

An Analysis of Perceived Ethical Leadership in Public Libraries in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Public libraries in the United States require employees to fulfill their job roles to provide services to the communities they serve through ethical leadership, social exchange, and employee engagement. The purpose of this quantitative correlational associative study was to determine if, and to what extent, there was a correlation between perceived ethical leadership and social exchange and between perceived ethical leadership and employee engagement in public libraries in the United States. The theory of social exchange was generalizable to the study. Public library employees ($n = 123$) were recruited from social media sites and through direct email messages. Two research questions guided this study: (RQ1) Is there a statistically significant correlation between perceived ethical leadership and social exchange in public libraries? (RQ2) Is there a statistically significant correlation between perceived ethical leadership and employee engagement in public libraries? The Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS), the Leadership Member Social Exchange (LMSX) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) were used to collect data. A Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation for RQ1 showed a correlation between ELS and LMSX ($n = 123, p < .001$). A Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation for RQ2 showed a correlation between ELS and UWES ($n = 123, p < .001$). Results may inform leadership decisions about the importance of ethical leadership in public libraries to increase social exchange and employee engagement which could positively impact public library success.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Public libraries; Administration; Critical librarianship

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Public library; Employee engagement; Ethical leadership; Ethical leadership scale; Social exchange; Leadership member social exchange; Social exchange theory; Utrecht work engagement scale

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