

The Ethical Leadership Model for Administrators of Normal Colleges and Universities in Liaoning Province

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: (1) to determine the components and indicators of ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province; (2) to propose ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province; and (3) to develop implementation guidelines for ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province. The research was mixed methodology research including qualitative research and quantitative research. Population was administrators and teachers from 10 normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province, the People's Republic of China, totaling 7903. The sample was obtained by proportional stratified random sampling method determined by statistical program, totally 367. The instruments used for collecting data were a semi-structured interview form, a five-point rating scale questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussion form. Descriptive statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis were used to perform data analysis by using statistical software as well as the content analysis was employed.

Research results were revealed that: (1) the components and indicators screened from theoretical framework, consisted of six components and 41 indicators of ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province namely, people orientation, fairness and justice, power sharing, ethical guidance, role clarification and integrity and honesty; (2) developed model of the ethical leadership for administrators in normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province was consistent with the empirical data ($X^2/df=1.742$, $GFI=0.855$, $AGFI=0.838$, $NFI=0.876$, $IFI=0.943$, $TLI=0.940$, $CFI=0.943$, $RMSEA=0.045$); and (3) there were 21 implementation guidelines for the ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership Model; Administrators; Normal Colleges and Universities; Liaoning Province

Introduction

As China enters a new era with rapid educational development and increasing globalization, research on ethical leadership among administrators in normal universities becomes crucial. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has emphasized the importance of educating people based on ethics and cultivating socialist builders and successors (Xi Jinping, 2022). In today's changing educational environment, higher education institutions face challenges, and strengthening ethical governance is significant for both university development and social citizen ethical construction.

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With the rapid development of society, colleges and universities have experienced some ethical anomie, breaking through the ethical bottom line. Ethics scandals and accusations against unethical behaviors have spurred interest in understanding organizational influences (Chuan-Chung Hsieh et al. 2023). These phenomena have a negative impact on school development and social progress.

Ethical leadership for administrators in normal colleges and universities is extremely important. For students, it sets an example and helps form correct values. For campuses, it creates a good cultural atmosphere. For teachers, it inspires and improves ethical cultivation. For schools, it builds a good image and promotes sustainable development. This research on the ethical leadership of administrators in normal colleges and universities is significant as it has a positive and far-reaching impact on schools and students.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the components and indicators of ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province.
2. To propose ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province.
3. To develop implementation guidelines for ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province.

Literature Review

Ethical leadership involves personal characteristics, behaviors, and decision-making focused on morality and the ethical management of others within an organization (Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Failures in educational ethical leadership have emphasized the importance of moral leadership in institutions (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2015). In Liaoning Province where higher education is rapidly developing, normal colleges are crucial in cultivating educational talent. Administrators' leadership is key to institutional operation and development, and ethical leadership is especially valuable in recent years. It significantly influences internal management, teacher-student cohesion, and the cultivation of future educators. Research

1.1 Definition of ethical leadership

Ethical leadership is crucial in today's organizations. This literature review analyzes and synthesizes its definitions. In early research, it was defined by a leader's integrity and character. In this research, ethical leadership refers to a style where leaders, based on moral principles and values, influence subordinates through their behaviours and decisions. Leaders lead by example, abide by ethical norms like being people-oriented, fair, just, able to share power, provide ethical leadership, clarify roles, and be honest and trustworthy.

1.2 The theoretical foundation of ethical leadership

Firstly, the development of ethical leadership theory involves the application of social learning theory and social exchange theory. According to Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2020) social learning theory, leaders set examples for their subordinates through their own behavior, influencing their ethical actions. Brown et al. (2005) proposed that leaders regulate personal behavior and influence followers through their own actions and two-way communication.

Additionally, social exchange theory suggests that when leaders treat subordinates fairly and with care, followers are likely to reciprocate with positive behavior.

Secondly, transformational and authentic leadership also contain ethical elements. Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1999) points out that leaders can influence subordinates either ethically or unethically. Authentic leadership (Arar, K., Haj, I., Abramovitz, R., & Oplatka, I. (2016) emphasizes that leaders act based on their true self and influence the organization through genuine actions, although not all scholars believe that authentic leadership necessarily includes moral components.

Lastly, Kalshoven, K., & Den Hartog, D. N. (2009) introduced the tension in ethical leadership based on altruism, suggesting that leaders' actions should prioritize the interests of others and society, rather than self-interest. Overall, ethical leadership is not just a leadership style but a way to influence organizations and society effectively through role modeling, behavior regulation, and motivating followers.

1.3 Education in Liaoning Province

Liaoning, with its capital Shenyang, is a coastal province in Northeast China. Liaoning Province is crucial in China's higher normal education, having ten public normal colleges and universities. Liaoning Normal University and Shenyang Normal University, established in 1951, offer various programs and serve over 13,000 and 21,000 undergraduates respectively. Other institutions like Anshan Normal University and Chaoyang Normal College provide diverse education for tens of thousands of students. Specialized schools such as Liaoning Special Education Teachers College and Liaoning Normal School for Nationalities train teachers for disabled students and ethnic minorities. These institutions are vital for cultivating future educators in Liaoning.

Research Methodology

1. Population and sample

The population was 7903, including administrators and teachers in normal colleges and universities under Liaoning Province, the sample was obtained by proportional stratified random sampling by using G*Power program version 3.1.9.1 (χ^2 tests - Goodness-of-fit tests: Contingency tables at DF=62, α err prob = 0.05 Effect size $w = 0.3$) totally 367 samples.

2. Research instruments

Three research instruments were used to examine the objectives of this paper. Part 1: Semi-structured interview. Part 2: Five-point rating scale questionnaire. Part 3: Focus Group discussion form. The instrument used for collecting data was a semi-structured interview form, a five-point rating scale questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussion form. Descriptive statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis were used to perform data analysis by using statistical software.

3. Data collection

(1) After conducting literature research, the researcher contacted seven key informants and sent interview questionnaires via email and phone. (2) Approximately 367 survey questions were sent and collected in online way, and all questionnaires were valid. (3) Focus group

discussions can be conducted on-site, led by researcher and open discussions. The researcher acted as facilitator.

4. Data analysis

(1) Perform content analysis on the results of literature review and in-depth interviews.

(2) Utilize descriptive statistical methods to analyze demographic variable data, including frequency and percentage. Descriptive statistics are employed to analyze the variables and components of the ethical leadership for administrators in normal colleges and universities, such as mean and standard deviation (SD). Conduct Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province.

(3) Conduct content analysis on the results of focus group discussions and ultimately propose effective guidelines.

Research Conceptual Framework

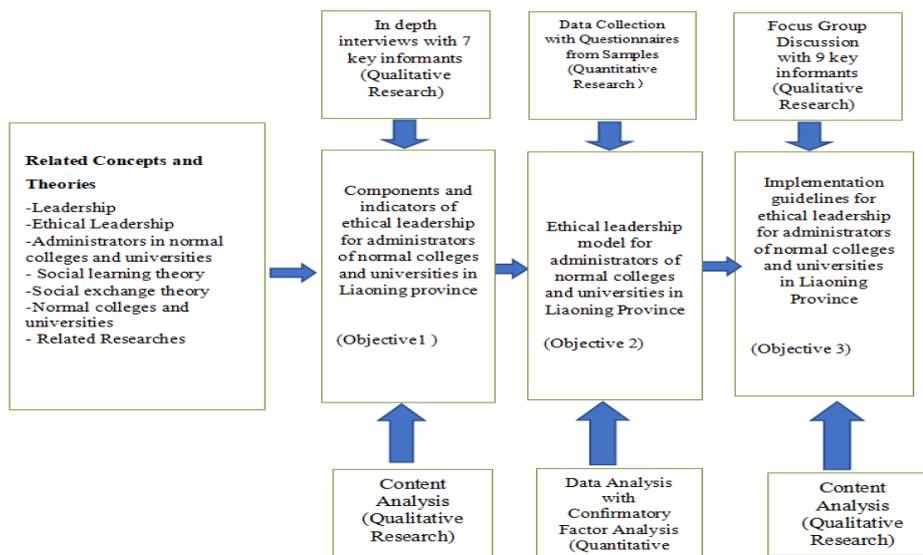


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

Research Results

Section 1: result of content analysis for research objective 1

The determine the components and indicators of ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province. Found that based on a literature review and interviews with key information providers, the researcher combined the total number of components from both sources and selected 20 effective components after repeated comparisons. A five-point sub-scale questionnaire was then developed on these components as a research tool. The instrument's quality was tested for content validity and reliability. For content validity, five experts reviewed the questionnaire using the Item Objective Congruence

(IOC) method, removing variables with scores below 0.6. Ultimately, six components and 41 indicators were retained.

Section 2 : Result of data analysis for research objective 2

The propose ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province. Found that according to statistics, there are about 367 samples including administrators and teachers in these 10 normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province. In this survey, researcher distributed about 400 questionnaires and recovered 367.They are both from the normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province and are distinguished according to gender, age, education level and professional title.

Part I: Result of data analysis on questionnaire: demographic information

A total of 367 valid questionnaires were collected in the survey. The demographic information covered in the questionnaires encompassed seven aspects: gender, age range, educational level, position level, professional title, working experience, and type of school. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out on this information, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 The descriptive analysis

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	167	45.5
	Female	200	54.5
Age range	Lower than 25 years old	15	4.1
	26 – 35 years old	94	25.6
	36– 45 years old	125	34.1
	46– 50 years old	63	17.2
	More than 50 years old	70	19.1
Educational Level	Bachelor	56	15.3
	Master	125	34.1
	Doctor	161	43.9
	Postdoc	20	5.4
	Others (please specific)	5	1.4
Position Level	Administrative Leader	83	22.6
	Administrative staff	29	7.9
	Teachers	216	58.9
	Others (Specific)	39	10.6
Professional title	Assistant	63	17.2
	Instructor	145	39.5
	Associate Professor	80	21.8
	Professor	36	9.8
	Others (please specific)	43	11.7
Working Experience	1 – 5 years	21	5.7
	6 – 10 years	90	24.5
	11 – 15 years	178	48.5
	More than 15 years	78	21.3
Type of school	Undergraduate Normal School	84	22.9

	College of Normal School	95	25.9
	A comprehensive university with a major in teacher education	188	51.2

The researcher sorted questionnaires and found the basic composition of survey samples: Females (54.5%) are slightly more than males (45.5%). Age is mainly middle-aged (36 - 50). Mostly doctorate and master's holders. Teachers account for the largest proportion in position. Lecturers are the largest in number in title, followed by assistants and associate professors. Those with 11 - 15 years of experience are the largest. Most are from comprehensive universities with teacher education majors, followed by normal colleges.

Part II Questionnaire data analysis results: variables analysis

1. Analysis the reliability of all the variables

The reliability test determines if questionnaire results are consistent. Cronbach's α value measures questionnaire consistency. 0.65 - 0.70 is minimally acceptable, 0.7 - 0.8 is good, and 0.8 - 1 is very reliable. The researcher used SPSS to calculate Cronbach's α coefficients to check data's internal consistency and reliability. The results are as follows table 1.

Table 2 Reliability analysis of all the variables

Variate	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
People orientation	7	0.939
Fairness and Justice	9	0.963
Power sharing	7	0.966
Ethical guidance	7	0.961
Role Clarification	4	0.904
Integrity and Honesty	7	0.926
Overall reliability of the scale	41	0.982

The above table's reliability analysis results show that this study set up 41 measurement items corresponding to 6 latent variables. The scale's overall reliability α value is 0.982. The reliability α values for People orientation, Fairness and Justice, Power sharing, Ethical guidance, Role Clarification, and Integrity and Honesty are 0.939, 0.963, 0.966, 0.961, 0.904, and 0.926 respectively. The reliability coefficients of each variable are all greater than 0.7. Thus, the questionnaire has better credibility and consistency.

2. Result of Data Analysis on Part 2 of the Questionnaire (n =367)

The theoretical model constructed by this research institute consists of 6 components: People orientation (PO), Fairness and Justice (FJ), Power Sharing (PS), Ethical Guidance (EG), Role Clarification (RC), and Integrity and Honesty (IH). Among them, people orientation involves 7 indicators, fairness and justice include 9 indicators, power sharing has 7 indicators, Ethical Guidance involve 7 indicators, role clarification contains 4 indicators, and integrity and honesty contain 7 indicators, totalling 41 indicators. Based on the effective data collected from

the formal survey, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out on the scores of the 41 indicators of the 6 components, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive statistical results of each indicator

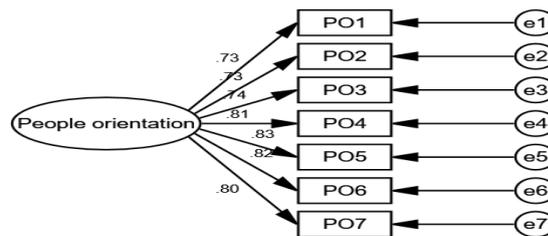
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Level
PO1	3.66	0.972	-0.435	-0.329	High
PO2	3.73	0.942	-0.438	-0.23	High
PO3	3.78	0.999	-0.654	0.006	High
PO4	3.8	0.967	-0.813	0.408	High
PO5	3.8	0.908	-0.664	0.151	High
PO6	3.73	1.013	-0.665	0.089	High
PO7	3.72	0.915	-0.355	-0.547	High
FJ1	3.54	0.979	-0.284	-0.663	High
FJ2	3.56	0.97	-0.428	-0.353	High
FJ3	3.71	1.06	-0.606	-0.198	High
FJ4	3.66	1.079	-0.626	-0.143	High
FJ5	3.46	1.02	-0.273	-0.369	Medium
FJ6	3.54	1.07	-0.393	-0.373	High
FJ7	3.7	0.971	-0.774	0.35	High
FJ8	3.46	1.098	-0.298	-0.622	Medium
FJ9	3.6	1.15	-0.53	-0.506	High
PS1	4.01	1.128	-1.158	0.675	High
PS2	3.71	1.021	-0.49	-0.192	High
PS3	3.68	0.981	-0.682	0.321	High
PS4	3.88	1.074	-0.83	-0.064	High
PS5	3.85	0.989	-0.86	0.38	High
PS6	3.82	0.979	-0.787	0.314	High
PS7	3.72	0.983	-0.495	-0.379	High
EG1	3.65	1.111	-0.65	-0.094	High
EG2	3.49	1.196	-0.382	-0.76	Medium
EG3	3.44	0.987	-0.342	-0.271	Medium
EG4	3.48	1.083	-0.543	-0.163	Medium
EG5	3.54	1.026	-0.527	-0.088	High
EG6	3.38	1.064	-0.317	-0.387	Medium
EG7	3.56	1.124	-0.614	-0.283	High
RC1	3.41	1.191	-0.33	-0.712	Medium
RC2	3.33	1.245	-0.207	-1.014	Medium
RC3	3.42	1.085	-0.101	-0.759	Medium
RC4	3.34	1.091	-0.163	-0.545	Medium
IH1	3.32	1.129	-0.17	-0.77	Medium
IH2	3.24	1.099	0.053	-0.856	Medium
IH3	3.24	1.031	-0.132	-0.512	Medium
IH4	3.3	1.073	-0.112	-0.614	Medium

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Level
IH5	3.23	1.058	-0.223	-0.571	Medium
IH6	3.29	1.103	-0.063	-0.71	Medium
IH7	3.24	1.067	-0.077	-0.673	Medium

The scale has 6 variables and 41 measurement items. Item averages range from 3.23 to 4, indicating high respondent choice tendency. Standard deviation is between 0.908 and 1.245. Skewness is -1.158 to 0.053 and kurtosis is -1.014 to 0.675, meeting criteria of absolute skewness less than 3 and absolute kurtosis less than 10.

3. Data analytic: selecting metrics for each component measurement mode

F



F

Standardized estimates
 Default model
 $\chi^2=34.164; df=14; \chi^2/df=2.440$
 ;GFI=.973;AGFI=.947
 NFI=.978;IFI=.987;TLI=.980;CFI=.987;RFI=.967
 RMSEA=.063

Figure 1 People orientation measurement results of various indicators

The figure above showed the people orientation measurement model analyzed by AMOS. It is found that the best indicators of this measurement model are consistent with the empirical data. The GFI, AGFI, TLI, CFI are greater than 0.90 to reach the ideal standard, and the RMSEA is < 0.08 . It meets the standard (Hair et al., 2019, Table Tennis Suksanwang, 2021). The model consists of seven indicators PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4, PO5, PO6, and PO7, and the factor loads are 0.73, 0.73, 0.74, 0.81, 0.83, 0.82, and 0.80, respectively. Therefore, we choose these indicators as representatives to describe this component.

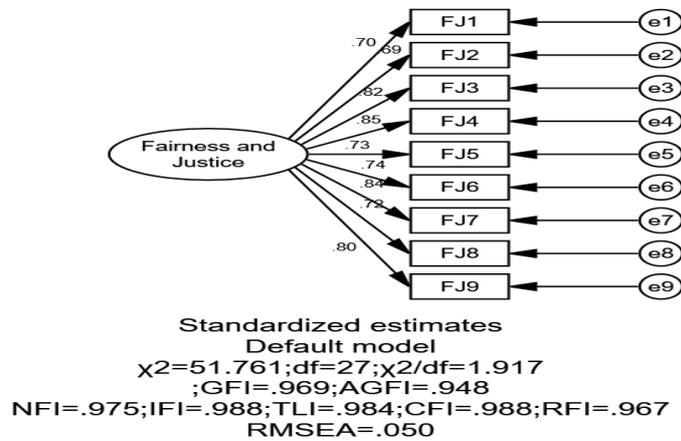


Figure 2 Measurement of Fairness and Justice Indicators

The Fairness and Justice measurement model analysed by AMOS shows that its best indicators are consistent with empirical data. GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI are greater than 0.90, reaching the ideal standard, and RMSEA is < 0.08, meeting the standard. The model consists of nine indicators (FJ1 to FJ9) with factor loads ranging from 0.69 to 0.85. These indicators are chosen as representatives to describe this component.

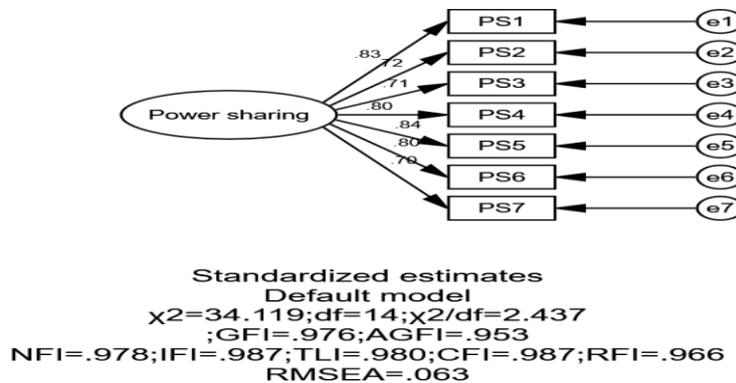
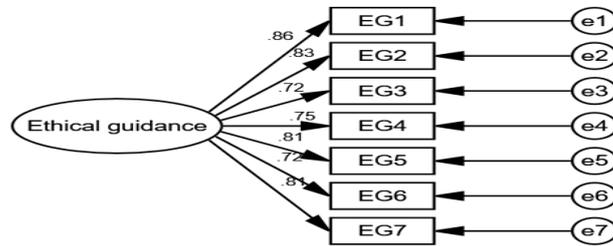


Figure 3 Power sharing of various indicators

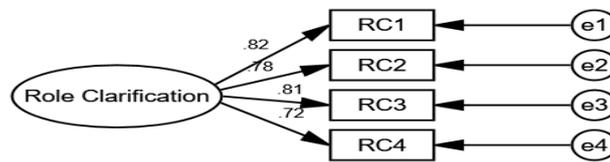
The Power sharing measurement model analysed by AMOS has best indicators consistent with empirical data. GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI are greater than 0.90, reaching the ideal standard, and RMSEA is < 0.08, conforming to the standard. The model consists of seven indicators (PS1 to PS7) with factor loads ranging from 0.70 to 0.84. These indicators are chosen as representatives to describe this component.



Standardized estimates
 Default model
 $\chi^2=20.416; df=14; \chi^2/df=1.458$
 ;GFI=.984;AGFI=.969
 NFI=.987;IFI=.996;TLI=.994;CFI=.996;RFI=.981
 RMSEA=.035

Figure 4 Ethical guidance on measurement of indicators

The Ethical guidance measurement model analysed by AMOS has best indicators consistent with empirical data. GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI are greater than 0.90, and RMSEA is < 0.08 , meeting the standard. The model consists of seven indicators (EG1 to EG7) with factor loadings ranging from 0.72 to 0.86. These indicators are chosen as representatives to describe this component.



Standardized estimates
 Default model
 $\chi^2=2.962; df=2; \chi^2/df=1.481$
 ;GFI=.996;AGFI=.979
 NFI=.996;IFI=.999;TLI=.996;CFI=.999;RFI=.987
 RMSEA=.036

Figure 5 Role Clarification Measurement Results of Various Indicators

The Role Clarification model analyzed by AMOS has indicators consistent with empirical data. GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI are > 0.90 and RMSEA < 0.08 , meeting standards. The model has four indicators (RC1-RC4) with factor loadings from 0.72 to 0.82, representing this component.

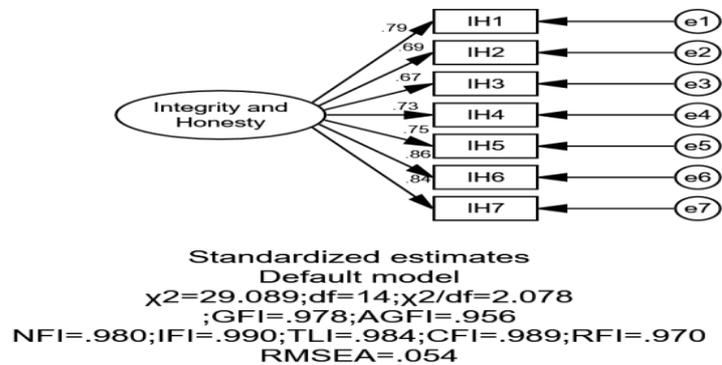


Figure 6 Integrity and Honesty Measurement Results of Various Indicators

The Integrity and Honesty measurement model analysed by AMOS has best indicators consistent with empirical data. GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI are greater than 0.90, and RMSEA is < 0.08, meeting the standard. The model has seven indicators (IH1 to IH7) with factor loads from 0.67 to 0.86. These are chosen as representatives for this component.

4. Correlation analysis

In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to verify variable relationships. Passing the statistical significance test shows significant correlations, providing a basis for subsequent regression analysis.

Table 4 Correlations of all variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. People Orientation	1					
2. Fairness And Justice	.486**	1				
3. Power Sharing	.497**	.645**	1			
4. Ethical Guidance	.423**	.724**	.534**	1		
5. Role Clarification	.308**	.454**	.408**	.607**	1	
6. Integrity And Honesty	.288**	.342**	.257**	.357**	.257**	1

*P<0.05, **P<0.01

The correlation analysis results show that the Pearson correlation coefficients between the six potential variables are all above 0.1, with significant P values less than 0.05, indicating significant statistical significance. Thus, the six latent variables have significant correlations. Appropriate indicators for each component were determined for secondary CFA studies.

5. Data analytic: establishing a model of ethical leadership for administrators in normal colleges in Liaoning Province

Researchers used AMOS software to analyze two-level confirmative factor analysis results and established a moral leadership model for managers in Liaoning Province's normal colleges and universities as shown in the following table.

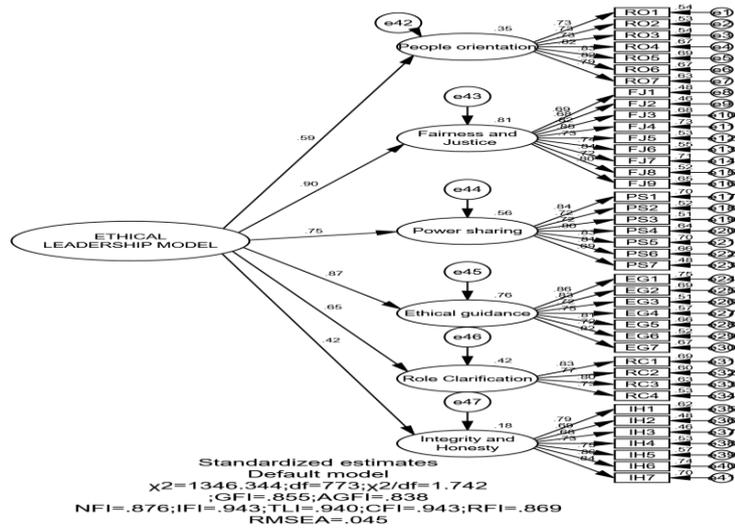


Figure 7 Measurement results of various variable indicator combinations

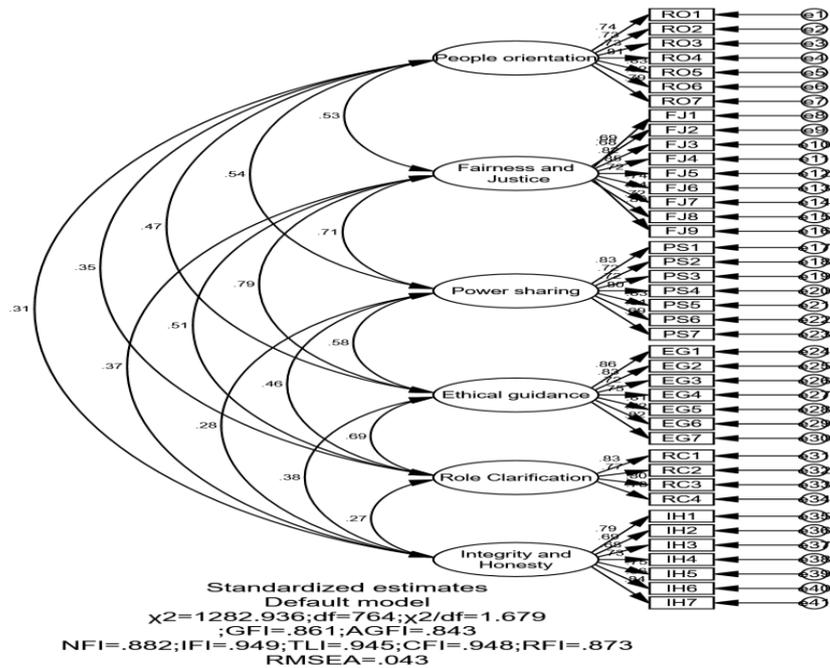


Figure 8 Measurement results of various variable indicator combinations

Section 3 : Result of data analysis for research objective 3

The research on developing implementation guidelines for ethical leadership for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province found that the focus group discussion was led by the researcher. It involved 9 key informants from different normal colleges in Liaoning Province with over 10 years of experience, including school ministers, vice deans of teaching, and department heads of education. They are professionals with education management experience. Based on freedom and voluntarism, experts freely expressed their views. According to the research results of 3 objectives and the above guidelines, there are 21 implementation guidelines for ethical leadership in this research.

Discussion

As this research finding, there were 6 components of the ethical leadership model which consisted of ,people orientation,fairness and justice, power sharing ,ethical guidance ,role clarification, integrity and honesty. These findings were based on a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and the validation of field survey data. In the researcher's opinion, these elements contributed to fostering a composition of the ethical leadership for administrators' model of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province. The above viewpoints are consistent with those put forward by experts in education-related fields. Kalshoven, K., Den Hartog, D. N., & De Hoogh, A. H. B. (2011).

In the model of this research , which includes traits such as integrity and values-based inspirational leadership, the opinion is consistent with Treviño, L. K., Brown, M., & Hartman, L. P. (2003). While Kontia and Khuntia & Suar revised ethical leadership into two dimensions of "motivation, trait and empowerment" through exploratory factor analysis based on the dimension division of moral leadership by Kenanger and Mendoca in 2004, which is not the same as result of the research.

The conclusion of this study gives reasonable guiding principles from six aspects of the leadership model. These suggestions can solve practical problems. For example, the ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province includes six key elements. Based on literature and field data, it benefits teachers and students. For teachers, it fosters a good environment, reduces stress, enhances job satisfaction, supports professional growth, and promotes moral standards. For students, it improves education quality, fosters values, ensures equal opportunities, and creates a harmonious campus. This aligns with theories like Thomas J. Sergiovanni's, highlighting moral leadership's role.

Conclusion

The research examines the ethical leadership model for administrators of normal colleges and universities in Liaoning Province, China. It identifies six key components of ethical leadership: people orientation, fairness and justice, power sharing, ethical guidance, role clarification, and integrity and honesty. These components were developed through literature reviews, semi-structured interviews, and confirmatory factor analysis. The study concludes that ethical leadership is crucial for effective management in higher education, fostering a positive campus environment, improving institutional integrity, and supporting teacher-student cohesion.

Recommendation

Part I: Recommend for Policies Formulation

1. Develop Ethical Leadership Standards: Establish clear ethical guidelines for administrators based on the six identified components. These standards should be integrated into institutional policies and leadership training programs.

2. Regular Ethical Audits: Implement regular evaluations of administrators' adherence to ethical standards through audits and performance reviews, ensuring that leaders maintain integrity, fairness, and transparency.

3. Supportive Legislation: Encourage government-level policies that promote ethical leadership training as a mandatory part of higher education reforms.

Part II: Recommendation for Practical Applications

1. Ethical Leadership Training: Incorporate ethical leadership training into professional development programs for administrators. This training should emphasize decision-making, fairness, and people-oriented management.

2. Inclusive Decision-Making: Foster a collaborative environment by encouraging power sharing, where teachers and students participate in decision-making processes, thus strengthening institutional cohesion.

3. Mentor-ship Programs: Establish mentor-ship programs where experienced administrators model ethical behavior and leadership for emerging leaders within the institution.

Part III: Recommend for Further Research

1. Longitudinal Studies: Conduct long-term research to assess the impact of ethical leadership on institutional outcomes, such as academic performance, staff retention, and student satisfaction.

2. Cross-Provincial Comparisons: Compare the ethical leadership models in Liaoning with those in other provinces to identify regional differences and best practices in ethical leadership in higher education.

3. Student Perception Studies: Investigate how students perceive the ethical leadership of administrators and its influence on their moral development and academic engagement.

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