

# **Moral Leadership of Department Heads and Employees' Job Satisfaction in the Department of Agrarian Reform Office, Zamboanga Del Norte**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study sought to determine the level of moral leadership of department heads and its effect on the job satisfaction of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Zamboanga del Norte during the calendar year 2023. Employing a quantitative approach, the study utilized descriptive survey and descriptive-correlational research methods. A total of 121 employees participated as respondents. The statistical tools used were the weighted mean, standard deviation, and Spearman Rank-Order Correlation coefficient. Results revealed that both the level of moral leadership of department heads measured in terms of integrity, trust, ethical relationships, and honesty and the level of employees' job satisfaction were rated as excellent and to the greatest extent. Furthermore, the respondents shared a consistent perception of these variables. A significant and strong positive correlation was established between moral leadership and job satisfaction, confirming that higher moral leadership among department heads is associated with greater employee satisfaction. Based on these findings, it is recommended that DAR central, regional, and provincial offices use the results of this study as a basis for policy formulation and leadership development programs aimed at further strengthening moral leadership practices and enhancing employee job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *Moral Leadership, job satisfaction, Department of Agrarian Reform*

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## **I. Introduction**

Moral leadership is defined as the demonstration of normatively appropriate behavior through personal actions, interpersonal relationships, and the active promotion of such behavior among followers using two-way communication, reinforcement, and ethical decision-making (Deng et al., 2022). It embodies conduct that fosters high moral standards and contributes to resolving organizational challenges effectively. Ethical leaders serve as role models by demonstrating self-discipline, selflessness, and integrity, thereby influencing others toward positive behavior (Fang, 2021). Job satisfaction, meanwhile, extends beyond financial incentives and material rewards; it is closely linked to the manner in which leaders manage, value, and treat their employees. When fairness, respect, and justice are absent in leadership practices, employee morale and satisfaction are likely to decline, ultimately placing the organization at risk (Abun et al., 2017). Furthermore, inadequate attention to enhancing moral leadership may lead to diminished job satisfaction, which could negatively impact employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Attar et al., 2017).

The ability of leaders to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their followers is crucial, as it can directly enhance job satisfaction. Moral leadership, in particular, contributes not only to shaping the public image of an organization but also to reinforcing its core values and ethical foundations. It significantly impacts the overall life and culture of an organization, serving as a guiding force for both leaders and employees (Craig, 2018). Research further emphasizes that moral leadership fosters greater employee satisfaction and engagement within the workplace (Zamguliene, 2013). In support of this, Mitonga-Monga et al. (2019) highlighted the growing recognition that organizational resources—such as culture, values, virtues, and effective moral leadership play a central role in cultivating positive employee attitudes and behaviors, including satisfaction, commitment, and discretionary effort.

Moral leadership has been found to correlate with various organizational outcomes, particularly job satisfaction. Several studies indicate that when leaders act in alignment with moral values and ethical standards, employees report greater levels of satisfaction in the workplace (Abun et al., 2017). Research findings further reveal a significant relationship between perceived moral leadership and employee job satisfaction, highlighting its importance in organizational success. Mitonga-Monga et al. (2019) also emphasized that moral leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction. This relationship may be attributed to employees' perception of leaders who embody honesty, integrity, respect, and trustworthiness, which in turn fosters higher levels of job satisfaction and contributes to improved organizational effectiveness.

While numerous studies have established the link between moral leadership and job satisfaction across educational, corporate, and healthcare institutions, there is limited research that specifically examines this relationship within government agencies in the Philippine context. In particular, little attention has been given to how the moral leadership of department heads in the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) influences employees' job satisfaction, despite the agency's critical role in delivering land reform programs and public service in agrarian communities. Furthermore, previous research has often overlooked the role of employees in shaping this relationship, leaving a gap in understanding how employees' profiles may affect their perceptions of moral leadership and job satisfaction. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the dynamics of moral leadership and employee satisfaction within the DAR office in Zamboanga del Norte.

## **II. Literature**

### **Moral Leadership**

Moral leadership in terms of how leadership is exercised and how it affects other people, and therefore he classified two kinds of leadership: unattractive and attractive leadership. Unattractive leadership means the existence of coercive and manipulative relationship between leaders and followers. Specifically, pointed out that coercive and manipulative leadership does not recognize the inputs of followers. He finds his/her way in order to impose what he/she wants and use unethical means to achieve his/her ends. Attractive leadership is marked by the non-coercive, participatory, and democratic nature of the leader-follower relationship. In this kind of leadership, the leader recognizes the role, autonomy, and input of followers. He or she considers everyone to be equal and important in the whole process of management (Abun et al., 2017).

### **Integrity**

The term 'integrity' is originated from the Latin adjective *integer*, which means the state or quality of being complete or whole (Monga, 2016). Integrity, defined as a commitment to moral standards, captures the essence of moral ideals and can thus be viewed as a key driver of moral leadership. Consider the impact of integrity on the concept of trust, in that followers have faith in leaders who are regarded to be high on integrity (Engelbrecht et al, 2017). According to Yukl (2013), integrity is "being truthful and consistent between a person's espoused values and behavior." Trust in leaders is founded on ethical leaders' characteristics such as integrity and

dependability, which likely result in trust that subordinates would reciprocate. According to social learning theory, subordinates are more likely to trust ethical leaders because of their role models' credibility and trustworthiness.

### **Trust**

Trust in the leader can be characterized as an employee's willingness to tolerate vulnerability based on favorable assumptions about the leader's intentions (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Trust in leaders is necessary to handle the many issues that organizations face, but trust in organizations remains low. Leadership that has a beneficial impact on the entire business is necessary to create trust in supervisors. Loyalty, devotion, and a willingness to take risks should be the most crucial attributes of organizational members in order to accomplish such leadership. The aforementioned attributes can only be attained if leaders place a high level of trust in their subordinates (Maximo et al., 2019).

### **Ethical Relationship**

In most theories of ethics that use the phrase, an ethical relationship is a basic and trustworthy relationship that one individual may have with another that cannot necessarily be characterized in terms of any abstraction other than trust and mutual protection of each other's bodies. Honesty is frequently emphasized (Islam et al, 2023). Proper conduct, establishing ethical relationships, and ethical leaders encourage ethical behavior through reinforcement, decision-making, and two-way communication (Kavathatzopoulos, 2019). According to Liao et al. (2015), ethical leaders demonstrate attributes of honesty and trustworthiness, which are necessary for fostering a cooperative workplace relationship between employees and their leaders.

### **Honesty**

Honesty refers to acting in a truthful manner (Maximo et al., 2019). Honesty and trust worthiness, which are essential for creating a cooperative working relationship between the employees and their leaders (Liao et al., 2015). Leaders model normatively appropriate behaviors, such as trustworthiness and honesty can help promote vigor and dedication by enabling employees to feel motivated enthusiastic, engaged in, and proud of their work. Two-way communication can also enhance work dedication and absorption by ensuring that employees possess and share essential organizational information with leaders, thereby potentially increasing employee commitment and effort to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Bedi et al., 2016).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a global phenomenon experienced across different sectors and contexts. In Malaysia, a study revealed that schools are losing valuable personnel, highlighting the urgent need to improve teachers' job satisfaction (Ariffin et al., 2013). Similarly, in the United States, a nationwide survey painted a concerning picture as job satisfaction among educators dropped to its lowest level in 25 years (Panes et al., 2017). Research also suggests that positive employee relationships significantly influence job satisfaction, with trust serving as a critical mediator in fostering a supportive work environment. Moreover, findings indicate that both male and female employees who demonstrate low commitment to their organizations tend to experience greater dissatisfaction with their jobs (Bagienska & Anna, 2021).

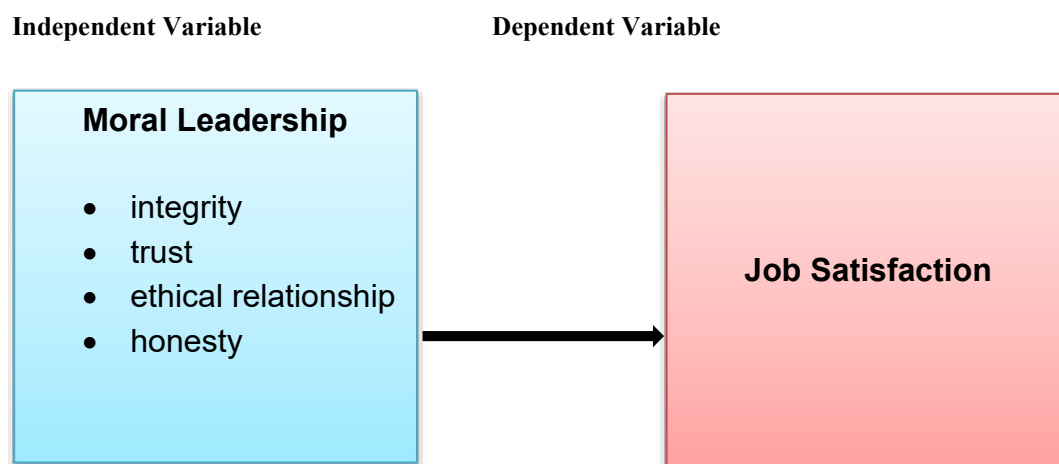
### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory developed by Dansereau et al. (1975), which presents a unique leadership paradigm emphasizing the vertical dyadic relationship between leaders and members. Unlike other leadership theories such as transformational, authentic, servant, or empowering leadership, which primarily highlight leaders' behaviors and actions, LMX focuses on the quality of relationships leaders establish with their subordinates. It posits that leaders do not treat all members uniformly; instead, they

form relationships of varying quality within their groups. High-quality exchanges are characterized by trust, mutual respect, professional regard, and loyalty, whereas low-quality exchanges are often transactional and limited in scope. Furthermore, outlined the developmental stages of LMX: role-taking, role-making, and role-routinization, which describe how leader-member relationships evolve over time. These foundational insights provide the theoretical grounding for examining how leadership dynamics, particularly moral leadership, influence employee outcomes such as job satisfaction.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, illustrated in Figure 1, presents the relationship between the study variables. The independent variable is moral leadership, measured through four key indicators: integrity, trust, ethical relationships, and honesty. The dependent variable is job satisfaction, which is assessed using fifteen specific items that reflect employees' overall contentment with their work. This framework underscores the assumption that higher levels of moral leadership among department heads positively influence employees' job satisfaction.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the moral leadership of department heads and its influence on the job satisfaction of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte, during the calendar year 2023. Specifically, it sought to address the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived level of moral leadership of department heads in terms of:
  - 2.1 integrity;
  - 2.2 trust
  - 2.3 ethical relationship; and
  - 2.4 honesty?
2. What is the respondents perceived level of job satisfaction?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the levels of moral leadership among department heads and the job satisfaction of the respondents?

## Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the levels of moral leadership among department heads and the job satisfaction of the respondents.

## III. Research Methodology

### Method Used

This study utilized both the survey and descriptive-correlational research methods. The survey method was employed to collect data through a standardized questionnaire measuring moral leadership and job satisfaction. As Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explain, a survey is an effective approach for obtaining data from a specific group of respondents to generate insights on particular variables of interest. Complementing this, the descriptive-correlational method was applied to examine the statistical relationship between the identified variables. Correlational research, as defined by Bhandari (2023), investigates the relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. In this study, correlational analysis was conducted to determine the extent and significance of the relationship between moral leadership and job satisfaction.

### Research Environment

The study was conducted at the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in the Province of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. The province is composed of twenty-five (25) municipalities and two (2) component cities, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of the DAR Provincial Office. The office employs a total of one hundred twenty-one (121) personnel, who collectively deliver agrarian reform programs and services across the province. Figure 4 illustrates the geographical location of the DAR Provincial Office, including its coverage of the two component cities and twenty-five municipalities.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study consisted of the entire population of one hundred twenty-one (121) employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Zamboanga del Norte, during the calendar year 2023. A complete enumeration was employed to ensure comprehensive representation of all personnel within the provincial and municipal offices.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire utilized in this study was composed of three parts. **Part I** employed the *Moral Leadership Scale (MLS)*, adopted from Abun et al. (2017), consisting of forty (40) items categorized under four indicators: integrity, trust, ethical relationship, and honesty. **Part II** made use of the *Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS)*, also adopted from Abun et al. (2017), which comprised fifteen (15) items designed to measure the overall job satisfaction of employees.

### Ethical Considerations

The principle of respect for persons was observed by obtaining ethical clearance from the Research and Ethics Committee of Andres Bonifacio College, Inc. Prior to data collection, informed consent was secured from the institution and each respondent. The purpose, scope, and procedures of the study were clearly explained, and participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary. They were also informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The research instrument was written in clear and simple language, avoiding technical terms that might confuse the respondents, to ensure their full understanding of the study.

## Data Gathering Procedure

A formal letter requesting permission to administer the research instrument was first submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School, Andres Bonifacio College, Inc., Dipolog City, and duly endorsed by the thesis adviser. Upon approval, the request letter together with the Dean's endorsement was transmitted to the Head of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte Office, for authorization. Once granted, the endorsement was further relayed to the heads of the different offices within the department. After securing the necessary permissions, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the identified respondents. Upon completion, the accomplished questionnaires were immediately retrieved to ensure the integrity of the data. The gathered responses were carefully tallied by the researcher, and the resulting dataset was subsequently examined, organized, and statistically treated by the assigned statistician.

## Statistical Treatment of the Data

Presented below are the statistical tools utilized in the treatment and analysis of the data gathered.

**Weighted Mean.** This is used to quantify the respondents' ratings on the moral leadership and job satisfaction of employees in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte Office.

**Standard Deviation.** This is used to determine the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the employee's score, where  $SD \leq 3$  is homogenous and  $SD > 3$  is heterogeneous Aiken & Susane (2001); Refugio, et al.,(2019).

**Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient.** This is used to determine the correlation between moral leadership and job satisfaction of employee. The following guide in interpreting the correlation value proposed by Cohen, et al., (2014) was utilized in this study:

Value	Size	Interpretation
$\pm 0.50$ to $\pm 1.00$	Large	High positive/negative correlation
$\pm 0.30$ to $\pm 0.49$	Medium	Moderate positive/negative correlation
$\pm 0.10$ to $\pm 0.29$	Small	Low positive/negative correlation
$\pm 0.01$ to $\pm 0.09$	Negligible	Slight positive/negative correlation
0.0	No correlation	

The data gathered in this study were totaled, processed, and analyzed using the Microsoft Excel Data Analysis ToolPak and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences. As a result, displaying statistical formulas is unnecessary. All statistical tests were performed at the 0.05 level of significance.

## IV. Results

### Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads

**Table 1**

*Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads in Terms of Integrity*

A. Integrity	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Department heads demonstrate the values in their daily activities and behaviors.	4.50	0.75	Excellent	Greatest Extent

2. The department heads consistently implement the policies of the department as stated in the manual, not only for the employees but also for himself.	4.57	0.60	Excellent	Greatest Extent
3 The department heads have not been damaged by any accusation of corruption and other ethical issues.	4.45	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent
4. The department heads make decision purely for the interest of the department as a whole, not for personal interest.	4.46	0.68	Excellent	Greatest Extent
5. The department heads are firm in their decision when they believe it is the right thing to do.	4.58	0.63	Excellent	Greatest Extent
6. The department heads walk the talk	4.48	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
7 The department heads play a role model to their employees when it comes to moral conduct and commitment to duties and responsibilities	4.50	0.68	Excellent	Greatest Extent
8. The department heads have been always objective and honest when they are dealing with their employees	4.45	0.66	Excellent	Greatest Extent
9. The department heads have not been living double standard lives.	4.35	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent
10. The department heads have integrated their moral values in their work and the way how they deal with the employees.	4.38	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.72</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Greatest Extent</b>

Table 1 shows that the department heads of DAR Zamboanga del Norte were rated “excellent” in moral leadership in terms of integrity, with an overall mean of 4.72 (SD = 0.64), interpreted as “greatest extent.” Respondents emphasized that their leaders are firm in making the right decisions, consistently implement departmental policies, act as role models of moral conduct, and “walk the talk” in their leadership practice. They also demonstrate fairness, objectivity, and incorruptibility, ensuring that personal interests do not override organizational goals. Furthermore, they integrate moral values into both their work and treatment of employees, reinforcing credibility and trustworthiness. The results affirm that integrity is the strongest and most highly regarded moral leadership dimension of department heads. Employees perceive their leaders as embodying moral consistency, ethical accountability, and transparency in decision-making. The finding implies that integrity-based leadership is central to fostering employee trust, organizational credibility, and workplace harmony. When leaders model integrity by aligning words with actions and prioritizing organizational over personal gain, employees are more motivated to adhere to ethical standards themselves. This practice also safeguards the institution from reputational risks such as corruption allegations. However, to sustain this level of integrity, ongoing monitoring, ethical leadership training, and recognition systems for value-driven leadership should be institutionalized. This will ensure that integrity remains a lived culture across all levels of the organization. Compared to the findings of Abun et al. (2017), which rated integrity among managers as “very good” (M = 3.92), the present study highlights



an improved perception, suggesting that DAR Zamboanga del Norte leaders demonstrate exemplary standards of integrity in their professional conduct.

**Table 2**

*Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads in Terms of Trust*

<b>B. Trust</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. The department heads and employees trust each other through an open line communication	4.41	0.73	Excellent	Greatest Extent
2. The department heads stand by their decision that is in the interest of the organization even if it is unpopular	4.50	0.63	Excellent	Greatest Extent
3. The department heads do not give in to pressures even if they know that it will risk their position.	4.35	0.76	Excellent	Greatest Extent
4. Most department heads respond in kind when the employees refer problems to them	4.48	0.67	Excellent	Greatest Extent
5. Most department heads are not revealing personal secrets of employees to others.	4.31	0.75	Excellent	Greatest Extent
6. Most department heads are trusted because they have never been tainted by corruption allegation	4.38	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent
7. The department heads are dependable when it comes to defend the right of employees.	4.46	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
8. Most department heads are dependable.	4.45	0.67	Excellent	Greatest Extent
9. The department heads stick to what is right and good even if it means that they would be abandoned	4.43	0.76	Excellent	Greatest Extent
10. The department heads stand for what they believe in and defend it even it means she/he is going to be removed.	4.41	0.71	Excellent	Greatest Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Greatest Extent</b>

Table 2 reveals that employees perceive their department heads as “excellent” in terms of trust, with an overall mean of 4.41 (SD = 0.65), interpreted as “greatest extent.” The respondents highlighted that their leaders



consistently stand by organizationally beneficial decisions even when unpopular respond promptly to employee concerns, defend employee rights, and uphold what is right even at personal risk. Department heads are trusted for maintaining open communication, being free from corruption allegations, protecting employee confidentiality, and resisting external pressures. These practices build a reputation of dependability and integrity among employees. The findings confirm that trust is a defining element of moral leadership among the department heads of DAR Zamboanga del Norte. By upholding honesty, consistency, and confidentiality, leaders foster strong relational trust with their subordinates.

This finding implies that trust-based leadership is vital in enhancing organizational commitment and employee confidence in management. When leaders uphold principles despite risks, safeguard employee confidentiality, and maintain transparent communication, they foster a workplace where employees feel secure, respected, and supported. However, sustaining this high level of trust requires consistent reinforcement of anti-corruption measures, transparent decision-making, and continual demonstration of fairness, especially in high-pressure or conflict situations. Strengthening institutional policies that reward ethical leadership can further institutionalize trust as a core leadership value. This aligns with the findings of Abun et al. (2017), which reported that trust is a central dimension of moral leadership, though their study rated it only as “very good.” The higher ratings in this study may reflect organizational efforts to strengthen trust-based leadership practices in recent years.

**Table 3**

*Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads in Terms of Ethical Relationship*

<b>C. Ethical Relationship</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Department heads always treat their employees ethically and respectfully	4.41	0.69	Excellent	Greatest Extent
2. Department heads talk to their employees/subordinates on how to do their job in an ethical manner	4.40	0.69	Excellent	Greatest Extent
3. Department heads always treat their employees as persons with dignity	4.51	0.66	Excellent	Greatest Extent
4. Department heads relate themselves to the employees in a respectful manner	4.42	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent
5. Department heads have not been using abusive language to their employees	4.41	0.71	Excellent	Greatest Extent
6. Department heads always call their employees privately when they found something wrong with the employees	4.44	0.66	Excellent	Greatest Extent
7. Department heads never insult or scolded their employees in front of other employees.	4.23	0.82	Excellent	Greatest Extent
8. Department heads treat their employees as equal partners	4.32	0.78	Excellent	Greatest Extent
9. Department heads do not have favoritism	4.05	0.91	Very Good	Great Extent
10. Department heads treat everyone the same.	4.12	0.86	Very Good	Great Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.26</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Greatest Extent</b>

Table 3 shows that employees perceive their department heads as “excellent” in terms of ethical relationships, with an overall mean of 4.26 (SD = 0.70), interpreted as “greatest extent.” Respondents emphasized that their leaders uphold dignity and respect, correct mistakes privately, communicate respectfully, refrain from using abusive language, and treat employees as equal partners. However, one indicator treating everyone the same without favoritism was only rated as “very good,” suggesting room for improvement in maintaining fairness and impartiality. The findings confirm that department heads of DAR Zamboanga del Norte exhibit strong ethical leadership practices that emphasize respect, fairness, and dignity in their relationships with employees. These behaviors contribute to a positive organizational climate where employees feel valued and respected.

This finding implies that fostering ethical relationships within leadership significantly enhances employee trust, morale, and organizational harmony. By treating employees with dignity and fairness, leaders reinforce a culture of respect and accountability. However, the “very good” rating for impartiality suggests that leaders should further strengthen practices that minimize favoritism to sustain equity and inclusivity in the workplace. Institutionalizing transparent performance appraisal systems, merit-based recognition, and consistent communication could help ensure that fairness is consistently practiced. The results also support Abun et al. (2017), who highlighted those ethical relationships in leadership remain anchored in institutional moral values, though there is variation in how consistently they are practiced.

**Table 4**

*Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads in Terms of Honesty*

<b>D. Honesty</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Most department heads are straightforward.	4.41	0.68	Excellent	Greatest Extent
2. Department heads are transparent to the employees related to issues that affect their lives.	4.34	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent
3. Department heads always rely on fact or evidence when they accuse employees of something wrong	4.33	0.73	Excellent	Greatest Extent
4. Department heads always act on certain issues when they believe it is the right thing to do	4.52	0.61	Excellent	Greatest Extent
5. Department heads have never been lying to their employees	4.26	0.82	Excellent	Greatest Extent
6. Department heads always implement what they have promised to their employees	4.40	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
7. Department heads do not alter the facts even if it means that their position would be at risk	4.38	0.72	Excellent	Greatest Extent
8. Department heads are committed to do what is right and avoid what is wrong	4.49	0.67	Excellent	Greatest Extent
9. Department heads never tell employees to do things which he/she himself/herself never does.	4.40	0.74	Excellent	Greatest Extent

10. Department heads are dependable at all times	4.45	0.75	Excellent	Greatest Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Greatest Extent</b>

Table 4 indicates that employees perceive their department heads as “excellent” in terms of honesty, with an overall mean score of 4.43 (SD = 0.66), described as “greatest extent.” The data suggests that leaders consistently demonstrate truthfulness, transparency, dependability, and fairness in their dealings. Specifically, employees affirm that their leaders act on issues according to what is right, fulfill commitments, avoid deceit, and rely on evidence before making accusations. This high rating illustrates that honesty is a strongly upheld value among the department heads of DAR Zamboanga del Norte. The findings confirm that honesty, as a dimension of moral leadership, is well-practiced by the department heads and contributes significantly to maintaining integrity and trust in the organization. Employees’ recognition of their leaders as dependable, straightforward, and transparent affirms that honesty is central to the leadership style within the agency.

The results imply that the department benefits from leaders who model honesty in decision-making and interpersonal relations, thereby strengthening employee confidence and promoting a culture of openness and accountability. Such a practice fosters loyalty, reduces conflicts, and ensures that employees feel secure and respected. However, sustaining this level of honesty requires continuous reinforcement through ethical policies, transparency mechanisms, and role-modeling behaviors by leaders. By doing so, DAR Zamboanga del Norte can further solidify a culture of moral leadership that supports both employee satisfaction and organizational performance. This aligns with Abun et al. (2017), who also found honesty as a core managerial value, though rated slightly lower in their study.

**Table 5**

*Summary of the Perceived Level of Moral Leadership of Department Heads*

Moral Leadership	Mean	SD	Rank	Description	Interpretation
A. Integrity	4.44	0.64	1	Excellent	Greatest Extent
B. Trust	4.41	0.65	3	Excellent	Greatest Extent
C. Ethical Relationship	4.26	0.70	4	Excellent	Greatest Extent
D. Honesty	4.43	0.66	2	Excellent	Greatest Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>0.68</b>		Excellent	Greatest Extent

Table 5 reveals that the moral leadership of department heads in DAR Zamboanga del Norte is perceived to be at the *greatest extent*, with integrity ranking the highest, followed by honesty, trust, and ethical relationship. These results highlight that department heads consistently demonstrate strong ethical values, fairness, and accountability in their leadership practices. The data suggests that employees recognize their leaders as models of integrity and honesty, which are foundational traits for sustaining trust and fostering ethical relationships in the workplace. The findings confirm that the department heads of DAR Zamboanga del Norte practice moral leadership to an excellent degree, which contributes to maintaining a positive and ethically grounded organizational environment. The ranking order of the indicators emphasizes that while all dimensions are highly evident, integrity and honesty stand out as the strongest moral leadership qualities perceived by employees.

This result implies that the agency benefits from leaders who exemplify high moral standards, which in turn strengthens employees’ confidence in leadership, enhances cooperation, and creates a trustworthy organizational culture. With moral leadership practiced to the “greatest extent,” employees are more likely to feel respected and supported, which can translate to increased morale and productivity. However, continuous efforts to further strengthen ethical relationships and trust-building initiatives remain important to ensure balanced and holistic moral leadership. This finding also aligns with Abun et al. (2017), who emphasized that integrity, honesty,

trust, and ethical relationships are critical elements in effective moral leadership that positively influence organizational outcomes.

### **Perceived Level of Job Satisfaction of Employees**

**Table 6**

*Perceived Level of Job Satisfaction of Employees*

<b>Job satisfaction of employees</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. I am generally satisfied with my current job.	4.55	0.62	Excellent	Greatest Extent
2. In general, I like the work I do.	4.56	0.60	Excellent	Greatest Extent
3. All in all, I like working environment of the office.	4.45	0.71	Excellent	Greatest Extent
4. I am happy because my department heads have good human relations.	4.45	0.75	Excellent	Greatest Extent
5. I am happy because the communication channel is open.	4.39	0.77	Excellent	Greatest Extent
6. I am satisfied that all employees are cooperating when it comes to common activity.	4.40	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
7. I am happy because my work and my accomplishment is recognized.	4.36	0.76	Excellent	Greatest Extent
8. I am happy because I am allowed to set goals and objectives when performing a task given to me.	4.46	0.63	Excellent	Greatest Extent
9. I am satisfied because my job is important to me.	4.66	0.54	Excellent	Greatest Extent
10. I am satisfied because I have learned a lot in my job.	4.71	0.51	Excellent	Greatest Extent
11. I am satisfied because I have enough freedom and authority to carry out my task.	4.52	0.63	Excellent	Greatest Extent

12. I am satisfied because I have security of tenure here in this office.	4.58	0.68	Excellent	Greatest Extent
13. I am satisfied because of the spirit of community in this office.	4.46	0.71	Excellent	Greatest Extent
14. I am satisfied because employees in this office are treated well and respected.	4.50	0.70	Excellent	Greatest Extent
15. I am satisfied because the policies are consistently implemented	4.44	0.69	Excellent	Greatest Extent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.49</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Greatest Extent</b>

Table 6 illustrates that the employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Zamboanga del Norte experience job satisfaction to the *greatest extent*, with an overall mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.58, described as “excellent.” Employees reported satisfaction with various aspects of their work, including the meaningfulness of their job, security of tenure, freedom and authority in performing tasks, respect and fair treatment, supportive work environment, good human relations from department heads, and recognition of accomplishments. These indicators show that employees find their workplace conducive, motivating, and aligned with their personal and professional values. The results affirm that employees in DAR Zamboanga del Norte are highly satisfied with their jobs, suggesting that the institution is successful in maintaining a positive and supportive organizational climate. This level of satisfaction reflects not only the favorable working conditions but also the effective leadership of department heads, who play a crucial role in creating an environment of respect, cooperation, and open communication.

The high job satisfaction of employees implies that DAR Zamboanga del Norte has effectively fostered an organizational culture where employees feel secure, valued, and motivated. This positive outcome indicates that the agency can expect enhanced productivity, commitment, and retention of personnel. However, as Abun et al. (2017) suggested, even when job satisfaction is high, there is always room for improvement. Continuous monitoring and enhancement of policies, employee recognition systems, and professional development programs may further strengthen satisfaction and prevent complacency.

**Table 7**

***Test of Relationship Between the Levels of Moral Leadership and Job Satisfaction of Employees***

Variables	p-value	p-value	Interpretation
Moral Leadership			
vs	0.638*	< 0.01	Large/High Positive Correlation Significant
Job Satisfaction			

\*Significant at 0.05 level

The results of the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation analysis reveal a significantly high positive correlation between the levels of moral leadership of department heads and the job satisfaction of employees. This

means that as department heads demonstrate higher levels of moral leadership—characterized by integrity, trust, ethical relationships, and honesty—employees’ job satisfaction also increases. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between moral leadership and job satisfaction is rejected. It is concluded that moral leadership is a critical factor that significantly influences employees’ job satisfaction in the Department of Agrarian Reform, Zamboanga del Norte. The implication of this finding is twofold. First, it highlights the essential role of moral leadership in shaping a supportive organizational climate where employees feel valued and motivated. Second, it suggests that sustained development of moral leadership among department heads can enhance employee satisfaction, which in turn may foster higher commitment, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. This underscores the need for continuous leadership development programs that emphasize ethical decision-making, integrity, and trust-building as a way to strengthen human resource outcomes. This confirms that moral leadership is a strong determinant of workplace satisfaction, as supported by Abun et al. (2017).

## **V. Discussion**

The findings of this study revealed that the department heads of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Zamboanga del Norte exhibited a high level of moral leadership across the four dimensions of integrity, trust, ethical relationship, and honesty, which were consistently rated as “excellent” and interpreted as “to the greatest extent.” This suggests that leaders in the agency not only demonstrate adherence to ethical values and fairness but also model behaviors that inspire confidence, foster respect, and create an organizational climate grounded in transparency and accountability. Parallel to this, employees’ job satisfaction was likewise rated at an “excellent” level, reflecting the positive work environment within the institution. Employees reported satisfaction in areas such as security of tenure, recognition of accomplishments, freedom to perform tasks, respect from superiors, open communication, and the cooperative spirit within the office. These findings suggest that DAR Zamboanga del Norte provides an enabling organizational climate where employees feel valued, respected, and motivated factors which are well-documented as essential for sustaining productivity and employee retention. Most notably, the study established a significant high positive correlation between moral leadership and job satisfaction. This indicates that as department heads display higher levels of moral leadership, employees experience greater satisfaction in their work. In other words, leadership practices rooted in integrity, honesty, trust, and ethical relationships directly enhance employees’ sense of value, belongingness, and overall morale.

The results carry important implications for leadership practice within the public sector. They underscore that moral leadership is not only a moral imperative but also a practical strategy for enhancing employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance. By embedding integrity, honesty, trust, and ethical behavior into leadership practice, agencies like DAR can foster an organizational culture that sustains both ethical governance and employee well-being. Strengthening leadership development programs focused on moral values, while simultaneously institutionalizing systems of recognition and accountability, will be key to sustaining this positive cycle of leadership and satisfaction.

## **VI Conclusion**

The study concludes that the moral leadership of department heads in DAR Zamboanga del Norte as reflected in the dimensions of integrity, trust, ethical relationship, and honesty is practiced at an excellent level and to the greatest extent. Similarly, employees reported an excellent level of job satisfaction, indicating that they feel valued, respected, and fulfilled in their roles within the organization. Most importantly, the analysis confirmed a significant and strong positive correlation between moral leadership and job satisfaction, demonstrating that leaders’ adherence to moral and ethical practices directly influences employees’ sense of satisfaction and engagement at work. These findings affirm that moral leadership is a vital factor in shaping organizational climate and ensuring employee well-being, thereby underscoring its essential role in effective public service management.

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