

Ethical Leadership and Corporate Culture: A Study of Guaranty Trust Holding (GTCO) Plc in FCT-Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of leaders' ethical behavior on corporate culture at Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO) Plc, a major Nigerian banking institution. Using a survey research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to employees across six GTCO branches in FCT-Abuja. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different job roles. The study tested three hypotheses using multiple regression analysis on data from 129 valid responses, achieving a response rate of 77.2%. Reliability and validity were established through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.7$) and factor analysis. The findings reveal that leaders' fairness, integrity, and transparency significantly enhance corporate culture, while leaders' role modeling did not exhibit a statistically significant influence. The model explained 61.7% of the variance in corporate culture ($R^2 = 0.617$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the strong predictive power of ethical leadership dimensions. These results highlight the need for GTCO Plc to reinforce fairness, integrity, and transparency in leadership practices, while exploring complementary strategies to enhance the role-modeling effect. The study provides practical recommendations for strengthening ethical leadership to foster a more robust corporate culture.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Corporate Culture, Banking Sector, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Across the globe, organizations are increasingly recognizing the role of ethical leadership in fostering trust, accountability, and sustainable business practices. Ethical leadership transcends mere regulatory compliance; it embodies the values, principles, and moral responsibilities that guide leaders in decision-making and interactions with stakeholders (Mulkhan, 2022). Countries with robust ethical leadership frameworks tend to have more stable economies, reduced corporate scandals, and enhanced public trust in institutions (Zahari et al., 2024). Conversely, the absence of ethical leadership has been linked to corporate failures, financial fraud, and diminishing investor confidence. This underscores the need for

businesses worldwide to embed ethical leadership as a cornerstone of their corporate culture.

Corporate institutions, particularly in the financial sector, thrive on trust and integrity. Ethical leadership within these institutions plays a vital role in shaping corporate culture, influencing employee behaviour, and determining long-term organizational sustainability. Ethical leaders set the tone for responsible business practices, ensuring that decision-making aligns with ethical standards and corporate values (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2024). In a dynamic financial environment, such as that of Nigeria, where banking institutions serve as the backbone of economic development, ethical leadership becomes even more critical in fostering transparency, accountability, and fairness (Moran, 2023).

Ethical leadership is defined as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships while promoting such conduct among employees through

communication, reinforcement, and decisionmaking (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leadership can be instrumental in improving corporate culture by fostering a work environment based on fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling. Scholarly works have acknowledged fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling as dimensions of ethical leadership (Shakeel et al., 2019).

The concept of fairness alludes to an ethical leader ensuring impartiality in decision-making, treating employees and stakeholders with equity and justice (Dampson, 2022). A fair corporate culture minimizes favoritism, enhances employee morale, and fosters organizational commitment. Integrity entails adherence to ethical principles, while transparency involves openness in decision-making processes (Edevbie & McWilliams, 2023). Together, these attributes build trust within the organization and with external stakeholders. A transparent corporate culture discourages unethical practices and enhances accountability. Ethical leaders serve as role models by exemplifying ethical behavior. Employees are more likely to emulate ethical conduct when they see their leaders demonstrating honesty, responsibility, and adherence to ethical norms. This ensures a trickle-down effect, reinforcing an ethical corporate culture at all levels (Xiang, 2023).

Corporate culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape an organization's environment and influence how employees behave and interact (Ghumiem et al., 2023). It dictates the ethical climate, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and organizational identity. A strong corporate culture enhances employee motivation, engagement, and productivity, whereas a weak culture can lead to ethical lapses, workplace dissatisfaction, and operational inefficiencies. In banking institutions, where trust and customer confidence are paramount, maintaining a strong corporate culture is essential for long-term success.

In the context of Nigerian banks, corporate culture is often challenged by issues such as unethical practices, financial misconduct, weak regulatory compliance, and employee dissatisfaction. In FCT-Abuja, where the financial sector is highly competitive, banks face mounting pressure to balance profitability with ethical responsibilities. Issues such as nepotism, fraudulent practices, poor employee engagement, and non-compliance with ethical standards have been reported in some banking institutions. These challenges highlight the need to examine the role of ethical leadership in fostering a more resilient and ethical corporate culture within Guaranty Trust Bank.

Given these concerns, this study is imperative as it seeks to explore the relationship between ethical leadership and corporate culture in Guaranty Trust Bank branches in FCT-Abuja. By identifying how ethical leadership influences corporate culture, this research aims to provide insights into improving leadership practices, enhancing employee commitment, and strengthening the ethical climate in the banking sector. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the effect of leaders' fairness on corporate culture in GTCO branches in FCT-Abuja;
2. assess the impact of leaders' integrity and transparency on corporate culture in GTCO branches in FCT-Abuja; and
3. investigate the influence of leaders' role modeling on corporate culture in GTCO branches in FCT-Abuja.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal scenario, the presence of ethical leadership within banking institutions would lead to a robust corporate culture characterized by high ethical standards, transparency, and accountability. Employees would be more engaged, decision-making processes would be fair and impartial, and banks would maintain strong reputational standing. Ethical leadership fosters a work environment where integrity prevails, minimizing instances of financial impropriety and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the banking sector.

However, in Nigeria, and particularly in the banking sector, corporate culture has been marred by ethical lapses, non-compliance, and leadership challenges. Reports of insider fraud, favouritism, poor employee motivation, and regulatory breaches indicate underlying weaknesses in ethical leadership. In FCT-Abuja, where competition among banks is intense, the lack of strong ethical leadership can lead to unethical practices that undermine corporate performance and employee morale. The absence of ethical leadership in banks may be a significant factor contributing to these corporate culture deficiencies.

Despite extensive literature on ethical leadership and several outcome variables, such as employee motivation (Edevbie & McWilliams, 2023), sustainable business practices (Kanyamukenge & Kagwaini 2024) among others. There remains an empirical and theoretical gap in understanding how ethical leadership influences corporate culture within Nigerian banks, specifically in Guaranty Trust Bank branches in FCT-Abuja. While previous studies have explored ethical leadership broadly (Shakeel et al., 2019; Dampson, 2022), limited research has examined its specific dimensions—fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling—and their impact on corporate culture in the Nigerian banking context. Failure to address these concerns could lead to a continued erosion of trust in banking institutions, increased regulatory scrutiny, and a decline in employee engagement and organizational performance.

2. Literature Review

Ethical leadership

Ethical leadership is a multifaceted concept encompassing various characteristics and behaviors. Brown et al. (2005) posit that ethical leaders demonstrate integrity by acting with honesty and fairness and adhering to strong moral principles. Transparency, a hallmark of ethical leadership, involves maintaining openness and clear communication with all stakeholders, fostering trust and accountability (Wang et al., 2015). Ethical leaders hold themselves and others accountable for actions and decisions, leading by example and setting a high bar for ethical conduct (Brown et al., 2005). Furthermore, ethical leaders

champion justice by ensuring fair treatment for all employees, promoting diversity and inclusion within the organization (Wang et al., 2015).

Recent research by Litalien et al. (2023) expands on the concept of ethical leadership by introducing the notion of ethical courage. Ethical courage refers to a leader's willingness to speak up against unethical behavior, even in the face of potential consequences. This highlights the importance of creating a safe space for employees to voice concerns about unethical practices without fear of retribution.

Ethical leadership has a cascading effect on various aspects of an organization. Mayer et al. (2019) demonstrate that ethical leaders cultivate trust and respect, leading to higher employee morale and satisfaction. Employees who perceive their leaders as ethical are more likely to be engaged, productive, and committed to the organization's success (Brown et al., 2005). Trevino and Weaver (1995) emphasize the crucial role of ethical leadership in influencing decision-making. Ethical leaders guide employees toward making ethical choices and minimizing unethical behavior and misconduct within the organization. This can lead to a more positive and productive work environment for all.

The long-term benefits of ethical leadership extend beyond employee morale and decisionmaking. A strong ethical culture fostered by ethical leadership can attract and retain top talent, enhance the organization's reputation, and ultimately lead to improved financial performance (Brown et al., 2005). Consumers are increasingly drawn to companies with strong ethical practices, and a positive reputation can translate into increased market share and customer loyalty (Wang et al., 2015).

Ethical leadership is characterized by several key indicators that shape organizational culture and employee behaviour. While ethical leadership broadly encompasses trust, respect, and ethical decision-making (Mayer et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2005; Trevino & Weaver, 1995), this study specifically focuses on fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modelling. These dimensions have been widely recognized in the literature as essential components of ethical leadership. For instance, fairness ensures that employees are treated equitably and justly,

fostering trust and reducing workplace conflict (Resick et al., 2006).

Integrity reflects the leader's consistency in ethical behaviour, reinforcing credibility and guiding employees towards ethical conduct (Den Hartog, 2015). Transparency, on the other hand, promotes openness in decision-making, mitigating unethical practices and enhancing accountability (Hassan et al., 2013). Role modelling, as emphasized by Brown and Treviño (2006), highlights the leader's influence in setting ethical standards and shaping organizational norms. These dimensions not only influence employees' ethical behaviour but also contribute to an organization's overall sustainability and long-term success.

Fairness

Ethical leadership is characterized by fairness and justice, which require leaders to treat all employees impartially and make decisions based on objective criteria rather than favouritism or personal bias. According to Brown and Treviño (2006), ethical leaders ensure that organizational policies and reward systems are applied consistently, preventing discrimination and unethical workplace practices. By maintaining fairness, ethical leaders build trust and enhance employees' commitment to the organization, fostering a work environment where ethical behaviour is prioritized.

In addition to fostering trust, fairness and justice in leadership contribute to employee morale and organizational stability. Research by Eisenbeiss (2012) indicates that when employees perceive fairness in leadership, they are more likely to demonstrate ethical behaviour and contribute positively to organizational outcomes. Leaders who uphold justice not only mitigate workplace conflicts but also set a precedent for ethical decision-making, reinforcing an ethical culture that extends beyond individual interactions.

Integrity and Transparency

Integrity and transparency are foundational aspects of ethical leadership, ensuring that leaders act honestly, adhere to moral principles, and communicate openly with their followers. Ethical

leaders demonstrate integrity by aligning their words with their actions, thereby fostering credibility and respect within the organization (Yukl et al., 2013). Transparency, on the other hand, entails open communication regarding policies, decisions, and challenges, reducing the likelihood of ethical breaches and promoting accountability.

By being transparent, ethical leaders encourage a culture of openness where employees feel valued and informed. According to Mayer et al. (2012), transparency in leadership reduces uncertainty and increases employees' willingness to engage in ethical behaviour. When leaders consistently demonstrate integrity, they serve as ethical role models, influencing their subordinates to uphold similar standards of honesty and accountability in their professional conduct.

Role Modelling

Ethical leaders serve as role models by exemplifying moral behaviour and setting ethical standards for their followers. According to Brown and Mitchell (2010), employees often emulate the behaviour of their leaders, making it crucial for those in leadership positions to uphold ethical conduct. Leaders who provide ethical guidance create an environment where employees understand what is expected of them, reducing ambiguity and fostering ethical decision-making at all levels of the organization.

Furthermore, ethical role modelling extends beyond individual behaviour to organizational culture. Research by Kalshoven et al. (2011) suggests that leaders who demonstrate ethical behaviour encourage ethical climate development, thereby influencing policies and corporate social responsibility initiatives. By consistently upholding ethical values, leaders reinforce ethical norms within the workplace, ensuring that employees remain committed to ethical principles in their professional activities.

Corporate Culture

Corporate Culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that characterize a company and guide its interactions

internally and externally. It includes the company's mission, vision, and core values, as well as its work environment, leadership style, communication practices, and approach to decision-making. Essentially, it's the personality of the organization and influences how employees and stakeholders perceive and engage with the company.

Corporate culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape an organization's internal environment and influence employee interactions. It encompasses an organization's norms, leadership style, ethical standards, and communication patterns, all of which contribute to shaping workplace dynamics and decision-making (Schein, 2017). A strong corporate culture fosters alignment between organizational goals and employee behaviour, leading to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. When employees identify with the values of their organization, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to its long-term success (Denison et al., 2014). Furthermore, a well-defined corporate culture promotes consistency in business operations and strengthens the company's identity in the competitive market.

Corporate culture also plays a significant role in shaping ethical behaviour and corporate governance. Research by Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) suggests that an organization's culture can either encourage ethical decision-making or contribute to misconduct, depending on the values embedded within the workplace. Companies with a culture of integrity and accountability tend to experience higher levels of employee trust and transparency, reducing the risk of unethical practices and internal conflicts. Additionally, corporate culture influences innovation, adaptability, and leadership effectiveness, impacting an organization's ability to navigate change and maintain long-term sustainability (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). As such, cultivating a positive corporate culture is essential for organizational growth and competitive advantage.

Theoretical Framework

The Transformational Leadership Theory, proposed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978, was the central theory used to underpin this study.

Burns conceptualized transformational leadership as a leadership style where leaders inspire and motivate followers by fostering a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and promoting ethical behaviour (Burns, 1978). The core assumption of this theory is that leaders can transform their followers by appealing to their values, emotions, and long-term goals rather than merely controlling or rewarding them based on transactional exchanges (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders exhibit key characteristics such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these attributes, they create an ethical and values-driven organizational culture that aligns employees' interests with broader organizational goals.

This theory is highly applicable to the study of ethical leadership and corporate culture as it emphasizes the role of leaders in shaping ethical standards and organizational values. Transformational leaders act as role models, fostering an environment of integrity, trust, and accountability, which directly influences corporate culture (Northouse, 2021). Ethical leadership, a key aspect of transformational leadership, ensures that employees uphold moral values, reducing unethical practices and enhancing corporate governance. In organizations where corporate culture is aligned with ethical leadership, employees demonstrate greater commitment, transparency, and ethical behaviour, ultimately fostering sustainable organizational success. Therefore, applying transformational leadership theory to this study helps to explain how ethical leadership influences corporate culture and enhances ethical decision-making within organizations.

Empirical Reviews

Ahmed and Khan (2023) examined the paradoxical effects of ethical leadership on employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviour by applying social cognitive theory. The study aimed to assess how ethical leadership influences unethical actions intended to benefit organizations, with a focus on the mediating role of psychological empowerment and the moderating effect of moral identity. A survey was conducted among 515 nursing staff from public and private hospitals in Pakistan, with data

collected at three different time intervals and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings contradicted previous studies, revealing that ethical leadership positively correlated with employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviour. Additionally, psychological empowerment mediated this relationship, indicating that when employees feel more empowered, they may justify unethical actions for organizational gain. The study further found that moral identity moderated the relationship between ethical leadership and psychological empowerment, demonstrating that individual differences significantly shape workplace behaviour. The study recommended that organizations carefully consider the psychological impact of ethical leadership and implement measures to prevent unethical proorganizational behaviours. However, the study was limited to the healthcare sector in Pakistan, necessitating further research across diverse industries and cultural settings to generalize the findings.

Kanyamukenge and Kagwaini (2024) investigated the role of ethical leadership in promoting sustainable business practices by integrating social learning theory, stakeholder theory, and transformational leadership theory. The study aimed to assess how ethical leadership influences environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices in organizations. A systematic review of selected papers from 2020 to 2024 was conducted to evaluate ethical leadership's impact on sustainability initiatives. The findings highlighted that ethical leadership fosters sustainable business practices by encouraging corporate social responsibility, enhancing employee engagement in sustainability initiatives, and strengthening organizational reputation. It recommended that organizations integrate ethical leadership into their core operations to build resilience, improve compliance with regulatory standards, and mitigate legal and financial risks. However, the study was limited by its reliance on secondary data, necessitating empirical research across different industries to validate its findings.

Al Halbusi et al. (2023) examined the interaction effects of ethical leadership, subordinates' moral identity, and self-control on employees' ethical

behaviour. The study aimed to assess how moral identity and self-control moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and ethical conduct. Using social learning theory and social cognitive theory, the researchers tested their model on 375 supervisor-subordinate dyads in a large Iraqi organization. The findings revealed that ethical leadership positively influenced employees' ethical behaviour, but this effect was stronger for employees with high moral identity and high self-control. Based on these results, the study recommended that organizations consider individual differences among employees when implementing ethical leadership strategies. However, a key limitation was its focus on a single organization, necessitating further research across diverse industries and cultural settings to generalize the findings.

Zheng et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and ethical voice, focusing on the mediating role of ethical value internalization and integrity identity. Drawing from self-concept and social-information processing perspectives, the study aimed to examine how ethical leadership fosters employees' ethical behaviour through internalized values. The research utilized three studies: two field studies involving police officers and staff in the United Kingdom (N = 972 and N = 765) and an online three-wave study (N = 448). The findings revealed that ethical leadership positively influenced employees' ethical value internalization, which subsequently enhanced their integrity identity and ethical voice. Using a time-lagged design, multisource data, and a three-wave cross-lagged approach, the research provided strong empirical support for its hypotheses. Based on these findings, the authors recommended that organizations cultivate ethical leadership to strengthen ethical voice among employees. However, the study primarily focused on law enforcement personnel, suggesting a need for future research to explore these relationships in different industries and cultural settings.

3.1 Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the impact of ethical leadership on corporate culture in Guaranty Trust Bank branches in FCT-Abuja. The descriptive design is

appropriate as it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to describe the relationship between variables and identify patterns and trends. The population of the study consists of employees in GTCO Holdings within the FCT, Nigeria. Six branches were selected—one from each area council in the FCT (Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Kwali, and Abaji). The selection criteria were based on the branch’s operational size, customer engagement level, and workforce composition to ensure representativeness. The study population is 164 employees, and the entire population was

reliability testing using Cronbach’s alpha, with coefficients of 0.81 for fairness, 0.79 for integrity & transparency, 0.83 for role modeling, and 0.85 for corporate culture, ensuring internal consistency. Content validity was determined through expert reviews, aligning questionnaire items with existing literature and theoretical constructs. To analyse the data, multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS v27, allowing for the examination of relationships between ethical leadership dimensions and corporate culture. This analytical technique provided robust insights into the predictive

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n=129)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18 - 25 years	23	17.8
26 - 35 years	51	39.5
36 - 45 years	35	27.1
46 years and above	20	15.5
Gender		
Male	72	55.8
Female	57	44.2
Years of Work Experience		
1 - 5 years	41	31.8
6 - 10 years	48	37.2
11 - 15 years	26	20.2
16 years and above	14	10.8
Marital Status		
Single	58	45.0
Married	63	48.8
Divorced	5	3.9
Widowed	3	2.3

used as the sample size due to its manageability and to ensure comprehensive insights into the research problem. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure that each employee had an equal chance of participation, reducing selection bias and increasing the generalizability of findings. Primary data was used, and data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, designed to measure ethical leadership dimensions and corporate culture attributes. The questionnaire was subjected to

strength of ethical leadership on corporate culture within GTBank in FCT-Abuja. **4.0 Results and Discussions**

A total of 167 questionnaires were distributed across the six selected branches of Guaranty Trust Bank (GTCO) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. However, only 129 questionnaires were retrieved, representing a response rate of 77.2%. A preliminary analysis of the 129 returned questionnaires revealed that they were 100%

suitable for further statistical analysis. The demographic characteristics of the 129 respondents are summarized in Table 1. The results indicate that the majority of respondents (39.5%) were between the ages of 26 and 35, followed by 36-45 years (27.1%). Males constituted a higher proportion of the sample (55.8%) compared to females (44.2%). Regarding work experience, most respondents (37.2%) had between 6 and 10 years of work experience, followed by 1-5 years (31.8%). In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents were married (48.8%), while 45.0% were single. Prior to conducting multiple regression analysis, key assumptions were assessed and met. Since these assumptions were satisfied, multiple regression analysis was

variables examined include age, gender, years of work experience, and marital status.

conducted. The following were the hypotheses tested:

H1: Leader’s Fairness significantly affects corporate culture

H2: Leader’s Integrity and transparency significantly affect corporate culture **H3:**

Leader’s Role modeling significantly affects corporate culture

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785 ^a	.617	.607	.89865

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role Modelling, Fairness, Integrity and Transparency

Source: Authors design, 2025

Table 3: ANOVA result on Ethical Leadership and Corporate Culture

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	162.403	3	54.134	67.033	.000 ^a
	Residual	100.946	125	.808		
	Total	263.349	128			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Role Modelling, Fairness, Integrity and Transparency

b. Dependent Variable: Corporate Culture

Source: Authors design, 2025

Table 4: Coefficients result on Ethical Leadership and Corporate Culture

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	.174	.258		.673	.502
	Role Modelling	.139	.076	.137	1.838	.068
	Integrity and Transparency	.349	.084	.324	4.169	.000
	Fairness	.398	.087	.427	4.571	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Corporate Culture

Source: Authors design, 2025

Table 2 presents the model summary for the relationship between ethical leadership and corporate culture. The R-value of 0.785 indicates a strong positive correlation between ethical leadership dimensions (fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling) and corporate culture. The R-Square value of 0.617 shows that 61.7% of the variation in corporate culture is explained by the independent variables. The adjusted R-Square of 0.607 confirms the model's reliability, accounting for the number of predictors included. The standard error of the estimate (0.89865) represents the extent of deviation in predicting corporate culture.

Table 3 shows the ANOVA results, which assess the overall significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 67.033 and the associated significance value ($p < 0.001$) indicate that the model is statistically significant. This confirms that fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling collectively contribute to predicting corporate culture. The total sum of squares (263.349) is divided into the regression sum of squares (162.403) and the residual sum of squares (100.946), showing that the majority of variance in corporate culture is explained by the independent variables.

Table 4 presents the coefficients of the regression model. The constant term ($B = 0.174$, $p = 0.502$) is not statistically significant, indicating that corporate culture does not have a meaningful baseline value in the absence of ethical leadership. Fairness ($B = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$) and integrity and transparency ($B = 0.349$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predict corporate culture, with fairness having the strongest impact. Role modeling ($B = 0.139$, $p = 0.068$) is not statistically significant, implying that its direct effect on corporate culture is weak. The t-values further confirm these relationships, with fairness ($t = 4.571$) and integrity and transparency ($t = 4.169$) exhibiting strong effects, while role modeling ($t = 1.838$) does not reach the required significance threshold.

Discussion of Findings

The central objective of this study was to assess the effect of ethical leadership on corporate culture of GT holding. The first hypothesis was on the effect of leader's fairness on corporate culture of GT holdings. The results indicate that fairness has a significant and positive effect on corporate culture. This suggests that organizations that uphold fairness foster a corporate culture where employees feel valued, trusted, and committed. When leadership ensures equitable treatment in decision-making, promotions, and reward allocation, employees develop a sense of belonging and alignment with organizational values. This finding aligns with the work of Al Halbusi et al. (2023), who found that ethical leadership positively influences employees' ethical behavior, particularly when fairness is embedded in leadership practices. Their study demonstrated that employees with strong moral identities and self-control respond more positively to fair leadership, reinforcing the role of fairness in shaping workplace ethics and culture. Similarly, Kanyamukenge and Kagwaini (2024) found that ethical leadership, particularly fairness, contributes to sustainable business practices by enhancing employee engagement and trust in leadership.

The second hypothesis was on influence of leader's integrity and transparency on corporate culture of GT holdings. The study also found that integrity and transparency significantly influence corporate culture. This implies that organizations fostering a culture of honesty, openness, and ethical accountability create an environment where employees are more engaged, committed, and aligned with corporate values. Transparency in decision-making processes, open communication channels, and ethical leadership behaviour contribute to a strong corporate culture that enhances both compliance and employee morale. These findings resonate with Zheng et al. (2022), who demonstrated that ethical leadership fosters ethical value internalization and integrity identity among employees. Their study provided empirical evidence that leaders who exhibit transparency and integrity encourage ethical voice and accountability, strengthening corporate culture. Additionally, Kanyamukenge and Kagwaini (2024) highlighted that organizations with ethical leadership that prioritizes integrity

and transparency are more likely to build sustainable and resilient corporate cultures.

The last hypothesis was on leader's role modeling on the corporate culture of GT holdings. Contrary to expectations, role modeling did not have a statistically significant direct impact on corporate culture ($\beta = 0.137$, $t = 1.838$, $p = 0.068$). This suggests that while ethical role modeling is essential, its direct influence on corporate culture may require additional mechanisms such as reinforcement policies, employee engagement programs, or participatory leadership structures. This finding aligns with Ahmed and Khan (2023), who found that ethical leadership does not always lead to expected positive outcomes. Their study highlighted the paradoxical effect of ethical leadership, showing that employees may interpret ethical leadership differently based on contextual factors such as psychological empowerment and moral identity. Similarly, Al Halbusi et al. (2023) suggested that the impact of ethical leadership, including role modeling, is significantly influenced by individual differences among employees, such as moral identity and self-control. A possible explanation for the non-significance of role modeling in this study is that employees may require more than just observing ethical behaviour from leaders—they may need active involvement in ethical decision-making, continuous reinforcement of ethical standards, and institutionalized mechanisms that encourage ethical practices at all levels of the organization.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that ethical leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping corporate culture within GTCO branches in FCTAbuja. Specifically, fairness, integrity, and transparency emerged as significant predictors of a positive corporate culture, reinforcing the importance of ethical leadership in fostering trust, commitment, and shared organizational values. However, role modeling did not exhibit a statistically significant direct impact, suggesting that while ethical behaviour by leaders is important, its influence on corporate culture may be indirect or contingent on other organizational factors.

Specific Recommendations

To strengthen corporate culture through ethical leadership, the following strategic actions are recommended:

1. Reinforce fairness in leadership practices by ensuring equitable treatment of employees in decision-making, promotions, and reward systems. This will enhance employee trust, job satisfaction, and long-term organizational commitment.
2. Enhance integrity and transparency by fostering open communication channels, ethical accountability structures, and whistleblower protection mechanisms. Organizations should implement ethical leadership policies that encourage transparency in business operations and decision-making.
3. Redefine leadership development programs to move beyond role modeling by actively engaging employees in ethical decision-making processes. This can be achieved through structured mentoring programs, ethical dilemma training, and participatory leadership models that integrate employees into governance structures.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between ethical leadership and corporate culture, it is not without limitations. The study was restricted to six GTCO branches in FCT-Abuja, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other financial institutions or geographic locations. Additionally, the study primarily examined fairness, integrity, transparency, and role modeling as dimensions of ethical leadership, leaving room for future research to explore other leadership attributes that may influence corporate culture.

Future studies should expand the scope to include a broader range of financial institutions across multiple regions and incorporate qualitative methodologies to gain deeper insights into how ethical leadership practices translate into organizational culture. Furthermore, longitudinal

studies could be conducted to examine the longterm effects of ethical leadership on

corporate culture and employee behaviour over time.

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