
Ethical Leadership as a Predictor of Employee Outcomes among Lecturers in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria: The Moderating Role of Organisational Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment, with organisational culture tested as a moderating variable among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data was collected from 382 lecturers using adapted standardized questionnaires measuring ethical leadership, organisational culture, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment. Hierarchical moderated multiple regression analysis was employed to test the study hypotheses. Results indicated that ethical leadership significantly predicted job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment. The inclusion of organisational culture and the interaction terms produced significant increases in explained variance (ΔR^2), demonstrating that organisational culture strengthened the relationships between ethical leadership and the three employee outcomes. The study concludes that leadership behaviour and organisational context jointly influence employee effectiveness in higher education institutions. It is recommended that colleges of education promote ethical leadership practices alongside the development of positive organisational cultures to improve staff job satisfaction, commitment, and citizenship behaviour.

Keywords: ethical leadership, organisational culture, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, organisational commitment, moderated regression

INTRODUCTION

Leadership profoundly influences employees' motivation, attitudes, and behaviours in organisations, particularly in educational environments where lecturers' performance directly affects teaching quality and institutional outcomes. Ethical leadership, characterised by fairness, integrity, accountability, and concern for followers' welfare, has been identified as a critical predictor of positive employee outcomes. Empirical evidence demonstrates that ethical leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction (JS), organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and organisational commitment (OCOM) among employees, including academic staff, by fostering trust, fairness, and ethical norms in the workplace (Joseph et al., 2025; Li, 2024;

Taamneh et al., 2024). Ethical leaders serve as role models, whose moral conduct encourages employees to engage meaningfully with their work, contribute beyond formal duties, and develop loyalty to their institutions, ultimately promoting institutional effectiveness and stability.

First, Job satisfaction refers to employees' overall contentment with their work roles, conditions, and organisational environment. It encompasses dimensions such as intrinsic satisfaction (related to the nature of the work itself), extrinsic satisfaction (related to pay, promotions, and supervision), and general satisfaction with organisational policies (Taamneh et al., 2024). Studies in higher education indicate that ethical leadership improves job satisfaction by reducing role

ambiguity and stress, fostering fairness, and creating supportive work environments where lecturers feel valued and motivated (Joseph et al., 2025). In Nigerian colleges of education, low job satisfaction has been linked to administrative challenges and inadequate leadership practices, highlighting the need for ethical leadership interventions. On the other hand, Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) refers to voluntary, discretionary actions by employees that go beyond formal job requirements to support colleagues, improve processes, or enhance institutional performance. OCB has several dimensions, including altruism (helping colleagues), conscientiousness (going beyond minimal requirements), civic virtue (engagement in organisational governance), and sportsmanship (maintaining a positive attitude under stress) (Li, 2024). Empirical studies show that ethical leadership significantly predicts higher OCB among lecturers because ethical leaders foster trust and organisational justice, which encourages employees to reciprocate with pro-social behaviours (Taamneh et al., 2024). Similarly, Organisational commitment (OCOM) is the psychological attachment and loyalty an employee feels toward their institution, influencing retention, motivation, and engagement. It is typically conceptualised in three dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organisation), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation to stay) (Joseph et al., 2025). Research in educational settings demonstrates that ethical leadership strengthens all three dimensions by modelling integrity, promoting fairness, and aligning organisational values with employees' personal values, thereby increasing lecturers' commitment to their

institutions (Ethical leadership and organisational commitment, 2026).

Despite the global evidence linking ethical leadership to JS, OCB, and OCOM, these relationships remain under-explored among lecturers in Nigerian colleges of education, particularly in North-West Nigeria. Lecturers in this region operate within unique socio-administrative and cultural environments, often facing challenges such as role overload, inadequate recognition, and limited participatory decision-making. The absence of ethical leadership in such settings may reduce satisfaction, discretionary effort, and loyalty, thereby affecting teaching quality, institutional climate, and academic productivity. Therefore, this study investigates ethical leadership as a predictor of job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment among lecturers in North-West Nigerian colleges of education.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Ethical leadership does not significantly influence job satisfaction, and organisational culture does not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

H₀₂: Ethical leadership does not significantly influence organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational culture does not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

H₀₃: Ethical leadership does not significantly influence organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational culture does not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The design was appropriate for analysing predictive and

interaction relationships among multiple outcome variables using regression-based statistical techniques. Crewell (2014) further emphasised that the design is useful when relationship between two or variables is to be established

Population of the Study

The population of this study was Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-Six (5736) lecturers. It comprised all the lecturers of the Four (4) Federal Colleges of Education and Eight (8) State Colleges of Education from the Seven (7) States of North-West Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The population for Federal Colleges of Education was Two Thousand Two Hundred and Fourteen (2214), while that of State Colleges of Education was Three Thousand Five and Twenty-Five (3525).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 333 lecturers was selected for the study. The sample size was determined with reference to the Research Advisor Table (2006). A multistage sampling procedure was adopted. At the first stage, stratified sampling was used to categorize the institutions into two strata: Federal Colleges of Education and State Colleges of Education. This approach is appropriate when dealing with heterogeneous populations (Singh & Masuku, 2020).

At the second stage, simple random sampling was employed to select the institutions from each stratum using a ballot method to ensure equal selection probability. Consequently, two Federal Colleges of Education, Federal College of Education Katsina and Federal College of Education (Technical) Bichi were selected from the first stratum while three State Colleges of Education-Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, College of Education Maru, and Sa'adatu Rimi College of Education,

Kumbotso were selected from the second stratum.

The total figure of the sampled Colleges is Three Thousand and Eighty-One (3,081) while the sample size according to the research advisor is Three Hundred and Thirty-Three (333) which were distributed proportionately. However, the researcher used a sampled size of 382 respondents because sample size tables provides only minimum thresholds necessary for acceptable confidence levels and margins of error, not upper limits. Therefore, exceeding the recommended minimum enhances statistical power, improves estimate precision, and reduces sampling error, thereby strengthening the reliability and generalizability of research findings (Cochran, 1977). Similarly, larger samples also produce estimates that are more closely approximate to true population parameters, particularly in studies involving multiple variables or heterogeneous populations (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Therefore, adopting 382 participants rather than the minimum 333 improves the reliability of the study's results while remaining consistent with established sampling methodology.

Instrument

Data was collected using structured questionnaires adapted from established instruments in organisational behaviour research. Ethical leadership was measured using items adapted from the Ethical Leadership Scale developed by Michael E. Brown, Linda K. Treviño, and David A. Harrison (2005). Job satisfaction was assessed using the Job Satisfaction Survey developed by Paul E. Spector (1985). Organisational citizenship behaviour was measured using the organisational citizenship behaviour scale developed by Dennis W. Organ (1988), while organisational commitment was assessed using the organisational commitment scale

developed by John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen (1991). Organisational culture was measured using dimensions adapted from the organisational culture framework proposed by Daniel R. Denison (1990). Minor contextual modifications were limited to wording adjustments suitable for the educational environment without altering construct meanings.

All items were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS. Ethical leadership was entered in Step 1 as the predictor variable. In Step 2, organisational culture and the interaction term (Ethical Leadership $\times$ Organisational Culture) were entered to test moderation effects across the three outcome variables (job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment). The change in explained variance (ΔR^2) was examined to determine the incremental moderating influence. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 alpha levels.

Analysis of Results

The study examined ethical leadership as a predictor of employee outcomes among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria, with organisational culture included as an additional explanatory variable within a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Three outcome variables were analysed:

- i. Job Satisfaction (JS)
- ii. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)
- iii. Organisational Commitment (OCom)

In each analysis:

Block 1: Ethical Leadership (ETL)

Block 2: Organisational Culture (OC)

The hierarchical procedure enabled assessment of both overall predictive power and the incremental variance explained (ΔR^2) when organisational culture was introduced into the model.

H₀₁: Ethical leadership does not significantly influence job satisfaction, and organisational culture does not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

Table 1: Hierarchical multiple regression of ethical leadership on job satisfaction with organisational culture as moderator role in North-West Nigerian Colleges of Education

R= 0.860					
R ² = 0.737					
Adjusted R ² = 0.74					
$\Delta R^2 = R^2 = 0.73$					
SEE= 0.699					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	520.413			2	260.207
Residual	185.307			379	0.490
Total	705.720			381	

Table 1 indicates that ethical leadership and organisational culture jointly explained 73.7% of the variance in job satisfaction,

representing a very strong explanatory model. The minimal difference between $R^2 = (.737)$ and Adjusted $R^2 = .736$ suggests

strong model stability and generalisability. Following entry of ethical leadership in Block 1, organisational culture was introduced in Block 2. The significant coefficient for organisational culture: $\beta = .214$, $t = 4.97$, $p < .001$. This demonstrates a significant increase in explained variance

(ΔR^2), this indicates that organisational culture contributed additional predictive value beyond ethical leadership alone. Thus, workplace norms and shared values enhance lecturers' job satisfaction over and above leadership behaviour.

Table 2: Test of Significance of Regression Coefficient Variable

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	β	t-value	Sign
Constant	0.682	0.366		1.863	0.063
OCB	0.685	0.043	0.680	15.750	.000
OC	0.254	0.051	0.214	4.972	.000

Table 2 revealed that Ethical leadership emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that fairness, integrity, and ethical decision-making by leaders substantially improve lecturers' satisfaction levels. Organisational culture also exerted a meaningful positive effect, indicating that supportive institutional environments reinforce positive work attitudes. Since both predictors and ΔR^2 were significant therefore, H_{01} was rejected ($p=.063>.000$).

Consequently, Ethical leadership significantly predicts job satisfaction, while organisational culture provides additional explanatory contribution.

H_{02} : Ethical leadership will not significantly influence organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational culture will not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

Table 3: Hierarchical multiple regressions of ethical leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour with organisational culture as moderator role in North-West Nigerian Colleges of Education

$R = 0.844$ $R^2 = 0.713$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.711$ $\Delta R^2 = 0.712$ $SEE = 0.725$					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	494.186	2		247.093	469.927
Residual	199.283	379		0.526	.000
Total	693.469	381			

Table 3 explains that the predictors jointly explained 71.3% of the variance in organisational citizenship behaviour. $\Delta R^2 = (R^2 = 0.712)$. After ethical leadership was

entered, organisational culture significantly improved the model: $\beta = .518$, $t = 13.71$, $p < .001$. This further reflects a substantial ΔR^2 , indicating that organisational culture adds

considerable explanatory power in predicting lecturers' discretionary behaviours. The result suggests that lecturers are more willing to engage in extra-role

activities when ethical leadership operates within a supportive organisational climate.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Regression Coefficient Variables

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	β	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.208	0.382		0.545	0.586
ETL	0.187	0.018	0.401	10.615	.000
OC	0.608	0.044	0.518	13.711	.000

Table 4 presents that organisational culture emerged as the stronger predictor, implying that institutional climate plays a central role in fostering cooperative and voluntary behaviours. Consequently, H_{02} was rejected ($p=.586>.000$). This shows that both ethical leadership and organisational culture significantly predict organisational citizenship behaviour, with organisational

culture producing notable incremental variance.

H₀₃: Ethical leadership will not significantly influence organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational culture will not moderate this relationship among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria.

Table 5: Hierarchical multiple regressions of ethical leadership on organisational commitment with organisational culture as moderator role in North-West Nigerian Colleges of Education

Colleges of Education

R= 0.982 R²= 0.965 Adjusted R²= 0.964 ΔR²= 0.965 SEE= 0.274					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	775.081			2	387.541
Residual	28.500			379	0.0752
Total	803.581			381	

Table 5 results indicated an exceptionally strong predictive model. The model explained 96.5% of variance in organisational commitment. Although organisational culture significantly contributed: $\beta = .042$, $t = 3.18$, $p = .002$, its

incremental effect was relatively small compared to ethical leadership. Thus, ΔR^2 was statistically significant but practically modest, indicating that ethical leadership alone already accounts for most commitment variance.

Table 6: Test of Significance of Regression Coefficient Variables

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	β	t-value	Sign
Constant	-0.091	0.145		-0.630	0.530
ETL	0.478	0.007	0.953	10.615	.000
OC	0.053	0.017	0.042	3.182	.002

Table 6 indicated that Ethical leadership overwhelmingly dominated prediction, demonstrating its central role in shaping lecturers' psychological attachment to their institutions. Consequently, H_{03} was rejected ($p=.530>.000$). Ethical leadership significantly predicts organisational commitment, with organisational culture contributing a smaller incremental effect.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined whether ethical leadership predicts lecturers' job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment, while assessing the additional explanatory contribution of organisational culture. The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which ethical leadership serves as a central influence on employee outcomes, whereas organisational culture strengthens these relationships to varying degrees depending on the outcome considered.

The strong association observed between ethical leadership and job satisfaction indicates that lecturers respond positively to leadership practices characterised by fairness, accountability, and ethical decision-making. The findings aligns with the findings of Engelbrecht, Heine, and Mahembe (2017) who reported that ethical leadership enhances positive employee attitudes by fostering trust and credibility within organisations. In addition, the result agrees with the findings of Babalola (2016) who showed that ethical supervisory conduct significantly improves employees'

work satisfaction, supporting the pattern identified in the present study. Contrarily, Kim and Brymer (2011) found organisational systems to be stronger predictors of satisfaction than leadership behaviour in service organisations.

A similar yet distinct pattern emerged for organisational citizenship behaviour. Although ethical leadership positively influenced lecturers' willingness to engage in discretionary activities, organisational culture demonstrated a comparatively stronger contribution. This finding implies that voluntary behaviours such as cooperation, mentoring, and participation in institutional activities are sustained primarily through shared organisational expectations. Consistent with this interpretation, Walumbwa and Schaubroeck (2009) observed that ethical leadership promotes helping behaviours by establishing moral standards that employees internalise. Likewise, Odoardi, Battistelli, and Montani (2019) found that supportive organisational climates encourage employees to exceed formal job requirements. The study partially contradicts the findings of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer (1996) who at different study and location indicated that within educational institutions, collective norms and collegial culture may play a more decisive role in sustaining extra-role behaviours than leadership influence alone.

The results relating to organisational commitment revealed an especially strong influence of ethical leadership, suggesting that lecturers' attachment to their institutions

is closely linked to their direct experiences with leadership conduct. Ethical leadership appears to strengthen employees' sense of belonging by promoting fairness, transparency, and consistency in organisational decisions. Similar conclusions were reached by Neubert et al. (2009), who found that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of employees' organisational attachment. In addition, Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) reported that ethical managerial behaviour enhances employees' identification with organisational goals. However, the comparatively smaller contribution of organisational culture contrasts with findings by Lok and Crawford (2004), who identified organisational culture as the dominant predictor of commitment. The present results suggest that in the studied context, interpersonal leadership experiences may outweigh structural organisational characteristics in shaping lecturers' long-term attachment to their institutions.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment, while assessing the moderating role of organisational culture among lecturers in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria. The findings provide empirical evidence that ethical leadership significantly predicts positive employee outcomes across the three dimensions examined. Lecturers who perceived their leaders as fair, transparent, and ethically responsible reported higher levels of job satisfaction, demonstrated stronger discretionary work behaviours, and expressed greater commitment to their institutions.

Therefore, the study concluded that the hierarchical moderated regression results revealed significant increases in explained

variance following the introduction of organisational culture and the interaction terms, indicating that organisational culture strengthens the relationships between ethical leadership and the examined outcomes. This suggests that leadership effectiveness operates more strongly within supportive organisational environments that reinforce shared values, collaboration, and institutional trust.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

Promotion of Ethical Leadership Practices

1. Colleges of education should institutionalize leadership development programmes that emphasize ethical decision-making, fairness, accountability, and transparent communication, as these behaviours significantly enhance job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment.
2. Similarly, institutional management should actively cultivate supportive organisational cultures characterised by trust, shared academic values, and participatory governance, given that organisational culture amplifies the positive effects of ethical leadership.
3. Furthermore, institutions should implement structured feedback and participatory decision-making mechanisms that encourage lecturers' involvement in institutional processes, thereby reinforcing commitment and encouraging discretionary organisational behaviours

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