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Vol. 23, June 2023 **ISSN: 2749-3628**,

VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ETHICAL BEHAVIOR A CASE STUDY IN MESOPOTAMIA GENERAL COMPANY FOR SEEDS

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Article history:		Abstract:				
Received: Accepted: Published:	10 th April 2023 11 th May 2023 11 th June 2023	The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between virtuous leadership and its relationship to the ethical behavior of a sample of employees working in the Mesopotamia General Company for Seeds, and this comes as an attempt to reduce or bridge the knowledge gap between the two research variables. In addition to trying to lay the correct and appropriate foundations for making leaders, relying on symbols emanating from Iraqi society that can be invested in order to be the most important capital for its profit-making organizations or for the provision of services. To achieve this, the researchers distributed 166 questionnaires to a number of employees in the Mesopotamian Seed General Company, and the number of questionnaires retrieved was 161, while the number of questionnaires valid for statistical analysis was (158), with an average of (98%) of the retrieved questionnaires. Theoretical results showed that there is a knowledge gap to explain the nature of the relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior in organizations in general and in the organization under study in particular.				
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Keywords: virtuous leadership, ethical behavior

CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FIRSTLY: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Ethical leadership is one of the terms that have been used in various scientific fields since early times, since this topic can be considered one of the ancient and modern topics, as it is ancient in its experiences, theories, friction, and its contribution to many important sciences in the world, in addition to being innovative in its many terminologies and the diversity of its fields. Moreover, the breadth of its broad and diverse scientific field, whose goal is to understand relationships in a balanced and prudent manner, relies on different sciences, from psychology to sociology. Therefore, some believe it has yet to settle a special science with its cognitive tools and distinctive devices. This can contribute to helping contemporary organizations to create a collaborative, understanding, and appropriate organizational atmosphere. The ethical aspect is a set of values and rules that determine correct and wrong behavior. Therefore, it determines when behavior is acceptable and when it is unacceptable. Ethical behavior is "behavior." Good and right are worthy of

respect and praise, and unethical behavior is wrong and fails to fulfill an obligation.

In light of the above facts, the idea of the current research is an extension of those mentioned theoretical and intellectual frameworks. Although there are indications in previous studies that ethical leadership is the main source for the formation of contemporary behavioral patterns that contribute to achieving success for any organization as a result of its acquisition of legitimacy, humanity, and the ability to make rational decisions, we note the scarcity of studies that attempted to study the relationship between it and ethical especially Within the limits of the behavior, organizational environment of Iragi organizations. Therefore, the current research came as an attempt to bridge the knowledge gap between the current research variables by studying the relationship between them in one hypothetical model.

Based on what was presented above, the researchers can define the formulation of the current research problem as follows: "The absence of interest in virtuous leadership leads to the



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emergence and spread of unethical behaviors in the organization."

Secondly: Research Questions:

Based on the current research problem, which was described above, the current research questions can be formulated as follows:

- 1. What is the level of virtuous leadership availability in the organization under discussion?
- 2. What is the level of spread of ethical behavior in the organization under study?
- **3.** What is the relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior in the organization under study?

Thirdly: Research Objectives:

In order to answer the questions of the current research above, a set of objectives were set as follows:

- 1. Determine the level of availability of virtuous leadership in the organization in question.
- 2. Determine the prevalence of ethical behavior in the organization under study.
- 3. Knowing the nature of the relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior in the organization under study.

Fourthly: the importance of research:

The importance of the current research can be placed on two main axes:

1. The first axis: The theoretical importance:

A. The current research is the first attempt to study the relationship between the research

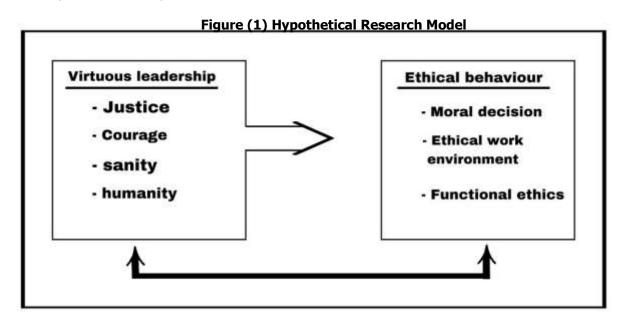
- variables, ethical leadership, and ethical behavior in one hypothetical model.
- B. The research provides an analytical view of the ideas in some previous studies, in which the research variables, virtuous leadership, and ethical behavior, were referred to individually or in combination.

2. Applied importance:

- A. The current research contributes to laying the correct foundations for how to benefit from Islamic personalities, values, customs, and traditions in the Iraqi environment as symbols that constitute a tributary for building contemporary leaders who can make prudent decisions at the level of their organizations in their various forms.
- B. The current research presents several conclusions and recommendations that can change the reality of the behavior of leaders and individuals working in Iraqi organizations.

Fifthly: Hypothetical Research Model:

In light of the cognitive and intellectual signals in several previous studies related to the current research variables of virtuous leadership and ethical behavior, the researchers developed a hypothetical model that shows the nature of the relationship between them, as shown in Figure (1).



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W	Vol. 25, 5	49-3628 <mark>7</mark>	Justice W		
	scholar Express developed	2	Courage	Virtuous	
	Wang & Hacket (2015)	2	sanity J	Leadership OC	- The
Figure		3	humanity		
(1) above	The scale was developed based on: Al-Rifai	3	moral decision P		
shows that the		3	Ethical work	Ethical	
		3	environment R	conduct WI	
	(2007)	3	Job ethics I		

virtuous leadership variable as an independent variable consists of four dimensions: (justice, courage, prudence, humanity), and ethical behaviour as a dependent variable, consisting of three dimensions as well: (moral decision, environment work ethics, job ethics).

Sixth: Research Hypotheses:

To find logical and objective answers to the questions of the current research and in order to achieve its objectives, the following two main hypotheses were formulated:

- The first main hypothesis: states that "virtuous leadership has a positive moral correlation with ethical behaviour

second main hypothesis: states that "virtuous leadership has a positive moral effect on moral behaviour.

Seventhly: Research Scale:

To measure the response level of the research sample on the research variables, ethical leadership and ethical behaviour, a questionnaire consisting of (18) items was used under the gradation (completely disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, fully agree). The virtuous leadership scale was developed based on wang & Hackket (2015), consisting of (9) items and four dimensions: (justice, courage, prudence, and humanity), and the ethical behaviour scale was developed based on Al-Rifai (2007) consisting of (9) Paragraphs and three dimensions are: (moral decision, ethical work environment, job ethics), as shown in Table (1) below.

Table (1) The current research scale

Source: Prepared by researchers based on a number of previous literature.



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Eighthly: Search Tool:

The main tool of the current research was the questionnaire, which was distributed directly Face to Face for the period from (10-12-2022) to (25-12-2022) to the research sample. The questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The first consisted of general information on several demographic factors for the research sample, including (gender, marital status, age, level of education, and the number of years of experience). The second consists of (18) paragraphs divided into two axes: the first axis, consisting of (9) paragraphs related to the independent variable (virtuous leadership), and the second axis, consisting of (9) paragraphs also related to the dependent variable (moral behaviour).

Ninthly: The research community and its sample:

The working associates of the sample of the Mesopotamian General Company for Seeds represent the research community, 166 of them were selected to be a sample for this research. After the researchers directly distributed the questionnaire for this research, 161 questionnaires were retrieved, 158 of which were valid for statistical analysis.

Tenthly: Statistical Analysis Methods:

To test the hypotheses of the current research and determine the level of availability of its variables, a set of statistical methods found in the two statistical programs AMOS v.22 and SPSS v.22 were used, represented by the mean, standard error, and standard deviation, as well as Cronbach's alpha coefficient, normal distribution, correlation, and standard regression weights.

CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL SIDE OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly: The concept and importance of virtuous leadership.

Virtuous leadership is one of the topics that were not circulated in various scientific research and studies, especially those related to human behavior in organizations, but this term began to draw the attention of those interested in human behavior to study the extent of its impact on the performance of business organizations at present in order to reach what this seeks. Organizations, by representing its principles in the behavior of workers and making it one of the necessary human cultures, as it helps them to stay away from dangers and job inconveniences or lack of understanding and adherence to ethical aspects and logical processes based on solid scientific facts that represent the opinions, desires, and goals of working individuals.

The first to address the concept of virtuous leadership was Alexander Harvard, who referred in his book to reach greatness through virtuous leadership and create a good generation of virtuous leaders 1, as he mentioned ² that virtuous leadership refers to making informed decisions And possessing technical knowledge and skills because they represent the key to success in ethical application and setting things right through the judgment of leaders with certain virtues, or it is a set of behaviors that leaders act in light of in an ethical manner and strive to do the right thing ³, and I also knew about It is feeling or acting at the right times about the right things towards the right people to reach the right end and on the right path 4, and it was also defined as actions, emotions, traits, capabilities, capabilities, or personal values ⁵, and virtuous leadership is considered An essential element that requires those who perform service to others through moral virtues, as it enables the organization to develop and find appropriate means and achieve results for others ⁶, as the importance of virtuous leadership is highlighted in the development and guidance of organizational behaviors Empowering leadership and

virtue to inform positive organizational inquiry". Academy of Management Perspectives, 32(4), 443-457."

¹"Zmakal Fouad, "An Introductory Brief on Virtuous Leadership," Economics of Countries Magazine: 2018, p.2." ² "Li, C. (2008, January). "Where does Confucian virtuous leadership stand?". In Proceedings of the Xxii World Congress of Philosophy (Vol. 9, pp. 35-45)." ³ -"Riggio, R. E., Zhu, W., Reina, C., & Maroosis, J. A. (2010)."

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⁴ "Newstead, T., Macklin, R., Dawkins, S., & Martin, A. (2018)." What is virtue? Advancing the conceptualization of

⁵ "Wang, Q. I. (2011). A conceptual and empirical investigation of leader virtues and virtuous leadership (Doctoral dissertation, p.2."

⁶ "Al-Karawi, Muhammad Thabet, Al-Kalabi, Muzaffar Jawad, "The Strategic Role of Virtuous Leadership in Enhancing Job Dedication," Journal of the College of Administration and Economics for Financial Studies, Issue 3, Volume 11, 2019, p.356."



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maintaining a climate of virtuous principles and foundations to maintain the standards of organizational entity in the business environment and to promote rapprochement between employees and improve their performance 1, and that the application of virtues in organizations is for the purpose of placing them at the forefront of the behavior of leaders and helping them discover and develop what they already possess This helps to successfully modify behavior and achieve positive psychological resources ², and virtuous leadership can achieve a number of benefits, including leadership sharing, which helps to achieve counting and fairness, as well as improving the responsibility of leaders through the use of power in achieving goals and objectives for the good. General, as well as supporting organizational learning through how to deal with clients and shareholders in the organization, as well as encouraging job ethics, that is, paying attention to ethical values on a large scale and solving problems transparently 3.

Secondly: the dimensions of virtuous leadership. The current research relied on a scale ⁴, which includes four dimensions of virtuous leadership, which are (justice, courage, prudence, and humanity).

1- Justice: Justice represents a social phenomenon that includes organizational and other aspects, and the most important asset of every organization is the human being, and therefore how to deal with them and treat them respectfully and fairly in a way that achieves organizational citizenship ⁵ and also justice refers to

preparing for what is right, acting with integrity and doing fair things And what is the right of others ⁶, and ⁷ went as the feeling of workers that there is a certain problem when the followers feel that they have worked unfairly, and on the contrary, the leader's benevolence and its application is made through the enactment of organizational policies and procedures Fair and respectful personal treatment by followers and linking justice to a set of behavioral outcomes, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and general performance ⁸.

- **2- Courage:** Courage is facing any task despite fear or rejection, adventure, perseverance and resistance to danger, and the strength to speak out against injustice. It is motivated by love, sincerity, and enthusiasm. ⁹, because courage plays an important role in decision-making, it is an inherent awareness of the nature of ethical behavior as a virtuous leader in doing what is right. ¹⁰.
- **3- Prudence:** Prudence refers to what is permanent rightness, common sense, good judgment, and sound logic to serve permanent and applicable solutions ¹¹, and that prudence includes a specific set of cognitive and emotional traits that are directly related to the ownership and development of life skills and insights about the nature of the self and other people, personal interactions, and experiences in the face of negative events ¹².
- **4- Humanity:** It means the desire to bring about real human change aimed at changing the way people learn,

¹ "Dokes, D. R. (2017). Virtuous leadership for increased business growth (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University, p.111."

² "Karakas, F., & Sarigollu, E. (2013). "The role of leadership in creating virtuous and compassionate organizations: Narratives of benevolent leadership in an Anatolian tiger". Journal of Business Ethics, 113(4), 663-678."

³ "Pearce, C. L., Waldman, D. A., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). "Virtuous leadership: A theoretical model and research agenda. In The Virtuous Organization, p.64."

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⁷ "Kaufman, B. R. (2014). The role of leader support for safety within the leader justice-safety performance relationship. Old Dominion University , p.13."

⁸ "Cropanzano, R., Rupp, D. E., Thornton-Lugo, M. A., & Shao, R. (2018). Organizational Justice and Organizational. The Oxford handbook of organizational citizenship behavior. p.5."

⁹-"Kinsella, E. L., Ritchie, T. D., & Igou, E. R. (2017). "On the bravery and courage of heroes: considering gender". Heroism Science, 2(1), p.4."

¹⁰ "Kobuck, S. L. (2015). Moral courage: A requirement for ethical decision making in nursing home leadership Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, p.5."

¹¹ "Standish, C. (2020). Wisdom and Leadership: Do wise people perform more efficiently, p.2."

¹² "Herdi, H., Kartadinata, S., & Taufiq, A. (2019). "Factors affecting the wisdom of counselors: perceptions of Indonesian pre-service counselors". Jurnal Kajian Bimbingan dan Konseling, 4(4), pp. 122-133."



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maintaining human contact by leaders, and promoting effective participation of individuals in work 1 , and also refers to respect for human rights and respect for his dignity and rights. He was, moreover, moving away from distinction, self-knowledge, and communication with individuals 2 .

Thirdly: the concept of ethical behavior.

Ethics is a set of values and rules that determine right and wrong behavior, and therefore it determines when behavior is acceptable and unacceptable. As for immoral behavior, it is behavior that does not conform to generally accepted social standards. Therefore, ethical behavior is considered good, correct, fair, honorable, and praiseworthy. Immoral behavior is the behavior that is judged to be Wrong, reprimanding, or failing to meet the obligation 3, as judging behavior as moral or immoral is based on principles, rules, and evidence stemming from a specific moral theory, person's characteristics, or social values. Therefore, the definition of ethical behavior faces Two thorny issues; the first: is the difficulty of finding a criterion for judgment that all individuals agree on, and the second: is that what is good and bad or right and wrong has different meanings for different people in different societies and that most of the conflict and confusion comes from objective discrimination and For morals, a person's action is subjectively moral if the person believes that his action is moral, and the person's action is objectively moral if that person practices his action according to the rule or the law 4.

Fourthly: Dimensions of ethical behavior

Promoting and strengthening behavior and practices in business organizations relies on the pillars of ethical

behavior represented by ethical decisions, ethical work environments, and job ethics⁵.

- **1- Ethical decision:** The presence of moral awareness between the leader and the manager will inevitably be reflected in the working individuals, and the moral values set by the institution will enhance its respect among the parties that have a relationship with it.
- **2- Ethical work environment:** Ethical behavior in the work environment is centered on representing moral values within the institution's mission through enacting clear and transparent laws, developing a written moral constitution, and creating an organizational climate that emphasizes moral values. Its dealings with different parties, as the organizational support for business ethics, are of high value in transactions reinforced by the moral values prevailing in the organization, leading to the satisfaction of individuals as they play an important role in ethical practice⁶.
- **3- Functional Ethics:** The moral principles and values that individuals, the manager, and the worker in the organization cherish when carrying out their work, whether with their colleagues or others, for example, "integrity at work, justice when treating others, and dignity," are behavioral pillars that individuals must show these ethical behaviors.

CHAPTER 2: THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly: scale coding:

In order to verify the nature of the relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior accurately and easily, table (2) the symbols of the scale:

Table (2) Coding the research variables

The number of paragraphs	The dimension	variable
3	Justice W	

¹ "Johanes, P., & Thille, C. (2019). The heart of educational data infrastructures, Conscious humanity and scientific responsibility, not infinite data and limitless experimentation, p.10."

² "Ogbujah,(2014) Leadership: Blight to the Appreciation of Common Humanity of Mankind,. Reasach on humanities and social sciences, university of Science and technology ,VOL ,(4) ,NO ,(23), p.62."

³ "Al-Saadi Moayad, Al-Anzi Saad, 2002, Management Ethics: Approaches to Training in Business Establishments, Iraqi Journal of Administrative Sciences, College of Administration and Economics, University of Karbala, Volume 1, No. 3, p.104."

⁴"Al-Enezi, Saad and Nima, Nagham Hussein, 2009, Logic in the Philosophy of Ethical Behavior in Business Organizations, Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences, College of Administration and Economics -University of Baghdad, Volume 15, No. 54."

⁵ "Abdul Mutaal Muhammad Sayed, Muhammad Rifai (2007), "Strategic Management: Part One", Dar Al-Marikh Publishing House, p.10."

⁶ "Raghad Abed Atallah Al-Mariyat (2011) "Business Ethics for the Organization on Ethical Behavior and the Performance of Salesmen for Pharmaceutical Products in Amman."



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Virtuous	Courage	3
Leadership OC	sanity J	3
Ethical	humanity	3
conduct WI	moral decision P	3
	Ethical work environment R	3

Source: Prepared by the researchers.

Secondly: Describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents:

For the purpose of defining a number of demographic characteristics of the respondents, Table (3) shows a description of them.

Table (3)Describes the characteristics of the demographic factors of the respondents

variable	Category	The number of respondents	•	
gender	male	45	85	
gender	female	8	15	
total summation		53	100	
marital status	married	43	81	
maritai Status	single	10	19	
total summation		53	100	
	26 – 33	18	34	
The age	34 – 41	26	49	
	more than 42	9	17	
total summation		53	100	
education level	Master	30	57	
education level	Ph.D	23	43	
total summation		53	100	

Source: Prepared by the researchers using the results of SPSS v.22.

Table (3) shows that the respondents in the current research had several demographic characteristics that they enjoyed, which reflected their awareness and knowledge of the reality of their organization, which will give credibility to the results that will be reached at a high level.

Thirdly: Testing the quality of conformity of the scale tool:

This test was carried out through the following: Virtual validity:

The current research questionnaire was presented to several experts and specialists in the field of business administration to test the apparent validity of its initial form. By adopting their proposals, some of their paragraphs were reformulated to be in their final form more accurate and clearer to the respondents.

Fourthly: Analyze the correlations between the variables of the study

This topic examines the correlation between human resource empowerment and the dimensions of



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creativity using the correlation coefficient to determine the nature of the relationship in the first main hypothesis, which states that there is no statistically

significant correlation between human resource empowerment and the dimensions of creativity.

Table (4) Relationships between the variables of virtuous leadership (total and detailed) and the dimensions of ethical behavior

Independent	moral behavior						
Independent	R	Calculated t	t Tabular	Moral level	n		
Justice	0.78	11.600	2.526	0.01			
Courage	0.882	17.453	2.526	0.01	150		
sanity	0.86	15.501	2.526	0.01	158		
aggregate index	0.839	14.435	2.526	0.01			

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the results of the SPSS v.22 program

Table (4) shows the results of measuring and testing the correlation between virtuous leadership and the dimensions of ethical behavior in general, as it is clear that there is a positive statistically significant relationship between virtuous leadership and the dimensions of ethical behavior in general, as the correlation coefficient between them was (0.839), which is a high value that reflects the existence of a positive relationship with statistical significance. This link shows that the stronger the company's ability to produce employee pleasure, the more virtuous leadership behaviors it employs to achieve ethical behavior. The previous result reveals that there is a substantial association between virtuous leadership and the dimensions of ethical behavior, as the computed t value reached (24.435), which is more than the tabular t value of (2.526) at a significant level (0.01) and two degrees of freedom (1.88).

Based on the previous results that prove the existence of a statistically significant correlation between the two variables, I accept the first main hypothesis.

Fifthly: Analysis of the impact relations between the variables of the study

This axis is in charge of determining the type of the effect described in the second primary hypothesis. The data in Table (5) refer to the analysis results, as the coefficient of determination (R2) indicates that the percentage of the explained difference in ethical behavior due to the influence of virtuous leadership is not less than (70%), which is a good percentage, implying that virtuous leadership in the company can satisfy 70% of the workers' desires. And that the remaining proportion (30%) represents the contribution of variables not included in the current study model or that cannot be controlled.

The (F) test supports this, as the calculated (F) value was (7.185), which is greater than the tabular F (3.090) at a significant level (0.01) and a degree of freedom (1.87), as shown in Table:

Table (5) the Results of the influence relationships between the variables of virtuous leadership (total and detailed) and ethical behavior

dependent variable	moral behavior					
independent variable	R ²	Calculated f	Tabular f	Moral level	Value P	n



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Justice	%60.73	4.66	4.820	0.05	0.03	
Courage	%77.78	10.5	3.090	0.01	0.002	150
sanity	%73.42	8.29	3.090	0.01	0.005	158
aggregate index	%70	7.185	3.090	0.01	0.009	

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the results of the program. SPSS v.22

The probability of rejecting the null hypothesis (H0), which states (there is no relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior), is approximately (0.009), which means that if we rejected the idea that there is no relationship between virtuous leadership and ethical behavior (1000) times, our decision would have been correct 991 times, with only 9 incorrect decisions. This indicates that nothing prohibits us from rejecting that the two variables have no relationship.

The second primary hypothesis is accepted based on the prior results showing a statistically significant link between the two variables.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1. The existence of scarcity or limited studies and research related to virtuous leadership and ethical behavior, individually or in combination.
- 2. Virtuous leadership is the final result of the applications of ethical behavior in the environment of contemporary organizations.
- 3. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the ethical behavior variable is moderately widespread in the organization under study.
- 4. The descriptive analysis of the virtuous leadership variable showed that it is moderately widespread in the organization under study.
- 5. The results showed that the virtuous leadership variable and its dimensions have a significant and direct correlation with the ethical behavior variable in the organization under study.
- 6. The results also showed that the virtuous leadership variable and its dimensions significantly and positively affect the ethical behavior variable in the organization under study.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The need to motivate the individuals working in the organization under discussion to possess the skills, abilities, and capabilities related to virtuous leadership behaviors to achieve the organization's goals.

- 2. There is also a need to encourage individuals working in the organization to adopt an ethical behavior approach to build foundations that enable them to do the right things at the right times.
- 3. The need for the leadership of the organization under discussion to lay the foundations and administrative procedures that contribute to increasing the applications of virtuous leadership and ethical behavior.
- 4. The need to conduct more field studies and different regulatory environments in this field.

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