



NAVIGATING MORAL CLEANSING: THE ROLE OF THE 'MACBETH EFFECT' IN DECISION-MAKING AMONG LEADERS OF PRIVATE NURSING SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Private nursing schools in South Kalimantan face increasing pressure to produce high-quality, ethically driven nursing professionals, aligning with Indonesia's "Golden Vision 2045." Within this context, the "Macbeth effect"—a psychological phenomenon where individuals experience guilt, anxiety, or a compulsion to "cleanse" themselves after confronting morally ambiguous situations—poses a challenge to ethical leadership. This study investigates the manifestation of the "Macbeth Effect"—the compulsion to morally cleanse oneself following ethically ambiguous situations—among leaders of private nursing schools in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with five school leaders to capture their experiences and perceptions of moral responsibility and ethical decision-making. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes, focusing on how the Macbeth Effect shapes leadership behavior, decision-making processes, and organizational dynamics within nursing education institutions. Findings reveal that leaders frequently exhibit moral cleansing behaviors, such as self-evaluation, transparency in decision-making, and using mediators to handle conflicts. While the Macbeth Effect enhances ethical leadership practices, it also introduces challenges that may impact mental well-being and leadership efficacy. Practical strategies, including promoting a culture of transparency, emotional support, and task delegation, are recommended to mitigate the psychological burden associated with moral cleansing. This research contributes to understanding ethical leadership in nursing education and highlights the need for support systems to sustain leaders' mental resilience and ethical commitment.

Keywords: higher education indonesia emas 2045; macbeth effect; nursing school; private school

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INTRODUCTION

The nursing school is a fundamental pillar of education and practice within the healthcare system, tasked with preparing future nurses to deliver compassionate, competent, and ethical care (Gede Juanamasta et al., 2021). Divided into public and private institutions, nursing schools offer unique settings, with private nursing schools showcasing distinct leadership and management structures that profoundly influence patient care quality and human development, aligning with the national research master plan (2017-2045) and Indonesia's vision for 2045 (Kementerian Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional/Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional, 2024; Ristekdikti, 2017). Operating within a unique framework shaped by educational goals, market dynamics, and regulatory demands, leaders in private nursing schools face various challenges, including financial sustainability, student recruitment, faculty retention, and accreditation standards, all while upholding nursing's

ethical principles (Hill & Wie, 2012; The Situational Analysis Of Nursing Education And Workforce In Indonesia | The Malaysian Journal of Nursing (MJN), n.d.).

One psychological phenomenon that profoundly impacts ethical decision-making and organizational dynamics within this complex leadership structure is the "Macbeth Effect." Defined as the compulsion to cleanse oneself morally after confronting situations involving moral ambiguity or decision-making dilemmas, the Macbeth Effect draws its name from Shakespeare's "Macbeth," where the protagonist experiences overwhelming guilt and paranoia in pursuit of personal ambition (Simpson & Micheal, 2012). In educational and healthcare leadership contexts, the Macbeth Effect may manifest in response to ethical challenges, integrity issues, cultural conflicts, and other moral quandaries (Trakulpipat et al., 2021). Although Macbeth Effect research has been explored in broader organizational and leadership contexts, its specific relevance to the leadership and management of private nursing schools remains underexplored.

The "Macbeth Effect," a psychological phenomenon wherein individuals feel compelled to cleanse themselves morally after engaging in ethically ambiguous actions, has profound implications for leadership, especially within fields demanding high moral accountability, such as education and healthcare. Leaders who encounter ethically challenging situations may experience intense moral distress, often leading to guilt and the desire for self-purification. This effect underscores the ethical burden leaders bear, as they navigate the responsibility of making decisions that can impact not only their institutions but also the well-being of their subordinates and clients. In contexts where leaders are tasked with upholding ethical standards, the Macbeth Effect can heighten their sensitivity to perceived moral transgressions, thereby intensifying their commitment to accountability and ethical integrity.

The presence of the Macbeth Effect in leadership also intersects significantly with mental health, as prolonged moral distress and unresolved ethical conflicts can lead to psychological strain. Leaders experiencing this effect may be more prone to anxiety, stress, and even burnout, particularly if they lack adequate coping mechanisms or support systems. In nursing education, for example, leaders may face the dual challenge of fostering an ethically sound environment while managing internal moral conflicts arising from institutional constraints or resource limitations. Consequently, the Macbeth Effect highlights the need for mental health support in leadership, as maintaining moral responsibility under sustained ethical pressure can impact leaders' overall psychological resilience and their capacity for effective, compassionate decision-making.

This study aims to examine the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect within leadership and management in private nursing schools, assess its implications on decision-making processes and organizational culture, and contribute to understanding ethical leadership within this unique educational setting. Drawing from theoretical frameworks in psychology, education, and organizational behavior, this research investigates the complexities of moral leadership within private nursing schools. It highlights the potential for practical strategies that leaders can employ to recognize, address, and mitigate the negative impacts of the Macbeth Effect (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). These strategies are intended to promote an environment conducive to ethical practice and organizational success, thereby filling a critical knowledge gap in the intersection of ethics, leadership, and education in private nursing institutions (Wright & Brajtman, 2011).

The originality of this study lies in its focus on the Macbeth Effect within private nursing school leadership, offering new insights into how moral self-regulation influences decision-making in a sector heavily reliant on ethical standards. The study employs a cross-disciplinary approach to contribute to theoretical understanding and practical application. The hypothesis proposed here is one-directional, suggesting that the Macbeth Effect negatively influences decision-making efficacy within private nursing school leadership due to increased moral conflict and psychological burden. The objectives of this study are to explore the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect, understand its impact on ethical decision-making in private nursing school leadership, and develop practical, strategic solutions to mitigate its adverse effects, thereby empowering leaders with the skills to navigate ethical dilemmas and foster a culture of integrity, innovation, and excellence.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to deeply explore the practice of the Macbeth Effect within private nursing schools in South Kalimantan Province. The case study method allows the researcher to examine this phenomenon in real life, gaining diverse perspectives and holistically understanding the situation's complexity (Heale & Twycross, 2018). The study involved five private nursing schools in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, selected for their representative role in the region's nursing education landscape and aligned with Indonesia's vision for ethically driven healthcare by 2045. These institutions—STIKES Intan Martapura, STIKES Darul Azhar Batulicin, Universitas Sari Mulia, Universitas Cahaya Bangsa, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin—were chosen due to their established Nursing Science programs and leadership structures, which mirror those found in private nursing schools across the country. This selection allows the study to capture diverse yet relevant experiences that reflect broader trends and challenges in ethical leadership and moral accountability within Indonesia's private nursing education sector, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings to similar contexts. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with leaders from the selected nursing schools, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews focus on experiences, perceptions, and responses to situations or events that may trigger the Macbeth Effect.

To ensure comprehensive data gathering, a semi-structured interview guide was designed to capture broad insights and specific instances of the Macbeth Effect in leadership decision-making. The interview focused on three key questions: 1) Can manifestations of the Macbeth Effect be found in the leadership of private nursing schools? 2) How does the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect impact decision-making in the leadership environment of private nursing schools? and 3) What strategies can be developed to manage the adverse effects of the Macbeth Effect manifestations in the leadership of private nursing schools?. The interviews were conducted via the Zoom app and recorded. After the interviews were completed, transcripts were immediately prepared with the help of transcription software, followed by reliability and validity checks through piloting interview items and refining them based on feedback. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee at Universitas Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin, under certificate number 513/UMB/KE/X/2024, issued on October 7, 2024. This approval certifies that the study adheres to ethical standards and ensures the safety and confidentiality of all participants.

Thematic analysis was employed to systematically organize and interpret the qualitative data collected, following a structured approach to identify key patterns and themes related to the Macbeth Effect in leadership. The analysis began with a comprehensive review of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Initial coding was then conducted by identifying

phrases and segments relevant to moral cleansing behaviors, ethical decision-making, and leadership challenges. Each code was meticulously labeled to capture the underlying meaning, with close attention to nuances in participants' experiences and expressions. Following initial coding, the researchers organized the codes into broader themes through an iterative process, ensuring consistency and coherence. The themes were then refined by grouping similar codes, verifying their alignment with the research objectives, and reviewing any overlapping or redundant themes. Throughout this process, the researchers conducted regular peer debriefings to enhance the rigor of the analysis, verifying each step against the study's framework. This multi-step approach ensured a thorough exploration of the data, leading to themes that accurately reflect the complexities of the Macbeth Effect within leadership dynamics in private nursing education.

RESULT

This study successfully gathered five participants from five private nursing schools in South Kalimantan Province. A description and information about the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.
Participants characteristic (N=5)

	Characteristic	n(%)
Gender	Male	3 (60%)
	Female	2 (4%)
Length of Term in Office	<5 years	0 (0%)
	>5 years	5 (100%)
Collage	Higher Education Institution	1 (20%)
	University	4 (80%)

This study generated three major themes regarding the practice of the Macbeth Effect as exhibited by leaders of nursing schools: 1) manifestations of the Macbeth Effect in the leadership of private nursing schools, 2) the impact of Macbeth Effect manifestations on decision-making within the leadership environment of private nursing schools, and 3) strategies for managing the adverse effects of Macbeth Effect manifestations in the leadership of private nursing schools. The Macbeth Effect describes a psychological phenomenon in which a person feels the need to morally "clean up their act" after committing an act that may be considered unethical or guilt-inducing. In the context of leadership in private nursing schools, the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect is seen in the behavioral patterns of leaders who often take responsibility for mistakes or conflicts, especially regarding staff dissatisfaction or decision-making mistakes.

Manifestation of *Macbeth Effect* in Private Nursing School Leadership Responsibility for Errors and Conflicts.

Some leaders in nursing schools described recognizing responsibility as a way of maintaining the program's credibility and providing a sense of security for subordinates. Participant 1, for example, stated,

"If we release it, we never ... this is his responsibility, we still face it, we can't patronize it when it's a responsibility, we can maintain the good name of the program like that even though it's our subordinates".

This statement shows an attempt to confront the problem head-on without ignoring its impact, a sign of the Macbeth Effect, where the leader feels the need to "cleanse" the institution's reputation and himself from the possible adverse effects of the decision.

Compromise with Subordinates through Deliberation

Effective leadership is also shown through deliberation with subordinates to avoid authoritarian actions that might cause resistance or conflict. Participant 2 described his leadership method by listening first,

"...we meet to unify perceptions... we decide together for good things."

In this case, the desire to reach a consensus or decision to solve the problem reflects an aspect of the Macbeth Effect that seeks to reduce guilt or moral discomfort by sharing responsibility in every decision.

Acceptance of Self-Deficiencies and Self-Evaluation

As a typical form of introspection from the Macbeth Effect, leaders like Zubaidah emphasize the importance of continuous evaluation and introspection in every decision-making process.

"We always start with an evaluation... throughout the process we have tried to learn more," participant 3.

By evaluating and improving, participant 3 created space for herself to let go of potential "moral sins" in decisions that may have previously been inappropriate.

Personal Conflict and Mediator Formation

Leaders also often face personal conflicts that require the role of a mediator to reach a more neutral resolution. For example, when a lecturer is insubordinate, the leader asks for help from above, such as the Dean, to be a mediator, as mentioned,

"I have a lecturer who has a conflict... I have a conflict often associated with personal conflicts, even though it is professional work" Participant 4.

This strategy shows the leader's attempt to "clean up" feelings of guilt or moral conflict by involving a third party to achieve a more objective resolution.

Awareness of Subordinates' Welfare

Leaders in nursing schools also show concern for the welfare of subordinates as a form of "moral cleansing" for policies that may be considered unfavorable. For example, in the context of the distribution of credits and allowances, leaders try to ensure that the welfare of subordinates is still considered even though there are sometimes differences in perception. Respondent 1 emphasized that decisions on allowances and the distribution of tasks were still made fairly despite disagreements among lecturers.

Ethical Practices and Action Examples

In leadership, ethics guide the leader's actions, especially in maintaining a good name. of the institution. When there is a violation of ethics, the leader gives a warning and also gives an example of the expected actions, so that subordinates can see a good example without feeling forced.

Participant 1 stated,

"If the principle I use is the first, it must be an example".

By setting a direct example, the leader affirms his moral commitment, a way to ethically "clean up" his responsibilities.

Reflections and Commitment to Developing the Next Generation of Leaders.

Leaders are not only focused on resolving current conflicts or mistakes, but are also committed to setting an example for the next generation, demonstrating the Macbeth Effect that seeks to cleanse and prepare successors without the moral burden of mistakes once committed. Respondn 4 stated,

"Let's not look for conflicts, together we will succeed, for example, the two of you together will be named, why don't you usually say it?".

This illustrates a commitment to leaving a legacy of leadership that is free from moral conflict.

Overall, the Macbeth Effect in leadership in this private nursing school is manifested in the form of full responsibility, deliberation with subordinates, self-evaluation, use of mediators in conflict, concern for the welfare of subordinates, and commitment to ethics.

The Impact of Macbeth Effect Manifestation on Decision-Making in Private Nursing School Leadership Environment

In the private nursing school environment, manifestations of the Macbeth Effect significantly impact decision-making patterns and strategies. Leaders, driven by the desire to maintain the institution's good name and defuse moral conflicts, show a tendency in decision-making that prioritizes introspection, evaluation, and supporting the moral well-being of subordinates and the organization. The following is the impact of the Macbeth Effect on decision-making based on interviews with five participants.

Emphasis on Fairness in Benefits Decisions and Division of Duties

One of the main impacts of the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect is caution in maintaining a sense of fairness among lecturers regarding the distribution of tasks and benefits. Participant 1, Head of Department at Sari Mulia University, described that when dissatisfaction arises regarding the distribution of credits, he tries to consider input from all lecturers and find a solution together. Participant 1 said,

"...we will discuss how to proceed, regarding the problem at hand, based on input from all lecturers," Participant 1.

This impact suggests that the Macbeth Effect encourages deliberation-based decision-making as a form of "cleansing" responsibility from potential conflict and injustice among subordinates.

Commitment to Transparency and Openness in Decision Processes

Another impact is the emergence of an attitude of transparency as part of the leader's efforts to avoid moral error and conflict. Respondent 5, who serves as Head of Study Program at STIKES Darul Azhar, asserted that every major decision is taken by considering collective opinions through joint meetings.

"... we do a kind of meeting to unite perceptions... we decide together for good things" respondent 5.

This approach shows that the Macbeth Effect has an impact in the form of collaborative leadership, where decisions that might cause resistance or dissatisfaction are avoided by involving all relevant parties.

Utilization of Mediators to Prevent Personal Conflict in Decisions

Another significant impact is the use of mediators as an attempt to avoid decisions that could exacerbate personal conflicts between leaders and staff. Respondent 1 revealed that he once faced a direct conflict with a disgruntled lecturer, and as a leader, he chose to involve the Dean as a mediator.

"I have a lecturer who has a conflict... I have a conflict often associated with personal conflicts, even though it is professional work" Participant 1.

This suggests that the Macbeth Effect reduces the emotional impact and subjectivity of decision-making by involving a neutral third party.

Reflection and Self-Evaluation in Every Decision

The manifestation of the Macbeth Effect also leads to a reflective attitude in the decision-making process. Leaders seek to evaluate decisions that have been made and learn from mistakes that may have occurred. Respondent 3, Chairperson of STIKES Intan Martapura, described the importance of self-evaluation in every decision-making so as not to repeat the same mistakes in the future.

"... during the process we have tried to learn more deeply, and from previous experiences we have learned what is wrong, there is something to be improved" Respondent 3.

This effect shows that the Macbeth Effect leads leaders to be cautious and introspective, prioritizing well-considered decisions to avoid repeating mistakes.

Efforts to Minimize Negative Impact on Subordinates' Emotional Well-Being

In addition, the Macbeth Effect also has an impact on decision-making that focuses on the emotional well-being of subordinates, especially when the decisions taken have the potential to cause negative impacts. Respondent 5 stated that he always tries to make decisions that are well discussed so as not to cause conflicts that can disrupt the work environment.

"... many things need to be considered because... for conflict management it really has to be finalized and considered when making any decision" respondent 5.

Thus, the Macbeth Effect motivates leaders to avoid decisions that could worsen working relationships or create discomfort among subordinates.

Commitment to Being a Role Model and Setting an Example in Decision Making

The Macbeth Effect is also reflected in leaders' determination to be role models for staff and lecturers in fair and responsible decision-making. Leaders realize that their actions can have a direct impact on the work climate. Participant 1 stated,

"...being an example, we don't want to reprimand right away, but show the proper action first" Respondent 1.

This statement shows that the Macbeth Effect has an impact in the form of a leader's commitment to prioritize integrity and exemplary in every decision, with the hope that this positive behavior will be emulated by subordinates.

Overall, the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect in the leadership environment of private nursing schools positively impacted decision-making. Leaders driven by the need to "cleanse themselves" of potential moral conflicts showed a preference for decision-making based on fairness, deliberation, transparency, and self-reflection. Other impacts included the use of mediators to avoid subjectivity, concern for the emotional well-being of subordinates, and a determination to be an ethical and responsible role model.

Strategies for Managing the Negative Effects of Macbeth Effect Manifestations in Private Nursing School Leadership

The Macbeth Effect, which refers to the psychological urge to morally cleanse oneself after committing an act that may bring about guilt or ethical conflict, can potentially have adverse effects on leaders and the work environment. This effect can affect decision-making, relationships with subordinates, and conflict management in leadership in private nursing schools. Based on interviews with five participants who are leaders in nursing institutions, the following strategies were developed to manage the harmful effects of the Macbeth Effect manifestations.

Promote Transparency and Open Communication to Avoid Emotional Conflicts

One of the key strategies in managing the negative impact of the Macbeth Effect is to encourage transparency and open communication in decision-making. By engaging

subordinates in open discussions regarding policies and changes, leaders can reduce guilt that arises from perceptions of authoritarianism or one-sided judgment. Participant 5, Head of Study Program at STIKES Darul Azhar, stated that decisions are taken collectively through deliberation to maintain harmony and prevent misunderstandings,

"... we do a kind of meeting to unify perceptions... we decide together for good things" participant 5.

As such, transparency in every step can reduce tension and avoid the uncomfortable feelings that the Macbeth Effect can cause.

Optimizing the Mediator's Role to Prevent Personal Conflicts

The use of mediators is one effective way to defuse conflicts that can exacerbate the Macbeth Effect. Leaders can involve a neutral third party, such as a dean or upper management, to prevent personal or emotional perceptions in making difficult decisions. Participant 1 described the importance of a mediator when dealing with dissident lecturers, with the aim of avoiding personal conflict:

"I have a lecturer who has a conflict... I have a conflict that is often associated with personal conflicts, even though it is professional work" participant 1.

By involving a mediator, leaders can focus on objective and professional decisions, thereby reducing the negative emotional impact caused by the Macbeth Effect.

Develop Mechanisms for Periodic Evaluation and Self-Reflection

Periodic evaluation of decisions and policies is an important strategy to prevent recurrent feelings of guilt resulting from ineffective policies. Respondent 3, Chairperson of STIKES Intan Martapura, highlighted the importance of reflection in every decision-making process to avoid repeating mistakes,

"...during the process we have tried to learn more deeply, and from previous experiences we have learned what is wrong, there is something to be improved" Respondent 3.

Periodic evaluation mechanisms can help leaders to improve future strategies and avoid the guilt that comes with sub-optimal decision-making.

Strengthening Ethical Competence and Leadership Skills through Periodic Training

Training on ethics and leadership can help leaders better manage the Macbeth Effect, especially in complex decision-making. Leaders with a solid ethical foundation and a deep understanding of conflict management will be better able to avoid adverse emotional effects. Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of being a role model for subordinates,

"...must be an example. Being an example, we don't want to reprimand right away but show the proper action first" Respondent 1.

By honing ethical and leadership skills through regular training, leaders can balance authority and moral responsibility.

Building a Culture of Emotional Support in the Workplace

A work culture that supports the emotional well-being of all parties can also be a powerful strategy to reduce the impact of the Macbeth Effect. When the work environment has a culture of support and appreciation, feelings of guilt or moral burden can be better managed. Respondent 5 emphasized that,

"... many things need to be considered because... for conflict management, it really has to be finalized and considered when making any decision" Respondent 5.

A culture that supports emotional well-being will strengthen the leader's mental resilience in facing the moral consequences of decisions.

Familiarize with Task Delegation and Decision Delegation to Relieve Moral Burden

Delegating tasks and decision-making to subordinates can help ease the moral burden on leaders that often arises due to the Macbeth Effect. By involving staff in day-to-day operational decisions, leaders can avoid the guilt that may arise from too much responsibility. Respondent 3 stated that the organizational structure at STIKES Intan Martapura allows tasks to be divided according to levels of authority, so that problems do not have to be solved by the chairperson:

"So if there are problems at the bottom that cannot be handled by the vice chairman, then go to the chairman" Respondent 3.

With this delegation, the leader can only carry part of the moral burden and can divide responsibilities proportionally.

The adverse effects of the Macbeth Effect manifestations in leadership in private nursing schools can be minimized through strategies that include transparency, mediators, periodic evaluation, ethical training, a good culture of providing emotional support, and task delegation. These strategies allow leaders to remain responsible and moral while safeguarding their emotional well-being and the surrounding work environment.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the "Macbeth Effect" in leadership within private nursing schools, revealing insights into how moral 'cleansing' behaviors influence decision-making and leadership dynamics. Drawing on participants' responses to educational leadership, this research parallels findings from previous psychological and organizational behavior studies. This discussion section contextualizes these findings, evaluates their implications, and addresses the study's strengths and limitations. The study's findings align with previous research by Shekhawat (2022) on the Macbeth Effect, which identifies a heightened need for moral cleansing following actions perceived as ethically dubious. In this context, nursing school leaders frequently exhibit introspection and self-accountability, as noted in their tendencies to assume responsibility for decisions impacting subordinates. This introspective approach, highlighted by the participant's commitment to credibility and the program's reputation, is consistent with research suggesting that moral self-regulation drives individuals to maintain ethical standards in response to guilt (Nakagawa et al., 2019; Siev et al., 2018; Simpson & Micheal, 2012). The study's observed focus on decision transparency and inclusivity aligns with the (Shekhawat, 2022) findings that collaborative decision-making mitigates perceived moral conflicts and strengthens leader-follower relationships.

Despite similarities with previous studies, unique contextual factors emerge within the nursing school leadership setting. Leaders often utilize structured discussions involving subordinates to reach consensual decisions. This reflects a more collaborative Macbeth Effect manifestation, deviating from the self-focused remorse seen in traditional organizational contexts. Moreover, the frequent use of mediators to handle conflicts between leaders and staff, as shared by the participants, adds a layer of impartiality to the Macbeth Effect in this setting, emphasizing conflict resolution over individual guilt (Schaefer, 2019). In contrast to conventional environments where hierarchical decision-making is prevalent, this approach underscores an ethical leadership model wherein collective responsibility is prioritized over unilateral accountability, thus diminishing personal guilt and fostering a supportive work culture (Bush, 2021).

The study's insights bear significant implications for leadership practices within nursing education. Leaders influenced by the Macbeth Effect are committed to ethical integrity and, through role modeling, cultivate a culture of mutual respect and collaboration (Bakokonyane,

2023; Metz et al., 2019). This moral self-regulation is pivotal in fostering an environment where ethical behavior is encouraged, ultimately benefiting institutional credibility. For nursing institutions aiming to balance authority with ethical standards, adopting transparency in decision-making can enhance staff morale and reduce turnover linked to moral dissatisfaction (Ladjar & Bantugan, 202 C.E.). Additionally, the implications for conflict management are notable, as mediators can alleviate interpersonal strains and reinforce objectivity, as highlighted by responses in the study(Nia & Amirianzadeh, 2018).A key strength of this study lies in its rich qualitative insights derived from first-hand accounts of nursing school leaders. The contextual specificity enhances the relevance of findings for leadership roles within educational health settings, offering a nuanced understanding of ethical conflicts unique to this domain(Bernhardt et al., 2023; Davis, 2018). However, the study's limitations include a limited sample size, constraining the generalizability of findings across different educational institutions. Furthermore, the study relies heavily on self-reported experiences, potentially introducing biases related to social desirability or recall inaccuracies. Future research might address these limitations by incorporating diverse institutional settings and employing longitudinal methodologies to capture evolving leader behaviors over time.

This study offers a novel contribution to understanding the Macbeth Effect in the context of nursing education leadership, revealing unique implications that extend beyond typical organizational settings. Unlike in corporate or traditional organizational environments where the Macbeth Effect may manifest as an individual's isolated moral response(Shekhawat, 2022), the findings suggest that nursing school leaders integrate this psychological phenomenon within a framework of collective responsibility. In this context, moral cleansing behaviors—such as transparency in decision-making, collaborative approaches, and mediation in conflicts—become integral to maintaining ethical integrity and sustaining a positive institutional culture. The shared moral and ethical accountability inherent in nursing education requires leaders to navigate moral conflicts not just for self-regulation but as a mechanism to support their subordinates' and students' moral and psychological well-being, which is critical in settings devoted to healthcare and compassion-driven services.

Moreover, the Macbeth Effect in nursing education leadership may have implications for leaders' mental health and resilience that differ from those of other fields(Bernhardt et al., 2023). As nursing educators are responsible for modeling ethical behavior, their encounters with moral distress can create prolonged psychological strain if not adequately managed(Aydogdu, 2023; de Leon Siantz, 2008; Ghorbani et al., 2023). This study highlights the need for strategies tailored to the nursing education setting, such as formalized emotional support systems, routine self-reflection practices, and ethical leadership training, to mitigate the impact of moral cleansing on mental well-being. By demonstrating how leaders in nursing education uniquely experience and address the Macbeth Effect, this research contributes valuable insights into the psychological demands of ethical leadership in healthcare education. It underscores institutional support's importance in upholding leaders' moral resilience and efficacy.

The ethical limitations of the Macbeth Effect present significant challenges within nursing education leadership, where moral cleansing behaviors can create a paradox in ethical decision-making. Leaders who feel compelled to address moral distress through personal accountability may inadvertently overextend themselves, leading to decision-making driven by guilt rather than balanced judgment(Andrews & Haskell, 2024). This phenomenon highlights the risk of ethical burnout, where leaders, in striving to maintain their integrity, experience prolonged mental strain and reduced resilience. Consequently, ethical

interventions tailored to nursing education are essential, promoting a supportive environment where leaders can engage in reflective practices without bearing the total weight of moral responsibility alone. Structured ethical training, regular self-care practices, and institutional policies fostering collective responsibility are crucial to preventing the adverse effects of the Macbeth Effect, ensuring that leaders can uphold ethical standards effectively and sustainably in a high-stakes educational setting.

In sum, the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect in nursing school leadership showcases a blend of reflective responsibility, collaborative decision-making, and ethical leadership strategies. Leaders effectively manage moral conflicts by aligning personal values with institutional goals, reinforcing an ethical and supportive work culture. These findings underscore the potential of moral self-regulation as a leadership tool, emphasizing the need for transparency, mediation, and ethical role modeling within nursing education. The study's contributions offer valuable insights for future explorations into leadership ethics, particularly within fields requiring high moral accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the manifestation of the Macbeth Effect is indeed present in the leadership of private nursing schools, where leaders feel a need to "morally cleanse" themselves through accountable and introspective decision-making behaviors. The impact of this manifestation is evident in decisions that prioritize the emotional well-being of subordinates, maintain transparency, and employ mediation to resolve conflicts, thereby fostering harmonious professional relationships and minimizing potential dissatisfaction. To manage the adverse effects of the Macbeth Effect, strategies such as involving mediators, conducting regular self-evaluations, and cultivating a work culture that supports emotional well-being are proposed to alleviate the moral burden leaders feel and improve decision-making efficiency. These findings contribute to the field of psychology by enriching the understanding of moral regulation in leadership contexts and offering practical strategies to enhance the psychological health of leaders and the work environment within the nursing education sector.

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