Understanding Unethical Leadership Behaviour by Unravelling Social and Organisational Factors

Abderrahmane Benlahcene\textsuperscript{a}, Abbas Ramdani\textsuperscript{b}\textsuperscript{*}, \textsuperscript{a}School of Government, Law and International Studies (COLGIS), Universiti Utara Malaysia, \textsuperscript{b}Department of Communication, School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Email: Corresponding Author’ Email: a*abdoben88@gmail.com, babbas@uum.edu.my

This study explores the role of social and organisational factors in predicting unethical leadership behaviour in a sample of leaders from Algerian state-owned companies. It employs a qualitative design to explore various social and organisational factors that trigger unethical leadership behaviour. A number of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders from state-owned companies in Algeria. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes and categories, and the process was facilitated by ATLAS.ti 8. The results show that there are five factors in relation to social and organisational influences which predict unethical leadership behaviour including: social values, organisational culture, corruption, peer-influence and politics. The unit of analysis consists of state-owned companies in Algeria. Hence, the results might have some unique cultural and organisational characteristics that cannot be applied to other sectors or cultural settings. Yet, the study contributes to our understanding of the role of social and organisational factors in predicting leaders’ unethical behaviour and lays the foundation for future research into the issues of unethical leadership in the context of Algeria and other African countries.

\textbf{Keywords:} Leadership, Unethical Leadership, State-owned companies, Algeria.
Introduction

The dark side of leadership has long been ignored in leadership research and is still under-researched (Furtner, Maran, & Rauthmann, 2017). Nevertheless, by now it has become clear that as a result of corporate failures in the ethical domain, a critical challenge for organisations is to gain a deeper understanding of why ethical standards are so easily violated and accepted (De Cremer & Vandekerckhove, 2017). Unethical leadership behaviours create a detrimental effect on both individuals and organisations. As a result, it is important to establish an empirical understanding on why leaders go astray and lose their ethical track. Enhancing our insight about the antecedents that influence leaders to get involved in unethical behaviours will allow organisations to manage or even prevent ethical leadership blunders and support sustainable and successful organisations.

A central issue in relation to unethical leadership behaviour in Algeria is the idiosyncrasy of African social and organisational contexts. It has been noted that leaders in African countries face several challenges due to the ramifications of corruption and ineffective institutional processes. In his analysis of ethical leadership in Africa, Temple (2012) concluded that in cases where leaders are working in a corrupt environment or organisational context, even those leaders with high ethical standards cannot operate, and effective leaders within this type of environment will lose their way. Thus, in order to diagnose and comprehend the obstacles of ethical leadership in the African context, an attempt must be made to understand the metaphysical milieu within which African leaders work (Temple, 2012). That is to say, the effects of ethical scandals on public sector organisations, and the consequences of cultural differences on (un)ethical leadership behaviour should be examined (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014).

Regarding the same issue, Eisenbeiß and Brodbeck (2014) argue that it is a challenge for leaders from African countries to behave in an ethical manner where they need to compromise in making contracts otherwise they cannot achieve their goals. Leaders are continuously confronted by these ethical dilemmas in an environment where it is difficult to remain ethical (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014). In the same vein, Luo (2004) states that the redundancy of corruption is fortified by means that make it seem typical and part of organisational culture. For instance, when the organisational environment requires regular bribery and pay-offs to bureaucrats and politicians for running daily tasks, corruption will become part of the organisational culture. In this case, there will be top leadership pressure on followers and organisation members to follow these unethical acts, norms and rules (Aguilera & Vadera, 2008). Hence, the distinctive features of the social and organisational context within African countries require empirical investigations that can uncover the role of these features in predicting the unethical behaviour of leaders.
Despite the importance of situational factors in moulding the behaviour of leaders, there remains a paucity of evidence about its role in countries where the rule of law is fragile, corruption ratios are high and cultural settings are unmapped. Although several studies have been carried regarding the dark side of leadership (Lašáková & Remišová, 2017), research on the subject has been mostly restricted to some organisational and situational contexts (mostly in Western countries). To date, the problem has received scant attention in the literature about Algeria and other African countries. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to explore the role of social and organisational influences in predicting unethical leadership behaviour within Algerian state-owned companies. In other words, it seeks to explore the characteristics of social and organisational contexts where leaders of Algerian state-owned companies are performing their tasks in order to uncover the influences of these social and organisational factors about the unethical behaviour of leaders. The overall structure of the study takes the form of four main sections: 1) introduction that places the problem into context. 2) the research methodology, 3) discussion of study results, 4) conclusion and recommendations for further research.

Methodology

The study uses an exploratory qualitative design, which is considered to be appropriate for the purpose of understanding behaviour (Veal, 2005). Exploratory qualitative design is mainly valuable for examining sensitive or personal issues (Keyton, 2015). In this study, 15 leaders from Algerian state-owned companies were interviewed face-to-face to investigate the issue and gain a deeper understanding of the various implications of leaders’ unethical behaviour. In addition, in the current study, the term ‘leader’ refers to top and middle level managers who are currently employed in one of the Algerian state-owned companies (e.g. CEOs, Directors, Heads of Department, etc.). In order to answer the study’s hypothesis, purposive sampling technique was used to choose the participants. All participants were contacted prior to the interviewing process to obtain their consent to take part in the interview. Once the participants agreed to participate in the interview, the objective of the interview and the purpose of the study were explained to each participant prior to commencing the interview session. Also, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information. After participants’ consent was obtained, the interviews were recorded and notes were taken as necessary.

Furthermore, the study adopted a semi-structured interview style as a tool in collecting relevant data; using open-ended interview questions offers rich data which elicits the experience and perspective of participants in their social world (Creswell, 2013; Lasch et. al., 2010; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured questions were constructed and developed based on the purpose of the study and used as a guideline for the data collection process. The interview questions were translated into Arabic, to establish a good rapport between study
respondents and the interviewer. Moreover, an interview protocol was formulated to guide the interviews. The interview sessions took place at different sites in Algeria during a period of three months between June and August 2017. The duration of the interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour and half depending on the willingness of interviewees to add further information about the relevant issue. Finally, the recorded data was transcribed and translated into English.

The final stage of the study included analysing, coding and categorising the collected data. ATLAS. ti 8 software was used to establish a systemic process of analysis. The translated transcripts were double checked by two bilingual Algerian researchers to ensure the quality of the translation. In addition, the final results of the analysis were also checked by two academic experts in the field of qualitative research and ethics to confirm that the data analysis is comprehensive and transparent.

**Findings and Discussion**

A total number of 15 interviews were successfully conducted and transcribed. The interviews took place at various sites in the South-eastern state of Wargla, Algeria. All interviews were conducted in Arabic as it is the native language of all respondents. Furthermore, the ages of interviewees ranged from 32 to 61 years. The respondents included 14 males representing around 93.3% of total participants, while female respondents represented 6.3% of the total number of participants. The roles and fields of work of respondents were diverse. Participants hold leading and managerial roles in human resources, finance, administration and logistics, business development, environment protection, procurement, manufacturing, accounting, maintenance and operations. They also have years of experience in their field ranging between 5 and 35 years.

Based on the thematic analysis of the collected data, several social and organisational factors contributing to the prevalence of unethical leadership behaviour were derived from the opinions and perspectives of respondents. These factors correlate with and are entrenched in the environment in which those leaders work. Figure 1 presents the main theme and sub-themes generated from the participants’ responses.
Leadership emerges and operates within social and organisational contexts. Thus, cultural norms, values, traditions and social conventions play a significant role in shaping (un)ethical behaviour of leaders at all levels. Social and organisational factors in this study refer to cultural, moral, and sociological features of Algerian society as well as the organisational environment. These factors include both interior and exterior ethical norms and values which are adopted by leaders and influence their ethical conduct. In addition, these factors were found to be closely attached to the unethical behaviour of leaders in Algerian state-owned companies and can explain much of the ethical lapses of leaders. Moreover, the five factors were derived and constructed based on the analysis of responses.

**Social Values**

A variety of interviewees’ perspectives were expressed regarding the issue of dysfunctional social values. Participants’ views are combined to form the problem of ill-formed values and norms which have been instilled in the character of leaders of Algerian state-owned companies. A society’s ethical foundations are crucial in moulding individual values and perceptions. Social and cultural values are the root of a significant proportion of a person’s ethical and moral values. According to social identity theory, the identity of an individual is binary. One part is shaped by personal identity, which implies that individuals have free will. On the other hand, another part consists of the social identity of a person which emerges from the knowledge that individuals are members of social groups and are shaped by the values and emotions that are adopted by the particular group they belong to. When asked about the reason why some leaders act in an unethical manner, Respondent 4 maintained:
“Those leaders also lack awareness about the centrality of ethics in life which is due to the way in which they were raised, and their perspective about responsibility towards the country and society” (Respondent 4).

Another respondent maintained that those leaders who got involved in unethical practices are a “product” of society: -

“...We can clearly see that our economy is suffering; there are ethical violations by certain leaders and employees within this sector. Those individuals are the “product” of our society” (Respondent 8).

Another respondent pointed out that the problem of leaders’ lack of ethical behaviour should be traced back to the way in which leaders were educated and nurtured with ethical values in society: -

“The problem is not just within state-owned companies but in the whole of society. When you have a society, which promotes and supports good ethical conduct, you will undoubtedly have individuals who are adopting the same ethical values; individuals who give priority to ethical responsibilities. Thus, the most important thing is that we should focus on educating and preparing a generation of leaders with strong ethical values” (Respondent 12).

In collaboration with the above assertions, Respondent 13 referred to the importance of promoting good moral values amongst members of society such as integrity, responsibility and honesty. He also suggested a link between the values cherished by society and the ethical behaviour of leaders.

“... We have a problem in terms of the values we are promoting in our society; in terms of responsibility, honesty, integrity; how important are these values to us? When you have a society that gives priority to these virtues and to correct ethical values, you will certainly have ethical leaders and followers as well” (Respondent 13).

The social milieu is a strong predictor for the ethical and/or unethical tendencies of leaders within organisational settings. At the early stage of development, individuals first encounter and are nurtured within the values of parents, family and society before they reach a position of leadership in an organisation. These social values are the main determinant of what is right and wrong, what is ethical and unethical, and it forms much of a leader’s character. In the same vein, Bennett J. Tepper et. al. (2017) propose that the antecedents of abusive supervision can be tracked to three sets of mechanisms: social learning, identity threat and self-regulation impairment (Bennett J. Tepper, 2017). Also, Daniel T.L. Shek et. al. (2018) suggest that sometimes individuals come to their new job already “infected” with certain
corrupt ethics. It is possible that they have never had a solid belief about being an ethical person, or the environment they have been living in has given tacit consent to unethical behaviours (Daniel T.L. Shek, 2018). Behavioural tendencies learned during childhood are often deeply rooted, readily manifesting themselves in the workplace during adulthood (Bennett J. Tepper, 2017).

The results of this study suggest that unethical leadership behaviour is associated with social values. The culture-related milieu is the original source and driver of (un)ethical behaviour. It influences organisational climate through its impact on policy environment, project pressures and individual traits (Mitonga-Monga, Flotman, & Cilliers, 2016). The wider social and cultural environment was found to be a significant determinant of the ethical behaviour of leaders. Based on the analysis of participants’ views and experiences, cultural values are the first source of ethical or unethical leadership values. It has been reported that some leaders are already nurtured with unethical values before joining the organisation which was due to certain dominant dysfunctional moral values within society.

The development of ethical or/and unethical leadership behaviour has a long history which is rooted in society’s cultural values. Hence, for a deeper understanding of ethical and unethical leadership, it is vital to take into account the cultural norms and values which have had a significant role in shaping the ethical character of individuals. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) state that there are a number of factors influencing ethical decision-making, including cultural background, gender, prior ethical education, religiosity and the type of ethical dilemma, as each culture is a specific system of shared values, beliefs and customs that an individual can use in relation to others and that can be transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Individuals from various cultural backgrounds are exposed to different values and customs, and accordingly are expected to present different behaviours, including insights into how each individual perceives ethical problems and engages in ethical decision making (Ho & Lin, 2011).

Organisational Culture

Concerns were expressed about the organisational culture within Algerian state-owned companies. The respondents commented on the current situation of the organisational culture, which represent conditions felt by leaders and managers in their day-to-day roles. Based on their responses the organisational atmosphere within these companies appears to have several problems. The respondents expressed their views regarding the absence of an organisational culture that is supportive of good ethical behaviour amongst managers and leaders. On the whole, participants demonstrated that there are numerous shortcomings in relation to the organisational culture. They also referred to the need for an organisational
culture that supports and promotes good ethical behaviour on the part of both leaders and followers. Respondent 3 expressed below his view concerning the issue of organisational:-

“I believe that there are three main reasons for such unethical behaviours The second is the absence of an effective and responsible working culture in some of the state-owned companies” (Respondent 3).

Similarly, respondent 5 depicted the need for an organisational culture which supports an ethical climate within the organisation.

“...Also, boost and support good organisational culture which promotes ethical values and responsibility amongst leaders. In fact, too many state-owned companies don’t give much attention to this side” (Respondent 5).

Another respondent pointed out that there is an absence of an ethical culture which prioritises good ethical behaviour amongst leaders and promotes sound ethical performance.

“... As a matter of fact, we lack the culture which supports and boosts good ethical conduct and gives priority to ethical performance” (Respondent 9).

Respondent 14 also believed that one of the factors that is contributing to unethical leadership behaviour is the organisational environment. He referred to an environment where leaders do not have a sense of belonging to their organisation due to several factors such as injustice, transgression and lack of respect.

“I would say that one of the reasons why leaders and managers in Algerian state-owned companies get involved in unethical practices is due to the organisational environment. The environment within Algerian organisations is not positive and also does not make leaders feel good and feel like they belong there. There is injustice and transgression within these organisations, some leaders and members feel like they are being treated unfairly and not respected by top leadership” (Respondent 14).

The organisational environment consists of the ethical climate, culture, and codes of conduct established within the organisation (Peterson, 2002). The internal climate is a vehicle by which management can encourage the adoption of organisational culture by its employees, ultimately leading to a more efficient and better functioning organisation (Trinkner, Tyler, & Goff, 2016). With respect to the organisational culture, the findings of this study show that Algerian state-owned companies seem to neglect the importance of organisational culture and its decisive role in shaping a positive ethical climate. Hoyk and Hersey (2009) argue that an organisation in which co-workers justify, accept or ignore unethical behaviours promotes
the viewpoint of the wrongdoer (Askew, Beisler, & Keel, 2015). Previous studies also suggest that situational variables such as organisational climate, culture, and policy are the main factors that contribute to the proliferation of unethical practices (Son Hing, et. al., 2007).

Furthermore, the views expressed by respondents indicate that the organisational culture within Algerian state-owned companies are to some extent not supportive of good ethical behaviour and do not prioritise ethics at their core organisational cultural settings. As a consequence, this absence of organisational culture that emphasises a positive ethical culture allows for the proliferation of unethical leadership behaviours. According to Trevino (1986), organisational culture influences thoughts and feelings and guides behaviour (Valentine & Fleischman, 2004). Kaptein (2009) indicates that the culture of workplace ethics comprises of an informal control system of an organisation which encompasses the experiences, assumptions and expectations of managers/leaders and employees about how the organisation prevents them from behaving unethically and encourages them to behave ethically (Mitonga-Monga et. al., 2016). Additionally, several studies of the same nature but in different contexts reported that the organisational climate is associated with unethical behaviour (Liu, Zhao, & Li, 2016). Therefore, in cases where the organisational culture is not based on sound ethical organisational norms, it gives rise to ethical transgressions within the organisation, especially by those who have authority and access to resources.

**Corruption**

Another important finding is the impact of corruption cases and scandals on the ethical behaviour of leaders within Algerian state-owned companies. The widespread practice of corruption across many sectors and domains in the country have affected the ethical environment within public sector organisations and public institutions. In particular, the participants of this study have indicated that the top political and managerial leadership in the country attained a bad reputation due to several grand cases of corruption and mismanagement of the country resources. It was suggested by respondents that this distorted ethical image of the top leadership in the country has negatively influenced the ethical atmosphere within various sectors of the public sphere. A shared view amongst interviewees was that corruption scandals by top leaders of this sector have weakened the sense of responsibility amongst leaders and managers.

In all types of organisations, top leadership setting the ethical tone and conduct of top leaders is pivotal in forming the ethical standards within the organisation. However, the problem in Algerian state-owned companies is that those at the top ladder of (political and managerial) leadership are portraying a negative role model by getting involved in cases of corruption and
misconduct. Consequently, this has resulted in creating an organisational environment where some illegal and unethical practices are acceptable.

One respondent, quoted below, placed the problem of corruption scandals in context:

“The sector of state-owned companies has experienced big scandals by some of the top leaders; those leaders supposed to act as role models for other members of this sector. What kind of example are they setting when they get involved in such bad behaviour!” (Respondent 2).

One interviewee argued that there is a lack of trust in political and managerial leadership due to the corruption scandals that occurred within the last few years and resulted in harming the ethical climate within Algerian state-owned companies.

“... Also, there is a lack of trust in political and managerial leadership in this country due to the corruption cases that have been committed lately. These cases have made unethical practices and a lack of responsibility amongst all members of the public sector appear normal or natural” (Respondent 8).

In another development, respondent 11 commented that the problem of corruption is mainly at the top level of leadership in the country and that this has negatively affected the behaviour of organisational members.

“Leadership at the top level of authority in this country is significantly involved in ethical violations and corruption. Such bad reputation of top leadership has a negative effect on the economy, the performance of public organisations and the behaviour of individuals as well” (Respondent 11).

The key feature of the problem of corruption in the context of Algerian state-owned companies is that it has contributed to the normalisation of unethical and corrupt practices within this sector. Campbell & Görtz (2014) state that in corrupt organisations, an employee’s corrupt behaviour is affected not only by his or her characteristics but also by his or her situation (Campbell & Görtz, 2014). As a result of the widespread practice of corruption and scandals by top leadership in both the political and managerial sectors, unethical leadership behaviours have penetrated the organisational environment. Moreover, if the organisational environment requires frequent bribery and payments to politicians and bureaucrats to conduct day-to-day business, corruption becomes part of the modus operandi that is called schematic corruption. The necessary condition is that high leadership pressure is exerted on organisational members and subunits to comply with these (unethical) rules and standards (Aguilera & Vadera, 2008).
Studies on the impact of political and organisational corruption and the unethical behaviour of leaders and managers in Algerian state-owned companies are scarce, which can be explained by the difficulty of access to information and organisational settings. Also, the sensitivity of this issue forces the researcher to face various obstacles to develop proper analysis and investigation of this phenomenon. According to Anguilera and Vadera (2008), despite the richness research regarding corruption in Political Science and Philosophy, organisational scholars have only recently begun to systematically investigate the causes and consequences of corruption in corporate organisations. This relative lack of studies is partly explained by the complexity of corruption, especially as it occurs through multiple levels of analysis and partly due to different perceptions and definitions of organisational corruption in different societies. In addition, the illegality and secrecy of corruption typically prevent empirical analysis (Aguilera & Vadera, 2008).

**Peer-Influence**

This factor signals the problem of negative influence of some top leaders on the behaviour of other leaders and managers in the ladder of authority in state-owned companies in Algeria. Peer influence also refers to the negative influence of leaders on their colleagues and other individuals within the organisational environment. Unethical as well as ethical leadership practices and values can be contagious within an organisational environment. The results under this factor represent concerns and perspectives which were expressed by participants about the issue of peer-influence. This issue can be explained by the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), according which “individuals learn to pay attention to the attitude, behaviour and values of believable role models, as well as to reproducing these types of behaviour.” Based on social learning theory, Brown and Trevino (2006) propose that most people need others for moral guidance. Their explanation is comparable to Weaver et. al (2005), who maintain that employees are strongly influenced by the people closest to them (De Wolde et. al., 2014; Kaptein, 2011). The comments below further illustrate this issue:

“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. These ‘bad apples’ will eventually have a negative impact on the performance and behaviour of other co-workers and employees by providing a bad example to others” (Respondent 1).

“Another problem within this sector is that some of corrupt leaders have had a negative influence on the performance and behaviour of other members of the sector” (Respondent 7).
Respondents 3 and 15 also expressed their opinions on the issue of peer-influence with a specific reference to the negative role played by top leadership and how it contributed to the prevalence of unethical behaviour amongst other leaders and members of the organisation.

“I would like to mention another reason, which is that the top leaders of this sector do not portray a good image of leadership which in return affects the ethical conduct and performance of other members of various organisations within this sector” (Respondent 3).

“…If top leadership’s “political and administrative” practices are unethical and have bad reputation, what do you expect from other managers or employees? This has a great influence on how they see themselves in the companies” (Respondent 15).

The analysis of the findings suggests that peer-influence plays a significant role in shaping leaders’ ethical and unethical behaviour. The influence of unethical leaders also impacts their colleagues, followers and organisations. In the current study, the influence of unethical leaders on the behaviour of peers and colleagues is one of the key antecedents of unethical leadership behaviour. Previous studies suggest that deviant peer influence can cause individuals to get involved in deviant behaviour (Paternoster, et. al., 2013). The particular role of managers at various organisational hierarchies in portraying workplace ethics and acceptable behaviour cannot be over-emphasized. This is due to the fact that organisational members come to appreciate what is acceptable and how to conduct themselves through direct experience and observation of their superiors and colleagues (Bandura, 1977, 1986), (Yeboah-Assiamah, et. al., 2016).

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have also demonstrated that the unethical behaviour of leaders is affected by the behaviour of other members of the organisation. For instance, social cognitive theory conceptualises organisational learning as an internal mental process that may or may not be reflected in immediate behavioural change. It posits that organisational members mostly learn or emulate certain behaviours through observation and modelling. The thesis is that other people’s behaviour tends to reflect on other remaining organisational members. This point is argued in the following statement: ‘Of the many cues that influence behaviour, at any point in time, none is more common than the actions of others.’ (Bandura, 1986:206), (Yeboah-Assiamah et. al., 2016). Likewise, according to Lašáková & Remišová (2015), unethical leadership is understood to have a negative effect not only on immediate subordinates, followers, or colleagues, but it is conceptualised in a wider framework with respect to society as a whole. Unethical leadership encompasses cases in which the leader harmfully influences (by deed or lack of action) other organisations, various groups of professionals, regional inhabitants in which the company operates, or the natural environment (Lašáková & Remišová, 2015).
Politics

Based on the respondents’ perspectives, political leadership in Algeria has affected the ethical climate of state-owned companies by its irresponsible and arbitrary governance. Also, the recent corruption scandal amongst politicians and the mismanagement of the country’s resources have contributed to eroding trust between the people and political leadership. Political leadership plays a significant role in creating a sense of commitment to serve the people and work for national development. On the other hand, political leadership that is irresponsible, authoritative and characterised by corruption and incompetence damages the sense of ethical commitment amongst individuals which is the case within Algerian state-owned companies according to respondents. One interviewee described the following:

“... There is lack of trust in the political and managerial leadership of this country due to the corruption cases that have been committed lately. These cases have made unethical practices and a lack of responsibility amongst all members of the public sector seem normal or natural” (Respondent 8).

Political leaders have the power to create and promote a healthy business environment or otherwise contribute to damaging the sense of trust amongst people through their reckless policies or unethical practices. A corrupt political elite negatively affects the way in which managerial leaders discern their ethical responsibility towards their companies and the whole of society. The factor of politics indicates the influence of the political arena on the ethical performance of leaders in Algerian state-owned companies. In the following quote, interviewee 9 implicitly pointed out the negative role of politics on Algeria’s economic and social life:

“... Politics also seems to me to have negatively influenced the socio-economic situation in this country, if you know what I mean” (Respondent 9).

One interviewee argued that political leadership in the country has a bad reputation which in turn affects the behaviour of people within state-owned companies:

“Also, the reputation and behaviour of top political and administrative leadership had a direct effect on other members of public organisations and institutions (Respondent 10).

In congruence with the above statements, participant 15 expressed his concerns about the fragile and biased judicial system which is influenced by political leaders. The interference of politicians in the judicial body has deteriorated the role of justice in the country:
“… When justice is being controlled by politicians, this will make it weak and biased” (Respondent 15).

The Algerian political domain is shaped by rigged elections, corruption and weak political institutions. State-owned companies are not immune to the bad influence of the poor performance of political leadership. According to Temple (2012), in numerous African countries, leaders have emerged through forged election and/or military coups; in most parts the leader/follower relationship is based on fear not mutual trust. Moreover, in these countries, leaders encourage the nation to pursue its personal goals, and in most cases leaders are intolerant to minority voices or the opposition (Temple, 2012). The problem of unethical leadership behaviour in Algerian state-owned companies is in part due to the ramifications of bad political leadership in the country. According to Lašáková & Remišová (2015), besides the organisational contexts, leadership is embedded in social conditions, thus emulating ethical problems that occur in various sectors of society, such as business, politics or the economy (Lašáková & Remišová, 2015).

Conclusion

Many scholars have traced Africa’s economic, political and social challenges to bad leadership. Bonnie Ayodele and Lanre Olu–Adeyemi (2006) state that this continent has struggled immensely to develop strategies for economic, political and social development without first analysing its leadership crisis. Though acknowledging that the future of nations is often determined by a combination of leadership and followership, Julius Ihonvbere places greater responsibility on leadership. There is clear consensus that there is a leadership dilemma in Africa in almost every aspect: social, political, educational, business and religious (Temple, 2012). Considering the crisis of leadership in African countries, this study incorporates both social and organisational factors that are contributing to the prevalence of unethical leadership behaviour within Algerian state-owned companies. The present study is designed to explore the role of social and organisational factors in predicting unethical leadership behaviour. The key impetus of this research has been the lack of empirical studies addressing the topic. Based on the analysis of collected data, the study has identified five main factors contributing to the prevalence of unethical leadership unethical behaviour within the state-owned companies in Algeria: social values, organisational culture, corruption, peer-influence and politics.

The findings indicate that unethical leadership behaviour in Algerian state-owned companies is the result of inter-connected social, cultural and organisational factors. The study also suggests that this phenomenon cannot be identified properly without deep analysis of an entangled web of factors that go beyond the internal organisational environment. Additionally, research on the topic has established an important volume of scholarly
analysis. However, studies on the dark-side of leadership within public sector are almost absent in Algeria and other African countries of similar social and organisational settings. Therefore, the insights gained from this study may assist researchers and future studies on issues related to unethical leadership. Furthermore, several previous studies (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014; Hassan et al., 2014; Temple, 2012) propose that the context of African countries place leaders in confrontation with several challenges. Hence, this study provides significant findings on various social and organisational factors that predict unethical leadership behaviour, which can help in mitigating the factors that establish the ground for destructive and unethical leadership behaviours.

The problem of unethical leadership behaviour in Algerian state-owned companies and other countries entails research-based efforts and practical tools to help in uncovering, determining and neutralising the negative social and organisational precursors of unethical leadership. The study can justly conclude that state-owned companies in Algeria are not emphasising or prioritising the ethical demeanour of their members in general and leaders in particular. This study maintains that state-owned companies need to reform their organisational priorities by implementing a comprehensive assessment approach which involves evaluating leaders not merely on the basis of technical or financial outcomes, but also on their ethical conduct and the long-term influence of their behaviour on company performance and various stakeholders. These results can also explain some of the aspects on which these companies need to focus in order to attain the best organisational outcomes.

A natural progression of this work is to validate the findings through quantitative testing and make them more widely applicable or otherwise identify new factors that may predict unethical leadership behaviours. The qualitative findings can be adopted to develop items and scales for quantitative survey questionnaires to further examine the factors that produce unethical leadership behaviour. Furthermore, if research efforts are to be advanced, further qualitative investigations need to be carried out across different sectors and organisations. A more inclusive range of respondents could offer further important evidence on the role of social and organisational factors in shaping the (un)ethical behaviour of leaders in Algerian state-owned companies as well as other private organisations. Ultimately, there is a need for further understanding regarding the impact of politics and political corruption on the ethical sense of leaders within the said context.
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