

Employee attitudes towards workplace ethics during the Covid-19 pandemic in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This research note uses national survey evidence collected in May 2021 to explore the views and attitudes of employees in Aotearoa New Zealand towards workplace ethics. We compare these findings with data from a previous Ethics at Work employee survey in 2018 to highlight key trends in workplace ethics over time. Results show several improvements over time but also some areas of concern. To show how New Zealand employees have responded during the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2021 results from Australian employees – as well as the 2021 global results of employees from 13 countries which include both New Zealand and Australia – are also presented. Our findings are discussed through a moral economy framework, which positions employment as a relationship with significant dependencies and mutualities between labour and capital. Importantly, this relationship is intended to enhance human and societal flourishing. We conclude that this framework provides an opportunity to rethink how employment relations in Aotearoa New Zealand might be understood and practised.

Keywords: Covid-19, employee survey, workplace ethics, ethics programmes, ethical leadership, moral economy

Introduction

In terms of its activities and the objectives pursued by different actors, the field of employment relations has long been influenced by ethical considerations and consequences (e.g., Gross, 1998; Budd & Scoville 2005; Provis, 2006). However, and somewhat surprisingly, it has seldom been the case that ethics has been explicitly included in analyses of the field, a point cogently argued by some leading commentators (e.g., Ackers, 2002). In his well-known article on neo-pluralism, Ackers (2002) seeks to elevate ethics by contending “...the employment *relationship* should be conceptualised as a social and ethical relationship, as well as an economic transaction” (p.12). In other words, neo-pluralism points to an ethical constitution of work and society. Since this influential contribution, there have been some efforts to engage with ethics, albeit through the lens of “corporate social responsibility” where the firm and its actions are the primary focus of attention (see, for example, the symposium on corporate social responsibility and labour standards in the BJIR, volume 56, number 1, 2018; Gold et al., 2020; Casey et al., 2021). These are all useful additions to the literature. We nevertheless contend that a focus on “ethics” as opposed to “corporate social responsibility” is more likely to advance our understanding of how different social institutions and employment actors can simultaneously improve work and society. This is because, unlike how corporate social responsibility is positioned, ethics, *prima facie*, does not necessarily elevate one actor’s or institution’s interests over another.

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In this research note, we will use the moral economy as a lens to discuss our findings. Moral economy is a framework that is informed by the writings of Karl Polanyi and British historian E.P. Thompson, that seeks to challenge neo-classical views of capitalism that labour is a “mere commodity” to serve organisational ends and what this means for the wellbeing and flourishing of individuals and wider society (Bolton & Laaser, 2013). In other words, while it acknowledges capitalism and the associated interest in rationalised views including efficiency, exchange, and productivity in various labour markets, it seeks to integrate economic practice with the personal needs of individuals so that economies are viewed as “...socially, politically and economically embedded systems, fuelled by norms and values” (Bolton et al., 2012, p.121). Therefore, a moral economy framework embraces an analysis of different actors in employment relations by promoting normative understandings of mutual reciprocity aimed at their wellbeing and thriving (Sayer, 2000). In New Zealand, the Employment Relations Act is known for its emphasis on mutual reciprocity, strongly supporting mutual trust and good faith obligations and behaviour. Good faith is a central tenet of the Act and intended to endorse and shape honesty and co-operative approaches in employment relationships. Advocating for the idea of a more ethical and reflective actor in the workplace would further strengthen our analysis of how different organisational practices are experienced in the New Zealand employment context and arguably contribute to insights into workplaces and wider society (Bolton & Laaser, 2013).

We acknowledge that the word “moral” might be problematic in terms of how it is used. For example, it may be used with a sense of being a widely shared value or it might descriptively convey whatever an individual considers to be a better situation according to their conception of morality (Carrier, 2018). Due to space limitations, we do not address this issue here (see Booth, 1994, for a wider critique). However, we highlight the potential of the moral economy to extend Acker’s neo-pluralism by showing how work, the experience of work, and society might be normatively enhanced. In other words, the moral economy provides the purpose and benefit (i.e., wellbeing, thriving or flourishing) underpinning Acker’s neo-pluralism, as well as revealing the consequences of employment relationships based on good faith. Encouraging the views of employees to comment on ethical practices in their workplaces is one way of achieving this since it respects the inclusion of individual values at work rather than their subordination due to management interests. Indeed, the moral economy would contend it is in management’s interest to develop the ethical capacities and voice of their employees, thereby generating mutual advantages.

Research focus

There is limited scholarly work on the employee perspective towards workplace ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand. There are some empirical studies that have canvassed the views of business managers on ethics. This body of work has collectively revealed that the nature of competition and the pressure for high performance often leads to a low priority for ethics among managers with few dedicated resources for incorporating ethical values into practice. Thus, ethics training and a code of ethics were more unlikely to be used or adopted. This research further reveals that many managers would themselves act in an unethical manner if required and they prefer adopting informal approaches to workplace ethics (see Brennan et al., 1992; Alam, 1999; Pajo & McGhee, 2003). Given this research was conducted around 20 or more years ago, our findings for New Zealand can shed light on the current situation and what changes have occurred over time. For example, some observers might anticipate the current situation could be more in line with Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which places New Zealand at the top of the index as a country with the least corruption in the public sector.

The purpose of this research note is to examine the views and attitudes of employees in Aotearoa New Zealand towards a range of contemporary ethical issues. Specifically, we ask: What are employees' attitudes and views on workplace ethics during the Covid-19 pandemic? We focus on their views concerning:

- Organisations' response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Misconduct at work;
- Speaking up;
- Ethics programmes;
- Ethical leadership; and
- Ethical issues for the future workplace.

Methods

Data were collected in 2021 as part of an international survey involving several countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Co-ordinated by the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) in London, the Ethics at Work 2021 employee survey was conducted in May 2021 by a UK-based consultancy firm (Yonder) and examined 9,834 respondents across 13 countries, including New Zealand and Australia (see Institute of Business Ethics, 2021). The Ethics at Work employee survey is a standardised questionnaire that is part of triennial research by IBE, which had been conducted since 2005 and exists of 13 questions into employee perceptions of ethics in the workplace. The aims of this international survey are to develop an understanding of employees' attitudes to and perceptions of ethics in the workplace, provide organisations with the latest trends and compare how business ethics is viewed and understood by employees in different countries. Before the latest data collection in 2021, (almost) the same survey was conducted in 2018 and the preceding years, which gives us the opportunity to compare employee perceptions before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The six research topics mentioned above correspond to the various themes and questions in the survey.

In 2021, sampling took place via an online panel in each country (Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the USA). A quota sampling approach was adopted whereby broad national representative quotas (i.e., based on the composition of the national population in each country) were applied by age, gender, and region. This approach helped ensure there was neither under- or over-representation of any subset and was adopted across all surveyed countries. Thus, all samples were deemed to be representative of the working adult population in each of the participating countries. In Aotearoa New Zealand, a representative sample of 757 employees (aged 18+ years) participated in the research. A similar number of employees were surveyed from Australia and the other countries.

There were different ways in which respondents were invited to access the online survey: either by direct e-mail invitation or they could access the survey via the panel's website. Respondents accessing the panel were incentivised with 'points' which could be redeemed (either for a cheque or vouchers for various brands/shops). The amount of panel points was based on the length of time respondents engaged with the survey. The order of the survey questions was not randomised, but the order of certain codes for different questions were randomised to minimise bias that may be a result of the way that the codes were ordered.

It is important to note that respondents in 2021 were not the same people as those who completed the previous Ethics at Work survey in 2018. The consultancy firm that conducted the survey also changed

between 2018 and 2021, but the IBE worked with them to ensure that the methodology used was comparable. Consequently, the samples selected can be considered representative of the working population and, therefore, it is possible to compare the two waves of the survey. Here, some of the descriptive statistics are presented. Specifically, we compare the 2021 findings with the same questions asked in the earlier 2018 Ethics at Work survey to investigate how, and in what ways, the practice of ethics might be changing. As a further point of comparison for assessing ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand organisations, we also provide the 2021 findings for Australia and the global average of all 13 participating countries (Institute of Business Ethics, 2021).

Results

Organisations' response to the Covid-19 pandemic

To begin, we first explore the perceived impact of the Covid-19 pandemic through a question in the 2021 survey that asked respondents' opinion regarding their organisation's response to Covid-19 in terms of ethics (Table 1). While slightly more than half of Aotearoa New Zealand's employees said it remained the same, it is noteworthy that 37 per cent believed their organisation's ethical behaviour had improved compared to before the pandemic. This is in line with the global average, including Australia that was even slightly more positive.

Table 1: Considering your organisation's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you say that your opinion on how ethically your organisation behaves has...?

	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
(Slightly) improved	37	41	37
Stayed the same	54	52	54
(Slightly) worsened	6	6	8
<i>Item Q3. 5 item Likert scale (improved, slightly improved, stayed the same, slightly worsened, worsened, prefer not to say). Not included in 2018 Survey.</i>			

Misconduct at work

The positive trend towards ethics at work is also visible in the percentage of employees that were aware of misconduct in the workplace, which has decreased considerably, from 26 per cent in 2018 to 16 per cent in 2021 (Table 2).

Table 2: During the past year at work, have you been aware of any conduct by your employer or colleagues that you thought violated either the law or your organisation's ethical standards?

	NZ (2018)	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
% Yes	26	16	14	18
<i>Item Q4. One response only. (yes, no, don't know).</i>				

A critical note is that the positive trend may be related to the fact that many employees have been working from home more during the pandemic, with the result that some forms of misconduct are less common and/or less visible to others. Indeed, there is cause for concern. Table 3 shows the misbehaviour that employees see at work. The percentages are based on employees who answered in the affirmative to the previous question. For example, 23 per cent of employees who reported having been aware of misconduct at work in the past year mentioned that this involved misreporting of hours worked. The most pressing issues were bullying/harassment (45 per cent); abuse of authority (44 per cent); safety violations (31 per cent); and discrimination (30 per cent). While many of these percentages of perceived misconduct in the workplace are lower than in the 2018 survey for Aotearoa New Zealand and/or are in line with the Australian and global responses in 2021, discrimination jumped 23 percentage points from 2018, while bullying and harassment is 14 per cent higher than the global average, despite the result for Australia being even worse. The abuse of authority was not included in the previous survey but in 2021, Aotearoa New Zealand fares poorly when compared to the global average and even Australia.

Although the Ethics at Work 2021 survey did not include questions that could explain the precise reasons for these patterns, there are solid indications that discrimination has increased dramatically after the outbreak of Covid-19, especially towards people of Asian descent (Thaker, 2021a; Thaker, 2021b), while the awareness of discrimination may also have increased as a result of the unprecedented 2019 terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (places of worship) in New Zealand (Webb, 2021). In this respect, it is encouraging that the Ministry of Justice (n.d) is currently leading the development of a National Plan against Racism. With regard to the increase in perceived bullying and harassment, we suspect a similar trend; an increasing awareness among employees as a result of, for example, the globally influential #MeToo movement and the following of organisational and government initiatives (Mau et al., 2019).

Table 3: Which, if any, of the following types of misconduct were you aware of?

	NZ (2018)	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
a) Misreporting hours worked	33	23	28	31
b) Safety violations	37	31	24	30
c) Discrimination (e.g., by race, gender, age)	7	30	29	26
d) Stealing	27	16	19	17
e) Improper hiring practices (e.g., favouring family or friends)	19	22	27	23
f) Fraud	9	11	16	12
g) Bullying / harassment	38	45	53	31
h) Abuse of authority	N/A	44	33	36
i) Data misuse, breach of confidentiality or privacy violations	N/A	16	16	18
j) Environmental violations	N/A	8	7	11
k) Bribery	N/A	7	5	9
l) Misuse of new technologies/Artificial Intelligence (AI)	N/A	6	9	6
m) Other	10	9	6	6
n) Prefer not to say	N/A	6	2	5
<i>Item Q5. [ASK ALL WHO ANSWERED 'YES / a' at Q4]. All that apply.</i>				

It is important to acknowledge that the percentages are not an optimal indication of the actual extent or seriousness of the misconduct. For instance, many cases of fraud and bribery are more likely to be covered up and out of sight of employees, and the percentages alone – 11 per cent and seven per cent, respectively, should be sufficient to alarm organisations. In addition, there are forms of misconduct that are relatively “new”, such as misuse of new technologies/Artificial Intelligence (AI) and might not yet always be recognised.

Speaking up

Another area of workplace ethics that is under increasing scrutiny is speaking up. Six in 10 (61 per cent) employees that have been aware of misconduct within their organisation did raise their concerns with management or another appropriate person, or through another mechanism, and a similar percentage (58 per cent) were subsequently satisfied with the outcome of speaking up. However, what was unexpected was that four in 10 employees who did speak up said they have experienced personal disadvantage or retaliation (Table 4). While Aotearoa New Zealand ranks about the same as the global average, it was noticeably better than in Australian workplaces. This finding needs urgent improvement if we want to encourage employees to report issues and to strive for more open, ethical and inclusive workplaces.

Table 4: After raising or speaking up about your concerns, did you experience any personal disadvantage or any form of retaliation for doing so?

	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
% Yes	41	53	43
<i>Item Q8 [ASK ALL WHO ANSWERED 'YES' / a AT Q5] (yes, no, don't know). Not included in 2018 Survey.</i>			

In addition, 40 per cent of employees that were aware of misconduct did not speak up, primarily because they felt they might jeopardise their job (31 per cent compared to 42 per cent in Australia) or did not believe that corrective action would be taken (31 per cent compared to 26 per cent in Australia) (Table 5). An additional reason for not speaking up was not wanting to be seen as a troublemaker by management (22 per cent). Worryingly, in the ‘other’ category (31 per cent), half of the respondents indicated that they did not raise concerns because the misconduct was perpetrated by management and they believed that nothing would change and/or their jobs would be jeopardised, or they did not know who they could contact to speak up. Another reason found in this category stems from the nature of the New Zealand labour market, namely the fear that because “everyone knows everyone” they would not find another job if they raised their concerns. What was more positive was that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, peer pressure (i.e., “I felt it might alienate myself from my colleagues”) has become far less important in electing not to raise concerns (17 per cent compared to 27 per cent in 2018). In Australia, the percentage for this same reason was 29 per cent while “I thought it would be raised by someone else”, also scored considerably higher than in New Zealand workplaces.

Table 5: Which of the following, if any, influenced your decision not to raise or speak up about your concerns?

	NZ (2018)	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
a) I felt it was none of my business	16	11	26	21
b) I felt I might jeopardise my job	33	31	42	34
c) I did not believe that corrective action would be taken	35	31	26	34
d) I felt it might alienate myself from my colleagues	27	17	29	21
e) I did not want to be seen as a troublemaker by management	19	22	26	25
f) I did not know who to contact	8	11	10	11
g) I thought that it was common practice	9	8	3	8
h) I thought it would be raised by someone else	9	6	19	8
i) I thought that they already knew about it	21	19	19	15
j) I didn't think it was a serious issue at the time	12	14	6	9
k) Other	18	31	10	8
l) Don't know	1	3	3	5
<i>Item Q9. [ASK ALL WHO ANSWERED 'NO / b' at Q5] All that apply.</i>				

Ethics programmes

Table 6 demonstrates that there has been little improvement in ethics programmes within Aotearoa New Zealand organisations in the past three years, with percentages about the same for the four building blocks: written standards of ethical business conduct (71 per cent); a means to report misconduct confidentially (60 per cent); an ethics advice or information helpline (49 per cent); and ethics training (55 per cent). Employees in the public sector and larger organisations are more likely to be aware of each of the instruments of an ethics programme (Institute of Business Ethics, 2021). Closer analysis of the Ethics at Work data shows that employees whose organisations have a comprehensive ethics programme (all four building blocks) were more likely to have spoken up than those in organisations without an ethics programme, and they had a more positive view of their organisation's integrity and ethical leadership. They were also more concerned about the inability of organisations to meet their stated ethical standards as a future workplace issue (Institute of Business Ethics, 2021). Organisations would, therefore, do well to have more than just a code of conduct if they want to actively support their employees in acting ethically, by also providing less common tools such as ethics training and ethical advice when they grapple with dilemmas and difficult situations in their daily work. Managers have an important role to play in providing this support.

Further analysis of the data revealed that organisation size is an important factor in the provision of ethics programmes with bigger organisations having more, and SME's having fewer instruments (Institute of Business Ethics, 2021). Finding innovative solutions could be further explored, such as providing external reporting capabilities or helplines, and collaborating with other organisations in the same industry.

Table 6: Please indicate whether each of the following statements apply to your organisation or not.

	NZ (2018)	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
a) My organisation has written standards of ethical business conduct that provide guidelines for my job (for example a code of ethics, a policy statement on ethics or guidance on proper business conduct)	70	71	75	67
b) My organisation provides employees with a means of reporting misconduct confidentially, without giving their name or other information that could easily identify them	56	60	66	57
c) My organisation offers advice or an information helpline where I can get advice about behaving ethically at work	46	49	57	46
d) My organisation provides training on standards of ethical conduct	51	55	67	52
<i>Item Q10. (yes, no / don't know). NOTE: % Yes reported.</i>				

Ethical leadership

Several of the previous sub-sections have implications for the actions of organisational managers. The Ethics at Work survey findings on ethical leadership also reported on those ways to create and maintain an ethical climate within organisations and support employees to “do the right thing” (Table 7). It is encouraging to observe that organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand have improved since 2018 and score generally close to or above the global average. However, we suggest scope exists for further dialogue and discussions around ethics internally: respondents were less likely to say that their line manager explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work they do (61 per cent compared to 65 per cent globally). While this may be connected with the principle of good faith in the Employment Relations Act, there is a real risk of complacency if managers assume that workplace ethics need no clarification. When comparing the ethical practices of managers in New Zealand workplaces, they are almost all below their counterparts in Australian workplaces. Consequently, there is room for improvement when it comes to ethical leadership by managers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Table 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	NZ (2018)	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
a) Overall, my line manager sets a good example of ethical business behaviour	69	72	76	71
b) My line manager explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work we do	56	61	66	65
c) My line manager supports me in following my organisation's standards of ethical behaviour	65	73	75	68
d) Issues of right and wrong are discussed in staff meetings	53	57	62	58
e) Senior management take ethics seriously in my organisation	N/A	73	78	70
f) In my organisation, decisions about people are made fairly	N/A	66	71	65
g) My organisation disciplines employees who violate my organisation's ethical standards	53	59	66	56
h) People in my organisation know what is expected of them in terms of ethical behaviour	N/A	82	83	78
i) People in my organisation are held accountable when they break the rules	N/A	66	73	68
j) My organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings (with customers, clients, suppliers, etc.)	74	80	80	76
k) My organisation lives up to its stated policy of social responsibility	66	71	72	71
l) My line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable	22	29	38	32
<i>Item Q11. 5 item Likert scale (strongly agree, tend to agree, neither (dis)agree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know). NOTE: strongly + tend to agree reported. Please note that (only) the last question in this item battery, taken from the Ethics at Work survey, has a negative wording.</i>				

We argue that a greater focus on providing formal ways in which employees can obtain advice or information about behaving ethically at work, which currently is the least common of the four building blocks of an ethics programme considered (see Table 6), could be one way of beginning to address these issues. This would be beneficial especially where there is little support by direct supervisors (Table 7), or ethical issues are not being identified because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the workplace (Tables 2 and 3). Ethical leadership – as a crucial layer between organisational ethical values and norms, which are embedded in ethics policies, programmes, and codes of ethics on the one hand, and an ethical climate and employee ethical behaviour on the other hand – is also an important way to work towards developing more ethical and responsible workplaces (see, for example, Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Bedi et al., 2016; Kuenzi et al., 2020).

Ethical issues for the future workplace

Finally, employee concerns for the workplace of the future are presented in Table 8. These reflect both contemporary issues such as discrimination, and emerging issues including AI and new technologies for organisational ethics. Overall, the data shows that employees in other countries, including Australia, tend to hold more concerns about their future workplaces than employees in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Table 8. How concerned, if at all, are you about the following issues with regards to the future of the workplace?

	NZ (2021)	AUS (2021)	Global (2021)
a) Loss of interpersonal interactions due to the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown	33	40	44
b) Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for unethical behaviour (e.g. discrimination, privacy violations)	37	40	41
c) Discrimination or bias in the workplace	41	43	41
d) Automated machines or Artificial Intelligence replacing humans in the workplace	33	40	41
e) Loss of interpersonal interactions due to new technologies	33	37	40
f) Inability of organisations to live up to their stated ethical standards	34	37	37
g) Increased level of unethical behaviour due to an increase in the use of new technologies	32	34	35
h) Increased surveillance and monitoring in the workplace	33	35	35
i) New workplace/skillset requirements due to digitalisation and new technologies	28	31	34
<i>Item Q15. 5 item Likert scale (extremely concerned, moderately concerned, slightly concerned, not very concerned, not at all concerned, prefer not to say). NOTE: extremely, moderately + slightly concerned reported. Not included in 2018 Survey.</i>			

Conclusion

Employment relations is a field of study that is replete with ethical considerations, even if ethics has seldom been at the centre of employment-related analyses (Ackers, 2002). Our research note has sought to remedy this shortcoming by inquiring into employees' attitudes and views on workplace ethics during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, we have drawn on survey evidence collected in 2021 from Aotearoa New Zealand (with comparisons to earlier 2018 evidence where available, as well as to Australia and a wider global survey of 13 countries including New Zealand and Australia) to focus on employee views. The areas addressed included organisations' response to the Covid-19 pandemic; misconduct at work; speaking up; ethics programmes; ethical leadership; and ethical issues for the future workplace.

The initial experience of the pandemic suggests that many organisations in New Zealand have either stayed the same or improved their ethical practice. At face value, this could be seen as encouraging

and broadly supporting what many observers might anticipate with New Zealand's top ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. However, there are indications that little may have changed since the studies of Brennan et al. (1992), Alam (1999), and Pajo and McGhee (2003) that focused on the ethical practices of New Zealand business managers. This earlier collection of research revealed competitive pressures and a relatively low priority given to ethics by managers, including ethics training and relevant ethics programmes, resulted in a preference for adopting more informal approaches towards workplace ethics. The most recent evidence from the 2021 Ethics at Work survey shows that most New Zealand employees now work in organisations with ethics programmes including a code of ethics. However, these programmes are by no means sufficient unless organisational leadership continue to advance the establishment of strong ethical climates and workplace cultures. When compared to Australia, unfortunately ethical leadership in New Zealand is somewhat lagging. Consequently, there are some concerning indicators of workplace misconduct among New Zealand organisations including bullying and harassment, discrimination, and an abuse of managerial authority. A significant minority of employees who speak up concerning misconduct experience retaliation suggests that informal organisational practices could be further strengthened through regulatory measures to enhance workplace ethics. For instance, the Protected Disclosures Act, which came into force in New Zealand from July 1, 2022, may assist in seeing a reduction in the number of cases of retaliation against employees who speak up.

Rather than adopting a strongly competitive and exclusively economic view of business practice where ethics is a cost and should be eschewed, we contend that a moral economy lens offers New Zealand organisations in general, and employment relations, in particular, a broader and more inclusive sense of purpose. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted many traditional practices including where work can now occur – including options for work from home – and identified how wellbeing is an important issue for people and society (Malinen et al., 2020). Supported by comprehensive ethics programmes, ethical leadership that encourages raising concerns and speaking up about misconduct in the workplace can, in our view, strengthen the foundation of New Zealand organisations (Lasthuizen, 2018). Such practices are aimed at improving business wellbeing which, in the end, will also enhance employees and their ability to thrive (Haar et al., 2022), and enrich society more broadly. New Zealand's Employment Relations Act is premised on an indigenous formulation of the concept of good faith, involving honesty, and co-operation. It has long been known for also being an avant garde and clever country. We urge all employment relations actors – and especially employers – to reinforce this reputation by proactively managing ethics in the workplace and thereby strengthening their ethical practices within a wider moral economy.

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