

CHAPTER 9

Power and Ethical Leadership in Higher Education Institution

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Higher Education Institution (HEI) can be quite challenging as it involved a different setting in terms of the everchanging post held by the leaders. It involved frequent changes in power depending on the post held by the leader. Power plays a critical part in leadership as leaders need power to influence people to make things happen. The outcome of power, although, depends on what type of power the leader chooses to use. Power may either benefit or harm the followers depending on the type of power being used. Indeed, a significant part of the influence a leader holds lies in the type of power he/she chooses to use. Good leaders are more likely to hold onto their power and use it only when circumstances necessitate.

In the same sense, the dark side of leadership is often unleashed through position and power. In many instances, as a leader climbs higher position, there are lesser checks on them. Subordinates may be silent about the toxic conduct of the leaders. Consequently, leaders earn more power without the self-awareness on their unethical conduct. This unethical conduct

would eventually be catastrophic. Hence, it is important for leaders to remain ethical no matter how high they are in the top. Study has shown that perceptions of ethical behaviour were significantly influenced by the ethical principles displayed by top leaders (Meng and Neill, 2022). Moreover, in many decision-making situations, ethical matters are either directly or indirectly implicated. Thus, the choices leaders make are influenced by their ethics which are led by their self-chosen principles and own morality. In which, power creates huge ethical responsibility for leaders.

Higher education institutions play a part in the creation and provision of economic, social, and personal prospects (Brighouse, 2010). In fact, higher education institutions play a crucial part in the development of future leadership and national social unity. Hence, the leadership of an institution of higher education should signify these standards. As Heyneman (2016) advocates that a good leader in a higher education institution is a representative for a civilized society. In the recent years, the higher education leaders have been facing a tougher situation due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. This high uncertainty situation has put on more emphasis on need for ethical conduct by leaders in the higher education especially on providing accuracy, transparency, justice, fairness, and accountability in the intuition (Liu, et. al., 2021).

Alas, there are instances of dubious leadership behaviour in higher education (Bartlett, 2006; Van Der Werf, 2007). For instance, there were many incidents of breaches of the law that led to the dismissals of higher institution's presidents and boards (Gerber, 2005). Sadly, unethical conduct by higher institution's leaders gives bad consequences to the entire institution (Kelley and Chang, 2007). In which, these unethical conducts may

damage the reputation of the higher education institution, that will have a huge impact on the institution itself.

Researchers revealed that the education institution may be as corrupt as in other organizations. The higher education institution may be corrupted by the personal interest of certain people in the organisations. In which, the forms of exploitation in higher education institution may varies from unlawful purchasing of supplies and services, professional misconduct such as abuse of power, nepotism, sexual abuse, biasness, the use of institution's properties and many more (Heyneman, 2015).

In Malaysia, there is a growing concern in ethical issues in higher education institutions. Among the unethical issues raised are corruption, bribery, and fraud (Nurul et. al., 2019). The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission March 2018 statistics shows 26 administrators in the higher education institution were arrested between 2016 to 2017 with many other reported cases (Ishak et. al., 2019). Besides that, according to a study by (Tiong et. al., 2018) on 141 academicians from numerous Universities in Malaysia, the occurrence of academic misconducts is high in the higher education institution. However, their findings found that 44% of the misconduct are not reported for various reasons, among them are the fear of being a whistle blower and the mindset that it is a norm. Hence, the actual cases of unethical conduct by those in the higher education institution are not statistically accurate. Besides, higher education institutions often kept the incidents confidential due to its sensitive issues and goodwill of the organization itself.

Despite that, there are few notable cases of unethical conduct in the higher education institution. For instance, there is an incident where a managing director of a private college took bribes from their students. He received RM2,500 from students in return for certificate issuance that granted the students to