FUW-IJMSS
ISSN: 2635-3539 (Print)
2384-6224 (online)
Open Access
Google Scholar

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH AND EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE IN PLATEAU STATE UNIVERSITY BOKKOS

By

Bulus Nandom Ishaya
bulus@fuwukari.edu.ng
08035965289

Abstract

This study examined the effect of ethical leadership on employee job performance at Plateau State University, Bokkos, Specifically, the effect of moral character, stewardship, role modelling, and accountability on job performance was examined. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 520 employees of Plateau State University through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed, using a five-point Likert scale. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study indicate that all four dimensions of ethical leadership—moral character, stewardship, role modelling, and accountability—positively influence employee job performance. Among these, stewardship and accountability were found to have the strongest effect. The study concludes that ethical leadership not only enhances individual employee performance but also promotes a positive organizational culture that encourages trust, transparency, and ethical decision-making. Furthermore, the results highlight the dynamic interplay between ethical leadership and employee performance, reinforcing the importance of ethical behaviour at all levels of leadership in the university setting. Based on these findings, the study recommends that Plateau State University should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize ethical leadership qualities. It also suggests the implementation of role modelling initiatives, encouragement of stewardship in decision-making, and the strengthening of accountability mechanisms to improve overall employee job performance.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Employee job performance, Moral character, Stewardship, Role modelling & accountability.

Introduction

In today's complex and rapidly changing landscape, ethical leadership has emerged as a vital component of organizational success. Ethical leaders not only drive employee job performance but also foster a positive work environment promote social responsibility, and enhance organizational reputation. Effective leadership is crucial for the success of any organization, including institutions of higher learning like Plateau State University. Ethical leadership in particular, has gained significant

attention in recent years due to its positive impact on employee behavior, job satisfaction, and overall performance. The term "ethical leadership" describes a style of management that places a premium on acting in accordance with universally accepted standards of morality. (The study conducted by Moore and colleagues in 2019) Encouraging a work climate that promotes employee development, creativity, and productivity, ethical leaders prioritise justice, transparency, and moral standards. As a result of ethical leadership, organisations and their staff stand out from the competition, which boosts morale and productivity (Serang et al., 2024).

Positive organisational culture, trust, and the adoption of comparable beliefs and behaviours are all outcomes of ethical leadership. They make choices that consider the needs of society and the environment while also considering the interests of the organisation and its members. Due to accountability and conflicts of interest between employees and company leaders, organisations on a global and local scale must comprehend and implement transparent ethical standards for their staff at all levels. As noted by Özsungur (2020) and Southgate et al. (2023), unethical actions taken by leaders can result in organisational and corporate failures like bribery, corruption, and employee turnover. In government agencies in developing nations, where personnel are entrusted with the responsibility of serving the public, a deeper comprehension of leadership ethics becomes even more crucial to organisational objectives.

A literature review shows that ethical leadership affects performance through communication, respect, employee empowerment, and honesty as indicated by Mseti et al., 2024, Brown et al., 2005, Bouckenooghe et al., 2015 and Barare & Wambua, 2018. Ethical leadership enhances organizational performance and productivity according to Brown et al., 2005 and Bouckenooghe et al., 2015. In the same way, Bedi et al. (2016) found that the workers are more likely to be cooperative, productive and satisfied with their job if they are reporting to an ethical supervisor.

According to Gibson et al. (2012) job performance was described as the capacity to achieve organizational tasks and objectives. Employee job performance refers to actions intended to accomplish goals in accordance with certain standards Employee performance can be observed in the form of a tangible or intangible product that is a response or decision that enhances the achievement of organizational or company goals (Obicci, 2015). As it is in this (Agustinus, 2015) defined employee job performance as the work outcome. They seek to achieve organizational objectives and objectives within the context of moral and ethical standards without legal requirements. Employee performance consists of actions that can contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives. In addition, according to the expert, employee performance refers to the results of the work done in the accomplishment of the tasks assigned in the course of the job by the use of experience, honesty, and punctuality (Arik, 2016). It has a function in the attainment of organizational or company objectives. The result is a standard that indicates whether employees perform their duties as expected by the company (Adawiyah et al., 2022). Ethical leadership increases positive employee job performance, and the latter strengthens and sustains ethical leadership. A positive and more productive work environment is the by-product of this dynamic interaction that creates a virtuous cycle. At Plateau State University Bokkos, we want to find out how four important aspects of ethical leadership—moral character, stewardship, role modelling, and accountability—relate to employee work performance.

An examination of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee job performance in many organizations shows that despite the importance of ethical leadership in promoting positive organizational outcomes, many organizations struggle to foster a culture of ethical decision-making and behaviour, leading to decreased employee job performance, low morale, and high turnover rates (Shakeel et al., 2019). Plateau State University, like many other institutions, faces challenges in maintaining high employee job performance, which is critical for achieving its academic and administrative goals. With the increasing demand for quality education and services, the university needs to ensure that its employees are motivated, committed, and performing at their best. Furthermore, the dynamic relationship between ethical leadership and employee job performance is not fully understood making it challenging for organizations to develop effective strategies to promote ethical leadership and improve employee performance (Mseti et al., 2024). This is actually the situation of things among many organizations in Nigeria today. It is based on the above-identified problems that this study is undertaking. The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of ethical leadership on employee job performance in Plateau State University. The specific objectives are to:

i. Investigate the effect of moral character on employee job performance.
ii. Examine the effect of stewardship on organizational performance.
iii. Determine the effect of role modeling on employee performance.
iv. Assess the effect of accountability on performance.

Literature Review

Ethical Leadership Approach

In other words, for leaders to be able to steer the behavior of others in an ethical manner, there must be principles, beliefs and behaviors that have to be followed (Lim & Lianto, 2024). Ethical leadership is one of the most important aspects of modern organizational management. It was also found that there is a positive relationship between the level of ethical leadership and work culture on the one hand and the level of employee job performance on the other.

Job performance may be defined as the level and standard of work accomplished by an employee. Employee job performance is a complex construct that can be defined as different aspects of an individual's work activities. It is an important outcome variable in organizational research, affecting organizational performance, productivity and competitiveness (Mseti et al., 2024) Ethical leaders who cultivate a positive organisational culture is expected to exhibit and model ethical behaviour, stewardship, accountability and encourage employees to make decisions that will benefit the organisation, the employee and society and the environment.

Moral character: refers to the stable and enduring qualities that define an individual's relationships with others, including their values, principles, and behaviors. It encompasses the virtues and traits that guide one's interactions, decisions, and actions, influencing how they treat others, conduct themselves, and navigate complex situations (Moore et al., 2019).

Stewardship: Being a good steward is taking good care of the things that have been given to you, whether they be resources, skills, or abilities. Responsible resource management entails keeping resources safe for use by current and future generations while making prudent use of them. Good stewards understand the interdependence of their deeds with the bigger picture and put the greater good ahead of immediate gratification (Okpala & Caldwell, 2019).

Role Modeling: Role modeling involves

setting a positive example for others to follow, demonstrating values, behaviors, and character traits that inspire trust, respect, and admiration (Aftab et al., 2022). Good role models lead by example, showing others how to act with integrity, empathy, and kindness. They recognize the impact of their actions on others and strive to create a positive influence (Adawiyah et al., 2022).

Accountability: Being accountable is owning up to your choices, deeds, and the results they brought about. Accountability means you have to account to yourself, other people, and maybe even a higher power. When they mess up, accountable people own up to it, figure out what went wrong, and fix it. Being open, honest, and fair is important to them since they know their actions affect other people and the community (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

Interconnectedness: These moral characters are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Effective stewards' model responsible behavior, demonstrating accountability for their actions. Role models, in turn, exhibit stewardship by using their influence wisely and being accountable for their impact. Accountability is essential for both stewardship and role modeling, as it ensures that individuals take responsibility for their actions and their consequences.

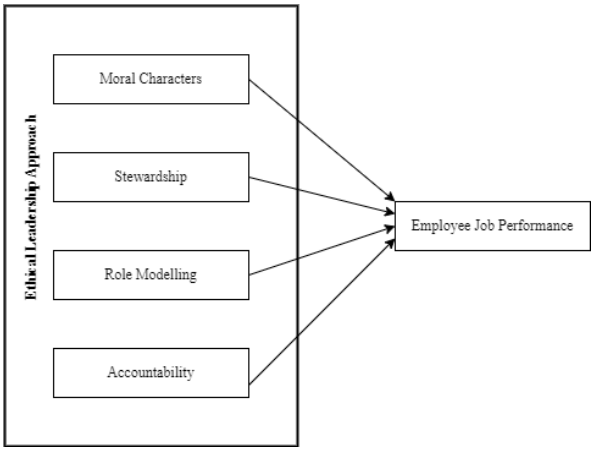

Fig 1: Conceptual model of the study
Source: Researchers model (2024)

Theoretical Review

Transformational Leadership Theory

The notion of transformational leadership has been put forward by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and has been further developed by Bernard Bass in 1985; it underlines the importance of ethical leadership in person and organisation change. The points of this strategy are idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, personalised attention, and inspiring motivation. In the sphere of leadership research and analysis, transformational leadership theory is one of the oldest and well-developed psychological and methodological approaches. To Burns, it is about the internal relations and values of the leader, where he or she encourages followers to change their behavior in light of barriers and be part of organizational change (Saad Alessa, 2021).

When the leaders communicate with the followers in a way that is described by Burns (1978) as 'searching for and mobilising higher levels of motivation and morality', then what is referred to as 'transforming leadership' occurs (Mulla & Krishna, 2009).

Ethical leadership is bolstered by transformational leadership theory's four pillars: establishing ethical organizational culture, increasing followers' ethical sensitivity, developing organizational culture, and empowering followers. An ethical approach has a favourable impact on employee work performance in several ways, including: increased job satisfaction; enhanced organisational commitment; better decision making; increased innovation and creativity; and reduced turnover.

Empirical Review

Ozavize Ayodele et al. (2019) conducted a study on the relationship between ethical leadership, ethical leadership environment, and employee moral effectiveness with the help of a social learning theory. A cross-sectional study employing self-completed questionnaires was conducted to investigate the moderating effect of virtue and tone based ethical leadership on the moral consequences of subordinates in institutions in Lagos and Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings suggest that virtue-oriented academic ethical leadership and ethical leadership climate improves employee moral functioning.

Brown et al. (2005) undertook a research on the social learning perspective of concept formation and evaluation with a view of supporting social learning theory as a framework towards understanding ethical leadership. An exploratory survey method was used in the United States to assess the practicality and importance of this construct and found that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of outcomes like perceived leader effectiveness, follower job satisfaction and organisational commitment and their willingness to voice concerns to management.

Torfing and Bentzen (2020) consider the possibility of applying stewardship theory as a replacement for control-based performance management. A qualitative research study in Denmark revealed that Stewardship theory provides a more plausible explanation to agency theory that was dominant in the New Public Management period, which engendered the development of strict performance management systems based on mistrust and monitoring of public employees.

Okpala and Caldwell (2019) examined humility, forgiveness and love as the core aspects of ethical stewardship. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the meaning and importance of ethical stewardship as a fundamental component in building leaders' credibility, focusing on humility, forgiveness, and love as three core leadership characteristics inherent in ethical stewardship, and arguing that people can practice ethical stewardship.

In their article with the title "Role of Ethical Leadership in Shaping Employee Moral Cognition and Misconduct," Moore et al. (2019) explored the implication of moral leadership. The study employed both experimental and survey research methods and established that ethical leadership reduces employees' level of moral disengagement and their unethical decisions and deviant behaviours. The findings suggest that the employee misconduct is a dual process between the employees and their supervisors.

Al. (2021) in a research focused on the interaction between ethical leadership and ethical climate regarding the ethical behavior of the workers with a moderating role of the person-organization fit. The data were collected from two groups from the manufacturing, medical, and insurance organizations. The results showed that the ethical behavior of the workers had a stronger relationship with the hypotheses for the workers with high P-O fit than for the workers with low P-O fit.

Ghanem & Castelli (2019) adapted a survey approach to assess the relationships between accountability and moral competence, and ethical leadership. The results revealed that moral competence plays a mediating role in this relationship, where by enhancing moral competence enhances the positive relationship between accountability and ethical leadership. The results suggest that accountability can be a way for organizations to promote ethical leadership.

In this study, Alam (2019) examined the impact of integrity systems, internal control

system, and leadership behaviours on accountability practices in Malaysia's public sector. This research employs both primary data to assess the current accountability systems and their relationship with the integrity framework, internal control system and leadership attributes in the Malaysian public sector. The findings show that there is a positive correlation between the integrity system and leadership quality, while the internal control system has an array of correlation with accountability practices.

Methodology

This study employed a survey design to collect data from representatives of the population without manipulating any variables. The study investigates the ethical leadership approach on employee job performance in Plateau State University Bokkos. The population consists of 869 employees at Plateau State University (Plateau State University Bokkos Registry, 2024). Using the Taro Yamane Statistical Formula, a sample size of 520 participants was determined Simple random sampling was use Model of the study to ensures equal chances of selection for all elements, Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires designed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), covering aspects related to ethical leadership and employee job performance, Content and face validity are established through expert consultation with the researchers supervisor. Reliability was confirmed via a pilot test (test–retest), yielding a Cronbach's alpha internal coefficient. the result of the crouchback alpha revealed values of .743, .823, .745 and .721 for MC, S, RM, A and P respectively.

Data were presented in Frequency tables, percentages, and multiple regression analysis (using SPSS V25) to test the hypotheses on the effect of various ethical leadership dimensions on employee job performance in Plateau State University Bokkos. The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the p-value is > 0.05 and reject the null hypothesis if the p-value < 0.05. The model looks like this:

$$P = B_o + B_1MC + B_2S + B_3RM + B_4A + e \quad \text{.....(eq 1)}$$

Where

MC= Moral CharacterS
= Stewardship
RM= Role Modeling
A = Accountability

Result and Discussion

The study distributed 520 questionnaires to the respondents out of which 423 were returned and used for the data analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Tolerance	VIF
P	3.0263	.33309		
MC	3.0226	.31037	.975	1.026
S	3.0753	.33219	.988	1.012
RM	3.0148	.36530	.975	1.025
A	3.0012	.35350	.981	1.019

Source: SPSS V25, 2024

The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean scores for all variables (P, MC, S, RM, A) are centered around 3, suggesting that respondents generally provided neutral to slightly positive ratings on the Likert scale for ethical leadership dimensions and employee performance. The standard deviations are relatively low, showing moderate variability in responses. The tolerance values are close to 1, and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are low (all close to 1), indicating no multicollinearity issues among the predictors (MC, S, RM, A).

Table 2: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726[a]	.528	.506	.23410

a. Predictors: (Constant), MC, S, RM, A

b. Dependent Variable: P

Source: SPSS V25, 2024

The model summary shows that the predictors (MC, S, RM, A) explain about 52.8% (R^2 = 0.528) of the variance in employee job performance (P), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.506, which accounts for any adjustments in the model based on the number of predictors. This suggests that the ethical leadership dimensions significantly influence employee performance, but other factors outside of this model may also contribute to performance.

Table 3: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.385	4	1.346	24.566	.000b

Residual	4.822	419	.055
Total	10.207	423	

a. Dependent Variable: P

b. Predictors: (Constant), MC, S, RM, A

Source: SPSS V25, 2024

The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant (F = 24.566, p < 0.05), indicating that the combination of the predictors (MC, S, RM, A) significantly predicts employee performance. The significance value (.000) shows strong evidence that the model is a good fit.

Test of Hypotheses and Discussion

Table 4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	2.459	.492	5.002	.000
	MC	.423	.080	5.288	.000
	S	.689	.074	8.833	.000
	RM	.311	.068	4.574	.006
	A	.597	.070	8.568	.000

Source: SPSS V25, 2024

The coefficients table provides insights into the individual contributions of each predictor:

H_{01}: Moral character has no significant effect on employee job performance in Plateau state university Bokkos

Moral Character (MC) has a significant positive relationship with employee performance (B = .423, p (.000) = .05). This means that employees perceive that leaders with strong moral character contribute positively to their performance. This aligns with Torfing & Bentzen, (2020), who emphasize the role of moral character in shaping employee behavior and ethical decision-making.

H_{02}: Stewardship has no significant influence on organizational performance in Plateau state university Bokkos

Stewardship (S) is the most significant predictor (B = .689, p (.00) < .05), showing the highest impact on employee performance. This finding supports the study by Okpala & Caldwell (2019), which highlighted the importance of stewardship in ethical leadership

and its role in fostering a sense of responsibility among employees.

H_{03}: Role modeling has no significant impact on employee performance in Plateau state university Bokkos

Role Modeling (RM) also positively impacts employee performance (B = .311, p (.006) <.05). Role modeling helps to set standards of behavior that employees emulate, as observed by Ozavize Ayodele et al. (2019), where ethical leaders who lead by example inspire positive behavior and performance in employees.

H_{04}: Accountability has no significant effect on employee performance in Plateau state university Bokkos

Accountability (A) significantly influences performance (B = .597, p(.000) < .05), showing that when leaders hold themselves and others accountable, it positively impacts employee job performance. This finding aligns with Ghanem & Castelli (2019), who found that accountability promotes ethical behavior and enhances leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to examine the effect between ethical leadership and employee job performance at Plateau State University Bokkos, focusing on four key dimensions: ethics: responsibility, leadership and example. The research shows that ethical leadership leads to enhancement of the employees' performance. Specifically, it was found that the stewardship and accountability had the most significant effect on the dependent variables than the moral character of the leaders and their capacity to set the right tone. Ethical leadership leads to positive organisational climate, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and organisational performance. These conclusions are in line with the previous research and therefore provide evidence for the significance of ethical leadership in promoting organisational performance and the outcomes of the employees. Based on this the study recommends the following:

i. This is why Plateau State University should ensure that it participates in leadership development programmes that make leadership to consider ethical leadership matters such as moral character, accountability and stewardship. Such programs should focus at making sure that the current and future leaders display the right ethical behaviors; encourage employees to be open and fair in their workplace, which would enhance the performance of the employees.
ii. Since it was discovered that stewardship has the most significant impact on performance, the university leadership should concentrate on the proper use of resources, as well as the sustainable goals of the organisation. Leadership should adopt stewardship ideas that improve self and organisational accountability and also improve sustainability within organisations.
iii. Management of Plateau State University to ensure that they set the standards that the employees should portray. This can be done through role modeling where the top management has to set good ethical standards and practice. This is because through modeling, leaders are able to set good examples that are followed in the organization hence enhancing the ethical standard and therefore the job performance of the employees.
iv. It also recommended that leaders and the employees are held responsible for

their actions. Some of the features that are suggested are performance appraisals, reporting and how to monitor ethical issues. This will not .

only enhance efficiency of the employees in the capacity they are expected to perform but also enhance trust and integrity in the firm

REFERENCES

Adawiyah, W., Baliartati, B., & Rafi, A. (2022). The Impact of Ethical Leadership onEmployee Performance: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). *LePALISSHE 2021*. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.3-8-2021.2315128

Aftab, J., Sarwar, H., Amin, A., & Kiran, A. (2022). Does CSR mediate the nexus of ethical leadership and employee's job performance? Evidence from North Italy SMEs. *Social Responsibility Journal*, *18*(1), 154–177. https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-09-2020-0393

Agustinus, J. (2015). Accountability Perspective: Implementation and Reporting on Spending Fund of Papua Special Autonomy. *Information Management and Business Review*, *7*(2), 79–86. https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v7i2.1142

Al Halbusi, H., Williams, K. A., Ramayah, T., Aldieri, L., & Vinci, C. P. (2021). Linking ethical leadership and ethical climate to employees' ethical behavior: the moderating role of person–organization fit. *Personnel Review*, *50*(1), 159–185.https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-09-2019-0522

Alam, M. M. S. (2019). corresponding author Citation Reference: *Social Responsibility Journal*, *38*(2019), 1–15.

Barare, N. Ben, & Wambua, L. (2018). Relationship Between Ethical Leadership and Performance of State Corporations in Kenya: a Case Study of Kenya Revenue Authority. *Journal of Human Resource and Leadership*, *3*(3), 14–19. www.iprjb.org

Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learningperspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *97*(2), 117–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002

Ghanem, K., & Castelli, P. (2019). Accountability and Moral Competence Promote Ethical Leadership. *Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, *12*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.22543/0733.121.1247

Lim, A. T., & Lianto, L.-. (2024). Ethical Leadership in the Eyes of Gen Z: A LiteratureReview. *FIRM Journal of Management Studies*, *9*(1), 83.

https://doi.org/10.33021/firm.v9i1.5059

Moore, C., Mayer, D. M., Chiang, F. F. T., Crossley, C., Karlesky, M. J., & Birtch, T. A. (2019). Leaders matter morally: The role of ethical leadership in shaping employee moralcognition and misconduct. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(1), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000341

Mseti, E., Lameck, W., & Kinemo, S. (2024). Ethical Leadership and Employees' Performance: A Systematic Review. *East African Journal of Education and SocialSciences*, *4*(6), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2023v04i06.0328a

Mulla, Z. R., & Krishnan, V. R. (2009). Do transformational leaders raise followers to higher levels of morality? Validating James MacGregor Burns' hypothesis in the Indian contextusing Karma-Yoga. *Annual Conference of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada, Niagara Falls*. https://sites.google.com/site/venkatrkrishnan/home/writings/fulltext/zubin_asac2009.pdf

Okpala, C., & Caldwell, C. (2019). Humility, Forgiveness, and Love -- The Heart of EthicalStewardship. *Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, *12*(2), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.22543/0733.122.1281

Ozavize Ayodele, F., Binti Haron, H., & Ismail, I. (2019). Ethical Leadership, Ethical Leadership Climate and Employee Moral Effectiveness: A Social Learning Perspective. *KnE Social Sciences*, *2019*, 189–205. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i22.5051

Saad Alessa, G. (2021). The Dimensions of Transformational Leadership and Its Organizational Effects in Public Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*(November), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.682092

Serang, S., Ramlawati, R., Suriyanti, S., Junaidi, J., & Nurimansjah, R. A. (2024). The role of ethical leadership on employees' behaviours and commitment to the organisation. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *22*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v22i0.2373

Shakeel, F., Kruyen, P. M., & Van Thiel, S. (2019). Ethical Leadership as Process: A Conceptual Proposition. *Public Integrity*, *21*(6), 613–624. https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2019.1606544

Southgate, G., Aderibigbe, J. K., Balogun, T. V., & Mahembe, B. (2023). Leadership styles as predictors of employee engagement at a selected tertiary institution. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *21*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v21i0.2238

Torfing, J., & Bentzen, T. Ø. (2020). Does stewardship theory provide a viable alternative to control-fixated performance management? *Administrative Sciences*, *10*(4), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci10040086