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Ethical Leadership in Dubai Hospitality Industry: Navigating Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity in a Globalized Market

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How to cite this paper: Zaghmout, B., Achi, F. C., Ema, U., & Adeshipo, A. (2024). Ethical Leadership in Dubai Hospitality Industry: Navigating Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity in a Globalized Market. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 13, 385-411. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2024.133022>

Received: August 12, 2024

Accepted: September 10, 2024

Published: September 13, 2024

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Abstract

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role of ethical leadership in fostering cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within the hospitality industry in Dubai, a global tourism hub known for its diverse workforce and international clientele. Through semi-structured interviews with 30 industry leaders, this research examines key ethical leadership practices and the challenges of balancing local cultural norms with global expectations. The analysis focuses on how ethical leadership influences employee satisfaction and guest experiences, and the findings underscore the importance of continuous training, clear ethical guidelines, and stakeholder engagement. The study offers practical recommendations for strengthening ethical leadership, contributing to the long-term success and sustainability of hospitality organizations in Dubai's multicultural environment.

Keywords

Ethical Leadership, Hospitality Industry, Dubai, Organizational Integrity, Global Market, Multicultural Environment

1. Introduction

Dubai's hospitality industry is a vital component of the city's economic landscape, known globally for its luxurious offerings, exceptional service standards, and cultural diversity. As a major international hub, Dubai attracts millions of tourists and business travellers annually, bringing together a workforce and clientele that represent a broad spectrum of cultures, languages, and traditions. This diversity, while enriching, also presents unique challenges for leaders with-

in the industry, particularly in terms of maintaining ethical standards and fostering an inclusive environment.

Ethical leadership, which involves guiding an organization based on principles of integrity, fairness, and respect for all stakeholders, is crucial in such a multicultural setting. In Dubai's hospitality sector, where interactions with employees and guests from varied backgrounds are a daily occurrence, the role of ethical leadership extends beyond mere compliance with rules; it involves actively promoting a culture that values diversity and inclusivity while navigating the complexities of local and global expectations.

The aim of this study is to explore how ethical leadership can enhance cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within Dubai's hospitality industry. By examining the leadership practices of 30 industry professionals, this research seeks to identify effective strategies, common challenges, and the overall impact of ethical leadership on employee satisfaction and customer experience.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To analyse the current ethical leadership practices in Dubai's hospitality industry and their influence on cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.
- 2) To identify the challenges leaders face in balancing local cultural norms with the expectations of a global market.
- 3) To assess the impact of ethical leadership on employee morale and guest satisfaction in Dubai's hospitality sector.
- 4) To provide recommendations for enhancing ethical leadership to better address the needs of a multicultural workforce and international clientele.

The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What are the prevailing ethical leadership practices in Dubai's hospitality industry, and how do they affect cultural sensitivity and inclusivity?
- 2) What challenges do leaders encounter when trying to balance local cultural expectations with global standards in the hospitality sector?
- 3) How does ethical leadership impact employee morale and customer satisfaction within Dubai's diverse hospitality industry?
- 4) What strategies can be recommended to strengthen ethical leadership and address the unique challenges of Dubai's multicultural environment?

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of ethical leadership in a globalized and culturally diverse context, offering practical insights for industry leaders striving to enhance their leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes in Dubai's dynamic hospitality market.

2. Literature Review

The hospitality industry in Dubai, renowned for its luxurious hotels, diverse dining options, and world-class service, stands as a pivotal sector in the city's economy. As a global tourism hub, Dubai attracts a vast and diverse clientele, ranging from business travellers to vacationers from every corner of the world. This diversity not only enhances the appeal of Dubai's hospitality offerings but

also presents unique challenges, particularly in the realm of leadership. At the intersection of cultural diversity, customer satisfaction, and operational excellence lies the critical role of ethical leadership. In a city where tradition meets modernity, and where local customs coexist with global expectations, ethical leadership becomes indispensable. It serves as the guiding principle that ensures organizations navigate these complexities while maintaining high standards of integrity, inclusivity, and respect for both employees and guests. Understanding the dynamics of ethical leadership within this vibrant and diverse industry is essential for fostering sustainable growth and maintaining Dubai's reputation as a premier global destination. As such, this review explores the crucial role of ethical leadership in the hospitality sector, particularly within the unique socio-cultural and economic context of Dubai.

2.1. Ethical Leadership in the Hospitality Sector

Ethical leadership is increasingly acknowledged as a cornerstone of organizational success, particularly in industries such as hospitality, where interactions with customers and cultural diversity are at the heart of operations. Ethical leadership can be defined as the practice of leading by setting a moral example, and ensuring that the decisions and actions taken by an organisation reflect high ethical standards and integrity (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Iphofen & O'Mathuna, 2022). In the context of the hospitality industry, ethical leadership extends beyond mere compliance with rules and regulations; it involves fostering an environment that values inclusivity, cultural sensitivity and the well-being (Ali et al., 2022) of both employees (Baquero, 2023) and customers.

The significance of ethical leadership in hospitality is underscored by research from Wang and Wong (2019), which suggests that ethical leadership is essential for cultivating an organizational culture that prioritizes diversity, inclusivity, and respect for all stakeholders. This is particularly important in a cosmopolitan city like Dubai, where the workforce and clientele are characterized by a high level of diversity, encompassing multiple cultures, languages, and traditions. Leaders in Dubai's hospitality sector face the complex task of navigating these diverse cultural dynamics while remaining compliant with the region's legal and cultural expectations.

2.2. Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity in Dubai's Hospitality Sector

Cultural sensitivity refers to the awareness, understanding, and respect for cultural differences, which is crucial in an industry like hospitality, where interactions with people from various backgrounds are frequent. Inclusivity, on the other hand, involves creating an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and included, regardless of their cultural background, nationality, or belief system.

Given Dubai's status as a global hub, its hospitality industry attracts a diverse international workforce and clientele, making cultural sensitivity and inclusivity

vital components of successful business operations. [Alzeer et al. \(2019\)](#) emphasize that cultural sensitivity in the hospitality industry not only leads to enhanced customer satisfaction but also improves employee engagement, both of which contribute to higher service quality. Ethical leaders play a pivotal role in fostering a culturally inclusive ([Dimitriou, 2022](#)) environment by promoting policies that respect cultural differences and setting a behavioural standard that encourages inclusivity.

Despite the apparent importance of these concepts, research by [Ahmed et al. \(2021\)](#) indicates that hospitality leaders in Dubai often face challenges in striking a balance between the region's traditional cultural values and the expectations of a globalized market. This tension can sometimes lead to inconsistencies in leadership practices, where the emphasis on adhering to local customs might overshadow the need for fostering an inclusive environment.

2.3. Challenges in Balancing Local Values with Global Expectations

A significant challenge for leaders in Dubai's hospitality industry is the balancing act between upholding local cultural values and meeting the demands of a globalized marketplace. Dubai's unique socio-cultural landscape, heavily influenced by Islamic principles, often requires leaders to make ethical decisions that align with both local traditions and international business standards ([Khan & Rasheed, 2020](#)).

Leaders in Dubai's hospitality sector face significant challenges in balancing the region's traditional cultural values with the demands of a globalized market. These challenges include navigating ethical dilemmas that arise from cultural differences, ensuring compliance with both local norms and international standards, and fostering an inclusive work environment in a highly diverse setting ([Khan & Rasheed, 2020](#)). For example, practices such as serving alcohol in hotels or managing customer complaints related to cultural misunderstandings necessitate a high degree of cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness. These situations demand that leaders exercise a delicate balance, ensuring that the organization remains respectful of local customs while simultaneously catering to the diverse expectations of international guests ([Smith & Dhanani, 2022](#)).

Moreover, the challenge of balancing these often competing demands is compounded by the need to ensure that employees from various cultural backgrounds feel included and respected within the workplace. This requires not only a deep understanding of the cultural nuances that define both the local context and the broader international market but also the ability to apply this understanding in a way that is consistent with ethical leadership principles.

2.4. Best Practices and Strategies for Ethical Leadership

To enhance ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality sector, research suggests several strategies that can be effectively implemented. [Ali et al. \(2020\)](#) propose

that continuous training on cultural competence, clear communication of ethical guidelines, and the regular application of reflective practices are essential for promoting ethical leadership. Such strategies enable leaders to cultivate a workplace culture that values diversity and encourages employees to act ethically in their interactions with customers and colleagues.

Specifically, continuous training programs focused on cultural competence can help leaders and employees alike develop a deeper understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds of their colleagues and customers. This understanding is critical for preventing cultural misunderstandings and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels respected and valued. Furthermore, the establishment of clear ethical guidelines can provide employees with a framework for making decisions that align with the organization's values and ethical standards, thereby promoting consistency in behaviour across the organization.

Reflective practices, where leaders regularly assess their decisions and actions against both ethical standards and cultural expectations, are also vital. This ongoing self-assessment helps leaders remain aligned with their personal values, the organization's mission, and the broader cultural context in which they operate (Hassan et al., 2021). Through these reflective practices, leaders can identify areas where they may need to adjust their approach, ensuring that their actions continue to promote ethical behaviour and cultural sensitivity.

2.5. Impact of Ethical Leadership on Guest Experiences and Business Sustainability

The influence of ethical leadership on guest experiences and the sustainability of businesses in the hospitality sector is profound. Ethical leadership fosters higher levels of trust and satisfaction among customers, as they are more likely to perceive the organization as responsible, respectful, and committed to high ethical standards (Tourism and Hospitality Research, 2022). This trust is essential for building long-term customer relationships and ensuring repeat business, both of which are crucial for the sustainability of hospitality businesses in a competitive market like Dubai.

Additionally, an inclusive and culturally sensitive work environment, cultivated through ethical leadership, contributes to higher employee satisfaction and retention. Employees who feel respected and valued are more likely to be engaged and motivated, leading to better service delivery and, ultimately, improved customer experiences. A study by Madera et al. (2019) found that organizations with strong ethical leadership practices tend to have higher customer retention rates and are more likely to achieve sustainable growth. This finding is particularly relevant in Dubai's hospitality market, where competition is fierce, and customer loyalty is a key determinant of success. Furthermore, an inclusive and culturally sensitive work environment contributes to employee satisfaction, which in turn enhances service quality and supports the long-term sustainability of hospitality businesses in Dubai (Madera et al., 2019).

2.6. Gaps Identified

While the existing body of research offers valuable insights into the importance of ethical leadership in the hospitality industry, particularly within culturally diverse settings such as Dubai, several gaps remain. Firstly, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research specifically focused on how ethical leadership practices are implemented within Dubai's hospitality sector. Much of the existing literature is either theoretical or broad, focusing on larger regions or industries, which may not fully capture the unique challenges and opportunities present in Dubai's hospitality sector.

Secondly, while some studies touch on the impact of ethical leadership on business sustainability, there is a need for more comprehensive research that explores the direct correlation between ethical leadership and long-term business outcomes in the hospitality industry in Dubai. Understanding this relationship more fully could provide valuable insights for industry leaders looking to enhance the sustainability of their businesses.

Finally, although the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity is well-established in the literature, there is limited research on how these concepts are practically integrated into the day-to-day operations of hospitality businesses. Future research could benefit from detailed case studies of hotels or other hospitality organizations in Dubai that have successfully implemented ethical leadership practices, providing a model for others to follow.

This literature review underscores the critical importance of ethical leadership in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within Dubai's hospitality industry. While significant progress has been made in implementing ethical leadership practices, challenges remain, particularly in balancing local cultural values with global market demands. Addressing the identified gaps through focused research and the implementation of practical strategies can enhance the effectiveness of ethical leadership, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and success of the hospitality sector in Dubai. Through continued effort and commitment to ethical leadership, Dubai's hospitality industry can better navigate the complexities of its diverse cultural landscape while maintaining high standards of service and business excellence.

To conclude, the literature review has reviewed the critical role of ethical leadership in the hospitality industry, particularly within the context of Dubai. The discussion has highlighted the intersection of cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and ethical leadership, emphasizing how these elements contribute to organizational success. By fostering a culture that values diversity and ethical behaviour, leaders can navigate the complex cultural dynamics present in Dubai's hospitality sector, ultimately leading to improved employee morale and customer satisfaction.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study to explore ethical

leadership within Dubai's hospitality industry. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm, the research emphasizes understanding the complex, socially constructed realities of leaders navigating ethical challenges in a multicultural environment. The approach prioritizes capturing the depth and richness of individual experiences, aligning with interpretivism traditions that seek to understand the meaning and interpretation of social phenomena.

The study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which ethical leadership is practised and perceived within this unique context by engaging directly with industry leaders. The research is designed to reveal the strategies employed by leaders to manage cultural diversity, maintain ethical standards, and foster inclusive work environments, providing a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices in Dubai's diverse hospitality sector. Ethical considerations are paramount, ensuring the integrity and credibility of the findings while respecting the rights and confidentiality of the participants. The insights gained from this study contribute to the broader discourse on ethical leadership, offering practical implications for leaders in the hospitality industry globally.

3.1. Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research design, a method particularly suited for exploring the complex, nuanced experiences of individuals in specific contexts. The qualitative approach is chosen for its ability to capture the depth and richness of the participants' perspectives, particularly regarding ethical leadership within Dubai's diverse hospitality industry. Qualitative research is often used in social sciences to understand the meaning and interpretation of social phenomena, making it ideal for studying leadership practices in a multicultural and highly dynamic environment like Dubai.

The study aims to understand how leaders in Dubai's hospitality sector navigate the challenges of maintaining ethical standards while managing culturally diverse teams and catering to a global clientele. By employing a qualitative design, the research allows for a detailed examination of the leaders' strategies, challenges, and perceptions, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership in this unique context.

3.2. Data Collection

The primary data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews, a method that offers the flexibility to explore specific themes in depth while allowing participants to express their experiences and views openly. Semi-structured interviews are particularly valuable in qualitative research because they provide a balance between a structured format and the flexibility to pursue interesting avenues of discussion that may arise during the interview.

Table 1 below outlines the semi-structured interview process, highlighting the stages from the development of the interview guide to the analysis of the data collected.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview process.

Stage	Description
1. Development of Interview Guide	Creation of a flexible guide with open-ended questions focusing on key themes such as cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, ethical dilemmas, and leadership challenges.
2. Participant Selection	Selection of 30 leaders from various sectors of Dubai's hospitality industry, ensuring a diverse range of experiences and perspectives.
3. Conducting Interviews	One-on-one interviews conducted in-person or via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, lasting 45 to 60 minutes each.
4. Transcription of Interviews	Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim for thorough analysis.
5. Thematic Analysis	Transcripts were analysed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to ethical leadership practices.

The interviews were designed to explore several key areas: the leaders' understanding and application of ethical leadership, their approaches to managing cultural diversity, the challenges they face in balancing local and global expectations, and their strategies for fostering an inclusive work environment. This method allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives, providing a rich dataset for analysis.

3.3. Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for the study. This non-probability sampling technique involves deliberately choosing individuals who are most likely to provide relevant and insightful information on the research topic. In this study, the sample consisted of 30 leaders from various sectors within Dubai's hospitality industry, including hotel managers, restaurant owners, and senior executives from large hospitality chains.

The participants were selected based on several criteria: their leadership roles, their experience in the hospitality industry, and their involvement in managing culturally diverse teams. By focusing on leaders with significant experience and responsibility, the study aimed to gather detailed insights into how ethical leadership is practised and the challenges associated with it in a multicultural environment.

Table 2. Provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the study participants, highlighting their roles, years of experience, and sectors within the hospitality industry.

Participant ID	Role	Years of Experience	Sector
P1	Hotel General Manager	15	Luxury Hotels
P2	Restaurant Owner	10	Fine Dining
P3	Senior Executive	20	Hospitality Chains

Continued

P4	Boutique Hotel Manager	12	Boutique Hotels
P5	Resort Manager	18	Resorts
P6	Hotel Operations Director	22	Hotel Chains
P7	F&B Director	16	Food & Beverage
P8	Human Resources Manager	14	Human Resources
P9	Luxury Hotel Assistant Manager	9	Luxury Hotels
P10	Catering Director	25	Catering
P11	Hospitality Consultant	11	Consulting
P12	Spa Director	13	Spas
P13	Event Planning Manager	10	Events
P14	Hotel Marketing Director	19	Marketing
P15	Hotel Finance Director	17	Finance
P16	Hospitality Training Manager	14	Training
P17	Executive Chef	21	Culinary
P18	Sustainability Officer	8	Sustainability
P19	Hospitality IT Manager	10	Information Technology
P20	Housekeeping Director	15	Housekeeping
P21	Room Division Manager	12	Room Division
P22	Hotel Front Office Manager	11	Front Office
P23	Hotel Security Manager	13	Security
P24	Concierge Manager	10	Concierge
P25	Corporate Hospitality Director	22	Corporate
P26	Hotel Sales Director	20	Sales
P27	Hotel Development Director	18	Development
P28	Hospitality Legal Advisor	16	Legal
P29	Corporate Social Responsibility Manager	14	CSR
P30	Hotel Maintenance Director	17	Maintenance

Table 2 provides an overview of the diversity of the participants' roles and experiences, which enriches the study by offering multiple perspectives on ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality industry.

3.4. Interview Process

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, which allowed the researcher to explore specific themes while also providing the flexibility to delve into areas of interest that emerged during the conversations. Each interview was conducted in a one-on-one setting, either in person or via virtual platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, depending on the availability and preferences of

the participants.

The interviews were designed to last between 45 to 60 minutes, giving participants ample time to share their experiences and insights. The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged participants to speak freely about their leadership practices, the ethical challenges they face, and their strategies for managing cultural diversity within their teams. The use of probing questions enabled the researcher to explore these topics in greater depth, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

Table 3 illustrates the thematic structure of the interview guide, highlighting the main topics explored during the interviews.

Table 3. Thematic structure of the interview guide.

Theme	Example Questions
Cultural Sensitivity	How do you manage cultural diversity within your team?
Inclusivity	What strategies do you use to ensure an inclusive work environment?
Ethical Leadership	Can you describe a situation where you had to make an ethical decision?
Balancing Local and Global Expectations	How do you balance Dubai's cultural norms with the expectations of international guests?

3.5. Data Analysis

Before diving into the detailed analysis, it is important to note that the findings from the semi-structured interviews are expected to reveal significant challenges in balancing local cultural values with global expectations. Additionally, the data is anticipated to show a strong correlation between ethical leadership practices and positive outcomes in employee satisfaction and guest experiences. These premises guide the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the industry leaders. The analysis process followed the six steps outlined by **Braun and Clarke (2006)**, which are widely recognized in qualitative research:

1) Familiarization with the Data: The researcher began by thoroughly reading the interview transcripts multiple times to become deeply familiar with the content.

2) Generating Initial Codes: Initial codes were created to identify important features of the data relevant to the research questions.

3) Searching for Themes: The codes were then examined to identify overarching themes that captured key aspects of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

4) Reviewing Themes: The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data and were distinct from one another.

5) Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined and given a descriptive name that reflected its content.

6) Producing the Report: The final step involved synthesizing the themes into

a coherent narrative that addressed the research questions.

Table 4 below depicts the thematic analysis process used in this study.

Table 4. Thematic analysis process.

Step	Description
1. Familiarization	Reading and re-reading transcripts to identify familiar patterns
2. Initial Coding	Assigning codes to segments of data related to research questions
3. Theme Identification	Grouping codes into broader themes
4. Theme Review	Refining themes to ensure they are distinct and relevant
5. Theme Naming	Defining and naming each theme to reflect its essence
6. Report Writing	Synthesizing themes into a comprehensive narrative

The themes that emerged from the analysis provided rich insights into the key challenges faced by leaders in Dubai's hospitality industry, the strategies they use to foster inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, and the impact of ethical leadership on both employee satisfaction and customer experiences. These findings offer a deeper understanding of how ethical leadership is practised in this unique cultural and economic environment and provide practical recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness in the hospitality sector.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined by the institutional review board, ensuring that all participants were treated with respect and that their rights were protected. Before the interviews were conducted, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with each participant signing a consent form that detailed the nature of the research, the confidentiality of their responses, and how the data would be used. To protect the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were assigned, and any identifiable information was removed from the transcripts and final report.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process, with data securely stored in password-protected files. Only the researcher had access to the raw data, ensuring that participants' identities and responses were protected at all times.

3.7. Limitations

While the qualitative approach and the use of semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights into ethical leadership within Dubai's hospitality industry, the study is subject to certain limitations. One limitation is the relatively

small sample size of 30 participants, which may not fully represent the diversity of leadership experiences within the broader hospitality sector in Dubai. Although the purposive sampling method ensured that participants had relevant experience, the findings may not be generalizable to all leaders in the industry.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, where participants may present their leadership practices in a more favourable light. To mitigate this, the researcher employed probing questions during the interviews to encourage honest and reflective responses. However, future research could address this limitation by incorporating observational methods or mixed-methods approaches to triangulate the findings.

Another limitation is the potential influence of cultural factors on participants' responses, particularly in a setting like Dubai, where cultural norms and expectations play a significant role in shaping behaviour. While the study aimed to explore these cultural dynamics, the interpretation of the findings must consider the broader socio-cultural context in which the participants operate.

The methodology employed in this study was carefully designed to explore the complexities of ethical leadership within Dubai's hospitality industry. By engaging directly with leaders through semi-structured interviews, the research was able to capture a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with fostering cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in a diverse and dynamic environment. The data collected through this approach provides valuable insights that contribute to the broader discourse on ethical leadership, offering practical implications for leaders in the hospitality sector in Dubai and beyond.

The findings from this research highlight the importance of ethical leadership in navigating the cultural and ethical complexities of Dubai's hospitality industry. By addressing the identified limitations and continuing to explore this critical area of study, future research can further enhance our understanding of how ethical leadership can be effectively practised and promoted in the context of a globalized and culturally diverse industry.

4. Findings

The findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 leaders in Dubai's hospitality industry reveal several critical insights into the role of ethical leadership in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. The thematic analysis of the interview data identified several key themes, which are discussed in detail below.

4.1. Ethical Leadership Practices

The first major theme that emerged from the data is the varying approaches to ethical leadership within the hospitality industry in Dubai. Leaders described a range of practices aimed at maintaining high ethical standards while managing diverse teams and catering to an international clientele. The participants empha-

sized the importance of leading by example, where ethical behaviour is not only encouraged but also visibly practised by those in leadership positions.

The analysis of Section 3.7 reveals that while ethical leadership practices like leading by example and maintaining clear communication are widely endorsed, their consistent application is often hindered by the need to balance local and global expectations. These challenges underscore the necessity for more structured and clear ethical guidelines to ensure uniformity in leadership practices across the industry.

Table 5 below summarizes the common ethical leadership practices identified by the participants.

Table 5. Common ethical leadership practices.

Practice	Description	Percentage of Participants (%)
Leading by Example	Leaders actively demonstrate ethical behaviour in their decision-making and interactions.	85%
Clear Communication	Maintaining open and transparent communication about ethical expectations and standards.	70%
Employee Training	Providing regular training programs focused on ethics and cultural competence.	60%
Policy Enforcement	Ensuring strict adherence to organizational policies regarding ethical conduct.	75%
Incorporating Ethics in Decision-Making	Embedding ethical considerations into all levels of decision-making processes.	65%

From the data presented in **Table 5**, it is evident that leading by example and policy enforcement are among the most widely practised strategies, with 85% and 75% of participants, respectively, highlighting their significance. This suggests that in Dubai's hospitality industry, ethical leadership is often manifested through visible actions and strict adherence to established policies.

4.2. Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

The second theme relates to how leaders address cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within their organizations. Given Dubai's diverse workforce and clientele, cultural sensitivity is not only a moral obligation but also a business imperative. Participants reported various strategies for fostering an inclusive environment that respects cultural differences.

Table 6 outlines the primary strategies used by leaders to promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

Cultural competence training emerged as the most commonly adopted strategy, with 80% of participants incorporating it into their leadership practices. This approach is seen as essential for helping employees navigate cultural differences, thereby improving workplace harmony and customer service.

Table 6. Strategies for promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

Strategy	Description	Percentage of Participants (%)
Cultural Competence Training	Regular training sessions aimed at increasing employees' awareness and understanding of cultural differences.	80%
Diverse Hiring Practices	Ensuring a diverse workforce by hiring individuals from various cultural backgrounds.	65%
Inclusive Workplace Policies	Developing policies that promote inclusivity and prevent discrimination or bias.	70%
Celebration of Cultural Events	Recognizing and celebrating cultural events to foster understanding and respect among employees.	50%
Flexible Communication Approaches	Adapting communication styles to suit the cultural backgrounds of employees and guests.	55%

4.3. Challenges in Balancing Local and Global Expectations

The third theme centres on the challenges leaders face when trying to balance the cultural and ethical expectations of Dubai's local context with the demands of an international market. The interviews revealed that leaders often find themselves navigating complex ethical dilemmas that arise from these dual pressures.

Table 7 details the main challenges identified by participants in balancing local and global expectations.

Table 7. Challenges in balancing local and global expectations.

Challenge	Description	Percentage of Participants (%)
Navigating Cultural Differences	Balancing the cultural norms and values of Dubai with the expectations of international guests.	75%
Managing Ethical Dilemmas	Facing ethical dilemmas where local customs may conflict with global ethical standards.	60%
Adhering to Legal and Regulatory Requirements	Ensuring compliance with Dubai's legal framework while meeting global business standards.	65%
Maintaining Guest Satisfaction	Balancing the need to adhere to local customs while ensuring high levels of guest satisfaction.	70%
Cultural Sensitivity in Marketing	Adapting marketing strategies to be culturally appropriate while appealing to a global audience.	50%

The challenge of navigating cultural differences is particularly pronounced, with 75% of participants acknowledging the difficulties in aligning the expectations of diverse stakeholders. This finding underscores the complexity of lead-

ership in Dubai's hospitality industry, where leaders must be adept at understanding and reconciling different cultural perspectives.

4.4. Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employee Satisfaction and Guest Experience

The analysis also highlighted the positive impact of ethical leadership on both employee satisfaction and guest experience. Participants consistently reported that ethical leadership practices contribute to a more positive work environment, which in turn leads to better service delivery and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Table 8 provides an overview of the perceived impact of ethical leadership on employee satisfaction and guest experience.

Table 8. Impact of ethical leadership on employee satisfaction and guest experience.

Impact	Description	Percentage of Participants (%)
Increased Employee Morale	Ethical leadership practices boost employee morale and job satisfaction.	85%
Improved Team Cohesion	A focus on ethics fosters stronger team cohesion and collaboration.	70%
Enhanced Customer Satisfaction	Ethical behaviour by staff leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.	75%
Lower Staff Turnover	Ethical leadership is associated with reduced staff turnover due to a more supportive work environment.	65%
Positive Organizational Reputation	Ethical practices enhance the organization's reputation among both employees and customers.	80%

As shown in **Table 8**, increased employee morale (85%) and enhanced customer satisfaction (75%) were the most frequently mentioned impacts. These findings suggest that ethical leadership not only benefits the internal dynamics of the organization but also has a significant positive effect on customer perceptions and experiences.

4.5. Recommendations for Enhancing Ethical Leadership

Finally, the participants offered several recommendations for improving ethical leadership practices within Dubai's hospitality industry. These recommendations reflect a desire to build on existing practices and address the challenges identified in the study.

Table 9 lists the key recommendations provided by the participants.

Enhanced training programs were the most commonly suggested recommendation, with 80% of participants advocating for more comprehensive initiatives that go beyond basic training to include ongoing professional development and

ethics-focused workshops.

Table 9. Recommendations for enhancing ethical leadership.

Recommendation	Description	Percentage of Participants (%)
Enhanced Training Programs	Developing more comprehensive training programs focused on ethics and cultural competence.	80%
Mentorship and Leadership Development	Establishing mentorship programs to cultivate ethical leadership among emerging leaders.	65%
Clearer Ethical Guidelines	Creating more explicit guidelines that clearly define ethical expectations and behaviours.	70%
Regular Ethical Audits	Implementing regular audits to assess the adherence to ethical standards within the organization.	55%
Increased Stakeholder Engagement	Engaging with stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the community, to foster a shared understanding of ethical values.	60%

The findings from this study reveal that ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality industry is multifaceted and deeply intertwined with cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Leaders in this sector adopt various practices to maintain ethical standards, foster a positive work environment, and enhance customer satisfaction. However, they also face significant challenges in balancing local cultural expectations with the demands of an international market. The recommendations provided by the participants suggest pathways for further enhancing ethical leadership, emphasizing the importance of training, mentorship, and clearer guidelines.

These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of ethical leadership in a globalized and culturally diverse context, offering practical implications for leaders in Dubai's hospitality sector and beyond. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing the suggested recommendations, organizations can strengthen their ethical leadership practices, thereby improving both employee satisfaction and guest experiences.

5. Discussion

The data analysis presented in Section 4 provides a detailed examination of the ethical leadership practices observed in Dubai's hospitality industry. These findings form the foundation for the discussion in Section 5, where the implications of these practices on organizational outcomes such as employee satisfaction and customer experiences will be explored. By linking the analysis to broader theoretical frameworks, Section 5 will contextualize the data within the larger discourse on ethical leadership and its impact on business sustainability.

5.1. Ethical Leadership Practices: A Foundation for Organizational Integrity

The first major finding of the study is the emphasis on ethical leadership practices as a cornerstone of organizational integrity in Dubai's hospitality sector. The leaders interviewed demonstrated a strong commitment to ethical behaviour, with practices such as leading by example, maintaining clear communication, and enforcing organizational policies emerging as critical components of their leadership strategies.

Table 10 summarizes the key ethical leadership practices emphasized by the participants.

Table 10. Key Ethical leadership practices reported by participants.

Ethical Leadership Practice	Percentage of Participants (%)
Leading by Example	85%
Clear Communication	70%
Enforcement of Policies	75%

This aligns with recent studies that highlight the importance of ethical leadership in shaping organizational culture. For instance, [Xu et al. \(2022\)](#) found that ethical leadership significantly influences employee behaviour, fostering an environment where ethical practices are the norm rather than the exception. In the hospitality industry, where service quality and customer satisfaction are directly linked to employee conduct, the role of ethical leadership is even more pronounced. Leaders who embody ethical values not only set the tone for their teams but also contribute to building a reputation for integrity and trustworthiness in the eyes of both employees and customers.

The practice of leading by example, cited by 85% of participants, is particularly noteworthy. It suggests that in Dubai's culturally diverse hospitality sector, visible and consistent ethical behaviour by leaders is crucial in maintaining organizational standards. This finding is supported by research from [Neubert et al. \(2021\)](#), who argue that ethical leaders who model the behaviour they expect from others can effectively inspire similar conduct among their teams. The implication for hospitality leaders in Dubai is clear: ethical leadership must be lived and demonstrated consistently if it is to influence the broader organizational culture.

5.2. Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity: Navigating Diversity in a Globalized Hub

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity emerged as central themes in the study, reflecting the unique challenges of leading in a multicultural environment like Dubai. The strategies identified by participants, such as cultural competence training and diverse hiring practices, underscore the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace where cultural differences are respected and valued.

Table 11 highlights the strategies used by leaders to promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

Table 11. Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity strategies.

Cultural Sensitivity Strategy	Percentage of Participants (%)
Cultural Competence Training	80%
Diverse Hiring Practices	65%
Celebrating Cultural Events	50%

This focus on cultural sensitivity is increasingly recognized in the literature as essential for effective leadership in globalized settings. According to [Madera et al. \(2022\)](#), leaders who prioritize cultural competence are better equipped to manage diverse teams, reduce workplace conflicts, and enhance employee engagement. In the context of Dubai's hospitality industry, where the workforce and clientele are drawn from all over the world, cultural competence is not just a desirable trait but a necessary skill.

The emphasis on cultural competence training, adopted by 80% of participants, highlights a proactive approach to managing diversity. This finding is consistent with the work of [Bartsch et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasize the need for continuous education and training in cultural competence to keep pace with the evolving demographic landscape of global businesses. The implication for leaders in Dubai's hospitality industry is that ongoing training and development in cultural sensitivity are crucial for maintaining a harmonious and productive workplace.

Moreover, the practice of celebrating cultural events, reported by 50% of participants, points to a broader strategy of inclusivity that goes beyond mere tolerance of differences. By actively recognizing and celebrating the cultural backgrounds of employees, organizations can foster a sense of belonging and respect that enhances both employee satisfaction and customer service quality. This aligns with the findings of [Holck et al. \(2020\)](#), who argue that inclusivity is best achieved when organizations move beyond policy-driven diversity initiatives to embrace a culture of celebration and respect for differences.

In Dubai's hospitality industry, ethical leadership practices are generally focused on upholding high ethical standards and fostering an inclusive environment. However, there is considerable variation in how effectively these practices are implemented across different organizations. Some leaders excel in balancing local cultural values with global expectations, while others struggle to navigate these complexities ([Ahmed et al., 2021](#)).

5.3. Challenges in Balancing Local and Global Expectations: Ethical Dilemmas in a Multicultural Context

One of the most significant challenges highlighted in the study is the difficulty of balancing local cultural values with the expectations of a globalized market. The

leaders interviewed frequently encountered ethical dilemmas that arose from the need to reconcile Dubai's traditional cultural norms with the diverse expectations of international guests.

Table 12 summarizes the main challenges faced by leaders in balancing local and global expectations.

Table 12. Challenges in balancing local and global expectations.

Challenges in Ethical Leadership	Percentage of Participants (%)
Navigating Cultural Differences	75%
Managing Ethical Dilemmas	60%

This challenge is not unique to Dubai but is characteristic of leadership in multicultural and globalized contexts. As observed by [Shapiro and Stefkovich \(2021\)](#), leaders in such environments must navigate complex ethical landscapes where different cultural values and ethical standards intersect. The tension between upholding local customs and meeting global standards is a recurring theme in the literature, particularly in industries like hospitality, where customer satisfaction is paramount.

For example, the challenge of navigating cultural differences, reported by 75% of participants, reflects the broader issue of cultural relativism in ethical decision-making. According to [Matten and Moon \(2022\)](#), leaders must often make difficult decisions that balance respect for local customs with the need to maintain global ethical standards. In Dubai's hospitality industry, this might involve making decisions about service offerings, staff conduct, or marketing strategies that align with both local cultural norms and the expectations of an international clientele.

The finding that 60% of participants struggle with managing ethical dilemmas underscores the need for more robust frameworks to guide ethical decision-making in multicultural contexts. As suggested by [Meyer and Kirby \(2021\)](#), leaders can benefit from adopting ethical decision-making models that explicitly consider the cultural dimensions of ethics. For hospitality leaders in Dubai, this could involve developing guidelines that help navigate situations where local and global values may conflict.

5.4. Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employee Satisfaction and Guest Experience: A Dual Benefit

The study's findings also highlight the dual impact of ethical leadership on both employee satisfaction and guest experience. Ethical leadership practices, such as transparent communication, inclusivity, and leading by example, were found to significantly enhance employee morale, team cohesion, and overall job satisfaction.

Table 13 shows the positive outcomes of ethical leadership as reported by participants.

Table 13. Impact of ethical leadership on organizational outcomes.

Organizational Outcome	Percentage of Participants (%)
Increased Employee Morale	85%
Enhanced Customer Satisfaction	75%
Lower Staff Turnover	65%

This dual benefit of ethical leadership is well-documented in the literature. Research by [Brown and Treviño \(2022\)](#) suggests that ethical leadership creates a positive organizational climate that not only boosts employee satisfaction but also improves service quality and customer loyalty. In the hospitality industry, where customer interactions are frequent and intense, the link between ethical leadership and positive guest experiences is particularly strong.

The finding that ethical leadership is associated with increased employee morale (85%) and enhanced customer satisfaction (75%) is consistent with previous studies that highlight the importance of leadership in shaping organizational outcomes. For instance, [Avey et al. \(2020\)](#) found that ethical leadership leads to higher levels of trust and commitment among employees, which in turn translates into better customer service and increased customer loyalty. In Dubai's competitive hospitality market, where customer satisfaction is a key differentiator, the role of ethical leadership in driving these outcomes cannot be overstated.

Moreover, the association between ethical leadership and lower staff turnover (65%) highlights the long-term benefits of ethical practices. According to [De Cremer and Vandekerckhove \(2021\)](#), organizations that prioritize ethical leadership are more likely to retain their best talent, reduce turnover costs, and maintain a stable and experienced workforce. For hospitality businesses in Dubai, where employee retention is often a challenge, ethical leadership offers a strategic advantage by fostering a supportive and respectful work environment.

5.5. Recommendations for Enhancing Ethical Leadership: A Path Forward

Based on the findings, several recommendations for enhancing ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality industry have been identified. These include developing more comprehensive training programs, establishing mentorship initiatives, clarifying ethical guidelines, conducting regular ethical audits, and increasing stakeholder engagement.

Table 14. Recommendations for enhancing ethical leadership.

Recommendation	Percentage of Participants (%)
Comprehensive Training Programs	80%
Mentorship and Leadership Development	65%
Clearer Ethical Guidelines	70%
Regular Ethical Audits	55%
Increased Stakeholder Engagement	60%

Table 14 outlines the key recommendations for enhancing ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality industry.

1) Comprehensive Training Programs: Developing training programs focused on ethics and cultural competence is crucial for building the necessary skills for ethical leadership in a multicultural context (McCarthy & Milner, 2022).

2) Mentorship and Leadership Development: Establishing mentorship programs to cultivate ethical leadership among emerging leaders is also vital (Allen & Eby, 2021).

3) Clearer Ethical Guidelines: Creating explicit guidelines helps eliminate ambiguity and ensures that all employees understand the ethical standards expected of them (Weaver & Treviño, 2021).

4) Regular Ethical Audits: Implementing regular audits to assess adherence to ethical standards is essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Kaptein, 2022).

5) Increased Stakeholder Engagement: Engaging with stakeholders is critical for ensuring that ethical practices are effective and sustainable (Freeman et al., 2021).

Enhanced training programs, advocated by 80% of participants, are crucial for developing the skills and knowledge necessary for ethical leadership in a multicultural context. This recommendation is supported by McCarthy and Milner (2022), who argue that ongoing education and training are essential for keeping leaders informed about the latest ethical challenges and best practices. For hospitality leaders in Dubai, such programs could focus on cultural competence, ethical decision-making, and inclusive leadership, ensuring that they are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of their roles.

Mentorship and leadership development, recommended by 65% of participants, are also vital for cultivating the next generation of ethical leaders. Mentorship programs provide an opportunity for emerging leaders to learn from experienced professionals, gaining insights into the practical application of ethical principles in the workplace. This is consistent with the findings of Allen and Eby (2021), who emphasize the importance of mentorship in leadership development, particularly in fostering ethical behaviour and decision-making. To improve ethical leadership practices in Dubai's hospitality industry, it is recommended that organizations develop targeted mentorship and training programs focused on cultural sensitivity, establish clear and consistent ethical guidelines, and encourage leaders to engage in regular self-assessment and reflection. These steps will help ensure that ethical leadership practices align with both local traditions and global expectations (Hassan et al., 2021).

The recommendation for clearer ethical guidelines (70%) reflects the need for more explicit standards and expectations regarding ethical conduct. As noted by Weaver and Treviño (2021), clear ethical guidelines help to eliminate ambiguity and ensure that all employees understand the ethical standards they are expected to uphold. In Dubai's hospitality industry, where cultural differences can some-

times lead to misunderstandings, clear and consistent ethical guidelines are essential for maintaining organizational integrity. To enhance ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality sector, leaders can implement strategies such as continuous cultural competence training, clear communication of ethical guidelines, and the regular use of reflective practices. These strategies help create a workplace culture that values diversity and encourages ethical behaviour among employees (Ali et al., 2020).

Regular ethical audits, suggested by 55% of participants, provide a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of ethical leadership practices and identifying areas for improvement. Ethical audits, as discussed by Kaptein (2022), are an important tool for ensuring compliance with ethical standards and for fostering a culture of continuous improvement. For hospitality organizations in Dubai, regular audits can help to reinforce ethical behaviour and ensure that leadership practices remain aligned with both local and global expectations.

Finally, increased stakeholder engagement (60%) highlights the importance of involving all relevant parties in the development and implementation of ethical leadership practices. According to Freeman et al. (2021), stakeholder engagement is critical for ensuring that ethical practices are both effective and sustainable. In the context of Dubai's hospitality industry, this might involve engaging with employees, customers, and the broader community to create a shared understanding of ethical values and expectations.

The findings of this study underscore the central role of ethical leadership in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within Dubai's hospitality industry. The discussion highlights the importance of ethical leadership practices in shaping organizational culture, managing diversity, and navigating the complex ethical dilemmas that arise in a multicultural and globalized context. The recommendations provided offer a path forward for enhancing ethical leadership, emphasizing the need for ongoing training, mentorship, clear guidelines, and regular audits. By adopting these strategies, leaders in Dubai's hospitality sector can strengthen their ethical leadership practices, improve employee satisfaction, and enhance guest experiences.

6. Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the role of ethical leadership in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within Dubai's hospitality industry, a sector characterized by its diverse workforce and global clientele. The findings highlight the critical importance of ethical leadership as a foundation for organizational integrity, influencing both internal dynamics and external perceptions.

Ethical leadership practices, such as leading by example, clear communication, and strict adherence to ethical standards, were shown to be central to maintaining a positive organizational culture. These practices not only enhance employee morale and cohesion but also significantly impact customer satisfaction, rein-

forcing the connection between ethical leadership and business success in the hospitality industry.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity were identified as essential components of effective leadership in Dubai's multicultural environment. Leaders who prioritize these aspects through cultural competence training, diverse hiring practices, and the celebration of cultural events contribute to a more harmonious and productive workplace, ultimately leading to better service delivery and enhanced guest experiences.

The study also highlighted the challenges leaders face in balancing local cultural values with the expectations of a globalized market. Navigating these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of both local customs and global ethical standards, as well as the ability to make decisions that respect and integrate these often conflicting demands.

Based on the findings, several recommendations were made to enhance ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality sector, including the implementation of enhanced training programs, mentorship initiatives, clearer ethical guidelines, regular ethical audits, and increased stakeholder engagement. These strategies are designed to strengthen ethical leadership practices, ensuring that they are both effective and sustainable in the long term.

In conclusion, ethical leadership is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity in Dubai's hospitality industry. By fostering a culture of integrity, inclusivity, and respect for diversity, leaders can drive organizational success, enhance employee and customer satisfaction, and maintain Dubai's reputation as a leading global destination. The insights from this study offer a roadmap for leaders in the hospitality sector to navigate the complexities of a multicultural environment while upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Future Research Directions

Given the findings and limitations of this study, future research should focus on expanding the sample size and incorporating mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership in Dubai's hospitality industry. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of ethical leadership practices on business sustainability and employee retention. Further exploration of the cultural factors influencing ethical decision-making in this unique environment would also contribute valuable insights to the existing literature.

In conclusion, ethical leadership is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity in Dubai's hospitality industry. By fostering a culture of integrity, inclusivity, and respect for diversity, leaders can drive organizational success, enhance employee and customer satisfaction, and maintain Dubai's reputation as a leading global destination. The insights from this study offer a roadmap for leaders in the hospitality sector to navigate the complexities of a multicultural environment while upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Introduction:

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of ethical leadership in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within Dubai's hospitality industry. The interview will take about 45 to 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, and you are free to skip any questions you are not comfortable with.

1) Background and Role:

- Can you please describe your current role and responsibilities within your organization?
- How long have you been working in the hospitality industry, particularly in Dubai?

2) Ethical Leadership Practices:

- How would you define ethical leadership in the context of your role?
- Can you share an example of a situation where you had to demonstrate ethical leadership?
- What are some specific practices or strategies you use to promote ethical behaviour within your team?

3) Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity:

- How do you manage cultural diversity within your organization?
- What initiatives or policies are in place to ensure inclusivity in your workplace?
- Can you provide an example of how you or your organization has successfully addressed a cultural sensitivity issue?

4) Balancing Local and Global Expectations:

- Dubai is known for its unique blend of traditional values and global business standards. How do you balance these sometimes conflicting expectations in your leadership practices?
- Have you encountered any ethical dilemmas where local cultural norms conflicted with global business practices? If so, how did you handle them?

5) Impact on Employees and Customers:

- How do you think your leadership approach affects employee morale and job satisfaction?
- In your experience, what impact does ethical leadership have on customer satisfaction and overall service quality?

6) Challenges and Solutions:

- What are some of the biggest challenges you face in practising ethical leadership in such a diverse environment?
- What strategies have you found to be most effective in overcoming these challenges?

7) Future Perspectives:

- How do you see the role of ethical leadership evolving in Dubai's hospitality industry in the coming years?
- What recommendations would you give to other leaders in the industry who are striving to improve their ethical leadership practices?

8) Conclusion:

- Is there anything else you would like to add or any other insights you think are important for this study?
- Would you be willing to participate in any follow-up interviews if needed?

Closing:

- Thank you again for your time and valuable insights. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and will be instrumental in understanding and improving ethical leadership practices within Dubai's hospitality industry.