

The Moderating Effect of Ethical Behaviour on Employees' Performance in Selected Public Institutions of Nigeria

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Abstract

Notwithstanding the growing importance of ethical conduct in today's corporate world, here remains a dearth of scholarly inquiry into the fundamental mechanisms that elucidate the relationship between ethical conduct and employee performance, particularly within government organisations. This research focused on government workers in Nigeria to determine how ethical behaviour affects their overall performance level. This study made use of primary and secondary sources to create a descriptive framework. Participants in this research were employees of federal government agencies within Southwest, Nigeria, and a total of 1500 government workers were selected using a purposive sample strategy. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sampled respondents. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that the implementation of a robust set of ethical principles has the potential to enhance the overall effectiveness of an organisation. Furthermore, it is evident that ethical leadership assumes a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between an organization's culture and the performance exhibited by its employees. The study revealed that institutional variables had a strong and direct influence on social determinants ($\beta = .944, p < 0.05$), organisational culture ($\beta = 1.412, p < 0.05$), and leadership ($\beta = .324, p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the relationship between institutional variables and these factors is statistically significant. Furthermore, it has been found that many factors, such as social determinants ($\beta = 2.766, p < 0.05$), organisational culture ($\beta = -3.608, p < 0.05$), leadership ($\beta = -.748, p < 0.05$), and institutional variables ($\beta = 3.138, p < 0.05$), exert a significant influence on the performance of employees. Therefore, a statistically significant correlation can be observed between indicators of ethical behaviour and the performance of public sector workers in Nigeria. In order to enhance employee performance, it is imperative for the government to place emphasis on preventive and enforcement strategies in its endeavour to promote ethical conduct.

Keywords: Ethics, Performance, Organizational culture, Employee, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

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Significant global transformations are currently taking place. In industrialised societies, the prioritisation of ethical standards is a matter of utmost importance. Research has indicated that the presence of an ethical work environment is a significant determinant

of decision-making and organizational responsiveness (Hsieh, Huang, Ma, & Wang). The significance of workplace ethics is growing in importance as a measure of a company's success and competitive advantage. Organisations that engage in a well-structured framework for effective governance in response to the recent positive trajectory of the global economy are more inclined to emphasise ethical conduct in the workplace and integrate moral values into their corporate culture (Hian & El'fied, 2014). Any reputable organisation will make significant efforts to optimise productivity. However, many organizations and the Nigerian government have come to terms with the fact that their hopes of increasing output have not been realised. According to Parboteeah and Kapp (2018), the implementation of various reforms in public sector organisations can be related to the primary purpose of tackling productivity difficulties. Yet, there is a lack of substantial evidence to support the notion that the allocation of human and material resources has resulted in noteworthy enhancements in organisational performance over time.

Ethics, at its core, is a normative discipline that establishes guidelines for human conduct by delineating actions as obligatory, forbidden, or permissible (Taennsj, 2019; Ugwu, 2019). Ethics encompasses the scholarly examination of concepts such as moral principles, ethical standards, notions of right and wrong, distinctions between good and evil, as well as the associated notions of obligation, responsibility, and morality. According to Rossouw (2015), there are certain actions that are widely seen as immoral, and it is universally agreed upon that individuals should refrain from participating in such behaviours. In recent times, there has been a growing discourse among researchers and practitioners in the field of public administration regarding the significance of ethics in their professional endeavours (Ibietan & Joshua, 2013).

The importance of ethical considerations in contemporary bureaucracies and public service cannot be overstated, since they have a direct impact on the exercise of power and lawful authority (Lewis, 2005). Agbude and Etete (2013) assert that the public service reform agenda in both developing and affluent nations often encompasses initiatives aimed at enhancing ethics and accountability. The escalation of unethical conduct and the absence of responsibility within the public sector have incited intense debates in recent times over the most effective strategies to curb these issues in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria.

The public sector of any nation plays a crucial role in facilitating the advancement and development of the respective country. The allocation of a significant portion of Nigeria's national budget to the establishment and operation of public businesses has been observed, as noted by Adeyemo and Salami (2018). The government, by means of its diverse ministries, departments, and agencies, executes policies, programmes, and services that facilitate development across various levels, stimulate economic expansion, and enhance the bonds of trust and collaboration between state officials and the constituents they serve (Parboteeah & Kapp, 2018).

Nevertheless, the performance of the public sector in Nigeria has been characterised by contradictions (Adeyemo & Salami, 2018) and has emerged as a symbol of corruption, mediocrity, and fraud (Agbude & Etete, 2013). Currently, the public sector in Nigeria is experiencing a state of near disintegration. The fundamental underpinnings of ethics have consistently been disregarded by political forces and the pervasive politicisation of various domains. Consequently, there is a noticeable decline in motivation, accompanied by inadequate compensation, a decrease in production, a lack of interest in skill enhancement, and a disregard for merit (Kagara, 2009; Salamon et al., 2020).

Despite the concerted efforts made by successive governments in Nigeria to foster transparency and responsibility, there has been a persistent presence of unethical conduct across several domains in recent times (Mcdonald, 2019). There is a widespread belief among individuals that corruption is deeply ingrained within the economic and political frameworks of numerous nations, particularly, Nigeria, in the contemporary day.

In order to emphasise the significance of ethical behaviour, many research have been done. Duska et al. (2017) identify corruption and inept administration of public affairs as two primary instances of unethical conduct. Due to the allocation of public funds by the government, narratives pertaining to the mismanagement, deceit, and misuse of these resources tend to garner disproportionate levels of attention relative to their actual significance. Ongoing endeavours to eliminate unethical business practises inside the workplaces of Nigeria persist in the present day (Osibanjo et al., 2015). Several scholarly studies, including those conducted by Miheli et al. (2017), Ongong'a and Akaranga (2018), and Omisore and Oyende (2019), have posited that the presence of workplace ethics plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness and

achievement of public institutions. Nevertheless, there is a limited body of research that has empirically examined the relationship between work ethics and employee performance through the utilisation of structural equation modelling techniques. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the potential influence of ethical behaviour exhibited by public sector employees in Nigeria on their productivity levels using structural equation model.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

The conventional interpretations of the term "ethics" encompass its characterization as a collection of rules or guidelines that dictate appropriate conduct. An alternative conceptualization of the term "ethics" can be described as "moral philosophy," encompassing the scholarly examination of the formation, progression, and rationalisation of an individual's moral beliefs (Ugwu, 2019). Ethical principles have a normative quality, as they establish the obligations, prohibitions, and allowances that pertain to individuals (Tnnsj, 2019; Schwartz, 2018). Ethics encompasses the scholarly examination of concepts such as moral principles, ethical standards, the distinction between right and wrong, the nature of good and evil, as well as the notions of obligation, responsibility, and morality. According to Rossouw (2015), there exist certain actions that are widely regarded as unethical and should be universally avoided. He describes many criminal activities such as armed robbery, murder, dishonesty, and corruption. Similarly, the author provided a series of favourable characteristics as illustrations for leading a virtuous life, including honesty, kindness, reverence for life, self-control, and patriotism, among others.

Osibanjo et al. (2015) claim that organisational ethics refers to a cultural norm that fosters a sense of obligation and duty among individuals towards their work. This perspective is based on the notion that work holds inherent worth for humans. According to Ongong'a and Akaranga (2018), a code of ethics refers to a formal declaration of corporate principles, ethical standards, rules of behaviour, professional conduct, or organisational philosophy pertaining to the obligations towards employees, shareholders, consumers, the environment, and other societal elements beyond the confines of the entity. According to Omisore and Oyende (2015), organisational ethics is considered a crucial component of an organization's responsibilities. It encompasses the expected level of commitment from employees, which is aligned with the core values and principles of the company. This suggests that, in a broad sense,

organisational ethics might be conceptualised as the criteria against which a corporation and its executives make rational decisions. The veracity of this statement lies in the fact that the ethical framework of an organisation is primarily established by the incorporation of standards within legislative measures, regulations, internal policies, and procedural guidelines.

Numerous prior studies have established a positive association between ethical practises inside the workplace and productivity outcomes. The presence of ethical issues exerts a direct influence on the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures, hence exerting an effect on the overall productivity of employees. Parboteeah and Kapp (2018) conducted a study that centred on the ethical behaviour of employees. According to the report, adherence to organisational ethics has the distinct capability to enhance productivity, morale, and confidence within the workplace. Organisations derive financial gains from individuals who possess a robust work ethic, hence rendering such employees highly valued by firms. This implies that the absence of employee commitment, deficient organisational structure, and inadequate interpersonal abilities may exert an adverse impact on the overall productivity of the organisation.

The study conducted by Ongong'a and Akaranga (2018) examined the extent to which the personnel of oil and gas firms in River State adhere to ethical business practises. The determinants were investigated with a cross-sectional survey approach. Based on the findings of the data analysis, a positive link was seen between workplace ethics and employee dedication to their profession within the specific setting of Nigeria. In a similar vein, the study undertaken by Osibanjo et al. (2015) aimed to enhance comprehension of the significance of organizational ethical leadership encompassing both publicly traded and privately owned enterprises. The survey conducted a sampling of 221 individuals who were employees and managers inside four distinct organisations, consisting of two public and two private entities. These businesses were selected from two different sectors. A survey research study was undertaken in order to gather data from the participants. The study conducted by the researchers could not identify any statistically significant disparity in ethical leadership between public and private firms, as assessed by the aforementioned attributes. Furthermore, the study revealed that employee ethical behaviour has the potential to impact their productivity.

The study conducted by Reynolds (2019) examines the impact of unethical behaviour and societal norms on the commitment and productivity of Nigerian employees. A total of 111 questionnaires were handed to workers in the Ikeja, Oshodi, Ikorodu, Isolo, and Iganmu Industrial Estates in Lagos State, Nigeria, as part of a descriptive survey study project. The research centred on the perspectives of those employed in these specific regions. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study indicate a significant association between ethical norms and organisational output in Nigerian contexts. However, the results also suggest that the presence of integrity and discipline may have an adverse impact on productivity enhancement. This phenomenon could potentially be attributed to the ethereal nature of certain characteristics, which necessitates an extended period of observation in order to discern their presence.

According to the research conducted by Osibanjo et al. (2015), the fundamental purpose of an organisation is to fulfil the requirements of individuals who own a vested interest in its achievements. The contribution of businesses to national development is manifested by their production, performance, efficiency, and productivity, all of which are outcomes of institutional labour (Ongong'a & Akaranga, 2018). Omisore and Oyende (2015) conducted a comprehensive examination of work ethics, values, attitudes, and productivity within the context of the Nigerian public sector. The study employed content analysis as a method for the collection and analysis of data. The research outcomes indicated that fraudulent activities, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, influence peddling, preferential treatment towards acquaintances, and overall lack of discipline are the primary factors that contribute significantly to unethical conduct within the public sector.

In their study, Miheli et al. (2017) conducted an experimental investigation to explore the relationship between professional ethics and workplace efficiency. The researchers employed a structural model in their study. Based on the findings, it is evident that professional ethics exert a significant influence on an individual's job performance. Based on the observed factor loading, it can be inferred that there exists a modest to moderate correlation between work ethics and job productivity. This phenomenon can be attributed to the influence of other elements beyond mere skill, such as job satisfaction, engagement, and organisational commitment, on work-related outcomes. Maicibi et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine the impact of Islamic work ethics on productivity. The researchers employed structural equation modelling to

evaluate the model, and the statistical analysis revealed that adherence to Islamic work ethics significantly influences productivity.

In their study, Hough, Green, and Plumlee (2015) examined the impact of a company's ethical climate and trustworthiness on employee commitment. The examination of employee engagement involves an analysis of its underlying factors, sometimes referred to as "antecedents," which encompass elements like the ethical climate within the organisation and the level of trust instilled by its management among employees. The findings indicate that trust in the workplace serves as a complete mediator in the relationship between a company's ethical culture and the level of dedication exhibited by its employees towards their job responsibilities. The observed substantial association indicates that the level of trust or mistrust within an organisation is significantly associated with the perception of its ethical condition by its employees and management. In the same vein, Komari and Fariastuti (2018) conducted a study on ethics in the workplace, employee well-being, and organisational commitment within Indonesia's Sharia Bank. The analysis also encompassed an examination of adherence to the established code of ethics in order to ascertain the significance of a code of ethics in shaping the performance of the service industry. The significance of the service industry's performance can be inferred from the observation that a substantial level of adherence to the set code of ethics is present. However, the majority of studies examining work ethics, including those mentioned earlier, primarily employ thematic analysis to explore the relationship between ethics and performance. There is a limited number of studies that do a full examination of this association using a relevant model. Hence, the present investigation holds significant value.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present work is firmly rooted in the domain of institutional theory. The concept of institutions and their societal roles was initially introduced by William Richard Scott in 1995. The concept of "social reality" encompasses symbolic and relational structures, practises, and products that are constructed by human interaction. This theoretical perspective posits that organisations may be understood through the same lens. This theory explores the ways by which structures such as plans, rules, standards, and routines get firmly established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour, hence constituting the foundational and enduring elements of social structure. The examination of the progression, distribution, acceptance, and

modification of these elements throughout various periods and locations, alongside their eventual decline and obsolescence, are subjects explored by numerous disciplines of institutional theory (Kabeyi, 2018). Symbolic systems, relational systems, procedures, and artefacts are all illustrative instances of carriers that have the potential to disseminate an institution. Institutions operate with diverse levels of authority, ranging from the global system to the most intimate individual relationships. The concept of "institution" typically connotes stability, although it is important to recognise that institutions are susceptible to ongoing and abrupt changes in their surrounding environment. This study relies on this theory due to its innovative approaches in promoting ethical standards within organisations. The field of workplace ethics examines the processes through which institutions, including plans, procedures, standards, rules, norms, and routines, are established as authoritative guidelines for social conduct.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive survey approach and primarily relied on primary data. The study's population consists of government personnel working in various government establishments, departments, and agencies located throughout the Southwest region of Nigeria. The region of Southwest Nigeria was historically and socioeconomically separated into three axes: Lagos/Ogun, Oyo/Osun, and Ondo/Ekiti. These divisions were established based on the historical and socioeconomic links of the respective areas. A purposive sample technique was utilised to carefully choose three states, namely Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo states, from the three respective axes. A purposive and proportional sampling method was employed to pick a sample size of 1500 individuals from the three specified States. The research employed a self-administered questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The instrument underwent internal consistency and validity testing. Table 1 presents the results of the pilot study, specifically focusing on the internal consistency of the measuring scales as assessed through the Cronbach method, and the validity of the scales as evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. According to Pallant (2010), the internal reliability of the scale falls within the range of 0.702-0.875, which is deemed appropriate based on the rule of thumb that an α value should be equal to or greater than 0.7. The KMO value falls within the range of 0.605-0.769, suggesting that the scales meet some of the criteria for measuring validity, as they have recorded values over 0.5. The investigation of the link among the

study variables involved the utilisation of both descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, as well as inferential statistics, including Confirmatory Factor investigation and Structural Equation Modelling with Maximum Likelihood Estimation.

Table 1: Psychometric Property of Measurement Scale

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Reliability</i>		<i>Validity</i>			<i>Remark</i>
	Cronbach Alpha (α)	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Df	sig	
Ethical behaviour	0.701	0.671	132.11	13	.000	good
Employees' performance	0.710	0.743	432.12	13	.000	good

Source: Author's computation

FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the demographic breakdown of the respondents. Participants in the study make up 60.7% males and 39.3% females, as was found. The results suggest that men make up the vast majority of responses. Furthermore, 48.7% are between the ages of 21 and 30, followed by 17.3% in the ages of 31-40, 15.3% in the ages of 41-50, 10% in the ages of 20 and below, and 8.3% in the ages of 51 and above. This indicates that the bulk of participants in the study are between the ages of 21 and 30. In terms of their education, 57.3% have a B.Sc./HND, 22.0% have an OND/DIP, 8.7% have a WASSCE/SSCE/GCE, 7.3% have an MPA/MBA/M.A./M.Sc., 4.7% have only a school leaving certificate, and none have a Ph.D. or any other advanced degree. That means that most of the people that fill out the survey are college graduates with a B.Sc. or higher. 54% have served for less than 5 years, 24% for 6-15 years, 13.3% for 16-25 years, and 8.7% for 26-35 years. This means that the average service time of the participants is less than five years.

Table 2: Showing the Frequency Distribution of Demographic Information of the Respondents

<i>SN</i>	<i>Background Information</i>	<i>Label</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1	Sex	Male	91	60.7%
		Female	59	39.3%
2	Age	Below 20 years	15	10%
		21-30 years	73	48.7%
		31-40 years	26	17.3%
		41-50 years	23	15.3%
		51 years and above	13	8.3%
3	Marital Status	Single	71	47.3%

		Married	79	52.7%
		Divorce	0	0%
		Widow	0	0%
4	Religion	Christianity	103	68.7%
		Islam	37	24.7%
		Traditional	0	0%
		Others	10	6.7%
5	Educational background	School Leaving Certificate	7	4.7%
		WASSCE/SSCE/GCE	13	8.7%
		OND/DIP	33	22%
		B.Sc/ HND	86	57.3%
		MPA/MBA/M.A/M.Sc	11	7.3%
		Ph.D	0	0%
		Others	0	0%
6	Years spent in service	Below 5 years	81	54%
		6-15 years	36	24%
		16-25 years	20	13.3%
		26-35 years	13	8.7%

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Employees' perceptions towards workplace ethics in Nigeria public sector

The initial step of the research project was to survey public sector workers in Nigeria about their attitudes regarding ethics on the job. The results are tabulated in Table 3 by mean score. Poor ethics and values have an effect on public sector organisation productivity (3.26), workplace ethics is indicated in writing and is official in this organisation (3.22), and employees are held to a code of conduct that helps to improve the organization's performance (3.40). The majority of respondents in a recent survey about ethics in the workplace in Nigeria's public sector agreed with the following statements, which were derived from the survey's overall mean: "Workplace ethics help to improve organisation performance; our organisation has written ethical standards that provide guidelines for job; our mission, vision, or value statement includes references to ethical workplace conduct; and poor ethics and value affect the productivity of our organisation.

Table 3: showing employees' perceptions towards workplace ethics in Nigeria public sector

S		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dv.
1	My organizations have written	58	86	6	0	3.35	0.56

	ethical standards that provide guidelines for job	(38.7%)	(57.3%)	(4%)	(0%)		
2	workplace ethics help to improve organization performance	74 (49.3%)	62 (41.3%)	14 (9.3%)	0 (0%)	3.40	0.66
3	I don't like ethical standards because it restricts a lot	16 (10.7%)	35 (23.3%)	74 (49.3%)	25 (16.7%)	2.28	0.87
4	Poor ethics and value affect the productivity in public sector organization	59 (39.3%)	71 (47.3%)	20 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	3.26	0.68
5	There is promotion of ethical standards and practices in this organization.	47 (31.3%)	76 (50.7%)	22 (14.7%)	5 (3.3%)	3.10	0.77
6	Employers value a strong organizational ethic due to the economic benefits it provides to the organization	38 (25.3%)	93 (62%)	16 (10.7%)	3 (2.0%)	3.11	0.66
7	Workplace ethics is indicated in writing and is official in this organization	3 (2%)	16 (10.7%)	76 (50.7%)	55 (36%)	3.22	0.71
8	Work place ethics affects job performance significantly	57 (38%)	48 (32%)	38 (25.3%)	7 (4.7%)	3.03	0.91
9	Effective performance of staffs is dependent on workplace ethics	30 (20%)	88 (58.75)	32 (21.3%)	0 (0%)	2.99	0.65
10	There is a mission, vision or value statement that makes reference to ethical workplace conduct in this organization.	60 (40%)	83 (55.3%)	7 (4.7%)	0 (0%)	3.35	0.57
Grand Mean						3.11	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The relationship between workplace ethics and employees' commitment to work in Nigeria public sector

Table 4 shows the descriptive analysis of the perception of participants on the relationship between workplace ethics and employees' performance. It was revealed that here is orientation or training on the organization's standards of ethical workplace conduct (3.34), and respondents reported that they fully observed that workplace ethics increase employee commitment to work (3.47), that ethical leadership plays a mediating role in the relationship between organisational culture and employee performance

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(3.47), that ethical standards, if well adhered to, will enhance organisation performance (3.38), and that there is orientation or training on the organization's standards of ethical workplace conduct (3.47). (2.50).

The majority of respondents in Nigeria's public sector agreed with the following statements about the relationship between workplace ethics and employees' dedication to their jobs: workplace ethics increase employees' dedication to their jobs, ethical leadership moderates the connection between an organization's culture and its employees' performance, ethical standards, if adhered to, boost an organization's performance, and there is some form of orientation or training to help employees develop a more ethical work ethic.

Table 4: Showing the relationship between workplace ethics and employees' commitment to work in Nigeria public sector

<i>S/N</i>		<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. Dv</i>
1	I fully observed that workplace ethics enhance employee's commitment to work	78 (52%)	65 (43.3%)	7 (4.7%)	0 (0%)	3.47	0.59
2	Faithfulness to workplace ethics correspond to employee commitment to work	50 (33.3%)	85 (56.7%)	12 (8%)	3 (2%)	3.21	0.67
3	Ethical standards can became more essential to the organization and meet the intended goal	52 (34.7%)	71 (47.3%)	21 (14%)	6 (4%)	3.12	0.79
4	Ethical standards if well adhered will enhance organization performance	75 (50%)	61 (40.7%)	10 (6.7%)	4 (2.7%)	3.38	0.73
5	Ethical leadership plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational culture and employees' performance	79 (52.7%)	62 (41.3%)	9 (6%)	0 (0%)	3.47	0.61
6	There is orientation or training on organization's standards of ethical workplace conduct in this	72 (48%)	62 (41.3%)	11 (7.3%)	5 (3.3%)	3.34	0.76

7	organization. There is personnel evaluation of ethical conduct as part of regular performance appraisals in this organization.	48 (32%)	75 (50%)	20 (13.3%)	7 (4.7%)	3.09	0.79
8	The organization's ethics standards are as a result of the poor working conditions.	28 (18.7%)	40 (26.7%)	61 (40.7%)	21 (14%)	2.50	0.95
9	The working conditions in this organization are such that make employees do the right things.	58 (38.7%)	66 (44%)	26 (17.3%)	0 (0%)	3.21	0.72
10	Organizational ethics inherently influences organizational practices which in turn influence employees' performance.	46 (30.7%)	86 (57.3%)	18 (12%)	0 (0%)	3.19	0.63
Grand mean						3.19	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The significant pathways indicating direct and indirect effects of ethical behaviour indicators and employee performance

Table 5 reveals that from the adjusted SEM of ethical behaviour and employee performance, there was a significant direct effect of institutional factors on social determinants ($\beta = -.944$, $p < 0.05$), organizational culture ($\beta = 1.412$, $p < 0.05$), and leadership ($\beta = .324$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that a unit change in institutional factors will reduce the effect of social determinants within an organization by 94.4%, more so, a unit increase in institutional factors will increase leadership effectiveness by 32.4%, while an increased institutional factors will increase will increase organizational culture 141.2% of the time.

Table 5 also reveals that social determinants ($\beta = 2.766$, $p < 0.05$), organizational culture ($\beta = -3.608$, $p < 0.05$), leadership ($\beta = -.748$, $p < 0.05$), institutional factors ($\beta = 3.138$, $p < 0.05$), have direct effect on job satisfaction; by implication a unit increase social determinant and institutional factors will increase improve job satisfaction by 276.6% and 313.8% of the times respectively.

Table 7 further reveals that institutional factors ($\beta = -.282, p<0.05$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = .362, p<0.05$) have direct effect on employee performance. This indicates that a unit increase in institutional factors will reduce employee performance by 28.2%, while a unit change in job satisfaction will improve employee performance by 36.2%.

Table 7 also reveals that leadership, organisational culture and social determinants have an indirect effect through institutional factors to employee performance. By implication, leadership, organisational culture and social determinants will increase employee performance by 28.2% only when institutional factors are on reduction. While institutional factors, leadership, organisational culture and social determinants have an indirect effect through job satisfaction. By implication, institutional factors, leadership, organisational culture and social determinants will increase employee performance by 36.2% only when associated with increased job satisfaction.

Table 5: Path Coefficient (Beta weights) of the adjusted SEM of ethical behaviour and employee performance

Path ways			Standardized Estimate				
			Initial model	Adjusted model	S.E.	C.R.	P
Institutional factors	---	Social_Deter	-2.699	-.944	1.487	-1.815	.070
Institutional factors	---	Organ_Cult	1.444	1.412	.441	3.276	.001
Institutional factors	---	Leadership	.434	.324	.228	1.909	.056
Job_Satis	---	Social_Deter	10.202	2.766	32.546	.313	.754
Job_Satis	---	Organ_Cult	-4.764	-3.608	16.919	-.282	.778
Job_Satis	---	Leadership	-1.295	-.748	4.842	-.267	.789
Job_Satis	---	Institut_Fact	4.050	3.138	11.093	.365	.715
Performance	---	Institut_Fact	-1.157	-.282	1.364	-.848	.396
Performance	---	Job_Satis	1.153	.362	1.058	1.090	.276

Path ways			Standardized Estimate		S.E.	C.R.	P
			Initial model	Adjusted model			
EEPP1	---	Performance	1.000	.810			
EEPP3	---	Performance	-.160	-.155	.086	-1.868	.062
EEPP4	---	Performance	.974	.759	.092	10.616	**
EEPP5	---	Performance	1.036	.785	.093	11.125	**
EEPP6	---	Performance	.812	.615	.100	8.103	**
EEPP7	---	Performance	.983	.809	.085	11.628	**
EEPP8	---	Performance	1.061	.912	.076	13.945	**
EEPP9	---	Performance	1.104	.932	.076	14.435	**
EEPP10	---	Performance	1.033	.865	.080	12.841	**
EEPP11	---	Performance	1.134	.867	.088	12.869	**
OC5	---	Organ_Cult	.935	.586	.157	5.938	**
OC4	---	Organ_Cult	.445	.213	.187	2.377	.017
OC3	---	Organ_Cult	.913	.521	.169	5.402	**
OC2	---	Organ_Cult	1.110	.738	.157	7.051	**
OC1	---	Organ_Cult	1.000	.614			
L6	---	Leadership	1.000	.482			
L5	---	Leadership	1.228	.509	.279	4.410	**
L3	---	Leadership	1.704	.775	.315	5.403	**
L2	---	Leadership	1.458	.732	.275	5.300	**
L1	---	Leadership	1.578	.673	.308	5.117	**

Path ways			Standardized Estimate		S.E.	C.R.	P
			Initial model	Adjusted model			
SD9	---	Social_Deter	3.455	.769	1.371	2.520	012
SD8	---	Social_Deter	3.870	.865	1.526	2.537	011
SD7	--	Social_Deter	2.162	.373	.966	2.237	025
SD6	---	Social_Deter	3.039	.571	1.245	2.440	015
SD2	---	Social_Deter	1.000	.220			
IF1	---	Institut_Fact	1.000	.600			
IF2	---	Institut_Fact	1.102	.535	.212	5.204	** *
IF3	---	Institut_Fact	.722	.430	.166	4.359	** *
JS3	---	Job_Satis	1.000	.754			
JS1	---	Job_Satis	.703	.590	.110	6.384	** *
OC6	---	Organ_Cult	.948	.585	.160	5.930	** *

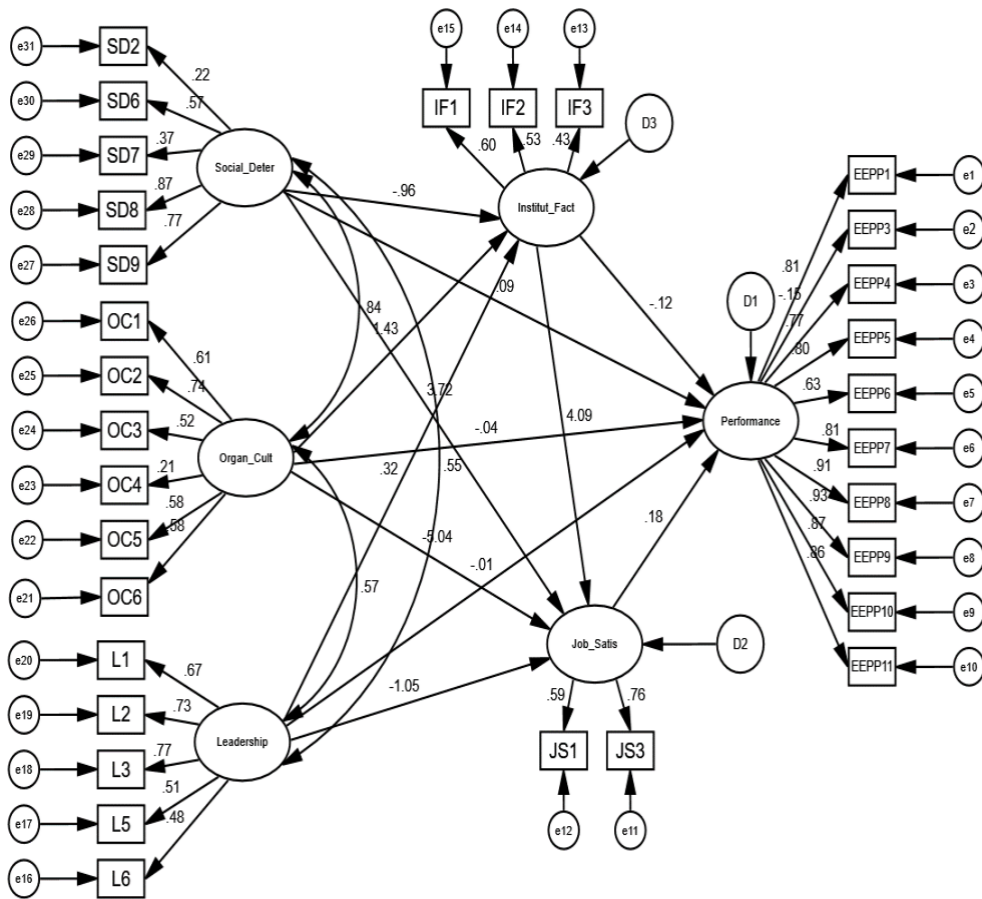


Fig. 1: Theorized SEM of ethical behaviour and employee performance model

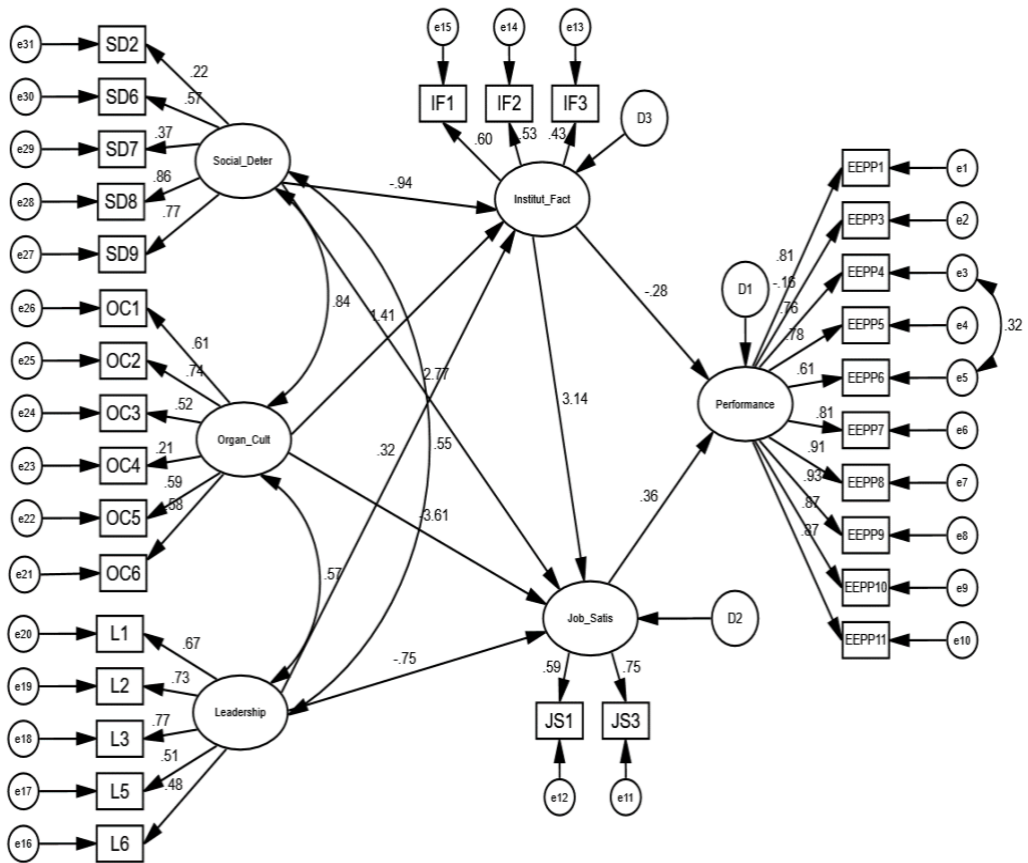


Fig. 2: Adjusted SEM of ethical behaviour and employee performance model

Table 6: Maximum Likelihood Estimate showing Goodness of Fit Index of the SEM of ethical behaviour and employee performance model

<i>Model</i>	X^2	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Benchmark			>0.05	>0.90	>0.95	>0.90	<0.06
Theorised Model	2502.366	419	.000	.489	.662	.522	.141
Adjusted model	2488.106	421	.000	.705	.804	.889	.010

GFI, goodness-of-fit index; NFI, normed fit index; CFI, comparative of fit index; df, degree of freedom; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

Table 6 reveals that the initial (hypothesized) model recorded a moderate fit; $X^2(419) = 2502.366$, $p < .001$. However, on the adjusted model gained a little improvement. The adjusted model recorded $X^2(421) = 2488.106$, $p < 0.01$. This implies that the model is slightly fit. Based on the recommendation by Cohen, (2000) and Tabachnik and Fidel (2007) the p-value notwithstanding the lesser the chi-square value the better the model. To further ascertain the increased fitness of the adjusted model over the initial model other fit indexes were considered: Normed fit index (NFI) = .804 < .95; Comparative fit index (CFI) = .889 < .90; Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .010 < .06. This implies that the adjusted model gained a slight proved fitness over the initial (hypothesized) model, however, the adjusted model can be said to have a mild fitness to the data.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's goal was to look at how ethical behaviour affects productivity in the public sector of Nigeria. According to the study's findings, it was established that employees in the Nigeria's public sector believe that workplace ethics contribute to improved organisation performance, and that their organisations have written ethical standards that provide guidelines for job. It was equally established that there exist in government various agencies, open discussion of ethical concerns in staff meetings. Finally, the majority of respondents said their organisation has a formal ethics programme that includes written standards of ethical workplace conduct, an ethics officer or professional in a similar role, and various training on ethical standards awareness. These were all reported under the heading of "training."

Concerning the connection between workplace ethics and public sector employees' dedication to their jobs in Nigeria, it was found that the organization's standards of ethical workplace conduct, and ethical leadership plays a mediating role in the relationship between organisational culture and employees' performance, and that ethical standards, if well adhered to, will improve the organization's performance, and that faithfulness to these standards is rewarded. More specifically, the connections between ethical behaviour indicators and worker productivity, are both directly and indirectly. Institutional variables were found to have a negative effect on social

determinants ($\beta = -.944$, $p < 0.05$), a positive effect on organisational culture ($\beta = 1.412$, $p < 0.05$), and a negative effect on leadership ($\beta = .324$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that a shift in institutional factors can mitigate the impact of social determinants within an organisation by 94.4 percent, that a shift of one unit in institutional factors can boost leadership efficiency by 32.4 percent, and that a shift of one unit in institutional factors can boost company culture by 141.2 percent. It has been found that social determinants ($\beta = 2.766$, $p < 0.05$), organisational culture ($\beta = -3.608$, $p < 0.05$), leadership ($\beta = -.748$, $p < 0.05$), and institutional variables ($\beta = 3.138$, $p < 0.05$) all have a significant and positive impact on employees' levels of job satisfaction.

The findings are consistent with the submission of Irwin and Bradshaw (2018) and Bowen (2014), who both believe that encouraging employees to exercise self-discipline at work is crucial to an organization's success, would disagree with our findings. It is equally in support of the fact that organizational success or failure may depend on the degree to which people are invested in their work which is line with Fatile, (2018). The way employees feel about their jobs is also important to the success of the company. The research found that there is a statistically significant link between ethical behaviour markers and public sector worker performance in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study indicate that individuals who exhibit ethical behaviour within the organisational context are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance in the workplace. Furthermore, the level of devotion individuals exhibit towards their employment is strongly correlated with their ethical conduct. It is therefore recommended that the Nigerian government should give priority to preventive and enforcement measures in its efforts to promote ethical behaviour, rather than depending exclusively on institutional measures.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDY

The current work possesses various research implications, limits, and avenues for further investigation that necessitate thorough examination and analysis. The study's conclusions hold significant importance for both theoretical understanding and practical application. The findings of this study illuminate the correlation between ethical

behaviour and organisational performance, offering empirical substantiation for established theories and models. This research provides a thorough analysis of the correlation between employees' ethical behaviour and their job success.

The study has the ability to assist the comprehension of human resources professionals in discerning the influence of ethical behaviour on employee job performance. The mitigation of moral and ethical breaches within organizational environments may be accomplished through a significant augmentation of employees' moral and ethical principles. Organisations possess the capacity to formulate policies and procedures that foster the promotion of ethical behaviour and commitment to job duties within the professional setting. Human resource managers have a vital role in promoting and nurturing ethical behaviour within the business context. The scope of these tasks includes the conceptualization, creation, execution, and assessment of projects focused on promoting ethical conduct, with the overarching objective of enhancing employee productivity.

The limitation of this study is reflected in its focus on government employees in the Southwest Nigeria. this however does not have any negative implication to the outcome of this study. Additional investigation could be conducted to explore the potential moderating effects of demographic factors, specifically age and gender. The current investigation included self-report data obtained from employees, which may possess significant limitations, particularly on the assessment of performance. In future research endeavours, it is advisable to conduct more extensive qualitative inquiries to determine the underlying elements that contribute to the observed correlation established by this methodology.

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