"Influencing Moral Behaviour"

Exploring the Ethical Implications of Influencing Moral Behaviour Within Hierarchal Organisations

Monique Tempelman
Master: Applied Ethics
Student number: 7008767

Supervisor: Jeroen Rijnders
2nd Supervisor: Mathijs Peters

Utrecht University

01-06-2021

Influencing Moral Behaviour

'Exploring the Ethical Implications of Influencing Moral Behaviour Within Hierarchal Organisations'

Monique Tempelman

Utrecht University

01-06-2021

'There are only two ways to influence human behaviour: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it'

– Simon Sinek –

1. Abstract

In many organisations at least some employees seem to display what some would judge immoral behaviour in one way or another (e.g. arriving late at work, doing personal business during work hours, not doing the tasks they agreed to do, etc.). In this thesis, I did not discuss whether such behaviour in itself is morally permissible or not. Instead, I analysed to what extent it would be morally permissible to influence such behaviour. In specific, I focus on hierarchal organisations as these structures make the influence that managers have on the behaviour of their employees even more clear. For instance, managers can try to make employees act more morally by giving promotions to employees that act morally or giving negative feedback to employees that do not act morally. However, using different strategies to change the behaviour of an individual involves many ethical aspects.

In this thesis, I have evaluated the ethics of influencing moral behaviour of managers by analysing widely used behavioural change strategies to find the most prominent ethical considerations. By comparing the perspectives of several relevant ethical frameworks, I argue that one important aspect to consider is the notion of autonomy, especially in relation to nudging. Furthermore, managers should not misuse the influence they can exercise and they should be very aware of the ways in which they can (unintended) influence their employees. On the other hand, employees themselves also have a task to consciously make their own decisions.

The main conclusion I argue for is that influencing moral behaviour can be considered ethical, but only when the aforementioned conditions are met. In addition, I argue that it is important for managers to become aware of the ethical considerations when they want to apply behaviour change strategies before any such influence is exercised. This way, well-founded ethical decisions can be made.

2. Table of Contents

3. Introduction

In many of the organisations I have worked, one of the main issues that managers were struggling with was how to motivate their personnel so that they would execute their job in a sufficient manner. Not just to make them work harder and faster, but actually motivate them to such an extent at which the employees would do the minimum required for their job. At that time, employees would for instance search for a good place to stay for their holiday during work hours or talk for hours with their co-workers while their weekly targets were far from obtained. This issue was the same in different teams at several departments. When asked about this behaviour, the employees did not seem to care or state they were actually working really hard but that the targets were too ambitious. However, even when the targets were lowered and everyone agreed they should be able to make it, almost none of them did. It seemed like they did not care about exercising moral behaviour at their job. Missing deadlines was not a big deal to them, engaging in a lot of personal activities during worktime was considered normal and if there was even a small aspect about a certain task that they did not like, they would delegate it to another colleague or department.

From conversations with employees and managers from other companies, I gather that this behaviour is not just restricted to these specific organisations. In other companies they also struggle with unmotivated colleagues who do not seem committed to their promises nor care about putting a higher workload on others. Therefore, managers try different strategies to motivate their employees, such as implementing ethical codes that dictate how personnel should behave or organising competitions between colleagues to make them more motivated.

An example of this is Amazon, which has implemented a programme to encourage the efficiency of their employees by offering mini-games that can be played only after completing warehouse work. However, such incentives carry many ethical considerations with them. The Amazon gamification programme has for instance been compared to the Black Mirror episode 'Fifteen Million Merits', in which people had to ride on bikes to earn credits which they could then use to buy certain privileges (Statt, 2021). This episode addresses several disadvantages to contemporary technology as well as the impact of such a merit system on social relations. Even though many of the tactics of managers to make the employees behave more moral are not this extreme, this comparison does put forward the importance of setting boundaries on behavioural influences, especially in the ethical domain.

What is also interesting about this subject, is that this immoral behaviour seems to remain mostly restricted to the work environment. This observation is also supported by findings from studies cultural anthropology, which show that individuals can play different

roles in different life domains, such as work and home. The result is that individuals can also have different values, norms and behaviour in these different domains (Trevino, 1992, p. 450). This suggests that immoral behaviour is not something that is dependent (solely) on the personality, values or experiences of an individual, but that it differs per life domain as well.

In their article 'Behavioral Ethics in Organizations' Trevino et al. argue that "the importance of ethical behavior to an organization has never been more apparent, and in recent years researchers have generated a great deal of knowledge about the management of individual ethical behavior in organizations" (Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006, pp. 977-978). They found several gaps in the current knowledge and obstacles that limit the understanding of moral behaviour in organisations. Specifically, they advise that further research be conducted to investigate whether hierarchical levels have influence on ethical behaviour.

Since there seems to be a knowledge gap, especially regarding the moral behaviour in hierarchal structures, this thesis will focus on moral behaviour in hierarchal organisational structures. To provide managers within these hierarchal organisations with moral guidelines on how to influence the behaviour of employees in an ethical manner, the research question that will be discussed in this paper is: *'To what extent is it ethically permissible to influence moral behaviour of employees within hierarchal organisations?'*

In order to understand this question, it is first of all important to understand what is meant by 'moral behaviour'. The definition of moral behaviour can be described as "intentional behaviour in accordance with those [moral] standards" (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 664). What these moral standards are will depend on other factors, such as the values and norms of an individual and their culture. In this thesis, behaviour that is consistent with what a manager can reasonably expect of employees based on their employment contract will be considered as moral behaviour. Second, the concept of 'hierarchal structure' can be defined as an organisational structure that uses "different levels of authority and a vertical link, or chain of command, between superior and subordinate levels of the organization" (Grimsley & Scalia, sd).

An important notion of this debate is that individuals are often required to give their consent before their behaviour is deliberately being influenced, for instance during research studies. However, there are also many times that no consent is given, for instance when a website layout is set up in such a way as to make individuals click on specific buttons. Whether or not it is ethically required for individuals to give their consent before any

influence can be exercised on their behaviour is an important debate. However, as there are many aspects to be considered, this paper cannot go in depth on this subject and it will therefore not be addressed.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine ways in which the behaviour of employees within hierarchal organisations can be influenced in order to determine the ethical permissibility. In the first section of this paper, the theoretical framework will be provided, including a background on different organisational structures, in particular hierarchal structures, as well as theoretical background on moral behaviour. Here, three main types of analyses, namely the Six Stages of Moral Development, the Four Component Model and the Moral Approbation Approach, will be used to examine the concept of moral behaviour. Furthermore, some general considerations which are important to frame this debate, such as moral relativity, moral hypocrisy and religion, will be discussed.

In the second part of the paper, the most widely used strategies to influence behaviour will be analysed to find possible ethical implications and considerations. These include the Transtheoretical Model of Change, Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Social Cognitive Theory.

The third part will be the main part of this thesis, in which the ethical considerations of the behaviour change strategies will be discussed. By applying ethical theories and literature to these behaviour change strategies, the ethical considerations can determine the ethical permissibility of the use of these behaviour change strategies. First, the influence of ethical leadership and its application to behaviour change will be discussed. Second, the struggle of respecting the autonomy of the employees whilst influencing their behaviour will be presented. Third, the Social Learning Theory will be analysed to provide a different perspective on the debate.

At the end of this paper, I will conclude that in general influencing employees to act more moral can be considered morally permissible under the circumstances that the autonomy is respected, no great amount of pressure is put on the employees to behave in specific ways and their choices are thus not limited, the intention of the influence is morally just, no rights of any individuals are violated and that the employee as entity in itself is also respected. In addition, I propose that before any influence on behaviour is exercised an ethical analysis should be made to become aware of the ethical implications of that specific influence.

4. Theoretical Framework

This section will provide the theoretical framework to work as a basis for the rest of the research. First, the hierarchal structures will be analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which moral behaviour and any influences hereupon takes place. Second, literature about moral behaviour will be studied so that a better understanding of the object of influence of behaviour change strategies can be provided. Third, some general considerations which are important to keep in mind when framing this debate, namely moral hypocrisy, religion and relativism, will be analysed. The reason for this is that it provides some more background into the circumstances in which this debate is being framed.

4.1. Hierarchical Structures

Organisational structure can be top-down, bottom up or any variation on this. For instance, the military has a highly centralised structure with a strict hierarchy, whereas technology start-ups often work as a decentralised organisations. In general, organisational structures can be categorised under one of the following five different categories (Morgan, 2015):

- Traditional hierarchy: This model is usually employed in organisations where linear work is executed. Communication flows from top to bottom, which implies that managers are in charge and employees perform work that has been delegated to them.
- Flatter organisations: This structure seeks to open up lines of communication and collaboration. Layers are removed and communication goes both ways. Some form of hierarchy still exists. A prerequisite for this model is that employees have the means to access each other and information anywhere and anytime.
- Flat organisations: Flat organisations have no job titles, seniority, managers, or executives. Every single employee is equal to another and the organisations are self-managed. This provides more freedom to the employees, but can prove to be a challenge, especially in larger organisations.
- Flatarchies: This dynamic model is a combination of hierarchies and flat organisations. They can have ad-hoc teams with flat structures within a hierarchical organisation, or hierarchical ad-hoc teams within flat structures, as well as many variations on this.
- Holacratic organisation: This structure allows for distributed decision making while every employee works on their specific area of expertise. Roles exist instead of job descriptions, so that employees can fulfil multiple roles. Authority lies not with managers, but with teams.

Different aspects within organisational structures play a role in determining the degree of hierarchy. This paper will focus on organisations with traditional hierarchical structures, which first of all implies that there is a chain of command that clarifies who reports to whom within an organisation. Second, there is a span of control which refers to the number of subordinates a manager effectively manages. Third, most decisions are made in a centralised manner. Fourth, there is a high degree of specialisation or a high degree to which activities or tasks are broken down and divided into individual jobs. Fifth, there are formal organisational structure, roles or positions that stay the same, regardless of who occupies it. Lastly, the hierarchal organisation has a rigid departmentalisation with little to no interaction between teams (Devaney, 2014).

4.2. Moral behaviour

After framing the debate within the hierarchal structures of organisations, this subsection will examine the ways in which the moral behaviour of individuals in general is established. Each section will discuss a different type of analyses of moral behaviour. First, the Six Stages of Moral Development model by Kohlberg is analysed. Second, the Four Component Model of Narvaez & Rest will be explained. Third, the Moral Approbation Approach by Jones & Verstegen Ryan is examined.

4.2.1. Six Stages of Moral Development

As the model developed by Kohlberg is prominent in the literature on moral behaviour, it seems only fitting to start by examining this framework. Kohlberg constructed his model on a study of development of moral autonomy of children till the age of 16. With the results, he put together a scheme with the six stages (in three levels) of moral development (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969, p. 93).

The first level is the preconventional level which consists of punishment and obedience orientation (stage 1) and of instrumental relativist orientation (stage 2). On this level, individuals do not really have an own sense of morality, but decide between different options for action by looking at the consequences. The second level is the conventional level which distinguishes between interpersonal concordance or 'good boy – nice girl' orientation (stage 3) and 'law and order' orientation (stage 4). Individuals on this level seek the approval of others of their behaviour and strive to confirm with social order by doing one's duty. The third and last level is the post-conventional, autonomous or principled level. The two stages on this level are social-contract legalistic orientation (stage 5) and universal ethical principle orientation (stage 6), where moral values are defined apart from any authority or social groups (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969, pp. 100-101).

This model of six stages of moral development has a limitation, namely that the implications are limited to moral judgement and thus does not seem to include implications for moral behaviour. After all, the stages only describe how people form judgements and not how they act on it. However, it does seems that judgement and behaviour are related as individuals have a drive to make actions consistent with their thoughts (Trevino, 1986, p. 609). This will be further explained in the next subsection.

4.2.2. Four Component Model

In their paper 'Four Components of Acting Morally', Darcia Narvaez and James Rest discuss the four processes that according to them produce moral behaviour. The four components of their model are internal psychological processes that have to take place in order to produce a moral act. In addition, they can trace the way in which a person responds in a particular situation. These processes do not necessarily have to take place in a logical sequence, as it seems that the components often interact with each other (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 386-388).

The first component of the four component model is moral sensibility, which prescribes that the individual has to be sensitive to situational information in order to interpret the events taking place around them and respond to them in a morally appropriate way (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 389-390). Moral judgement, the second component of the model, attempts to make a judgement about which action would be morally wrong or right to take. The third component of the model is moral motivation. Any moral values that one has may be motivation for certain behaviour, but motivation is also influenced by other non-moral values such as pleasure, status, wealth, etc. (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 394-395). The fourth and last component is implementation. This process involves the strength of one's character as individuals need to be able to deal with unexpected aspects and possible distractions in order to produce moral behaviour (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 396-397).

All of these components interact with each other in a harmonious way until the completion of the specific action. For instance, all sorts of situational changes (such as priming or the concern for one's own well-being) may result in different moral behaviour as they might interfere with the moral sensitivity (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 397-398).

4.2.3. Moral Approbation Approach

The moral approbation approach is defined as "the desire for moral approval from oneself or others" (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 664). As a general framework, Jones and Verstegen Ryan propose that within organisations unethical choices are often made because

of the complexity of cognitive aspects and the strong dependency on organisational design (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 665). As a result of this dependence on organisational factors and on moral approval, Jones and Verstegen Ryan argue that the moral behaviour of individuals depends on one's moral approval from oneself or others. This is what they have named 'moral approbation' (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 663). The following figure schematically displays the steps within the subconscious process of the moral approbation model that an individual has to take before a behavioural intent can be established.
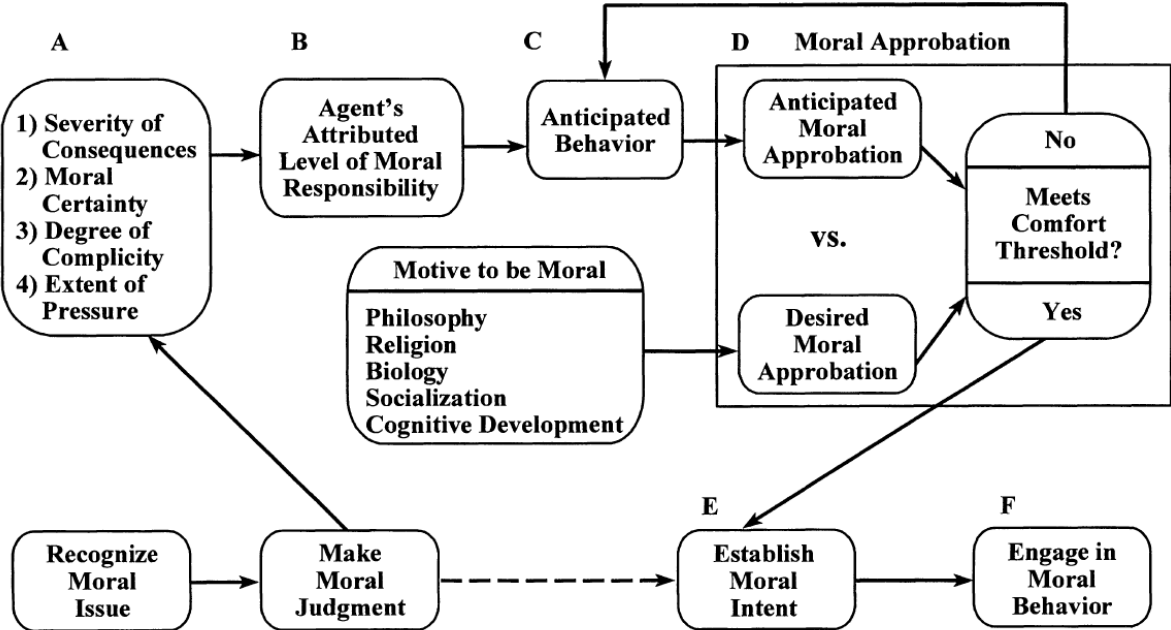

Figure 1 The Moral Approbation Model (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 667)

First, the individual recognises the moral issue and makes a moral judgement about this situation. Then they will determine the level of moral responsibility (B) by assessing the four factors as listed under A. Second, the anticipated behaviour (C) is compared to that level of responsibility so that the individual can estimate how much moral approbation will be the result of that behaviour. At the same time the individual has specific motives to behave morally which result in a perceived desired moral approbation. The individual will then conceive this desired moral approbation as a threshold for their anticipated moral approbation (D). If the anticipated moral approbation meets this threshold, the individual will establish the intention to behave according to this anticipated behaviour (E) and finally engage in this moral behaviour (F) (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 667).

In sum, the moral approbation approach suggests that when the elements of moral responsibility as listed above are influenced, it will lead to higher levels of moral intent as well as a higher chance of changed moral behaviour (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 676).

4.3.   General Considerations

There are other influences that might have an effect on one's moral behaviour. It is of relevance to analyse these as it provides different perspectives on the circumstances surrounding this debate. Here, the concept of moral hypocrisy will be discussed, as well as the theory of relativism and the possible influence of religion on moral behaviour.

4.3.1. Moral hypocrisy

Even though it is often believed that moral behaviour is motivated by moral principles as the previous section showed, the concept of moral hypocrisy suggests that these principles might be a cloak to perform actions out of self-interest. Thus, instead of behaving a certain way because it is good or right, moral hypocrisy suggest that individuals act to appear moral but have the main intention of benefitting themselves. The reason that individuals might act in this way is that they can get the social and/or self-rewards of being seen as a moral person whilst avoiding any social and/or self-punishments for not being a moral person. Therefore, individuals have adapted to moral rationalization. This also results in that they can justify to themselves why a certain situation does not violate any of their principles. This rationalization is made easier as a result of the abstractness of the moral principles. If this moral rationalization process is successful, one can serve one's interest without violating one's principles (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997, pp. 1335-1336).

In their studies, Batson et al. confronted 80 female participants with a dilemma about who to assign a fun and a boring task to, either to themselves or another participant. The reason that women were chosen as participants is because they were described by others as being more moral compared to men. In a questionnaire the participants presented themselves as moral responsible persons as well. During the experiment, the participants were put into a room alone and in three different circumstances had to decide if they wanted to give the fun task to themselves, or to give this to someone else. They were under the impression that no one would find out how the tasks were assigned. In the first setting, there was no mention of morality and over 75% of the participants assigned themselves the positive task. In the questionnaire afterwards, only one of the participants said that this was the moral thing to do and most of the participants judged it more morally to assign the positive task to the other person than to flip a coin or assign it to themselves. In the second setting, the participants were given the option to flip a coin and even though half of the participants did so, 90% of them still assigned the positive task to themselves. The results show that the participants who flipped the coin and still assigned the positive task to themselves felt like they acted morally afterwards, even though none of them said it was the moral thing to do in advance. In the third

setting the participants could accept or decline the task assignment offered by the experimenter and participants appeared significantly more likely to accept the assignment of the experimenter when the positive task were assigned to them (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997, pp. 1335-1342).

These results show that only a small proportion of the participants acted in the way that they considered to be most moral whilst they stated in advance that they consider themselves to be morally responsible individuals. This strongly suggests the presence of moral hypocrisy involving self-deceit, which could be a result from a conflict between self-interest and morality. This suggests that even though individuals might want to appear moral, they still act in self-interest (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997, pp. 1338-1346). Thus, when influencing moral behaviour, individuals might only appear to act moral, when they are actually acting from self-interest.

4.3.2. Relativism

Moral relativism is the concept that proposes that there are multiple correct ways to answer a moral question as there are multiple truths in some moral issues. Thus, when one individual judges that a specific action is morally right, another individual could judge that this same action is wrong, whilst they both could have equally good reasons for their judgements (Tännsjö, 2007, p. 124). At first sight it might seem that these individuals are thus contradicting each other, but this does not necessarily need to be the case as their respective judgements have different meanings. Each individual has obtained different properties in their live and so constituted different moral universes. The rightness or wrongness of an action might have different meanings in different universes, therefore avoiding any strict contradiction (Tännsjö, 2007, p. 132).

Individuals tend to judge the behaviour of others from the own point of view of their own morality, but then seem to neglect the possibility that this other individual might have a different morality. At the same time, individuals can also use the point of view of the others morality to point out when their actions are not coherent with that morality (Tännsjö, 2007, pp. 128-131). However, that individuals judge actions this way does not imply that the difference in their moral behaviour is also a result from the relative morality that they may hold. Even though individuals are influenced by their respective moral truths, it does not follow that they also behave accordingly (Tännsjö, 2007, pp. 138-139).

In regards to influencing moral behaviour, moral relativism holds that what one might find moral behaviour, another might find immoral behaviour. In this thesis, some assumptions will be made about what moral behaviour holds (e.g. arriving on time, making deadlines etc.)

and some people might disagree with this. However, this thesis is about finding ethical considerations that are related to exercising influence on moral behaviour and does not argue for what this moral behaviour should entail.

4.3.3. Religion

As religion prescribes certain behaviours and plays a big part in the lives of many individuals, it is also of interest to look at the influence that religion has on the moral behaviour of individuals. Empirical evidence suggests that when individuals are primed with religious aspects, the prosocial behaviour of those individuals increased. These effects have found to be especially reliable for believers, but non-significant for individuals who do not believe (Norenzayan, 2014, pp. 371-372). In addition, studies have shown that social surveillance (the idea that you are being watched) also increases prosocial behaviour. In religion, a God or similar supernatural beings could make religious individuals feel as if they are monitored constantly. Therefore, even if no one is really watching, religious individuals might tend to behave more prosocial as they feel God is still watching (Norenzayan, 2014, p. 372).

Thus, it would seem that religious priming has at least some influence on the moral behaviour of religious individuals such as the traits of generosity, honesty and cooperation. An example of this is that Christians and non-believers were just as likely to give to charity on weekdays, but on Sundays Christians were about three times more likely to donate something (Norenzayan, 2014, p. 373). In relation to influencing their moral behaviour, religious people might thus respond different than non-religious people.

5. Strategies of Behaviour Change

In order to determine to what degree it is morally permissible to influence moral behaviour, it is also necessary to research how the moral behaviour of individuals can be influenced. Therefore, this section will examine the main strategies of behaviour change to gain an understanding of how the moral behaviour of individuals can be influenced. R. Davis et al. (2015) conducted a scoping review with the aim to identify theories of behaviour and behaviour change. This study involved a search of electronic databases, web searching, hand searching key journals, searching reference lists and consulting with a multidisciplinary advisory group. In their search, they have identified 82 theories of behaviour and behaviour change (Davis, Campbell, Hildon, Hobbs, & Michie , 2015, p. 332). Of these theories, only 3 accounted for 56% of the articles that were being reviewed. These theories are the following (Davis, Campbell, Hildon, Hobbs, & Michie , 2015, p. 335):

– Transtheoretical Model of Change
– Theory of Planned Behaviour
– Social Cognitive Theory

As these seem to be the main theories on behaviour change, they will be analysed further in the next sections.

5.1. Transtheoretical Model of Change

The Transtheoretical Model of Change (TMC) was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the early 1980s. This model has since gained popularity and has been used across different theories in several fields of practice around the world, such as exercise studies, organisational behaviour and eating disorders. It provides a guideline for determining how the behaviour of individuals could best be influenced and consists of five stages, namely precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (Calderwood, 2011, pp. 108-109). Before explaining the stages, it is important to note that these are stages along a continuum and individuals can be in between stages, experience parts of different stages at the same time and switch between stages (Calderwood, 2011, p. 111).

The first stage, the precontemplation stage, can be described as a stage in which the individual is in denial. It may be that the individual is not yet realising or accepting they will (have to) change. In the second stage, the contemplation stage, the individual is beginning to accept that they have to change in order to deal with that specific situation. Even though the individual is thus thinking in a different way, they may still be unprepared to actually make the changes. In the preparation stage, the individual will then prepare for making significant

changes by taking intermediary steps. What these steps are will depend on the person and situation. In the next stage, the action stage, the individual will actually make the change. After the change is made, the last stage will set in, which is the maintenance stage. In this stage, the individual has successfully changed their behaviour and will now focus on maintaining this new behaviour. They can do so by reflecting on situations in which this behaviour became evident. If it seems that the behaviour is no longer effective, the individual may revisit one of the previous stages to work through the process again (Calderwood, 2011, pp. 110-111).

In relation to behaviour change, influence should be exercised within all of these stages to ensure that the individual will realise and accept that they have to change, prepare to make this change, actually make the change and then maintain their new behaviour.

5.2.   Theory of Planned Behaviour

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the intention of an individual to behave a certain way is key. The stronger the intention, the more likely it is that such behaviour will be performed. The figure below displays the TPB in a schematic manner (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 181-182).
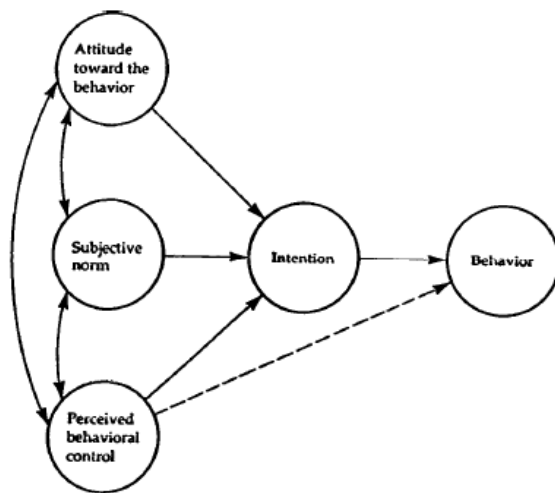
Figure 2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

As the figure displays, intention is influenced by three factors, namely the attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Here, the attitude toward the behaviour refers to the extent to which the individual has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of that specific behaviour. In general, attitudes will be positive if the intended behaviour is believed to have positive outcomes. The attitude will be negative if the outcomes

of that behaviour is believed to be negative. The second aspect of intention, subjective norms, refers to the perceived social pressure that is associated with the (non)performance of that behaviour. The greater the motivation to comply to these norms, the stronger the intention. The degree of the perceived behavioural control refers to the extent to which the individual assumes the performed behaviour is easy or difficult. This will reflect past experiences as well as anticipated obstacles and experiences from acquaintances. The relative importance of these three factors will differ per individual and situation. In general however, the more favourable the attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are, the stronger the intention is to behave a specific way (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 188-196).

According to the TPB, several conditions have to be met in order to be able to change the behaviour. The first is that the intention and perceived behavioural control should at least be compatible with the intended behaviour. Thus, if the intended behaviour is to be donating to charity, the individual should have the intention to donate and feel they have control over the action to donate. Second, intention and perceived behavioural control should remain stable until the intended behaviour is executed. Any changes in situations may cause the individual to behave differently. The last condition is that the perceived behavioural control should realistically reflect the actual behavioural control of the individual (Ajzen, 1991, p. 185).

When influencing one's behaviour through this strategy, the attitude towards the intended behaviour could be influenced by highlighting the positive outcomes of that behaviour. In addition, the subjective norms can be influenced by increasing any (social) pressure associated with that behaviour. Furthermore, the intended behaviour should look as easy as possible in order to increase the perceived behavioural control. If these steps are taken, the intention will increase and therefore the chance that the individual will perform the intended behaviour.

5.3.   Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura, the founder of the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), explains that behavioural patterns are organized by individual experience and retained in neural codes. While behaviour might be largely determined by experience, there are many other factors that influence one's behaviour at least till some degree. Genetic factors and neural systems are examples of such factors and place constraints on the individuals' capabilities. Behaviour that is being regarded as instinct may draw on inborn elements, but it still requires experience to be developed. As these sensory systems and brain structures can be influenced by environmental factors, behaviour contains a mix of inborn elements and learned patterns through experience (Bandura A. , 1989, pp. 74-75).

The SCT provides a framework to help understand, predict and change human behaviour. In general, the SCT states that individuals can learn cognitive strategies and behaviour by observing the behaviour of others. The following five cognitive features can have an influence on behaviour according to the SCT (Nabavi, 2012, pp. 11-13):

- The expectation of the consequences and responses;
- The experience of others' consequences;
- The manner in which new information is cognitively processed;
- Decisions about how to behave;
- The effect of (non)occurrence of expected consequences.

According to Bandura, cognitive factors are not the only factors influencing behaviour. The SCT states that there are three interacting elements, namely personal factors (of which cognition is one aspect), behaviour and the environment. One's behaviour is thus influenced by personal as well as environmental factors (Nabavi, 2012, pp. 14-15).
With regards to influencing behaviour, one might therefore ensure that there are referent others around the individual who display the desirable behaviour. In addition, the individual should be surrounded by an environment that stimulates to behave in the desirable manner.

In the rest of this thesis it will be assumed that these strategies are indeed effective and could be put to use.

6. Ethical Considerations

The previous section explained different strategies that can be used to change the behaviour of an individual. This section will analyse the ethical considerations that arise from implementing those behaviour change strategies as a way to influence the moral behaviour of employees.

The first consideration is that within hierarchal structures, managers are in the right position to exercise influence on employees to behave in certain ways. As employees might feel pressured to behave in accordance with the expectations of the manager (as the Social Cognitive Theory suggests), employees might act in ways they would have otherwise not wanted to act. Here the question arises to what extent using such pressure would be ethical permissible to use in order to influence one's moral behaviour.

I argue that a second important notion in the debate on behaviour influences is the concept of autonomy. All the behavioural change theories analysed in the previous section intend to steer the individual in some direction, thereby trying to influence the choices an individual may make. This might infringe on one's autonomy as the individual may seem to be less free to make their own decision. The debate about to what extent such influence can be considered manipulation of the values of the individual is therefore of great importance.

Third, the subjective norms and expectations of consequences can furthermore be greatly influenced by colleagues and managers. Through social learning employees might adapt different moral behaviour without being aware of this change. That makes the theory of social learning an important ethical consideration as well.

These ethical considerations will be discussed by applying these theories to a specific case in order to identify ethical boundaries to the use of behaviour change strategies. First, a closer look into the role of ethical leadership will be provided in order to discuss the ethical consideration of pressure from management. Second, the concept of autonomy will be examined to discuss the implications on influences, such as nudging, on the employees. Third, the social learning theory will be discussed to determine to what extent it would be permissible for managers to influence employees in that manner.

6.1. Ethical Leadership

As ethical issues are ever present within an organisation, managers will have to engage in decision-making behaviour that affects the activities of the organisation as well as the lives of employees. Their behaviour can have many (social) consequences, such as relating to the well-being of employees and customers. This influence that managers have can be quite

concerning, as some of them have noted that they sometimes compromise their personal values as they feel pressure to achieve company goals and to be successful (Trevino, 1986, pp. 601-603). Therefore, this section will take a closer look on ethical leadership theory, according to which "leaders influence followers' ethical decisions and actions through social learning processes, communicating the importance of ethical standards, social exchange processes, and using performance management systems to make employees accountable for their conduct" (Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, & Njoroge, 2014, p. 381). The social learning processes will be discussed further in section 6.3. 'Social Learning Theory'. This section will focus more on the accountability aspect, as well as any pressure that employees might perceive.

In order to take a closer look at the ethical implications surrounding ethical leadership, I will take an example by which the practical aspects can be discussed. One way for managers to exercise influence on the moral behaviour of employees is by means of setting targets which the employees need to achieve if they want to keep their job. This might, for instance, happen in call centres where employees are expected to handle a minimum amount of phone calls per day. Through this influencing of expectation of consequences (getting fired if you do not make the targets), the experience of others' consequences (seeing colleagues who do not always make the targets get called to the manager) and the (non) occurrence of expected consequences (whether or not employees that do not make targets actually get fired), the manager is using several aspects of the Social Cognitive Theory to influence the moral behaviour of employees.

There are different kinds of degree of influence within this example. For the purpose of analysis, I will make use of the following three stages:

a) There is no strict minimum target, but managers will speak up if employees severely underperform and they have the means to fire employees.

b) The manager reminds the employees regularly that if they underperform, they might get fired.

c) The manager is using this minimum target to increase productivity by pressuring the employees to work harder.

As we are exploring the moral permissibility of influencing moral behaviour, it will be assumed that managers only use this tactic on employees that are less productive to the degree that they are making their colleagues have to work harder and are not adhering to what was agreed on in the employment contract. In my example that means that they would miss such

amount of calls that the work pressure of their colleagues increases significantly as they have to take those calls.

In order to determine the moral permissibility of each of these scenario's, I will first introduce some consequentialist considerations. The reason for this is that this ethical theory can explain why employees change their behaviour through each of the different scenarios. Subsequently, I will evaluate the three scenarios in terms of the pressure that any authority might use. Lastly, the theory surrounding the notion of self-leadership will be analysed to look at this example from a different point of view. From these analyses, ethical boundaries to influencing moral behaviour through ethical leadership will be argued for.

6.1.1. Consequentialism

When exploring the moral permissibility of the exercised influence in these scenario's, it can be argued that managers should influence the behaviour of individuals when this will lead to a more positive outcome (namely more or higher moral behaviour). Here, the normative ethical theory of consequentialism provides an argumentative base. Consequentialism states that the right action should be the one with the best results. Within this theory one can make distinctive stands, such as a hedonists or utilitarian point of view, but in this thesis it suffices to define consequentialism as the theory that proposes that individuals should choose to perform the action which produces the best consequences (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2019).

When this theory is applied to the concept of moral behaviour, it supposes that individuals should act in ways which will produce the best overall consequences for all parties involved. Thus, when faced with a choice on how to act, an individual would look at the wide range of results that every option would produce for different parties involved and choose whichever action has best overall results. When influencing the behaviour of individuals, consequentialism would consider it morally if the consequences of that influence are the most positive ones.

When considering the question to what extent it is morally permissible to influence the moral behaviour of the employees in my example, it can be argued that influencing the employees this way may increase productivity and might also be beneficial to the employees themselves as they are pushed to act more morally and can therefore develop themselves on a professional level. This will specifically be the case in scenario b) as the employees are more motivated there to change their behaviour than compared to scenario a). In scenario c) the pressure that employees might feel to act in a specific way, could be seen as a negative consequence. To determine the moral permissibility in terms of consequentialist

considerations, one would have to weigh the different consequences of all possible options against each other. However, in most circumstances it will be difficult to weigh the consequences against each other. In my example for instance, it is difficult to measure the extent to which the moral behaviour will be positively influenced and productivity will be increased versus the amount of pressure employees feel. This makes it difficult to determine the moral permissibility of these specific situations in my example in consequentialist terms. Therefore, I will take a closer look at the influence that pressure has on the behaviour of the employees in the next subsection.

6.1.2. Obedience to authority

Another way to determine the moral permissibility of each of these scenarios is to take a closer look at the pressure that managers can put on employees. One of the most well-known studies into this so called 'obedience to authority' was performed by Stanley Milgram, who wanted to research whether the Nazi's who performed war crimes were just following orders or whether they acted on autonomous decisions. The experiment was designed to examine the extent to which an order to harm another person would be obeyed. An experimenter ordered participants to administer increasingly severe electric shocks to an experiment confederate every time they provided a wrong answer to a question posed by the experimenter. The participant was encouraged by the experimenter to continue administering the shocks, even when the confederate would scream out in agony. The result of this experiment is shocking (pun intended): 65% of the participants continued until the level indicated with 'XXX', which was supposed to mean death (Milgram, 1974).

After the experiment, there were numerous accounts of critique. Throughout the years, many variations have been studied to find differences in effects. As the validation of this experiment has influence on the issue of the moral permissibility of influencing employees through pressure of authority, some of these critics and variations will be discussed.

One critique is that as the subjects were in the 'safe environment' of a psychological study under the watchful eyes of scientists of Yale, they may not have thought that they were inflicting any actual pain. However, when the subjects were asked in post-experimental interviews subjects to indicate the amount of pain they thought to have inflicted on a scale from 1 to 14, the average answer of the subjects was a stunning 13.42. This suggests that the subjects actually did think they were inflicting the pain (Helm & Morelli, 1979).

Another critique is that the subjects might have thought that the 'learners' should just suffer the pain as the subjects thought that these 'learners' had voluntarily agreed to be in this

study (Recuber, 2016, p. 50). However, the subjects themselves had agreed to the exact same conditions and had the same chance of being placed in the electric chair. In addition, the 'learner' stated multiple times in different degrees that he did wanted to quit this experiment. Therefore, I find it improbable that the subject would believe that the learner should just suffer the pain, especially as it could have also been them in that chair.

To counter the critique that there are significant differences between environment of a psychological laboratory and real life situations, other variations of this study were performed. For instance, there was a variation where there was no voice feedback from the experimenter and one where there were scheduled responses when the subject hit a specific volt level. Even in the first variation, the majority of the subjects still went until the end (Helm & Morelli, 1979, p. 323).

Other variables occurred in elements such as the proximity to the learner (i.e. no feedback; voice feedback; being in the same room; with a hand on a shock plate). Within these four versions, the level of obedience dropped each time the proximity was decreased (from 65% in the first version to 30% in the fourth). An even sharper decline was measured when the proximity to the experimenter was decreased, for instance by giving instructions through a telephone. In this variation about 20% of the subjects were obedient (Helm & Morelli, 1979, pp. 323-324).

Even though the differences between the real life situations and those in such a study might be real, I believe that the general conclusion is still valid as this experiment does show that the presence of a legitimate authority can make individuals behave in ways that are inconsistent with their personal values.

Milgram explained that the experiment activated an 'agentic state' in which the subjects viewed themselves as an instrument of the person in charge (the experimenter). In this agentic state, the subject would have transferred any feeling of responsibility for their actions onto the experimenter. Thus, when they had to choose between refusing the demands of the experimenter and harming another person, the evaluative mechanism was absent and the subject could no longer autonomously act according to their own values. They therefore submitted to the demands of the experimenter (Helm & Morelli, 1979, pp. 324-339). For this psychological mechanism to be put in motion the figure of authority should appear to have authority, but it is not necessary that they actually have authority (Helm & Morelli, 1979, p. 335).

Employees are usually expected to work as ordered by their superior, even if these orders contradict to an individual's personal values (Trevino, 1986, p. 612). In my example, the

pressure that the manager puts on the employees differs in degree. I argue that when this degree of pressure is to such extent that the employee can no longer act according to their own values as this 'agentic state' has been activated, this way of influencing the moral behaviour of employees becomes unethical as it infringes on one's autonomy. The reason for why autonomy is so important will be discussed more in depth in the next section. The point at which this agentic state is be activated will differ per situation and person. For instance, a study by Witkin and Goodenough showed that in ambiguous situations, field dependent employees are more likely to act in consistence with the advice from external referents, such as the manager who is urging the employees to make their minimum targets. Field independent employees on the other hand, act with more autonomy (Witkin & Goodenough, 1977).

Another factor is the notion of ego strength, which is related to the degree of conviction that one has about ones self-regulating skills. Individuals who believe that they have a high degree of ego strength are more likely to resist any impulses and instead stand by their own norms and values (Trevino, 1986, p. 609). Character traits such as perseverance, self-confidence and perceived efficacy seem to enhance this ego-strength. A lack of these traits on the other hand results in a failure of self-regulative behaviours and thus an incompetence of acting morally (Narvaez & Rest, 1995, pp. 396-397). Therefore, individuals with a lower degree of ego strength might be easier influenced to change their moral behaviour.

In my example it would seem that in general scenario a) and b) do not yet activate such an agentic state. In scenario c) however, this becomes more ambiguous. Some employees might still be able to act autonomously under such pressure, but some employees will activate the agentic state. Even though scenario c) might be considered morally permissible, it does need close consideration to ensure that employees are still acting autonomously. However, as this is difficult to check in practice, I would advise against using this method as a way to influence the moral behaviour of employees.

6.1.3. Self-leadership

Another view on this debate is the so called 'self-leadership', which entails that individuals are in charge of motivating, leading and controlling their own behaviour. The utilisation of self-leadership can promote moral behaviour by the modification of aspects such as the management of cues, proactive networking, self-reward and self-punishment (Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, & Njoroge, 2014, pp. 387-389).

In addition, holding the employees accountable for the decisions they make instead of moving towards activating the agentic state might also improve moral behaviour. As

individuals would rather be perceived as being ethical than unethical, they are motivated to improve their behaviour if they are being held accountable for their actions (Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, & Njoroge, 2014, pp. 383-384). In order to achieve this, employees need to be aware of the consequences of their actions and ascribe a sense of responsibility to themselves. When this individual's responsibility to behave in moral ways is encouraged within an organisation, there is a higher change that individuals will act in moral ways (Trevino, 1986, p. 613).

Thus, it might not even be efficient to put any extent of pressure onto the employees in order to improve their moral behaviour. However, in this thesis the question is not about efficiency, but about moral permissibility. Even though I do argue that self-leadership is a more preferable way of improving moral behaviour compared to exercising pressure as it provides the employees with more autonomy, it can still be permissible to exercise a certain extent of pressure.

The moral permissibility of using such pressure can be determined by the consequences of this influence strategy as well as the moment of activation of the agentic state. Only when the positive consequences of the exercise of influence outweigh the negative ones and the amount of pressure is limited so that the agentic state is not activated would it be permissible to influence the moral behaviour of employees.

In my example this means that scenario a) and b) are morally permissible, as first the manager does not use strict targets, which means that the pressure he performs is not too rigid, but allows for some flexibility. Second, the manager does not pressure employees with harsh penalties (e.g. firing them) and therefore does not draw on hierarchic power relations. Rather, by entering into a dialogue with the employees about their performance, the manager attempts to influence their moral behaviour in an open and transparent way. This way the autonomy of the employees is respected, which makes these scenarios morally permissible. Scenario c) on the other hand, is not morally permissible as the employees might be pressured to such an extent that their agentic state is activated. Even if this is not the case, the consequences of exercising such an influence seem to involve a lot of negativity, such as stress and a less pleasant work environment. In addition to the difficultly in determining if the agentic state is activated, I argue that this is sufficient ground to deem scenario c) morally impermissible.

6.2. Autonomy

The previous section already touched upon the notion that employees should have some kind of freedom to choose to act in ways that they want. This section will explore this concept of autonomy further, in which autonomy can be described as the ability to set one's own ends

(Engelen & Nys, 2020, pp. 146-147). This implies that employees should have the freedom to choose their own actions according to their inherent values. As I have already stated before, I argue that in all circumstances autonomy of the employees should be protected. The theories of nudging, situationism and deontology will be used as a means to frame this debate.

As behaviour is often thought to be a result of its consequences (punishment or reward), managers can for instance influence moral behaviour through providing rewards to employees who act in accordance with that desired behaviour and punish those who display undesired behaviour. In order to change the behaviour, managers will have to make clear what sort of behaviour will be rewarded and punished (Trevino, 1986, pp. 613-614).

Hereby the manager is using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to influence the attitude towards the desired behaviour. Thereby the intention to behave in the desired way is strengthened. In order to make the attitude towards the desired moral behaviour as attractive as possible, the consequences of this behaviour will have to be made as positive as possible. In addition to Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Social Cognitive Theory also acknowledges the importance of consequences: Three of the five cognitive features that are believed to influence behaviour are the expectation of the consequences and responses, the experience of others' consequences and the effect of (non)occurrence of expected consequences.

The example that will be used in this section relates to managers who influence the consequences of specific moral behaviour to make this more attractive. For instance, managers can reward their employees if they make their deadlines on time. Here, three scenarios can be determined:

a) No rewards: The manager does not influence the consequences for employees who make their deadlines.
b) Psychological rewards: The manager gives psychological rewards, such as compliments, to employees who make their deadlines.
c) Material rewards: The manager gives material rewards, such as gifts or money to the employees who make their deadlines.

Scenario a) is a situation in which there are no rewards for changing ones moral behaviour. The manager might still inform employees in an objective manner about the deadlines, but will take no action to promote this behaviour. Scenario b) is different as there are psychological rewards involved. Examples of this are putting a green emoticon on a whiteboard next to the name of the employee who displays moral behaviour (e.g. when they come to work on time) or by giving compliments. The example of the gamification

programme of Amazon as presented in the introduction can also be considered under this scenario as it involves virtual rewards that also have psychological effects. As soon as actual material rewards are added to this, we are discussing scenario c). Material rewards can be either in the form financial rewards or other gifts such as a diner coupon or a vacation in a foreign country.

In relation to autonomy, multiple considerations should be taken into account when determining the moral permissibility of using such rewards to influence the moral behaviour of employees. This will be discussed more in depth in this section. First of all is the concept of nudging. This can be explained as exercising influence with the intention to alter individual behaviour a manner that is predictable without any option is explicitly being removed or the reasons of the individual are substantially changed (Simkulet, 2017, p. 536). Here, I will also relate to the capability approach as way to dive further into the concept of freedom of choice. Second, the theory of situationism will be discussed to provide more depth on the situational factors involving moral behaviour. Third, I will focus on the rights of the individual, such as autonomy, being influenced through the use of Kantian concepts. These topics will then provide some ethical boundaries to influencing moral behaviour in relation to the autonomy of the employees.

6.2.1. Nudging

Using rewards as an incentive to change one's behaviour can be described as a nudge and therefore nudging is an important consideration to take into account. A reason for the use of nudging is for instance that individuals seem to be unable to be convinced on the basis of rational arguments to change their behaviour. By using the more superficial cognitive processes of the individual, such as heuristics and biases which such a nudge takes advantage of, chances are increased that the individual will display the desired behaviour (Simkulet, 2017, p. 540).

The use of nudges can be very subtle. In my example for instance, putting a green emoticon on a whiteboard next to the names of the employees who exercise the desired moral behaviour can be considered to be a nudge. This is a kind of reward that fits in situation b) as it will work on a psychological level. As soon as there would be actual material rewards, such as a raise or a gift, this cannot be considered a nudge anymore as it would change the employee's reasons to act in a certain way significantly. Therefore, nudges will mostly fall under scenario b).

The main concern regarding nudging is that it could infringe on the individual's autonomy as it might take the voluntary choice away by the exploitation of psychological

mechanisms. Individuals have very little control over the influence that nudging has on them, which makes it more questionable if they would make a different choice compared to what they would have chosen without this influence (Engelen & Nys, 2020, p. 138). However, proponents of nudging stress that no freedom of choice is being limited and that a-rational influences are continuously influencing individuals in daily life as their decisions depend partly on the choice environment (Engelen & Nys, 2020, p. 150). In this section, the argument regarding freedom of choice will be examined, whereas the next section 'situationism' will relate to the argument about a-rational influences.

The crux of this discussion about nudging seems to be the question whether or not the autonomy of the individual is being violated when nudging is involved. Different positions are being taken with regard to autonomy in this nudging debate, which I will illustrate in the following example. Many people want to live healthy, but fail to actually implement a healthy lifestyle. When shelves in supermarkets are arranged in such a way that it is made easier for people to choose the healthy products, they are being nudged into making that decision. Some people argue that this also violates the autonomy of the individual as they did not decide to pick the healthy products as a result of their own rational analyses. However, it would seem that the individual was capable of making their own choice as they could still have chosen to get the less healthy food. In addition, this example also shows that nudging can be beneficial to one's autonomy as it is actually helping the individual to achieve their ends (Engelen & Nys, 2020, pp. 146-147).

Autonomy entails that individuals should have the freedom to choose their own ends. In relation to this freedom to choose, the capability approach provides an ethical view on this matter. As Amartya Sen (1990) describes in his article 'Development as Capability Expansion', the capability approach "sees human life as a set of "doings and beings"–we may call them "functionings"–and it relates the evaluation of the quality of life to the assessment of the capability to function" (Sen, 1990, p. 43). In this theory, having a choice is a valuable feature in the life of an individual as one should be free to achieve various functioning combinations. These can for instance be longevity, avoidance of undernourishment and absence of morbidity, or in case of management and working life, professional development. It is about looking at the life that individuals would be able to choose to lead compared to the lives they are forced to lead by for instance the law and regulations (Sen, 1990, pp. 48-56).

In relation to influencing moral behavioural, that would mean that the strategies used to influence behaviour of individuals should not decrease any effective opportunities that individuals have to undertake any actions or activities which they want to perform. It relates

to the concept of nudging in the way that the capabilities of the employees to achieve their functioning should not be limited by for instance psychological or material rewards. The reason for this is that such rewards would deprive employees form certain capabilities, which makes it morally impermissible. In my example, the first two scenarios do not seem to influence nor limit any effective opportunities for the employees to undertake any actions that they want to perform and would therefore be morally permissible on this subject. After all, scenario a) does not even have such rewards and the rewards in scenario b) will be of limited influence. In scenario c) however, the reward becomes so significant that capabilities of the employee could be limited as they might not feel free anymore to pursue their own functionings, which would make this morally impermissible.

6.2.2. Situationism

The other argument regarding nudging was that a-rational influences are continuously present the in daily life of individuals either way. As their decisions depend partly on the choice environment nudging should therefore not be considered immoral (Engelen & Nys, 2020, p. 150). As I agree with this statement, I will first show that situational factors indeed have a significant influence on moral behaviour and then argue how it relates to the moral permissibility of nudging.

Arguments to support the statement that the behaviour of individuals depend at least partly on situational factors are plenty. For instance, Jones & Verstegen Ryan have argued that as most individuals are at stage 3 or stage 4 of the model developed by Kohlberg, they tend to be susceptive to environmental factors. Moral sensibility, the first component of the four component model, also prescribes that individuals are sensitive to situational information. Regarding the behaviour change strategies, the Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that the perceived behavioural control can be influenced by the situation. The Social Cognitive Theory also recognises the importance of environmental factors on ones behaviour, this in interaction with personal factors. Thus, it appears that environmental factors do play a role in individual moral behaviour (Jones & Verstegen Ryan, 1997, p. 665). To gain a deeper understanding of the influence of situational factors and how this relates to the autonomy of the employees, I will take a closer look into the theory of situationism.

Some believe that behavioural patterns are 'global', meaning that they are stable across different situations and are not easily disrupted when morally irrelevant variables are changed. However, the global aspect of these behavioural patterns has been put to question by situationists. They claim that global traits hardly exists as is shown by experiments where

changes in morally irrelevant variables do have a significant effect on one's moral behaviour (Bates & Kleingeld, 2018, p. 524). Instead, they argue that individual's character traits vary across different situations and that therefore the way that individuals behave is dependent on the situation instead of their character. Situational varieties seem to influence ones behaviour in ways that common sense might not predict and that may seem insignificant, even though the behaviour might be relatively consistent over time in similar situations (Turri, 2017, p. 158).

An example of an experiment that shows that global traits do not exist is 'the Good Samaritans Experiment' executed by Darley and Batson. The subjects (students) were on their way to a talk about the Good Samaritan when they walked past a 'sick' person (an actor). Compared to the control group who were on their way to a talk about a practical topic, there appeared to be no significant difference in the amount of students that stopped to help this person. However, there was a significant difference found between the students who considered themselves to be in a hurry (10% helped) and those who did not felt they had to hurry (63% helped) (Darley & Batson, 1973). Thus, it would appear that the situational factor of time pressure is the crucial variable in this experiment and that the traits of helpfulness, compassion or kindness did not have much influence on the students' willingness to help.

In his article 'An Aristotelian Critique of Situationism', Kristjánsson offers four objections to the position of situationists. The first is the methodological objection, which argues that the way in which the experiments which support situationism are conducted or interpreted is wrong. For instance, the subjects could be pressured during the experiment or were not prepared sufficiently for the situation (Kristjánsson, 2008, pp. 62-63). Even though if this may the case for some experiments, it seems improbable that all, or even most studies, are conducted or interpreted wrong as the scientist will in general have a solid knowledge base on how to set up experiments in a correct way.

The second objection is the moral dilemma objection, which can be related to the first objection. The moral dilemma objection states that as the experiments do not put subjects in any day-to-day choice situation, the subjects are pressured with competing virtue impariatives. As individuals do not have a specific theory of algorithm to decide on which virtues to act, it is hard to determine whether individuals actually did behave in an immoral way (Kristjánsson, 2008, pp. 63-64). However, in many experiments the behaviour change can be traced back to trivial factors such as the weather or surrounding noises (Bates & Kleingeld, 2018, pp. 527-528).

A third objection to situationism, the biting-the-bullet objection, takes another stance and argues that the results of the experiments are to be expected as very few individuals are actually considered to be virtuous persons. The lack of moral behaviour does not imply that global traits do not exist, but merely that they are hard to find. Situationists can respond to this objection by arguing that even though the rarity of global traits does not have to imply that they do not exist, it does show that moral behaviour can be influenced by morally insignificant changes in the situation rather than with any traits of agents. Thus, individuals can be influenced to fail standards of moral behaviour with a relative ease that would question the existence or influence of global traits (Bates & Kleingeld, 2018, pp. 527-528). In addition, if these global traits are so rare and difficult to find by empirical research, and it therefore becomes difficult to explain and predict behaviour that way, than the appeal of these global traits is lost. However, this could also be evidence of the limits of the current empirical research (Kristjánsson, 2008, pp. 66-72).

The fourth and final objection is that of anti-behaviourism. It suggests that even if individuals are thought to not possess global traits as robust behavioural dispositions, they could still possess those traits in a more holistic sense. For instance, even if someone does not give money to a person in need when he has the opportunity to do so, it does not mean that this individual is not a generous person. It could be that they normally are generous, but had a very bad experience the last time they gave money away. Or maybe they are not giving money because they believe it would be a bad thing for that person to receive money. Furthermore, if the person does give money, it does not have to imply that they are generous, as they might just want to get rid of that person. Situationists can respond by stating that it is morally strange that someone's ethical perceptions were admirable whereas they did not behave accordingly and that it could still be that the individuals were influenced by situational variabilities (Kristjánsson, 2008, pp. 67-73).

As I have shown that the four objections to situationism seem to be ungrounded, I argue that that situational factors do have a significant impact on the moral behaviour of individuals. In addition, about 95% of our cognition occurs in the subconscious mind (Zaltman, 2003) and yet it is still widely accepted that individuals are capable of exercising autonomy. Therefore, I argue that current notion of autonomy also takes the workings of our psychological mechanisms into account. As these a-rational influences and situational factors thus do not influence autonomy, the idea that nudges act in a-rational ways does not infringe on the autonomy of individuals. If the manager therefore wants to use green emoticons or

compliments to ensure that employees make their deadlines, it could be considered morally permissible in this context.

6.2.3. Kantianism

When talking about autonomy, this is described as a moral right that people have; something one should not infringe on. In regards to the moral rights, deontology is a prominent ethical theory which proposes that when determining the moral permissibility of an action we should look at the underlying principles instead of the outcomes. This ethical theory can provide a different view on the debate on autonomy and will therefore be discussed more in depth in this section.

Kant is a well-known philosopher within this deontological framework, who proposes that humans, as sentient beings, should determine the right cause of action by using their reason capabilities. According to Kant, morality is centred around principled behaviour. Individuals could be motivated by either their principles to act in certain ways (Ward, 2002, pp. 2-5). Kant establishes standards of these principles that are objective, rational and unconditional, so called categorical imperatives. The most widely and well-known used formulations of these imperatives are the following:

"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (Kant, 1993, p. 30)

"Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end." (Kant, 1993, p. 36)

To give an example of the implications of the first formulation is that if you ask yourself if it is morally permissible to lie in a certain situation, you could imagine how it would be if everyone in the world would lie in that situation and whether that would be something you would want. Thus, if there is a murderer at your door asking where his target can be found, you could judge it permissible to lie, because if everyone would do that many lives would be spared. The second formulation does not imply that individuals can never be used as a means to an end, but it does state that this should never be the only goal out of respect for the life of individuals.

In this line, it can be argued that as long as the behaviour change strategies influence the behaviour of individuals in such a way that it one could at the same time will it to become an universal law, they could be morally permissible. On the other hand, behaviour change

strategies could be considered to be morally impermissible as they often use individuals as a means to achieve a specific end. However, it is not always the case that individuals are being used merely as a means to an end. In line with Kant's thoughts, I argue that the differences lies in just that specific aspect. Using employees to increase profit would be ethically wrong as it degrades them as human beings. However, encouraging employees to develop themselves professionally and thereby increasing the profit would be ethically acceptable. The difference is the way in which employees are taken into account when setting up such behaviour change strategies; either as an important actor that should be treated with respect or merely as a means to achieve an end.

Thus, when influencing moral behaviour, I argue that employees should not be treated merely as a means to an end as humans are rational beings that should be treated as such and in a respectful manner with regards to their agency. Furthermore, behaviour change strategies should only be conducted in ways of which one could will it to become universal law. In relation to respecting the employees, this means that all scenarios of my example would be morally permissible as long as the employees are not merely used to obtain an end (such as profit). With regards to the extent to which one would not mind if it became a universal law, I argue that scenario c) is not morally permissible. The reason for this that if every employee who made their deadline (or exercised other moral behaviour) would be presented with material rewards, this would first of all create a very materialistic society which is for instance a bad thing in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, even though employees would most likely make their deadlines, this extrinsic motivation would make it seem as if they were doing right for the wrong reasons.

Thus, I argue that the use of nudging in order to change moral behaviour of employees would be morally permissible if the autonomy of the individual is respected, which is the case when they are not limited in their options or functions, they are not merely used as a means to an end and the way of influencing is one of which we could will it to become moral law. For my example, this would imply that in general scenario a) no rewards and b) psychological rewards are morally permissible, whereas scenario c) material rewards is not.

6.3. Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura A. , 1977) suggests that appropriate behaviour is learned when people observe the actions of significant others. Using this theory, Brown et al. (2005) argue that leaders influence the ethical conduct of their followers through social learning. The ethical conduct of the leader as well as his expectations seem to play a large part

in this promotion of moral behaviour. It follows that managers play a key role in the moral behaviour of their employees (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005). This section will take a closer look into the ethical implications that are related to influencing moral behaviour through social learning.

One way of social learning is through role taking, which means that individuals are able to choose to take the perspective of others into account. If they have opportunities to engage in more complex role taking, individuals are speculated to advance in their cognitive moral development stages (Trevino, 1986, p. 611).

A study by Brenner and Molander (1977) found that the primary influence of ethical behaviour of employees is the way in which their managers behave. This finding is supported by Vitell and Festervand (1987). It suggests that if a manager does not display what would be considered to be moral behaviour according to the employees, for instance by coming in late or favouring some employees over others, the employees will then also follow that immoral example. In addition, employees will also apply self-leadership in order to align their behaviour with their managers' behaviour due to the influence of the social learning process (Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, & Njoroge, 2014, pp. 387-389).

Thus, managers can influence the moral behaviour of employees by using the principles of the social learning theory and, for instance, apply them to the strategy of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. They can for example, influence the subjective norms in an office by arriving on time and leaving after the work is done. This will give the employees the impression that working the contracted hours are the norm and they should also adhere to that. Here, I assume that it is considered to be moral behaviour to arrive on time and not leave before the end time, as this is what the employee agreed to in their contract. In this example, two scenarios can be distinguished, namely:

a) Unintentional influence: The manager works these hours because he feels this is the right thing to do, but has no intention to influence the behaviour of employees.

b) Intentional influence: The manager works these hours with the intention to make employees feel like they have to make these hours as well.

In this example, working the hours as agreed to in the initial work contract is considered to be moral behaviour. In order to examine the extent to which these two scenarios can be considered morally permissible, I will first discuss the extent to which the utilisation of social learning can be considered immoral and then apply this to the example. Second, I will apply this theory to other actors, as the manager is not the only one who is able to influence

behaviour through social learning. Last, the intention of the actor who is exercising this influence (in this case the manager) will be discussed, as it provides a different view on the permissibility of any influence on the moral behaviour of the employees.

This is not merely a discussion about whether the intention of the manager is good or bad. As scenario a) shows, the manager can also unintentionally influence the moral behaviour of employees by exercising a specific behaviour. This is what makes social learning quite complicated within our discussion. Even if he does not realise he is acting as a role model, it could still have a negative (or positive) impact.

6.3.1. Separation of tasks

One of the questions related to my example is be whether or not the managers are acting immoral if there is an unintentional way of influencing. For instance, it can be argued that it would be up to the manager himself at what time he wants to arrive and is not responsible if the employees follow his example. This relates back to Alfred Adler's concept of 'separation of tasks', where it is understood that people should not intrude on other people's tasks and people should thus make their own decisions. The employees should ask themselves whose task it is and separate their own tasks from those of others (Kishimi & Koga, 2019, pp. 120-121).

In relation to my example, this means that employees should ask themselves whether it is up to them or up to someone else to decide when they arrive and when they leave. The answer depends on who is ultimately going to receive the end result brought about by the choice that is made (Kishimi & Koga, 2019, pp. 122-124).

From the employees' point of view, I argue that it is up to the employees to make this choice, as the results will have most impact on them. Even though the manager will also receive something as more work will be done by the employees and the manager benefits from more work, I believe it will not have much of an impact on the results if an employee arrives few minutes late or leaves few minutes early. However, I believe that the results will have a bigger impact on the employees, as they are the ones that have to adjust their behaviour if they are to arrive on time and leave at the proper hour. This requires adaptability and discipline, among others. Furthermore, if they do not change their behaviour, they will also have to deal with any possible consequences that the manager might enforce.

From the point of view of the manager, I would argue that it is indeed up to him to decide if he wants to adhere to those work hours or not. He is the one that will receive most of the end result as he has to make those hours. It would then follow that the manager himself is free to decide the times of his arrival and departure, and it would then be up to the employees how

they respond to this. Thus, using social learning unintentionally as in scenario a) would be considered morally permissible on this matter. If social learning is used intentionally as in scenario b) with the aim of influencing the moral behaviour of employees, then the question of what this intention is also plays a role. This will be discussed in the next subsection.

6.3.2. Intention

When the manager intentionally stays at the work location to influence the behaviour of the employees through social learning as in scenario b), the moral permissibility of his intention in doing this also plays a role. Here, a comparison can also be drawn towards the concepts of nudging and obedience to authority as the intention of those influences are also important within those concepts. With nudging for instance, in addition to being influenced in ways that individuals might not always be aware of (which is supposed to infringe on ones right to autonomy), critics also point out that it implies that another person is wilfully using the psychological mechanisms of people (Engelen & Nys, 2020, p. 139). The same can also be said for influencing through using pressure and through social learning.

Within this debate, the distinction between paternalistic influence and self-interest influence is of interest to the debate. If on the one hand the aim of exercising a behaviour change strategy is for the good of those that are being influenced (e.g. helping them develop themselves), this can be considered paternalistic. If on the other hand the aim of the influence is for egocentric gains (e.g. increasing profit), then it is considered to be self-serving (Simkulet, 2017, pp. 536-537). Paternalistic influence may be considered morally permissible as the intention of actor exercising the influence is right, whereas the intention of the actor in self-serving influence is less moral and therefore morally questionable.

For instance, if the employees through social learning feel that they have to arrive on time, this may be with the intention to actually help the employees making good on their promises (i.e. working the hours they agreed to in their contract), in which case it could be more morally permissible. If, however, this was done with the intention to increase productivity and therefore overall profit, this is sooner to be morally deemed morally impermissible.

On the other hand, the intentions of the employees who adjust their behaviour through social learning could also be considered. If the employees know that their behaviour is not desired behaviour (e.g. when they arrive too late) and yet choose not to act accordingly, this could also be considered morally impermissible. In relation to the Moral Approbation Approach, it would seem that in such a situation the anticipated moral approbation does not meet the threshold of desired moral approbation. The employee does not establish any

intention to behave according to this anticipated behaviour. The intention of the employees can therefore be considered morally impermissible in that case. This puts a new dimension to the debate about the moral permissibility of influencing the moral behaviour of employees.

In relation to my example, this thus means that if the employees have the intention to arrive too late, it would be sooner morally permissible to influence their moral behaviour than when the employees have the intention to arrive on time. Thus, in scenario b) it can be considered morally permissible if the intention of the manager is paternalistic. If his intention is not paternalistic, it can still be considered morally permissible, but only if the intention of the employee is to exercise the immoral behaviour of arriving too late.

6.3.3. Other role models

Social learning is also a very useful tool that people use in their daily lives. Managers are not the only agents capable of influencing the moral behaviour of employees. The so called 'referent others' seem to have a significant influence on the ethical conduct in organisations as well. The presence of a referent other, or role model, can either encourage ethical or unethical behaviour. Such a referent other can be someone outside the organisation or a manager, but is more likely to be a colleague as one can identify with such a person easier (Trevino, 1986, p. 612). For instance, Deshpande and Joseph (2009) found a positive association between the self-reported unethical behaviour of nurses and their perception of the (un)ethical conduct of their colleagues.

Furthermore, it might not only be individuals who have an influence on the moral behaviour of others. Regarding the influence that groups might have on the moral behaviour of individuals, it seems that group discussions and group leadership have a significant impact. Studies show that individuals with low moral reasoning advanced furthest after having group discussions. Overall group performance seemed to decrease when the leader was relatively less principled, whereas high principled leaders either improved or did not change the group moral reasoning. Thus, group decision making might support moral behaviour (Trevino, 1992, p. 455).

These studies show that social learning by itself can be useful, if properly implemented. However, there is a difference between social learning in daily situations and using social learning as a way to influence people. This difference is that when social learning is used to influence behaviour, it means that an actor is intentionally trying to influence behaviour by using a-rational social influences. As I have just argued: if the intention of the actor is immoral, then influencing behaviour through the use of social learning would also be

considered immoral. If the intention is just, then it provides grounds for a moral way of influence.

Thus, social learning can be considered to be a morally permissible way of influencing the behaviour of employees. However, it should not be used to manipulate the employees, nor as a way to get them to do something they would not choose for themselves to do. Even when it is for the 'greater good' or morally right, it is still up to them to choose their own actions. An exception may be when the employees have the intention of exercising immoral behaviour. Social learning can be a way to let the employees know (whether unconsciously or not) what is considered to be the proper moral behaviour.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

As managers want to motivate their employees to act more morally, they try different strategies to influence the moral behaviour. As there are ethical aspects involved in the use of such strategies, this paper has sought to provide an answer to the research question: *'To what extent is it ethically permissible to influence moral behaviour of employees within hierarchal organisations?'*. This question was answered by examining the ethical considerations of different behaviour change strategies in order to determine the ethical permissibility of influencing the behaviour of employees within hierarchal organisations.

I have argued that influencing the employees to act more moral can be considered permissible under the circumstances that the autonomy of the employees is respected. This implies that the functioning combinations of the employees should not be limited, and managers do not put pressure on the employees to behave in ways that are incompatible with their own values. In addition, the intention of influencing the behaviour should be morally just. What this moral justness entails, is important to determine in further study. Managers can act as role models to provide a good example of moral behaviour and can influence social norms to the extent that no one is disadvantaged by them. Furthermore, no rights of any individuals can be violated, which also means that employees should not be used merely as a means to an end.

As ethics is often subjective it remains important that whenever strategies to influence behaviour are used an ethical analysis is being conducted, which can be based on the findings in this paper. This way, the actors can become aware of the ethical considerations and will have to think deliberately about the implications of the actions they wish to perform. In larger projects, managers could also consider to seek the advice of a person with an ethical background or an advisory board. Either way, considerations should be noted down so that any decisions can always be substantiated.

It must be noted that this paper has looked into the influence of behaviour change strategies in a very specific setting. However, these considerations may of course vary per person, company and situation. Furthermore, the assumed hierarchal organisation to which these theories are applied is also a very general one. If the organisation has a different culture or structure, the influences and ethical considerations might be different. Further research will be necessary to determine the extent to which such considerations differ in organisations with different size, culture etc. However, I do believe that this research provides a general overview that can be used as a starting point.

As stated in the introduction, an important notion to consider with any actions that influence moral behaviour is the extent to which individuals should be required to give their consent. As this is not always possible or desirable, further study can be conducted into whether or not it should be ethically required for individuals to give their consent before any influence can be exercised on their behaviour.

8. Bibliography

Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* , 179-211.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1989). Social Cognitive Theory. In R. Vasta, *Annals of child development* (pp. 1-60). Greenwich: CT: JAI Press.

Bates, T., & Kleingeld, P. (2018). Virtue, Vice, and Situationism. In N. Snow, *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue* (pp. 524-545). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Batson, C., Kobrynowicz, D., Dinnerstein, J., Kampf, H., & Wilson, A. (1997). In a Very Different Voice: Unmasking Moral Hypocrisy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1335-1348.

Brenner, S., & Molander, E. (1977). Is The Ethics of Business Changing? *Harvard Business Review*, 57-71.

Brown, M., Trevino, L., & Harrison, D. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing . *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 117–134.

Calderwood, K. A. (2011). Adapting the Transtheoretical Model of Change to the Bereavement Process. *Social Work*, 107-118.

Darley, J., & Batson, C. (1973). "From Jerusalem to Jericho": A study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100-108.

Davis, R., Campbell, R., Hildon, Z., Hobbs, L., & Michie , S. (2015). Theories of behaviour and behaviour change across the social and behavioural sciences: a scoping review. *Health Psychology Review*, 323-344.

Deshpande, S., & Joseph, J. (2009). Impact of emotional intelligence, ethical climate, and behavior of peers on ethical behavior of nurses. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 403–410.

Devaney, E. (2014). *The Pros & Cons of 7 Popular Organizational Structures*. Retrieved from blog.hubspot.com: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/team-structure-diagrams

Engelen, B., & Nys, T. (2020). Nudging and Autonomy: Analyzing and Alleviating the Worries. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 137-156.

Grimsley, S., & Scalia, S. (n.d.). *Organizational Chart and Hierarchy: Definition & Examples*. Retrieved from study.com: https://study.com/academy/lesson/organizational-chart-and-hierarchy-definition-examples.html

Helm, C., & Morelli, M. (1979). Stanley Milgram and the Obedience Experiment: Authority, Legitimacy, and Human Action. *Political Theory*, 321-345.

Jones, T. M., & Verstegen Ryan, L. (1997). The Link between Ethical Judgment and Action in Organizations: A Moral Approbation Approach. *Organization Science*, 663-680.

Kant, I. (1993). *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Kishimi, I., & Koga, F. (2019). *The Courage to be Disliked.* London: Allen & Unwin.

Kohlberg, L., & Kramer, R. (1969). Continuities and Discontinuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development. *Human Development*, 93-120.

Kristjánsson, K. (2008). An Aristotelian Critique of Situationism. *Philosophy*, 55-76.

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to Authority.* New York: Harper & Row.

Morgan, J. (2015). *The 5 types of organizational structures*. Retrieved from forbes.com: https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2015/07/06/the-5-types-of-organizational-structures-part-1-the-hierarchy/#6e45dce95252

Nabavi, R. T. (2012). Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning. *Theories of Developmental Psychology*, 1-24.

Narvaez, D., & Rest, J. (1995). Four Components of Acting Morally. In W. Kurtines, & J. Gewirtz, *Moral Development: An Introduction* (pp. 385-400). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Norenzayan, A. (2014). Does religion make people moral? *Behaviour*, 365-384.

Recuber, T. (2016). From Obedience to Contagion: Discourses of Power in Milgram, Zimbardo, and the Facebook Experiment. *Research Ethics*, 44-54.

Simkulet, W. (2017). Nudging, informed consent and bullshit. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 536-542.

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2019, June 21). *Consequentialism*. Retrieved from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: https://stanford.library.sydney.edu.au/entries/consequentialism/

Statt, N. (2021, 03 15). *Amazon expands gamification program that encourages warehouse employees to work harder.* Retrieved from theverge.com: https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/15/22331502/amazon-warehouse-gamification-program-expand-fc-games?utm_source=tldrnewsletter

Steinbauer, R., Renn, R. W., Taylor, R. R., & Njoroge, P. K. (2014). Ethical Leadership and Followers' Moral Judgment: The Role of Followers' Perceived Accountability and Self-Leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 381-392.

Tännsjö, T. (2007). Moral Relativism. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 123-143.

Trevino, L. K. (1986). Ethical Decision Making in Organizations: A Person-Situation Interactionist Model. *The Academy of Management Review*, 601-617.

Trevino, L. K. (1992). Moral Reasoning and Business Ethics: Implications for Research, Education, and Management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 445-459.

Treviño, L. K., Weaver, G. R., & Reynolds, S. J. (2006). Behavioral Ethics in Organizations: A Review. *Journal of Management*, 951-990.

Turri, J. (2017). Epistemic Situationism and Cognitive Ability. In M. Alfano, & A. Fairweather, *Epistemic Situationism* (pp. 158-167). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vitell, S., & Festervand, T. (1987). Business Ethics; Conflicts, Practices and Beliefs of Industrial Executives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111-122.

Ward, D. E. (2002). Explaining Evil Behavior: Using Kant and M. Scott Peck to Solve the Puzzle of Understanding the Moral Psychology of Evil People. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 1-12.

Witkin, H., & Goodenough, D. (1977). Field dependence and interpersonal behavior. *Pshychological Bullletin*, 661-689.

Zaltman, G. (2003). *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market.* Brighton: Harvard Business Review Press.