Ethical Work Climate and Organisational Performance: Evidence from Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study centres on the increasing importance of ethical work climate in improving organisational performance and the need to examine how ethical leadership and ethical policies and practices influence employee productivity and operational efficiency in the banking sector. Although ethical practices are widely recognized as essential for organisational success, their effectiveness in enhancing performance remains a concern. Hence, this study examined the effect of ethical work climate on organisational performance in money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to examine the impact of ethical leadership on employee productivity; and determine the effect of ethical policies and practices on operational efficiency. A survey research design was employed for the study, while a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. A sample size of 262 respondents was used for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed, and multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS vs 25. The findings revealed that ethical leadership has a significant impact on employee productivity with ($R^2 = 0.521$ and p-value < 0.05); and ethical policies and practices have a significant effect on operational efficiency with ($R^2 = 0.571$ and p-value < 0.05). The study concluded that ethical work climate significantly enhances organisational performance by improving employee productivity and operational effectiveness. Therefore, the study recommended that management of money deposit banks should strengthen ethical leadership practices through transparency, accountability, and integrity, while also improving the implementation of ethical policies and codes of conduct to sustain organisational performance.

Keywords: Ethical Work Climate, Ethical Leadership, Ethical Policies and Practices, Employee Productivity, Organisational Performance.

Introduction

Worldwide, organisations have come to understand that ethical values, responsible conduct, and organisational integrity are critical factors in sustainable performance. In today's business world, financial results are no longer the only focus but workplace ethics, employee behaviour, stakeholder trust and responsible management practices are also in scope. As such, the term ethical work climate has emerged as one of the crucial organizational concepts as it is the shared perception of employees in regards to the ethical climate of an organization, the decision-making process and acceptable behaviours at work (Sookdawoor & Grobler, 2022). The ethical work climate gives employees behavioural guidance, accountability and helps them to do things responsibly for the better of the organisation. Ethical conduct in the workplace has become a topic of interest in developing economies because of the imperative to improve transparency, accountability and employee commitment. The ethical climate affects employees' perception of ethical issues and moulds their attitude and conduct through the setting of organizational conditions that promote commitment, cooperation and positive outcomes of the workplace (Otaye-Ebede et al. 2020).

It is especially important in the financial industry because the quality of the service, confidentiality, trust and satisfaction with the rules and regulations affect the credibility of an organisation. The Money Deposit Banks conduct their business in a competitive and regulated environment in Nigeria, whose ethical behavior will impact on the confidence of customers, the performance of the employees and the reputation of the institution. Ethical leadership and organisational values help to foster places of work in which employees are accountable and dedicated to organisational objectives (Sarwar et al., 2020). Organisational performance is not just about financial results; it also relates to productivity of the employees, quality of services, operational efficiency, and effectiveness in general. Ethical organizational practices increase performance by increasing the trust of the stakeholders, the commitment of the employees and the sustainability of the organization in the long run (Saha et al., 2020). A positive moral atmosphere fosters motivation, decreases unethical behaviours and encourages professional conduct. According to Chiboiwa et al. (2025), an ethical work climate can positively influence employee performance by fostering a work culture where ethical performance is encouraged, whereas Gorfie and Wube (2023) determined that the implementation of ethics can help create a better environment for the organisation through the improvement of employee effectiveness and working conditions. However, in the Nigerian context, ethical behaviour and organizational support are still significant employee determinants and organizational outcomes (Abdulkareem et al., 2025). As a result, this study investigates Ethical work climate and organisational performance of Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Ethical, accountable, and transparent behaviour is essential in the banking sector, as it promotes customer confidence and organisational performance. However, unethical workplace behaviour, poor ethical leadership, weak adherence to organisational policies, and low employee commitment may undermine productivity and operational efficiency. Although previous studies, including Sookdawoor and Grobler (2022), Saha et al. (2020), Chiboiwa et al. (2025), Gorfie and Wube (2023), and Ryu (2020), have examined ethical climate, leadership, and organisational performance, limited attention has been given to specific dimensions of ethical work climate in the banking sector. Consequently, empirical evidence on the influence of ethical leadership, policies, and practices on employee productivity and efficiency among Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria, remains limited. This study therefore examines the impact of ethical work climate on organisational performance in this context.

Research Objectives

Main objective is to examine the effect of ethical work climate on organisational performance in money

deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria. While specific objectives are to;

- examine the impact of ethical leadership on employee productivity in money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- determine the effect of ethical policies and practices on operational efficiency in money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Ethical Work Climate

Ethical work climate is the collective perceptions and beliefs of workers about the ethical values, standards and practices that influence their behavior and decision making within the organization. It demonstrates how aware workers are of appropriate behaviour and how they handle ethical problems in the workplace (Obeidat, Al-Bakri, & Elbanna, 2020). It proposes that the moral climate which is shaped by leadership actions, organisational policies, communication and organisational expectations is a factor that influences organisational members. An ethical work climate foster integrity, fairness, accountability, and responsible employee behaviors; a poor ethical climate can lead to uncertainty and unethical behaviors. Sookdawoor and Grobler (2022) point out that ethical climate affects the perceptions of ethical expectations and affects positive employee behaviours.

Ethical work climate is developed by organisational structures and practices that promote ethical decision making. Some of the key dimensions include ethical leadership, ethical policies and procedures, fairness, compliance and transparency in organisational operations (Ezeanyim, & Ezeanolue, 2021). Much of this is heightened in the role of the leader as they act as role models to whom employees look up to and whose conduct impacts their attitudes and behaviours. If managers are honest, fair, and responsible in their business practices, their employees are likely to be as well. Likewise, ethical policies and practices offer explicit guidance to promote consistency, accountability, and professional behavior. Ethical climate has been shown to affect employees' outcomes through its effect on their experiences in the workplace and promotion of actions that further organizational goals (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is one of the major aspects of ethical work climate that indicates how much values and ethics are exemplified and supported by the leadership of the organization in their decision making, behaviour and relations with employees. Ethical leaders have the ability to shape the culture of the workplace by being a positive example to employees and fostering a workplace that values fairness, responsibility and ethical accountability. Organisational culture is influenced by leadership behavior, as people tend to copy the behavior of other people they look up to in the organisation (Akanji et al., 2020).

Transparency is one of the fundamental principles of ethical leadership, characterised by openness, honesty in decision-making and the sharing of accurate information with staff. Transparency is a particular trait of good leadership that fosters trust and diminishes uncertainty by communicating to staff what is expected of them and how the organization operates. Accountability is linked to leaders taking responsibility for their own actions and employees taking responsibility for their own actions based on an agreed ethical code. Integrity is the consistency between the values, words and actions of leaders which boosts employee confidence and ethical commitment (Essien & Anyadighibe, 2022). Previous research has demonstrated that ethical leadership is linked to positive organisational outcomes due to its role in encouraging responsible behaviors, trust amongst employees, and performance. According to Nwachuku et al. (2025), good work ethics boost the effectiveness of an organisation through proper employee behaviour, and Dwi-Widyani et al. (2020) concluded that ethical conduct and entrepreneurial leadership helps to improve the performance of an organisation. Furthermore, according to ethical climate studies, the employees' perception of ethical leadership

impacts on their attitudes and behavioural reactions at work (Essien & Anyadighibe, 2022). Thus, transparency, accountability, and integrity in leadership is essential to building a positive ethical work climate. Ethical leaders set an example for their employees to follow so that they are encouraged to behave in an ethical manner, which in turn helps them become more productive and help achieve the organisation's goals.

Ethical policies and practices must be enforced, supported by management and understood by employees in order to be effective. Organizations that have ethical values in their working practice are more likely to increase the trust of their employees and decrease the risk of organizational wrongdoing which leads to organizational effectiveness. According to Halbusi et al. (2021), ethical leadership and ethical climate have a combined effect on the employee's ethical conduct, both through reinforcing organisational values and encouraging responsible behaviour. In the same way, Abdulkareem et al. (2025) found that ethical behavior and organizational support have positive impacts on employees and organizational performance. Therefore, confidentiality policies, anti-corruption and codes of conduct are important tools that help to improve ethical work climate and increase operational efficiency.

Organisational Performance

Organisational Performance is the degree of achievement of an organisation's goals and objectives using effective management of resources, processes and employee capacities. It's a multifaceted one that encompasses monetary and non-monetary effects including productivity, efficiency, quality of service and effectiveness (Ezeanyim, & Ezeanolue, 2021). Today, organizations are aware that their performance is not just a result of resources and strategies, but also of internal variables such as ethical climate, leadership actions, and employee dedication. Organisational conditions and values have significant influence on employee behaviours which lead to organisational outcomes, as stated by Otaye-Ebede et al. (2020).

One of the key dimensions of organisational performance is its productivity and is a measure of the skills, knowledge and effort an employee bring to the tasks they are set. Productive workers add to better output, quality service provision and attainment of organisational goals (Nwachuku, et al., 2025). Employee engagement and commitment in the organization are supported through ethical leadership and a positive work culture, which leads to better performance results (Sarwar et al., 2020). Likewise, Ryu (2020) concluded that organisational ethical climate had an effect on employee commitment and job performance through strengthening the employees' alignment with organisational values.

Operational efficiency is the capacity of an organisation to produce the greatest output with the lowest cost, delay and waste of resources. It requires good process, good coordination, following procedures, and maintaining continuous improvement in services (Obeidat, et al., 2020). Operational efficiency plays a crucial role in the banking industry, ensuring the reliability, customer satisfaction, and competitive edge of financial institutions. Efficiency is supported by ethical work practices because they promote responsible behaviours and standards within the organisation (Loke et al., 2022). Hence, in service driven organisations employee performance and operational efficiency are important factors to the performance of the organisation, especially in the context of ethics and sustainable effectiveness.

Adopted Theory

The current study uses the theory of Ethical Climate as originally developed by Victor and Cullen (1988). The theory suggests that organisations develop common beliefs and judgements about what is ethically right and wrong, how decisions are made and what is acceptable behavior in the workplace. It implies that employees' behaviours and attitudes are shaped by the ethics of the organisation which is established by values, leadership practices and formal policies. The theory is applicable to this study owing to the fact that employee's productivity and operational efficiency are the key performance indicators and the independent variable under study is ethical work climate. For the theory to be relevant in the Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, it establishes the link between ethical leadership, confidentiality practices, anti-corruption and code of conduct

and the behaviour of employees and the effectiveness of the organisations. Therefore, the theory can be used to examine the effect of ethical practice within workplaces on the performance of an organisation.

Empirical Reviews

Abdulkareem et al. (2025) investigated the relationship between ethical behaviour, organisational support and employee outcomes in the context of public sector organisational performance, to test the extent to which ethical behaviour and organisational support can predict employee outcomes and organisational effectiveness. The study design was quantitative research with structured questionnaires and analyzed with statistical techniques. The results indicated that ethics and organisational support have significant positive influence on the employee results and organisational performance. The study was confined to public sector organisations, however, which posed a problem for generalising the findings to private financial institutions including Money Deposit Banks. Furthermore, the study investigated ethical behaviour in a general way without singling out ethical leadership or ethical policies as aspects of ethical work climate.

After this, Chiboiwa et al. (2025) discussed the ethical work climate and employees' performance to explore the impact of an ethical work environment on employee effectiveness. The research method adopted in this study was an empirical research method that relied on employee perceptions to determine that the ethical work climate supported employee performance through the promotion of responsible behavior, commitment and positive attitudes in the workplace. The study, however, was mainly aimed at employee performance and did not go in depth into analysing the operational efficiency, an important performance indicator for the organisation. The research methodology adopted by Gorfie and Wube (2023) is quantitative designed to explore the relationship between business ethics and organisational performance with the mediation of working conditions. The study revealed that ethical practices are consistent with the positive outcomes of organisations via the creation of positive working conditions. However, the research was carried out in a general business context, which meant that there was a lack of sector-specific evidence in the banking industry.

Likewise, Sookdawoor and Grobler (2022) explored the processes of ethical climate and how ethical climate interacted with ethical leadership and organisational pressures to influence organisational citizenship behaviour. The study used survey methods and revealed that the ethical climate has a significant effect on employee behaviour. Its emphasis on citizenship behaviour, however, does not extend directly to the current study, as it was not concerned with productivity and operational efficiency. The study conducted by Loke et al. (2022) was a quantitative survey design that investigated the effects of ethical work climate on ethical work behaviour of auditors in the public sector in Malaysia. The results revealed a relationship between ethical climate and the ethical climate of the Malaysian public sector, which may not be applicable to Nigerian banking institutions.

Previous research by Saha et al. (2020), Sarwar et al. (2020), Ryu (2020), Otaye-Ebede et al. (2020) and Obeidat et al. (2020) also confirmed that ethical leadership, ethical climate, and responsible organisational practices are related to better employee and organisational outcomes. However, the studies were mostly conducted outside of Nigeria and in different set up of organisations with little empirical evidence showing the effect of ethical leadership and ethical policy on the productivity of employees and operational efficiency in Money Deposit Banks. In this regard, this study aims at complementing the existing literature by investigating the impact of ethical work climate on the performance of the Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design using a survey approach to examine the effect of ethical work climate on organisational performance in Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain measurable data from employees regarding ethical leadership, ethical policies and practices, employee productivity, and operational efficiency.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised employees of selected Money Deposit Banks operating in Kwara State, Nigeria. The selected banks and their respective population sizes were presented as follows:

Table 1: Selected Banks and Staff Strength

Banks	Population	Source
Access Bank	164	Human Resource Department (2026)
GTBank	112	Human Resource Department (2026)
Zenith Bank	122	Human Resource Department (2026)
United Bank for Africa (UBA Plc)	148	Human Resource Department (2026)
First Bank	213	Human Resource Department (2026)
Total	759	

Source: Author’s Computation

The selected banks were considered suitable for the study due to their operational relevance and significant presence within the study area.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted a. The technique ensured that every member of the population simple random sampling technique had an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing sampling bias and improving the representativeness of the selected respondents. The technique was considered appropriate because the population was finite, identifiable, and manageable.

Sampling Size

The sample size for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) finite population sample size formula. Based on the calculation, the study used a sample size of 262 respondents.

Distribution of Sample by Categories

The sample size was proportionately distributed among the selected banks as follows:

Table 2: Distributions Sample Size

Banks	Sample Size
Access Bank	57
GTBank	39
Zenith Bank	42
United Bank for Africa (UBA Plc)	51
First Bank	73
Total	262

Source: Author’s Computation

Research Instrument

The main instrument for collecting data for the study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in light of the research goals and on the basis of the empirical research available in the field of ethical work climate and organisational performance. The instrument comprised of demographic

characteristics of respondents, ethical leadership, ethical policies and practices, employee productivity and operational efficiency. Respondents' answers were gathered on a five point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers and experts in the field of management studies validated the research instrument. To check the reliability of the instrument, the internal consistency of the questionnaire items was checked with the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. The overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained from the reliability test was 0.838 which showed that the instrument was reliable and appropriate for the study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used for analysing the data obtained. The respondents' responses were summarised using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The effect of ethical work climate dimensions on organisational performance dimensions were tested using multiple regression analysis. The data was analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Results and Conclusion

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variables

N

Min

Max

Mean

Std. Deviation

Skewness

Kurtosis

Statistic

Statistic

Statistic

Statistic

Statistic

Statistic

Std. Error

Statistic

Std. Error

Ethical Leadership

262

4

5

4.41

.492

.370

.129

-1.874

.257

Ethical Policies and Practices

262

4

5

4.43

.496

.265

.129

-1.940

.257

Employee Productivity

262

4

5

4.67

.472

-.706

.129

-1.511

.257

Operational Efficiency

262

4

5

4.67

.472

-.706

.129

-1.511

.257

Valid N (listwise): 262

Descriptive statistics of the study variables for 262 respondents are presented in Table 3. The findings revealed that the perceptions of the respondents are positive as the means values of ethical leadership (4.41), ethical policies and practices (4.43), employee productivity (4.67) and operational efficiency (4.67) showed high mean values. Low variation in responses across the standard deviation (0.472–0.496) indicated consistency among the participants. The results on skewness and kurtosis showed the data were reasonably

distributed and appropriate for further analysis. In general, the respondents rated the practices of ethical work climate as "highly implemented" and "improved employee productivity and operational efficiency" in money deposit banks in Kwara State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

$H0_1$: Ethical leadership has no significant impact on employee productivity in Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 4a: Model Summary

Model

R

R Square

Adjusted R Square

Std. Error of the Estimate

1

.722a

.521

.505

.635

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency, Accountability, Integrity

The results of table 4a revealed that the correlation coefficient (R) between the ethical leadership dimension (transparency, accountability, and integrity) with employee productivity was 0.722, meaning there was a strong positive correlation. The R square value is 0.521 which suggests that ethical leadership accounts for 52.1% of the variation in employee productivity and the remaining 47.9% is attributable to other factors that are not captured in the model. The value of adjusted R Square is 0.505, which is an adjusted model value to confirm the ability of the model. Standard error of the estimate (0.635) represents the amount of error in predicting. Thus, the ethical leadership plays a significant role in enhancing the productivity of the employees in the money deposit banks in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Table 4b: Coefficientsa

Model

Unstandardized Coefficients

Standardized Coefficients

T

Sig.

B

Std. Error

Beta

1

(Constant)

.332

.149

2.236

.027

Transparency

.164

.095

.164

2.716

.021

Accountability

.285

.091

.299

3.120

.002

Integrity

.290

.085

.304

3.410

.001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

Table 4b reports the regression coefficients of the impact of ethical leadership dimensions (transparency, accountability, integrity) on employee productivity. The findings showed that transparency positively and

significantly influenced employees' productivity (β = 0.164, t = 2.716, p = 0.021). The other factors of accountability had a positive and significant effect (β = 0.299, t = 3.120, p = 0.002). Likewise, the positive impact of integrity on employee productivity was the highest (β = 0.304, t = 3.410, p = 0.001). For all the significance values obtained, no significance was attained (all values were <0.05) thus the null hypothesis is rejected and this means ethical leadership has a significant effect on employee productivity in money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: Ethical policies and practices have no significant effect on operational efficiency in Money Deposit Banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 5a: Model Summary

Model

R

R Square

Adjusted R Square

Std. Error of the Estimate

1

.756a

.571

.556

.656

a. Predictors: (Constant), Confidentiality Policy, Anti-Corruption Policy, Code of Conduct

Table 5a reveals that there was a positive relationship between the ethical policies and practices dimensions (confidentiality policy, anti-corruption policy and code of conduct) and operational efficiency with R value of 0.756. The value of R Square is 0.571, which means that the variation in operational efficiency is 57.1% due to ethical policies and practices and 42.9% due to other factors not considered in the model. The value of adjusted R Square is 0.556, which indicates that the model is reliable in predicting the operational efficiency. Thus, it is concluded that ethical policies and practices play significant role in enhancing the efficiency of money deposit banks in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Table 5b: Coefficientsa

Model

Unstandardized Coefficients

Standardized Coefficients

t

Sig.

B

Std. Error

Beta

1

(Constant)

.175

.156

1.124

.264

Confidentiality Policy

.353

.086

.361

4.128

.000

Anti-Corruption Policy

.282

.097

.277

2.914

.004

Code of Conduct

.150

.094

.138

2.604

.012

a. Dependent Variable: Operational Efficiency

Table 5b presents the regression coefficients showing the effect of ethical policies and practices on operational efficiency in money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria. Results showed that the confidentiality policy positively and significantly influences operational efficiency ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 4.128$, $p = 0.000$). Likewise, anti-corruption policy made a positive and significant impact on operational efficiency ($\beta = 0.277$, $t = 2.914$, $p = 0.004$), and code of conduct had a positive and significant impact ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.604$, $p = 0.012$). All of the significance values were less than 0.05, which meant that the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that ethics policies and practices have a significant effect on the efficiency of operating money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study has drawn a conclusion that ethical work climate has a significant effect on the performance of money deposit banks in Kwara State, Nigeria. The results have confirmed that ethical leadership (transparency, accountability, integrity) has a positive impact on employee productivity. In addition, there are ethical policies and practices that have a significant impact on operational efficiency, such as confidentiality policy, anti-corruption policy and codes of conduct. The findings confirm that ethical culture in the work environment leads to responsible work behaviour, boosts organizational processes, and enhances overall performance. Thus, the money deposit banks with priority of ethical leadership and good ethics of operation would have a higher productivity and have good operation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested;

- Management of money deposit banks should promote ethical leadership practices by encouraging transparency, accountability, and integrity among leaders to improve employee productivity and commitment.
- Banks should strengthen ethical policies and practices, particularly confidentiality policies, anti-corruption measures, and codes of conduct, to enhance operational efficiency and ensure effective organisational performance.

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