Leadership Self-Accountability to Prevent Corruption in the Workplace

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Abstract

Corruption in the workplace is one of the most intensively discussed themes in recent years. Continual scandals in business and public sectors over the last decades have increased interest in self-accountability to prevent engaging in corrupt behavior in the workplace. To address the need to promote self-accountability in the context of leadership, this paper mentions five leadership practices that affect self-accountability in respect of enhancing ethical behavior. Scholarly literature on corruption and self-accountability was examined and trends surfaced in five practices: self-criticism, self-monitoring, self-management, self-leadership, and moral cognitive. This paper aims at providing organizational leaders with a framework for increasing their self-accountability practices toward reducing corrupt behavior and creating an ethical climate in the workplace.

Subject Areas

Management Organization, Organizational Behavior

Keywords

Corruption, Ethical Behavior, Leadership, Self-Accountability

1. Introduction

Corruption became one of the most important problems and issues in scientific discourse over the last decades. Corruption can be defined as the breaking of a rule by an individual(s) or organization(s) for private gain [1]. In public organizations, one corrupt behavior is the use of public office for personal gain [2]. In business and private companies, a large part of corrupt behaviors culminates in the leaders supporting corruption on behalf of their organization [3]. Corrup-

tion generally leads to greediness, unemployment, organizational weakness, poor law enforcement, and lack of ethical standards, which consequently weaken the notions of justice and trust [4] [5]. Corruption in the workplace is one of the most intensively discussed themes in recent years [6]. Volatility in today's economy compels organizational leaders to address situations that may result in complex ethical dilemmas. Developing organizational leader calls for the development of leadership competencies that include values and ethics [7]. Ethical decisions and acts are an important component of leadership behavior [8]. Ethical decisions and acts are an important component of leadership behavior. A lack of ethical standards and codes may result in the leader's confusion about making ethical decisions because of the absence of mutual regulation of conduct [9] [10]. In regard to leadership, corruption in the workplace refers to how a leader, entrusted with the authority to make decisions, misuses her/his position [11]. Such a leader might be a public officer who takes advantage of her/his position for personal gain [2] or a business manager who facilitates corruption for personal and/or organizational benefits [12].

Making an ethical decision is an important component of leadership behavior in today's complex global economy [9] [13] [14] [15]. To sustain ethical behavior, organizational leaders need to adopt mechanisms that can help them observe and evaluate their behavior in order to decrease the likelihood to engage in inappropriate conduct [16] [17]. In this regard, leaders may need to consider adopting self-accountability to enhance their ethical behavior [18] [19] [20]. Self-accountability is an interpersonal value based on self-evaluating one's behavior in order to improve it [19] [21]. In the context of leadership, self-accountability occurs when a leader is accountable to him/herself without anyone else to observe, monitor, or hold him/her responsible. Dhiman *et al.* (2018) [18] defined self-accountability as "the need to justify one's actions and decisions to oneself in order to confirm or enhance a self-identity or image shaped by strongly held beliefs and values" (p. 80).

The literature on corruption deals with studies that focus on the relationship between corruption in the workplace and ethical behavior. However, there is a dearth of research dealing with the relationship between corruption in the workplace and self-accountability. In particular, the literature lacks studies that focus on how strengthening the practices of self-accountability may help lead to decreases in the number of negative activities that violate the standards and concerns of others in the workplace and the community as a whole. In this regard, this paper aims at providing organizational leaders with a framework for increasing their self-accountability practices toward reducing corrupt behavior and creating an ethical climate in the workplace.

2. Corruption in Business and Public Sectors

Corruption is a phenomenon that affects businesses but countries and governments as well [22]. Although corruption arises from informal practices, it leads

to slow economic development, ruins the reputation and trust of organizations, and weakens democratic institutions [12]. Corruption can occur in business and public sectors, and large and small organizations alike. Organizational corruption takes different forms depending on the economic system of the country in which an organization follows. In developing and emerging economies, corruption grows with low individual income, low levels of democracy, and low transparency. In these circumstances, one may expect a big influence on the behavior of businesses and especially the public sector because cultural standards inevitably affect all sectors [23]. Corruption is definitely harmful to societies when it becomes rampant in the public sector where organizations are owned and operated by governments [22]. A greater part of public organization corrupt behaviors s concerns the delivery of public services and their consequent spreads throughout bureaucratic hierarchies [24]. Furthermore, public investments inappropriately turn into personal enrichment of corrupt officials, rather than being allocated to the sectors and programs improving value and meeting needs [25]. In developed economies, corruption grows with higher levels of market monopolization, where business corruption might harm growth in wealthy economies [26] [27]. Developed economies may have a long tradition in preventing public sector corruption from spreading because of accountability, transparency, public and stakeholders' pressure, the power of media, governments' legislations, and culture. However, every once in a while, people hear about business scandals with leaders misusing authorities for personal or business gain [28] [29], leaders who facilitate corruption for the benefit of their organization may harm other businesses. Consequently, the share of business incompetence increases, which harms the market and in turn damages the nation's economy. Corruption indeed weakens the standards of a healthy economy by transferring taxes to incompetent companies in terms of currency bailouts [12] [22].

Corrupt Organizational Cultures

Corruption usually stems from greed for money and desires. In public organizations, one corrupt behavior is the use of public office for personal gain [2]. In business and private companies, a large part of corrupt behaviors culminates in the leaders supporting corruption on behalf of their organization [3]. Corrupt leaders perceive themselves fighting a war under the slogan "the end justifies the means", which stimulates values and norms within the organizational culture [12]. Within organizational boundaries, the characteristic of a role model is manifested in leaders and direct supervisors, powerful sources of influence per their position and authority [30]. Consequently, corrupt leaders tend to create an atmosphere of corruption, which leads to spreading a culture of corruption throughout the organizations [31]. With social exchange, leaders influence subordinates based on reciprocal relationships of obligation [32]. On one hand, social exchange theory suggests relationships through and a series of mutual exchanges yield a pattern of reciprocal obligation in each party [33]. Accordingly,

the subordinates show more willingness to engage in corrupt behaviors if believing that leaders are immoral and corrupt [34]. Social learning, on the other hand, explains the process through which organizational leaders influence their subordinates [35]. According to Bandura (1977) [36], social learning theory hypothesizes that subordinates learn by observing salient role models and/or through direct interaction with role models. Also, subordinates learn particular behaviors by observing persons, usually leaders, who are perceived as legitimate in their behaviors [37].

On a repertoire of corrupt practices becoming embedded in corporate culture routines, Ashforth and Anand (2003) [38] explained how corruption in organizations becomes normalized and institutionalized in organizations. The problem is how corrupt acts become normalized as an integral part of organizational structures and processes, adopted by employees as permissible and desirable, and passed on to successive generations of organizational members. Ashforth and Anand [38] considered that employees, including leaders, can perceive corrupt behavior as suitable through three mechanisms: institutionalization, rationalization, and socialization. These mechanisms form leaders' perceptions and behavior to help prevent corruption at their workplace. Institutionalization is the process by which corrupt practices are enacted as a matter of routine; rationalization is the process by which leaders who engage in corrupt acts use socially constructed accounts to legitimize their actions and reshape their perception about their situation; and socialization is the process by which new employees are taught and trained to act, accept and facilitate the corrupt practices [12]. Institutionalization is recognized as a primary corrupt decision or act that becomes embedded in structures and processes and thereby routinized. Leadership plays a potentially enormous role in the institutionalization process. Leaders, controlling many of the levers of institutionalization, are potent role models for their subordinates [38]. Leaders can be a key source of ethical guidance for their subordinates, as leadership should offer subordinates ethical direction and role modeling while inspiring high ethical behaviors [39]. Leaders share positive attitudes and behavior toward corruption with their subordinates, but depend on the society's perspective toward corruption [12]. A corrupt leader embeds corrupt practices in a corporate culture. When the corporate culture is corrupt, the employees may show more willingness to engage in corrupt behaviors [34].

3. Methodology/Approach

There is a dearth of studies that focus on the relationship among corruption in the workplace and self-accountability. In particular, the literature lacks studies that focus on how strengthening the practices of self-accountability may help lead to decreases in the number of negative activities that violate the standards and concerns of others in the workplace. This paper aims at providing organizational leaders with a framework for increasing their self-accountability practices to-

wards reducing corrupt behavior and creating an ethical climate in the workplace. In this regard, this literature review investigates how adopting self-accountability can prevent leaders from engaging in corrupt behavior in the workplace. The basic question of this review was: Do self-accountability practices help leaders prevent corrupt behavior in the workplace? To answer that question, the following reviews were made:

- Present leadership self-accountability as an interpersonal quality. Moreover, literature on self-accountability encompasses practices to increase leadership self-accountability.
- Present literature that explicitly highlighted corruption and self-accountability collectively, specifically to witness if self-accountability practices can help leaders and organizations prevent corruption.
- Present ethical climate at workplace as an outcome of reducing corrupt behavior.
- Provide a framework for practicing self-accountability to assist leaders prevent corrupt behavior in the workplace.

A critical examination of the research comprised over 115 studies across several disciplines (leadership, accountability, corruption, organizational behavior). Electronic databases involved Business Source Complete+, Emerald Management Xtra, and Proquest Business Collection. The following section identifies the common components that emerged as a result of the literature review on corruption and self-accountability.

4. Leadership Self-Accountability

Volatility in today's economy compels corporate leaders to address situations that may result in complex ethical dilemmas, and makes ethical practices an important component of leadership behavior [9] [40] [41] [42] [43] [44]. To sustain ethical behavior in managerial practices, organizations need to decrease the likelihood a leader to engage in inappropriate behavior by adopting mechanisms for combating corruption behavior. One mechanism for enhancing appropriate leadership behavior addressed in recent literature is self-accountability [9] [18] [19] [20] [45]. Self-accountability is a unique dimension of accountability based on a self-evaluation of one's behavior to improve it [21]. Self-accountability occurs when a leader/employee is self-accountable with no one else to observe, monitor, or hold him/her responsible. According to Musah (2011) [20], leadership self-accountability is an individualistic quality that makes the leader accountable for errors committed towards correcting for improved behavior. Peloza *et al.* (2013) [45] considered that self-accountable leaders are able to develop a sense of self-accountability for their behavior with no presence of others in the decision context. In this unique situation, the actor is the leader who avoids corrupt behaviors by evaluating actions regardless of being accountable to others (or not) within or outside an organization.

Adopting self-accountability is considered significant to improve and develop

leaders' performance [9] [19] [46] [47] [48]. Self-accountability enables leaders to form their own behavior in their appearance and behavior [49]. A leader with a well-developed sense of self-accountability is more apt to hold him/herself accountable for him/her behavior to increase ethical leadership [19]. Self-accountability helps leaders set choices and decisions in line with ethical and sustainable manners [45]. Ghanem and Castelli (2019) [9] found a relationship between self-accountability and moral-cognitive development, with self-accountable leaders proving high moral utilization. Self-accountability encompasses moral virtue of a leader referring to internal principles that help him/her distinguish right from wrong. Leaders generally set their norms based on certain beliefs and values they strongly hold [50]. Self-accountability is predominantly connected to good judgement and wisdom [51]. The asset of leader's wisdom may predict leadership behaviors and the quality of leader effectiveness [52]. When a leader has a well-developed sense of personal wisdom for a certain situation, he/she becomes able to hold him/herself accountable for his/her behavior. Leadership practices affecting self-accountability in the context of enhancing leadership ethical behavior are presented next.

4.1. Behaviors to Increase Self-Accountability

To address the need to promote self-accountability in the context of leadership, Ghanem and Castelli (2019) [19] mentioned five leadership practices that affect self-accountability in the context of enhancing ethical behavior within organizational boundaries. Ghanem and Castelli [19] established that building a culture of self-accountability in the workplace can be achieved by training organizational leaders to practice self-criticism, self-monitoring, self-management, self-leadership, and moral cognitive, daily.

4.2. Adopting Constructive Self-Criticism

Leaders need to be able to practice a positive aspect of self-criticism in order to decide what is right or wrong in their behaviors. By adopting a constructive style of self-criticism, leaders can develop an optimistic explanatory style of behavior focusing on specific and modifiable areas in need of improvement [53]. Self-criticism is most often selected when individuals are aware of accountability conditions [54] and are more likely to engage in an overall assessment of their behaviors and judgments. Leaders' behaviors can inspire and affect others within organizations. Therefore, leaders should always aim at discovering who they are, what values they own and want to maintain, and what needs to be corrected if needed [55]. Self-criticism may help leaders observe the ideas and assumptions shaping their behavior and leading to greater self-awareness. Increased self-awareness can promote positive change. In this regard, a leader' self-awareness practice leads to increased leadership effectiveness by considering psychological strengths and emotional triggers and knowing how dark side personality traits (such as a need for approval, a tendency to be judgmental, a need for perfection

and control) badly affects relationships [51] [56] [57].

4.3. Enhancing Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring is one of the best behavioral precursors to increasing high-quality decision making and decreasing inappropriate behavior in accountable environments [58] [59]. Self-monitoring has been seen as a personality trait that refers to an ability to adjust attitude and behavior to accommodate social situations. Self-monitors are sensitive to clues indicating which behavior suits a situation to then use these clues efficiently to organize such behavior [60]. People differ in the extent to which they monitor (observe and control) their behavior. In this regard, leaders with high self-monitors are able to seek suitable standards to behave to any given situation, and use these standards efficiently to adjust their behavior [61]. When leaders make high-quality decisions in their organizations, positive effects trickle throughout the organizations as a result of better ethical decisions, efficient communications with subordinates, co-workers and superiors, and increased job attendance [62] [63]. In the absence of efficient external accountability conditions, a leader' self-accountability may play a critical role in affecting her/his decisions and actions [18]. A self-accountable leader pays attention to her/his managerial monitoring skills to improve organizational practices. This encourages leaders to be more positive with their followers by improving work-related decisions [64], increasing job performance [65], and improving financial activities and controlling spending [62] [63] [66].

4.4. Practicing Self-Management

Self-management can be viewed as an individual practice through which a person is responsible for setting and accomplishing her/his personal or organizational goals to achieve benefits for the organization [67]. Self-management practices help leaders manage their personal activities, improve decision-making, and overcome organizational problems [68]. According to Colburn (2019) [69], self-accountability is at the core of self-management where leaders' values and behaviors shape a culture of self-management helping demonstrate self-accountability. Leaders can utilize self-management practices to manage their personal activities and improve decision-making capabilities by judging complications and formulating detailed goals and tactics that help address and overcome organizational problems [68]. Self-management offers the framework to enhance accountability as an internal control system, in addition to being externally controlled. Self-management provides leaders with a sense of choice, and appears to inspire personal accountability. As a self-regulatory behavior, self-management is consistent with self-accountability in terms of enhancing self-relevance and internal motivation by connecting proper behavior to identity, both strengthening internal control and enhancing leadership's feelings of responsibility [67] [69].

4.5. Enhancing Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is considered as a comprehensive self-influence perception that

concerns leading oneself towards improved performance [43] [70] [71] [72]. It is the process by which a leader drives his/her own behavior to achieve desired goals, reflecting positively on personal and organizational performance. Self-leadership implies that leaders get motivated to monitor and control their thoughts and behavior from within their inner self [73]. Leaders often engage in self-leadership to monitor their progress to achieve desired goals, and then to motivate themselves to continuously improve their performance and decisions [74] [75]. Self-observation is the most important practice of self-leadership. Self-observation involves leadership's awareness on why and when to demonstrate certain behaviors, which enable a leader to change behavior in line with desired results [76]. Leaders can practice self-observation by taking notes about important events throughout the day, soliciting feedback from others (peers, followers, superiors), and journaling [70] [75] [77]. Scholars view self-accountability as a way to improve and develop performance by directing personal behaviors [9] [18] [45] [78] [79] [80]. However, self-accountable leaders first need to find ways by which they can develop their behaviors and decision-making. In this respect, leaders can engage in self-leadership as a way to set their ethical goals, monitor progress to achieve those goals, and motivate them to continuously increase their ethical behavior and effective decisions [74]. Consequently, the features of self-leadership can characterize a fundamental practical route to increase self-accountability as leaders self-accountable for their decisions become strongly motivated to improve their ethical behavior and decision-making process [19].

4.6. Fostering Moral Cognition

Cognitive moral development refers to the cognitive process of determining how individual reasons when making moral judgments [81] [82]. Moral judgment is the process by which an individual decides that a course of action is morally right or wrong [83]. Moral judgments should precede moral behavior: First we think about an action, and then we undertake such action. A higher cognitive level can potentially enable a higher moral action. As an individual gets to higher cognitive steps, his/her moral thinking acquire the potential to be more abstract [84]. An important aspect of cognitive moral development is that, as a leader approaches higher moral cognition, moral thinking and ethical behavior become more internalized and individualized so that the leader is able to develop his/her own code of ethics. Moreover, the leader becomes less externally based about what others think or dictate to him/her [85]. Ghanem and Castelli (2019) [19] considered moral cognitive-development as an internal motivator to utilizing self-accountability. When leaders possess a high moral cognition, their ethical behavior may be accountable (e.g. self-interests, personal gain and/or organizational gain, breaking the law because a moral thing to do, being a corporate whistleblower with organization harming the environment, etc.). Self-accountability holds the aspects of interpersonal values of a leader; it is a sense of internal control. Self-accountability is a unique interpersonal value that is based on a

self-evaluation of one's behavior in order to improve it [18] [21]. Leaders look at their behaviors in light of relevant prescriptions for identity and therefore self-accountability has implications for leadership's ethical behavior.

5. Self-Accountability Practices to Prevent Corruption

This section presents literature that explicitly investigated corruption and self-accountability practices collectively. Reviewing relevant contributions potentially overlapping between corruption and each of self-criticism, self-monitoring, self-management, self-leadership and moral cognition may identify potential relationships. This potential overlapping can be investigated for the purposes of helping organizations to sustain ethical behavior in the workplace. Ghanem and Castelli (2019) [19] regarded self-criticism as a positive trait that leaders need to practice as an initial stage towards self-accountability. Positive style of self-criticism helps leaders develop an optimistic explanatory style of behavior. Such style helps leaders focus on specific and modifiable areas needing improvement [53], and observe ideas and assumptions shaping their behavior for greater self-awareness [54] [86]. A leader gains positive attributes by adopting a self-critical attitude. The latter helps the leader increase their self-awareness, guiding him/her on a path of reputability, always seeking good actions. According to Lerner and Tetlock (1999) [54], self-criticism and effortful thinking are selected most often when individuals engage in a wide assessment of behaviors and judgments under accountability conditions. Consequently, self-criticism can play a vital role for preventing organizational leaders from being involved incorrupt behaviors.

In the context of self-monitoring, a number of studies conducted in the last decades on corporate corruption proposed a wide variety of corporate corruption prevention and control systems. Some of these studies focused on intrinsic motivation, such as values and self-monitoring, as important factors of corruption prevention [3] [87]. According to Lange (2008) [3], organizational leaders can play a critical role in maximizing self-monitoring against corruption. Leaders who adopt self-monitoring practices are able to assume suitable standards of behavior in any given situation, and use these standards efficiently to arrange their own behavior [61]. Such leaders then pay attention to their managerial monitoring skills to improve organizational and leadership practices. This encourages leaders to observe job performance [65] and monitor financial activities and spending [36] [62] [66]. Moreover, said leaders inspire their subordinates to voluntarily and continually monitor and correct their own behavior in accordance to ethical standards. To achieve this, the leaders should be personally committed, credible, and willing to take action on principles they stand for [3].

As for self-management, leadership self-management falls in the context of self-regulatory behavior, which provides leaders with a sense of choice and appears to inspire personal accountability. Self-management makes leaders link

their behavior to an identity that strengthens responsibility [67] [69]. With self-regulating power, leaders will avoid unethical behavior, which damages citizens. Self-management is a managerial competency involving ethical conduct and comprising undertaking activities that complement personal qualities like honesty, trustworthiness, and reliability [88] [89]. Self-management can shape the identity of leaders in ways that foreclose authentic self-reflection making ethical judgment possible within organizational boundaries [90]. In this regard, self-management practice is not disconnected from social and ethical activities [91]. Thus, self-management should reduce a tendency for corruption [92].

Organizational leaders can engage in self-leadership as a means to set their ethical goals, monitor development in achieving those ethical goals, and inspire themselves to continuously increase their ethical behavior and make effective decisions [19]. Self-leadership can be adapted from human resource development practices to efficiently progress the performance of a leader then the organization. The proposition suggests self-leadership to also help prevent corruption in the workplace [93]. There are many voices around the world, especially in developing economies that stress the need for self-leaders to address and curb destructive leadership to help organizations in those countries overcome challenges [94]. To better understand the role of self-leadership in supporting disciplined behavior then combating corruption, Manz (2015) [76] defined higher-level self-leadership as leadership practices associated to higher-level governing standards that reflect personal authenticity, responsibility, and expanded capacity. Authenticity concerns higher-level standards that guide a leader's behavior to address the underlying motives for effort and behavior and the degree of consistency with his/her own values. Responsibility comprises self-led intentions and behaviors that relate to responsible ends. It is compatible with aspects of corporate social responsibility and virtue in organizations which includes the concern for wider good towards employees, stakeholders, citizens, members of the international community, etc. Expanded capacity emphasizes on self-leadership approaches that contribute to a wider range of self-leadership, and contributes to the potential for personal authenticity and responsibility. Through this expanded capacity, self-leadership will be better equipped to pursue authentic choices and actions and to select responsible behaviors as part of the self-influence process. Focusing on expanded capacity includes expansion to add self-influence skill sets in newer and arguably less developed and researched areas to address additional aspects of one's personal effectiveness. For example, leaders can go beyond their current skill area to cover a new behavioral self-leadership strategy supporting disciplined behavior.

In the context of moral cognition, there is a correlation between cognitive and moral development. Scholars on cognitive development propose cognitive psychology in which individuals' beliefs about right and wrong are influenced by moral reasoning abilities [95]. Kohlberg (1958, 1969, and 1984) [81] [82] [85]

developed several stages of cognitive moral development that start with the earliest level of moral development and end with the highest level of moral reasoning. The extent to which a leader would consider corruption as an acceptable behavior depends on her/his level of cognitive moral development [96]. A higher level of moral cognition can potentially enable a higher moral action. As a leader gets to higher cognitive stages, his/her moral thinking becomes potentially more abstract. With approaching higher levels of cognitive moral development, the leader's moral thinking becomes more internalized and individualized so that the leader is able to develop a personal code of ethics. Furthermore, the leader becomes less externally influenced by others' unethical behavior [85]. The early step towards preventing corruption is to understand the disadvantages of engaging in corrupt activities and what motivates individuals to engage in such behavior. Since corruption comprises pursuing personal interests at the expense of the welfare of others, it can be argued that an individual's beliefs of appropriateness in engaging in corrupt behavior will be influenced by the leader's level of cognitive moral development [96]. In this regard, a leader with a strong moral cognition perceives him/herself as a highly ethical person, and would be unlikely to consider corruption as an acceptable behavior even if it is potentially beneficial. Also, such leaders are less likely to behave in ways that are purely self-centered [97]. Leaders judge morality of actions using existing understanding of justice. Over time, leaders tend to become more sophisticated in their moral cognitive. Consequentially, leaders with more moral knowledge and experiences realize moral judgment at advanced levels of cognitive moral development [98].

6. Ethical Climate at Workplace as an Outcome of Reducing Corrupt Behavior

Reducing corruption in the workplace leads to a healthier environment. The most important aspect of such an outcome is the existence of an ethical climate that governs the interactions within the organizational boundaries, that reflects to the relevant stakeholders [99]. Organizational climate is likely to affect behaviors within an organization, including corrupt behavior. Hence, organizational ethical climate may affect individual motives for corruption as a specific method of adopting unethical behavior [100]. Victor and Cullen (1987) [101] defined ethical climate as "the shared perception of what is correct behavior and how ethical situations should be handled in an organization" (p 51). There is no doubt that ethical climates may develop as a consequence of organizational policies and practices (*i.e.* corporate governance) and leadership behavior, and exert a significant impact on the ethical decision-making of organizational members and their subsequent attitudes and behavior at the workplace [17]. Corporate governance of an organization must comply with local laws, transparency and accountability requirements, ethical norms, and environmental and social codes of conduct [102]. Corporate governance includes the practices that an organiza-

tion can apply to regulate the behavior of management and induce them to respect the rights and interests of stakeholders [103]. Leadership is a key factor in the success of modern organizations. Leaders can be a key source of ethical guidance for subordinates, and ethical leadership offers followers ethical direction and role modeling while inspiring high moral behaviors [39] [104]. Scholars have generally utilized social learning theory to explain the process by which organizational leaders influence ethical climates in the workplace through expected role-modelling behaviors to subordinates [17] [36] [105] [106] [107].

Ethical climate in the workplace has positive implications at both organizational and individual levels. In the context of organizations, ethical climate contributes to creating and sustaining an environment of trust within organizations (employees and executives) and outside the organizations (suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders) [47] [62] [63] [108] [109]. It holds organizations to greater ethical, legal, and strategic business activities that are compatible with public expectations. Moreover, it enhances public trust and embellishes the image of the organization. Ethical climate plays a critical role in enhancing corporate social responsibility practices and ethical sustainability, where ethical decisions are influenced by external aspects that guide socially responsible behaviors [110]. Corporate social responsibility aims to maintain the responsibility of organization in society and ensure positive societal effects of business activity. Ethical climate, also, has a positive effect on organizational performance. It refers to the context where organizational decisions reflect the organization's best interest. Therefore, ethical climate helps guide managerial practices to improve financial performance such as corporate profit, strategic advantage, return investment, assets, and equity [51] [62] [110] [111] [112]. In the context of individuals, ethical climate increases the ethical awareness of individuals within an organization. Employees, including leaders, display high morality and increase willingness and ability to recognize moral and ethical contexts. Employees are able to demonstrate high ethical awareness in their decisions, have greater opportunities to exhibit ethical behaviors in their daily activities [113] [114]. Ethical climate may contribute to increased job satisfaction and employee retention through positive organizational culture. Employees who perceive their organization to be ethical are also likely to feel that their organizations are fair to them [110]. Consequently, engagement and productivity increase as employees experience job satisfaction [115].

7. Findings

This paper discussed five self-accountability practices to reduce corruption and enhance ethical behavior in the workplace. Adopting constructive self-criticism helps leaders develop an optimistic explanatory style of behavior. This style encourages leaders to focus on specific and modifiable areas in need of improvement. Therefore, self-criticism plays a vital role to prevent organizational leaders from falling into corrupt behaviors. Organizational leaders ought to play a criti-

cal role in maximizing self-monitoring against corruption. Self-monitoring practices help leaders assume suitable standards of behavior in any given situation, and use these standards efficiently to arrange their own behaviors. Practicing self-management makes leaders link their behaviors to identity, which strengthens the leaders' responsibility. Self-management shapes the identity of leaders in ways that foreclose the kind of authentic self-reflection that makes ethical judgment possible within organizational boundaries. In this regard, self-management should reduce the likelihood of corruption. Leaders can engage in self-leadership as a means to set ethical goals, monitor development in achieving such goals, and inspire themselves to continuously increase their ethical behavior and make effective decisions. Accordingly, logically, self-leadership helps prevent corruption in the workplace. Cognitive moral development proposes that individuals' beliefs about right and wrong be influenced by moral reasoning abilities. The extent to which a leader would consider corruption as acceptable behavior depends on his/her level of moral development. A higher cognitive level potentially enables a higher moral action against corruption. Reducing corruption in the workplace should lead to a healthier workplace environment. This paper considers ethical climate as one of the most important outcomes of reducing corruption in the workplace. Ethical climate has positive implications at both organizational and individual levels. For organizations, an ethical climate contributes to creating an environment of trust between internal and external stakeholders, while enhancing corporate social responsibility practices. As for individuals, an ethical climate increases ethical awareness within the organization. Moreover, an ethical climate contributes to increased job satisfaction and employee retention through positive organizational culture.
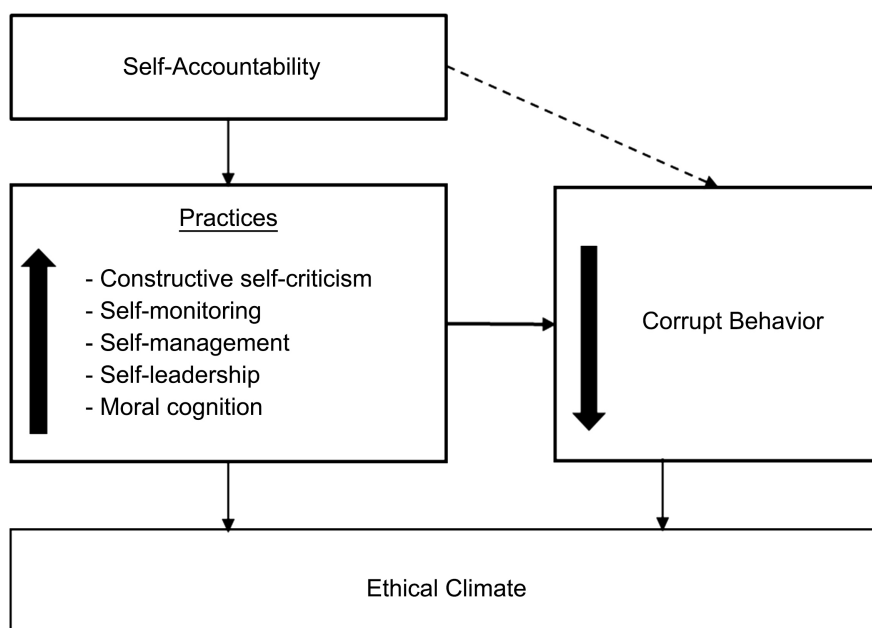

Figure 1. A framework for leadership self-accountability to prevent workplace corruption.

8. Conclusion

Corruption in the workplace is one of the most intensively discussed themes in recent years. To sustain ethical behavior, organizations need to adopt mechanisms that help improve employees' behavior to decrease the likelihood of engagement in corrupt behavior. Leadership is a key factor in the success of modern organizations. Leaders are key to ethical guidance for subordinates, and ethical leadership offers followers ethical direction and role modeling while inspiring high moral behaviors. In this regard, organizational leaders may need to consider adopting self-accountability to enhance their ethical behavior. This paper provides organizational leaders with a framework for increasing their self-accountability practices toward reducing corrupt behavior and creating an ethical climate in the workplace. Figure 1 proposes a framework for practicing self-accountability behaviors towards assisting leaders to prevent corrupt behavior in the workplace. The significance of the literature review completed lights a path to new findings that may provide organizations with increased knowledge to enhance ethical behavior in the workplace. Future studies are needed to validate this framework.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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