

## **The Effect of College Counselors' Authentic Leadership and Ethical Leadership on Students' School Satisfaction**

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### **Abstract**

*Teachers play a key role in influencing students' school lives, but many researchers have tried to improve school satisfaction in various aspects. And counselors are a special type of Chinese university teachers, and not only have the characteristics of university teachers, but also have daily administrative management functions related to students' school life. In this paper, we demonstrated the effect of college counselors' ethical leadership and authentic leadership on school satisfaction among Chinese university students. In addition, it also verified the mediating effect of organizational identification in this process. As a result of empirical analysis, ethical leadership have both positive effect on organizational identification and school satisfaction. Similarly, authentic leadership also have positive impact on organizational identity and school satisfaction. In addition, organizational Identification has a positive effect on school satisfaction. Furthermore, organizational identification has also been proven to mediate the relationship between both two types of leadership and school satisfaction. Finally, we found that authentic leadership was more influential than ethical leadership in increasing school satisfaction levels.*

**Keywords:** Ethical Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Organizational Identification, School Satisfaction

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

School satisfaction is defined as a subjective evaluation of students' perceptions of the quality of school life [1], and it has been shown to have a positive effect on academic achievement, psychological and social development [2-4]. Despite the importance of school satisfaction, the results of survey related to Chinese college students' satisfaction with school life were not very high. For example, [5] surveyed 1314 students at a university in China. It found that only 45.71% of students were satisfied with their overall school life. Similarly, [6]'s study showed that there is still a gap between the quality of services at universities and the expectations of students. Therefore, it requires a multi-faceted study on how to improve the school satisfaction.

Since teachers play a key role in influencing students in schools, many researchers have tried to improve school satisfaction in various aspects, including teacher leadership, role performance, support for students, and relationships with students [4,7-9]. Nowadays, when education faces great challenges, teacher leadership has been regarded as a salient factor in promoting innovation and specialization of education in schools [9,10]. Meanwhile, in recent business organizations, the morality and ethics of the leader are being emphasized due to the ethical scandal of the top management. This lack of ethics is not only limited to companies, but can also occur to educators, politicians and other professionals [11,12]. Ethics can be seen as an important factor of

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teachers' leadership, as they also have to solve ethical dilemmas in the process of performing their work. In particular, counselors are a special type of Chinese university teachers, and not only have the characteristics of university teachers, but also have daily administrative management functions related to students' school life. In general, counselors are the professors who have the longest and most frequent contact with college students in school life from admission to graduation. From this point of view, this study focuses on ethical leadership and authentic leadership that emphasize ethics, and aims to examine how college counselors' ethical leadership and authentic leadership affect school satisfaction.

Ethical leadership refers to the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making [13, p:120]. In addition, authenticity leadership is defined as leadership that is true to members by making balanced decisions and realizing relational transparency through objective relevant information analysis and listening based on a high level of self-awareness and internalized morality [14]. As such, since both ethical and authentic leadership are ethic-based leadership, clear communication, decision-making, and behavior about the professor's ethical standards are likely to make students aware of an ethical environment that treats them with respect and fairness. This is expected to improve the school satisfaction, which is a positive attitude toward the school, of students through organizational identification by expressing their identity as a psychological sense of belonging to the school. However, as the definition explains, since authenticity leadership implies that it is intrinsically moral [14], some researchers have pointed out that the problem of conceptual overlap is likely to exist between ethical leadership and authenticity leadership [14-17]. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the structural distinction between authenticity leadership and ethical leadership through empirical analysis by emphasizing the ethics of teaching leadership. In addition, we also verify how the two types of leadership affect organizational identification and school satisfaction. According to such context, it verifies the mediating effects of organizational identity on the relationship between both two types of leadership and school satisfaction. Finally, this study intends to examine which type of leadership is more effective in improving school satisfaction.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Ethical Leadership**

Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.” [13, p:120]. Normative and appropriate behavior means that members who recognize the leader's ethical behavior perceive the leader as a normatively correct and trustworthy role model. Two-way communication means an ethical leader becoming a role model based on social learning theory, engaging organizational members in the ethical decision-making process, and providing appropriate ethical procedures to subordinates through dialogue. Reinforcement means a leader setting ethical standards, rewarding ethical behavior that meets the established standards, and applying sanctions if the standards are not met.

### **2.2 Authentic Leadership**

Authenticity leadership refers to the leadership that is true to members by making balanced decisions and realizing relational transparency through objective relevant information analysis and listening based on a high level of self-awareness and internalized morality [14]. Authentic leadership consists of four elements: leader self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and balanced processing. Leader self-awareness means that the leader understands his/her own strengths and weaknesses, knows what others think of his/her leadership, and is fully aware of the leader's influence on others. Relational transparency refers to the leader's actions to gain trust by sharing information with people and showing his or her true and true self in daily relationships with members. In addition, internalized morality means that the leader acts in accordance

with his or her inner moral values, not by external pressure from members or organizations. Lastly, balanced decision-making refers to making decisions by listening to and referring to all relevant information and opinions of others.

### **2.3 Organizational Identification**

Organizational identification means an individual's sense of belonging to a specific organization and perception as a common destiny with the organization [18]. This is also an important mechanism to change the behavior or beliefs of members by integrating the characteristics or attributes of the organization with themselves and integrating them into a cognitive response system. Organizational identification serves as the basis for job attitudes and individual behavior, perceives and acts as an organization and a common destiny, and contributes to the organization along with self-expansion [18], and is an important antecedent to determining members' personal and intra-organizational behaviors [19]. Therefore, organizational identification is a concept that has important meanings not only for satisfaction at the individual level of members of the organization but also for efficiency at the level of the organization.

### **2.4 School Satisfaction**

School satisfaction is defined as a subjective evaluation of students' perceptions of the quality of school life [1], which is one of the indicators of positive school life. In particular, school satisfaction has been regarded as a fundamental area for students to understand their quality of life, including positive emotions and cognitive evaluations about life [1, 20]. The level of school satisfaction is affected by various factors such as students' personal factors, school system factors, and teacher-related factors [4]. Personal factors include demographic characteristics such as gender, age and socioeconomic level, psychological characteristics such as self-respect and motivation to learn, and physical environments such as school facilities and the school's democratic climate or friendship. Among the factors associated with teachers are teacher leadership, role performance, support for students, and student relationships [4,7,9].

### **2.5 Ethical Leadership and Organizational Identification**

Leaders can have a strong impact on employees' identity, and when employees admire leaders, the level of organizational identification increases [21,22]. Ethical leaders not only value ethics, but are also trustworthy, fair, and listen to their subordinates' grievances [13, 23]. Furthermore, because ethical leaders make fair and principled decisions, subordinates become more satisfied and trustworthy with their leaders, and have a pleasant and positive perception of the working environment [24,25]. In fact, some studies have also shown that the more ethical attributes a leader displays, such as fairness, trustworthiness, and integrity, employees have been shown to have more psychological attachment to the organization [26,27].

*Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership will have a positive influence on organizational identification.*

### **2.6 Authentic Leadership and Organizational Identification**

Authentic leader's self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and balanced processing can earn trust from members, and it will likely lead to identification with the leader [14,28]. Also, since leaders represent the interests of the organization and strive to achieve its goals, identification of authentic leaders is likely to lead to organizational identification [28]. Furthermore, authentic leaders can exercise a higher level of leadership than ethical leadership by placing more emphasis on others' interests than on their own [29].

*Hypothesis2: Authentic leadership will have a positive influence on organizational identification.*

## **2.7 Organizational Identification and School Satisfaction**

According to the social identity theory, if the identification with the organization to which they belong is strong, employees internalize the attributes of the organization as their own attributes and make organizational and self-interest consistent [18,30,31]. Furthermore, organizational members who feel attached to and identify with the organization are more committed to the organization, are more satisfied with their jobs, and work hard to achieve organizational goals [32]. Therefore, a high level of organizational identification is expected to increase the students' attachment to the school and to immerse them in the school, which in turn will improve their satisfaction with the school.

*Hypothesis3: Organizational identification will have a positive influence on school satisfaction.*

## **2.8 Ethical Leadership and School Satisfaction**

According to social learning theory and social cognitive theory, individual learning is possible by direct experience, indirect experience, observation of other people's behavior and results, and the more an individual perceives a person as a leader, the easier the organization's decisions and policies are accepted by employees, and the higher its commitment and satisfaction with the organization [33-35]. In this situation, if an ethical leader exhibits normatively appropriate behavior such as trust or honesty or altruistic behavior for others, employees will recognize such a leader as a legitimate and trustworthy ethical role model. As a result of this role model, employees are expected to voluntarily immerse themselves in the values and goals of the organization and improve their satisfaction with the organization.

*Hypothesis4: Ethical leadership will have a positive influence on school satisfaction.*

## **2.9 Authentic Leadership and School Satisfaction**

self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and balanced processing of authentic leaders' behaviors may allow employees to recognize the leader as a role model [14,36,37]. This perception influences the development of the subordinate's own authenticity, creates a more transparent and positive exchange relationship with the leader, and creates a positive perception of their work and organization [14]. This process is expected to result in increased attachment and commitment to the organization [37], and eventually improve organizational satisfaction.

*Hypothesis5: Authentic leadership will have a positive influence on school satisfaction.*

## **2.10 Mediating Effect of Organizational Identification**

According to social identity theory, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, and categorizing themselves as members of a group also applies their characteristics to themselves [18,30]. As a result, members of an organization in a social group identify themselves by perceiving the nature of the organization as their own, and identify themselves as a common destiny with the organization. And the social identity formed in this way affects individual attitudes and behaviors [18,30]. As previously described, ethical leadership gains the trust of employees by practicing actions and creating management values that serve as a model for others based on moral and ethical characteristics. When employees' values match the values of ethical leader, the employees perceive the characteristics of the organization as their own, and as the uniformity of the organization identification, they will have a positive attitude, such as organizational satisfaction.

Likewise, the authenticity leader will improve organizational identity by exerting a positive role model influence on employees by showing self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and balanced processing, and as it increases, organizational satisfaction is expected to improve.

*Hypothesis6: Organizational identification will positively mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and school satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis7: Organizational identification will positively mediate the relationship between authentic leadership and school satisfaction.*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Participants

This study was carried out a survey of college students from Yanbian University in China, from July 2021 to July 12th to 18th, and finally used a total of 476 parts of the data analysis. In the characteristics of the study sample, the results of the gender distribution 136(28.6%) were men, 340(71.4%) were women; distribution result of the grade is shown as Freshman 224(47.1%), sophomore 209(43.9%), junior 39(8.2%), senior 4(0.8%).

#### 3.2 Measurement

In this study, ethical leadership is defined as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making [13]. Ethical leadership was measured by [13] and all 10 items were included. Authenticity leadership is defined as leadership that is true to members by making balanced decisions and realizing relational transparency through objective relevant information analysis and listening based on a high level of self-awareness and internalized morality [14], that measured by [38] and all 16 items were included. Organizational identification refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a specific organization and perception as a common destiny with the organization [18], that measured by [39] and all 6 items were included. School satisfaction is defined as a subjective evaluation of students' perceptions of the quality of school life [1], that measured by [40] and all 6 items were included.

### 4. RESULT

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was first conducted to verify the suitability of the factor structure. The results of average variance extracted (AVE) of each variable showed ethical leadership=0.917, authentic leadership=0.873, organizational identification=0.867, and school satisfaction=0.834. The construct reliability of each variable showed ethical leadership=0.990, authentic leadership=0.988, organizational identification=0.939, and school satisfaction=0.961. In addition, the fit index of the model fit was  $X^2/df=3.525$ , TLI=0.956, CFI=0.961, IFI=0.961, PNFI=0.846, PGFI=0.687. According to the above results, the measurements of CFA have significant validity.

Also, as a result of the reliability analysis, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of all variables (ethical leadership=0.994, authentic leadership=0.993, organizational identification=0.966, school satisfaction=0.979) showed high reliability with more than 0.900. In order to understand the relationship between each variable, this study conducted a correlation analysis.

As shown in Table 1, the results of the analysis showed that ethical leadership had a significant positive correlation with organizational identification ( $r=0.725$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and school satisfaction ( $r=0.788$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Similarly, authentic leadership was found to have significant positive correlations with organizational identification ( $r=0.765$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and school satisfaction ( $r=0.812$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and organizational identification and school satisfaction ( $r=0.779$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) were also found to have significant positive correlations.

**Table 1. The results of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis**

	mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Ethical leadership	6.211	1.228	-			
2. Authentic leadership	6.182	1.238	0.911***	-		
3. Organizational identification	6.193	1.193	0.725***	0.765***	-	
4. School satisfaction	5.989	1.286	0.788***	0.812***	0.779***	-

\*\*\*= $p < 0.001$ , \*\*= $p < 0.01$ , \*= $p < 0.05$

To test the hypothesis, this study was analyzed using a structural equation model. As shown in Table 2, ethical leadership was found to have a significant positive effect on organizational identification (Estimate=0.200,  $p < 0.001$ ) and school satisfaction (Estimate=0.264,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, authentic leadership was found to have a positive effect on organizational identification (Estimate=0.603,  $p < 0.001$ ) and school satisfaction (Estimate=0.307,  $p < 0.001$ ). Organizational identification also had a positive effect on school satisfaction (Estimate=0.395,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, organizational identification was verified to have a partial mediating effect on the relationship between ethical leadership (indirect effect=0.079; lower BC=0.010, upper BC=0.184) and authentic leadership (indirect effect=0.238; lower BC=0.099, upper BC=0.341) and school satisfaction. Therefore, all hypotheses 1-7 were all supported.

**Table 2. The results of path analysis**

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Ethical leadership → Organizational identification	0.200	0.048	4.199	0.000
Ethical leadership → School satisfaction	0.264	0.048	5.497	0.000
Authentic leadership → Organizational identification	0.603	0.049	12.384	0.000
Authentic leadership → School satisfaction	0.307	0.056	5.525	0.000
Organizational identification → School satisfaction	0.395	0.049	8.100	0.000
Path	Indirect	Total	Lower BC	Upper BC
Ethical leadership → Organizational identification → School satisfaction	0.079	0.343	0.010	0.184
Authentic Leadership → Organizational identification → School satisfaction	0.238	0.545	0.099	0.341

$\chi^2(p) = 3069.404(0.000)$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 4.999$ , IFI=0.939, TLI=0.930, CFI=0.939, PNFI=0.808, PGFI=0.631

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Conclusion

We examine how ethical leadership and sincerity leadership affect school satisfaction as a way to improve school satisfaction while emphasizing the ethics of college teachers. In addition, the mediating effect was verified by explaining this process as the role of organizational identification, we make the following conclusions. Firstly, both ethical leadership and authentic leadership were found to have a significant effect on organizational identification. This explains that the more the leader is honest and truthful to himself and the subordinates based on ethics and respects them, the more the subordinates identify with the leader and the organization because they show an attitude to respect and follow the leader [41]. Secondly, both ethical leadership and sincerity leadership were found to have a significant effect on school satisfaction. This

emphasizes the importance of teachers' ethics in the educational field, and suggests that teachers' ethical leadership and authentic leadership are important predictors in improving school satisfaction. In particular, authentic leadership had a greater effect on school satisfaction than ethical leadership. This means that authentic leadership is more effective than ethical leadership in improving school satisfaction. Finally, organizational identification was found to have a significant effect on school satisfaction, and the mechanism by which organizational identification plays a mediating role in the relationship between ethical leadership, authentic leadership and school satisfaction was verified. This means that ethical and authentic leadership improves school satisfaction through the organizational identification. Therefore, in order to strengthen students' organizational satisfaction, this study suggest that not only the leadership of the professor is necessary, but also the indirect effect of organizational identification needs to be considered.

## 5.2 Limitations and Future Research

We have several limitations as follows. First, there will be a common method bias problem because the survey method of this study relied on the self-reporting method of organizational members. Therefore, in future research, it will be necessary to solve the problem of the common method bias by having both supervisors and subordinates measure the questionnaire. Second, we haven't measure changes over time because it is a cross-sectional design in measuring ethical leadership, authentic leadership, and organizational identification. Therefore, in future research, it will be necessary to present more effective results as a longitudinal study. Third, we examined only ethical leadership and authentic leadership among leadership related to ethics of college teachers. In future research, it will be necessary to include various variables such as transformational leadership and servant leadership related to ethics. Finally, in addition to the roles of college counselors, it is necessary to focus on students' psychological factors and explore their roles. Students' school satisfaction is considered to be affected by their psychological factors. In particular, a healthy psychological state is highly likely to increase students' academic engagement and such process should lead to high school satisfaction. Based on this aspect, it is necessary to reduce their negative factors such as depression, anxiety, and stress to increase their psychological health. Previous study emphasized that the research should be continuously studied, which reduces negative factors such as stress, anxiety, and depression [42]. These attempts will eventually contribute to improving student performance.

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