
THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR ON COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN COMPANIES IN SERBIA

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of research into the influence of ethical leadership behavior (EL) on communication satisfaction (CS) and organizational learning (OL) in companies in Serbia. In addition, the moderating effects of gender and age on the observed relationships were examined. The data were obtained by using questionnaires completed by N = 380 middle managers from 102 companies in Serbia. The statistical methodologies that were used in the data analysis are: descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis to test the moderating effects. All correlations between the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior and those of communication satisfaction and organizational learning are positive and statistically significant. Ethical leadership behavior has a double impact: a) an individual, personal, and human one that affects communication satisfaction more, and b) an organizational, systemic one which has a greater effect on organizational learning.

Key words: *ethical leadership, communication satisfaction, organizational learning, Serbia.*

JEL Classification: D23, O15, J24

Introduction

The centuries-old topic under discussion is the leader's responsibility in order to ensure ethical and moral leadership (Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006). Leaders have a responsibility to ensure standards of moral and ethical behavior (Resick et al., 2006; Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 1989). According to Daft (2011), in addition to their business, ethical leaders also have to care for their employees, customers, suppliers, communities, shareholders and themselves. Ethical leadership behavior is placed on the list of priorities in organizations due to the strong impact of trust and the reputation of the organization and its leaders (Klashoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011; Mendonca, 2001), which significantly affects the recruitment of new employees (Ogunfowora, 2014). However, the number of empirical studies about ethical leadership behavior is limited, and up to date multilevel research is rare in this area (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009). Of particular importance for this paper are the impacts of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and organizational learning.

Leaders learn how to develop ethically based on academic knowledge and their own research (Binns, 2008). Ethical leaders are role models of normatively acceptable behavior (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison 2005; Kalshoven & Den Hartog, 2009). Ethical leaders also influence knowledge sharing behaviors (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Based on this we can conclude that leaders who behave ethically extend their knowledge and openly talk about new findings and ideas with their employees, motivate their employees to learn and develop skills, and are both innovative and willing to share knowledge. Similarly, the survey results presented in the reference (Ma, Cheng, Ribbens, & Zhou, 2013), show that ethical leadership behavior is positively related to employee creativity, when the moderators of the relationship are knowledge sharing and self-efficacy. Ethical leadership behavior encourages employees to invest additional efforts in the workplace and to help each other to achieve task-related goals (Kalshoven & Boon, 2012; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2013). The research results presented in the reference (Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog, & Folger, 2010), show that ethical leadership behavior has an effect on job performance and improves job characteristics, especially the importance of work tasks and job autonomy. In this way, employees are encouraged to make further efforts in the workplace and be productive at work. Job autonomy allows individuals to utilize existing knowledge and skills more effectively, to promote the development of new knowledge and make contributions to the workplace (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997; Piccolo et al., 2010).

The position of leaders is such that they can influence the emotions of employees at work, and this is achieved through communication and behavior (Bass, 1985; Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Transparency and open communication are important features of ethical leadership behavior. Ethical leaders talk openly to their followers about ethical behavior and provide them with a voice (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders gain their followers' attention by pointing out an ethical message within an organizational context and direct the attention of employees to ethical standards, highlighting their importance in an explicit way (Treviño et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2005). In addition, individuals who have common ethical values develop higher levels of trust and achieve better communication (Schmitike et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2010).

Communication is crucial to ethical leadership as a social learning process (Brown et al., 2005). Men (2015) investigated the contribution of ethical leadership to internal communication effectiveness, and showed that ethical leadership behavior

affects an organization's symmetrical communication system. It is necessary for ethical leaders to be open and to clarify performance goals and expectations, so that employees know what is expected of them and how their impact in the workplace meets the criterion (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). In addition, ethical leaders use rewards, penalties and open communication to foster ethical conduct among their followers (Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003; Brown et al., 2005). When it comes to similar surveys conducted in companies in Serbia, as well as the cases in this paper, it is useful to note the result obtained in the reference (Nikolić, Vukonjanski, Nedeljković, Hadžić, & Terek, 2013), where it is shown that high LMX leads to the strengthening of the relationship between internal communication satisfaction and job satisfaction.

The research presented in this paper is inspired by the desire, but also the need to determine the direction and intensity of the impact of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and organizational learning in companies in Serbia. The moderating effect of the respondents' gender and age on the observed relationships was also examined. This type of research has not been done in companies in Serbia. According to the findings of the authors of this paper, studies that specifically examine the impact of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and/or organizational learning have not been carried out in the world either. If such studies exist, then they are certainly rare. All this gives added significance to the results of this study. The results of this study are presented below.

Theory

Ethical leadership behavior

Ethical leadership behavior involves management that respects the rights and dignity of others (Resick et al., 2006; Ciulla, 2004). Ethical leaders use power in a socially responsible way, and leadership is viewed as a process that has an impact on the social responsibility of employees (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009). Ethical leadership behavior is defined as a demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, as well as the promotion of such behavior to followers through two-way communication (Brown et al., 2005). Also, ethical leaders discuss ethics with their employees and set clear ethical standards, using rewards and punishments to ensure that those standards are followed (Treviño et al., 2003; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Research suggests that ethical leaders are caring and people-oriented, open and communicative (Resick et al., 2006; Treviño et al., 2003). Ethical leaders have a positive impact both on the attitudes of employees, and their ethical behavior (Kalshoven & Den Hartog, 2009; Brown et al., 2005; Trevino et al., 2003). In recent years, ethical leadership behavior has been viewed by researchers as a particular style of leadership (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Hitka et al. 2018).

Research in the field of ethical leadership, as a rule, shows the positive effects of the ethical behavior of the leader on numerous organizational, work and business performance. According to (Wang & Yang, 2016), ethical leadership has a strong influence on the functioning of the organization and represents a decisive factor for the actions and behavior of employees. Ethical leadership strengthens employee confidence and helps in accepting change (Babalola, Stouten, & Euwema, 2016). The high level of business ethics in the organization contributes to the creation of better-quality working attitudes (Valentine & Godkin, 2017). Also, ethical values in the

organization provide more favorable work performance of employees (Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman, & Kidwell, 2011). Ethical behavior of leaders and fostering ethical values reduces the turnover intentions of employees and managers (Kangas et al., 2016; Liu & Chiu, 2018; Rubel, Kee, Quah, & Rimi, 2017).

Brown et al. (2005) developed the Ethical Leadership Scale (LES), which has 10-items and combines various ethical leader behaviors (fairness, power sharing and role clarification). Resick et al. (2006), De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008, 2009) and Kalshoven et al. (2011, 2011a) distinguish between different types of ethical conduct and believe that they should take into account the variety of causes and consequences of ethical leader behaviors. For this reason, these authors observe ethical leadership behavior as a multidimensional construct. Kalshoven et al. (2011) measure separately the ethical leader behaviors of fairness, power sharing and role clarification which Brown et al. (2005) combined in one dimension scale. Fairness is an important feature of ethical leaders; ethical leaders treat others fairly, act with integrity and take responsibility for their actions. Power sharing refers to ethical leaders who involve employees in the decision making process and are ready to hear the opinions of others. Role clarification is related to transparency and the participation of ethical leaders in open communication with the aim of their subordinates gaining a better understanding of the performance goals, what the responsibilities of employees are, and what is expected from them. In addition to these three dimensions, Kalshoven et al. (2011) defined the following ethical leader behaviors: people orientation, ethical guidance, concern for sustainability and integrity. The people orientation dimension of ethical leader behavior reflects the care, respect and support of employees and their needs. One component of the ethical leader behavior is concern for sustainability. This dimension includes leaders' care for the community and society, and responsible leadership behavior in accordance with the welfare of society. Ethical guidance involves the way in which ethical leaders communicate about ethics and promote ethical behavior, as well as how they explain the rules and reward the ethical behavior of employees. Ethical leaders are consistent and stand behind their word, and these attributes of a leader are explored in the integrity dimension.

In this paper, the impact of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and organizational learning are examined. In this study we use Brown et al.'s (2005) uni-dimensional scale, and the multidimensional scale for measuring ethical leader behaviors as measured by Kalshoven et al. (2011).

Communication satisfaction

Communication satisfaction is defined as the attitude of employees to various aspects of communication (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Pace and Faules (1994) indicate that communication satisfaction represents an individual affective response to the desired outcome arising from the communication that occurs in an organization. Reeding (1972) uses the term communication satisfaction to indicate the overall level of satisfaction that employees experience in their communication environment. Employee communication satisfaction means satisfaction with internal communication. The essence of internal communication is two-way communication between management and employees. According to (Grunig, Grunig, & Doizer, 2002), internal communication examines the nature of the effectiveness of the communication systems within an organization, as well as the communication between the people in it. Downs and Hazen (1977) developed a questionnaire called the Communication

Satisfaction Questionnaire, which was used in this study. Using this questionnaire, Downs and Hazen (1977) explored different aspects of communication satisfaction: the organizational perspective, communication with supervisors, the communication climate, personal feedback, horizontal and informal communication, media quality, organizational integration and subordinate communication.

The organizational perspective covers all kinds of information about the company as a whole, such as information regarding changes, the financial situation, and the policy and objectives of the company. Communication with supervisors covers aspects of up-and-down communication with superiors. This dimension estimates the openness of superiors to new ideas, and the extent to which they are prepared to listen to employees and to provide them with guidance in solving job-related problems. The communication climate reflects the quality of communication in the company on two levels, both organizational and personal. Personal feedback is related to the workers' need to know how they are being judged and how their performance is being appraised. Horizontal and informal communication involves communication among employees and determines the extent to which the communication between the members takes place freely. The media quality dimension assesses the quality of meetings, the precision and length of written instructions, and the degree to which the amount of communication is adequate. Organizational integration refers to the degree to which individuals receive information about their immediate environment. Subordinate communication applies only to supervisors and is not included in this study. The focus of this dimension is top-down communication with subordinates.

Many studies point to the importance of communication satisfaction and its beneficial impact on various aspects of the functioning of organizations: productivity of employees (Clampitt & Downs, 1993), business performance (Tsai, Chuang, & Hsieh, 2009), organizational effectiveness (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004), job satisfaction (Kang, 2010), organizational civic behavior (Carriere & Bourque 2009), reduction of stress, burnout, absenteeism and employee turnover (Ahmad, 2006). Similarly, quality internal communication in organizations promotes technological proactivity, organizational learning and organizational innovation (García-Morales, Matías-Reche, & Verdú-Jover, 2011), as well as financial results and organizational stability (Yates, 2006).

Supportive oral communication positively affects the individual's perception of management support and friendliness. In addition, positive communication impacts on the motivation of employees and establishes trusting relationships with the management level (Jo & Shim, 2005). Ethical leadership behavior is achieved by means of two-way transparent communication. In this way, ethical leadership behavior affects symmetrical communication in the organization (Men, 2015). Ethical leaders use communication to build good relations in the organization and implement two-way communication with their subordinates. On the other hand, ethical leaders use communication to explain the performance goals to their subordinates, to clarify what is expected of them, to explain the rules and communicate the ethical standards (Brown et al., 2005, Kalshoven et al., 2011). Ethical leaders should communicate clearly and frequently about ethics and values, but also to associate ethics with business processes (Treviño et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2005; Van den Akker, Heres, Lasthuizen, & Six, 2009). At the same time, ethical leaders should encourage employees to actively and without reservation, participate in communication regarding the ethical dilemmas and problems they face at work (Weaver, Treviño, & Agle, 2005). Based on the above, it can be concluded that ethical leadership behavior shapes communication within a company and the way in which it takes place. For this reason, in this paper we examine

the impact of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction in companies in Serbia.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning is the capacity of an organization to be competitive (Pentland, 1992; Argote, 2013). Organizational learning is increased through the improvement of existing skills or the development of new ones (Dibella, Edwin, Nevis, & Gould 1996). Similarly, Cook and Yanow (1993) consider it necessary to seek attributes through which organizations can meaningfully understand, possess and use knowledge, because organizational learning is not essentially a cognitive activity. The organization learns in two ways: from the existing members of the organization or by selecting new members who possess the knowledge that the organization lacks (Simon, 1991).

This paper applies a shorter version of the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), by the authors Marsick and Watkins (2003). The questionnaire has seven dimensions that measure learning-related factors. The Continuous Learning dimension measures the support and opportunities given to employees in order to facilitate continuous learning. Inquiry and Dialogue reflects the level of interactive inquiry and dialogue. The Team-based Learning dimension reflects the degree to which the company encourages collaboration among teams in learning activities. Empowerment measures how employees are involved in setting and implementing a shared vision. Embedded System reflects the level of systems to capture and share learning. The System Connection dimension measures how the company is linked to its environment. Strategic Leadership reflects the extent to which a company provides strategic leadership for learning practices.

Leadership is the key to accepting organizational learning and creating a learning organization (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006). It is best for leaders to use elements of both transformational and transactional leadership. There are opinions (Robbins & Judge, 2009) that the learning organization requires transformational leadership aimed at achieving a common vision. In that sense, interesting is the result of the research (Shao, Feng, & Hu, 2017), where it has been shown that the influence of transformational leadership on organizational learning is strong, but mediated by learning culture, and that influence of transactional leadership on organizational learning is weak but direct. Anyway, leaders are role models from whom employees can gain new knowledge and skills, which they in turn use to improve operational performance (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Studies confirm that knowledge sharing is a mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership behavior and employee creativity (Ma et al., 2013). Accordingly, it can be assumed that ethical leaders who promote the expansion and sharing of knowledge as appropriate normative behavior, motivate employees to learn, develop skills, and be innovative and willing to share knowledge. In this sense, ethical leaders reward employees who expand their knowledge and are ready to share it with others. For this reason, in this paper we examine the impact of ethical leadership behavior on organizational learning in companies in Serbia.

Hypothesis and research questions

On the basis of previous theoretical considerations, two hypotheses can be set (in the part of the research related to the influence of ethical leadership behavior dimensions on communication satisfaction and organizational learning dimensions):

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between ethical leadership behavior dimensions and communication satisfaction and organizational learning dimensions.

H2: There is a statistically significant predictive effect of ethical leadership behavioral dimensions on communication satisfaction and organizational learning dimensions.

Research of moderatory effects has an explanatory character making it difficult to pre-set hypotheses. Therefore, in this part of the research, two research questions are raised:

RQ1: Is there a moderating effect of gender on the ethical leadership behavior dimensions and the dimensions of communication satisfaction and organizational learning?

RQ1: Is there a moderating effect of age on the ethical leadership behavior dimensions and the dimensions of communication satisfaction and organizational learning?

Material and Methods

Survey instruments (measures)

In this paper ethical leadership behavior was measured by means of the Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al., 2005) and the Ethical Leadership at Work questionnaire (Kalshoven et al., 2011). The ELS (Ethical Leadership Scale) consists of 10 items, and the questionnaire is concise and is used in research studies dealing with employee behavior. The ELW (Ethical Leadership at Work) questionnaire has 38 items that assess people orientation, fairness, power sharing, concern for sustainability, ethical guidance, role clarification, and integrity. For both instruments, the items are valued by grades 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is completely agree.

The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) (Downs & Hazen, 1977) was used as an instrument for measuring communication satisfaction. The CSQ is one of the most comprehensive questionnaires because it estimates the direction of information flow in formal and informal communication channels and it refers to various members of the organization and different forms of communication. The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire consists of 40 items covering seven dimensions: the organizational perspective, communication with supervisors, the communication climate, personal feedback, horizontal and informal communication, media quality, organizational integration and supervisory communication. In this study 35 items and seven dimensions from the CSQ were used (Table 1). The responses were measured by using a 7-point Likert scale.

For measuring organizational learning, a shorter version of the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) was used, by the authors Marsick and Watkins (2003). The questionnaire has 21 items and 7 dimensions: Continuous Learning, Inquiry and Dialogue, Team-based Learning, Empowerment, Embedded System, System Connection, and Strategic Leadership. The responses were evaluated by scores 1-6, where 1 is strongly disagree, and 6 is completely agree.

Participants and data collection

The research was carried out in Serbian companies. The survey was conducted by the respondents (middle management) completing the questionnaire. A total of $N = 380$ middle managers from 102 companies completed the questionnaire. The middle managers evaluated the ethical leadership behavior of their top managers, and gave their quality assessment of the ethical leadership behavior of their CEOs. At the same time, the respondents (middle managers) expressed their satisfaction with the communication, as well as the organizational learning in their companies. Middle managers are taken for respondents as they have contacts with the senior management and the CEO, as well as with other employees. At the same time, middle managers have a better insight into and knowledge about the business, results and prospects of the company and its employees.

Results

For data processing, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were used in order to investigate the moderating effect of gender and age on the relationship of the ethical leadership dimensions, the communication satisfaction dimensions and the organizational learning dimensions.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the ethical leadership scale, the ethical leadership at work dimensions, the dimensions of communication satisfaction and the dimensions of organizational learning. The table shows the names of the dimensions, the short name for each dimension, the mean and standard deviation for all dimensions, as well as Cronbach's alpha for each dimension. The values of Cronbach's alpha range between $\alpha = 0.707$ to $\alpha = 0.942$.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for all dimensions

Short name	Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's alpha
ELS	Ethical Leadership Scale	380	1.00	5.00	4.1563	.78528	,935
ELW1	People orientation	380	1.00	5.00	4.0737	.91767	,942
ELW2	Fairness	380	1.00	5.00	4.0294	.88958	,901
ELW3	Power sharing	380	1.17	5.00	3.9947	.90552	,895
ELW4	Concern for sustainability	380	1.00	5.00	4.0614	1.00382	,899
ELW5	Ethical guidance	380	1.00	5.00	4.0947	.85232	,926
ELW6	Role clarification	380	1.00	5.00	4.0084	.93760	,896
ELW7	Integrity	380	1.00	5.00	4.0178	.99612	,906
CS1	Organizational perspective	380	1.00	7.00	4.9389	1.24831	,843
CS2	Communication with supervisors	380	1.20	7.00	5.1121	1.12986	,842

CS3	Communication climate	380	1.00	7.00	4.8084	1.36164	,873
CS4	Personal feedback	380	1.60	7.00	5.0653	1.31897	,869
CS5	Horizontal and informal communication	380	1.20	7.00	5.2258	1.00996	,707
CS6	Media quality	380	1.20	7.00	5.0632	1.17197	,817
CS7	Organizational integration	380	1.20	7.00	5.2137	1.02970	,730
OL1	Continuous Learning	380	1.00	6.00	4.5070	1.03314	,850
OL2	Inquiry and Dialogue	380	1.00	6.00	4.5904	1.08764	,880
OL3	Team-based Learning	380	1.00	6.00	4.1956	1.14861	,906
OL4	Embedded System	380	1.00	6.00	4.0912	1.37698	,918
OL5	Empowerment	380	1.00	6.00	3.9693	1.35013	,916
OL6	System Connection	380	1.00	6.00	4.0395	1.35467	,912
OL7	Strategic Leadership	380	1.00	6.00	4.0544	1.39584	,932

Source: own calculation

Correlation analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the correlation analysis between the ethical leadership behavior dimensions and the dimensions of communication satisfaction and organizational learning. These results refer to the total sample of N = 380 respondents. Pearson correlation was used. In Table 2, statistically significant correlations are marked as follows: * p <0.05; ** p <0.01. It may be noted that all the correlations are statistically significant, and ** p <0.01.

Table 2 Pearson coefficients for the correlations between the ethical leadership dimensions, the communication satisfaction dimensions and the organizational learning dimensions

	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	CS6	CS7	OL1	OL2	OL3	OL4	OL5	OL6	OL7
ELS	.508**	.438**	.411**	.420**	.448**	.443**	.540**	.510**	.441**	.414**	.408**	.358**	.323**	.309**
ELW1	.465**	.322**	.354**	.403**	.389**	.362**	.492**	.510**	.473**	.399**	.345**	.335**	.270**	.223**
ELW2	.433**	.345**	.341**	.395**	.387**	.344**	.455**	.490**	.544**	.462**	.407**	.357**	.328**	.305**
ELW3	.438**	.332**	.362**	.397**	.370**	.362**	.446**	.512**	.513**	.487**	.493**	.434**	.387**	.394**
ELW4	.411**	.296**	.336**	.379**	.320**	.332**	.415**	.510**	.480**	.462**	.457**	.420**	.395**	.389**
ELW5	.418**	.344**	.327**	.386**	.366**	.402**	.479**	.518**	.499**	.461**	.457**	.358**	.302**	.352**
ELW6	.415**	.327**	.366**	.390**	.356**	.375**	.455**	.476**	.492**	.463**	.488**	.394**	.359**	.387**
ELW7	.389**	.300**	.348**	.368**	.354**	.350**	.421**	.455**	.470**	.466**	.478**	.425**	.359**	.397**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01. Source: own calculation

Regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive effect of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions (independent variables) on the dimensions of communication satisfaction and organizational learning (dependent variable). The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 3 (Statistically significant values of β and R2 are indicated by bold font).

Table 3 Regression analysis (Dependent Variable: CS dimensions, OL dimensions, Predictors: EL dimensions)

Dependents	Independent								R ²	F	Sig
	ELS	ELW1	ELW2	ELW3	ELW4	ELW5	ELW6	ELW7			
	β										
CS1	.314	.110	.008	.100	.029	-.063	.120	-.016	.287	18.697	.000
CS2	.410	-.123	.080	.060	-.045	.028	.087	-.028	.204	11.867	.000
CS3	.287	.030	-.003	.085	.020	-.169	.179	.072	.200	11.590	.000
CS4	.192	.084	.046	.061	.045	-.043	.127	.027	.217	12.851	.000
CS5	.312	.031	.073	.080	-.083	-.031	.069	.069	.220	13.117	.000
CS6	.330	-.009	-.054	.032	-.033	.134	.092	.018	.220	13.061	.000
CS7	.327	.117	-.011	.022	-.030	.081	.127	.005	.326	22.402	.000
OL1	.171	.126	.009	.075	.144	.110	.045	-.006	.343	24.220	.000
OL2	.021	.030	.284	.094	.051	.014	.134	.023	.335	23.338	.000
OL3	.098	-.060	.150	.122	.096	-.008	.095	.113	.283	18.293	.000
OL4	.168	-.160	.029	.188	.082	-.045	.222	.111	.298	19.709	.000
OL5	.124	-.021	-.004	.173	.155	-.181	.079	.202	.228	13.704	.000
OL6	.165	-.147	.085	.141	.224	-.247	.147	.101	.199	11.522	.000
OL7	.169	-.263	.030	.137	.173	-.062	.121	.160	.212	12.487	.000

Source: own calculation

Gender as a moderator of the observed relationships

The results of the correlation analysis of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions, communication satisfaction dimensions and organizational learning dimensions, for men and women, are shown in Table 4.

To test the moderating effects of gender hierarchical regression analysis was used. Hierarchical regression analysis examined the significance of the regression coefficient by the product predictor variables for the independent variable ELWi and the dependent variables CSi and OLi and the moderating variables of gender. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis (R square and F-change) are presented in Table 5, with only those results where the moderating effect of gender was found.

Table 5 Hierarchical regression analysis (R square and F-change) with gender as a moderator (only those pairs where a moderating influence of gender is confirmed)

Independent	Dependent	R square	F-change
ELS	CS4	.185	3.876
ELW2	OL6	.119	4.759

Age as a moderator of the observed relationships

The results of the correlation analysis of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions, communication satisfaction dimensions and organizational learning dimensions, for the younger respondents (under 45) and older respondents (over 45), are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 Correlation coefficients between the EL dimensions, CS dimensions and OL dimensions, for younger and older respondents

Age	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	CS6	CS7	OL1	OL2	OL3	OL4	OL5	OL6	OL7
< 45 324	ELS	.463**	.414**	.412**	.398**	.446**	.429**	.510**	.387**	.386**	.386**	.359**	.308**	.286**
	ELW1	.402**	.296**	.330**	.372**	.387**	.336**	.428**	.495**	.421**	.298**	.337**	.260**	.202**
	ELW2	.348**	.299**	.289**	.353**	.344**	.290**	.373**	.457**	.471**	.352**	.346**	.296**	.273**
	ELW3	.398**	.300**	.338**	.367**	.360**	.331**	.397**	.493**	.460**	.465**	.466**	.419**	.365**
	ELW4	.362**	.274**	.322**	.356**	.314**	.305**	.371**	.503**	.463**	.451**	.453**	.448**	.390**
	ELW5	.335**	.302**	.271**	.327**	.353**	.338**	.412**	.512**	.478**	.454**	.443**	.381**	.302**
	ELW6	.349**	.296**	.336**	.349**	.338**	.331**	.401**	.455**	.467**	.462**	.483**	.421**	.371**
	ELW7	.321**	.269**	.301**	.327**	.315**	.319**	.363**	.440**	.438**	.471**	.467**	.438**	.354**

45 < 56	ELS	.585**	.525**	.365**	.491**	.489**	.510**	.619**	.399**	.511**	.456**	.456**	.360**	.410**	.446**
	ELW1	.594**	.413**	.394**	.514**	.429**	.475**	.628**	.430**	.524**	.489**	.487**	.335*	.332*	.362**
	ELW2	.653**	.520**	.503**	.552**	.609**	.588**	.659**	.495**	.709**	.513**	.605**	.415**	.502**	.498**
	ELW3	.568**	.475**	.424**	.519**	.438**	.518**	.581**	.492**	.558**	.546**	.594**	.522**	.566**	.603**
	ELW4	.514**	.385**	.344**	.455**	.360**	.468**	.508**	.408**	.419**	.460**	.430**	.281*	.368**	.455**
	ELW5	.615**	.493**	.492**	.615**	.447**	.655**	.622**	.416**	.446**	.431**	.479**	.275*	.326*	.432**
	ELW6	.543**	.437**	.436**	.543**	.453**	.566**	.551**	.422**	.447**	.413**	.532**	.299*	.341*	.385**
	ELW7	.548**	.416**	.509**	.531**	.553**	.485**	.565**	.396**	.486**	.401**	.491**	.365**	.401**	.364**

*p<0.05, **p<0.01.

Source: own calculation

To test the moderating effects of age hierarchical regression analysis was used. Hierarchical regression analysis examined the significance of the regression coefficient by the product predictor variables for the independent variable ELWi and the dependent variables CSi and OLi and the moderating variable age. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis (R-square and F change) are presented in Table 7, but only those pairs where a moderating influence of age is confirmed.

Table 7 Hierarchical regression analysis (R square and F-change) with age as a moderator (only those pairs where a moderating influence of age is confirmed)

Independent	Dependent	R square	F-change
ELW1	CS7	.253	3.970
	CS1	.209	6.172
ELW2	CS6	.132	5.231
	CS7	.229	8.262
	OL2	.318	4.488
ELW3	CS1	.213	4.339
	CS6	.142	4.383
ELW4	CS7	.221	6.880
	OL7	.176	5.724
ELW5	CS7	.189	4.117
	CS1	.193	4.179
ELW7	CS6	.178	6.026
	CS1	.172	4.052
	CS7	.197	5.263

Source: own calculation

Discussion

The average scores for ethical leadership behavior have a fairly high value (descriptive statistics - Table 1). A possible explanation is that these scores are a consequence of the socialist times. The socialist system had a strong human orientation, and the equality of people was particularly insisted on, so all the workers had the same right to vote (in the former Yugoslavia, the socialist arrangement had a specificity, which was reflected in the workers' self-management). It can be assumed that people in Serbia still highly value certain things from the period of socialism such as care of people, equality, humanity, and justice. The current leaders, obviously aware of this, try to meet the staff and avoid their dissatisfaction and sensitivity to inequality and injustice. Dimension ELW3 - power sharing has the lowest average score from the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior. This serves as confirmation of previous results, since Serbia is a country characterized by an organizational culture with high orientation towards people and especially high power distance (Vukonjanski, Nikolić, Hadžić, Terek, & Nedeljković, 2012; Nikolić et al., 2014).

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) show that the scores measuring the communication satisfaction dimensions and organizational learning dimensions are above average. From the dimensions of communication satisfaction, CS5 - horizontal and informal communication and CS7 - organizational integration have the highest average ratings. When it comes to CS5 - horizontal and informal communication, the situation is clear: collectivism within the group was a highly regarded dimension of organizational culture in Serbian companies (Vukonjanski et al., 2012). People in Serbia communicate readily with those in their immediate environment, news is exchanged and an atmosphere of openness to others is mainly present, especially in the horizontal levels of the organization. Dimension CS7 - organizational integration also applies to information and communication in the direct, immediate environment, personal conscience and the demands of the job. There is a similarity between these two dimensions, and good communication as part of the job requirements is something that is necessary for the effective implementation of specific tasks. For this is, undoubtedly, given significant attention. However, when it comes to the communication at organizational level, communication in terms of systems access for effective operations, improved motivation and long-term effects, this is accessed considerably weaker and with a greater degree of disorientation. Therefore, the lowest scoring communication satisfaction dimension was CS3 - communication climate.

From the dimensions of organizational learning, OL2 - promote inquiry and dialogue and OL1 - create continuous learning opportunities were awarded the highest average grades. There is an obvious consistency here with the results of measuring communication satisfaction. The best situation concerns a single, horizontal level: mutual help of employees, encouraging questions about doing business more efficiently, open and honest exchange of information and trust among employees. In contrast, the lowest estimated dimension of organizational learning is OL5 - empower people toward a collective vision. This dimension relates to encouraging initiatives among employees, providing employees with a certain degree of autonomy, and encouraging employees to take reasonable risks. So again, there are difficulties at the organizational level: the state does not cope well with strategic and systematic issues. The managers of Serbian companies sometimes behave irrationally and are disorganized, which is not good for business.

In Table 2 we can see that all the correlations between the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior and those of communication satisfaction and organizational

learning are positive and statistically significant (H1 is confirmed). The impacts on specific dimensions are discussed below.) However, it is important to note the difference between the impact of certain dimensions of ethical leadership behavior on those of communication satisfaction and organizational learning. Specifically, the dimensions of communication satisfaction are mostly influenced by ELS - the Ethical Leadership Scale, as a general dimension, then ELW1 - people orientation, while the dimensions of organizational learning are mostly influenced by ELW3 - power sharing, and then ELW4 - concern for sustainability. This difference can be explained as follows: the impact of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction is based to a large extent on the human approach of leaders, while the impact of ethical leadership behavior on organizational learning is mainly a systems component, i.e., the influence is based on systematic ethical leadership behavior. In such a situation, the leaders' general ethics, and concern for the feelings, needs, problems, emotions and personal development of their employees, will greatly contribute to the communication satisfaction. On the other hand, the willingness of leaders to reduce the power distance and self-reflection in the direction of environmental protection and sustainable development has a systemic effect on the organization and behavior of employees. Low power distance and environmentally beneficial behavior of organizations have a positive impact on employee awareness and understanding of the importance and need for organizational learning. This creates the conditions for the continuous learning of leaders and employees, improved cooperation, better learning conditions etc. It is interesting that the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior, which have the greatest influence on those of communication satisfaction (ELS - the Ethical Leadership Scale and ELW1 - people orientation), at least influence the dimensions of organizational learning. Similarly, the dimension of ethical leadership behavior ELW4 - concern for sustainability, which strongly influences those of organizational learning, has the least influence on the communication satisfaction dimensions. This actually confirms what was previously stated: the different nature of the communication satisfaction dimensions and those of organizational learning.

From the communication satisfaction dimensions, CS7 - organizational integration, and CS1 - organizational perspective have the strongest correlation with ethical leadership behavior. These are the dimensions that, to a large extent, represent communication at organizational level, so it can be said that they have a systemic component. Taking into account the previous discussion, the next phenomenon occurs: ethical leadership behavior impacts on communication satisfaction mostly via human-oriented leader behavior and the effects of this behavior on communication satisfaction are predominantly reflected at the systemic, organizational level. It can be concluded that the roots of higher communication satisfaction at all levels of the organization, as well as at that of the entire organization, in fact lie in ethical leadership behavior with a prominent human component.

From the dimensions of organizational learning, OL1 - create continuous learning opportunities and then OL2 - promote inquiry and dialogue, achieve the strongest correlation with the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior. Unlike the previous situation, these are the dimensions which, inter alia, include the mutual help of employees for learning, open and honest exchange of information, respecting the opinions of others and trust among employees. Therefore, this dimension can be said to have a personal and human component. The phenomenon which occurs here is contrary to that of communication satisfaction: ethical leadership behavior systemically affects organizational learning and the effects of this impact, to a large extent, are later perceived on individual and interpersonal levels of learning. The

support for employees in learning, the honest exchange of information in learning, and good individual and group performance in general, are achieved, for the most part, through systematic ethical leadership behavior at organizational level. This is very important because learning, however excellent the institutional framework, conditions and incentives are, mostly depends on the individual himself, his desires and motivations. Systemic ethical leadership behavior is what can motivate an individual to learn.

Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis. The dimensions of ethical leadership behavior are the independent variables, while the dimensions of communication satisfaction and those of organizational learning are the dependent variables. The corrected determination indexes R2 have values within the range from 0.199 to 0.343. The values of the determination indexes R2 are statistically significant at all observed dependent variables. Based on these results, it can be noted that there is a statistically significant positive predictive effect of dimensions of ethical leadership behavior on observed dependent variables. (H2 is confirmed.) OL1 - create continuous learning opportunities (0.343), OL2 - promote inquiry and dialogue (0.335), CS7 - organizational integration (0.326) and OL4 - create systems to capture and share learning (0.298) have the highest values of R2. The predictive effect of the independent variables are the most pronounced for these dependent variables. OL6 - connect the organization to its environment (0.199), CS3 - the communication climate (0.200) and CS2 - communication with supervisors (0.204) have the lowest values of R2. The results of the regression analysis are consistent with those of the correlation analysis, as previously discussed.

Tables 4 and 5 show that the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between ethical leadership behavior and the observed performances occurs in only two of the 112 surveyed pairs. On this basis, it can be said that there is no moderating effect of gender on the relationship between the ethical leadership dimensions, communication satisfaction dimensions and the dimensions of organizational learning (RQ1 is answered). For the two pairs where there is a moderating effect, it has the following path: for women there is a stronger positive influence of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions on the observed performances, while for men the effect is positive, but weaker. The first of the two pairs is ELS - the Ethical Leadership Scale and CS4 - personal feedback. For women the ethical behavior of leaders is, to a greater extent, sufficient feedback: unlike men, they require less professional support and fewer critical reviews. Women are more emotional and it is more important for them that their leader is ethically correct than to constantly receive acknowledgment for their work. The second of the two pairs is ELW2 - the Fairness Scale and OL6 - connect the organization to its environment. Therefore, if the leader demonstrates honest and fair treatment of employees and the organization, this means more to women in terms of incentives to the systemic and global thinking, better cooperation with the local community and openness to solve problems at all levels of the organization. Fairness in a leader gives women a greater incentive to work, and promotes dedication to work and the welfare of the organization.

Tables 6 and 7 show that the moderating effects of age on the ratio of ethical leadership behavior and the observed performances occurs partially: it is strongly expressed for some dimensions of communication satisfaction, while for organizational learning it is almost negligible (RQ2 is answered). The moderating effect of age has the following path: for the older respondents there is a strong and positive influence of the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior on the observed performances, while for the younger respondents, this impact is positive, but weaker. The largest

number of moderations is concentrated around three dimensions of communication satisfaction: CS7 - organizational integration, then CS1 - organizational perspective and CS6 - media quality. As stated, these are the dimensions that represent communication on a wider, organizational level, so it can be said that they are characterized by a system component. Obviously, compared to their younger colleagues, the older middle managers are more aware of the systemic importance of ethical leadership behavior for the communication, but also the functioning of the organization as a whole. They know how to better recognize (un)ethical leadership and know how to value it more. They have experience: they know how the organization works in terms of good and bad ethical leadership behavior. As a result, older middle managers have less tolerance for the unethical behavior of their leaders.

It is possible to single out two dimensions of ethical leadership behavior that contribute most to the moderating effects of age on the observed relationships. These are: ELW2 - fairness and ELW3 - power sharing. The previous observations are expressed most powerfully for these dimensions: the fairness of a leader and his willingness to reduce power distance represent an important indicator (especially for older middle managers) that the leader acts ethically. In such circumstances, the older middle managers will especially appreciate the systemic effects of this highly ethical leader behavior.

Conclusion

The average scores for ethical leadership behavior, communication satisfaction and organizational learning in companies in Serbia, obtained in the descriptive statistics (Table 1), show that the best situation concerns those dimensions related to the individual, horizontal level: mutual help between employees, encouraging questions regarding the efficient performance of work tasks, the open and honest exchange of information and trust among employees. In contrast, the lowest average scores are for those dimensions that relate to systemic, strategic and organizational elements. This situation is directly related to the state of the dimensions of organizational culture in Serbian companies (Vukonjanski et al., 2012).

The correlation analysis (Table 2) shows that all correlations between the dimensions of ethical leadership behavior and those of communication satisfaction and organizational learning are positive and statistically significant. Those which most affect the dimensions of communication satisfaction are ELS - the Ethical Leadership Scale, as a general dimension, then ELW1 - people orientation, while those which mostly influence the dimensions of organizational learning are ELW3 - power sharing, and then ELW4 - concern for sustainability. It can be concluded that ethical leadership behavior has a double impact: a) an individual, personal, and human one, which has a greater influence on communication satisfaction, and b) an organizational, systematic one, which has a stronger effect on organizational learning.

However, the effects of these influences of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and organizational learning are different from the nature of their influences. Thus, ethical leadership behavior, which has an effect on communication satisfaction mainly in terms of the leader's human behavior and concern for people, has effects on communication satisfaction which are actually reflected systemically at organizational level. Similarly, ethical leadership behavior, which impacts on the organizational learning systemically, has effects on organizational learning which are reflected by the improvement of the individual and interpersonal level of learning.

The results of the regression analysis (Table 3) demonstrate consistency with those of the correlation analysis. It has been shown that there is an expressed positive predictive effect of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions on the observed dependent variables (the communication satisfaction dimensions and those of organizational learning).

There is no moderating effect of gender on the relationship between the ethical leadership dimensions and those of communication satisfaction and organizational learning. Specifically, the moderating effect of gender exists only in two pairs: for women there is a stronger positive influence of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions on the observed performances, while for men the effect is positive, but weaker. The results for the two pairs can be summarized as follows: for women, the ethical behavior of leaders, as well as the honest and fair relations of leaders toward employees and the organization, is to a greater extent, sufficient feedback and encouragement to greater involvement and commitment to the job and the company.

The moderating effects of age on the relationship between ethical leadership behavior and the observed performances is strongly expressed in some dimensions of communication satisfaction, while for the dimensions of organizational learning it is almost irrelevant. For the older respondents, there is a strong and positive influence of the ethical leadership behavior dimensions on the observed performances, while for the younger ones, this impact is positive, but weaker. Compared to their younger counterparts, the older middle managers are more aware of the importance of ethical leadership behavior on communication, but also on the functioning of the organization as a whole.

Orientation towards people, the fairness of a leader and his/her willingness to reduce the power distance, are particularly important indicators of ethical leadership behavior. Employees in companies in Serbia particularly appreciate this dimension of ethical leadership behavior. The recommendation to managers and leaders is to act ethically, both at the individual level when dealing with people, and at the organizational level. In this way, among other things, they will certainly contribute to better business communication and organizational learning in the company. Often it only takes a little attention, for example, a sincere "How are you ...?" can significantly raise employee motivation and willingness for much greater involvement. The results of this research further gain in importance if we have in mind that so far there are no or only a few studies that specifically address the influence of ethical leadership behavior on communication satisfaction and/or organizational learning.

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