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Leaders' Strategies for Reducing Unethical Behavior in Organizations

Miranda Evelyn Sawyer
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Miranda Evelyn Sawyer

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Leaders' Strategies for Reducing Unethical Behavior in Organizations

by

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MBA, Endicott College, 2010

MA, Boston University, 1997

BS, Suffolk University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Unethical conduct among business leaders and managers results in employee turnover. Senior business leaders who cannot mitigate unethical behavior risk increased hiring and training costs, decreased productivity, and reduce employee performance. Grounded in the ethical leadership construct and a composite of the social learning theory and the social exchange theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. The participants comprised five senior leaders of a United Kingdom-based company in the northeast region of the United States who successfully implemented strategies to mitigate unethical conduct. Data were collected from documents, public websites, and semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Five themes emerged: communicating the company's values continuously, building an ethical culture, creating an ethical climate, leading by example, and having a growth mindset. A key recommendation is that organization leaders build ethical cultures through ethics programs that include codes of ethics, ethics training, and communication plans to reinforce the expectation of ethical conduct. The implications for positive social change include the potential to allocate and use investments to strengthen underserved communities' social, economic, and environmental growth and initiatives to protect the natural environment.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family. To my husband, Kevin Sawyer, thank you for your love, support, and thoughtfulness throughout my doctoral journey. Also, to my dad, Reverend Rodrigo Córdoba, for your prayers, encouragement, and unending support and love through the years. I am also forever grateful to my deceased mom, Eunice Córdoba, for her love, support, and encouragement. This is my family's accomplishment as well. Most importantly, to Father God, for Your blessings and faithful promises throughout my life. May the culmination of this study be for Your glory and honor.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizations run productively and successfully when their senior leaders are ethical. Ethical leaders care about the well-being of their employees and their organizations. Ethical leaders engage employees in their jobs and influence employees to stay in the organization. Some of the ways they engage employees is by the leaders' exemplary ethical conduct and by inspiring employees to participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Ulla et al., 2017). Unethical leaders, on the other hand, have the opposite effect in organizations. For instance, unethical leadership results in employee turnover intentions (Harr et al., 2016; Mesdaghinia et al., 2019). Thus, it is for the good of the organization to have ethical leaders.

Background of the Problem

During the global economic downturn, which started in 2007, several companies went bankrupt due to the unethical decisions of their senior leaders (Schoen, 2017). In their pursuit to make high profits, many senior leaders failed to make ethical decisions for the benefit of the employees and the company (Rua et al., 2017). Senior leaders' unethical conduct negatively affects companies, their employees, and even the countries where they operate (Bonner et al., 2016). For instance, the unethical conduct of leaders of major corporations led to the 2007-2009 financial crisis, which also led the U.S. economy into recession (Schoen, 2017). Another consequence of unethical leadership is employee turnover intention (Harr et al., 2016; Mesdaghinia et al., 2019). Employee turnover leads to a decrease in a company's productivity and an increase in costs associated with hiring

and training new employees (Haar et al., 2016). Certainly, unethical leadership has negative business and organizational outcomes.

Being an ethical leader is not only the right thing to do, but it is also good for organizations (Sharma et al, 2019). Ethical leaders consider the benefit of the company and the employees when making decisions (Knights, 2016). Ethical leaders build ethical cultures where employees engage and remain in their jobs and disregard any notions of quitting (Huhtala & Feldt, 2016). The presence of ethical leaders results in the effective performance and the success of an organization (Sharma et al., 2019)

In this study, I will provide background information on ethical theories and ethical leadership styles. I will also mention the positive results of ethical leadership and the negative consequences of unethical leadership. In addition, I will include the role of ethical leadership on CSR. I have presented the background to the problem; the focus will now shift to the problem statement.

Problem Statement

Unethical conduct among business leaders and managers leads to employee turnover intentions (Mesdaghinia et al., 2019). In their quantitative study on unethical leadership, Cialdini et al. (2019) found that 77% of the participants were most likely to leave a group due to an unethical leader, which could lead to turnover in organizations. The general business problem is that unethical conduct among business leaders and managers leads to employee turnover intentions. The specific business problem is that senior leaders lack strategies to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. To complete this study, I interviewed five senior leaders who demonstrated successful outcomes in building an ethical organization and mitigating unethical conduct in their organization. The senior leaders work at a U.K.-based company, doing business in New York and New England, that received recognition for its ethical practices from Ethisphere. Ethisphere is an organization whose mission is to advance ethical standards in businesses (Ethisphere, 2021). The results of this study might serve senior leaders in the US who are looking for strategies to mitigate managers' unethical behavior. The implication for social change is that ethical leaders and managers have a positive impact on CSR by building ethical cultures and climates that increase employee CSR involvement (Ullah et al., 2017). Ethical leaders and managers also care about the natural environment as they make decisions that prevent ecological harm and create services and products that are environmentally appropriate (Ullah et al., 2017). Employees from organizations led by ethical leaders and managers put the interests of society ahead of their own and act responsibly while interacting with, and supporting, customers, society, and the natural environment (Wu et al., 2015).

Nature of the Study

Researchers evaluate a phenomenon by using either qualitative methods, quantitative methods, or the mixed methods approach (Park & Park, 2016). Through qualitative research, researchers collect, observe, analyze, and interpret data to acquire a

deep understanding of a phenomenon (Park & Park, 2016). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study to explore the strategies senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. Researchers use the quantitative research method to analyze statistical data to examine variables' characteristics and relationships (Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because the intent was not to examine the relationship of variables to reach conclusions, but to learn from participants' experiences. The mixed methods approach involves combining the quantitative and qualitative methods in one study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). Addressing this study's objective did not require using both qualitative and quantitative approaches; thus, I did not use the mixed-method approach.

There are four primary qualitative research designs: case study, ethnographic, phenomenological, and narrative designs. Through case studies, researchers explore real-life phenomena within a specific environment (Ridder, 2017). A single case study is a traditional research design, which is suitable to use for an "unusual circumstance," which is a situation that deviates from common occurrences (Yin, 2017). A single case design was justifiable to use for this study because I conducted research on a company that has won global recognition for its ethical practices for several years, which is an unusual circumstance. Through the multiple case design, researchers use two or more cases, which can strengthen the findings (Yin, 2017). However, the breadth of this study did not need the use of the multiple case design because the single case design was suitable to describe and understand the phenomenon of interest in an organization (Gustafsson, 2017).

Other qualitative research designs include ethnographic, phenomenological, and narrative designs. Researchers using the ethnographic method analyze how culture affects people's behavior (Keränen & Prior, 2019). Researchers using phenomenological studies seek to understand a phenomenon based on people's lived experiences, perceptions, and feelings (Noon, 2018). Researchers using the narrative design collect narrative accounts of participants' personal stories (Nigar, 2020).

The focus of this study was not to evaluate the participants' culture, feelings, or personal narrative accounts but to evaluate business ethics practices. Therefore, for this research study, I used a case study design.

Research Question

What strategies do senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used for mitigating unethical conduct of managers in your organization?
2. How did you assess the effectiveness of the strategies you used for mitigating managers' unethical conduct in your organization?
3. What key barriers have you encountered in implementing strategies for mitigating managers' unethical conduct in your organization?
4. How did you address the key barriers to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in your organization?

5. What, if any, motivational techniques do you use to encourage ethical behavior among organizational managers?
6. What, if any, additional strategies have you used to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in your organization?

Conceptual Framework

The ethical leadership construct served as the foundation for this research study as it provides a constitutive description and definition of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005). In addition, I used a composite contextual framework that includes both the social learning theory (SLT) and the social exchange theory (SET) because these theories involve the practices of role modeling and behavior imitation in interpersonal relationships (Babalola et al., 2016; Patnaik, 2018). Hence, the combination of these theories provides the groundwork for this study because ethical leaders serve as role models of ethical behavior to managers. Also, based on the SLT, Brown et al. introduced the ethical leadership construct. The authors defined ethical leadership as the manifestation of proper behavior through personal actions and the advancement of such behavior through two-way communication and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). Per Brown et al., for leaders to influence ethical conduct, leaders must demonstrate conduct that is generally viewed as honest, transparent, fair, and considerate. Brown et al. conceptualized ethical leadership based on SLT, which indicates that individuals can learn anything by observing others' behaviors (Bandura, 1986). SLT refers to leaders serving as role models for employees to learn the behaviors the leaders expect of the employees at their jobs (Babalola et al., 2016). The definition of ethical leadership by

Brown et al. also applies to the SET (Ahn et al., 2018). SET refers to a social exchange relationship, in which employees reciprocate the leaders' actions (Ahn et al., 2018; Pattnaik, 2018). For instance, leaders' positive actions towards employees generate high-quality exchange relationships in which employees emulate the leaders' actions in similarly positive ways (Ahn et al., 2018; Pattnaik, 2018). Ethical leaders provide moral guidance through their behavior and actions (Babalola et al., 2018) and become the subjects of observation and imitation by employees (Babalola et al., 2016). The composite contextual framework of SLT and SET provides an expected means for understanding this study's findings because this composite contextual framework provides the basis of ethical leadership theory in that ethical leaders have a significant positive influence on their followers (Moore et al., 2019).

Operational Definitions

Ethical climate: Ethical climate is a perceived position of management's behavior and actions about ethics (Joe et al., 2018). When employees perceive that the ethical climate in their organization is beneficial for society, they are more likely to identify with the firm and remain working for the firm (Joe et al., 2018).

Ethical leadership: Ethical leadership is the process of influencing people to act through the principles and beliefs that embrace the behaviors of honesty, fairness, and equity (Brown et al., 2005; Knights, 2016).

Ethical organizations: These are organizations that consider the implications of what they do and the effect they might have on all their stakeholders (including

employees, customers, suppliers, the community, the shareholders, and the planet; Knights, 2016). An ethical organization is honest, fair, and equitable (Knights, 2016).

Leadership ethical conduct: This term refers to leaders who exhibit behavior that is honest, transparent, fair, and considerate (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders genuinely care about their followers and society (Sharma et al., 2019).

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB): This is workers' behavior that is in line with acceptable behavioral norms that are rewarded (Babalola et al., 2019).

Social exchange theory: This theory refers to a social exchange relationship in which employees reciprocate the leaders' actions (Ahn et al., 2018).

Social learning theory: This theory is based on the notion that individuals learn by observing and emulating the attitudes, values, and behaviors of role models (Bandura, 1977).

Unethical leadership: Unethical leadership refers to leaders' conduct that infringe on moral standards, or that is illegal (Fidan & Koc, 2020; Moutousi & May, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are part of the composition of knowledge, in terms of how everyday life is understood (Hathaway, 1995). When a researcher interviews an expert panel, the researcher assumes that the members of the panel are representative of experts in the given field (Bean et al., 2018). The reason for highlighting the assumptions is to better understand and appreciate epistemological matters (Hathaway, 1995). The identification of assumptions leads to a greater awareness of the suitability of different kinds of

knowledge for different objectives (Hathaway, 1995). A general assumption was that all participants would share the essence of their experience about the research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also assumed that participants' responses would reflect their actual behavior and actions in the workplace. Another assumption was that the knowledge and experiences of the leaders interviewed would provide relevant and reliable information about using strategies to mitigate unethical conduct in an organization.

Limitations

Limitations are constraints within a research design that may alter the results of the research (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). Overall, limitations refer to potential weaknesses in the study. Researchers have a responsibility towards the academic world to identify the limitations of the study in order to present meaningful and unbiased information to the reader (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). I conducted this research at one company through a single case analysis. The analysis of participants' responses was limited to the experiences of the participants at one company. The study was limited to those individuals with whom I communicated.

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors that affect the study over which the researcher has some degree of control over (Eisner, 2017). They are boundaries that the researchers decide to set as parameters to identify the scope of the study and reach a particular objective (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Hence, the researcher is in control of the delimitations. One of the delimitations of this study is the qualitative research design I chose, the single

case study. Through case study research, researchers investigate real-life experiences within a specific environment (Ridder, 2017). Another delimitation refers to the selection of participants. I selected participants who are in leadership roles as they are in the best position to influence employees and the culture of the organization.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of managers' unethical behavior in the workplace have led senior leaders to find solutions and strategies to prevent and address managers' unethical conduct (Rao, 2018; Smith-Crowe, 2015). Unethical management leads to employee turnover intentions, which might lead to turnover (Haar et al., 2016). Employee turnover leads to a decrease in a company's productivity and an increase in costs associated with hiring and training new employees (Haar et al., 2016). Also, unethical leaders negatively affect managers' job performance as managers become less focused on their jobs and less interested in contributing to the company's development and success (Naseer et al., 2016). Unethical decision-making can also lead to fraudulent activity in an organization such as theft, insurance scams, financial misrepresentation, and overall fraud intended to mislead shareholders (Eaton & Korach, 2016). Such fraudulent activities can result in the organization losing shareholders' investments, consumer confidence, and profits (Amiram et al., 2018).

However, ethical leaders and managers can build ethical climates that contribute to the managers' and employees' commitment to the organization and lower turnover (Joe et al., 2018). Ethical managers ensure that all employees are treated with dignity,

respect, and fairness (Knights, 2016). Ethical leaders and managers build and reinforce good standards of conduct in the organization by modeling the ethical behavior they seek in their followers and by resolving unethical issues in the organization (Downe et al., 2016). Organizations' leaders can increase the company's economic performance and competitiveness by developing ethical managers and transparent cultures, which results in employees' commitment and stakeholders' support to the organization. (Ullah et al., 2017).

Implications for Social Change

Ethical managers engage in CSR initiatives (Ullah et al., 2017). Ethical leaders and managers develop and catalyze the values of integrity, collaboration, open communication, and corporate citizenship (Ullah et al., 2017). In addition, ethical leaders and managers also care about the natural environment by avoiding ecological harm and developing environmentally friendly products and services (Ullah et al., 2017). Furthermore, ethical leaders and managers cultivate ethical cultures by engaging in CSR initiatives, which inspire employees to also engage in CSR practices (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018; Ullah et al., 2017).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The objective of this literature review was to present a critical analysis of what other scholars have written on the subject of leadership ethics. To work on the literature review, I researched literary works in the Walden Library's databases, including Business Source Complete, ProQuest Central, and Emerald Insight. I reviewed leadership and organizational behavior journals and books related to ethical and unethical leadership

behavior and the consequences of such behavior in organizations. Whereas early publications of seminal work provided the study's conceptual framework, recent publications covered current events and developments in the field of ethical leadership. Some of the key terms I used when researching the literature included "ethical leadership," "unethical leadership," "ethical organizations," and "strategies for mitigating unethical leadership." I found a substantial number of sources on ethical leadership. In this study, 85% of the articles are peer-reviewed; 96 of the articles in the literature review are peer-reviewed. Also, 73% of the articles in this study were published between 2017 to 2021.

By adopting a thematic approach to data analysis, I organized the literary review into six subsections. The subsections include (a) ethical codes and theories, (b) ethical leadership styles, (c) unethical leadership styles, (d) the role of ethical leaders in combating fraud, (e) ethical leadership and CSR, (f) strategies to build ethical organizations, and (g) strategies to mitigate managers' unethical conduct. Each subsection relates to the topic of ethical leadership. The critical analysis of the scholarly works under each subsection demonstrated the depth and significance of ethical leadership in organizations. Below, I elaborated on each subsection.

Ethical Codes and Theories

Over the centuries, philosophers and scholars have written extensively about ethical codes and theories, basing them on what they considered to be universal

principles, such as integrity, respect, and fairness (Schwartz, 2005). Examples of codes of ethics include the following: The Bible's Ten Commandments, the Code of Hammurabi (Pyrzcz, 2019), Plato's sense of the common good, Rawls' principle of distributive justice (Mishra, 2016; Olatunji, 2019), and the Judeo-Christian principle of the Golden Rule (Apressyan, 2020; Kelly, 2017). I defined and explained these codes in more detail below. Some ethical theories include the teleological (utilitarian) theory, the deontological (Kantian) theory, and the value theory. Recognizing ethical codes and theories is significant to understand the attitude and decision-making process of business leaders.

Ethical Codes

According to Ali and Gibbs (1998), The Bible's Ten Commandments are moral standards that can serve as the groundwork for business ethics in the societies that acknowledges them. The Ten Commandments encourage obedience, tolerance, and harmonious relationships (Ali & Gibbs, 1998). Plato's code of the common good refers to social peace, collaboration, and friendship among different groups to benefit the common good (Olatunji, 2019). The Judeo-Christian standard of the Golden Rule refers to treating others as one would like to be treated (New International Version Bible, 2011/1978). In addition, The Bible as a guide for good spiritual living also teaches its followers to "turn the other cheek" as a way to show empathy, love towards others, harmony, and to ultimately contribute to social peace (Dreyer, 2018). On the contrary, the code of Hammurabi promotes the law of retribution, which teaches retaliation and reciprocal harm, which The Bible refers to as "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" (Dreyer, 2018; New

International Version Bible, 2011/1978). Rawls's law of distributive justice refers to the compensation of people for their hardship (Arneson, 2008; Rawls, 1971). According to Arneson, some people are blessed to have been born in favorable conditions and possess wealth, intelligence, and charm; others are not. Therefore, according to the law of distributive justice, it is the responsibility of the fortunate to assist the less fortunate and adjust the distribution of goods (Arneson, 2008; Rawls, 1971). Revisiting these codes provided a basic understanding of the ethical foundations of some of the current ethical approaches that some business leaders follow.

Ethical Theories

Some of the ethical theories that scholars have written extensively about include the utilitarian theory, the deontological theory, and the virtue ethics theory. The utilitarian ethical theory refers to the assumption that individuals should make decisions based on the potential results of an action (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016). Proponents of utilitarianism seek the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Hennig & Hütter, 2020). From a utilitarian view, an action is acceptable if it leads to an increase in overall well-being (Gawronski & Beer, 2017). When making a decision, a business leader who follows the utilitarian approach will focus on the greatest good for the organization overall.

Contrary to the utilitarian approach is the deontological theory, which refers to universal ethical principles that individuals follow regardless of the outcome; individuals make decisions based on duty, not results (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016). Kant, one of the biggest proponents of deontology ethics, contended that individuals of goodwill do

their duty because it is the correct action, regardless of the consequences (Hennig & Hütter, 2020). It is imperative to understand the concept of deontological ethics to understand the decisions of a business leader who follows this approach. A deontological leader will make a decision that might not necessarily lead to the benefit of the entire workforce. Deontological ethics supporters assert that only the right action needs to be taken because it is our moral duty to do so and not because of the results that it might produce (Hennig & Hütter, 2020). Thus, an action is ethical if it is consistent with moral norms (Gawronski & Beer, 2017).

The concept of moral norms is significant for deontological theorists. To further clarify the concept of moral norms, Schwartz (2005) analyzed three sources of ethical standards: (a) corporate codes of ethics; (b) global codes of ethics; and (c) the business ethics literature. Schwartz found that universal moral norms include honesty and integrity, respect, care for others, equality and impartiality, accountability, and justice. These moral norms are the basis for the decision-making process of deontological ethics supporters (Jamnick, 2017).

Finally, virtue ethics proponents focus on human interpersonal relationships. According to virtue ethics supporters, individuals reach happiness as a consequence of moral lifestyles and service to society (Baumane-Vitolina et al., 2016). This concept of service to society indicates that leaders who follow virtue ethics would make an effort to form positive interpersonal relationships and engage in CSR initiatives. Given that such initiatives involve the values of collaboration, open communication and service to society (Ullah et al., 2017), promoting a virtuous ethical climate would ultimately benefit an

organization and its stakeholders. Identifying ethical theories is helpful to further understand the ethical inclinations of business leaders.

Ethical Leadership Styles

In their scientific and literature review, Otaghsara and Hamzehzadeh (2017) reported that in this third millennium, there has been an organizational paradigm shift “from negativity to positivity” that involved the improvement of leadership conduct in organizations. The positive leadership conduct manifests in the ethical treatment that leaders show to their employees, which in turn leads to employee well-being (Tu et al., 2017). An outcome of employee well-being is low employee turnover (Yee et al., 2016). Ethical leadership leads to low turnover and the well-being of the employee and the organizations (Kim, 2017; Yee et al., 2016).

There are four ethical leadership styles that cause employee well-being and low turnover and turnover intention. These include the authentic, the servant, the transformational, and the transpersonal leadership styles. Authentic leadership involves a process in which the leader and follower establish an open and reliable relationship (Otaghsara & Hamzehzadeh, 2017). The main outcome of the authentic relationship is the comfort and welfare of the employee (Otaghsara & Hamzehzadeh, 2017). Likewise, servant leaders’ main objective is to take care of the followers’ needs (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Servant leaders show concern towards followers, take care of their needs, and help them develop in the organization (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Similarly, transformational leaders provide individualized consideration to followers (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018). Transformational leaders also inspire and motivate

followers to surpass their personal interests for the interests of the organization (Kunnanatt, 2016). Similarly, transpersonal leaders care about the employees and help employees enhance their performance (Knights, 2016). Transpersonal leaders are, by definition, authentic leaders (Knights, 2016). Furthermore, transpersonal leaders act on the principle of human equality, in terms of treating those at the bottom of society's hierarchy with the same dignity, respect, fairness and honesty as the ones at the top (Knights, 2016). Ethical leaders work toward the well-being of employees.

The Decline in Turnover Intentions

One of the areas that shows the relevance of ethical leadership in an organization is the decline in employee turnover intention. Examining the root cause of turnover intention is significant because turnover intention serves as a negative indicator of employee engagement and organizational productivity (Kim, 2017). In their quantitative study, Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) investigated the impact of the servant leadership style on employee turnover intentions. They found that servant leaders help reduce employees' turnover intentions (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Similarly, Mittal (2016) researched the effects of transformational leadership and found that transformational leadership also helps lower employee turnover intentions. Likewise, Sun and Wang (2017) conducted quantitative research on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intentions and found that transformational leadership has a negative effect on employee turnover intention. Similarly, Ribeiro et al. (2020) conducted quantitative research to examine the effects of authentic leadership. They found that the authentic leadership style has a negative effect on employee turnover intention.

The results of the abovementioned studies indicated that ethical leadership styles have a positive impact on reducing employee turnover intentions. Because transpersonal leadership is a recent entrant in scholarly literature, I could not locate research examining transpersonal leadership and turnover intentions. However, given that transpersonal leaders are ethical and authentic leaders (Knights, 2016), employees working under transpersonal leaders would be less likely to leave the organization. When employees perceive that the organization's climate is ethical, they are more likely to identify with the organization and disregard any notions of leaving the organization (Joe et al., 2018).

Ethical Leadership and its Overall Positive Impact in the Organization

Ethical leadership results in the effective performance and the success of an organization (Sharma et al., 2019). Ethical leaders transcend their self-interest and concentrate on what is good for the organization and the employees (Knights, 2016). Ethical leaders value each of their employees and treat employees with dignity and respect (Knights, 2016). Ethical leaders are interested in the well-being of employees and the organization (Basar & Filizoz, 2015). In the paragraphs below, I elaborated on the ethical leaders' benefits to employees and the organization.

Ethical leaders benefit an organization's employees. In their conceptual study, Sharma et al. (2019) analyzed the relevance of ethical leadership by researching a vast array of literature on ethical leadership styles. They found that ethical leaders clearly follow the values of honesty, integrity, fairness, and selflessness, and their decisions take into consideration the well-being of their employees. Such decisions lead to employee commitment to the organization and trust in leadership. Similarly, Basar and Filizoz

(2015) examined the effects of ethical leadership on employees' intention to quit. They found that ethical leaders can create an ethical climate, which can increase employee morale and job satisfaction. In addition, Basar and Filizoz found that ethical leaders can even "heal the wounds" of employees who experienced personal or organizational issues. On the contrary, Babalola et al. (2019) found that when employees perceived their leaders as having a strong ethical conduct, they are less motivated in their jobs. In their quantitative study, Babalola et al. (2019) investigated perceived leader ethical conviction in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee deviance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The researchers found that when employees perceived leaders to have strong ethical convictions, employees were less inclined to refrain from deviant behavior and less motivated to engage in OCB. Only when the leaders appeared to be flexible in their ethical convictions did employees respond positively. According to Bababola et al., employees see leaders with strong ethical beliefs as leaders who create a harsh environment and restrict employee's voice and overall choices in the organization. However, Babalola et al. (2016) found that overall, ethical leaders show trustworthiness, fairness, and honesty, which provide employees with the confidence and the stability they need to feel comfortable in their jobs. Although the findings show mixed results on the impact of ethical leaders on the employee's well-being, most scholars agreed that ethical leaders have a positive impact on employees' well-being.

Ethical leaders establish ethical work environments that benefit the organization. According to Wang et al. (2017), ethical leaders can improve the organization's financial and social performance. Wang et al. investigated how multiple dimensions of ethical

leadership, such as the leaders' humanity, responsibility and sustainability, and moderation influence firm performance. They found that the leader's humane, responsibility and sustainability orientations have positive influences on the firm's financial and social performance, while the leader's moderation orientation has a positive influence on the firm's financial performance (Wang et al., 2017). As a case in point, under the responsibility and sustainability orientation, ethical leaders are likely to engage in environmental planning and material recycling, which can improve the firm's corporate image (Wang et al., 2017). The humane orientation of ethical leadership results in employee work engagement, both intellectually and emotionally, on all activities that involve the firm's stakeholders (Wang et al., 2017). Under the moderation orientation, ethical leaders empower employees to have a voice and share their knowledge, which helps with the organization's decision-making process (Wang et al., 2017). Similarly, Feng et al. (2019) found that ethical leadership in the form of humane and moderation leadership results in organizational performance improvement. Feng et al. explored the conditions that help organizations to profit from customer orientation (CO), which involves the organization's strategies to meet customers' needs (Feng et al., 2019). Ethical leadership helps improve CO, which improves the competitive advantage of an organization (Feng et al., 2019). Likewise, Kia et al. (2019) examined the process through which ethical leadership increased service climate, CO, and employee performance among banking employees. Kia et al. found that ethical leaders build ethical climates. In addition, when employees identify with the values associated with ethical climates, they are more likely to be high in-role performers, which ultimately helps

improve organizational performance. These results reinforce the notion that ethical leadership improves organizational performance (Wang et al., 2017; Williams & Seaman, 2016). Certainly, the presence of ethical leaders benefits organizations.

Unethical Leadership Styles

Scholars refer to unethical leaders as “destructive,” “toxic,” “abusive,” “Machiavellian,” “despotic,” and “psychopathic” (Belschak et al., 2018; Boddy & Croft, 2016; Dai et al., 2019; Hou, 2017; Naseer et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2018). The negative connotations of these synonyms fittingly divulge that such leadership styles are harmful. Leaders who subscribe to the aforementioned unethical leadership styles work to the detriment of employees and the organization because unethical leaders are mainly interested in personal gain, not the well-being of their followers (Mesdaghinia et al., 2019). Moreover, unethical leaders set a bad example for others to follow (Mesdaghinia et al., 2019). In the next section, I described these unethical leadership styles and how harmful they are for organizations and their employees.

Unethical Leadership Styles’ Definitions

There are numerous kinds of unethical leadership styles. Unethical leaders are leaders who make choices that violate moral standards or the law and promote unethical conduct among followers (Fidan & Koç, 2020). Unethical leaders may engage in unethical conduct to benefit personally or to hinder the interests of others (Hassan, 2019). These definitions of unethical conduct are significant because they refer to a variety of unethical leadership styles that some business leaders might follow. Belschak et al. (2018) defined Machiavellian leadership as unethical because Machiavellian leaders

focus on personal gain at any cost. Similarly, despotic leaders care about gaining power and dominance for their self-interests, not the interests of the followers or the organization (Naseer et al., 2016). Likewise, destructive leaders focus on their needs and disregard the interest of the employees, the organization and stakeholders (Hou, 2017). Equally, toxic leaders focus on promoting themselves over the mission of the organization and the well-being of their followers (Winn & Dykes, 2019). Abusive leaders undermine employees and the functions of the organization (Tepper et al., 2017). Another type of unethical leadership is the corporate psychopath who are egocentric and indifferent to the needs of others. (Boddy, 2016). Unethical leaders work against the interests of organizations and their employers.

The Effects of Unethical Leadership Styles

The effects of unethical conduct and unethical leadership styles are detrimental to organizations and employees. Through their qualitative research study Fidan and Koç (2020) studied the effects of unethical leadership. The researchers used a phenomenological research design to interview teachers about school administrators' moral conduct. The researchers found that unethical leaders influence followers to act unethically, such as violating rules and raising student's grades unjustifiably. In addition, Fidan and Koç found that the leaders' unethicality can also extend throughout the institution and become part of the institution's culture. Similarly, d'Adda et al. (2017) found that unethical leaders influence their followers to act unethically. The researchers conducted a two dice experiment which included the possibility of misreporting. The first experiment was administered to individuals to determine their honesty level. In the

second experiment, the researchers created groups and randomly delegated leaders for each of the groups. The groups competed with each other for monetary incentives. If the groups acted dishonestly, they increased their earnings, but to the detriment of social welfare. According to d'Adda et al., individuals show harm to social welfare by lying, which violates the deontological and utilitarian moral principles. Through their experiment and statistical analysis, d'Adda et al. found that the groups with a leader who demonstrated unethical behavior resulted in groups with considerably more unethical conduct than the other groups. These findings indicated that unethical leaders can also influence their followers to act unethically.

Unethical leadership in the form of abusive and toxic leadership can lead to employee turnover intention (Pradhan & Jena, 2017; Singh et al., 2018). For instance, after exploring the elements that may mitigate the effects of abusive leadership, Haar et al. (2016) found that abusive leadership results in employee turnover intentions. Likewise, in their quantitative study on abusive supervision, Pradhan and Jena (2017) confirmed that abusive supervision can strongly increase subordinates' intention to quit. Similarly, Dai et al. (2019) also conducted quantitative research on abusive supervision and found that abusive supervision leads to employees' intention to leave the organization. Additionally, Singh et al. found that toxic leaders are responsible for a 48% decrease in employee work effort and a 38% decrease in work quality. Turnover intention can lead to turnover and turnover leads to a decrease in productivity and an increase in costs associated with hiring and training new staff (Haar et al., 2016).

Other forms of unethical leadership are destructive and despotic leadership, which also have negative repercussions in organizations. In their conceptual research study on destructive leadership, Mullen et al. (2018) found that under destructive leadership, employees experience hostility and humiliation, which has negative effects on the organization and the employees. Similarly, in their quantitative research analysis on leadership, Fors Brandebo et al. (2016) found that destructive leadership had a strong positive association with employee emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. Similarly, Naseer et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative research study on the effects of despotic leadership; they found that under despotic leadership, employees are less cooperative and less interested in doing anything else beyond their immediate tasks for the organization. Thus, organizations that have destructive and despotic leaders run the risk of building a disengaged workforce. Clearly, organizations should discourage unethical leadership practices and address any signs of unethical leadership behavior in the organization.

Some unethical leaders are also corporate psychopaths (Boddy & Croft, 2016). In their qualitative study Boddy and Taplin (2016) investigated employee job satisfaction under the leadership of corporate psychopaths. They found that in their pursuit to achieve personal gain, corporate psychopaths created an atmosphere of conflict and abuse which created low levels of employee job satisfaction and high levels of turn over intention. In fact, employees under corporate psychopath leaders reported they were willing to leave their jobs even if they did not have another job lined up (Boddy & Taplin, 2016). In addition, in a company that Boddy et al. (2015) examined, they found that corporate

psychopaths created dysfunctional work environments because they mistreated employees and did not provide a clear direction for the organization. Under corporate psychopath leaders' unethical conduct spread around the organization, which also affects the reputation of the organization negatively (Boddy et al., 2015). In the company Boddy et al. examined, they found that staff turnover was about 40% per year, which was twice the average for the industry sector involved. Clearly, unethical leadership styles are harmful to organizations and employees. Thus, it is in the organization's best interest to have ethical leaders because ethical leaders positively influence employees and the organizational climate.

The Role of Ethical Leaders and Ethical Culture in Combating Fraud

Fraud is planned and deliberate criminal conduct (Van Vlasselaer et al., 2017). Committing fraud is committing unethical behavior (Harrison et al., 2018). Ethical leadership and ethical culture in organizations can help mitigate fraud (Robinson & Jonker, 2017; Suh et al., 2018). When fraud is committed against the company by its officers, directors, or employees, it is "occupational fraud" (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2018). Part of occupational fraud is white-collar crimes, which are crimes committed by individuals of high social status in their work positions (Michel et al., 2016). White-collar crimes' annual cost is approximately \$4 trillion worldwide, which includes large scale fraud such as antitrust violations, financial scams, medical crimes, and environmental fraud (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2018; Michel et al., 2016). The solution to occupational fraud is ethical leadership. Utilizing a quantitative methodological approach, Robinson and Jonker explored how leaders try to

mitigate fraud through inculcating their ethical values within the organization. The researchers investigated the degree in which business ethics was imbedded in the organization. They analyzed the perceived association between the leader's personal values and the company's values and whether the leader acted in accordance with the values and rules of the business. The researchers interviewed 13 leaders from small and medium-sized businesses from different companies in South Africa. They used descriptive statistics to analyze the implementation of ethics management through operational tools to determine the usefulness of operational mechanisms to ensure ethical compliance. The results showed that leaders perceived that their personal values were imbedded in their companies through an array of operational tools. Such tools included modeling the values they expected of others, verbal communication of ethical values, training on ethical values, codes of ethics, describing ethical standards in job interviews, and providing written consequences of unethical behavior to employees (Robinson & Jonker, 2017). The results indicated that the use of these operational tools led to a lower perception of organizational fraud. Also, Suh et al. (2018) found that the perception of ethical culture was negatively associated to the perceived occurrence of occupational fraud. Suh et al. explored the effects of ethical culture and monitoring effectiveness on occupational fraud. The researchers collected data through a survey from 392 employees from the banking industry. For their statistical analysis, the researchers used the structural equation modeling (SEM). The researchers found that an ethical corporate culture was a significant element to minimize fraud. According to the researchers, their findings indicated that investing in strengthening the ethical culture of an organization can

mitigate occupational fraud. Ethical leaders and ethical organizational cultures can help mitigate occupational fraud.

Ethical Leadership and CSR

Ethical leaders engage in CSR initiatives and influence their followers to also participate in CSR. Through their quantitative study, Williams and Seaman (2016) examined mindfulness and CSR initiatives as mediating factors to understand the impact of ethical leadership on managerial performance. The authors found that ethical leadership positively relates to CSR initiatives, which also enhance employee managerial performance. On a similar note, De Roeck and Farooq (2018) investigated the association between CSR and ethical leadership in influencing employees' socially responsible behaviors (SRBs). The researchers found that employees who identified with an organization they perceived to be socially responsible would engage in SRBs to support the organization's social mission (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018). The researchers also found that the effects of CSR on employees' societal behaviors are contingent on perceived ethical leadership (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018). This finding suggests that when employees notice that their leaders are ethical, they follow the leader and the leader's social initiatives. Likewise, Hansen et al. (2016) examined employee trust propensity as a moderator of the association between CSR and perceptions of ethical leadership. They found that employees' perceptions about their company's CSR may impact their perceptions of whether the leaders are ethical and indirectly impact the employees' perceptions of the ethical climate in the organization. When workers notice that the organization engage in CSR, they perceive senior managers and the organizational

culture as ethical (Hansen et al., 2016). Ethical leaders can build an ethical culture and increase CSR involvement by influencing employees to engage in CSR (Ullah et al., 2017). Organizations need ethical leaders because ethical leaders have a significant impact on enhancing CSR practices and inspiring employees to also engage in CSR.

Strategies to Build Ethical Organizations

Ethical leaders build ethical organizations (Basar & Filizoz, 2015; Eisenbeiss et al., 2015). A leader who demonstrates ethical principles and who places ethics at the core of their decision-making process builds an ethical organization (Basar & Filizoz, 2015; Eisenbeiss et al., 2015). Ethical leaders have a positive impact on organizations, employees' lives, clients, social change, and the company's stakeholders (Basar & Filizoz, 2015; De Roeck & Farooq, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Some of the strategies that could help leaders build ethical organizations include organizations' codes of ethics, ethics programs, training, and leading by example.

Organizations' Codes of Ethics

Scholars refer to codes of ethics as codes of rules or codes of conduct (Snellman, 2015), which might have a positive impact in the organization. Codes of ethics inform employees what the expectation is when it comes to professional conduct (Kirsten et al., 2017). Codes of ethics describe morally acceptable conduct in an organization (Holtzhausen, 2015). Snellman (2015) found that codes of conduct are imperative to building an ethical organization. Snellman investigated ethical theories and wrongdoings in public sector organizations and how public employees could mitigate them. He

contended that ethical rules are tools that civil servants must build and follow to administer the public's interest. Snellman found that organizations must apply ethical theories through codes of conduct to combat wrongdoings. However, Snellman also found that despite the presence of codes of conduct in organizations, unethical conduct continued to increase. Snellman's findings and conclusion are puzzling; he first concluded that codes of conduct are a solution to unethical conduct; however, he also found that despite the codes of conduct, unethical conduct continued to spread in the organization.

The implementation of codes of ethics yields mix results. For instance, Giorgini et al. (2015) found that the existence of codes of conduct does not guarantee that the codes will lead to action. Giorgini et al. found a gap between the codes of ethics and their implementation. They explored the circumstances by which people follow ethical codes of conduct and the reasons they have for not following them. Giorgini et al. found the participants they interviewed did not know the organizations' codes of conduct and did not consider the codes of conduct to be relevant; in short, the codes had no impact on the participants conduct. Giorgini et al. suggested that organizations provide employees with rigorous training on ethical conduct, as opposed to relying on the employees to follow the codes of conduct. Similarly, in their quantitative research study, Thaler and Helmig (2016) found that codes of conduct did not show significant effects on an organization's ethical attitude or behavior. Thaler and Helmig conducted an experimental analysis of whether codes of conduct and ethical leadership influence attitudes among public administration employees. They found that only ethical leadership had a positive effect

on employees' attitudes and that codes of conduct did not influence the participants' behavior. Likewise, Holtzhausen (2015) found that codes of conduct did not impact employee behavior. On the contrary, according to Holzhausen, codes of conduct are detrimental to the organization because they do not refer to the ethical responsibility of the individual, but that of the group. Holzhausen conducted a literature review on codes of ethics from a post-modern perspective, where individuals consider different points of views, not a unified objective. According to Holzhausen, ethical rules tend to address societal purposes that do not necessarily address the situational nature from diverse countries and organizational contexts. Holzhausen concluded that codes of ethics are obstacles to individual responsibility. Nevertheless, recently published literature indicated that codes of ethics might reduce unethical conduct, but organizations need to promote the code of conduct (Shah & Alotaibi, 2018). Based on the literature, it is not evident that the existence of codes of ethics makes a difference in combating unethical conduct. However, when business leaders continuously promote codes of conduct throughout the organization and provide training, codes of conduct might be useful for organizations to mitigate unethical behavior.

Ethics Programs

Ethics programs can help leaders build ethical organizations. The goal of an ethics program is to promote ethical behavior, build an ethical culture, and prevent unethical behavior (Ferrell et al., 2019; Kaptein, 2009; Kaptein, 2015). Ethics officers are usually in charge of developing and monitoring ethics programs in collaboration with other company divisions (Hess, 2019; Hogenbirk & Van Dun, 2021). In his quantitative

research study, Kaptein (2015) examined the effectiveness of ethics programs in organizations. He found that organizations that have an ethics program experience less unethical behavior than those that do not have an ethics program. An ethics program contains various components that complement each other to sustain an ethical organization (Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2020; Kaptein, 2015). According to Kaptein, the best way to address unethical conduct is through a comprehensive ethics program. He advised that companies include the following elements: (a) a code of ethics, (b) ethics training and communication, (c) accountability policies, (d) monitoring and auditing, (e) investigation and correction policies, (f) an ethics officer, (g) ethics report line, and (h) incentive policies. Usman and Hammed, 2017 highlighted the importance of accountability policies in an ethics program. The authors found that personal accountability and making others accountable for their actions deter employees from learning unethical practices. Bates et al. (2017) added another element to the ethics program: ethics liaisons. Ethics liaisons increase awareness of ethical practices and share information about moral dilemmas (Bates et al., 2017).

Similarly, Eisenbeiss et al. (2015) postulated that ethics programs are essential to maintain an ethical culture. Eisenbeiss et al. examined the relationship between CEO ethical leadership and firm performance. Eisenbeiss et al. conducted a quantitative analysis and collected data on CEO ethical leadership, organizational ethical culture, and ethics programs using a web-based survey. Eisenbeiss et al. found that CEO ethical leadership positively relates to organizational ethical culture and that organizational ethical culture positively relates to firm performance under the condition of a strong

corporate ethics program. Eisenbeiss et al. stated that corporate ethics programs could positively shape an organization's culture and improve its performance. Certainly, ethics programs might be used by a firm that commits to improving the organization's ethical practices. An ethics program seems to be an effective strategy to build an ethical organization.

Ethics Training

Organizations can benefit from training employees on how to behave ethically; however, ethics training can lead to mixed results due to cultural differences. Through their quantitative research, Kirsten et al. (2017) found that ethics training leads to lower levels of unethical behavior. Kirsten et al. explored the impact of ethics initiatives on South African participants' observations of unethical conduct and their inclination to report unethical conduct. Kirsten et al. found that ethics training mitigates unethical behavior; thus, organizations should invest in training. In a similar manner, Atan et al. (2017) found benefits to ethical training in organizations. Atan et al. examined the factors that foster accountability in public sector organizations in Malaysia. The researchers also examined ethics-related training and the degree to which participants incorporate ethics training into the agency's commitments (Atan et al., 2017). The ethics training focused on enhancing ethical awareness, ethical decision making, ethical leadership, building an ethical climate, and personal accountability (Atan et al., 2017). Atan et al. found a positive relationship between ethical training and accountability, which in turn reduces unethical conduct. Also, Kancharla and Dadhich (2020) postulated that ethics training leads to ethical conduct. In their quantitative research, the authors tested the effect of

ethics training on ethical culture and workplace behavior. They examined the impact of ethics training on workplace behaviors and evaluated employees' job satisfaction, employee commitment, and intention to stay. They found an association between ethics training and ethical culture and that ethical culture was related to positive workplace behavior. According to Kancharla and Dadhich, organizations can use ethics training as a tool to reinforce ethical behavior in the workplace.

Contrary to the findings mentioned above, Ermasova et al. (2017) found that ethics training does not make a difference in an organization. Ermasova et al. investigated how training, expertise, and tenure made a difference in the employees' ethical reasoning. Ermasova et al. conducted their research in Russia and found that there is a difference in ethical standards for Russians and Americans. The business behavior of Russian working adults refers to personal loyalty and in-group allegiances, not on general concepts of right and wrong (Ermasova et al., 2017). It seems that ethics training can benefit organizations; however, ethics scholars should be cautious about generalizing ethical norms and be aware of cultural differences.

Leading by Example

Ethical leaders are models of ethical behavior (Lee et al., 2017). Leading by example is the most significant approach to promote ethical values in an organization (Nygaard et al., 2017). According to Nygaard et al., "nothing influences employees more than a good example" (p. 134). Nygaard et al. conducted a quantitative study in multinational retail companies and examined whether leaders could influence employee behavior. Nygaard et al. analyzed different sources of influence to improve ethical

behavior, such as coercive power, legitimate position power, financial incentives, and role modeling. The authors found that the use of coercive power, which is power based on threats, had a negative effect on employee's conduct as service quality performance decreased in the organization. Moreover, their research showed that neither position power nor financial incentives improve ethical values (Nygaard et al., 2017). Nygaard et al. found that the role models of ethical behavior promote ethical conduct and influence employees to behave ethically. Employees' identification with the leaders' values and the leaders' willingness to deter unethical conduct, influence employees to act ethically (Nygaard et al., 2017).

Similarly, Lee et al. (2017) found that ethical leadership elicits employee ethical behavior. Lee et al. examined the role of ethical leadership in relation to employees' moral voice and whether ethical leadership causes employees' ethical behavior. The researchers investigated when and how ethical leaders influence employees to express their opinions about ethical issues. Lee et al. found that ethical leaders influence employees to act ethically by helping employees develop a moral voice, which is the expression of morally courageous views and the confrontation of unethical problems. Lee et al. concluded that ethical leadership leads to employee ethical behavior.

Recently published literature introduced the concepts of "ethical leaders" and "ethical persons." According to Pircher et al. (2020), it is the ethical person who has the most influence on the employee's actions, not the ethical leader. The notion of differentiating these concepts was originally introduced by Treviño et al. (2000). According to Treviño et al., a moral person displays moral characteristics such as honesty

and integrity, and a moral manager encourages employees to follow ethical norms.

Treviño et al. also stated that “being an ethical person is the substantive basis of ethical leadership” (p. 130). Hence, it is imperative for executives to demonstrate they are both ethical persons and moral managers for employees to perceive them as ethical leaders (Treviño et al., 2000) and emulate their behavior.

Leading by example also aligns with recently published literature on virtue ethics theory, which involves individuals’ moral character (Alkadry et al., 2017). Virtuous ethics supporters put ethical theory into action by demonstrating virtuous qualities (Tsoukas, 2018). Leaders can demonstrate virtuous qualities through interpersonal relationships and the service they provide to stakeholders (Tsoukas, 2018). According to Fink (2020), “to act rightly is to act virtuously” (p. 14). Hence, leaders’ ethical conduct involves the expression of virtuous characteristics, which can positively influence followers’ conduct. Role models of ethical conduct seem to be the best alternative for organizations to build and maintain an ethical culture.

Strategies to Mitigate Managers’ Unethical Conduct

Ethical leaders, ethics programs, ethics training, ethical climates and cultures, CSR initiatives, continuous communication of the company’s values, and honesty oaths can reduce unethical behavior in an organization (Bashir & Hassan, 2019; Beck et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2018; Dimitriu et al., 2019; Kaptein, 2015; Kuenzi et al., 2019). Ethical leaders may reduce unethical behavior by modeling the ethical behavior they seek in others (Bashir & Hassan, 2019). Also, when leaders integrate ethics programs in the organization, unethical conduct diminishes (Kaptein, 2015). By being role models of

ethical behavior and providing ethics programs and training, leaders can also mitigate unethical conduct (Kaptein, 2015; Nygaard et al., 2017). Consequently, to reduce unethical conduct, leaders can use the same strategies I found in the literature designed to build ethical organizations, which I described earlier. These strategies include: (a) codes of ethics, (b) ethics programs, (c) ethics training, and (d) leaders' ethical behavior and leading by example. Therefore, the process of building an ethical organization is also a strategy to reduce unethical conduct.

Most of the literature on ethical leadership focuses on strengthening ethical conduct, not on mitigating unethical behavior in organizations. Numerous scholarly works address fraudulent, illegal behavior, which is part of behaving unethically. However, unethical behavior also includes conduct that is not unlawful. Thus, I continued to look for scholarly works that addressed unethical conduct in general; I found that there is a scarcity of data on strategies to mitigate unethical behavior. The strategies I found to reduce unethical behavior include building ethical organizations, leaders' moral humility, responsible leadership, CSR initiatives, ethical organizational climate (EOC) and culture, communicating the company's values continuously, and honesty oaths.

Leader Moral Humility

According to Owens et al. (2019), what helps an organization decrease unethical conduct is "leader moral humility." Leaders' moral humility is a leader's inclination to show humility while dealing with moral issues (Owens et al., 2019). For instance, leaders show moral humility when they acknowledge their own moral competences and weaknesses (i.e., past missteps, and biases), when they appreciate others' moral strengths,

and when they pursue ongoing learning and growth (Owens et al., 2019). The researchers maintained that leaders' moral humility increases followers' moral efficacy, which is the followers' confidence in their ability to perform in moral situations. According to Owens, leader's moral behavior influences followers to reciprocate their leaders' ethical behavior at their jobs. The researchers conducted hierarchical linear analysis to test the principal effect of leader moral humility on follower moral self-efficacy. The researchers found that leader moral humility is a significant predictor of follower moral self-efficacy, which in turn increases follower prosocial behavior and decreases follower unethical behavior (Owens et al., 2019).

Although ethical leaders are humble leaders (Hegarty & Morccia, 2018), Owens et al. made a distinction between ethical leaders and morally humble leaders. According to Owens et al., ethical leaders are steady models of ethical behavior and representatives of ethical principles. In contrast, morally humble leaders focus on improving their moral competence and refining their follower's moral character. Furthermore, moral leaders acknowledge their shortcomings in handling moral issues and make noticeable the moral strengths of others (Owens et al., 2019). Owens et al. also acknowledged that ethical leadership and morally humble leadership are not rival constructs but rather complementary. However, Smith and Kouchaki contended that ethical leaders display moral humility and set the tone at the top by creating an ethical culture that leads to employee moral humility. Base on the information related to moral humility, it seems that it is a quality of ethical leadership.

Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership can mitigate unethical conduct in an organization (Cheng et al., 2019). Responsible leaders are ethical and socially conscientious leaders who care about the organizations' stakeholder (Taştan & Davoudi, 2019). Responsible leaders integrate business ethics, CSR and sustainability into the culture of their organizations (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2017). Through their quantitative study, Cheng et al. (2019) found that responsible leadership may mitigate unethical pro-organization behavior (UPB). Cheng et al. examined the trickle-down effect of responsible leadership from high-level leaders to low-level leaders down to the rest of the employees. The researchers hypothesized that by observing and emulating responsible leaders, employees would recognize UPB, appreciate CSR, and diminish any potential desire to engage in UPB. Cheng et al. conducted descriptive statistics, correlation, and confirmatory factor analysis to test their hypothesis. They found that responsible leadership is negatively related to UPB as their behavior and actions communicate their expectations of ethical conduct to the rest of the employees (Cheng et al., 2019). Responsible leaders can serve as role models of ethical behavior and nurture an organization's ethical environment (Cheng et al., 2019).

CSR

According to Choi et al. (2018), workers' positive perceptions of CSR activities decrease unethical behavior. In their study, Choi et al. referred to unethical behavior as "deviance" and "anomie," which they further defined as behavior that is amoral, dishonest, deceptive, and sometimes illegal. Per Choi et al., an anomie situation is an occurrence in which "the end justifies the means" and where leaders value employees

based on the profits employees can attain for the organization. When making corporate decisions, anomie managers disregard moral responsibility (Choi et al., 2018). If employees notice that their organization engages in anomie, the employees will most likely also engage in amoral conduct (Choi et al., 2018). The researchers hypothesized that employees' positive perceptions of CSR practices reduce employee deviance and anomie. Choi et al. used hierarchical regression analysis to test their hypothesis. The researchers found that employees' perceptions of the company's engagement of CSR activities had a negative effect on employee devious conduct and on anomie.

Similarly, in their study, Burbano and Chiles (2018) found that employees behave in an ethical manner when they perceive that their employer engages in CSR. Burbano and Chiles conducted a survey of full-time U.S. workers and found that employees tend to have a sense of moral obligation and feel bad about acting unethically when they perceive their employer is doing good. In addition, the researchers conducted a field experiment on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to analyze CSR's influence on employees' likelihood to engage in unethical behavior. MTurk is an online labor market platform where anyone can post tasks, and workers can work on tasks to receive compensation. Burbano and Chiles' results showed misreporting among some employees; however, misreporting decreased when employees perceived that their employers were doing good by others.

Contrary to these aforementioned positions, List and Momeni (2017) contended that CSR could have a negative effect on employees' conduct. By utilizing MTurk, List and Momeni (2017) found that workers were more likely to behave unethically when

their employer pledged to donate a percentage of the employees' wages to charity. Workers who received the CSR message were more likely to misreport, lie, and fail to complete a task. The result of their study shows that by replacing about 5% of the wage with CSR contributions, the number of cheaters increased by 25%. List and Momeni concluded that CSR contributions increase workers' misbehavior. This finding appears debatable. In this study, the researchers did not seem to have asked the participants if they would be interested in donating part of their earned wages to CSR initiatives. Instead, the researchers decided to donate for the participants. Hence, the participants' donation was involuntary. Ultimately, it does not seem that the CSR contributions led to misbehavior; instead, it appears that it was the manner in which the researchers introduced CSR to the participants that led to unethical conduct.

Ethical Organizational Climate (EOC) and Culture

When an organization has a strong EOC, the workers will be less inclined to engage in unethical conduct (Kuenzi et al., 2019). Kuenzi et al. defined organizational climate as the way the workers experience their environment. Ethical climate means that employees perceive that the organization has stable ethical policies and engage in the company's practices (Farouk & Jabeen, 2018; Kuenzi et al., 2019), which leads to employee well-being (Farouk & Jabeen, 2018; Schwepker et al., 2020).

Kuenzi et al. used the social information processing theory (SIPT) and the SLT to examine EOC further. These theories refer to individuals' tendency to imitate the behavior that is accepted in the organization (Kuenzi et al., 2019). The researchers

hypothesized that ethical leadership is positively associated with EOC and that EOC is negatively associated with unethical organizational behavior. The researchers conducted two studies to test their hypothesis. Study 1 included exploratory factor analysis; Kuenzi et al. measured EOC using the ethical climate questionnaire (ECQ), the ethical climate index (ECI), and the overall justice climate (OJC). ECQ measured people's perceptions of organizational values through ethical decision-making. ECI is a measure of decision making that includes elements such as collective moral character, motivation, and judgement. Through OJC, researchers measure how individuals perceive overall fairness in the organization (Thornton & Rupp, 2016). In Study 2, Kuenzi et al. measured group deviance and analyzed collective moral identity as a standard condition of the association between EOC and unit unethical behavior. Through their analysis using predictive validity evidence, they found a relationship between ethical leadership and unit-level behavior through EOC. The authors concluded that when employees perceive that their work setting includes stable ethical initiatives and policies, their collective understanding leads to EOC (Kuenzi et al., 2019).

Similarly, Fu and Deshpande (2014), contended that an organization that has an ethical climate fosters ethical behavior and mitigates unethical behavior. According to Fu and Deshpande, ethical climate has a trickle-down effect in organizations that results in less unethical behavior. Organizations that have an ethical climate are caring organizations, and caring organizations foster employee commitment, which in turn leads to less unethical behavior (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). Fu and Deshpande examined the association between caring climate and organizational commitment, which is a measure

of workers' commitment to the organization (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). For their research, the authors used structural equation modeling (SEM); the SEM results indicated that a caring climate had a significant direct impact on organizational commitment. According to Fu and Deshpande, their findings indicated that employees are more committed to an organization they perceive cares for them. Thus, given that ethical climate fosters employee commitment and employee commitment fosters ethical conduct, ethical climate is a key element to address unethical conduct.

Closely related to organizational climate is organizational culture. Organizational culture refers to the shared values and written and unwritten rules that an organization developed over time (Madan & Jain, 2017). According to Farooqi et al. (2017), organizations need to create ethical cultures that influence employees to act ethically. Bussmann et al. (2018) examined the impact of ethical organizational cultures. The authors analyzed whether an organization that fosters integrity through anticorruption programs reduces corrupt behavior. According to Bussmann et al., an ethical organization culture can lead to a culture of success, which is what workers experience with each other daily. Bussmann et al. hypothesized that a firm's culture that fosters integrity will reduce corrupt behavior among employees. The researchers used complex SEM to examine the cause-effect association among various crime prevention factors in an organization. The researchers conducted the study at a German company with branches in Germany, China and Russia that used executed anti-corruption programs. Bussmann et al. (2018) found that while a company promotes a culture of integrity, it also mitigates workers' willingness to engage in unethical behavior.

Communicating the Company's Values Continuously

Organizations can influence managers to follow ethical values to avert unethical behavior (Dimitriu et al., 2019). A value system is the foundation of an organization's corporate culture (Schaefer et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is in the organization's benefit to communicate its values frequently, so it is ingrained in people's "minds and hearts" (Dermol & Širca, 2018, p. 544). Continuous communications of the company's values can help embed ethical principles in the organization's culture and mitigate unethical conduct (Dimitriu et al., 2019).

Honesty Oaths

Several organizations use honesty oaths to advance ethical commitment and promote honest behavior (Beck et al., 2018). Beck et al. (2018) found that honesty oaths are an effective way to increase moral awareness and reduce lying. The researchers conducted a dice experiment in which players have the possibility to cheat for personal gain. Before conducting the dice experiment, the researchers knew the actual distribution of the results for honest behavior. Beck et al. asked the participants to verify with their signature that the information they would submit would follow the principle of honesty and that they would not lie for personal gain. Beck et al. used the following oath:

Hereby, I do affirm that all the data I am about to provide regarding my actions during this experiment will be the absolute truth. I also do swear that all my actions during this experiment will be due to the principle of honesty and that I will not lie in order to enrich myself (p. 480).

After administering this oath, Beck et al. compared the dice results of the participants who took the oath against the results of the participants who did not take the oath. The results of the dice experiment from the participants who signed the oath yield more honest results (Beck et al., 2018). Hence, to reduce unethical behavior in the form of lying, an honesty oath can be a tool for organizations to address unethical conduct.

Also, Jacquemet et al. (2021) investigated if oaths to honesty could mitigate shirking and lying among crowdsourced internet workers. They found that an oath can help reduce lying, but not shirking. The researchers defined lying as the act of making a false statement and shirking as the failure to perform a task as agreed. Jacquemet et al. conducted a coin-flipping experiment, where the participant would flip a coin ten times and would get an incentive per head. The researchers could not notice if lying occurred at the individual level, but they could measure lying by comparing the aggregate outcomes to the truthful distribution, which they knew in advance of the experiment. Shirking could be detected at the individual level based on the number of times an individual spent on the coin-flipping part of the exercise (Jacquemet et al., 2021). During the experiment, the researchers assigned each participant to either the "Oath" or the "NoOath" group. Researchers showed the Oath group a computer screen asking them whether they agreed with the following statement: "Before we begin, do you swear upon your honor to answer the following questions truthfully?" (p. 5). The researchers did not show the NoOath participants the oath screen; instead, the participants went directly to the coin-flipping task. The researchers found that a truth-telling oath reduces lying, but leaves shirking unchanged.

Jacquemet et al. (2020) investigated whether honesty oaths impact people's decisions to respond truthfully. They found that honesty oaths only impact individuals who have feeble preferences for lying, what the researchers called "partial liars." The oaths do not make a difference in chronic liars, which are individuals with strong preferences to be dishonest for personal gain (Jacquemet et al., 2020). The researchers tested the effectiveness of the honesty oath by conducting two earned income tax declaration lab experiments. In the first experiment, Jacquemet et al. tested the honesty oath by administering an oath where the participant "swear upon [his/her] honor that, during the whole experiment, [he/she] will tell the truth and provide honest answers" (p. 4). Jacquemet et al. reported that the average compliance rate was 49.0% and that the average compliance rate under the oath treatment was 63.2%. For the second experiment, the researchers used a repeated trial design to determine the consistency and strength of participants' preferences for honesty or dishonesty. The researchers revealed that partial liars are indecisive, as they changed their responses across rounds. The oath led to a decrease of lying from the participants who changed their decisions, which confirmed that the oath turns partial compliers into full compliers (Jacquemet et al., 2020). Under oath, full compliers and full liars give the same responses across all rounds (Jacquemet et al., 2020). The researchers concluded that although honesty oaths foster honesty, they do not change the conduct of individuals with strong inclinations to profitable dishonesty.

Ethical leaders play a significant role in mitigating unethical conduct in organizations. Ethical leaders are honest, trustworthy, humble and responsible, which are characteristics that their followers tend to imitate. Also, ethical leaders engage in CSR,

which not only serves the organization's stakeholders well but it also helps reduce unethical behavior in the organization. Finally, leaders can use honesty oaths as tools that might help mitigate unethical conduct. Nonetheless, that data clearly indicates that to mitigate unethical conduct, organizations need ethical leaders.

Transition

The purpose of Section 1 was to develop a deeper understanding of the topics of ethical leadership and unethical leadership. I presented an overview of ethical theory and examined different ethical and unethical leadership styles. I also discussed the benefits of being an ethical leader and their affinity for CSR practices. I also defined unethical leadership and described its negative consequences, such as employee turnover intention. I also added a section on the strategies that senior leaders can use to build ethical leaders in the organization. The last section referred to the strategies senior leaders can use to mitigate unethical conduct.

In Section 2 I described my plan to collect and analyze information to support and complete the study. I first reiterated the purpose statement. I also mentioned my role as the researcher, which is that of being the main instrument of information gathering. I presented the techniques I used to mitigate bias, such as triangulation and reflective journaling. Also, I included a section on the selection of participants and the Institutional Review (IRB) process. I also mentioned the Belmont Report's research guidelines for ethical standards while working with participants. I also outlined the qualitative research method and the case study research design I used. I also described the purposeful sampling and snow sampling techniques that I used. I delineated the methods I used for

collecting data, which are interviews, observation, and documentation. I also included information on the data organization techniques and data analysis techniques I used. I also mentioned the importance of conducting ethical research and carrying the study with honesty and integrity to ensure the reliability of the study findings. I also described the importance of validity and reliability in the research process, including the aspects of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation.

Section 3 is the final section, where I presented the results of the study. It includes nine subsections. These subsections are the following: introduction, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research, reflections, conclusion, and appendices.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I present essential elements of qualitative research and the steps I took to complete this study. I begin by reiterating the purpose statement. I mention my role as the researcher and my preliminary plan to gain access to the participants. Also, I include a discussion about the research method and design I used and followed with a description of the population and sampling. I also discuss critical ethical protection elements for the participants. Lastly, I mention the data collection and analysis process, which includes statements on the importance of reliability and validity and how I planned to apply them to this research study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. To complete this study, I interviewed five senior leaders who demonstrated successful outcomes in building an ethical organization and mitigating unethical conduct in their organization. The senior leaders work at a U.K.-based company, doing business in New York and New England, that received recognition for its ethical practices from Ethisphere. Ethisphere is an organization whose mission is to advance ethical standards in businesses (Ethisphere, 2021). The results of this study might serve senior leaders in the US who are looking for strategies to mitigate managers' unethical behavior. The implication for social change is that ethical leaders and managers have a positive impact on CSR by building ethical cultures and climates that increase employee CSR involvement (Ullah et al., 2017). Ethical leaders and managers also care about the natural

environment as they make decisions that prevent ecological harm and create services and products that are environmentally appropriate (Ullah et al., 2017). Employees from organizations led by ethical leaders and managers put the interests of society ahead of their own and act responsibly while interacting with, and supporting, customers, society, and the natural environment (Wu et al., 2015).

Role of the Researcher

Through qualitative methods, researchers aim to comprehend how participants interpret their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the essential elements of qualitative research is that the researcher is the main instrument of information gathering and data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Some of the advantages of human instruments (researchers) are that they can easily adapt to any situation that arises during the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Also, the researchers can further clarify and summarize the information they gather based on their understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I had experience leading people. From my perspective, leading people means having a strong conviction of the importance of ethical norms and acting according to those norms. Some of the most common ethical characteristics include honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity (Sharma et al., 2019). Throughout my career and at the time this study was performed, I had met leaders who portrayed these characteristics and others who did not. I had also observed and experienced the damage that unethical leaders cause in an organization, such as low employee morale, employee turnover

intention, and employee turnover. For this study, I interviewed senior leaders of an organization that received recognition for its ethical practices.

During the interview process, I followed the guidelines included in The Belmont Report, which highlights ethical standards for research (Miracle, 2016). The main goal of the Belmont Report is to protect the rights of all research participants (Miracle, 2016). It includes three elements: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Miracle, 2016). Respect for persons refers to the autonomy of individuals in that they have the right to make their own decisions. Beneficence refers to the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from harm and to make efforts to secure the participants' well-being. Justice refers to the need for researches to treat all participants equally and fairly (Miracle, 2016). I followed the Belmont Report guidelines during the interview process.

Researchers have biases that can impact the study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). One way to mitigate bias is through triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018). In qualitative research, triangulation involves a strategy to test validity by using more than one data source (Fusch et al., 2018). Different data sources can provide more information about the phenomenon; in addition, more data sources can increase the validity of the study (Fusch et al., 2018). For this study, I used data triangulation by conducting interviews, by reviewing documentation, and by reviewing archival data. Besides, during this research process, I practiced "journaling," which it is also called "reflective journaling," "in-depth notes," or "field notes" (Oliphant & Bennet, 2019; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). By taking notes, researchers can document their insights and reflections through the research process and document any new information or adjustments to the methodology or

analysis (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Through the notes, researchers can also engage in preliminary coding, which can later be organized by topic or participant (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Notes can also help researchers to identify researcher bias, provide context, and increase rigor (Oliphant & Bennet, 2019; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Finally, while the researcher is working on the data analysis, the journal entries can be useful to remind the researcher about the setting, emotion, and comprehension of the data as the participant shared it during the interview (Shufutinsky, 2020).

Another tool I used to ensure I thoroughly grasped the participants' responses and ideas was "member checking," which involves the solicitation of feedback from the participants on the findings to ensure validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is the most significant way to avoid misinterpretation of the participants' responses and to mitigate biases.

Interviews are one of the most common methods researchers use to gather information about a given topic. One of the ways to conduct interviews is through an interview protocol (see Appendix A). An interview protocol is a script of what the researcher will say during the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview protocol serves as a guide to conduct interviews and gather data in the qualitative research process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Through interviews, researchers interact with experienced subject-matter experts to collect information about aspects of the work they do (Van de Wiel, 2017). I used six questions to interview senior managers who have implemented successful strategies to mitigate unethical conduct among managers. The interview protocol was a crucial tool to gather data from the participants.

Participants

Researchers who conduct qualitative research depend on gaining access to participants to complete their study (Saunders, 2012). Researchers should choose participants based on their study's focus to meet the research study's goal and answer the research question (Saunders, 2012). The topic of the study should be the principal element prompting the selection of the participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers should formally solicit that participants partake in their research voluntarily (Yin, 2017).

For this study, I interviewed senior leaders from an organization that has been recognized for its ethical practices. According to Saunders (2012), researchers should prepare and learn more about the company they plan to approach before contacting the participants. Such preparation includes reviewing the organization's web site to learn more about the company (Saunders, 2012). I prepared for the interviews by reading about the partner company in their website and public documents. During the preparation process, I also obtained formal approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the interviews; the approval number is 2020.11.2600;00:42-0600. Once I gained the formal approval from the IRB, I emailed my contact person at the company to solicit interviews with members of the senior leadership team. I did not know any of the participants before the interviews.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

In this doctoral study, I used the qualitative research method. Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people interpret their experiences and how they create their worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In contrast, quantitative researchers focus on obtaining results that can be presented numerically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The mixed method includes both the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Through qualitative research, the researcher aims to comprehend the phenomenon, not to measure it (Dasgupta, 2015). For this research study, the qualitative method was appropriate to explore the strategies business leaders use to mitigate unethical behavior. Through the qualitative method, I gained insights, reviewed information, and interpreted the data. In addition, the qualitative method is what researchers have typically used in social sciences (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). In contrast, when researchers use the quantitative method, they analyze statistical data and measure variables (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative research involves the collection of data with a focus on numerical information rather than individuals' insights (Queirós et al., 2017). Quantitative research would not have worked for this study because I did not plan to examine the relationship between variables or collect statistical information.

The mixed methods approach involves combining quantitative and qualitative methods in one study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). Conducting a mixed method approach requires a significant amount of time due to the collection, analysis, and validation of

quantitative and qualitative data; it may not always be feasible for a researcher to use the mixed-method approach (Mckim, 2017). Researchers usually use the mixed methods approach when they determine that using quantitative or qualitative methods alone would be insufficient (Doyle et al., 2016). Using mixed-methods research does not guarantee the extension of theory; researchers should choose mixed-methods to serve a specific function (Doyle et al., 2016). Through a mixed-method approach, researchers identify two epistemological positions: a positivist approach and a constructivist, and for the mixed-method approach to be feasible undertaking, the researcher must define and reconcile both approaches (Timans et al., 2019). The scope of this study did not need the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches; hence I did not use the mixed methods approach in this study.

Research Design

Choosing a research design involves assessing how to apply a chosen method to answer the research question (Yin, 2017). There are four main research designs for qualitative methodology: case study, phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic designs. Through case study research, the researcher aims to investigate real-life experiences within a specific environment (Ridder, 2017). The case study has an exploratory function (Ridder, 2017). A case study can also identify the need for action (Saunders et al., 2015). The case study design was appropriate for this research study because it focuses on a specific environment. I interviewed business leaders that use successful ethics strategies to avert misconduct in an organization. Researchers who use the phenomenological study aim to understand a phenomenon based on peoples'

perceptions and lived experiences (Noon, 2018). Phenomenological research was not appropriate for my study because my primary goal was not to understand the subjective, lived experiences and perspectives of participants, but to learn about the phenomenon and share my findings with others. Narrative qualitative research refers to the collection of narratives and evaluating themes in the narratives (Constant & Roberts, 2017). The focus of this study was not on narratives but on specific experiences, behaviors, and actions to understand a phenomenon which I then compared them with additional sources of data through the qualitative triangulation process. Through the ethnographic design, the researcher analyzes how culture impacts people's behavior (Keränen & Prior, 2019). Ethnographic research would not have been appropriate for my research because I did not evaluate the culture in which the business managers operate, but the strategies they use to improve leaders' ethical behavior.

Data saturation is a critical element of qualitative research (Fofana et al., 2020). It means that the researcher has reached sufficient data to address the study's themes; thus, gathering more data would not add new relevant information (Lowe et al., 2018). Researchers reach data saturation when they do not identify any new information, and the research study generates the utmost information on the phenomenon (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I collected information from scholarly works, company documents, and interviews. I reached saturation during the data collection process once I recognized that new data were not forthcoming. At that point, I knew that the data I collected was sufficient to uncover the themes of the study. Saturation also happens when additional interviews do not add further information to the study (Fofana et al., 2020).

Population and Sampling

Sampling involves identifying suitable participants who can provide information to understand a phenomenon (Moser & Kortsjens, 2018). For this study, I used the purposeful sampling and snowball sampling methods to identify and recruit participants. Researchers who use purposeful sampling are interested in discovering, learning, and gaining insights on the subject of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers first determine the purpose of the study to intentionally choose the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used purpose sampling to select experts in the field of ethical leadership. Researchers need to choose a sample from which they can gather the most amount of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The targeted population for this study consisted of senior leaders who successfully implemented strategies to mitigate unethical conduct. I also used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a type of purpose sampling; it consists of the researcher asking participants to refer the researcher to potential participants who might also have relevant information for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The number of participants that the researcher needs to interview to reach data saturation depends on the focus of the research study (Allen et al., 2019). According to Sim et al. (2018), there is no ideal number of cases because data from numerous cases do not always lead to more significant results. However, Alase (2017) maintained that the sample size can be between two and 25 participants. For this study, I interviewed five members of the partner organization's senior management team. I met them virtually, via Zoom, due to the current pandemic to ensure safety. I ensured there were no distractions from my end while conducting the interview. I asked for permission before I started

audio recording. I used the application “audio hijack” to record the interviews and the application “otter ai” to transcribe the data. I also took notes after the interviews to record my observations. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their participation and informed them of my next step in the process, which included the member checking procedure to ensure I captured the information they shared accurately.

As the researcher for this study, I assessed when I reached a saturation level while collecting data. Researchers reach the saturation point when the data do not show new ideas or new themes, and it is possible to reproduce the research results (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers can also reach saturation during interviews, that is, when the researcher begins to hear similar answers to the interview questions or observing similar behaviors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I obtained multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, scholarly works, and documents to support my findings. When new data were not forthcoming, it indicated that I reached data saturation.

Ethical Research

The quality of the doctoral study refers to the value of the information the researcher collects and the researcher’s ethical conduct (World Health Organization, 2017). Of most importance is the researcher’s integrity, honesty, and transparency, which contribute to the reliability of the study results and establish public trust (World Health Organization, 2017). Readers should be able to trust that the researchers conducted the research study with integrity and that the findings are reliable (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). It is the researchers’ responsibility to proceed in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016).

Informed consent is a major part of ethics in research studies (Regmi et al., 2017). The principle of informed consent is that researchers have a responsibility to inform the participants of all the areas of the research study (Regmi et al., 2017). The researcher should clarify the researcher's identity, the study's objective, the role of the participants, and how the results will be used (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). Informed consent also means that participants exercise their rights to agree voluntarily or refuse to participate in the study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). The informed consent form must explain how the researcher will protect the participants' privacy and indicate that participants can withdraw from the research study at any point without any consequences. The consent form should also include the researchers' contact information, provide information on potential benefits to participants; and describe any potential risks of harm involved in the research (Tomas & Pettit, 2017).

Also, it is the responsibility of the researcher to store the information collected from the participants in a safe place to keep the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Steneck, 2007). A way to securely store data is to use random codes to identify participants as opposed to names or personally identifiable information (Steneck, 2007). Also, the researcher can limit access to the participants' codes for further protection (Steneck, 2007). During the research process, I used codes to identify the participants. I also stored the information in my password-protected computer and backed it up in cloud storage. I will continue to store the data securely for 5 years to protect the confidentiality of the participants, and then destroy all the data.

The consent form can also serve as a reminder to the researcher to highlight some areas during the interview. For instance, I assured the participants that I would keep their names and the name of the company confidential and would not use them in this study. It is imperative for researchers to protect the names of the participants or organizations (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017). I mentioned to the participants that I would send them a summary of the final doctoral study together with the entire study. Finally, for this study, I did not offer any remuneration.

Data Collection Instruments

Instruments

In qualitative research, researchers are the primary instruments for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As instruments, researchers benefit the study because individuals are adaptable and responsive; however, the researchers must evaluate their own bias during the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Methods for collecting data include interviews, archival media, and documentation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews

There are different approaches to conducting interviews; for this research study, I conducted semistructured interviews. Through this approach, the researcher can collect open-ended data to explore participants' views about a specific topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). A semistructured interview involves a candid conversation between the researcher and the participant by utilizing a flexible interview protocol complemented by follow-up questions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I used an interview protocol (see

Appendix A). The interview protocol serves as a practical guide that includes a script of what the researcher will mention before and after the interview questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). In following the interview protocol, I provided the participants with an overview of the study, inform them of the recording process, and the member checking process. I used the member checking technique to enhance the validity and reliability of the data collection process. The member checking technique involves requesting feedback from the participants about the data collected from them to ensure the data is accurate (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). After each interview, I sent each participant a summary of the interview for them to review to ensure I accurately captured the information they provided. All the participants approved of their respective summary; two participants included edits in their summaries.

Documentation

Documents refer to a comprehensive array of data, including physical materials and written, visual, and digital data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Documents are sources of data that are accessible to the researcher to examine. Documents can exist in both a physical setting and an online setting. Some examples of documents include emails, agendas, archival records such as maps, survey data, public files and companies' records, such as financial statements (Yin, 2017). Documents are useful to corroborate information (Yin, 2017). I collected documents to analyze and to validate all the information I gathered. Researchers should evaluate documents thoroughly and ensure that they are clear and valid (Yin, 2017). Documents are good data sources that can help researchers to support and complement other sources of data.

Archival Data

Archival research is the process of examining data that was collected for purposes other than academic research purposes (Heng et al., 2018). Archival data includes newspapers, letters, company memos and datasets (Deller, 2019; Heng et al., 2018). Using various samples of archival data can increase the generalizability of the study (Heng et al., 2018). However, only using archival data as a data source can increase researcher bias resulting in erroneous conclusions, which would highly affect the study's validity (Heng et al., 2018).

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique involves a description of the procedure the researcher will use to collect data (Yin, 2017). For this case study, the methods I used to collect data were semistructured interviews, document reviews, and archival data. Through the semistructured interviews, the researcher has key questions to ask the participants or topics for conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semistructured interviews tend to be flexible in that it is a dialogue between the researcher and the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For instance, the order of the questions may vary from interview to interview, depending on the circumstance and the flow of the conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, through semistructured interviews, the researcher can probe answers to add depth to the conversation and obtain additional information that would further help to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2015). Semistructured interviews also have disadvantages. Because of their lack of standardization, semistructured interviews might lead to information that is not reliable or

dependable (Saunders et al., 2015). They can also lead to bias, as the researcher's comments or non-verbal communication might lead to bias in the way the participants respond to the question (Saunders et al., 2015). For the interview sessions with the participants, I employed an interview protocol (see Appendix A). The interview protocol serves as a procedural guide that includes the interview questions and a script of what the researcher will say before and after the interview questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I also used company documents to confirm the information I gathered from the interviews. An organization's documents might include meeting agendas and codes of ethics. Documents can also include newspapers, corporate records, historical accounts, and blogs (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tinsdell, many documents are readily available and contain information that would have taken a significant amount of time for the researcher to collect. The technique of document collection has its limitations as well. Because organizations usually do not create documents for research purposes, the information presented by the organization may not be comprehensive or useful to the researcher (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). Another issue that the researcher may encounter is the uncertainty on whether the documents are authentic and accurate (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). As such, assessing the authenticity and accuracy of written documents is part of the investigator's research process (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). It is the researcher's responsibility to learn about the origin of the document, including its author, and the context in which the company generated it (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016).

I also used archival data. Archival records contain a vast amount of information that researchers can select and analyze (Skarpelis, 2020). It can provide relevant information about events, processes, or individuals (Skarpelis, 2020). Archival data can provide evidence that an event occurred and add validity to a study (Skarpelis, 2020). However, archival data might not provide all the information that explains a phenomenon. It provides traces of an event that researchers can extract, analyze, and use to corroborate the findings from other data sources (Skarpelis, 2020).

Data Organization Technique

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), researchers should organize the information they collect and keep a good account of their data. Researchers should organize and label the data in a way that they can easily access it when they needed it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For instance, researchers should create an inventory of the complete data set (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They should also ensure they know what data they collected, such as interview responses, field notes, and memos to keep track of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I organized and managed the data in Microsoft Excel and Word. I also stored the data in my password-protected computer and backed it up in cloud storage. I will continue to store the data securely for 5 years and then destroy all the data. Keeping the data organized can certainly facilitate the research process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of answering the author's research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through data analysis, the researcher attempts to understand the data by consolidating and interpreting the participants' responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The

researcher's understanding of the data will ultimately lead to the study's findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The findings can constitute descriptive accounts, themes, or theories that explain the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used triangulation to consolidate the data. Triangulation is a research strategy to test validity by using more than one data source (Fusch et al., 2018). Different data sources can provide more information about the phenomenon and a more thorough explanation of the situation (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation means cross-checking all data sources to corroborate and validate the information collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation is an important strategy for increasing the credibility of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used data triangulation by conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing documentation.

It is imperative for the researcher to use a specific analytical strategy to connect and examine the research data to create meaning (Yin, 2017). According to Yin, researchers can use the "logic models" to conduct data analysis. The logic models consist of comparing and examining empirically observed events to theoretical events (Yin, 2017). Through logic models, researchers analyze occurrences that transpire over a period of time in a logical sequential manner that led to a specific accomplishment (Yin, 2017). One logical model is the "organizational-level logic model," which consists of tracing events over time in an organization to identify and analyze the outcomes (Yin, 2017). The organizational-level logic model refers to an intervention that an organization might have introduced that caused a particular result (Yin, 2017). I used the organizational-level logic model as a data analytic tool for my study. The ethical

strategies the organization introduced served as the intervention that caused the mitigation of unethical conduct.

In addition, I used the thematic analysis method to scrutinize the data. The researcher's objective is to find patterns that are evident in the data (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers can use thematic analysis to detect and evaluate patterns and address the research question (Nowell et al., 2017) The process of thematic analysis involves the researcher becoming knowledgeable of the data, conducting coding and finding patterns (Saunders et al., 2015). Coding is an essential process for organizing the data and finding themes or patterns in the data (Saunders et al., 2015).

Thematic analysis also involves defining and naming themes and writing up the themes while making connections between them; this process will generate conclusions about the data in relation to the literature (Nowell et al., 2017). For this study, I looked for connections between seminal studies on what constitutes ethical leadership and the empirical research results. I examined the theoretical and empirical information and ultimately answered my research question on the strategies senior leaders use to mitigate unethical conduct among managers. I used coding methods introduced by Saldana (2015), and Microsoft Excel to organize the codes and identify themes in the data.

Insights to answer the research question came from semistructured interviews through video, company documents, the company's website, and public documents. The documents I used included the following: (a) the company's code of ethics, (b) the ethics guide for managers, (c) the supplier code of conduct, (d) a quarterly memo to managers, (e) the company's website, and (f) the three volumes of Ethisphere' "Insights into the

practices of the world's most ethical companies." I conducted data analysis on the interview and document data for triangulation to validate the findings. I conducted semistructured interviews by asking six open-ended questions through the virtual Zoom platform between December 12, 2020, and February 25, 2021. I recorded the interviews, transcribed the interview data, and wrote a summary report for each interview. I sent each participant the summary report of their respective interview as part of the member-checking process.

By using an inductive approach to analyzing data, I coded, categorized, and themed the data to reach conclusions. According to Saldana (2015), researchers can organize similarly coded data into categories; the outcome of coding are themes that enable the researcher to formulate conclusions. Saldana mentioned four stages to code and theme the data. These stages include: "first cycle coding," "after first cycle coding," "second cycle coding," and "after second cycle coding." Saldana also mentioned a "pre-coding" step that researchers can use as a precursor to the four cycles of coding. Thus, I followed five steps to coding the data (see Table 1). Each step involves coding techniques that I described below.

Table 1*Five Coding Steps*

Coding the data				
1. Precoding	2. First cycle coding	3. After first cycle coding	4. Second cycle coding	5. After second cycle coding
Quotes or passages	In vivo coding	Values coding	Pattern coding	Code weaving
	Initial coding	Code charting	Categories	Theming

Note. These coding steps are based on Saldana (2015).

I followed five steps to code the data. First, I pre-coded the data. I read the transcripts and highlighted passages for analysis. I also summarized each transcript and sent it to the respective participant to review for accuracy. They informed me that the information was accurate; two of the participants returned the summary with a few changes. Second, I followed Saldana's "first cycle of coding." I use the techniques of "in vivo coding" and "initial coding." For in vivo coding, I extracted the specific words the participants used and put them in quotation marks to differentiate them from other codes. I also used initial coding by comparing data to find similarities and differences. My third step was "after first cycle coding." I reviewed the transcript and used the "values coding" technique by coding phrases that reflected the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs. I organized the data based on the frequency of the codes.

The fourth and five steps also included additional coding techniques. The fourth step was the "second cycle coding," which included re-analyzing the data. I used the "focused coding" technique by identifying frequent codes and categorizing the data.

Finally, the fifth step I took was the "after second cycle coding." Under this step, I arrived at theming by transforming the final set of categories into longer-phrased themes (see Table 2). Then, I used the "code weaving" technique by combining the fragments of the most frequent themes and patterns into narrative form. Below I described the five themes that surfaced through coding analyses. Please see a sample of the participants' interview data codes in Table 3. For confidentiality, I coded the five participants as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Table 2*Coding of Participants' Interviews*

Participant	Frequent Codes	Categories	Themes
P1	Promote values continuously, reinforce ethics	Communicate the values	Communicate the values continuously
P2	Continuously talk about ethics, reinforce		
P3	Communicate values constantly		
P4	"We repeat do the right thing"		
P5	Communicate ethical values		
		Ethical Culture	Build an ethical culture
P1	Ethics director, "code of conduct"		
P2	"Continuously try to drive that culture"		
P3	"Ethics liaisons," "code of conduct"		
P4	"Strong ethics liaison network"		
P5	"Ethics hotline," "ethics team"		
		Ethical Climate	Build an ethical climate
P1	Listen to the employees, address unethical behavior		
P2	"Safe space for employees to speak up"		
P3	"Thank employees," resolve concerns		
P4	"Build relationships"		
P5	"Create a space where people can be authentic"		
		Role Modeling	Lead by example
P1	"Model the right behavior"		
P2	How you act speaks volumes		
P3	Leading by example, "set the tone"		
P4	"We are nice" ethical behavior		
P5	The leaders example cascades to the rest		
		Improvements	Have a growth mindset
P1	"Find a better way,"		
P2	"You can't become complacent," pursue learning		
P3	"Lessons learned," "growth mindset"		
P4	"Any kind of opportunity to learn"		
P5	"Continue to make things better."		

I also coded documents. I analyzed documents from my partner organization and documents from Ethisphere about ethical companies. The partner organization has three codes of conduct, one for employees, one for managers and one for suppliers. I found the company's "our code of ethics" and "supplier code of conduct" on the partner organization's website. One participant shared their "ethics guide for managers," which is also a code of ethics. Table 3 displays data from the three codes of conduct. I also obtained a quarterly "memo to managers," which includes information on work ethics. Table 4 contains coding data from the quarterly memo to managers. I also coded three volumes of the Ethisphere's "Insights into the practices of the world's most ethical companies" report to learn about what Ethisphere found to be critical elements to build and sustain an ethical organization (see Table 5). Data analysis from all documents showed coding similarities to the interviews' data, which resulted in similar categories and themes.

Table 3*Coding of Company's Three Codes of Conduct*

Codes of Conduct	Frequent Codes	Categories	Themes
Ethics guide for managers	“absolute commitment to our values everyday”	Communicate values	Communicate values continuously
Our code of ethics Suppliers' code	“living our values” “share our...principles”		
Ethics guide for managers	“our code of conduct applies to every employee”	Ethical culture	Build an ethical culture
Our code of ethics	“stand for something beyond profit” “help us create the culture”		
Suppliers' code	“committed to skills development” “code of conduct”		
Ethics guide for managers	Support employees who raise issues, employee engagement	Ethical climate	Build an ethical climate
Our code of ethics	“values into action”		
Suppliers' code	“promoting an environment where everyone can feel comfortable raising concerns”		
Ethics guide for managers	“Set an ethical tone,” “build trust”	Role modeling	Lead by example
Our code of ethics	“lead by example” “demonstrate...the values”		
Supplier code of conduct	“impact,” “highest ethical standards”		
Ethics guide for managers	“keep an open mind,” “treat each concern as a learning experience”	Improve	Have a growth mindset
Our code of ethics	“learn from each other,” “learn from our mistakes,” improve performance		
Suppliers' code	“find a better way,” “establish relevant metrics and targets”		

Table 4*Coding of Quarterly Memo to Managers*

Frequent Codes	Categories	Themes
Values, feedback, communication	Communication and values	Communicate the values continuously
Ethics matters, “morality,” “virtuous,” “ethical culture,” ethics matters	Ethical Culture	Build an ethical culture
“Help your employees,” “accountability”	Ethical climate	Build an ethical climate
“Your employees will see your behavior, choices, and values and will adopt them”	Role modeling	Lead by example
“Self-awareness,” “remain vigilant,” learn	Improvements	Have a growth mindset

Table 5*Coding of Ethisphere's Insight Report Series*

Volumes	Frequent Codes	Categories	Themes
Volume 1	"communicating initiatives," "integrity, transparency, trust"	Communicating the values	Communicate the values continuously
Volume 2	"messages stick when communicated often"		
Volume 3	"constant and clear communication"		
Volume 1	"programs and practices, "culture of ethics"	Ethical culture	Build an ethical culture
Volume 2	"code of conduct," "CSR," "training"		
Volume 3	"managers must be trained"		
Volume 1	"consider the employee experience"	Ethical climate	Build an ethical climate
Volume 2	"commitment"		
Volume 3	"get feedback from employees," "engage employees"		
Volume 1	"the role and leadership of ethics," "by way of example"	Role modeling	Lead by example
Volume 2	leaders define the standards of ethical business practices		
Volume 3	"top leadership engagement"		
Volume 1	"ethics and compliance metrics," "benchmarking against the practices of other companies"	Improvement	Have a growth mindset
Volume 2	"focus on sustainability," "area ripe for improvement"		
Volume 3	"reinforce ethical conduct," "data driven assessment"		

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces correct and consistent results (Mohajan, 2017). Also, reliability denotes the extent to which the research study does not show any bias (Mohajan, 2017). The researcher can ensure reliability by using dependable measures in the study (Mohajan, 2017). Dependability refers to the assurance that the study's results center on the data the researcher collected (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016). The researcher's strategies to ensure dependability are triangulation and member checking (Johnson et al., 2020). As discussed earlier, triangulation is the process of collecting multiple sources of data to confirm or discard the study's findings (Johnson et al., 2020). Member checking is the process of asking participants for feedback to ensure the researcher's understanding of the information the participant provided is accurate (Merriam & Tinsdell, 2016).

Validity

Validity is the degree to which data collection methods measure what they are designed to measure and the assurance that the research results are truthful (Saunders et al., 2015). Validity also means that the researcher conducted the study with integrity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers must portray results that are valid and reliable as the study reflects a phenomenon in people's lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, researchers should present trustworthy information for readers and practitioners (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2016). Quality research validity also refers to the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research findings provide an accurate and meaningful account of reality at a moment in time (Roller & Lavrakas, 2017).

Credibility indicates whether the study results represent the information that the participants conveyed to the researcher (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers can test for credibility by utilizing triangulation and member checking (Saunders et al., 2015). For my research I used triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent of neutrality in which the research study is based on the participants' responses and not the researchers' bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researchers establish confirmability by using member checking, triangulation or an audit trail, which is a clear description of the steps the researcher took from the beginning of the study to its development and the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher would then keep records of what the research did through the investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, I used triangulation and member checking to ensure confirmability.

Transferability

Transferability is about the extent researchers can use the study findings in other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It refers to the ability of researchers to generalize the results of a research in other settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher

ensures transferability by presenting a thorough description of the study's research questions, design, context, and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By providing this information, the researcher gives the reader the ability to assess the transferability of the research study to another setting (Saunders et al., 2015). I used reflective journaling to document my observations and the steps I took during the interview process.

Data Saturation

Researchers reach data saturation when the process of data collection does not lead to any new information related to the subject of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers acknowledge data saturation when they encounter the same insights, data, outcomes, and interpretations during their research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At that point, the researcher has found the information available on the subject. In addition, researchers attain a level of saturation when no new codes or themes emerge within the data (Saunders et al., 2018). While collecting and analyzing data, I reached a level of saturation because I no longer identified any new codes or themes in the data. Furthermore, during the interviews, I reached a level of saturation when the latest participant I interviewed provided similar information that other participants had previously offered.

The results of this empirical research and analysis revealed five findings. They are: (a) communicating the company's values continuously, (b) building an ethical culture, (c) building an ethical climate, (d) leading by example, and (e) having a growth mindset. Three of these findings, building an ethical culture, creating an ethical climate,

and leading by example, coincided with findings in the literature review. In the segments below I elaborated on each finding.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I presented the necessary steps to complete this qualitative case study. I restated the purpose statement, which provides the foundation for the study. I also described the purpose and the snowball sampling techniques. I mentioned the methods of data collection I used, including data gathered from interviews, and documentation. I also highlighted the importance of validity and reliability to ensure stable and reliable measures for this study. I discussed the principle of informed consent, which is an ethical responsibility of all researchers. Section 3 includes nine subsections. The subsections include the following: (a) introduction, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further research, (g) reflections, (h) conclusions, and (i) appendices.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that senior leaders use to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. Data analysis of the participants' perspectives and documentation resulted in five main themes. One theme that emerged during data analysis was *communicating the company's values continuously*, which includes the company's expectations of ethical conduct. Another theme was *building an ethical culture* in the organization, which includes code of conduct, an ethics officer, ethics training, ethics liaisons, and an alert line. Another theme was *building an ethical climate*. *Leading by example* was another theme; the senior leaders ensure they model the behaviors they expect from others. *Having a growth mindset* also surfaced as a theme. Table 6 indicates the frequency in which the participants referred to each theme and the theme percentage compared to the total number of references for all themes.

Table 6

Themes

Theme	Frequency/ Participant codes	Percentage
Communicate values continuously	80	34%
Building an ethical culture	44	19%
Building an ethical climate	41	18%
Leading by example	27	12%
Having a growth mindset	39	17%

Presentation of the Findings

Communicating the Company's Values Continuously

The first theme that emerged to mitigate unethical conduct among managers was communicating the company's values continuously. The company's values are the foundation of their operations, and they promote them daily. All of the participants mentioned the values. "Do the right thing" is at the core of their value system; they expect honesty, integrity, respect, transparency, and accountability from each employee. P1 stated, "The company's values have to be at the center of whatever we do on a daily basis." Similarly, P2 stated, "We continue to anchor back to our values...to become just embedded core common language." They promote their values continuously.

I also found evidence of their continued communication of their values in their codes of conduct, the guide for managers and the company's website. The "code of ethics" states, "You must keep to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and ethics at all times when working for us." Similarly, the "guide for managers and supervisors" states: "Remember, honesty comes first," and "Always put integrity ahead of numbers." Furthermore, the "suppliers code of conduct" states, "Our values describe what we stand for and guide our behavior. They set the tone and shape the culture of the organization." The participants' comments are consistent with recently published literature by Dermol and Širca (2018). Dermol and Širca stated that it is in the organization's benefit to communicate its values frequently for employees to understand and appreciate the company's expectation of ethical behavior. Also, according to Dimitriu et al. (2019), organizations must influence managers to follow moral values to avert unethical

behavior. A system of values is what makes the organization's corporate culture (Schaefer et al., 2019). Continuous communications of the company's values can help embed ethical principles in the organization's culture and mitigate unethical conduct.

Building an Ethical Culture

Another theme that emerged was building an ethical culture. In addition, six subthemes emerged in the data, which include key components to create an ethical culture. These are (a) codes of ethics, (b) ethics training, (c) ethics officer, (d) ethics liaison network, (e) ethics report line, and (f) accountability policies. These subthemes are part of the partner organization's ethics program to build the culture. During the interviews, most of the participants referenced the importance of maintaining an ethical culture to sustain an ethical organization. P2 stated,

I think it's important in building the right culture. And I think that one of the other things we've done is by making ethics and doing the right thing part of our vision, it allows us to talk about it all the time. And the more that we talk about it as leaders, the more that our employees talk about it, the more it becomes just embedded core common language. And again, it's just creating that culture.

Similarly, P3 stated, "I just think it's an overall culture of transparency. And I think it comes from communicating as a leader and being open about your decision-making process." As previously reported in the literature, Riaz (2018) found that an ethical culture mitigates unethical conduct. Recently published literature also supports this

finding; according to Farooqi et al. (2017), organizations need to create ethical cultures that influence employees to act ethically.

One way to create an ethical culture is through an ethics program (Kaptein, 2009). Recently published literature confirmed that an ethics program is necessary to create an ethical culture (Ferrell et al., 2019). Ethics programs serve to clarify and reinforce the moral behavior that the organization expects of each employee (Kaptein, 2015). The partner organization has several initiatives that makes up an ethics program. P1 stated,

Everything we've done in our program has been about trying to establish that culture. So, when it comes to mitigating unethical conduct of our managers, we have a number of things that we do, we have a very robust communication program. And for all employees, which basically takes pieces of our code of conduct and on a monthly basis in different forms we'll communicate out to our employees our key messages related to our code and what's expected.

The participants described a series of ethics initiatives as part of their culture. Thus, during the data analysis, six sub-themes emerged, which involve creating an ethical culture through an ethics program. The sub-themes are: (a) codes of ethics, (b) ethics training, (c) ethics officer, (d) ethics liaison network, (e) ethics report line, and (f) accountability policies. Table 7 indicates the frequency in which the participants mentioned the sub-themes and the percent of the subtheme compared to all subthemes that comprise the theme. Also, below is a description of each sub-theme.

Table 7*Building an Ethical Culture*

Subtheme	Frequency/ Participant codes	Percentage
Codes of ethics	19	24%
Ethics training	14	18%
Ethics officer	8	10%
Ethics liaison network	13	17%
Ethics report line	9	12%
Accountability policies	15	19%

Codes of Ethics

The first subtheme under building an ethical culture that emerged was codes of conduct. The organization has three codes, one for employees, “our codes of ethics,” another for the supervisors, the “guide for managers and supervisors,” and one for suppliers, titled “supplier code of conduct.” Similar to what the participants shared during the interviews, the company’s codes of conduct highlighted the company’s values. Most of the participants mentioned that the codes of conduct serve as guides. P1 stated,

We just came out with our new code of conduct, which comes out every 3 years...and whenever we do that, we also come out with a companion document called our guide for managers and supervisors. So, it takes what’s in the code, and then it provides a very focused document for our managers, you know, how do you get your employees to live the code.

P2 said that although written ethics guidelines are the company's baseline, they are not effective on their own. P2 stated,

We have all of the written procedures; we test everybody every year. And so, we do all of the I think the baseline, put it in your materials, but let's face it, who's really reading that stuff, it gets lost, you know, and it gets buried in with thousands of other pages of policies and procedures. But when you spotlight it, when you make it a headline and the organization talks about it, you can't miss it.

All participants highlighted that the company uses different communication methods to inform employees it expects everyone to behave ethically and follow the codes of ethics.

The literature review led to mixed results in terms of the effectiveness of the codes of conduct. Some researchers found that the codes of conduct effectively reduced unethical conduct (Snellman, 2015). Others found that the codes were not helpful as they did not show significant results in improving ethical behavior (Thaler & Helmig, 2016). Recently published literature indicated that codes of ethics might reduce unethical conduct, but organizations need to promote the code of conduct (Shah & Alotaibi, 2018), which is what the partner organization does. Thus, as found in the literature review and the empirical data, codes of conduct by themselves are not enough to mitigate unethical behavior. Hence, having the codes of ethics be a part of an ethics program leads to a more effective approach to mitigate unethical behavior.

Ethics Training

The organization requires that all its managers take ethics training, which the organization provides. P5 stated, “One of the things that [the organization] does really well is...provide us a lot of training and coaching.” The training’s agenda includes the code of conduct and case studies. P1 stated, “We have very focused training that all of our managers are required to take.” Some of the participants described a training initiative that involves reviewing case studies, analysis, and discussion. P1 mentioned that during the training, the facilitator asks the managers the following questions: “If you encounter an unethical situation, if somebody comes to you with a concern, how do you effectively address it? How do you role model the right behavior as a leader?” The session then follows with a discussion about ethics including the organization’s expectation that all employees follow ethical principles. The participants’ statements align with previously reported literature. Giorgini et al. (2015) stated that organizations benefit from providing employees with training on ethical conduct to ensure they understand the rules and apply them appropriately. Recently published literature postulated that ethical training leads to positive workplace conduct (Kancharla & Dadhich, 2020). Ethical training is an essential component of an ethics program.

Director of Ethics and Compliance

The partner organization has a director of ethics and compliance with a staff of three employees. Most of the participants referred to this team as the “ethics and compliance team.” When referring to this team, P2 stated,

Their sole purpose exists in the organization to help all of us as employees make sure that we're doing the right thing every day. And so, any concerns that come in, get referred over to the ethics department, and they will do a confidential investigation.

The ethics and compliance team manages the ethics initiatives, which includes updating the company's codes of conduct, facilitating ethics training, and managing the ethics liaison's network, which I described in the next section. As previously found in the literature, an ethics officer is an essential component of an ethics program (Kaptein, 2015). Recently published literature indicated that ethics officers are usually in charge of developing, monitoring, and refining the ethics program in collaboration with other company divisions (Hess, 2019; Hogenbirk & Van Dun, 2021). Directors of ethics and compliance s create and promote a company's ethics program.

Ethics Liaison Network

The company's ethics and compliance team also lead an "ethics liaison network." It involves a group of employees who volunteer to serve as messengers of ethics practices to their respective teams. According to P1, given that the ethics and compliance team is small, the company created the ethics liaisons network, which helps increase awareness of ethical practices. According to P3, "Everybody knows that they can either call or talk to [the ethics liaison] if they have questions; I have use them as well." P4 stated, "We have a very strong ethics liaison network...every single department no matter how big or small you are, has a person in the network." Recently published research aligned with the participants' statements. Bates et al. (2017) indicated that ethics liaisons increase

awareness of ethical practices, share information about moral dilemmas, and review and update ethics projects. Ethics liaisons serve as advocates of ethical initiatives in organizations.

Ethics Report Line

The company has an anonymous alert line that most of the participants referenced. The alert line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for employees to report any issues or concerns. Most participants said they constantly promote it to ensure all employees know that it is for them. P3 stated, “We have an ethics hotline...so if somebody were to call and say, ‘I have a concern about something that’s going on,’ it would go through an HR kind of investigation channel.” In the literature review, I found that ethics report lines can be part of ethics programs, which complement other features of the program (Kaptein, 2015). I did not find any recently published literature on ethics report lines.

Accountability Policies

All participants spoke about the importance of setting expectations and making employees accountable. P5 stated, “I set the expectation, I speak about them very often, and then I hold people accountable to them.” Also, P3 stated,

If you’re going to set an expectation, but you’re not going to enforce policy, or you’re going to be relaxed on, behaviors that you wouldn’t want to see, it defeats the purpose of setting the expectation. So, it’s really even for the small things holding employees accountable.

The participants' statements align with Kaptein's (2015) contention that accountability policies are effective after managers set expectations through a code of ethics or training. Recently published literature indicated that accountability policies reduce unethical conduct (Usman & Hammed, 2017). Based on the participants' statements and the literature, accountability policies are a vital element of a company's ethics program.

Building an Ethical Climate

Another theme that emerged during the data analysis was "building an ethical climate." Ethical climate means that employees perceive that the organization has stable ethical policies and engage in the company's practices (Farouk & Jabeen, 2018; Kuenzi et al., 2019), which leads to employee well-being (Farouk & Jabeen, 2018; Schwepker et al., 2020). Some of the participants spoke about employee engagement and well-being. P5 stated "I am used to try to create a space where not only I'm true to myself, but I create a space where people can be true to themselves, whatever that looks like, and without judgment."

Also, P2 spoke about the well-being of employees. P2 stated

Because the fact that we have a culture that allows our employees to feel safe and secure and speaking up is something that we want to celebrate, because that in turn will make people help people understand that this is the behavior that we're driving.

The company also issues an annual employee survey to get employee's input about the organization's initiatives. According to P4, most employees fill out the survey. P4 stated

“we have something like 86% of our 17,000 employees fill out the employee survey. So, it’s an exceedingly high survey rate... So, the employee survey certainly gives us a data point.” The results of the survey provide the leaders with data to learn how the employees perceive the culture of the organization. If the data shows any areas of concern, they launch an investigation to find opportunities for improvement.

Also, as mentioned earlier, the company has an ethics liaison network comprised of volunteers, which help enhance the organization’s ethical climate. According to P4, employees enjoy being part of this network. P4 stated

People used to think ‘oh, I don’t want to have to have that extra job of being on the ethics liaison.’ Now people kind of fight for it. And so, we try to mix it up every other year, I’ll switch out the person who’s on it because they get to represent and it’s a network for them to be part of.

Also, P1 mentioned that the number of liaisons has increased over the years. P1 stated “we started out back in 2008, with like four, which was way too few. But it’s evolved each time the company has reorganized, and now we’re up to over 100 ethics liaisons.” The ethics liaison network has led to employee engagement. The company also has an anonymous hotline and an email inbox for employees to express concerns or ask questions about handling a situation. Based on the participants’ descriptions of ethics initiatives and employee engagement, it seems that the company has an ethical climate.

Leading by Example

Another theme that emerged as an essential strategy for senior leaders to mitigate unethical conduct was leading by example. Each participant mentioned the importance of

role modeling. P3 mentioned that leaders need to model “what good looks like.”

Similarly, P2 stated

We’re, you know, role modeling the right behavior that we’re expecting from our employees, because I think that’s important, the tone from the top matters, which I think is, you know, intuitive, but not always done, right. And so, it’s really making sure that you’re not allowing for exceptions, or, you know, deviations from company policy, no matter how minimal it is.

P5 gave an example of modeling ethical behavior, which employees emulated. P5 said

It doesn’t matter, you know, the type of philosophy people have, really employing the same expectations that I had set in following my example of things that I had done. And watching it cascade through the organization and seeing people not thinking about it, just doing the right thing, to me, was how I could kind of see that I was making a difference within the organization.

The company’s codes of conduct support this finding; the “guide for supervisors and managers” states the following: “set the ethical tone in our organization. Hold yourself to a high standard of conduct and do the right thing, even when the right thing seems like a difficult thing to do.” The partner organization has an expectation that managers lead by example and promote ethical behavior through the company.

This revelation of leading by example aligns with previous scholars’ contentions that ethical leaders serve as role models of ethical conduct and influence employees to behave ethically (Treviño et al., 2017). Employees closely observe their leaders and imitate their moral conduct (Cheng, 2019; Owens et al, 2019). Also, recently published

literature introduced the concepts of “ethical leaders” and “ethical persons.” According to Pircher et al. (2020), it is the ethical person who has the most influence on the employee’s actions, not the ethical leader. The notion of differentiating these concepts was originally introduced by Treviño et al. (2000). According to Treviño et al., a moral person displays moral characteristics such as honesty and integrity, and a moral manager influences employees to follow ethical norms. Hence, it is imperative for executives to demonstrate they are both ethical persons and moral managers for employees to perceive them as ethical leaders (Treviño et al., 2000) and emulate their behavior.

Leading by example also aligns with recently published literature on virtue ethics theory, which comprises individuals’ moral character (Alkadry et al., 2017). Virtuous ethics supporters put ethical theory into action by demonstrating virtuous qualities (Tsoukas, 2018). Leaders can demonstrate virtuous qualities through interpersonal relationships and the service they provide to stakeholders (Tsoukas, 2018). According to Fink (2020), “to act rightly is to act virtuously” (p. 14). Hence, leaders’ ethical conduct involves the expression of virtuous characteristics, which can positively influence followers’ conduct.

Having a Growth Mindset

The last theme that emerged during data analysis was having a growth mindset. All the participants talked about the importance of learning and finding ways to improve the organization at all levels. P3 stated

I think it’s important having avenues that your employees can turn to either raise questions or concerns, because it’s not realistic to think that, you know,

everybody knows what the ethical decision is. And so, to have that, you know, that continuous improvement and growth mindset.

P4 stated “we do town halls where we all talk about ethics, where we’ve done the right thing and where we’ve frankly done the wrong thing, any kind of opportunity to learn.”

Also, P2 stated

You can’t become complacent, you can’t become too confident that you know, you’ve done everything you can do to be an ethical organization, you cannot stop, you have to continuously try to drive that culture and to drive the right behavior. Because I truly believe if you stop right, you will backslide. And no matter how good you are, there’s always there’s always risk... it’s a human element. So, there’s always the risk of bad actors. So, you can’t completely guard against it.

The leaders use every opportunity to make improvements in the company’s guidance, initiatives, and practices. One of the companies’ initiatives to learn and improve is the monthly meetings on case studies. A case study includes an analysis and discussion of how a situation was handled and how it should have been handled based on the company’s values. Also, their annual anonymous survey results provide input for the senior leaders to find areas of improvement. The company also benchmarks against other organizations to learn about their ethical initiatives. Based on the participants’ emphasis on learning and improving the organization’s ethical practices, having a growth mindset surfaced as a theme that might help organizations reduce unethical conduct. I did not find any literature that linked having a growth mindset with decreasing unethical behavior.

Applications to Professional Practice

The specific business problem highlighted in this study is that senior leaders lack strategies to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in their organizations. The results of this study revealed five findings:

- Communicating the company's values continuously
- Building an ethical culture
- Building an ethical climate
- Leading by example
- Having a growth mindset

Senior leaders can apply the findings to solve the specific business problem by creating a value system, which would serve as the company's expectations for employees. A value system can help build the organization's culture (Schaefer et al., 2019). Senior leaders can include the values in the code of conduct and mission statement and promote them through newsletters and meetings. When everyone in the organization follows the company's values, they will also exhibit them to external stakeholders, leading to better communication, engagement, and trust with the stakeholders resulting in further collaboration (Bundy & Vogel, 2018).

Business leaders can also create an ethics program to build and maintain an ethical culture. An ethics program contains various components that complement each other to sustain an ethical organization (Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2020; Kaptein, 2015). Such components can include (a) codes of ethics, (b) ethics training, (c) ethics officer, (d) ethics liaison network, (e) ethics report line, and (f) accountability policies. The partner

organization included these initiatives in their ethics program. However, companies can design their own ethics program based on their values.

Business leaders can also create a communications plan that promotes both the values of the organization and the ethics program. The ethics officer can lead this effort in collaboration with employee volunteers, such as ethics liaisons. The communication plan can include monthly newsletters reminding employees of the company's values, mission, and expectations. Also, the ethics officer can provide managers with agenda topics related to ethics for managers to use in their staff meetings. Senior leaders must show support for the ethics program and communications plan if they want the employees to follow them.

Implications for Social Change

Ethical leaders mitigate unethical conduct by exhibiting ethical behavior and engaging in CSR initiatives to protect the natural environment. Through their actions, ethical leaders inspire employees to follow moral values and engage in CSR initiatives (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018). In turn, employees display ethical conduct in their treatment of stakeholders (Opoku-Dakwa, 2018). Ethical leaders partner with stakeholders to carry out environmental initiatives to avoid ecological harm (Ullah et al., 2017). For instance, the partner organization invests in initiatives to reduce air pollution, which negatively affects climate change, and supports wildlife protection. It also expects its suppliers to adopt the organization's environmental policies. Based on this study's research, ethical leaders positively impact society by implementing initiatives that benefit the natural environment.

Ethical leaders are also responsible leaders who engage in CSR practices to help communities (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2017; Tourigny et al., 2019). For instance, the partner organization carries out community development enterprises. One of the initiatives involves funding infrastructure projects to advance the economic progress in the communities in which they do business. They also provide grants to build affordable housing for underserved members of the community. They also partner with non-profit organizations and community colleges to support the communities' social, environmental, and economic development. The company's "our code of ethics" states: "We are at the heart of communities... because we want to see the communities in which we operate thrive." Some of the partner organization's employees also volunteer to work alongside non-profit organizations for community development. The company also provides funding for scholarships to college graduates to serve underserved populations in developing countries. Some of the projects abroad have involved education for young women in villages and health educations for children. The partner organization provides clear examples that ethical leaders engage in CSR by supporting community development and education.

Ethical leaders influence followers to join social responsibility practices (Han et al., 2019). Ethical leaders promote OCBs and citizenship behavior for the environment. (Han et al., 2019; Tourigny et al., 2019). The implication for social change is the ethical leaders influence the employees to engage in the organization's social change mission (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018).

Ethical leaders also impact employees' personal lives. Ethical leadership leads to employee satisfaction and quality of work-life, which positively affects their employees and their families (Lee et al., 2018). Ethical leaders positively influence their employees' moral conduct, which helps employees manage their family conflict (Freire & Bettencourt, 2020). Positively managing family conflict is significant because families are a fundamental part of society (Chirisa et al., 2018). Families shape human behavior and embed values in their members to become responsible members of society (Rimkuvienė et al., 2020).

Also, recently published literature ascertained that ethical leaders influence employees to share knowledge (Xia & Yang, 2020). This outcome is significant because employee knowledge yields group organizational knowledge, productivity, innovation, and growth (Mohajan, 2019). This concept is noteworthy because unwillingness to share knowledge is based on individuals' self-interest at the cost of stakeholders' welfare and the larger community (Bavik et al., 2018). Ethical leaders, however, promote the values of fairness, collaboration, open communication, and transparency (Bababola et al., 2016; Knights, 2016; Ullah et al., 2017). The implication for social change is that ethical leaders influence followers to share knowledge with other members of society (Bavik et al., 2018).

Finally, recently published literature indicated that ethical leaders reduce bullying in the workplace by improving the work environment (Islam et al., 2019). Workplace bullying is a universal societal problem associated with psychological harm for those affected by this toxic behavior (Ahmad et al., 2017). Recently published literature

confirmed that whereas ethical leaders establish a healthy work environment where employees are engaged and happy (Ko et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2017), unethical leaders create a climate of fear (Syed et al., 2019). The implication for social change is that ethical leadership reduces bullying in the workplace by creating and maintaining an ethical culture that ensures employees' well-being (Khokhar & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2017; Riaz, 2018).

Recommendations for Action

The findings of this case study offer strategic initiatives that senior leaders can use to mitigate unethical conduct and avoid negative consequences such as employee turnover intention. The strategies are (a) communicating the company's values continuously, (b) building an ethical culture, (c) building an ethical climate, (d) leading by example, and (e) having a growth mindset. These findings indicate the importance of ethical leadership to practitioners. Ethical leadership behaviors (such as honesty, respect, fairness, etc.) foster a healthy work environment. In a healthy environment, employees identify with the organization's values, and employers retain skilled employees, thereby increasing organizational performance and satisfied stakeholders (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017; Suifan et al., 2020). Ethical leadership are essential to mitigate unethical conduct, reduce employee turnover intentions, and improved business performance.

I recommend that companies build ethical cultures by implementing CSR initiatives and by creating ethics programs. CSR practices have many benefits. They positively impact society, help mitigate unethical conduct, and enhance organizational

performance (Burbano & Chiles, 2018; Ullah et al., 2017; Williams & Seaman, 2016).

There are numerous causes organizations can support. As found in this study, some causes can include protecting our natural environment and serving underserved populations.

Ethics programs also have benefits; they help build ethical cultures, mitigate unethical conduct, and increase organizational performance (Eisenbeiss et al., 2015; Kaptein, 2015; Kaptein, 2009). The ethics program can include a code of conduct, an ethics training plan, and a communications plan. The ethics program should also have a coordinator, such as an Ethics Officer, to develop and manage the ethics program. The foundation of the code of ethics could consist of principles such as integrity, honesty, respect, and care for others (Schwartz, 2005).

The ethics program should include ethics training for all employees. Training can be based on the organization's code of ethics and the organization's values. The training can include reviewing case studies related to ethical or unethical behavior for awareness, discussion, and learning. Dilemma discussions can increase ethical awareness because employees learn from real-life issues (Kreismann & Talaulicar, 2021). The company should consider providing the training more than once. Continuous training and repetition may be helpful for sustainable learning and the development of ethical aptitude (Kreismann & Talaulicar, 2021).

A communications plan is also crucial to reinforce the message of ethical conduct. Organizations can create a quarterly newsletter that includes ethics-related stories or links to news clips and a message from a senior leader each quarter reinforcing the company's

values. The company can also post on their intranet a list of the values they expect everyone to follow. Most importantly, senior leaders must support and follow the ethics program if they expect others to do the same.

The findings of this study are relevant to not only business leaders and managers but human resource practitioners. Business leaders of private, public, and nonprofit institutions can use these strategies as a foundation to build and maintain an ethical culture. I will share this study in my place of employment, so that all managers can learn about the importance of maintaining an ethical organization. I will also disseminate the results of this study to interested stakeholders through knowledge sharing in social media forums and through a potential publication in a business and academic journal.

Recommendations for Further Research

The information the participants shared provided relevant information. The participants spoke at length about their experiences as senior ethical leaders and their strategies to mitigate unethical conduct in the organization. The information they provided led me to five findings, which I was able to corroborate with the documents I gathered.

This study has its limitations. The results of the study are limited to the individuals I interviewed at one organization. Another limitation is that I conducted all interviews virtually due to the pandemic. I did not have an opportunity to visit the organization in person and collect data via observation. Another limitation could be the sample size in that I interviewed five participants. However, the sample size in a qualitative study is an area of uncertainty (Vasileiou et al., 2018). According to Sim et al.

(2018), there is no ideal number of cases because data from numerous cases does not always lead to more significant results. However, Marshall et al. (2013) mentioned that although there is not a standard for sample size, he suggested that a case study should contain between 15 to 30 interviews. Contrary to Marshall et al.'s statement, Alase (2017) maintained that the sample size could be between 2 and 25 participants. Therefore, given the variation of opinions, a specific sample size might not be a concrete limitation.

There are several areas researchers can investigate to expand the scope of this study. Researchers could replicate this study by using data from different geographical areas. Replicating the task using the same instruments and reaching the same conclusion would further validate this study's findings. Researchers can also conduct quantitative research analysis to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and unethical conduct. Researchers can also perform a study on ethical leadership from the employees' perspective to learn more about building an ethical climate.

Researchers can also study the impact of mentoring on ethical leadership. During this research, two participants referenced mentoring and coaching. One mentioned that coaching is vital to building ethical leaders, and another participant said that the participant has mentors who have helped the participant develop as a leader. Researchers could examine the relationship between mentoring and unethical leadership behavior to determine whether mentoring is a factor that can mitigate it.

Reflections

Through the interview process, I kept a journal which helped me uncover preconceived notions and personal biases. Before interviewing the leaders, I had concluded that the senior leaders had a lot to be proud of, given their exceptional recognitions and multiple CSR initiatives. I assumed the participants would talk about their numerous awards, how much they helped others, and perhaps display well-justified pride. That was not the case; what they showed were modesty and humility. Each participant acknowledged that they still find weaknesses in the organization, which they address by making adjustments in their approach and continuous training. They spoke enthusiastically about ethical leadership and their interest to learn from each other, their employees, and other companies. This fact further confirmed the finding that ethical leaders' demonstration of values such as humility could mitigate unethical conduct.

Conclusion

Leaders' unethical conduct is detrimental for organizations. It involves self-interest at stakeholders' expense, and it can lead to fraud and business closures (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017; Xia et al., 2019). Unethical decision making contributed to the 2007 financial crisis, which led to the global recession (Schoen, 2017; Wiggings & Metrick, 2019) and cost many stakeholders their life savings and livelihoods (Chin et al., 2019; Merle, 2018; Schoen, 2017). Considering the devastation caused by unethical conduct, it is imperative for senior leaders to follow ethical principles that lead to the well-being of stakeholders and the organization's durability. Understandably,

organizations need to make profits to subsist and grow; but they must work within the confines of ethical practices for long-term sustainability (Ogbodo & Umoru, 2018).

Ethical leaders do not compromise ethical decision-making at any expense. The benefits of ethical leadership are vast. They include employee engagement and well-being, low turn-over intentions, CSR initiatives, performance improvement, satisfied stakeholders, and an ethical climate (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017; Feng et al., 2019; Suifan et al., 2020; Ullah et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017). It would be in senior leaders' best interest to consider launching an ethics program to mitigate unethical conduct and build and maintain an ethical organizational culture.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol To interview an Organization's Senior Leaders
1. Begin with a brief introduction of the researcher, the research topic and an overview of how the data may be used.
2 . Acknowledge the importance of the senior leaders' time and thank them for their participation and support.
3. Review the signed consent form and ask if there are questions or concerns regarding their authorized consent to participate.
4. Inform the participant that I will be using video conference to audio record and transcribe the interview.
5. Note the date and the time of the interview.
6. Mention that I have 6 questions and that the interview should take between 30 to 45 minutes to complete.
7. Ask the questions. Watch for non-verbal cues. Paraphrase as needed. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth.
8. Give the participant ample time to answer each question.
9. Offer the participant the opportunity to give any additional data that I did not ask.
10. Thank the senior leaders for their time and participation.
11. Mention next steps: member checking and that upon completion of the study; I will share a summary of the study.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used for mitigating unethical conduct of managers in your organization?
2. How did you assess the effectiveness of the strategies you used for mitigating managers' unethical conduct in your organization?
3. What key barriers have you encountered in implementing strategies for mitigating managers' unethical conduct in your organization?
4. How did you address the key barriers to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in your organization?
5. What, if any, motivational techniques do you use to encourage ethical behavior among organizational managers?
6. What, if any, additional strategies have you used to mitigate managers' unethical conduct in your organization?