators, faculty members, and students. These individuals are in charge of the university's educational, research, entrepreneurial, cultural, and social services. It is the responsibility of higher education administrators to provide an atmosphere in which these tasks can be carried out effectively. Administrators in higher education approach the issue of professional ethics in various ways. The decisions that these administrators make on a daily basis about the university's multiple affairs, such as coordination, organizing, effective communication with other academics, and judging their performance, affect students' and faculty members' beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, or behaviors. (Nemati and Mohseni, 2010). Institution administrators who have a sincere conviction in academic and professional ethics and practice these principles might serve as role models promoting professional ethics at the university (Nemati and Mohseni, 2010).

The pervasiveness of professional ethics in an organization may considerably help it reduce stress and successfully achieve its goals, as well as hold the organization responsible (Niaz Azari, Enayati, Behnamfar, and Kahroudi, 2014). If the organizational culture at the university faces problems such as irresponsibility or incompetence, it swiftly impacts the social culture and undermines the moral basis of society. Managers' decisions determine idleness, snitching, lying, envy, bribery, dishonesty, or financial and behavioral corruption. Security concerns, cybercrimes, tuition, and financial assistance, student and professor selections, document management, financial and legal violations, misuse of power, and so on are also connected with educational managers' ethical decisions. If educational administrators' lack of professional ethics undermines the institution's organizational culture, the public culture outside the university will be affected as well. This fact indicates that academic and professional ethics should be a priority in societal master plans and that ignoring them would have negative consequences. It also highlights the importance of the university's organizational health compared to other organizations. Educational administrators must practice ethical behavior and make decisions based on moral principles. Furthermore, they must serve as role models for students, professors, staff, and the community in terms of honesty, respect, responsibility, trust, and caring (Green, 2006). Department managers or supervisors collaborate with many groups, including academic staff and students. These managers' behavior and professional ethics impact the organizational environment and how its members interact with one another.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ethics, often known as moral philosophy, investigates several aspects of morality. Professional ethics is one of them. Simply put, professional ethics is the responsibility of the profession. Individuals, thinkers, philosophers, and sages have recognized a structural relationship between ethics and the element of responsibility since the distribution of posts and management, and they have underlined the structural link between the two (Bagheri, Salehi, and Hajizad, 2010).

Professional ethics is an applied ethics branch that deals with work ethics and has a far broader scope than business ethics. Morality can be created in someone's personal life or in their

professional life. Professional ethics includes work ethic. The major part of professional ethics is concerned with the ethical behavior of organizations outside of personal and professional life. As a result, the idea of professional ethics encompasses both individual-professional ethics and organizational ethics (Sanei and Bari, 2014).

According to a definition, professional ethics is a set of rules that individuals must follow voluntarily and in accordance with their convictions and nature when performing a profession without being bound by external obligations or, in the event of a violation, being punished by law (Amiri et al., 2010). Thus, professional ethics refers to a person's moral obligation in terms of their work, as well as the unwritten standards that should govern individual relationships inside the organization (Moradzadeh, Poorahmad, and Asadi, 2014). However, Faramarz Gharamaleki (2014) goes beyond these definitions. He defines professional ethics as the organization's ethical responsibilities to the environment, including work ethic responsibilities. So, professional ethics is a subfield of ethics that deals with the ethical responsibilities of organizations as well as the examining of ethical issues in business. People with professional ethics, according to Kadvazier, have the following characteristics: commitment, honesty, respect for others, superiority, competitiveness, obedience, respect for societal values and norms, justice and fairness, empathy with others, and loyalty (Amiri et al., 2010).

Professional ethics in higher education has two dimensions: 1) intrapersonal ethics and 2) individual or social ethics. In higher education, the social aspect of ethics is essential. This is because adhering to professional, ethical principles and creating a favorable environment for its promotion are more easily accomplished in an appropriate social context (Nemati and Mohseni, 2010). The ethical framework in higher education, on the other hand, represents the internal rules of professionals as well as a sense of moral commitment whose foundation is in professional self-understanding.

The norms, values, and characteristics of scientific professional ethics emerge not from a vertical pattern of culture-building but from an endogenous development pattern and spontaneous activities of academic sectors. They contribute to the internalization of ethical norms by building a culture of self-evaluation, self-regulation, and commitment to quality (Farastkhah, 2006). In light of the above discussions, the purpose of this research is to investigate the professional ethics of educational leaders and the components of professional ethics in educational management.

METHODS

A systematized review of the related studies with was carried out according to the Khan et al. guideline (8). Step one is forming questions for review. In this regard, as the purpose of this systematized review was to search, select, and analyze exciting literature on professional ethics of educational leaders so it was guided by the following two questions:

1. What experiences have been reported in the field of professional ethics of educational leader's contexts and medical education?
2. What are the focus and key points of these experiences?

The second step is to identify relevant works. For this purpose, seven bibliographic databases and search engines including Cochrane Library, Eric, PubMed, SCOPUS, Web of Sciences, Sid and Irandoc were searched. The following keywords were used to search through these online data sources with time limitations from 2015 to March 2021: Ethics, professional ethics, management, leadership, educational leaders. Advanced search options and Boolean operator (AND) were also used to find out more relevant records. Details of the search strategy can be found in Table (1).

Table 1: Search Strategy Details

Database or Search Engine	Search Strategy
PubMed	("Ethics"[Title/Abstract] AND " professional ethics"[Title/Abstract]) AND ((journalarticle[Filter]) AND (humans[Filter]) AND (english[Filter]) AND (2015:2021[pdat]))
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY (" management" AND Ethics) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2017)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MEDI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "HEAL") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PHAR") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))
WOS	TOPIC: ("professional ethics, management, leadership, " AND educational leaders) Timespan: Last 5 years. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI.
Cochrane	("professional ethics " AND educational leaders):ti,ab,kw" (Word variations have been searched)
ERIC	" professional ethics, management, leadership " AND educational leaders, Ethics
Sid	" professional ethics, management, leadership " AND educational leaders, Ethics
Irandoc	" professional ethics, management, leadership " AND educational leaders, Ethics

The third step is assessing the quality of studies. To select appropriate papers for data collection, all the records were saved and checked for duplications. After that, the titles were screened in terms of eligibility criteria. Records with completely irrelevant titles were excluded and those with potentially relevant titles were saved for abstract screening. First, vague and relevant abstracts were selected to evaluate the full text. Then, in the second stage, the complete texts were carefully evaluated to find qualified articles. The following items were set as inclusion criteria in this review:

- Paper format: Journal Article (research, analytical, and review articles)
- Paper language: Persian and English
- Paper subject: Ethics, professional ethics, management, leadership, educational leaders.

Fig. 1 shows the PRISMA flowchart for including papers in the review. It is also worth mentioning, there are no ethical issues applicable in this study. The seven above databases were systematically searched for papers describing Ethics, professional ethics, management, leadership, educational leaders. The search strategy generated 723 studies electronically. According to the given criteria, the titles were screened, and duplicate records were eliminated

(196 articles). Examining titles resulted in 595 studies and reviewing abstracts revealed 131 studies considering Ethics, professional ethics, management, leadership, educational leaders. Full texts were reviewed to determine for evaluating quality appraisal criteria were met. After reading the full texts, 65 studies were included. The flow chart of the search process is suggested in Figure 1.

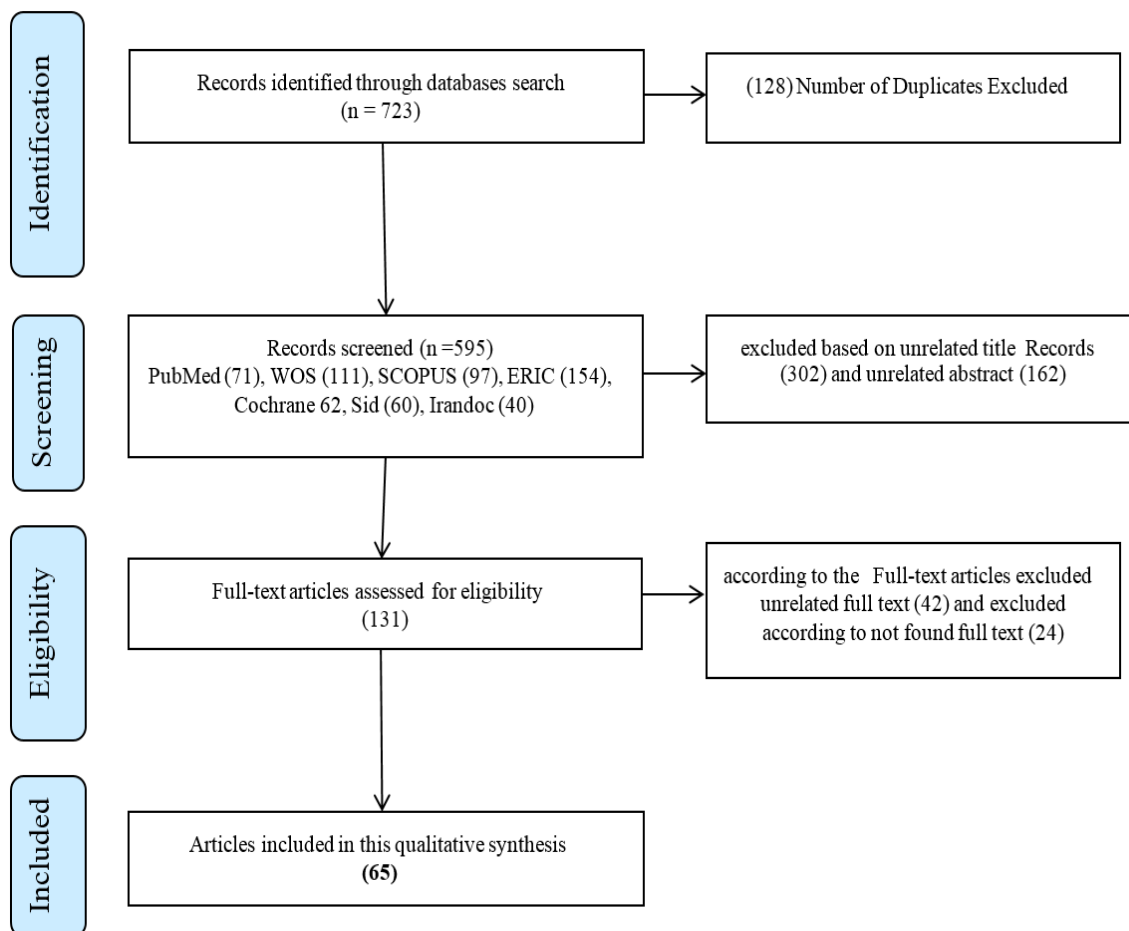


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart for including papers

The fourth step is summarizing the findings, so the data derived from the reviewed studies are demonstrated in Table 1. The table was designed to classify the data and shows the summary of studies included in the review.

Table 2: Summary of studies included in the review

Articles	Articles
A Multinational Study of Teachers' Codes of Ethics: Attitudes of Educational Leaders: Shapira-Lishchinsky O.2020	Exploring the challenges and ethical requirements of medical sciences education during COVID-19: a qualitative study: ramezani et al, 2021
Ethical leadership in educational organizations: A cross-cultural study: Ahmet GÖÇEN: 2021	Ethical Leadership Practices and Trust Among Public School Leaders in Malaysia: Sharmini Siva Vikaraman et al, 2021
Ethical Leadership in Educational Administration: A Review: Wan Mohd Hafis Pak Wan Chik: 2020	Pulling Back the Curtain on Moral Reasoning and Ethical Leadership Development for K-12 School Leaders: D. Keith Gurley et al, 2020
Studied the ethical behavior of school leaders in non-Euro-West countries by examining the dilemmas faced by Kenyan educational leaders. Oduol and Cornforth 2019	Professional and Public Accreditation as An Assessment of Agricultural Educational Program Quality in Russia: Natalya et al, 2021
School principals' perception of professional ethics and the extent of its observance in high schools in Birjand: Hakimeh Khosravi et al, 2021	The Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Quality of Work Life of Public University Employees with the Moderating Role of Professional Ethics: Ali Khaleghkhan et al, 2020
Ethical Challenges of School Principals during of COVID-19: Abolfazl Ghasemzadeh Alishah et al, 2021	Components of Teachers' Professional Ethics: A Systematic Review Based on Wright's Model 2020: Gholampour et al.

RESULTS

Themes	Subthemes	Subcomponents
Individual dimension	Personality traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfillment of the obligations • Sense of humor and high morale • Kindness • Empathy and forgiveness • Political neutrality • Openness to criticism • Moderation and flexibility • Decisiveness • Confidentiality • Trustworthiness • Honesty and truthfulness • Openness to others' views • Self-confidence
	Personal commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility • Adhering to the moral sense
	Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing appropriate clothes and looking trim
	Perceptual skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-analysis • Creativity and critical thinking • Reasoning ability
Organizational dimension	Organizational commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility • Openness to criticism and participation • Being Disciplined in work • Respect for others • Empathy

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Interested to work • Understanding professional responsibilities • Respecting organizational culture • Preferring organizational interests over personal interests • Concentrating on the organization's progress
	Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing knowledge • Managing information • Keeping up-to-date • Membership in various scholarly societies
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding discrimination in interactions with learners • Providing professional assistance for colleagues • Fairness and equality • Maintaining high-quality communication with learners • Maintaining high-quality communication with colleagues • Respecting others' privacy • Having communicative skills
Social dimension	Social values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating on socio-cultural values • Respecting social norms • Loyalty and the sense of social responsibility • Improving citizenship skills • Having a keen interest in society's cultural development
	Social relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining proper social interaction • Maintaining the social status
Teaching-learning process dimension	Following the educational rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding punishing learners either psychologically or physically • Adherence to educational and organizational rules
	Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery in teaching methods • Stating the objectives of the training in a clear way • Focusing on students' overall development • Using inclusive methods • Establishing a suitable and safe educational environment • Paying attention to the educational aspects of education • Using technology for educational purposes • Encouraging teamwork • Providing appropriate information for students • Concentrating on learners' empowerment and education • Training learners effectively
	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying attention to learners' educational needs • Mastery of the subject
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to justice and fairness in evaluation • Paying attention to individual differences • Following standards in evaluation • Providing tasks and evaluating in line with the goals
	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying close attention to research and writing research papers, books, etc. • Considering the research sample's safety and security • Honesty in presenting the results • Avoiding the disclosure of project information

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Professional ethics in management has grown significantly during the contemporary era. It is now considered to be one of the most crucial factors in achieving the educational objectives of organizations, schools, and, at a higher level, society. The need for continuous improvement in the quality of education has driven those who work in academic organizations to enhance their performance. As a result, they should address training from a qualitative perspective and try to preserve the standards of the organizational training programs by presenting executive strategies. This requires implementing effective management procedures, a positive attitude toward education, and the availability of acceptable criteria for evaluating educational success. Ethics and social responsibility, as well as management and leadership, are additional criteria that, like an umbrella, encompass other criteria. Professional ethics has a profound effect on an organization's actions and achievements. It boosts productivity and improves communication while lowering risk. This is because when professional ethics governs the organization, information flows easily, and the manager is informed before problems emerge.

Educational organizations are very important to society and play a significant role in conveying humane teachings. On the other hand, the success and development of a society are dependent on the development and promotion of that society's educational organizations and human resources. In this sense, we need leaders who can seek and accomplish great objectives. To establish an ethically healthy environment for an organization's employees, educational managers must possess several professional traits and abilities. Creating such an organization needs strong leadership with good professional ethics. In other words, management cannot survive without these core assumptions. Members of society support the application of ethics and ethical concepts as well. Hard work and diligence, enthusiasm for learning, self-motivation, openness to criticism, self-analysis, a desire to advance others' professions, encouraging others, a desire for collaboration, discipline, and a sense of pride in the work are all indicators of ethical commitment. Professional ethics is one of the elements that, together with other variables, can contribute to improving and developing academic system performance. Scientific progress needs a supportive environment in which all academics feel comfortable and are capable of focusing their efforts in this direction. It requires establishing ethical regulations over the scientific and academic institutions. Professional ethics is one of the fundamental issues affecting all human societies and is the most critical factor in an organization's success. Thus, one of the roles of educational leaders is to consider professional ethics in the organization. Following professional ethics in the organization is critical because by doing so, the organization, on the one hand, does not provoke conflict in society and, on the other hand, ensures its long-term values by making rational decisions. Practicing professional ethics by educational managers leads their actions to be immediately communicated to other individuals or educational organizations; so, people often see these managers as role models for their own development and success in the workplace.

Thus, managers who adhere to professional ethics mature to the point where they can no longer behave regardless of such ethics. If this manager is in charge of an educational organization, his actions will be more efficient and productive. As a consequence of this manager's actions,

other society's members benefit, since this person educates ethical individuals and brings skilled and competent instructors or employees into the workplace with high moral awareness, which in turn benefits other organizations as well. A manager with professional ethics instills in his or her personnel a real, strong, and broad-based trust in the educational environment and, at a higher level, in the entire educational organization system. This fosters internal motivation and stability in staff, educators, and students, attracts specialized human resources and boosts the educational organization's efficiency or output. Consequently, challenges become opportunities, and ethics govern the organizational culture. In short, if the educational manager adheres to professional ethics, his or her behavior is automatically transmitted to other members. These members consider the manager as a role model for their own path of personal and professional growth in the workplace. Finally, this contributes to improving the educational environment, educational organizations, and, above all, society.

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