Courageous, Fearful, Bureaucratic, and Quantum Organizational Types, and Personal Ethics

Lucinda Parmer
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Integrating the perspective of the values in action classification theory (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), which asserts that personal attributes, such as fearlessness, authenticity, enthusiasm, and perseverance, create courage, and the deontological theory of ethics (Kant, 1996), which posits that what is wrong for one person to do is wrong for anyone and that morality is for everybody, this research examined four organizational types—courageous, fearful, bureaucratic, and quantum—to determine their effects on ethical behavior. The type of organization an employee works in can influence ethical behavior regarding supporting fairness and dignity, advocating for personal beliefs, challenging discrimination, defending colleagues' rights, empowering underrepresented voices, and championing meritocracy and inclusivity (Kilmann et al., 2002). A statistically significant difference between fearful and quantum organizations was identified. This research affirms that individuals who worked in fearful organizations rated lower on personal ethics than those in quantum organizations, who rated higher on personal ethics. Furthermore, ethnicity emerged as the only statistically significant socio-demographic variable regarding the relationship between organizational type and personal ethics.

Keywords: organizational types, ethics, courage, fearful organizations, quantum organizations

INTRODUCTION

Employees demonstrate organizational courage by voicing opinions that challenge the status quo, even when such opinions are not well-received by organizational leaders or peers. Courageous behavior, also called bravery, can originate from any person at any organizational level (van Loon & Buster, 2019). When displaying organizational courage, an employee shows a lack of fear by speaking out against injustices. A courageous employee will speak the truth and discuss problematic issues openly and candidly, even in the presence of managerial leaders. Employees who behave courageously seek to create positive organizational dynamics through authenticity, honesty, and forthrightness. Courageous employees demonstrate persistence, conscientiousness, and perseverance in fearful workplace situations. Organizational leaders should encourage employees to speak up because of their obligation to the organization. (Farley et al., 2021; Kokkoris & Sedikides, 2019; Mert & Köksal, 2022; Ogunfowora et al., 2021; Steckler & Clark, 2019).

A person's ethical makeup develops early from parenting and authority figures such as teachers and religious leaders. Peer relationships with friends and family also assist in forming a person's ethical lens. These learned ethical behaviors send signals to the brain on what is right and wrong and create a person's moral compass (Jones, 2017; Neal et al., 2019; Sliwa, 2017). A person's values drive this lens, and decision-making occurs based on these values (Brydon-Miller & Coghlan, 2019; Přibáň, 2019). For example, ethical

behavior happens when one recognizes there is a moral issue in question. A judgment establishes moral intent, and behavior transpires from the decision-making. Ultimately, ethical leadership is based on having moral strength originating from the freedom to choose what is upright and does not derive from fear or greediness (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007; Pascal, 2019; Schwepker, 2019).

Organizational Courage

Courage is essential in all professions, including those traditionally associated with it, such as soldiers, astronauts, or company whistleblowers. However, many employees do not speak up because displaying workplace courage can have negative consequences. Displaying acts of courage can be challenging for employees to implement. However, exhibiting courage can produce positive employee and organizational outcomes. Acts of courage can arise from employees who, having shown a commitment to the organization, seek to cultivate positive relationships with their coworkers. An employee can demonstrate courage by campaigning for a strategic move, challenging workplace inadequacies, pushing to amend an unfair policy, speaking out against unethical behavior or an abuse of power, or speaking up for a colleague in need. Moreover, four fundamental principles of displaying courage include laying the groundwork, picking battles, persuading at the optimal moment, and following up after the fact (Detert, 2018; Howard et al., 2017; Schilpzand et al., 2015).

Having courage encompasses bravery, persistence, honesty, and zest. Courage is accomplishing one's goals in the face of opposition. The braver and more tenacious one becomes, the more that person's character increases due to reaching a state of feeling effervescent, and as a result, more courageous behavior transpires (Groessl, 2017; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). A person behaves courageously through the decision-making process of wanting to take action and to be braver. These courageous actions occur regardless of the potential consequences that could follow (Chowkase et al., 2024).

A courageous person is not without fear but believes something else is more important than the fear itself (Roosevelt, 1932). Although it is precarious for employees to behave courageously in the workplace, it is necessary for organizations to become more effective and to grow. Employees who do the right thing while facing negative consequences show bravery. Within puzzling circumstances, individuals can manifest organizational courage as a constructive quality. Moreover, in difficult situations where organizational and personal interests collide, managerial leaders should still demonstrate high moral and ethical standards (Harbour & Kisvfalvi, 2014; Koerner, 2014).

Personal Ethics

Developing a personal code of ethics requires understanding one's value-based structure. It entails decision-making, self-awareness, self-interests, and cultivating a sense of self. This code of ethics comes with an understanding that there is a moral obligation to be accountable to oneself and others. Individuals demonstrate ethical behaviors through courage, virtues, fairness, justice, passion, temperance, and integrity. Within the workplace environment, employees can learn these behaviors. For example, employees observing and imitating ethically-sound leaders and colleagues can strengthen their ethical behaviors through role modeling (Donada et al., 2019; Newstead et al., 2020; Orms, 2016; Stern, 2014).

An employee's ethical makeup is essential when exemplifying integrity-based worker traits. Organizational members perceive employees who exhibit high moral standards to be influential leaders. Being influential is vital in ethical leadership as these leaders must inspire followers towards a common goal. Employees should exhibit ethical standards at the organizational and team levels. Moreover, employees and leaders with high moral standards are essential internationally since globalization has created a more borderless society (Cabana & Muel, 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2018; Northouse, 2022; Peng & Wei, 2020).

Ethics are practical approaches people demonstrate regarding professional practices and decision-making, for example, in a workplace environment (Fierens et al., 2023). A person or organization further attributes ethics to accountability and responsibility (Lysova et al., 2023). Ethics is further displayed by individuals having a duty not to harm others, whether psychologically or physically, simply because they are human beings (Gould & Hazelgrove, 2023). However, individuals exhibiting destructive tendencies

within organizational leadership positions can adversely impact employees' ethical conduct, leading to reduced knowledge sharing, diminished commitment, and heightened organizational and interpersonal deviance among employees. Unethical leaders whose followers doubt their uprightness will be viewed with skepticism regardless of how well-crafted and noble the vision is articulated (Lyu et al., 2023; Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007; Schmid et al., 2019; Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research's theoretical framework integrated the values in action classification theory (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and the deontological theory of ethics (Kant, 1996). The values in action classification theory assert that personal attributes, such as fearlessness, authenticity, enthusiasm, and perseverance, create courage. The deontological ethical theory posits that what is wrong for one person to do is wrong for anyone and that morality is for everybody.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Understanding one's ethical lens defines personal ethics. This ethical lens encompasses an individual's personality, virtues, aptitudes, goals, traits, values, norms, and beliefs (Orms, 2016; Snieder & Zhu, 2020). An employee fearlessly challenging traditional organizational practices or confronting managers, leaders, peers, or stakeholders irrespective of potentially unfavorable outcomes such as job loss, negative performance reviews, or criticism defines organizational courage. The employee behaving with organizational courage willingly taps into their self-efficacy center, believing that their decisions and actions will make a difference to the organization (Kelman et al., 2016; Kilmann et al., 2010).

This study depicts four organizational types. A courageous organization is where employees frequently observe acts of courage, even in the face of fear of deviating from the organization's accepted norms. A fearful organization is when employees observe few acts of courage, and substantial fear exists. In a bureaucratic organization, employees have observed few acts of courage but do not fear negative consequences if choosing to behave courageously. Lastly, a quantum organization is where frequent acts of courage are observed by employees with little fear of negative consequences (Kilmann et al., 2010).

METHOD

Overview

This research study examined the relationship between courageous, fearful, bureaucratic, and quantum organizational types and personal ethics. The Organizational Courage Assessment (Kilmann, et al., 2002) determined what type of organization a person worked in based on the level of courage or fear observed. The Personal Ethics Assessment (Boretti, 2011) determined the participants' personal ethics score.

Research Instruments

The Organizational Courage Assessment (Kilmann et al., 2002) had 40 items broken up into two parts. Participants in the first part used a Likert scale of 0 = never observed, 1 = rarely, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often, and 4 = regularly observed or not needed to rate how frequently they observed people in the organization performing acts of courage. Participants in the second part used a Likert scale of 0 = not afraid, 1 = somewhat, 2 = moderately, 3 = considerably, and 4 = extremely to rate how afraid people in the organization would be of performing acts of courage. The Personal Ethics Assessment (Boretti, 2011) contained 12 items, and participants used a Likert scale of 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 3 = usually, and 4 = always, based on personal ethics questions. Socio-demographics, including gender, age, ethnicity, income level, and educational level, were also assessed.

Example Survey Items

Organizational Courage Assessment Part I (Kilmann et al., 2002)
1. I have observed people coming to another's aid when that person was being unfairly treated or ridiculed.
2. I have observed people speaking out against illegal or unethical actions.
3. I have observed people standing up for what they believe in when it was not the majority view.
4. I have observed people speaking out if another person was harmed because of discrimination.
5. I have observed people standing up for fellow employees who were not being treated appropriately.
6. I have observed women or minority group members speaking out to defend their points of view in white, male-dominated groups.
7. I have observed people fighting to hire someone over others' objections, because they believed that individual was the best person for the job.

Organizational Courage Assessment Part II (Kilmann et al., 2002)
1. How afraid would people be of coming to another's aid when that person was being unfairly treated or ridiculed?
2. How afraid would people be of speaking out against illegal or unethical actions?
3. How afraid would people be of standing up for what they believe in when it was not the majority view?
4. How afraid would people be of speaking out if another person was harmed because of discrimination?
5. How afraid would people be of standing up for fellow employees who were not being treated appropriately?
6. How afraid would women or minority group members be of speaking out to defend their points of view in white, male-dominated groups?
7. How afraid would people be of fighting to hire someone over others' objections, because they believed that individual was the best person for the job?

Personal Ethics Assessment (Boretti, 2011)
1. Do you maintain appropriate confidentiality?
2. Are you honest with sharing information with others?
3. Are you able to avoid conflicts of interest?
4. Are you able to manage your personal biases?
5. Do you respect the diversity within your organization?
6. Does favoritism ever enter into your decision-making?
7. Do you follow orders regardless if they appear unethical?

Participants

The sample consisted of 439 participants ($n = 439$) gathered digitally in the United States. Five key socio-demographic variables considered were Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Income Level, and Education Level. Female participants were the slight majority (53.08%). The combined majority age group was 18 – 40 (77%). The White ethnic group was the majority (61.28%), and participants earning up to $45,000 had the highest income level (32.35%). Lastly, the majority education level included participants with at least a bachelor's degree (77.45%).

Research Questions

Research Question #1: *What influence does organizational types have on ethics?*

Research Question #2: *What influence does socio-demographics have on ethics?*

Hypotheses (*H*)

H$_{1a}$: There is a significant relationship between a courageous organizational type and ethics.

H$_{1b}$: There is a significant relationship between a fearful organizational type and ethics.

H$_{1c}$: There is a significant relationship between a bureaucratic organizational type and ethics.

H$_{1d}$: There is a significant relationship between a quantum organizational type and ethics.

H$_{2a}$: There is a significant relationship between gender and ethics.

H$_{2b}$: There is a significant relationship between age and ethics.

H$_{2c}$: There is a significant relationship between ethnicity and ethics.

H$_{2d}$: There is a significant relationship between income level and ethics.

H$_{2e}$: There is a significant relationship between education level and ethics.

Preliminary and Secondary Variables

This study had four preliminary variables. These were Observed Acts of Courage and Afraid of Performing Acts of Courage, which depicted the Organizational Types of Courageous, Fearful, Bureaucratic, and Quantum. The fourth variable was Personal Ethics. The secondary variables were the five socio-demographic variables of Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Income Level, and Education Level.

RESULTS

Data Cleaning

The raw data initially contained 479 participants. However, due to the coding of Observed Acts of Courage and Afraid of Performing Acts of Courage to classify the Organizational Types of Courageous, Fearful, Bureaucratic, and Quantum, some scores indicated that the employee worked in a mixed organization. Excluding these 40 mixed cases resulted in a final sample size of 439. The data-cleaning process also looked for outliers. None of the three scales of Observed Acts of Courage, Afraid of Performing Acts of Courage, and Personal Ethics had more than 5% outliers. According to Raghunathan (2016), since all of these had at most 5% of outliers, the presence of outliers was, therefore, inconsequential.

Reliability and Validity Tests

Observed Acts of Courage and Afraid of Performing Acts of Courage (e.g., level of fear) were measured by 20 items, and Personal Ethics was measured by 12 items. Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate scale reliability, including construct and convergent validities. Taber (2018) states that Cronbach's Alpha must be greater than 0.70. All three scales exceeded this minimum. The Average Variance Extracted tested for convergent validity. According to Byrne (2016), the minimum must be 0.50, and all the scales exceeded the minimum requirement. Furthermore, computing the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) tested for discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2018), where the maximum HTMT ratio was 0.85. None of the coefficients exceeded the 0.85. Therefore, the study did not violate discriminant validity. Based on these findings, the dataset was suitable for analysis (Byrne, 2016).

Histogram Analysis

Histogram analysis indicated a normal distribution for *Observed Acts of Courage* with a mean rating of $M = 39.50$ ($SD = 12.09$). Similarly, a normal distribution existed with Afraid of Performing Acts of

Courage, with a mean rating of $M = 29.87$ ($SD = 14.866$). The mean rating for Personal Ethics was $M = 23.85$ ($SD = 3.326$). The distribution was normal; most participants rated personal ethics as good (49.20%). The second-highest rating was very good (45.56%). Participants rated personal ethics moderate (4.78%) and low (0.46%).

Organizational Types and Personal Ethics

Table 1 demonstrates that quantum organizations had the highest personal ethics scores. Courageous organizations followed with the second-highest personal ethics scores. Bureaucratic organizations showed the second-lowest personal ethics scores, while fearful organizations exhibited the lowest.

TABLE 1
ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES AND PERSONAL ETHICS

Organizational Type	Frequency		Personal Ethics	
	N	%	Mean	SD
Courageous	41	9.3	24.00	2.890
Fearful	71	16.2	22.90	3.558
Bureaucratic	169	38.5	23.78	3.423
Quantum	158	36.0	24.32	3.148

Linear Discriminant Analysis

As shown in Figure 1, all four quadrants from the Organizational Courage Assessment (Kilmann et al., 2002) were validated, with Courageous Organizations in the correct first quadrant, Fearful Organizations in the correct second quadrant, Bureaucratic Organizations in the correct third quadrant, and Quantum Organizations in the correct fourth quadrant. In this respect, the four organizational types were distinguishable from the data collected.

FIGURE 1
LINEAR DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS – ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE
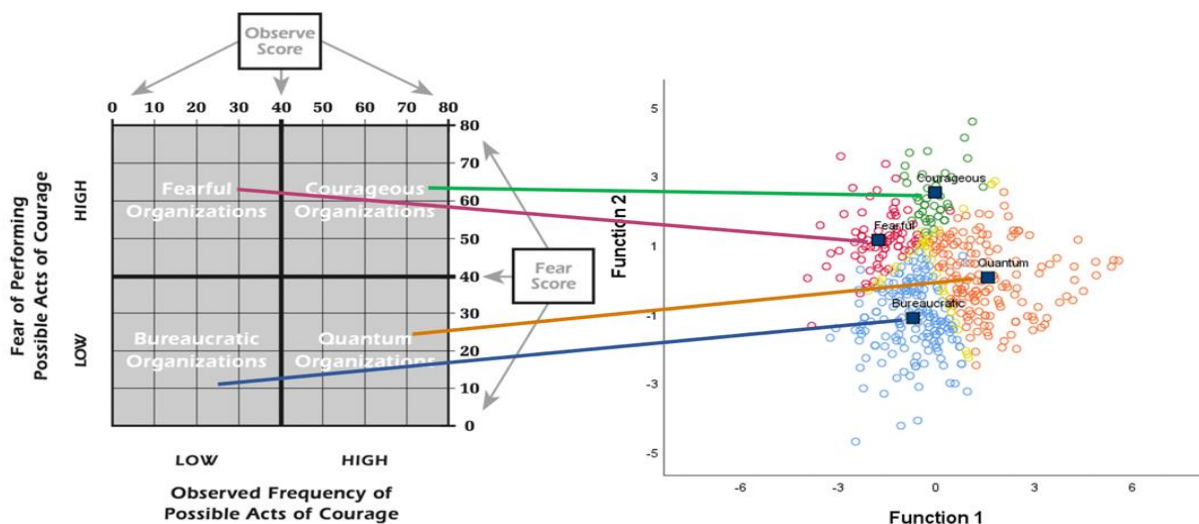
Hypotheses Testing

The primary independent variable for this study was the *Type of Organization*, while the dependent variable was *Personal Ethics*. In addition, the socio-demographic variables of Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Income Level, and Education Level were additional but secondary independent variables. Given that

the *Organizational Type* variable was categorical, with four groups (e.g., Courageous, Fearful, Bureaucratic, and Quantum), the *Personal Ethics* score was scale, and the additional effects of categorical socio-demographics were also part of the analysis, the parametric Factorial Analysis of Variance (e.g., ANOVA) was considered the ideal approach.

Testing Assumptions

Levene's Test for Equality of Error Variances and the Breusch-Pagan Test for heteroskedasticity were used to test statistical assumptions for the Factorial ANOVA. The results showed insufficient evidence to support that the error variances across the four categories differed $L(3, 435) = 0.436$, $p = 0.727$. Regarding the Breusch-Pagan Test for heteroskedasticity, the results likewise showed ($\chi2(1) = 1.542$, $p = 0.214$) that the p-value was greater than 0.05, so there was not enough evidence to support the presence of heteroskedasticity. Therefore, the analysis did not violate any of the statistical assumptions.

Testing Primary Hypothesis – Organizational Type and Personal Ethics

The Tests of Between-Subjects Effects computed the overall model for evaluating the primary hypothesis between Organizational Type and Personal Ethics. The statistical analysis revealed a significant effect of Organizational Type on Personal Ethics, with $F(3, 439) = 3.055$, $p = 0.028$, and $\eta^2 = 0.021$. Subsequently, the analysis conducted a post hoc Tukey Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test to determine whether the significance applied to all organizations or some of them. Table 2 represents the corresponding comparisons between the groups. Notably, statistically significant differences in the levels of Personal Ethics were found between Fearful and Quantum organizational types ($MD = -1.42$, $p = 0.015$).

TABLE 2
POST HOC TUKEY HSD – ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE AND PERSONAL ETHICS

(I) Organization	(J) Organization	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	p	95% Confidence Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Courageous	Fearful	1.10	.648	.327	-.57	2.77
	Bureaucratic	.22	.575	.981	-1.26	1.70
	Quantum	-.32	.579	.947	-1.81	1.18
Fearful	Courageous	-1.10	.648	.327	-2.77	.57
	Bureaucratic	-.88	.467	.237	-2.08	.33
	Quantum	-1.42*	.472	.015	-2.63	0.20
Bureaucratic	Courageous	-.22	.575	.981	-1.70	1.26
	Fearful	.88	.467	.237	-.33	2.08
	Quantum	-.54	.366	.460	-1.48	.41
Quantum	Courageous	.32	.579	.947	-1.18	1.81
	Fearful	1.42*	.472	.015	.20	2.63
	Bureaucratic	.54	.366	.460	-.41	1.48

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Two homogeneous subsets were detected. Bureaucratic and Courageous organizations overlapped between the two subgroups, but Fearful and Quantum organizations remained distinct. There were significant differences in the Personal Ethics scores between Fearful and Quantum organizations, but for Bureaucratic and Courageous organizations, there was not enough evidence to support that there were any notable differences. A Factorial ANOVA resulted in the main effect yielding an F ratio of $F(3, 435) = 3.055$, $p < .001$, indicating a significant difference between Fearful and Quantum organizations.

Testing Secondary Hypothesis – Organizational Type, Socio-Demographics, and Personal Ethics

Table 3 shows the Factorial ANOVA results. The relationship between organizational type and personal ethics was statistically significant ($p = 0.026$). Ethnicity was the only demographic variable with a statistically significant effect ($p = 0.007$).

TABLE 3
BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS – ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE, SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS, AND PERSONAL ETHICS

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power[b]
Corrected Model	3347.715[a]	260	12.876	1.530	.001	.691	1.000
Intercept	37238.173	1	37238.173	4425.832	.000	.961	1.000
Organizational (Org) Type	28.978	3	21.659	2.521	.026	.069	.506
Gender	12.889	1	12.889	1.532	.217	.009	.234
Age	11.477	4	2.869	.341	.850	.008	.126
Ethnicity	140.590	5	28.118	3.342	.007	.086	.894
Income Level	69.142	4	17.286	2.054	.089	.044	.605
Education Level	37.937	5	7.587	.902	.481	.025	.318
Org Type * Gender	40.875	3	13.625	1.619	.187	.027	.421
Org Type * Age	106.536	7	15.219	1.809	.088	.066	.718
Org Type * Ethnicity	87.514	8	10.939	1.300	.246	.055	.586
Org Type * Income Level	71.694	12	5.975	.710	.740	.046	.404
Org Type * Education Level	31.045	8	3.881	.461	.882	.020	.211
Error	1497.661	178	8.414				
Total	254599.000	439					
Corrected Total	4845.376	438					

a. R Squared = .691 (Adjusted R Squared = .539)
b. Computed using alpha = .05

The results showed that Europeans had the lowest Personal Ethics (M = 21.38; SD = 4.926, p < .05) than the rest of the other ethnic groups. The second-lowest was Hispanics (M = 23.52; SD = 3.405), while the third-lowest was Whites (M = 23.70; SD = 3.036). Moreover, the highest Personal Ethics was Native Americans (M = 24.46; SD = 3.318), while the second-highest was Blacks (M = 24.36; SD = 3.922), and the third-highest was Asians (M = 24.24; SD = 3.932).

DISCUSSION

This study sought to establish the influence of courageous, fearful, bureaucratic, and quantum organizational types on an employee's ethical behavior. Quantum organizations were associated with the highest personal ethics scores. A quantum organization is where frequent acts of courage are observed by employees with little fear of negative consequences. The second-highest personal ethics score was associated with courageous organizations. A courageous organization is where employees frequently observe acts of courage, even in the face of fear of deviating from the organization's accepted norms. The second-lowest personal ethics scores were associated with bureaucratic organizations. In a bureaucratic organization, employees have observed few acts of courage but do not fear negative consequences if choosing to behave courageously. The lowest personal ethics scores were associated with fearful organizations. In a fearful organization, employees observe few acts of courage, and substantial fear exists

(Kilmann et al., 2010). Moreover, statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences in the levels of Personal Ethics were found between Fearful and Quantum organizational types. Therefore, H_{1b} and H_{1d} are accepted, yet H_{1a} and H_{1c} are rejected.

This study further sought to establish what influence the socio-demographics of Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Income Level, and Education Level had on an employee's ethical behavior. Ethnicity was the only demographic variable with a statistically significant effect on the relationship between Organizational Type and Personal Ethics. The order from low to high on personal ethics scores were Europeans, Hispanics, Whites, Blacks, and Native Americans. Therefore, H_{2c} is accepted and H_{2a}, H_{2b}, H_{2d} and H_{2e} are rejected.

This study had limitations. For example, the Personal Ethics Assessment (Boretti, 2011) was a self-rating the participants did. Furthermore, this study did not consider employees who worked in a mixed organization. Future research should further advance on why working in a fear-based organization can compromise employees' ethical behavior and how working in a quantum (non-fear-based) organization constructively enhances employees' ethical behaviors.

Future research should also address how fear-based organizational cultures are toxic organizations typically led by leaders manifesting Dark Triad personality traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and the importance of keeping these types of employees out of leadership roles and out of the organization altogether. Managerial leadership implications should focus on determining how these toxic people ultimately make their way and navigate themselves into leadership roles at the demise of their followers and coworkers.

Additionally, further research is needed to help equip hiring managers and recruiters in the interviewing process to weed out fearmonger candidates. Interview questions that focus on the candidate's workplace civility traits or lack thereof are essential to help determine whether this person will be toxic to the organization and others. Once an employee is already within the organizational system and actively seeking promotion, utilizing the 360-Degree Feedback Assessment (Kluger & DeNisi, 1987) as a tool can uncover whether the person would transition into a power role as a toxic leader (Masood & Grogan, 2023; Walsh & Magley, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

This study statistically demonstrated that fearful organizations negatively impact employees' ethical behavior. Alternatively, employees' ethical behavior is constructively enhanced when working in quantum organizations (non-fear-based). Suppose employees are too afraid to support fairness and dignity, advocate for personal beliefs, challenge discrimination, defend colleagues' rights, empower underrepresented voices, and champion meritocracy and inclusivity (Kilmann et al., 2002). In that case, employees will perform under a fear-based organizational umbrella. The fear that permeates the organization's varied management and leadership layers creates a toxic work environment in a contaminated organizational culture with destructive leadership (Li et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024).

In the short run, employees find it easier to follow operating procedures and agree more with managerial leadership decisions. Yet, if companies want to succeed in the long run, employees must challenge the status quo regarding operating procedures, policies, and norms. However, challenging traditional practices and organizational cultural norms can come with retaliation, negative performance reviews, being put on a performance improvement plan, schedule and task changes, being passed over for promotions, attacking the victim's private life and personality, threat of professional status, workplace bullying, mobbing, workplace isolation, social exclusion, and losing their jobs (Kilmann et al., 2002; Monks & Coyne, 2011).

There are numerous reasons why an employee's ethical behavior would diminish while working within a fear-based organization. Firstly, when employees see destructive leadership taking place, creating fear and toxicity in the company, they begin to believe that this is acceptable behavior, which clouds their judgment for the worse and thus negatively impacts their ethical behaviors throughout the organization internally and externally. Another reason employees will model the behaviors of a bad leader is that employees will learn and then implement human behavior by observing and mimicking the values and

behaviors of the leaders in an organization. Lastly, peer pressure can cause employees to behave negatively (Bandura, 1977; Li et al., 2023; Lilly, 2021; Restubog et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2024).

Courageous employees are not intimidated into having a prohibitive voice regarding organizational malpractices, concerns, and the day-to-day operations of any unethical functions of the organization. If employees deem it necessary to be silent and not have a voice, it is out of fear, and they are working under weak leadership within a flawed organizational culture (Svendsen et al., 2020). Exercising the leadership trait of self-confidence (Northouse, 2022) will help organizational leaders take in and admit unethical wrongdoings in the company when seen or voiced by employees. It will also give them the courage and momentum needed to create positive changes instead of adverse outcomes within the organizational culture.

Courageous employees should be applauded instead of punished, and having leaders with enough self-assurance and fortitude to appreciate courageous employees is needed to keep a company growing and moving forward. Otherwise, the people and the organization shift to a darker place. For example, although physical bullying is not as common within organizations, psychological bullying is (Monks & Coyne, 2011). Finally, employees must find organizations that promote courageous behaviors to enhance psychological safety, job satisfaction, employee retention, and personal ethics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Boretti, J. (2011). *Personal ethics assessment.*

Brydon-Miller, M., & Coghlan, D. (2019). First-, second- and third-person values-based ethics in educational action research: Personal resonance, mutual regard and social responsibility. *Educational Action Research*, *27*(2), 303–317.

Byrne, B.M. (2016). *Structural equation modeling with AMOS (multivariate applications series)* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Cabana, G.C., & Muel, K. (2021). Team ethical cultures within an organization: A differentiation perspective on their existence and relevance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *170*(4), 761–780.

Chowkase, A.A., Parra-Martínez, F.A., Ghahremani, M., Bernstein, Z., Finora, G., & Sternberg, R.J. (2024). Dual-process model of courage. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1376195.

Detert, J.R. (2018). Cultivating everyday courage. *Harvard Business Review*, *96*(6), 128–135.

Donada, C., Mothe, C., Nogatchewsky, G., & de Campos Ribeiro, G. (2019). The respective effects of virtues and inter-organizational management control systems on relationship quality and performance: Virtues win. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *154*(1), 211–228.

Farley, S.B., Yoon, H.J., & Padilla, C. (2021). What values will define and guide OD in the future? *Organization Development Review*, *53*(1), 27–34.

Fierens, M., de Smaele, H., Domingo, D., Le Cam, F., Raeymaeckers, K., Temmerman, M., & Tixie, F. (2023). Ethics as the backbone of the professional identity of Belgian journalism interns. *Media Practice & Education*, *24*(4), 333–350.

Gould, J., & Hazelgrove, T. (2023). Scrooge's reclamation: Lessons in personal ethics. *Teaching Ethics*, *23*(1), 45–62.

Groessl, J. (2017). Leadership in the field: Fostering moral courage. *The Journal of Social Work, Values and Ethics*, *14*(1), 72–79.

Hair, J.F., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E., & Black, W.C. (2018). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage India.

Harbour, M., & Kisvfalvi, V. (2014). In the eye of the beholder: An exploration of managerial courage. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *119*(4), 493–515.

Howard, M., Farr, J., Grandey, A., & Gutworth, M. (2017). The creation of the Workplace Social Courage Scale (WSCS): An investigation of internal consistency, psychometric properties, validity, and utility. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, *32*(6), 673–690.

Jones, W.A. (2017). Legal yes, ethical no. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *11*(2), 55–56.

Kant, I. (1996). *Critique of pure reason*. Hackett Publishing.

Kelman, S., Sanders, R., & Pandit, G. (2016). 'I won't back down?' complexity and courage in government executive decision making. *Public Administration Review*, *76*(3), 465–471.

Kilmann, R., O'hara, L., & Strauss, J. (2010). Developing and validating a quantitative measure of organizational courage. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, *25*(1), 15–23.

Kilmann, R.H., O'Hara, L.A., & Strauss, J.P. (2002). *Organizational courage assessment (Organizational Design Consultants).*

Kluger, A.N., & DeNisi, A. (1987). The validity of 360-degree feedback: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*(3), 655–701.

Koerner, M.M. (2014). Courage as identity work: Accounts of workplace courage. *Academy of Management Journal*, *57*(1), 63–93.

Kokkoris, M.D., & Sedikides, C. (2019). Can you be yourself in business? How reminders of business affect the perceived value of authenticity. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *49*(7), 448–458.

Li, P., Yin, K., Shi, J., Damen, T.G.E., & Taris, T.W. (2023). Are bad leaders indeed bad for employees? A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies between destructive leadership and employee outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, pp. 1–15.

Lilly, J. (2021). The positive side of peer pressure: Employees as "enforcers" of positive cultural values. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, *35*(9), 4–6.

Lysova, E.I., Tosti-Kharas, J., Michaelson, C., Fletcher, L., Bailey, C., & McGhee, P. (2023). Ethics and the future of meaningful work: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *185*(4), 713–723.

Lyu, Y., Wu, L., Ye, Y., Kwong Kwan, H., & Chen, Y. (2023). Rebellion under exploitation: How and when exploitative leadership evokes employees' workplace deviance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *185*(3), 483–498.

Masood, H., & Grogan, A. (2023). Crafting work relationships using "dark motives": A multilevel model. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, *88*(2), 34–46.

Mendonca, M., & Kanungo, R.N. (2007). *Ethical leadership*. Open University Press.

Mert, I.S., & Köksal, K. (2022). The role of coast guard courage in the relationship between personality and organizational commitment. *Military Psychology*, *34*(6), 706–721.

Monks, C.P., & Coyne, I. (2011). *Bullying in different contexts*. Cambridge University Press.

Neal, P., Justice, B., & Barron, K. (2019). How ethical leadership impacts student success. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (185), 97–105.

Newstead, T., Dawkins, S., Macklin, R., & Martin, A. (2020). The virtues project: An approach to developing good leaders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *167*(4), 605–622.

Nguyen, L.D., & Tran, Q.H.M. (2018). Working adults and personal business ethics in south east Asia: A comparative study in Thailand and Vietnam. *Public Organization Review*, *18*(2), 159–174.

Northouse, P.G. (2022). *Leadership theory & practice* (Ninth ed.). SAGE Publications.

Ogunfowora, B., Maerz, A., & Varty, C.T. (2021). How do leaders foster morally courageous behavior in employees? Leader role modeling, moral ownership, and felt obligation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *42*(4), 483–503.

Orms, C.M. (2016). Developing the personal ethics code: A key element of an effective business ethics course. *Business Education Innovation Journal*, *8*(2), 51–58.

Pascal, E. (2019). Being similar while judging right and wrong: The effects of personal and situational similarity on moral judgements. *International Journal of Psychology*, *54*(2), 188–196.

Paulhus, D.L., & Williams, K.M. (2002). The dark triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *36*(6), 556–563.

Peng, H., & Wei, F. (2020). How and when does leader behavioral integrity influence employee voice? The roles of team independence climate and corporate ethical values. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *166*(3), 505–521.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook of classification.

Přibáň, J. (2019). Constitutional values as the normalisation of societal power: From a moral transvaluation to a systemic self-valuation. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, *11*(2/3), 451–459.

Raghunathan, T. (2016). *Missing data analysis in practice.* CRC Press.

Restubog, S.L.D., Scott, K.L., & Zagenczyk, T.J. (2011). When distress hits home: The role of contextual factors and psychological distress in predicting employees' responses to abusive supervision. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(4), 713–729.

Roosevelt, F.D. (1932). "Only thing we have to fear is fear itself": FDR's first inaugural address. *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web.* Retrieved from http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5057/

Schilpzand, P., Hekman, D.R., & Mitchell, T.R. (2015). An inductively generated typology and process model of workplace courage. *Organization Science*, *26*(1), 52–77.

Schmid, E.A., Verdorfer, A.P., & Peus, C. (2019). Shedding light on leaders' self-interest: Theory and measurement of exploitative leadership. *Journal of Management*, *45*(4), 1401–1433.

Schwepker, C.H. (2019). Strengthening customer value development and ethical intent in the salesforce: The influence of ethical values person–organization fit and trust in manage. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *159*(3), 913–925.

Schyns, B., & Schilling, J. (2013). How bad are the effects of bad leaders? A meta-analysis of destructive leadership and its outcomes. *Leadership Quarterly*, *24*(1), 138–158.

Sliwa, P. (2017). Moral understanding as knowing right from wrong. *Ethics*, *127*(3), 521–552.

Snieder, R., & Zhu, Q. (2020). Connecting to the heart: Teaching value-based professional ethics. *Science & Engineering Ethics*, *26*(4), 2235–2254.

Steckler, E., & Clark, C. (2019). Authenticity and corporate governance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *155*(4), 951–963.

Stern, R. (2014). Darwall on second-personal ethics. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *22*(2), 321–333.

Svendsen, M., Seljeseth, I., & Ernes, K.O. (2020). Ethical leadership and prohibitive voice: The role of leadership and organizational identification. *Journal of Values Based Leadership*, *13*(1), 47–65.

Taber, K.S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, (48), 1273–1296.

van Loon, R., & Buster, A. (2019). The future of leadership: The courage to be both leader and follower. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *13*(1), 73–74.

Walsh, B.M., & Magley, V.J. (2020). Workplace civility training: Understanding drivers of motivation to learn. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *31*(17), 2165–2187.

Zhang, K., Zhao, B., & Yin, K. (2024). When leaders acknowledge their own errors, will employees follow suit? A social learning perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *18*(2), 403–421.