

The Power of Ethical Leadership in Advancing Social Justice and Equity in Physical Education Programs in Beijing, China



Zheng Xuezheng

Emilio Aguinaldo College, Manila, Philippines

ABSTRACT: The study aimed to investigate the impact of the pandemic on physical education teachers and coaches in Beijing, China. A sample of 132 teachers was selected using random sampling. A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data on ethical leadership practices, social justice outcomes, and equity outcomes in physical education programs. The Likert-type scale measured the perceived role of program administrators in promoting ethical leadership. Data analysis used descriptive statistics, Pearson-R, the t-test, and ANOVA to test hypotheses. The study examined the correlation between ethical leadership and social justice in physical education programs. The results indicated that there was no significant correlation found between perceptions of ethical leadership and social justice promotion. This suggests that variations in individuals' perceptions of ethical leadership were not strongly linked to variations in their perceptions of social justice promotion.

KEYWORDS: ethical leadership, social justice, equity, physical education programs

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Education in China is highly valued. Thus, issues of social justice and equity in physical education programs have been identified. These include unequal access to resources, such as equipment and facilities, and a lack of inclusivity and diversity in the curriculum. In the most recent years, Physical Education is understood as a means to promote social justice and equity. Moreover, ethical leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on addressing these issues.

Literature on ethical leadership in education indicates that it is a crucial aspect in fostering excellent results for students and instructors. In particular, ethical leadership has been associated to greater levels of work satisfaction among teachers, increased levels of academic accomplishment among students, and a favorable culture inside schools (Avolio et al., 2009 ; Restubog et al., 2011).

In the context of physical education, ethical leadership involves creating an environment that fosters social justice and equity (Ponnu & Tennakoon, G., 2009). This includes providing equal opportunities and access to physical education programs for all students, regardless of their background or ability level. It is believed that ethical leadership improves innovation behavior, partially through leader identification and psychological safety. Identification with leader fully mediates moral leadership and psychological safety, and psychological safety partially mediates identification with leader and innovation behavior. The study helps school leaders and legislators create a more supportive and ethical work environment for physical education instructors by better understanding the role of moral leadership in supporting innovation behavior. (Chen et al., 2021)

Physical education (PE) requires ethical leadership to foster a positive learning environment and promote ethical behavior among students. Due to the emphasis on Confucian values and the role of education in fostering moral development, ethical leadership in P.E. is of particular importance in China. Lui & Li (2017) argue that physical education can promote the development of ethics by instilling values such as honesty, fairness, and respect in students through physical activities and games. They also suggest that physical education teachers should adopt appropriate teaching methods and strategies to promote ethical behavior and character development in students. Research on the role of ethical leadership in promoting social justice and equity in physical education programs is crucial for a variety of reasons. Physical education programs play an essential role in promoting students' physical health, mental well-being, and overall academic success (Maeda, Shen, & McDonough, 2018).

According to (Hoey, 2001 as cited by Hayes & Stidder, 2003), “*sport can make a unique contribution to tackling social exclusion in society. We recognise that this is not something that sport can tackle alone but by working with other agencies sport can play a significant part...We must work together to promote the provision of high quality physical education by qualified personnel for all ages, regardless of sex, race, religious or ethnic background or ability. We must promote the health and well-being of the community through physical education. We must promote the education of teachers and those responsible for the delivery of physical education programmes in educational establishments and the community.*”

The Power of Ethical Leadership in Advancing Social Justice and Equity in Physical Education Programs in Beijing, China

Physical education programs can mitigate disparities and promote positive outcomes for all students by promoting ethical leadership practices that prioritize social justice and equity. Secondly, ethical leadership is a fundamental aspect of effective leadership in any context (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). By examining the role of ethical leadership specifically in the context of physical education, we can gain a better understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities for promoting ethical leadership practices in this setting.

Social justice and equity are essential in physical education instruction because they guarantee that all students have equal access to opportunities and resources, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender, or ability. When social justice and equity are incorporated into physical education, a safe and inclusive environment is created in which students feel valued and supported, thereby enhancing their physical and mental health, academic performance, and overall quality of life.

In addition, research can provide practices and interventions supported by evidence that can assist educators in promoting social justice and equity in physical education. This can involve identifying effective teaching methods, developing curriculums that incorporate diverse perspectives and cultures, and employing assessment tools that accurately measure student progress regardless of background or ability.

Policies and initiatives in China, such as the "Healthy China 2030" campaign, have been implemented in an effort to promote social justice and equity in physical education. These efforts may be found in China. This strives to promote health and fitness among all citizens, and the "National Fitness Program," which attempts to give equal access to chances for anyone to engage in physical exercise, is related to this goal (An et al, 2022). In addition, there has been a request for an increase in the amount of attention that is paid to the requirements of children who have disabilities, as well as the function that physical education plays in the enhancement of general well-being and mental health.

Thus, this research has the potential to contribute to the development of more effective and equitable physical education programs, and to inform broader discussions on the role of ethics and leadership in promoting social justice and equity in education. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of ethical leadership on fostering social justice and equality in physical education programs. Ethical leadership is characterized by the demonstration of moral courage, transparency, accountability, and integrity and has been associated with excellent outcomes in a variety of business contexts, including education. It is expected that ethical leadership in physical education programs will correlate favorably with social justice results and equitable access to physical activity opportunities, and equity outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to examine the impact of ethical leadership on fostering social justice and equality in physical education programs. Specifically, it will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of physical education program administrators in promoting ethical leadership in terms of:
 - 2.1. Moral sensitivity
 - 2.2. Integrity
 - 2.3. Responsibility
 - 2.4. Trustworthiness
 - 2.5. Role modeling?
2. To what extent do physical education program administrators contribute to the promotion of equity and social justice in physical education programs:
 - 3.1. Diversity and Inclusion;
 - 3.2. Access and opportunity;
 - 3.3. Empowerment and agency
 - 3.4. Critical consciousness and action?
3. Is there a significant relationship between ethical leadership and social justice in physical education programs?

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative-correlation research design to examine the impact of the pandemic on physical education teachers and coaches. The study was conducted at a PE institution in Beijing, China, which focused on training and educating future physical education teachers and coaches. A representative sample of 132 physical education teachers from the selected sports university was selected using a random sampling technique. A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data on ethical leadership practices, social justice outcomes, and equity outcomes in physical education programs. The Likert-type scale measured the perceived role of physical education program administrators in promoting ethical leadership in terms of moral courage, transparency, accountability, integrity, cultural responsiveness, teacher-student relationships, access to resources, and advocacy. Data analysis used descriptive statistics, Pearson-R, the t-test, and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test hypotheses regarding differences in the responses of the participants and the relationships between ethical leadership and social justice and equity in

The Power of Ethical Leadership in Advancing Social Justice and Equity in Physical Education Programs in Beijing, China

physical education programs. The results were presented in tables to facilitate interpretation. Ethical considerations were followed to protect the rights and interests of the respondents. Initially, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study, and participants' personal information was kept confidential and private. The data collected was only accessed by authorized persons for the purpose of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The study examines the ethical leadership contributions of administrators in the physical education program. The indicators evaluated within the construct of Moral Sensitivity, Integrity, Responsibility, and Role Modeling provide valuable insights into the level of ethical sensitivity demonstrated by administrators. The overall mean for Moral Sensitivity is calculated to be 2.652, with a low standard deviation of 0.387. This indicates that administrators are generally attuned to the ethical implications of their decisions and actions, value diverse perspectives, and seek feedback. In addition, the highest mean score is attributed to the statement "My school principal seeks feedback from others before making decisions that could have ethical implications." This indicates that administrators value collaborative decision-making and consider diverse viewpoints in ethical choices. However, the lowest mean score is associated with the statement "My school principal considers the ethical implications of his/her decisions and actions." In terms of Integrity, the overall mean for Integrity is calculated to be 2.904, with a low standard deviation of 0.4269. This indicates that administrators consistently demonstrate integrity in their commitments, words, actions, and decision-making processes. The highest mean score is attributed to the statement "My school principal follows through on his/her commitments." The lowest mean score is associated with the statement "My school principal avoids engaging in behavior that could be perceived as unethical." This suggests that while administrators show awareness of ethical behavior, there is room for improvement in avoiding actions that may be perceived as unethical. Lastly, the study examines the role of administrators in promoting ethical leadership within the context of role modeling. The overall mean for role modeling is calculated to be 2.938, with a low standard deviation of 0.354. This indicates that administrators consistently exhibit ethical behavior, promote ethical values within the school community, and actively encourage ethical decision-making among staff and students.

2. The data shows the contribution of Physical Education Program Administrators to promoting equity and social justice in Physical Education Programs. The overall mean score of 2.912 indicates a substantial effort in fostering an equitable and socially just environment. Indicators 1 and 8 show that students' unique identities are valued and respected, and they feel comfortable expressing their opinions. However, Indicator 2 has a lower mean score, suggesting room for improvement in creating an inclusive environment. The highest mean score is achieved in Indicator 2, emphasizing the importance of equal opportunities for all students. In addition, for the contributions of Physical Education Program Administrators to equity and social justice in Physical Education Programs. The results show a significant commitment to fostering empowerment and agency, with students feeling empowered to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making processes. Administrators also take students' ideas seriously, fostering ownership over learning and development. However, there is room for improvement in ensuring consistent value for students' ideas. The program promotes critical thinking, encourages students to question and challenge systems of inequality, and equips them with knowledge to make a positive difference.

3. The study examines the correlation between Ethical Leadership and Social Justice in Physical Education Programs. The results show no significant correlation between Ethical Leadership perceptions and Social Justice promotion. The correlation coefficient is 0.096, with a significance level of 0.273. This suggests that variations in individuals' perceptions of Ethical Leadership are not strongly related to variations in their perceptions of Social Justice promotion.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, the researcher derived the following conclusions:

1. Analysis of administrators' ethical leadership contributions reveals provided diverse perspectives on ethical leadership. Collaborative decision-making stands out as a high point, while a need for considering ethical implications emerges as an area for improvement. Administrators consistently demonstrate integrity in commitments, although there is room to enhance avoidance of behavior perceived as unethical. Their role modeling reflects an ongoing commitment to ethical values within the school community.

2. Administrators display considerable efforts to establish equitable and socially just environments within Physical Education Programs. Indicators underscore a respect for students' identities and opinions, although inclusivity improvement is needed. The highest mean score underscores the importance of equal opportunities, and administrators empower students to voice opinions and participate in decision-making processes. However, a consistent valuation of students' ideas and the promotion of critical thinking require attention.

3. The study reveals no significant correlation between perceptions of Ethical Leadership and Social Justice promotion. Differences in individuals' perceptions of Ethical Leadership do not strongly relate to their views on Social Justice promotion.

REFERENCES

- 1) An, Y.; Yang, J.; Niu, S.J.; Wang, J. Health First: The Sustainable Development of Physical Education in Chinese Schools. *Sustainability* 2022, 14, 3133. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14053133>
- 2) Avolio, B. J., Zhu, W., Koh, W., & Bhatia, P. (2004). Transformational leadership and organizational commitment: mediating role of psychological empowerment and moderating role of structural distance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(8), 951-968. DOI: 10.1002/job.283
- 3) Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117-134. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002
- 4) Hayes, S., & Stidder, G. (2003). *Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport: Contemporary Issues for Teachers, Trainees and Practitioners*. Routledge.
- 5) Chen, J., Zheng, W., & Jiang, B. (2022). The impact of moral leadership on physical education teachers' innovation behavior: The role of identification with leader and psychological safety. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1030245. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1030245>
- 6) Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117-134. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002
- 7) Liu, L., & Li, F. (2017). The Way to Deepen Reform of School Physical Education in the Background of "Healthy China". *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics Science and Technology Education*, 13(10), 6545-6553. doi: 10.12973/ejmste/78096
- 8) Maeda, J. K., Shen, B., & McDonough, M. H. (2018). Effect of physical education and activity levels on academic achievement in children. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 50(5S), 950-951. doi: 10.1249/01.mss.0000536542.79962.1b
- 9) Ponnu, C. H. & Tennakoon, G. (2009). The Association Between Ethical Leadership and Employee Outcomes - the Malaysian Case. *EJBO - Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, Vol. 14 (1). Retrieved from <http://ejbo.jyu.fi>
- 10) Restubog, S. L., Zagenczyk, T. J., Bordia, P., & Bordia, S. (2011). When employees behave badly: The roles of contract violation and abusive supervision in predicting workplace deviance. *Journal of Business Ethics*



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.