Ethical Failures in Leadership: A Qualitative Study in the Algerian Public Organisations

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The dark side of leadership has long remained scarcely studied. To assist in filling this gap, this study investigates the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures in the Algerian public organisations. The purpose of this study is to explore the individual antecedents that contribute to ethical failures of leaders in the public organisations of Algeria using a qualitative approach. Based on the results generated from fifteen semi-structured interviews with leaders from public organisations, the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures fall into six categories: lack of ethical awareness, irresponsibility, egocentricity, ignorance, uncontrolled access to organisational resources, and poor leadership skills. This study contributes to the body of academic knowledge as the first comprehensive investigation into the individual antecedents of ethical failures of leaders in the Algerian public organisations. It is expected to open up avenues for future research about the nature of unethical leadership.

Key words: *Ethical Failures, Leadership, Unethical Leadership, Public Organisations.*

Introduction

In all types of organisations, leaders play a crucial role in steering the efforts of followers, influencing organisational culture, and boosting or hindering the effectiveness of their organisations (Salleh, Zubair & Hamzah, 2018). Concerns about the ethical values and decisions of leaders arise from the inevitable influence they have on our lives. Nevertheless, since its beginning, the field of leadership has been romanticised, stressing the positive influence of leaders on organisations and followers, while mostly overlooking the negative side of leaders. Yet, a steady progression has been witnessed in the literature within recent

years that focused more on the contingent dark side of leaders. This growing focus on the negative features of leadership propose an important paradigm shift that acknowledges the harmful impact that leaders can wield over followers (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018).

Traditionally, leadership studies have mainly focused on 'good' leadership and have, until recently, neglected the 'dark-side' of leadership (Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann, 2017). This is due to the large numbers of unethical behaviours in different contexts which stimulated an increasing enthusiasm in studying and understanding why people take part in these sorts of behaviours that lead to massive costs for societies and organisations (Blair, Helland, & Walton, 2017; Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012; Moore, Detert, Klebe Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012). Although it is crucial to comprehend ethical and unethical conduct at all levels of an organisation, analysing these behaviours in the context of leadership is particularly significant, as leaders have the ability to influence the behaviour of followers and to mould organisational culture (Blair et al., 2017).

With respect to Algeria, which is the focus of this study, there are mounting concerns regarding the situation of leadership in the country. This is understood to be largely due to the widespread corruption (Group, 2019). The behaviours and decisions of the Algerian leaders are being questioned by the people which signifies their dissatisfaction with the performance of the country's leadership in various sectors (Abderrahmane & Mokhtar, 2017). Moreover, according to Freedom House organization (2019), the media in the country has a limited margin of freedom. Yet, it has shade lights on the recent corrupted and unethical practices of public officials and leaders of public sector organizations. For instance, SONATRACH which is one of the key state-owned organisations in the country, has experienced many cases of mismanagement and corruption in relation to its top leaders (Marwane, 2018).

In the same vein, Begga & Merghit (2014) reported that one of the key forces that played a major role in the failure of the business settings in Algeria is corruption. The prevalence of corruption is considered a serious problem in the country (Begga & Merghit, 2014; Integrity, 2017). The Algerian political and economic spheres are hindered by continuous practices of fraud and corruption. However, in most cases these corrupt and unethical practices go unseen and legal procedures are rarely taken. Additionally, evidence suggests that energy sectors are severely impregnated with unethical practices (Hadjadj, 2007; Strachan, 2018). Also, the African Development Bank reported that 173.11 billion dollars were illegally smuggled from the country from 1980-2009. Most of these illegal money transfers are connected to cases of corruption within the public sector, especially in the energy sector (Agoun, 2016).

Although, an increased attention to ethical failures of leaders was provoked in both public and private businesses as a result of the ethical scandals of once successful global corporations and the economic crisis at the end of the first decade of new millennium

(Lašáková & Remišová, 2017). It is important to note that studies on the issue of ethical failures in leadership did not receive much attention in the Algerian context. Equally important, previous published studies on the subject matter are limited to western countries of different cultural and organizational settings which presents the need for more studies on unethical leadership in other cultural context. Most of the literature on ethical leadership as well as unethical leadership reflects a Western-based private sector perspective (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014). As was pointed out previously, the Algerian public sector and public organizations suffer a problem of unethical and corrupt practices that necessitate sound investigation and a thorough analysis. Furthermore, the problem of leaders' unethicality is coupled with the dearth of empirical studies that can explore such a critical issue.

A number of studies investigating the 'dark-side' of leadership have emerged within recent years. Particularly, researchers have made efforts to analyse the factors linked to personality which are found to be contributing to the tendency of leaders to take part in unethical practices (Blair et al., 2017). Yet, as noted by Aravena (2019), the number of studies in previous academic work on unethical leadership behaviour continue to be limited and if we look at these studies through an empirical perspective, it is even less complete (Aravena, 2019). More so, the paucity of research on issues of ethics within public administration is far more intense compared to other disciplines within the social sciences (Belle & Cantarelli, 2017). Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to explore the individual antecedents which contribute to leadership ethical failures within the Algerian public organisations. In this study, the 'individual antecedents' refer to the tacit and explicit cognitive and moral processes linked with leadership unethical behaviour within the Algerian public organisations. It also refers to the treats and individual-based characteristics attached with the unethical behaviour of leaders.

The present study is intended to contribute to the existing literature in several ways. Firstly, this study seeks to fill the knowledge gap concerning the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures in an unmapped cultural context. This study is one of the first research endeavours to explore the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures in the Algerian public organisations. Secondly, the antecedents of leadership ethical failures have received little attention in the previous literature. The findings of this study could improve our understanding of the different antecedents of leaders' unethical behaviour. Thirdly, the present study uses an exploratory qualitative design that allows for a deeper examination of the individual antecedents of leaders' ethical failures and provides a robust data-driven analysis. The next section of the study presents the research methodology used in this research. The study will then go on to present the results of the data analysis together with a discussion on the main findings. The last section of the study provides a conclusion, limitations, and future directions relevant to this study.

Research Method

The current study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative design is the most suitable approach in the study of research issues of which we have no previous knowledge on their variables. Such research issues may be little explored in the literature which posits the need for investigations based on the views and experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012). Using purposive sampling technique to select participants, the data were collected through 15 semi-structured interviews at different public organisations in Algeria. As a prerequisite of participation in the study, interviewees needed to have at least five years of working experience in a leading position. This was applied to ensure that interviewees have proper experience in a leading position within the public organisations in Algeria.

Demographic data on respondents included the number of years of experience, age, gender, and occupational group. The average age of the interviewee was between 32–61 years old with a range of experience from 5-35 years. There were 14 males and one female. Moreover, the participants hold leadership roles in various fields. The initial interview questions were developed based on the objective of the study and the pre-existing literature on the antecedents of leadership unethical behaviour. The interview questions were developed by two researchers in the fields of ethics and qualitative research. Also, during interview sessions, introductory remarks were used to explain the objective of the information being collected as well as the confidentiality of the information. The duration of the interview's sessions lasted between 30 and 120 minutes depending on the willingness of respondents to add more information. Finally, when the data collection reached the point of saturation, the researchers transcribed the interviews.

In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the transcribed interviews. The technique of thematic analysis provides a comprehensive approach for interpreting the collected data and it focuses on the extracting of codes and themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Correspondingly, codes and themes were developed and structured by rigorous and comprehensive attending to the transcribed interviews. The deep reading and re-reading of the transcribed materials is a technique used frequently in qualitative approaches in order to develop the themes of the study and formalise their identification (Thomas & Harden, 2008). To perform a detailed and systematic analysis, the entire process was facilitated by utilizing ATLAS.ti 8.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews has revealed several individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures within the Algerian public organisations. Six main

groups of individual antecedents that have been linked to the ethical failures of leaders were coded and categorised based on the views and perspectives of the respondents. The final results of the analysis of this study suggest that the individual antecedents of leaders' ethical failures were the lack of ethical awareness, irresponsibility, egocentrism, ignorance, uncontrolled access to organisational resources, and poor leadership skills. Figure 1 presents the link between the main theme of the study and the six sub-themes:
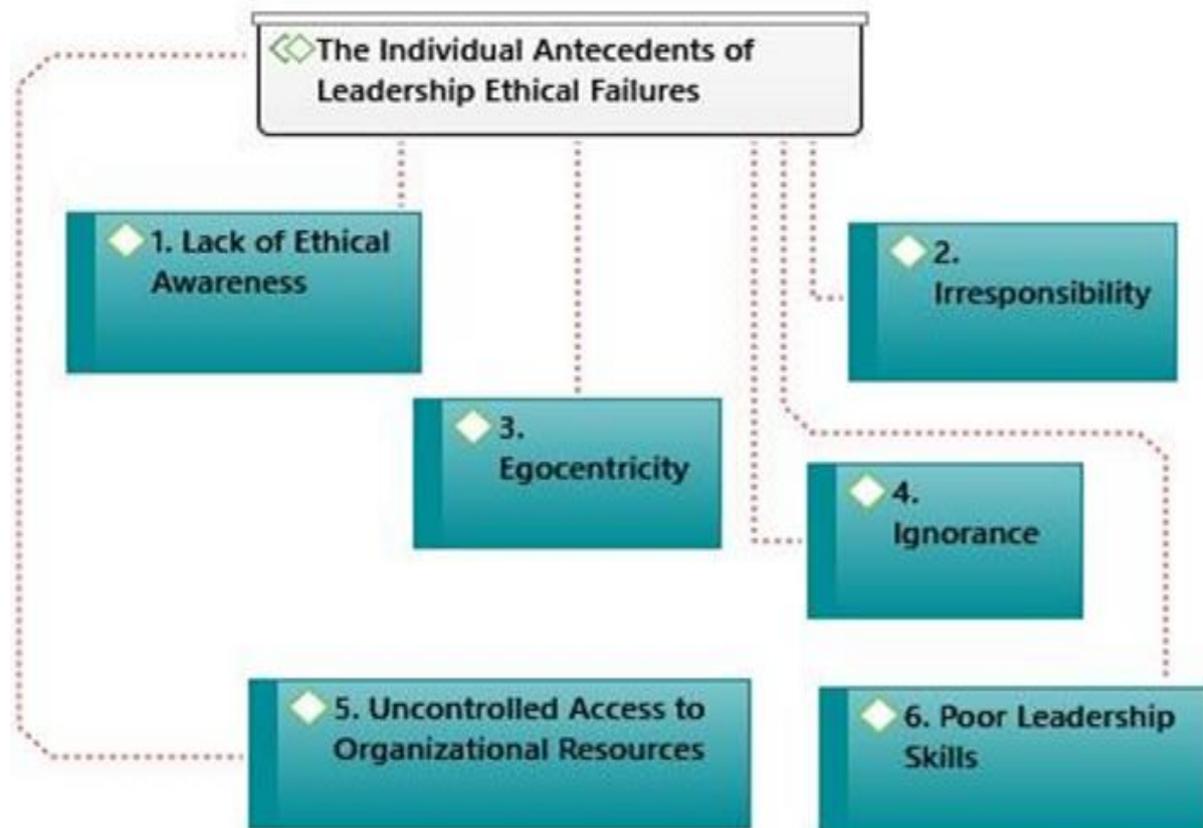
Lack of Ethical Awareness

Several categories occurred repeatedly suggesting an emphasis on the lack of ethical awareness among leaders of the Algerian public organisations. According to the respondents of the study, the lack of ethical awareness has contributed to an escalation in the number of unethical practices at the leadership level within public organisations. Based on the respondents' answers, this lack of ethical awareness is one of the core forces at work. Moreover, when asked about the main individual factors contributing to the unethicality of leaders; the interviewees were unanimous in the view that the lack of ethical awareness among leaders is one of the key antecedents that impacted the ethical behaviour of leaders. The statements below present the views and perspectives of participants.

Respondent 12, when asked about the individual characteristics of leaders that caused the current situation of leaders' unethical and corrupt behaviours in the Algeria public organisations, stated that:

"The lack of ethical awareness also needs to be addressed; leaders need to be more aware of their ethical responsibility towards the company. The problem is that people do not feel ethically obligated to serve the public interest, for the sake of the public company" (Respondent 12).

Additionally, interviewees expressed various responses which stressed on the problem of the lack of ethical awareness of leaders within the public organisations.

"If we are talking about ethical violations, I think most of it is because of the lack of awareness pertaining to leaders' responsibility towards the organisations as well as the whole society" (Respondent 7).

There was a recurrent reference to the need of ethically aware leaders in order to build strong and sustainable companies. This pointed to the issue of leaders' lack of ethical awareness within this sector. The importance of leaders' ethical awareness arises from their crucial impact on the ethical climate within the organisation and their decisive role in steering the performance of its members towards the right path. In assertion with this point, respondent 8 stated that: -

"Most importantly we are in need of leaders who are aware of their ethical responsibilities towards this country because at the end of the day we, "the people," have the power to build a strong nation or a weak nation. In other words, we need leaders who have strong ethical sense and well educated with regards to their ethical responsibilities (Respondent 8).

In line with this, respondents 10 and 14 confirmed the problem of leaders' lack of ethical awareness:

"The situation in this country is no different than other Arab countries, we have a real problem of control and transparency over leaders and individuals at the top ladder of power. I would also say that in most cases; violations happen because there is a lack of responsibility and awareness of the ethical obligations of leaders" (Respondent 10).

"We have enough rules and regulations at the state-owned companies. We have regulations which determine each member's duties, rights, and responsibilities. I can say that what we need is not more laws or rules, but we need more awareness about the importance of the ethical conduct to the organisation" (Respondent 14).

Most participants have explicitly and repeatedly mentioned the lack of ethical awareness as the key individual antecedent that lead to ethical failures of leadership within this sector. The argument of this study is that these leaders have a distorted understanding in regard to the scope of their ethical commitment. Respondents have frequently linked the lack of ethical awareness among leaders with the range of ethical responsibility and that these leaders should perceive themselves and their actions as morally attached to a wider range of constituents (e.g. the company, society and the whole country).

Irresponsibility

Responsibility implies concern for others and awareness pertaining to the ramifications of our actions, behaviours, and decisions. The emphasis on responsibility of leaders arises from the wide-ranging impact of their decisions on organisations and stakeholders. In the scenario of the Algerian public organisations, an apparent individual antecedent of leadership ethical failures is the weak sense of responsibility among leaders. This factor refers the irresponsibility of some leaders within the Algerian public organisations. In this regard, this individual antecedent denotes a lack of responsibility from leaders toward their organisations, followers and society at large. The results of the analysis suggest that this leaders with this characteristic feel ethically responsible only to a narrow group of people and in some cases only to their self-interests. They exclude other parties and stakeholders from the range of ethical responsibility. Respondent 2 stated his perspective below regarding the issue of leaders' irresponsibility:

"The situation in Algeria is no perfect; there are a lot of problems regarding the unethical behaviour of some leaders. The lack of responsibility and ignorance about the ethical responsibilities of leadership will eventually result in unethical behaviours by leaders" (Respondent 2).

The flawed understanding of what and who is involved in the scope of responsibility is deep-rooted in the broader province of social and cultural environment. This perspective was echoed by another respondent:

"...There are cases of corruption and mismanagement of resources by some leaders in this sector. Why do you think those leaders acted in that way? Look, first of all I do not think the problem is only with those leaders but instead the problem is in the whole society. We do not have a strong ethical culture and we lack the sense of responsibility as individuals, leaders or politicians" (Respondent 4).

Respondent 7 explained further about the link between unethical practices and leaders' responsibility in the following statement:

"I have been working in this sector for many years and I can say that there were some improvements, but we also still have many existing problems. There is new blood within this sector. In other words, there is a change in terms of the human resources within this sector, new generation with new ideas. Yet, in some cases these new leaders were not recruited based on their qualifications. If we are talking about ethical violations: I think most of it is because of the lack of awareness pertaining of leaders' responsibility towards the organisations as well as the whole society" (Respondent 7).

Responsibility is considered a valuable ethical obligation, hence, in scenarios where leaders fail to meet the requirement of their responsibilities and fail to work for the collective interests, we are often inclined to perceive them as unethical/ and or irresponsible. Leaders who display no sense of responsibility are less concerned about the interests of other people and they are less attentive to the outcomes of their decisions and behaviours. Based on perspectives of the respondents it was apparent that those leaders who got involved in unethical behaviours have a distorted perception about their responsibilities. Consequently, instead of serving their companies and working for the collective interest of all stakeholders, they were more persuaded to tend their own interests.

The results of the thematic analysis suggest that irresponsibility is a negative individual feature that has resulted in leaders being more prone to fail ethically. Irresponsible leaders are inclined to get involved in actions and behaviours which lack an ethical compass or/and regards to the needs of the organization or its members. According to Oplatka (2016), responsible leaders are committed to work for the good of the whole community including future generations and constantly serve to achieve desirable goals that meet the interests of a wide scope of stakeholders by focusing on virtuous outcomes (Oplatka, 2016). In addition, values such as responsibility, commitment, and serving for the collective good are entrenched in the role of leadership. As stated by Ciulla (2018), leaders are not only supposed to take responsibility, they are also supposed to act in the interests of others. We do not put people in leadership roles to serve their own interests (Ciulla, 2018).

Egocentricity

The self-serving attitude of leaders in the Algerian public organisations was another factor that influenced the ethical performance of leaders. This view appeared mainly in regard to the question of the individual antecedents of leaders' ethical failures. Selfishness was repeatedly mentioned by respondents as one of the main factors contributing to the prevalence of unethical behaviours among leaders in the context of public organisations in Algeria.

Egocentricity was reported by respondents to be a negative character trait that has influenced the ethical conduct of leaders. According to Knippenberg and Wisse (2010), leader selfishness posits various harmful consequences; an imbalance in distributing resources and the promotion of unjust decisions that negatively impact individual and group-level results being just two examples (Lašáková & Remišová, 2015). As one interviewee put it:

"...This situation is mainly because of the reckless and ineffective recruitment system. As a result of that, most of the time unqualified people get into position of power. Also, I believe that those leaders who are involved in cases of corruption and unethical behaviour are basically selfish and work for their private interests" (Respondent 1).

Talking about this issue, another interviewee said the following:

"...The Selfishness and ignorance of those in leading positions about their decisive role to serve their companies and to serve the nation are serious problems. Those leaders also lack the awareness about the centrality of ethics in life and that is due to the way how they were raised, and their perspective on responsibility towards the country and the society" (Respondent 4).

Likewise, several respondents expressed similar views. For example, respondent 15 stated that "the rates of corruption have intensified within the last few years. There are huge amounts of money and resources which have been stolen by some leaders. These cases of corruption happened mostly because those leaders are selfish, and they have no concern or sense of responsibility towards others". Also, respondent 12 opined that "The main issue is how to create a solid ethical awareness among leaders of the Algerian public organizations. As you can see some leaders do not feel like they have ethical commitments to their organizations, they feel that they are only ethically responsible to themselves and to serve their own self interests."

Leadership egocentricity is basically the opposite of what constitutes good and effective leadership. Instead of seeking collective interests and serving the interests of the whole group, selfish leaders practiced their authority and power to increase their private interests at the expense of others. While ethical leaders practice their power to serve the interests of the group, unethical leaders take advantage of their position to gain private interests and self-glorification (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010; Hartley & Hinksman, 2003). Furthermore, according to Maner and Mead (2010), instead of using their power and authority for the greater good, some leaders might be enticed to use it in egocentric ways. This type of leader might practice their power to dominate rather than to lead. In fact, while leaders are responsible for elevating the well-being of their followers, leaders might also be

allured to work for their personal capacity to gain power and domination (Maner & Mead, 2010).

Ignorance

Many codes that surfaced frequently during the analysis suggested that leaders' ignorance of their ethical commitments is among the individual factors of leadership ethical failures within public organisations in Algeria. Respondents of this study stressed on the problem of ethical ignorance of some leaders and they repeatedly link it with lack of responsibility and selfishness. Based on the analysis of the interviews, ignorance refers to the lack of proper knowledge in regard to what constitute right and wrong. Ignorance also denotes a lack of knowledge about leaders' ethical requirements and their responsibility to play a decisive ethical role in the organisation. For instance, one respondent stated the following:

"The situation in Algeria is not perfect. There are a lot of problems regarding the unethical behaviour of some leaders. The lack of responsibility and ignorance about the ethical responsibilities of leadership will eventually result in unethical behaviours by leaders" *(Respondent 2).*

Likewise, the following statement by respondent 4 describes the situation of leadership in the public organisations:

"...Also, people are selfish when it comes to standing up for righteous things such as keeping those leaders accountable for what they do. This is partially because most individuals do not see anything wrong with what those unethical leaders have committed. The selfishness and ignorance of those in leading positions about their decisive role to serve their companies and to serve the nation are serious problems" *(Respondent 4).*

The quote below also demonstrates the perspective of another respondent on the matter of ethical ignorance of some leaders:

"...Moreover, there is an ignorance about the ethical responsibility towards this sector and its future" *(Respondent 9).*

To effectively deal with the various complexities of decision-making processes at the organisational level, leaders need to have principled level of moral reasoning and the ability to address different ethical issues in performing their tasks. However, ignorance about the ethical implications of decision-making processes makes leaders prone to fall ethically and behave in a way that might damage their organisations. In the light of this, two important questions pertaining the issue of leaders' ethical ignorance need to be addressed. Firstly, what

are the factors that contributed to this state of ethical ignorance by some leaders. In other words, how can such decisive leading positions be held by unqualified leaders within public organisations in Algeria? Secondly, how can these leaders deal effectively with complex ethical issues within organisations when they lack the proper knowledge to make sound ethical analyses of different situations? In the absence of adequate knowledge about what constitutes ethically accepted behaviours, and what is considered right or wrong, leaders will go about making decisions without any thorough ethical reasoning.

The ignorance of leaders pertaining to the significance of ethics in their organisational roles will result in detrimental consequences for the performance of both leaders and followers. Moreover, Ciulla (2012) argues that leadership is a specific type of human relationship. Some features of this relationship are: Influence, power, vision, responsibility and obligation. By understanding the ethics of this relationship, we attain a proper understanding of leadership, because some of the main issues in ethics are also very vital issues in leadership. These issues include the personal challenges of authenticity, self-discipline, self-interest, and moral obligations associated with justice, competence, duty, and the greatest good (Ciulla, 2012).

Uncontrolled Access to Organisational Resources

Regarding the uncontrolled access to organisational resources; the statements of respondents point out to the unrestrained access to the company resources by leaders which made them susceptible to use these resources for private interests. The absence of sound control on the company resources and the lack of transparency on the activities of leaders and managers within the Algerian public organisations have intensified the number of ethical and legal violations by leaders. Concerns related to the unrestrained access to resources by leaders have been emphasised as much as it may need to be in the interviewees' responses. For example, interviewee 10 stated the following:

"The situation in this country is no different than other Arab countries. We have a real problem of control and transparency over leaders and individuals at the top ladder of power" (Respondent 10).

In line with that, respondent 14 has said that:

"...the more access and control leaders get to the resources, and the more powerful they get the more they will be prone to unethical practices. For example, when a leader holds position in a company for long period of time this will give him more power and authority to do whatever he wants. In other words, he sees the company assets as his own" (Respondent 14).

Uncontrolled access to organisational resources by leaders is a result of an impaired controlling system and weak tools of transparency. In such circumstances, leaders can act in a deviant manner without the fear of getting caught or held accountable for their inappropriate actions. Thus, in organisation settings where access to resources and properties is not subjected to attentive inspection, leaders are more vulnerable to cross the lines and engage in unethical actions. Respondent 14 explained further regarding the issue of uncontrolled access:

"The absence of control over leaders will eventually motivates them in a way or another and put them in the risk of acting unethically; the luck of transparency will seduce leaders to violate the rules. We cannot just rely on the conscience or ethical sense of leaders, we also need to protect leaders from going astray by drawing limits for them and by having strong and effective control means in the organization. I believe that there is a huge lack of transparency and accountability within the Algerian state-owned companies. Leaders are free of control, they have almost complete authority over resources" (Respondent 14).

In the above statements, respondents 10 and 14 have brought to our attention the complex problem of uncensored access to the resources of organisations by leaders. This problem is a result of tangled factors such as lack of control and fragile transparency within the Algerian public organisations. Hence, uncontrolled access to organisational resources is one of the key antecedents of leadership ethical failures in this context. According to Ciulla (2018), power leads to privileged access and control over resources. Consequently, leaders have more opportunities to indulge themselves and, hence, they need more willpower to resist doing so (Ciulla, 2018). In other words, access that accompanies success and power makes leaders more prone to fall ethically by taking advantage of their uncontrolled means of access to the organisational resources.

Poor Leadership Skills

Based on the answers of the respondents, the lack of leadership and managerial skills, competencies and qualities – poor leadership skills - is one of the critical individual antecedents that gave rise to unethical behaviours among leaders of the Algerian public organisations. The respondents of this study stated that the absence of the required leadership qualities that enable leaders to cope with the different challenges and tasks in the organisation will result in several ethical and managerial issues, and leaders will fail in dealing with these issues due to their incapability and poor skills. Furthermore, due to the poor leadership qualities, leaders are prone to conflicts with employees. Based on the analysis of interviewees' responses, leaders who were recruited based on nepotism not based on their qualifications tend to have low self-esteem and lose the respect of their followers. One of the respondents put it:

"I think we are in need of leaders who have good competencies pertaining to their roles and field of work because the unqualified and unprepared leader will make mistakes in doing his tasks, he will also lack confidence especially if he was appointed through unfair recruitment ways" *(Respondent 6).*

Another respondent highlighted the link between the ineffective recruitment structure in the organisation and the problem of unqualified leaders and how this factor influenced the quality of leaders within the Algerian public organisations. This view is uttered in the following quote:

"Apparently, the situation is not promising; we have problems within this sector with regards to leadership. This situation is mainly because of the reckless and ineffective recruitment system. As a result of that, most of the time unqualified people get into position of power" *(Respondent 1).*

Respondent 4 stressed again on the need for competent and aware leaders which implies that the current qualities of leaders are not up to the level of leadership-role requirements. As a matter of fact, most respondents have mentioned the need to improve the quality of the organisations' leaders and managers.

"Public organisations need competent leaders and managers, it also necessitates leaders who are aware of their responsibilities. As we mentioned earlier, this will not happen unless we all work together for that purpose as companies, society, and educational institutions" *(Respondent 4).*

One respondent emphasised the necessity for leaders who have integrity and competency; leaders which can be good role models for other organisational members This demand for competent and skilful leadership stems from the current situation of the Algerian public organisations – a situation where leaders and managers are not well-qualified to best manage the resources of this sector.

"...Secondly, we need leaders who have integrity, also competent leaders which can show the best role model for other members of this sector" *(Respondent 8).*

In addition to the above, the following respondent talked about the link between the ineffectiveness of leadership training and development programs on one hand and the poor qualities and skills of leaders on the other. Furthermore, respondent 13 stated that human resources are the weakest aspect in this sector.

"...There are programs for development and training for leaders and employees, but the problem is that it is not implemented well, or the quality of these programs is not really good. There is a huge lack of training and development with regards to all types of training in the Algerian public sector. Human resource is the weakest point in the Algerian state-owned companies – we need more qualified, competent, and well-trained leaders and followers" (Respondent 13).

The recurrent calls for good leadership with the appropriate competencies and qualities by the respondents of this study indicate that the Algerian public organisations are in critical need for proper mechanisms which can enrich its human resources especially at the level of leadership roles. These results have articulated not only the problem of poor leadership qualities in this context but also has signalled the link between the current situation of leadership qualities and the recruitment system, as well as leadership training programs which were depicted by the respondents as ineffective. According to Lašáková & Remišová (2015), ineffective leadership that results in sabotage of or decline from organisational goals is unethical. In case leaders are not able to contribute to company goals, and quite the opposite, they contribute to low work productivity and low performance of others, their leadership should be reflected upon as unethical (Lašáková & Remišová, 2015).

The findings of this study have shown that leadership skills and competencies are very necessary for smooth and efficient management processes within the organisation. However, in cases where the quality of the human capital is poor this will result in misusing the organisational resources and failing in investing the potentials of its members. In line with this, McCall and Lombardo (1983) argue that some of the personal behaviours of leaders that lead to ineffectiveness and "derailment" in general include both anti-subordinate behaviours such as intimidating and bullying subordinates, and anti-organisational behaviours such as laziness, lack of appropriate management skills, failing to build teams, being unable to think strategically and spending more time occupied with matters other than their work assignments (Toor & Ogunlana, 2009).

Conclusion

The problem of unethical leadership behaviour in the Algerian public organisations posits serious threats on the development of this sector. The negative consequences of corrupt and unethical behaviours of leaders in the country were the primary impetus for conducting the current study. Exploring the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures is a response to the dearth of empirical studies in the context of Algeria. Furthermore, the study of the 'dark-side' of leadership requires investigation across different sectors and cultural contexts in order to establish a sound analysis of the various accounts of leadership unethical behaviour. In line with this, Tavanti (2011) stated that toxicity in leaders is unfortunately a

common reality in many organisations (Tavanti, 2011). Though the intuitive case for investigating bad eadership is strong, it is surprising that there are very limited empirical studies of bad leadership. This dearth of empirical research is possibly even more perplexing when anecdotal proofs propose that bad leaders are common in all walks of life (Aravena, 2019; Belle & Cantarelli, 2017; Erickson, Shaw, & Agabe, 2007).

In the same vein, compared to other fields of leadership research, empirical evidence on bad leadership is still trivial (Schilling, 2009). In Algeria, despite the far-reaching consequences of unethical behaviours of leaders on individuals, organisations, and the whole society, studies on this problem remain very scarce. Thus, this study was set out to address and uncover the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures and offers deeper understanding on the issue. Hence, in exploring the ethical failures of leadership, this study focused on the treats and individual-based characteristics attached to the unethical behaviour of leaders. As discussed in the previous section, the investigation of ethical failures of leadership in the Algerian public organisations has shown that there are various individual antecedents linked to leaders' ethical failures. This study has found that the individual antecedents which contribute to leadership ethical failures are the lack of ethical awareness, irresponsibility, egocentricity, ignorance, uncontrolled access to organisational resources, and poor leadership skills.

This study contributes to the literature on unethical leadership by revealing the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures in a different social and organisational context. The study also offers practical assistance to policy-makers and the government sector in general on how to improve the ethical quality of its leadership. Most of the previous studies conducted concentrated mainly on antecedents of unethical leadership in developed countries of different cultural and organizational settings. Therefore, exploring the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures in a different context is a key contribution of this study. Moreover, the current study offers preliminary insights into the problem of leadership ethical failures which can help in alleviating the symptoms of such a phenomenon.

The generalisability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the scope of this study was limited in terms of sector. Most of the respondents are from companies that operate in the oil and gas industry. Also, the sample of the study is not representative of female leaders which could bring new insights to the investigation of the individual antecedents of leadership ethical failures. An additional uncontrolled factor is the possibility that the answers of respondents to the interview questions were not always reflecting the actual experiences within the Algerian public organisations due to the sensitivity of the topic. These limitations should be taken into account in future research endeavours on the issue of leadership ethical failures. Furthermore, several respondents referred to the recruitment policies within the Algerian public organisations and how it affected the quality of leaders

within this sector. The problem of ineffective recruitment resulted in attracting individuals of poor technical and behavioural skills. Future studies should investigate the different implications of the recruitment structure within public organisations in Algeria. Additionally, further studies could also examine the policies of transparency and accountability in this sector to assess its effectiveness in curbing leaders' unethical practices.

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