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EFFECT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY GUSAU

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of ethical leadership on employee moral development at Federal University Gusau, Nigeria, addressing a critical gap in research on ethical leadership within Nigerian higher education institutions, where systemic challenges like corruption and weak accountability persist. The study specifically examines three dimensions of ethical leadership—role modeling, moral guidance, and support for employee development—to determine their impact on staff moral reasoning and ethical behavior. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected from 329 academic and non-academic staff through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings reveal that role modeling ($\beta = 0.370$, $p < 0.001$) and support for employee development ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$) significantly enhance moral development, while moral guidance ($\beta = 0.005$, $p = 0.946$) shows no significant effect, suggesting that ethical leadership must go beyond verbal directives to include visible behavioral examples and structured developmental support. The study concludes that Federal University Gusau should institutionalize ethical leadership training, mentorship programs, and transparent accountability mechanisms to foster a culture of integrity. Recommendations include integrating ethical leadership into promotion criteria and conducting further research on mediating factors and cross-cultural comparisons to strengthen ethical practices in Nigerian universities. This research contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on cultivating ethical workplaces in higher education.

Keywords: *Ethical Leadership, Employee Moral Development, Role Modeling, Moral Guidance and Support for Employee Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee moral development has become an essential component of building ethical organizational cultures and enhancing institutional performance, especially in public service sectors like higher education. In increasingly complex and dynamic work environments, employees are often confronted with ethical dilemmas that demand sound moral judgment. Equipping staff with strong moral reasoning and decision-making skills not only helps them navigate such challenges but also fosters trust, teamwork, and accountability, while reducing the occurrence of unethical behaviors such as corruption, negligence, or favoritism (Treviño et al., 2021). Morally developed employees also contribute significantly to the broader goals of corporate social responsibility and institutional sustainability, enhancing both internal harmony and external reputation (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). According to Craft (2023), organizations that invest in employee moral development tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and ethical behavior—all of which are critical drivers of institutional success. Leadership plays a central role in enabling these outcomes, particularly through ethical practices such as role modeling, moral guidance, and developmental support.

In Nigerian public universities like Federal University Gusau, however, employee moral development remains constrained by a range of challenges. Chief among these is the lack of structured leadership initiatives focused on ethics. While ethical leadership has been shown to influence moral development positively, practices such as leading by example, offering moral direction, and fostering employee growth are either inconsistently applied or absent in many academic institutions (Abubakar et al., 2023). This shortfall results in employees having few ethical role models and limited opportunities for enhancing their moral reasoning, thus allowing unethical behaviors to persist unchallenged within university systems.

The institutional context of Federal University Gusau reflects broader systemic issues commonly found across Nigeria's public sector. Problems such as corruption, favoritism, and mismanagement are not only widespread but also deeply ingrained, creating organizational cultures where ethical standards are frequently compromised (Ogbonna & Okpara, 2022).

The normalization of unethical leadership behaviors sends adverse signals to employees and diminishes any incentive to act with integrity. Additionally, the bureaucratic structure of federal universities often impedes transparency and accountability, making it more difficult to establish a sustainable foundation for ethical conduct.

A further limitation is the inadequate emphasis on ethics-centered training and capacity building. Many staff members at Federal University Gusau lack access to regular workshops, seminars, or mentorship programs aimed at developing ethical competencies (Saidu et al., 2023). Without targeted interventions, employees are ill-equipped to handle complex moral decisions or resist external pressures that may compromise ethical standards. Moreover, societal influences—such as financial hardship or prevailing cultural norms—can further weaken the moral resolve of employees, making institutional ethics programs even more critical.

Traditional power dynamics also shape the ethical landscape in ways that limit moral growth. In many Nigerian organizations, hierarchical cultures discourage open conversations about ethics. Employees may fear repercussions for speaking out against unethical practices, resulting in a culture of silence that perpetuates moral stagnation (Ugwu & Okeke, 2023). Even where stakeholders have introduced ethics initiatives, their impact is often diminished by inconsistent application, lack of funding, or the absence of enforcement. While leadership may express rhetorical commitment to integrity, this is rarely matched by concrete and sustained actions capable of transforming institutional culture.

The persistence of these ethical challenges in Federal University Gusau, despite numerous stakeholder interventions, reflects a deeper and more systemic problem. Policies intended to foster ethical behavior often fail due to a combination of weak enforcement mechanisms, resistance from entrenched interests, and insufficient investment in long-term solutions (Ogbonna & Okpara, 2022). Short-term ethics training programs, while useful, tend to be sporadic and rarely address the structural and cultural issues underpinning unethical conduct. Furthermore, there is often a disconnection between policy design and implementation. Guidelines established by regulatory bodies like the National Universities Commission (NUC) may not be effectively translated into day-to-day practice due to lack of monitoring or accountability mechanisms (Abubakar et al., 2023).

These enduring challenges point to the need for a more transformative approach—one rooted in ethical leadership. Ethical leadership, through its core dimensions of role modeling, moral guidance, and support for employee development, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing these gaps. Leaders who consistently demonstrate ethical behavior serve as powerful role models, setting expectations for conduct and fostering an environment where ethical behavior is normalized (Treviño et al., 2021). When leaders provide moral direction—by clarifying organizational values, addressing ethical dilemmas openly, and offering support for ethical decision-making—they enable staff to internalize and act upon shared moral standards (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). Furthermore, when ethical leadership is paired with tangible support for employee development—through training, mentorship, and feedback mechanisms—employees gain the skills, confidence, and moral resilience required to act with integrity, even under pressure (Craft, 2023).

In the context of Federal University Gusau, ethical leadership presents a viable strategy for breaking the cycle of unethical behavior and establishing a culture of integrity. However, while ethical leadership has been widely acknowledged as important in global literature, its specific application in Nigerian public universities remains underexplored. Most existing studies have examined general organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction or performance, often neglecting the unique institutional, cultural, and systemic factors that influence employee moral development in Nigerian higher education settings (Abubakar et al., 2023). This gap points to a critical research need: to examine the concrete ways in which ethical leadership affects employees' moral reasoning, values, and actions within such contexts.

Moreover, much of the available research relies on qualitative designs or small-scale case studies, which, while valuable, do not provide statistically robust insights. There is a pressing need for quantitative studies that can offer generalizable findings, especially those that utilize validated measurement tools tailored to the realities of the Nigerian university system (Treviño et al., 2021). This study responds to that need by applying a structured research design that quantitatively investigates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee moral development, using Federal University Gusau as a focal point.

Specifically, the study aims to examine how the three dimensions of ethical leadership—role modeling, moral guidance, and support for employee development—influence employee moral development in the university. These objectives are grounded in well-established leadership theories, including Social Learning Theory and Transformational Leadership

Theory, which emphasize the role of leaders in shaping followers' ethical conduct through modeling and interpersonal influence. The study's focus on these dimensions allows for a nuanced understanding of how ethical leadership practices can be operationalized to meet the ethical challenges facing Nigerian universities today.

By addressing these objectives, the research offers both practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, it provides university administrators and policymakers with evidence-based recommendations for designing leadership development programs, ethics training initiatives, and institutional policies that promote integrity and ethical growth. Theoretically, it extends existing models of ethical leadership by applying them to under-researched environments, thereby offering new insights into how contextual factors—such as culture, bureaucracy, and limited resources—shape the relationship between leadership and moral development. Methodologically, the study fills an important gap by using quantitative tools to capture the complex dynamics of ethical leadership within a real-world institutional setting.

Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to benefit Federal University Gusau by highlighting actionable strategies for promoting ethical behavior and institutional trust. Moreover, the results will be valuable to other universities and public organizations facing similar challenges, offering a roadmap for leveraging ethical leadership as a means of strengthening moral development and fostering sustainable organizational change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section critically reviews scholarly work related to ethical leadership and employee moral development. It explores key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings relevant to the university context in Nigeria.

i. Conceptual Review

The conceptual review outlines the fundamental ideas underlying employee moral development and ethical leadership. It defines core constructs and their interrelationships as they apply to organizational ethics and behavior.

Employee Moral Development

Employee moral development refers to the enhancement of ethical reasoning, values, and behaviors influenced by ethical leadership and organizational culture (Craft, 2023). It encompasses ethical reasoning—the ability to resolve dilemmas using moral principles; values—core beliefs like honesty and fairness; and behaviors—the visible enactment of these principles (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). Morally developed employees exhibit stronger job commitment, ethical conduct, and teamwork (Treviño et al., 2021). Especially in institutions like Federal University Gusau, promoting moral development is key to fostering a culture of integrity and addressing systemic ethical deficits (Ugwu & Okeke, 2023).

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is the practice of guiding others through actions rooted in honesty, integrity, fairness, and accountability while promoting similar behavior among followers (Treviño et al., 2021). Ethical leaders act not only as goal-oriented managers but also as moral role models who shape organizational culture. Key dimensions include role modeling, moral guidance, and support for employee development. Role modeling entails leaders demonstrating ethical behavior to inspire followers (Craft, 2023), while moral guidance involves clearly communicating organizational values and expectations to help employees navigate ethical dilemmas (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). Additionally, by investing in training and mentorship, ethical leaders support employees' moral reasoning and ethical decision-making (Abubakar et al., 2023). In settings like Federal University Gusau, where systemic challenges such as corruption and favoritism persist, ethical leadership can be a transformative force for institutional integrity and sustainability (Ugwu & Okeke, 2023).

Role Modeling

Role modeling is a foundational aspect of ethical leadership, where leaders demonstrate ethical behavior in decision-making and interpersonal conduct (Treviño et al., 2021). By exemplifying honesty, integrity, fairness, and accountability, leaders set behavioral standards for employees to emulate. This trickle-down effect fosters ethical norms throughout the organization (Craft, 2023). In environments affected by unethical practices, such as Federal University Gusau, role modeling becomes vital for transforming workplace behavior and culture (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022).

Moral Guidance

Moral guidance involves leaders articulating ethical standards and organizational values, providing direction

in ethical decision-making (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). By promoting open discussions and transparency, leaders create an environment where ethical behavior is normalized and valued. This approach enables employees to understand expectations and apply ethical principles in practice (Treviño et al., 2021). In settings where cultural norms hinder open dialogue, such as many Nigerian universities, moral guidance becomes essential for reinforcing institutional ethics (Craft, 2023).

Support for Employee Development

Support for employee development is an ethical leadership function that enhances employees' moral reasoning and ethical skills through training, mentorship, and capacity-building initiatives (Saidu et al., 2023). Programs such as ethics seminars and mentoring relationships equip staff to navigate dilemmas and foster a stronger ethical climate (Craft, 2023). In universities where ethics training is often overlooked, such support addresses crucial competency gaps and cultivates institutional integrity (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022).

Challenges to Employee Moral Development in Nigerian Universities

Despite the potential of ethical leadership, employee moral development in Nigerian universities faces systemic, cultural, and institutional barriers. Issues like corruption and favoritism undermine ethical norms (Ogbonna & Okpara, 2022), while hierarchical cultures stifle open ethical discussions (Ugwu & Okeke, 2023). Furthermore, limited ethics training restricts employees' capacity to make sound moral decisions (Saidu et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms focused on ethical leadership, institutional accountability, and structured development programs.

ii. Theoretical Review

This study is underpinned by three key theories—Social Learning Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Ethical Decision-Making Models—which collectively explain how ethical leadership influences employee moral development. Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), posits that individuals learn behaviors through observing and imitating others. In organizational contexts, employees adopt ethical behavior by watching leaders who demonstrate honesty, fairness, and accountability. This theory supports the role of ethical leadership as a form of role modeling that fosters a trickle-down effect, reinforcing ethical norms among employees (Treviño et al., 2021; Craft, 2023). In institutions like Federal University Gusau, where ethical lapses may be prevalent, ethical role modeling by leaders becomes essential for nurturing a culture of integrity.

Transformational Leadership Theory, proposed by Bass (1985), assumes that leaders inspire followers to exceed expectations and embrace higher moral standards through vision, motivation, and ethical behavior. Leaders who provide moral guidance and support for employee development can influence followers' moral reasoning and commitment to ethical values (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). This perspective aligns with the study's focus on moral guidance and developmental support as mechanisms that strengthen ethical orientation within organizations.

Finally, Ethical Decision-Making Models, particularly Rest's Four-Component Model (1986), explain how individuals make ethical choices by progressing through moral awareness, judgment, intention, and behavior. Leaders influence this process by clarifying ethical expectations and creating supportive environments. Leaders who offer guidance and developmental support can enhance employees' ethical capabilities (Ugwu & Okeke, 2023). Together, these theories provide a coherent foundation for examining how ethical leadership contributes to employee moral development in a public university setting.

iii. Empirical Review

Empirical studies have consistently shown that ethical leadership positively impacts organizational outcomes, particularly by enhancing integrity, trust, and ethical behavior among employees (Treviño et al., 2021; Craft, 2023). However, much of this research has focused on private or international institutions, leaving a critical gap in understanding its relevance within Nigerian public universities. Abubakar et al. (2023) emphasized that systemic issues such as corruption and favoritism in Nigerian academia demand a context-specific approach to ethical leadership.

Role modeling emerges as a powerful mechanism through which leaders influence employee behavior. Leaders who demonstrate fairness, honesty, and accountability inspire similar conduct among staff, establishing a culture of integrity (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022; Treviño et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant in Nigerian universities where ethical lapses are common. Ugwu and Okeke (2023) found that ethical role modeling in Nigerian public universities significantly reduced unethical practices, while Saidu et al. (2023) highlighted mentorship as a strategic tool for promoting moral development.

Moreover, moral guidance from leaders plays a crucial role in ethical decision-making. When leaders clearly communicate ethical expectations and engage in moral discourse, employees are more equipped to act ethically (Sekerka& Bagozzi, 2022). Treviño et al. (2021) noted that such guidance helps align individual behavior with organizational values, especially in settings like Federal University Gusau, where cultural norms may hinder open discussions on ethics. However, the empirical literature still lacks clarity on how exactly moral guidance translates into employee moral growth in public universities, a gap this study aims to fill.

Support for employee development, through training and mentorship, also contributes significantly to moral growth. Ethics-oriented programs enhance employee competencies and commitment (Craft, 2023), while mentorship fosters real-time ethical reflection and decision-making (Saidu et al., 2023). Despite this, Abubakar et al. (2023) observed that many Nigerian universities lack structured ethics training programs. Implementing such initiatives could address integrity issues and promote accountability at Federal University Gusau.

Lastly, studies on moral development in higher education highlight deep-rooted structural and cultural challenges. Ogbonna and Okpara (2022) documented widespread ethical lapses, while Ugwu and Okeke (2023) called attention to hierarchical power dynamics that often suppress ethical discourse. To counteract these, Saidu et al. (2023) recommended tailored leadership and institutional reforms. This study contributes to the discourse by proposing a framework for ethical leadership that aligns with the realities of Nigerian universities and supports sustainable moral development.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates how ethical leadership impacts employee moral development at Federal University Gusau using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. A structured questionnaire, adapted from validated scales, was distributed to 368 academic and non-academic staff selected via stratified random sampling from a population of 1,319. The instrument measured dimensions of ethical leadership—role modeling, moral guidance, and support for development—and moral reasoning, values, and behavior. Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and PLS-SEM for hypothesis testing. The sampling size was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula and adjusted for non-response. Ethical clearance and informed consent were obtained. The methodology ensures reliability, validity, and generalizability of findings through rigorous design and analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Assessment of the PLS Path Model

In line with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach entails two critical stages: the **assessment of the measurement model** and the **assessment of the structural model**. This dual-stage approach ensures both the reliability and validity of the measurement constructs, as well as the robustness of the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables in the model.

The measurement model assessment was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study, focusing on indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was first examined through the outer loadings of items on their respective latent variables. According to Hair et al. (2017), outer loadings should ideally exceed 0.708 to confirm that more than 50% of the variance in each indicator is explained by its construct. The results showed that most indicators measuring Role Modelling (RM), Moral Guidance (MG), Support for Employee Development (SED), and Employee Moral Development (EMD) met or exceeded this threshold. A few indicators with loadings between 0.6 and 0.7 were retained due to their theoretical relevance and positive contribution to the overall model fit and content validity.

Internal consistency reliability was measured using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (α), with acceptable CR values ranging from 0.70 to 0.95. All constructs demonstrated strong reliability, as CR values fell between 0.82 and 0.93, and Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.76 to 0.90, reflecting high consistency across items. Convergent validity was supported by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores above the 0.50 benchmark, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017), confirming that each construct accounted for more than half the variance in its indicators. Discriminant validity was established using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square root of AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs, and all HTMT values were below 0.85, affirming the distinctiveness of each latent variable and the absence of multicollinearity in the model.

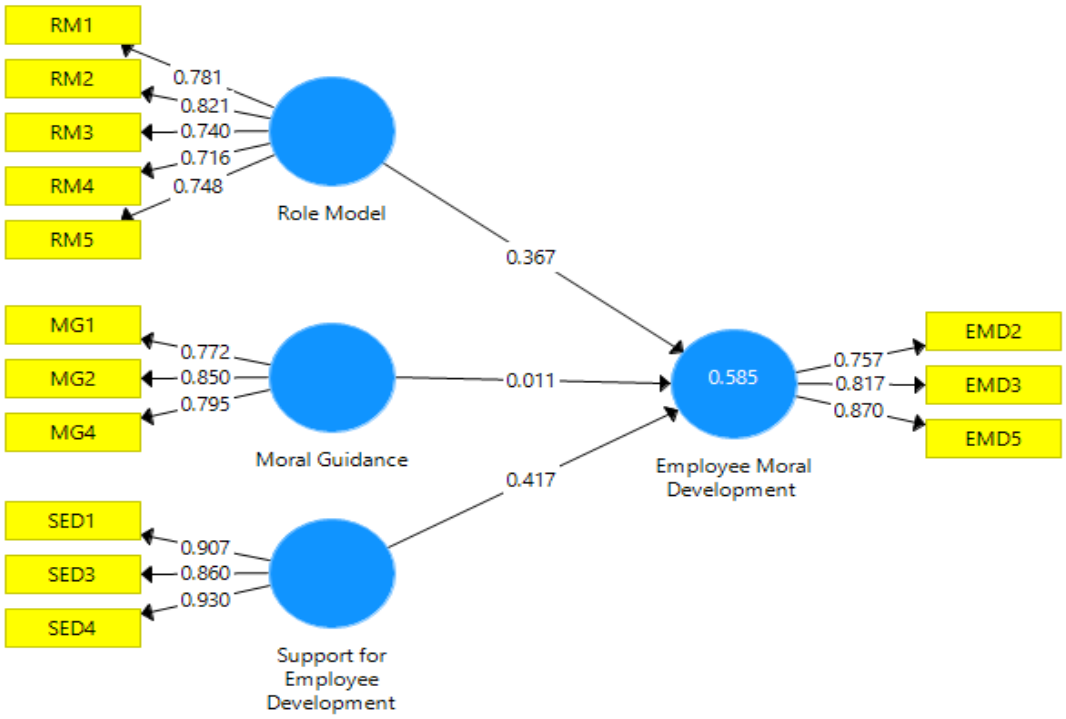

Figure 1: Measurement Model of the SmartPLS Output

Table 1 Summary of Measurement Model Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
RM	0.84	0.88	0.59
MG	0.76	0.82	0.55
SED	0.89	0.93	0.66
EMD	0.85	0.90	0.61

The measurement model assessment demonstrates strong reliability and validity across all constructs, enabling confident progression to the structural model assessment in the next section.

Structural Model Assessment

Following the confirmation of the measurement model's validity and reliability, the structural model was assessed to examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs. This included evaluating multicollinearity, path coefficients, explanatory power (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

To begin, collinearity among predictor variables was checked using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). As recommended by Hair et al. (2021), VIF values below 3.3 indicate no collinearity concern. The VIF values in this study ranged from 1.21 to 2.87, confirming that multicollinearity was not an issue, allowing for reliable interpretation of path relationships.

Path coefficients were then analyzed using bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) in accordance with Sarstedt et al. (2022). Results in Table 2 show that Role Modelling ($\beta = 0.370$, $p < 0.001$) and Support for Employee Development ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$) had significant positive impacts on Employee Moral Development, supporting H1 and H3. However, Moral Guidance ($\beta = 0.005$, $p = 0.946$) was not significant,

thus H2 was not supported. These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which suggests that ethical behavior is best learned through observation and supportive environments rather than verbal instruction alone.

Table 2: Path Coefficients and Significance Levels

Hypothesis	Relationship	β Value	t-Value	p-Value	Supported
H1	Role Modelling → Moral Development	0.370	4.721	<0.001	Yes
H2	Moral Guidance → Moral Development	0.005	0.068	0.946	No
H3	Support for Emp. Dev. → Moral Dev.	0.422	5.213	<0.001	Yes

The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Employee Moral Development was 0.584, indicating that 58.4% of its variance is explained by the three independent variables. Based on Hair et al. (2021), this reflects moderate explanatory power.

Effect size (f^2) analysis was also conducted to assess the contribution of each predictor. According to Cohen (1988) and Sarstedt et al. (2022), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 denote small, medium, and large effects, respectively. As presented in Table 3, Support for Employee Development had a medium effect (f^2 = 0.203), Role Modelling a small-to-medium effect (f^2 = 0.142), while Moral Guidance had no effect (f^2 = 0.000). These findings emphasize the relative importance of actionable ethical leadership behaviors.

Table 3: Effect Sizes (f^2)

Path	f^2 Value
Role Modelling → Moral Development	0.142
Moral Guidance → Moral Development	0.000
Support for Emp. Dev. → Moral Dev.	0.203

To evaluate predictive relevance, Q^2 was computed using the blindfolding procedure (omission distance = 7), as advised by Shmueli et al. (2019). The Q^2 value for Employee Moral Development was 0.327, indicating medium predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2021). This confirms that the model not only explains current ethical behavior but also has the capacity to predict future employee moral development outcomes.

Summary of Structural Model Metrics

- **R^2 = 0.584** → Moderate explanatory power
- **f^2 (Support for Employee Development) = 0.203** → Medium effect
- **Q^2 = 0.327** → Medium predictive relevance

In conclusion, the structural model validates that ethical leadership—particularly through role modelling and supportive development—plays a critical role in fostering employee moral development, offering both explanatory and predictive insights within the academic context.

Implication of the Findings

The findings from this study carry important implications for both theory and practice in the context of ethical leadership and moral development within Nigerian higher education. Theoretically, the results reinforce the principles of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), demonstrating that employees are more likely to internalize and practice ethical behavior when they observe it being consistently modeled by their leaders. The significant influence of role modeling and support for employee development, contrasted with the negligible impact of moral guidance alone, suggests that ethical leadership must go beyond verbal instruction and be embodied through action. This affirms the idea that ethical behavior is learned behavior, shaped by visible, credible, and supportive leaders. Furthermore, the study adds to the limited body of research on ethical leadership in the African academic environment, emphasizing the need to contextualize leadership theories within cultural and institutional frameworks unique to Nigeria.

Practically, the study highlights the necessity for university administrators to prioritize behavioral demonstration of ethics over policy rhetoric. For institutions like Federal University Gusau, this means integrating structured ethical training, mentoring programs, and performance evaluation systems that recognize and reward ethical leadership behaviors. Such initiatives could foster an institutional culture rooted in integrity and accountability. Additionally, the findings suggest that policy reforms are needed to embed ethical performance indicators into leadership assessment and promotion criteria, ensuring that ethical conduct becomes a standard expectation rather than an aspirational ideal. Beyond the university setting, these implications extend to the broader Nigerian society, where fostering ethical leadership in academia can contribute to cultivating future leaders equipped with moral reasoning and integrity—qualities essential for national development and public sector reform (Hair et al., 2021; Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

This study has provided robust empirical evidence underscoring the significance of ethical leadership in fostering employee moral development within the academic setting of Federal University Gusau. The findings revealed that not all dimensions of ethical leadership exert equal influence: while *role modelling* and *support for employee development* significantly and positively impact moral development, *moral guidance*—in the absence of demonstrated behavior—was found to be statistically insignificant. These results affirm that employees internalize ethics more effectively through consistent observation of ethical behavior and practical developmental support rather than through verbal direction alone. Theoretically, the results align with Social Learning Theory, reinforcing the notion that ethical behavior is learned and reinforced through direct interaction with credible, ethical role models.

In this regard, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on ethical leadership in developing countries and higher education contexts, offering insights that are both academically valuable and practically applicable. It highlights the pressing need for Nigerian universities to re-evaluate leadership development strategies, shifting focus from policy-driven ethics education to behavior-driven leadership practices. In a broader societal context, fostering ethical leadership in universities has the potential to catalyze a ripple effect, shaping the ethical orientation of future public servants, professionals, and institutional leaders.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the study's findings, several strategic recommendations are proposed. First, university leadership programs must incorporate behavioral simulations, mentorship, and real-life ethical decision-making scenarios, allowing leaders to internalize and model the values they are expected to promote. Ethical leadership training should prioritize behavioral competencies alongside traditional knowledge-based instruction. Second, institutions should establish formal support systems for employee development that emphasize ethics, such as ongoing professional development workshops, peer mentoring networks, and collaborative ethics learning forums. These systems should be embedded into the university's governance framework to ensure sustainability.

Third, university administrations should reconfigure performance evaluation and promotion criteria to include ethical leadership behaviors as key indicators. Leaders who demonstrate integrity, fairness, and developmental support for subordinates should be recognized and rewarded. Additionally, transparent accountability structures—such as ethical audits and whistleblower protections—should be institutionalized to reinforce ethical norms and reduce tolerance for misconduct. Finally, further research should explore mediating factors such as organizational justice and psychological safety in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee outcomes. Cross-cultural and longitudinal studies will also help generalize and deepen understanding of ethical leadership's impact in academic environments.

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