



# Ethical Leadership and Staff Job Performance in the Nigerian Tourism Sector

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## Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author APE designed the study, generated the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author OHO performed the data analysis and interpretation of results. Author DGO managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examined the relationship between ethical leadership and staff job performance in the Nigerian tourism sector. To achieve this, the study investigated whether the dimensions of ethical leadership (ethical guidance, power sharing, moral perspective and trustworthiness) significantly predict staff task, contextual, and adaptive performance. It adopted the cross-sectional survey research design whereby 1,853 employees were drawn from thirty (30) tourism firms in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the Taro Yamane formula was used to sample 256 staff. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire which was administered on a face-to-face basis, out of which 210 were fully completed and retrieved, representing 82% of the entire copies

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administered. The data collected were analysed descriptively, while the formulated hypotheses were analysed using the multiple linear regression method. The findings showed that ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict task and adaptive performance but have significant predictive power on contextual performance. Based on the findings, the study recommended that management should continually feel the need to uphold an excellent practice of leading their subordinates ethically.

*Keywords: Adaptive performance; contextual performance; ethical guidance; power sharing; trustworthiness.*

**JEL Classification:** J24, L83, M12, M54.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For an organisation to achieve its stated vision, mission and objectives, its human resource component cannot be ignored since it constitutes its most value-adding asset [1]. As such, to understand the extent to which a staff adds value to an organisation, the issue of job performance is of absolute importance. Job performance is a construct that has received numerous attention from human resource management experts, researchers, and organisations. It comprises all the staff's behaviors, the outcomes of such behaviours, and all efforts they exert towards making a considerable difference in the pursuit of organisational objectives [2]. This implies that the way a staff performs in his/her job will depend on certain factors that affect such staff, which can either be internal or external. An example of such factors is the conduct that flows from the organisation's upper echelon [3].

The issue of ethics at the leadership level became more significant as a result of the scandals that resulted in the fall of big organisations like Enron and Lehman Brothers [4]. Investigations show that these falls were due to the unethical and vicious behaviours of the organisational leaders. For instance, [5] stated that the fall of Enron which caused a huge decline in employment rate, investment failure, and hampered clients' assurance in the financial industry made it mandatory for organisations to re-examine their strategic course, showing them the essence of ethical leadership that would lead to profitability. These ethical problems set the obligatory turn for leaders to examine existing leadership paradigms [6]. At present, competitiveness in the organisational setting has exponentially increased the challenges of ethical leadership. Those in the upper echelon of an organisation may exercise their influence by the use of only their positions, control, and resources that are tied to it [7].

A very significant definition of ethical leadership was offered by [8] cited in [3] as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 3). This definition implies that ethical leadership is related to concepts such as trust, fairness, honesty, integrity, charisma, consideration, and equal treatment. Ethical leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles that positively influence the subordinate's job performance in terms of assigned tasks and duties [9].

Most of the contemporary studies on ethical leadership revolve around three major areas: ethics within the leader, ethical leaders influencing followers, and challenges the organisations face in implementing ethics [4]. This shows that ethical leadership has several dimensions. [10] and [11] acknowledged seven behavioural dimensions of ethical leadership including power sharing, people orientation, integrity, fairness, role clarification, sustainability concern, and ethical guidance. In addition, [12] suggested that "ethical leadership comprises balanced processing, moral perspective, and moral sensitivity. These studies have paid concrete attention to how and why these dimensions of ethical leadership influence both the performance of staff and the organisation at large". For instance, a detailed study by [13] examined "the relationship between ethical leadership and task performance and found that ethical leadership increases task significance, which, in turn, results in improved performance". Similarly, [14] submitted that leadership styles rooted in ethics positively influence subordinates' outcomes in form of increased job satisfaction, build trust in supervisors, and a high level of work engagement.

The tourism sector in Nigeria promises a great opportunity for the diversification of the country's economy. It contributed 4.5% to the GDP in 2019, fell to 2.8% in 2020, and rose to 3.6% in 2021 (www.statistica.com). Efforts have been put in place by the government to sustain this upward movement given the enormous potentials that are yet to be maximally tapped. Specifically, Nigeria developed the National Tourism Policy in 1990 to encourage private sector participation. The institutional frameworks put in place under the policy include the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, State Ministries, and Local Government Tourism Boards. All these are to drive the sector and ensure tourism value additions in terms of micro and macroeconomic level contributions. Micro-level contributions can be direct (such as hotel accommodation, restaurant food and beverages, entertainment, transportation, and shopping) and indirect (suppliers and supportive infrastructures). Macro-level contribution is in terms of contributing to the overall balance of payment position of the country [15].

However, when compared with developed economies, the contribution from this sector to the country's GDP is still poor. Some studies [3] and [15] have attributed this to the administrative and management practices in these firms which are questionable. The unethical conducts of organisational leaders discourage staff members and create an unhealthy working environment. Most staff members are treated with levity by the leaders which lead to chaos and anarchy in the workplace. Furthermore, a key factor that has been identified for the slow growth rate of the sector is the inadequacy of ethical leaders, who act as role models, care for their subordinates, and are determined to improve the performance of both the firm and its members as confirmed by [16]. There is a dearth of ethical leaders who can foster a conducive, effective, harmonious, and productive working relationship in most firms culminating in low staff and organisation's performance. Clearly, ethical leadership becomes a significant element and needs deep assessment within the Nigerian tourism context.

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to examine the effect of ethical leadership on staff job performance in the Nigerian tourism sector. Specifically, the study examined the following: (i) whether ethical leadership dimensions significantly predict staff task performance in tourism firms; (ii) whether ethical leadership

dimensions significantly predict staff contextual performance in tourism firms; and (iii) whether ethical leadership dimensions significantly predict staff adaptive performance in tourism firms. To permit empirical investigation of the subject matter of this study, the following hypotheses have been raised: (i) Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff task performance. (ii) Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff contextual performance. (iii). Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff adaptive performance.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Concept of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is a marriage of two major sub-concepts, ethics and leadership. For clarity, these concepts are defined first before ethical leadership is addressed proper. Ethics was derived from the Ancient Greek word '*ethikos*' meaning character, custom, habit, or disposition. [17]: (p.2) viewed ethics as "a systematic approach to understanding, analysing, and distinguishing matters of right and wrong, good and bad, and admirable and deplorable as they relate to the well-being of and the relationships among sentient beings". It is a system of moral principles and is concerned with what is good for people and society, and also portrayed as 'moral philosophy' [18].

Ethics has to do with different questions at different levels. [19] affirmed that it comprises all types of essential issues such as those relating to practical decision making and its primary concern consists of the nature of value and the standards which are used to evaluate human actions of right or wrong, good or evil. Scholars and theorists have agreed that the terms 'ethics' and 'morality' are strongly related. [3] highlighted six (6) essential characteristics concerning ethics and morals, that: (i) no one can escape making a moral or ethical decision because both concepts are socially connected; (ii) other individuals always take part in one's moral and ethical decision; (iii) moral decisions count as any decision made affects someone else's life, self-esteem, or happiness level; (iv) specific wrap-up and decision cannot be made in ethical arguments; (v) individuals use moral reckoning to make moral judgment or to determine right actions; and (vi) that, individuals cannot put into effect a moral judgment without being given a choice. The significant quality of these

characteristics is that individuals are bordered by others whose lives can be directly or indirectly affected by the ethical or unethical decisions they make.

It is imperative, therefore, to see how ethics aligns with the concept of leadership. Leadership is described as the way an individual communicates in general and relates to people, how he/she motivates and trains subordinates, and the way he/she provides direction to the said people to execute their tasks [20]. It is also viewed as the act of directing a group of people to accomplish a designated goal [21]. These definitions of leadership imply that an individual is singled out from a group to plan, organise, direct, staff, manage, and control the group and its activities. Such an individual is tagged as 'a leader' [22].

According to [23], ethical leadership should be held in high esteem in the world of business. It is the bond linking leaders and subordinates that places the moral values essential to leadership [24]. Ethical leadership can also refer to that type of leadership that is controlled by reverence for moral beliefs and standards and for the dignity and rights of other people [25]. According to [25], "ethical leadership relates to concepts such as fairness, transparency, honesty, personality, trust, consideration, integrity, and equal treatment. They affirmed that the issue of ethics in an organisation must be addressed from the upper echelon if examples must be set for the subordinates to follow to breed an ethical climate for organisational growth and success".

These definitions of ethical leadership suggest that ethical leaders can set the paradigm for others and resist any enticement to deviate. Describing an ethical leader, [26] posited that "it is an individual with the right value and strong character, who sets examples for others and resists temptations. An ethical leader must recognise the fact that building positive relations among all members of the organisation is paramount and the ingredients for such relationships include the basic principles of trust, compassion, respect, equity, honesty, fairness, and justice". No wonder, [24] opined that "the observable facts of ethical leadership consist of several traits like loyalty, uprightness, sincerity, and a caring attitude towards subordinates".

This indicates the multi-dimensional nature of ethical leadership. For instance, [10] and [11] acknowledged seven behavioural dimensions of

ethical leadership to include power sharing, people orientation, integrity, fairness, role clarification, sustainability concern, and ethical guidance. More so, [24] added four major dimensions of ethical leadership to include honesty, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, and fairness. In addition, [12] suggested that ethical leadership comprises balanced processing, moral perspective, and moral sensitivity. Some of these elements are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs:

**Power Sharing:** This refers to the extent to which leaders allow subordinates to partake in decision making processes especially the ones that concern and affect them. The concept of power sharing also centres on the extent to which these leaders pay attention or welcome the ideas and views of their followers. As [11] put it, ethical leaders are expected to share power.

**Ethical Guidance:** This dimension is interconnected with sustainability concerns. An ethical leader must commune with subordinates about ethical conducts and misconducts and the consequences of these. He/she is expected to enlighten the followers on issues that build around ethics and live his/her life teaching the followers about them. Specifically, it is a pertinent task for ethical leaders to ensure that subordinates adopt ethical norms and follow them strictly [27].

**Trustworthiness:** Although used extensively as a synonym for integrity, trust connotes a firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of an individual or his/her action. It is a revered and poignant bond that exists between persons; the anticipation of faith that an individual has in another individual (particularly a leader) or an organization [28]. As noted by [26]: (p.232), trust is "the basis for constructive conflict, goal commitment, personal accountability, and achieving collective goals". The study partitioned the concept of trust into two: conditional and unconditional. Where both parties are willing to transact with each other so long each behaves appropriately and uses a similar interpretative scheme to define the situation, is tagged conditional trust. Unconditional trust is typified by the shared values that structure the social situation and becomes the primary vehicle through which individuals experience trust. The issue of trust is significant in any entity, and it is anticipated that an ethical leader exhibits behavioural consistency between words and actions. He/she

must show a high level of trust which measures the extent he/she discerns his/her main beliefs, display them and stand by them irrespective of the situation involved.

**Moral Perspective:** This underlines ethical conduct and is a fundamental ingredient of moral analytical techniques [29]. Moral perspective indicates that an ethical leader must have to set aside his/her interest while acting in the best interest of the subordinates. As explained by [12], the moral perspective element of ethical leadership strives for the conduct of ethical leaders to rest only on morals and ethical principles or standards.

## 2.2 Concept of Staff Job Performance

The principal element to success in the modern competitive business environment is human capital [30]. As a result of this, to gain an understanding of an employee's contribution towards the attainment of business goals, the concept of performance is essential. [31]: (p.23) defined it as "the attained outcomes of actions with skills of staff who perform in certain situations". It can also be viewed as the set of staff behaviours, results, and outcomes that come after completing the job tasks using certain competencies and that are measured using different metrics [32]. Job performance reflects a staff's behaviours, and from an institutional point of view, it can only be productive or counterproductive. These definitions imply that a staff's job performance comprises all the activities conducted by a staff at the workplace, which are relevant and add value to the organisation.

In the field of human resources management, numerous scholars have carved out different contexts which can be used to measure staff job performance at the workplace. They have identified several approaches to work performance and highlighted their strategic constructs. Some of these constructs include contextual job performance, proactive work behaviour, problem-solving, idea implementation [33]; disciplined effort, work outcomes [34]; level of creativity, training efforts, handling work-related stress [35]; and task, contextual and counterproductive work behaviour [36].

As emphasized by [37], performance aspects that concern staff can be partitioned into three namely: their task performance, adaptive performance and contextual performance. Task

performance refers to the overt behaviours on work tasks displayed by a staff on the job [38]; adaptive performance reveals a staff's skill to adjust and provide adequate support to their job profile at the workplace [39] while contextual performance depicts pro-social behaviour shown by staff in a work-setting not necessarily addressed in his/her job role [37].

However, for the purpose of evaluating a staff's performance, this study made use of the variables of job performance structured by [36]. [36] grouped the measures of individual work performance into four: task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. "Performance in the form of task performance comprises job explicit behaviours which include fundamental job responsibilities assigned as a part of the job description. Task performance requires more cognitive ability and is primarily facilitated through task knowledge, task skills, and task habits" [37].

Some scholars believe that job performance extends beyond meeting just the set organisational goals and objectives; hence, contextual performance was introduced. It is viewed by [36] as "the individual behaviours that support the organisational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function" (p. 861). Nevertheless, a staff's capability to adjust and provide the necessary support to their job profile in a dynamic work situation is referred to as adaptive performance [40]. Previous works [41] revealed that "once a worker derives a certain amount of perfection in his/her assigned tasks, he/she tries to adapt his/her attitude and behaviour to the varied requirements of those job roles".

## 2.3 Ethical Leadership and Staff Job Performance

It has been reckoned that the conducts of leadership are imperative when it comes to predicting subordinates' job satisfaction and their perceived job performance [42]. For instance, [43] affirmed that "leadership enables staff to connect with the organisation and those who emotionally connect positively with an organisation feel a sense of ownership and are more likely to stay with it, delivering superior work in less time and reduce turnover costs". Studies such as [44] and [45] showed that leadership pattern has a significant relation with staff performance, and different leadership

behaviours may have a positive or negative correlation with staff performance, although, this depends on the variables used.

Mixed results abound on the effect of different leadership patterns on staff's job performance. [46] stated that "a transformational leader encourages subordinates to have the vision, mission and organisational goals, encourages and motivates them to show maximum performance, stimulates subordinates to act critically and to solve problems in new ways and treat employees individually. As a consequence, subordinates will reciprocate by showing maximum work. More frequent transformational leadership behaviors implemented will bring significant positive effects to improve the psychological empowerment quality of subordinates". In particular, ethical leadership is becoming more significant in understanding the influence of leaders on others in the organisations and on staff performance [47].

Irrespective of the type of leadership style portrayed, being enveloped with good ethics would have a significant effect on the subordinates. According to [47], ethical leadership is connected to apparent top management team efficacy and subordinates' confidence about the prospects of the organisation and their place within it. Likewise, at the organisational echelon, ethical leadership is essential but direct supervisors represent the pivotal lens through which staff look through the worth of the organisation, and what they perceive to have a massive effect on their strive towards attaining organisational set objectives in both the short and long run [7].

Several scholars have declared their positions on the direct relationship between ethical leadership and staff's job performance. [48] pointed out that ethical leadership positively affects the job attitudes and behaviours of staff. Ethical leadership is significantly positively linked to staff performance [49] [50] [51] [52]. [52] identified specific norms and group-level behaviours that influence this relationship. Besides, [53] noted that ethical leadership and task performance association are strengthened by subordinate's workplace friendships. Additionally, [54] suggested that an ethical leader is a basic source of enhanced staff's job performance, although this source is strongly mediated by the nature of the long-term relationship existing between the staff and his/her superior.

Obviously, ethical leadership provides the platform for staff to bring out their best about their jobs, but the presence of strong organisational principles takes this connection to another level [5]. The relationship between shared moral values and standards applied by leaders can be directly or indirectly proportional to a staff's job performance, which indicates that grooming programs to enhance well-established principles displayed by superiors would set the path for the sustainability of such practice. This is a clear indication that ethical leadership can be used as a weapon for stimulating improved work outcomes among subordinate.

## **2.4 Conceptual Model**

This paper adapted the constructs of various authors on the dimensions of ethical leadership [10] [11] [24] [12] for the independent variables. Also, the dimensions of job performance as constructed by [56] were adapted as the dependent variable. At the peak, the model explains the direct relationship between the variables of ethical leadership (ethical guidance, power sharing, moral perspective, and trustworthiness) and the staff job performance (task, contextual, and adaptive).

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study has its roots in the stakeholder's theory and the affective events theory, which have been adopted as the theoretical base of this study. The stakeholder's theory can be appropriately used to explain ethical leadership. This theory was first introduced by Ian Mitroff in 1983 in his work titled: "Stakeholders of the Organisational Mind". It was later made popular by Edward Freeman in 1984 in his book, "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach". The stakeholder theory is a standpoint in business ethics that explains how the leaders of a business organisation are morally compelled to pursue jointly or to maintain equilibrium in the interests of its stakeholders while conducting business activities. According to [57], this theory concentrates on the subject of standards, principles, and morals in the art of managing relationships between organisations and stakeholders or organisational components such as customers, suppliers, directors, shareholders, and employees.

More so, the affective events theory (AET) is appropriate for explaining a staff's job performance. The theory explains how emotions

and moods influence job satisfaction, job performance, and behaviours in the workplace [58]. The underlying assumption of this theory is that an individual's behaviour is shaped by the emotions felt by the individual at that moment. That is, if such a person is in a good mood, the resultant effect is positive behaviour; and a bad mood produces the contrary. According to this theory, the things that happen during the work day of an employee go a long way in predicting the job outcome of that employee for that day. It explains the connection between an employee's internal influences (such as cognitions, emotions, mental states) and their response to happenings that occur in their workplace capable of influencing their performance, commitment, and satisfaction [59]. The essence of this theory is to explain the factors responsible for the job performance of staff.

## **2.6 Empirical Review of Related Studies**

Several research works have been conducted on ethical leadership and job performance both locally and internationally. [12] researched the effect of ethical leadership on employee performance in Uganda. The objective was to determine the effect of ethical leadership dimensions (balanced processing, moral perspective, rewards and punishment, and moral sensitivity) on employee performance in the public sector. A cross-sectional research design was employed. Two hundred and seventy-five (275) staff comprising top managers, supervisors, and ordinary workers were drawn from several ministries such as the Ministry of Public Service, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and Civil Service College, Kampala City Council Authority, Uganda, which formed the study's sample. A self-structured questionnaire was designed by the author and administered to the sampled staff. The findings of the study revealed that the mentioned dimensions of ethical leadership strongly and positively influence employees' performance.

Wegge et al. [60] conducted an empirical investigation to find out the influence of ethical leadership dimensions on employee individual task initiatives using age as a moderator. Data were obtained from 402 faculty members of 26 different universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan through the aid of a structured questionnaire. Reliability statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis and

stepwise regression analyses were used to analyse the data. The findings indicated that faculty supervisors, people orientation, concern for stability, power-sharing behaviour, role clarity, and integrity have a strong influence on individual task initiatives. It was also found that the age of the faculty members has a significant moderating influence on the relationship among integrity, role clarity, concern for stability, and individual task initiative, while age does not moderate the significant relation existing between people-orientation and individual task initiative.

Weng [55] studied the impact of ethical leadership on employees' performance with organisational values as a moderator. The study's hypotheses were: (i) ethical leadership has a positive impact on employees' performance; and (ii) organisational values can amplify the impact of ethical leadership on employees' performance through its moderating effect. Using the stratified random sampling technique, 265 employees from six universities in Pakistan were selected to form the study's sample and the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The study's findings revealed that ethical leadership has a positive impact on employees' performance; and organisational value as a moderator between ethical leadership and employees' performance is sustained.

Khalid and Bano [61] explored the impact of ethical leadership on employees' attitudes in manufacturing firms. The study hypothesized that: (i) ethical leadership has an effect on overall job satisfaction; (ii) ethical leadership and overall job satisfaction influence normative and continuance commitment. Data were elicited from 30 employees of ten (10) manufacturing firms in Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the use of survey questionnaires. Data analyses were conducted with the use of exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses. The results showed that: ethical leadership significantly and positively influenced overall job satisfaction; ethical leadership and overall job satisfaction significantly and positively influenced normative commitment; and ethical leadership significantly and positively influenced continuance commitment.

Agha et al. [25] investigated the impact of ethical leadership on employee commitment in Nigeria: A study of Innoson Technical and Industrial

Company Limited, Enugu, Nigeria. The dimensions of ethical leadership used in the study were integrity and equal treatment while the measures of employee commitment were continuance commitment and active commitment. The study employed the correlational research design whereby a structured questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument administered to the selected employees and clients of the sampled firm. Simple linear regression was used to ascertain the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The study revealed that integrity significantly and negatively impacts on continuance commitment of the employees; and equal treatment positively and significantly leads to an increase in the active commitment of the employees. Thus, the study implies that appropriate ethical leadership contributes to employees' performance.

Dinc et al. [62] investigated "how leader integrity and ethical leadership can influence trust in the leader and employee work engagement. The study's hypotheses include: (i) trust in the leader has a significantly positive influence on the follower's work engagement; (ii) ethical leadership has a significantly positive influence on the follower's work engagement; (iii) ethical leadership has a significantly positive influence on the trust in the leader; (iv) leader integrity has a significantly positive influence on the trust in the leader; and (v) leader integrity has a significantly positive influence on ethical leadership. The convenience sampling technique was used to select 204 employees of different organisations in South Africa and an electronic web-based questionnaire was used for collecting data. The data were analysed using item

analysis and confirmatory factor analysis conducted via structural equation modelling. The results of the analysed data confirmed the stated hypotheses as a positive relationship was found among the variables of interest".

Engelbrecht et al. [63] explored the impact of ethical leadership (EL) on job satisfaction (JS), job performance (JP), and turnover intention (TI) of employees. They specifically looked into the relationship between EL and JS; the influence of EL on JP; the connection between EL and TI; the link between JS and JP; the relations between JS and TI; and whether JS mediates the connection between EL and JP. A cross-sectional design was employed whereby data were elicited from 250 employees of tourism firms in three cities in Pakistan using copies of a structured questionnaire. SEM was used in testing the study's hypotheses. The results confirmed the following: a significant positive relationship existed between EL and JS; EL significantly and positively influenced JP; EL negatively influenced TI; JS positively influenced JP; and JS was insignificantly associated with TI. It was also discovered that JS has no mediating effect on the influence of EL on employees' TI.

Ngubane et al. [3] conducted "an investigation into ethical leadership in municipalities from the South African perspective. The study examined the theoretical constructs of ethical leadership and the value systems that go with it. The quantitative research design was employed whereby semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit information from municipal managers and senior managers in local governments across South Africa. It was found

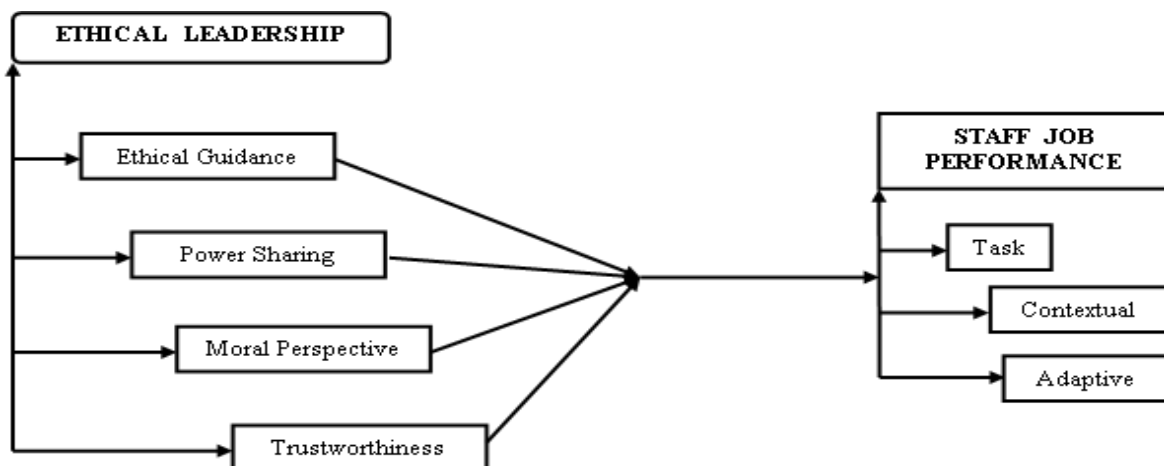


Fig. 1. Conceptual representation of the influence of ethical leadership on staff job performance



that the municipal managers and senior managers understand what ethical leadership entails and affirmed ethical values to include honesty, integrity, trust, fairness, conduct, accountability, morality, justice, etc. The findings also showed that most municipalities do have support mechanisms in dealing with unethical conduct among managers but the effectiveness of these structures is very low. In general, it was discovered that it is extremely difficult to practice ethical leadership in municipalities especially because the environment is not conducive and safe for ethical leaders”.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted because it can be used to gather data that are not available from other sources and would give an unbiased representation of the matter of interest. Thus, it does not involve the manipulation of variables [57]. This study’s population comprised staff of thirty (30) tourism firms located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as of 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2022. The states are Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ondo and Rivers. The choice of these states was hinged on the fact that activities of tourism firms are more pronounced and dominant in the selected states because of the high rate of oil exploration activities in the region with a high inflow of foreign expatriates. The study’s population was 1,853 staff. Using the Taro Yamane formula, 256 staff constituted the study’s sample. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire.

#### 3.2 Variables and Measurement

##### 3.2.1 Ethical leadership

Five (5) statements each were raised on the dimensions: Ethical Guidance and Power Sharing (which were measured by adapting the ‘Ethical Leadership Scale’ designed by [10]; Moral Perspective; and Trustworthiness (measured by adapting the ‘Trust in Leader Scale’ confirmed by [38]), making a total of 20 items under this section. All items were on a 5 point Likert scale of ‘1’ for strongly disagree to ‘5’ for strongly agree.

##### 3.2.2 Job performance

The individual work performance scale (IWPS) developed by [36] was adapted. It is a 19-item

questionnaire designed to measure task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance of a staff at the workplace. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all items, ranging from ‘1’ for poor to ‘5’ for excellent.

#### 3.3 Instrument’s Validity and Reliability

The instrument was validated using the face validity and content validity techniques. To ensure the instrument’s reliability, the Cronbach Alpha method of reliability was used to ascertain the consistency of the instrument’s constructs. The Cronbach alpha values obtained for each variable from the reliability test are presented in Table 1. The results of the reliability test indicated that the instrument is reliable since all the values are greater than 0.70 as suggested by [64].

**Table 1. Reliability indexes of the variables**

S/N	Dimensions	Reliability index
1	Ethical Guidance	0.957
2	Power Sharing	0.921
3	Moral Perspective	0.931
4	Trustworthiness	0.933
5	Task Performance	0.913
6	Adaptive Performance	0.901
7	Contextual Performance	0.951

*Source: Authors’ Computation*

#### 3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

To analyse the respondents’ responses to the statements raised concerning the research items, the mean and standard deviation were used. The standard that was used for judgment to determine the mean was 3.00 (criterion mean) derived from the 5-point scale. To ascertain the shape of the distribution of the responses to staff job performance and ethical leadership, the kurtosis results were used. For the hypotheses, linear regression was used to find out the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The rationale for using regression is that it can predict the value of a variable based on the value of another variable. The alpha level of significance for testing the hypotheses was set at  $\alpha < 0.05$ .

The models estimated are:

*Model 1*

$$STP = \beta_0 + \beta_1EGD + \beta_2PWS + \beta_3MPP + \beta_4TWN + e_i \quad (1)$$

Model 2

$$SCP = \beta_0 + \beta_1EGD + \beta_2PWS + \beta_3MPP + \beta_4TWN + e_i \quad (2)$$

Model 3

$$SAP = \beta_0 + \beta_1EGD + \beta_2PWS + \beta_3MPP + \beta_4TWN + e_i \quad (3)$$

Where:

- STP = Staff Task Performance
- SCP = Staff Contextual Performance
- SAP = Staff Adaptive Performance
- EGD = Ethical Guidance
- PWS = Power Sharing
- MPP = Moral Perspective
- TWN = Trustworthiness
- e = error term

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred and fifty-six (256) copies of questionnaire were administered to the employees of the sampled firms; but two hundred and ten (210) copies were fully completed and retrieved, representing eighty-two percent (82%) of the entire survey instrument administered in the fieldwork. The analysis begins with descriptive statistics.

Table 2 showed the summary statistics of the dependent variable (staff job performance) and independent variable (ethical leadership). Staff job performance was measured by three (3) items (STP: staff task performance; SCP: staff contextual performance; SAP: staff adaptive performance) while ethical leadership was measured using four items (EGD: ethical guidance; PWS: power sharing; MPP: moral perspective; and TWN: Trustworthiness). The descriptive pattern of the mean responses for the subscales (STP: 3.80; SCP: 3.73; SAP: 3.50; EGD: 3.65; PWS: 2.64; MPP: 2.66) revealed that all the variables scored above the mean benchmark of 2.50 except TWN: 2.35, which scored below the mean benchmark. This result implies that while tourism firms use ethical guidance (EGD), power sharing (PWS), and moral perspective (MPP) as their ethical leadership styles, trustworthiness (TWN) is unfavourable in promoting staff task, contextual, and adaptive performance.

The standard deviation (a measure of dispersion) values for all the variables are very low (STP: 0.43; SCP: 0.39; SAP: 0.49; EGD: 0.63; PWS:

0.51; MPP: 0.55; TWN: 0.56); an indication that the views shared by the respondents on ethical leadership and staff job performance are not too dispersed from each other and that most likely, they share a similar philosophy of how firms in the tourism sector see and use ethical leadership in enhancing staff job performance.

Furthermore, to ascertain the shape of the distribution of responses, the kurtosis results were used. *SAP* (2.44) had the least kurtosis and *STP* (3.61) the most. Overall, all the kurtosis values for the variables are not too far away from 3; an indication that the variables are fairly close to normal distribution. Besides, the skewness values revealed that while *STP*, *SCP*, *SAP*, and *EGD* are skewed towards one direction (negatively skewed), *PWS*, *MPP* and *TWN* are skewed towards the other direction (positively skewed). Overall, all the kurtosis values for the variables are not too far away from 3; an indication that the variables are fairly close to normal distribution.

##### 4.1 Correlation Matrix

To further illuminate the distributional characteristics of the data, the correlation matrix was computed to show how the variables relate to one another.

Table 3 presents the Karl Pearson correlation matrix of staff task performance (STP) along with the four ethical leadership dimensions (EGD, PWS, MPP, TWN). The results revealed among others that all the variables of ethical leadership are positively correlated with staff task performance (STP). This implies that there is a positive relationship between staff task performance and ethical leadership. More also, we found that none of the Karl Pearson correlation coefficients exceeded 0.90 an indication of the absence of a multi-collinearity problem [65] in the empirical model of the staff task performance and ethical leadership.

Table 4 presents the Karl Pearson correlation matrix of staff contextual performance (SCP) with the four (4) ethical leadership dimensions (EGD, PWS, MPP, TWN). The results revealed that two variables of ethical leadership (EGD, PWS) are positively correlated with staff contextual performance (SCP) while MPP (-0.16) and TWN (-0.08) are negatively correlated. This implies that there is a positive relationship among staff contextual performance, ethical guidance and power sharing. On the other hand, we found a

negative relationship between staff contextual performance, moral perspective and trustworthiness. Interestingly, none of the Karl Pearson correlation coefficients exceeded 0.90; an indication of no multi-collinearity problem in the model of the staff contextual performance and ethical leadership.

the variables of ethical leadership (EGD, PWS, MPP) are positively correlated with SAP except TWN (-0.06) which is negatively correlated. This implies that there is a positive relationship between staff adaptive performance, ethical guidance, power sharing and moral perspective. On the other hand, we found a negative relationship between staff adaptive performance and trustworthiness. Again, none of the Karl Pearson correlation coefficients exceeded 0.90; therefore, there is no multi-collinearity problem in the empirical model of staff adaptive performance and ethical leadership.

Table 5 shows the Karl Pearson correlation matrix of staff adaptive performance (SAP) with the four (4) ethical leadership dimensions (EGD, PWS, MPP, TWN). The results revealed that all

**Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics of the variables**

Stats	STP	SCP	SAP	EGD	PWS	MPP	TWN
Mean	3.80	3.73	3.50	3.65	2.64	2.66	2.35
Std. Dev.	0.43	0.39	0.49	0.63	0.51	0.55	0.56
Kurtosis	3.61	2.60	2.44	2.83	2.71	3.20	2.86
Skewness	-0.49	-0.19	-0.03	-0.32	0.26	0.40	0.43
Obs.	210	210	210	210	210	210	210

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 3. Karl pearson correlation matrix for staff task performance and ethical leadership**

Parameters	STP	EGD	PWS	MPP	TWN
STP	1.00				
EGD	0.08	1.00			
PWS	0.02	0.09	1.00		
MPP	0.06	-0.09	-0.01	1.00	
TWN	0.08	-0.03	0.04	0.09	1.00

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 4. Karl pearson correlation matrix for staff contextual performance and ethical leadership**

Parameters	SCP	EGD	PWS	MPP	TWN
SCP	1.00				
EGD	0.11	1.00			
PWS	0.14	0.09	1.00		
MPP	-0.16	-0.09	-0.01	1.00	
TWN	-0.08	-0.03	0.04	0.10	1.00

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 5. Karl pearson correlation matrix for staff adaptive performance and ethical leadership**

Parameters	SAP	EGD	PWS	MPP	TWN
SAP	1.00				
EGD	0.11	1.00			
PWS	0.07	0.09	1.00		
MPP	0.10	-0.09	-0.01	1.00	
TWN	-0.06	-0.03	0.04	0.10	1.00

Source: Authors' Computation

From Tables 3-5, it was established that all the empirical models (models 1-3) showing the relationship between the three (3) dimensions of staff job performance (task, contextual and adaptive) and the four (4) ethical leadership dimensions (ethical guidance, power sharing, moral perspective and trustworthiness) do not show any sign of multi-collinearity problems, hence the data set of the study were considered good enough in conducting further statistical tests for the study to make inferences on the results obtained in the field survey.

#### 4.2 Inferential Statistics and Test of Research Hypotheses

**Test of Hypothesis 1:** Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff task performance. Model 1 was used to test this hypothesis, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows the OLS result for staff task performance and ethical leadership. It was observed that the coefficients of the explanatory variables are positive. This implies that they can drive staff task performance. However, the statistical significance of these values determined by the probability value of the t-statistics shows that all the probability values are greater than 0.05. This means that they are not significant statistically. Furthermore, the F-statistic which measures the joint significance of the independent variables taken together has a value of 1.11 with a p-value of 0.3508. This p-value is greater than 0.05 meaning that the variables are not jointly significant. Arising from the results of the t-statistics and F-statistics, the formulated hypothesis is not rejected. Clearly, there is an insignificant positive relationship between staff task performance and ethical leadership.

**Test of Hypothesis 2:** Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff contextual performance. Model 2 was applied to test this hypothesis and the result is as presented in Table 7.

Table 7 shows the OLS result for staff contextual performance and ethical leadership. It revealed that the coefficients of two of the explanatory variables, EGD and PWS, are carrying positive

signs while two variables, MPP and TWN are carrying negative signs. This implies that two of the explanatory variables (EGD and PWS) can drive staff contextual performance. However, the statistical significance of these values determined by the probability value of the t-statistics shows that some of the probability values are less than 0.05. Specifically, PWS (0.032) and MPP (0.019) are less than 0.05. This means that they are significant statistically. Furthermore, the F-statistics which measures the joint significance of the independent variables taken together has a value of 3.69 with a p-value of 0.0061. This p-value is less than 0.05 meaning that the variables are jointly significant. Arising from the results of the t-statistics and F-statistics, the formulated hypothesis is rejected. Clearly, there is a positive and negative significant relationship between staff contextual performance and ethical leadership.

**Test of Hypothesis 3:** Ethical leadership dimensions do not significantly predict staff adaptive performance.

In Table 8, the OLS result for staff adaptive performance and ethical leadership is presented. The coefficients of three of the explanatory variables, EGD, PWS, and MPP, have positive signs while one (TWN) has a negative sign. The positive explanatory variables can drive staff adaptive performance. However, the statistical significance of these values determined by the probability value of the t-statistics shows that all the probability values are greater than 0.05. This means that they are not significant statistically. Furthermore, the F-statistic which measures the joint significance of the independent variables taken together has a value of 2.15 with a p-value of 0.0746. This p-value is greater than 0.05 meaning that the variables are not jointly significant. Arising from the results of the t-statistics and F-statistics, the formulated hypothesis is not rejected. Clearly, there is an insignificant relationship between staff adaptive performance and ethical leadership.

#### 4.3 Post-Estimation Results

The post-estimation result to further confirm the suitability of the estimated models is presented in Table 9. The diagnostic test used is the variance inflation factor (VIF) test.

**Table 6. Ordinary least square result for staff task performance and ethical leadership**

F (4, 256)	=	1.11		
Prob. > F	=	0.3508		
R-Squared	=	0.0171		
Adj. R-Squared	=	0.0017		
Parameters		Coefficient	t-value	P>/t/
EGD		0.0584	1.36	0.174
PWS		0.0055	0.11	0.915
MPP		0.0488	1.00	0.320
TWN		0.0611	1.27	0.206
CONSTANT		3.2975	12.39	0.000

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 7. Ordinary least square result for staff contextual performance and ethical leadership**

F (4, 256)	=	3.69		
Prob. > F	=	0.0061		
R-Squared	=	0.0545		
Adj. R-Squared	=	0.0397		
Parameters		Coefficient	t-value	P>/t/
EGD		0.0501	1.30	0.194
PWS		0.1006	2.15	0.032
MPP		-0.1034	-2.35	0.019
TWN		-0.0455	-1.05	0.293
CONSTANT		3.6678	15.38	0.000

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 8. Ordinary least square for staff adaptive performance and ethical leadership**

F (4, 256)	=	2.15		
Prob. > F	=	0.0746		
R-Squared	=	0.0326		
Adj. R-Squared	=	0.0175		
Parameters		Coefficient	t-value	P>/t/
EGD		0.0902	1.87	0.062
PWS		0.0599	1.02	0.307
MPP		0.1007	1.83	0.068
TWN		-0.0605	-1.12	0.264
CONSTANT		2.8893	9.68	0.000

Source: Authors' Computation

**Table 9. Variance inflation factor**

Variables	VIF	1/VIF
EGD	1.02	0.9790
MPP	1.02	0.9824
TWN	1.01	0.9882
PWS	1.01	0.9898
Mean VIF	1.02	

Source: Authors' Computation

Table 9 shows diagnostic test results for staff job performance and ethical leadership. The result of the mean VIF is 1.02. This is less than the VIF benchmark of 10.0; therefore, it indicates that

there is the absence of a multi-collinearity problem in the empirical model of the study.

The OLS results revealed that ethical leadership dimensions (ethical guidance, power-sharing, moral perspective, and trustworthiness) insignificantly predict staff task performance. The result is slightly at variance with the empirical results of [66] in India; [12] in Uganda; [60] in Pakistan, who found that ethical leadership significantly and positively influence staff's task performance. This disagreement is not unconnected with cross-country differentials in

policies relating to task performance and also that the tourism sector in Nigeria is still evolving.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that ethical leadership dimensions significantly predict staff contextual performance. The finding of our study agrees with the results of [67] that used Turkish private firms and found that ethical leadership significantly affects contextual performance. Thus, this finding calls for some policy implications for the management of the tourism sector. Finally, the findings that ethical leadership dimensions insignificantly predict staff adaptive performance in tourism firms in Nigeria did not support the result of [67] who used Turkish private firms and found that ethical leadership significantly affects staff's adaptive performance.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The concept of ethical leadership has become a commonplace discourse in human resource management literature due to the scandals that ensued in the fall of big corporations such as Enron and Lehman Brothers. The literature opines that the demise of these big corporations was due to unethical behaviours of organisational leaders. In light of this, the study examined the relationship between ethical leadership and staff job performance in some selected tourism firms in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study concluded that ethical leadership does not significantly predict staff task performance and staff adaptive performance but significantly predicts staff contextual performance. Therefore, to influence pro-social behaviour not expressly defined in job roles, ethical leadership is a potent means.

Based on the study's findings, the paper makes the following recommendations: (i) Managers in tourism firms should continually feel the need to uphold an excellent practice of leading their subordinates ethically. (ii) The management should recognise that to sustain or improve the contextual performance among their staff, they must position themselves to lead from the front by taking matters relating to ethics in their organisation as a top priority. (iii) Adaptability is very paramount in achieving success at the workplace. The superiors at the upper echelon should create a workplace atmosphere where good morals thrive to enable the subordinates to

adjust and provide the necessary support to their job profile at the workplace.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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