Ethical Leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing


In this article about leadership and ethics it’s discussed how leader’s examples should be ethical guidelines specifically for employees. The author uses the social learning theory as a basis to introduce ethical leadership as a fundamental construct. By combining seven different but related studies together the author explores the connections ethical leadership has with nomological networks. The purpose behind this was to analyze more empirical data since empirical research regarding ethical leadership is sparse. Research regarding the ethics of leadership in this article revolve around two types of leadership, transformational/charismatic leadership. The author goes on to say that this approach lave the view limited to our understanding of ethical leadership and chooses to use social learning to further this.

The social learning perspective is used to provide a basis of deductive theoretical understanding. This includes that leaders need to provide a proper example of what to expect in ethical actions in order to have others understand what this will look like. A leader who provides an example of what they want to see will help improve the conception of ethical practices for the others around the leader. Some of the characteristic that were identified in this was a leader’s ability to be altruistic which included honestly, respect for others, and treating people fairly. I
think the issue with this is some of these traits can be observed by some but may be not seen the same way by others. This is where it is vital for the leader to switch the roles and observe the follow instead. Usually the employ is used to following the boss’s example, but if the leader chooses to actively observe an employ he will discover many important things. The social learning model is used by leaders who want to incorporate an inclusive model of ethical practices where it’s not only the leader deciding what is ethical. The others around him influence what is ethical, but it’s up to the leader to properly exemplify this.