



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

**ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; NAVIGATING ETHICAL COMPLEXITY, THE
IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY
ORGANIZATION IN SME IN NIGERIA**

MASTER THESIS

IBOLO ERIC ANEGBODE

Nicosia

January, 2025

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MASTER THESIS

IBOLO ERIC ANEGBODE

Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Laith Tashtoush

Nicosia

January, 2025

Approval

We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by **IBOLO ERIC ANEGBODE** titled **ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; NAVIGATING ETHICAL COMPLEXITY, THE IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION IN SME IN NIGERIA**” and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

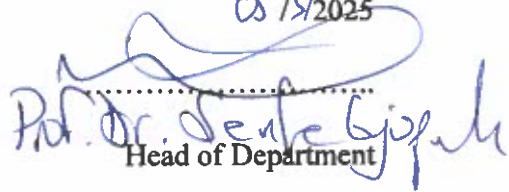
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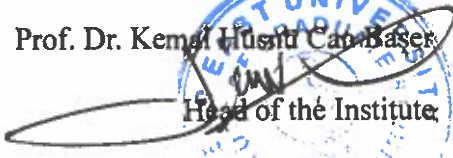

Committee Member : Assist. Prof. Dr. Tijen Zeybek		
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Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Laith Tashtoush		
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Approved by the Head of the Department

05/8/2025

Head of Department

Approved by the Institute of Graduate Studies

.../20...
Prof. Dr. Kemal Hüsnü Can Başer

Head of the Institute


Declaration

I hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis, and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of the Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

IBOLO ERIC ANEGBODE

/ /2025

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Thank you so much, and may God continue to bless you all.

IBOLO ERIC ANEGBODE

Abstract

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; NAVIGATING ETHICAL COMPLEXITY, THE IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION IN SME IN NIGERIA

Anegbode, Ibolo Eric

Supervisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Laith Tashtoush

MA, Department of Business Administration

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The success of any organization depends on the behavior of its employees. To achieve this, good ethical values are required to stop negative behavior within the organization. The application of moral principles, convictions, and visions to behavior and decision-making is known as ethics in administration. The use of ethics in leadership raises performance standards, and frequently, there is a corresponding punishment or reward, which strengthens organizational ethics. "Influencing people through ethics" is the definition of ethical leadership. Given the preceding, this investigation aims to examine the influence of ethical leadership on employee behavior Navigating Ethical Complexity, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in in SME in Nigeria. The methodology approach used is a sample of 293 employees of SME in Nigeria, data was collected in the workplace. To achieve the objectives of this study, quantitative research was used and SPSS software was used to conduct the statistical analysis of all data in this study. The results show that there is a positive impact between ethical leadership and Navigating Ethical Complexity, and there is a negative impact between Navigating Ethical Complexity, ethical leadership, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that Navigating Ethical Complexity mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations among employees.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Navigating Ethical Complexity, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

ÖZ

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; NAVIGATING ETHICAL COMPLEXITY, THE IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION IN SME IN NIGERIA

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Herhangi bir organizasyonun başarısı, çalışanlarının davranışlarına bağlıdır. Bunu başarmak için, şirket içindeki olumsuz davranışları durdurmak için iyi etik değerler gereklidir. Ahlaki ilkelerin, inançların ve vizyonların davranış ve karar verme süreçlerine uygulanması, yönetimde etik olarak bilinir. Liderlikte etiğin kullanılması performans standartlarını yükseltir ve sıklıkla örgütsel etiği güçlendiren karşılık gelen bir ceza veya ödül vardır. "İnsanları etik yoluyla etkilemek" etik liderliğin tanımıdır. Öncekiler göz önüne alındığında, bu araştırma, etik liderliğinNigeria'deki kamu sektöründe çalışan davranışı, psikolojik güvenlik ve verimsiz çalışma davranışı üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kullanılan metodoloji yaklaşımı, şirketin 293 çalışanından oluşan bir örneklem olup, verileri işyerinde toplanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amaçlarına ulaşmak için nicel araştırma kullanılmış ve SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak bu çalışmada tüm verilerin istatistiksel analizi yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, etik liderlik ile psikolojik güvenlik arasında olumlu bir etki olduğunu ve psikolojik güvenlik, etik liderlik ve verimsiz çalışma davranışı arasında olumsuz bir etki olduğunu göstermektedir. Ek olarak, bulgular psikolojik güvenliğin çalışanlar arasında etik liderlik ile verimsiz çalışma davranışı arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etik liderlik, psikolojik güvenlik, ters etki yaratan çalışma davranışı

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, researchers have recognized that ethics has an important part in the development of good personalities among individuals for the success and prosperity of both communities and the people who make up them. In general, leaders must set ethical guidelines for those who follow them to address actions that are harmful to society and specific businesses (Aronson, 2001). Moral responses to questionable corporate conduct have resulted in a huge demand for ethical leadership under current economic conditions, and it is now a more expansive field to be explored (Trevino et al., 2006).

Many researchers have examined the notion of ethical leadership and are interested in its significance as an important component in improving employees' moral conduct (Neubert et al., 2009; Mayer et al., 2009; Brown et al., 2006; Sam et al., 2008). Researchers and practitioners focus on leadership's function to prevent unethical behavior in businesses (Brown et al., 2006; Sam et al., 2008). Brown et al. (2005, p. 120), offer a standard definition of ethical leadership, stating that "Ethical leadership is the manifestation of conventionally proper behavior through individual actions and interactions with others, and the transmission of conduct behaves to those who follow via interaction in both directions, support, and decision-making." Because most academics in the field have developed their empirical and theoretical studies on this idea, this is the best technique for presenting leadership and ethics in writing for academic purposes.

Researchers have used this phrase in papers such as (Piccolo et al., 2010; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009; Detert et al., 2007). Brown et al. (2005), created an ethical leadership scale that incorporates components of transformative (Bass, 1985), authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and charismatic (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) leadership techniques. Leaders in diverse roles play an important role in fostering a long-term company culture in employees' minds and behaviors (Grojean et al., 2004). Theories of transformative and charismatic leadership, according to House, (1976) and Bass, (1985), identify several means through which effects

happen, and workers regularly notice these effects and their outcomes (Bandura, 1986).

Furthermore, ethical leadership research reveals that the way a leader behave is crucial for creating a productive outcome in enterprises (Koh & El'Fred, 2001; Petrick & Quinn, 2001; Trevino et al., 2003). In their study, Trevino et al. (2000) and Brown et al., (2005), defined two foundations of ethical leadership. The first was referred to as an example of morality, while the second was described as an ethical individual. Trevino et al., (2003) defined ethical traits, arguing that good leaders are moral persons who are credible, truthful, and honest. Brown et al. (2005) defined the moral person component of ethical leadership as viewers' perceptions of the leader's personality, personal attributes, and selfless drive. According to Trevino et al. (2000), the second pillar is that of an ethical manager who values morality in his aims. Brown et al. (2005) also proposed an ethical leadership moral manager component.

This aspect of ethical leadership argues that proactive role modeling has an impact on adherents' ethical and immoral behavior. Brown and Trevino, (2006) describe how they employ incentive and penalty strategies to hold followers accountable to pre-established norms. A leader should set a positive example for others by displaying the highest standards of morals and behaving ethically in their day-to-day discussions, decisions, and acts (Toor et al., 2009). Ethical leadership is crucial in the SME since it influences employee work practices. Ethical leadership has a positive and significant association with several aspects of the effectiveness of leadership, including employee Navigating Ethical Complexity, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, motivation among workers, job fulfillment, efficiency, and engagement (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Newman et al., 2015; Ofori, 2009, Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

Regardless of these structured methods, it has not been thoroughly investigated how ethical leaders impact and motivate others (Avey et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 2012), and many researchers have proposed that particular interest be paid to comprehending how these essential operations work in ethical leadership

(Bouckennooghe et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2014; Newman & Sheikh, 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2011).

Employees who work in an ethical leadership environment are more inclined to experience mutual respect that goes beyond interpersonal trust, resulting in an elevated degree of Navigating Ethical Complexity (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Navigating Ethical Complexity is an important intermediary mediator between leadership and outcomes (Siemsen et al., 2009). It is the degree to which people believe their coworkers (e.g., managers) will not reprimand or misjudge them for taking risks. Navigating Ethical Complexity is defined as a person's ability to show their individuality and avoid any negative effects on their appearance, status, or occupation, allowing them to openly converse with themselves.

In his research, Edmondson discovered that building self-confidence is an important part of establishing PS and can also be a vital cause for staff members to express (Liang et al., 2012), communicate, and share information (Siemsen et al., 2009). Navigating Ethical Complexity may exceed any team member's confidence, especially in a team. Navigating Ethical Complexity relates to workplace safety in terms of preserving work relationships and open discussion. On the opposite side, uncertainty at work may result in emotions of stress, which can alter people's behaviors and feelings, eventually impacting both their mental and physical resilience and interfering with their work productivity.

Edmondson et al. (2004), argued that Navigating Ethical Complexity is a condition in which there is an assurance of security in taking risks in work environments so that workers are willing to talk openly, for instance, when developing and executing innovative concepts. It is obvious that sometimes these innovative concepts are fraught with danger, and the possibility for failure is huge, thus they are rejected since they are deemed deviant behaviors. Regardless of the success or failure of new ideas expressed by employees, a Navigating Ethical Complexity work environment is still required for employees to dare to express these new ideas while also daring to take risks.

The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations can be defined as voluntary, possibly detrimental, or harmful actions that harm individuals

or enterprises. Griep et al. (2018) and Spector and Fox, (2002, p. 270), for enterprises, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations has inescapable difficulties and economic consequences. According to estimates, the associated expenses of The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations range between 17.6 (Hollinger & Langton, 2006) and 200 billion dollars (Govoni, 1992 cited in Griep et al., 2018). Given this fact, several experts have attempted to investigate and uncover the causes of The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in enterprises. This is due to its association with a variety of important places of employment and personal factors like dark triad personalities, psychological contract violation and organizational justice (Ying & Cohen, 2018), character characteristics (Van & De Bruin, 2018), colleague conduct (Moon & Hur, 2018; Ferguson, 2012), and human resource management practices (Samnani & Power, 2014).

In the same way, a meta-analytic analysis revealed that weak leadership predicted a proclivity for unproductive work conduct (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Particularly, amid diverse leadership techniques, when leaders behave ethically their followers avoid engaging in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations like wasting time during breaks, absenteeism, and fraud (Bedi et al., 2016).

Problem Statement

As previously stated, there is a lot of research on ethical leadership in Western Countries (Brown et al., 2006; Sama et al., 2008; Neubert et al., 2009; Mayer et al., 2009). Nevertheless, as far as we are concerned, no study has been found exploring the influence of ethical leadership on employee behavior, Navigating Ethical Complexity, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary organizations in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper tries to fill the gaps and will be a value add and benefit for the enterprise, employees, and school.

Purpose of the Study

Our aim in writing this paper is to investigate the impacts of workplace misbehaviors on employees' work outcomes and to determine the significance of

morals in an organization. Also, how organizational leaders should act because being a moral leader is critical for the enterprise's credibility.

Significance of the Study

It is the first investigation that looks into the effects of ethical leadership in Nigeria. This study is also crucial since it leads to the creation of a flourishing workplace environment, the strengthening of company image and trustworthiness, the promotion of worker and customer commitment, and the effectiveness in production.

Research Questions

Q1: Does ethical leadership positively affect Navigating Ethical Complexity?

Q2: Does Navigating Ethical Complexity negatively affect The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations?

Q3: Does ethical leadership negatively affect The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations?

Q4: Does Navigating Ethical Complexity mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations?

Assumptions

In this investigation, the following assumptions are made:

1. All respondents completely comprehend the questions.
2. Respondents will provide truthful statements about their knowledge.
3. All of the results offered are unequivocal about the influence of ethical leadership on-employee behavior.

Definition of Key Terminology

Ethical leader behavior: Many leadership ways of acting have been considered ethical leadership attributes. Character and integrity, understanding of ethics, interpersonal relationships and community direction, encouraging, influencing, and inspiring, as well as managing accountability for ethics, were

identified by Resick et al. (2006). Brown et al. (2005); De Hoogh and Den Hartog, (2008); Eisenbeiss and Brodbeck, (2014); Kalshoven et al. (2011) have discovered that ethical leadership ways of acting include behaving honestly and fairly, being consistent and showing integrity, encouraging others to do right things, taking care of people, allowing voice, and empower others.

Unethical leadership: Brown and Mitchell, (2010, p. 588) describe it as "actions and choices made by those in leadership positions that are illegal and/or contradict ethical principles, as well as those that impose procedures and frameworks that foster illegal.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical Leadership and Navigating Ethical Complexity

The term "leadership" has been defined in numerous ways. It is defined by Nelson, (2006) as "steps, methods, or procedures that influence, guide, and direct how individuals act in their workplace." Armstrong, (2003) defines leadership as "the ability to persuade people to voluntarily change their behavior to do the work assigned to them with the assistance of the team." Leaders provide leadership, encouragement, motivation, advice, and inspiration to achieve goals. They help to develop a vision and mobilize personnel around a single purpose.

Leaders now have the skills and information they need to make intelligent decisions and solve problems quickly. Leadership styles (servant leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership) have become a significant area of study in the management industry, and many scholars consider leadership style to be a key component in influencing how employees work in an organization (Wu, 2009). As a result, Bass et al. (2003) identified leadership style as an important predictor of an organization's effectiveness. Leadership has been presented as a significant motivation for business ethics (Carlson & Perrewe, 1995; Paine, 1996; Weaver et al., 1999; Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002). Much of this research has centered on the idea that a leader's actions and behaviors are important predictors of success.

Ethical leadership is described as doing the right action at the right moment for the right purpose. It refers to leaders who release confidence, honesty, and integrity. They also work to increase their consistency, predictability, and credibility. Consistency is synonymous with integrity because it entails doing what one says, following up, and following through in such a way that when one says something, he or she does it as well as follows up (Brown et al., 2005).

As a result, others frequently believe in such a person because his history shows that when someone says something, they usually follow through on it. Leaders who follow ethical principles are frequently regarded as communicating

openly, well, and spontaneously, as well as being good listeners. People or followers with difficult issues approach them because they know they will get a sympathetic ear. After all, they are usually likable (Brown & Trevino, 2006). A leader with ethics instills trust in those below him to convey even terrible news or challenges. They have been described as motivating, energetic, powerful, and courageous.

Brown and Trevino, (2006, p. 597) define ethical leadership as "a leader's honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness." A leader must embrace the components of integrity and honesty in leadership to bring transformation to an organization. An ethical leader is distinguished from an unethical leader by his or her honesty. Trustworthiness and openness are characteristics of a decent person's character. A leader must be honest and capable of demonstrating numerous actions beyond personal integrity to be effective in ethical leadership. Accountability for followers' moral behavior is one example, as is the continuous transmission of moral signals to followers (Valdesolo et al., 2017).

Navigating Ethical Complexity in the workplace is an environmental condition that enables individuals with enough assurance and reliability to be innovative (Gong et al., 2012). Kahn, (1990) defined Navigating Ethical Complexity in his engagement model as "the feeling of being allowed to display and employ oneself without fear of unfavorable consequences to one's self-image, status, or job" (p. 708). Kahn, (1990) further stated that Navigating Ethical Complexity in the workplace reflects helpful administration, clarified duties, and liberty in self-expression.

Navigating Ethical Complexity upholds the assumption that dangerous acts, like using one's voice, won't result in personal injury (Detert & Burris, 2007). Edmondson, (1999, p. 354) defined the concept as the "shared belief that a group is secure for interpersonal risk-taking." Navigating Ethical Complexity represents others' perception that they won't be penalized for unfavorable outcomes. It is defined as an environment that fosters mutual respect and confidence. People are at ease in this environment (Edmondson, 1999; Liu et al., 2015).

Furthermore, recent research has revealed that when employees observe interpersonal behaviors such as charitable behavior, support, loyalty, and

compassion demonstrated by moral leaders in their job teams, increased levels of enjoyment, involvement, trust, and collaboration may ensue (Mayer et al., 2012). Workers are more likely to get involved in social risk-taking and display trust and mutual regard with coworkers when they work under ethical leaders (Mayer et al., 2012). Navigating Ethical Complexity, stated by Edmondson, (1999), is a mental condition distinguished by respect for one another and trust between individuals, in which workers are confident being themselves and engaged in social risk-taking.

Ethical leadership will have an impact on employees' Navigating Ethical Complexity in work environments. Ethical leaders, by definition, demonstrate normatively suitable behavior through their behaviors and interpersonal connections with staff members in the work environment (Brown et al., 2005). They also demonstrate responsiveness to society and caring by signaling to workers that the leader's primary focus is their best interests (Brown et al., 2005).

Therefore, ethical leadership is critical in influencing employees' Navigating Ethical Complexity. People can express themselves freely in such an environment. In the same way, leaders motivate followers to share their thoughts and withdraw barriers to doing so, establishing an environment of strong psychological trust. If followers trust their leader, they will take risks because they feel the leader will not penalize them if unfavorable outcomes occur. As a result, there is a link between ethical leadership and Navigating Ethical Complexity (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

According to social learning theory, we wanted to shed light on the effect of ethical leadership through certain characteristics of the ethical employee and manager (Brown et al., 2005). Based on social learning theory, ethical leaders' behaviors may "trickle down" to followers, encouraging people who experience the behaviors to act in a fairly uniform fashion toward other employees (Mayer et al., 2012; Quade et al., 2017). According to social learning theory, a person can learn about specific activities by seeing them. Ethical leadership explains and debates with employees what ethical behavior is and works in the best interests of the employees (Brown et al., 2005). Therefore, when ethical leaders communicate with their employees transparently and openly, mutual admiration and interpersonal

confidence are fostered both between the leader and those who follow and between the followers themselves (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

There has been numerous research undertaken to study the meaning of the phrase ethical leadership to proximate observers of leaders (Trevino et al., 2000). Ethical leaders are thought to be ethical, fair in their decision-making, and legitimate in their personal life. They reduce individuals' anxieties about the uncertainty of the job and organizational behavior by being compassionate, trustworthy, transparent, and honest, as well as acknowledging the need of adhering to strong ethical ideals. Employees that have sufficient faith in their leaders are keener to follow ethical norms and are also willing to take risks (Hoyt et al., 2013). People who are seen to be fair in their dealings with others. Workers in this situation notice the leader's actions and use them as a reference (Stouten et al., 2013). Specifically, social learning theory illuminates how ethical leadership affects workers' positions and draws moral behavior from them (Ardichvili et al., 2009; Kirkman et al., 2009).

According to the literature discussed above and social learning theory, this thesis proposes:

H1: Ethical leadership has a significant positive impact on Navigating Ethical Complexity

Navigating Ethical Complexity and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

A favorable atmosphere at work allows workers to share expertise, which affects enhancing Navigating Ethical Complexity. The worker's sense of being emotionally secure and comfortable at work is known as Navigating Ethical Complexity (Edmondson, 2004). When the worker views the atmosphere to be Navigating Ethical Complexity, they openly discuss their views and worries, feel free to provide suggestions, and work out training requirements to perform successfully and accomplish objectives. It is different when the job circumstance is unforeseeable, full of confusion, and can even threaten the worker's safety; may become depressed, experience emotional disorders, and can ultimately affect the physical and psychological resilience of the individual, which may cause problems

with productivity at work if left unchecked and may result in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in workers.

Navigating Ethical Complexity is defined as a shared view among members of a work unit that it is safe for them to participate in interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999). This article employs a one-dimensional scale of Navigating Ethical Complexity. According to Edmondson, both personal and institutional variables can influence Navigating Ethical Complexity in an organization. Navigating Ethical Complexity entails more than just perceiving and experiencing high levels of interpersonal trust; it also refers to a work environment marked by mutual respect, in which employees feel comfortable expressing their differing viewpoints (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

Concerning voice behavior, this can be considered risky behavior. Employees consider interpersonal hazards (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Duan, 2011). For example, people may be concerned that their voice behavior may be misinterpreted or retaliated against by their colleagues and bosses, resulting in a breakdown in relationships (Dutton et al., 1997; Milliken et al., 2003). Status may suffer as a result.

Navigating Ethical Complexity plays an important role in determining how such risks are evaluated (Detert & Burris, 2007). Specifically, when employees perceive a high level of Navigating Ethical Complexity, this will dampen their assessment of negative risks associated with voice behavior. For this reason, Navigating Ethical Complexity is regarded as one of the necessary preconditions for employee voice behavior to occur (Ashford et al., 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007; Liang et al., 2012).

Researchers have focused on The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations because of its significant negative influence on workplaces, which causes a rise in work stress, turnover of employees, and low performance (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Penney & Spector, 2005). The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations displays responses to ongoing pressure at workplaces as a strategy to deal with the frustration caused by conditions at work (Spector & Fox, 2005).

The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations can be also defined as "intentional behavior aimed at causing harm to the enterprise and its members" (Spector & Fox, 2002: 269). Organizational disagreement, delaying work, stealing corporate property, and wasting time and resources are all instances of 'destructive' acts (Kesler, 2007). For an enterprise's conduct to be categorized as The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, it must be purposeful, harmful, and illegal (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). According to studies, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations that endangers the enterprise and the general wellbeing of its staff is common. For example, it has been reported that 58% of female employees may encounter harassment, and 24% may face sexual bullying. Furthermore, it was shown that 25% of employees in the United States lose their employment as a result of internet misuse. Furthermore, theft occurs in practically every business. During the same period, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations is believed to inflict significant economic loss (Mount et al., 2000).

Others aggregate and investigate similar behaviors under various aspects, in addition to studies that examine The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations independently as aggressiveness, stealing, or absenteeism (Spector et al., 2006). Raver, (2004), for example, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in two sub-dimensions: 'interpersonal' and 'organizational'. Workers' bad-intentioned and hurtful conduct toward other workers is classified as the former, while negative behavior towards the entire organization is defined as the latter.

The primary forms of The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in the workplace are illicit use of information, assets, time, absenteeism, racism, keeping apart, inefficiency, assets misuse, verbal and physical aggression, mistrustfulness, social pressure, mobbing, and harassment (Foldes, 2006; Seçer, 2007).

Therefore, in line with the literature review, the hypothesis below is proposed for this study:

H2: Navigating Ethical Complexity has a significant negative impact on The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Ethical Leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Ethical leadership is a mindset that promotes the well-being of staff in the workplace. Workplace well-being is associated with ethical leadership, trust, and support from the enterprise.

Ethical leadership has a favorable impact on trust among employees (Taşlyan et al., 2016, p. 2541). Tuna and Boylu, (2016) discovered that receiving workplace support productively influences positive emotional well-being in the workplace, whereas receiving departmental assistance adversely affects negatively employees' well-being at work. Furthermore, they discovered that perceiving organizational support affect positively the level of removal, stealing, and abuse characteristics, all of which are aspects of unproductive work behavior.

Ethical leaders can set a good example for others and resist temptations along the way. The worth of character and values, the reality of ethical leadership is a lot more complex, and the stakes are far higher. Similarly, Freeman and Stewart, (2006), defined an ethical leader as someone with the "right value" and "strong character" who sets an example for others and resists temptation. Ethical leaders are stakeholders in organizations that strive to fulfill their domain's purpose, vision, and value without sacrificing self-interest. Within an awareness of ethical ideals, ethical leaders exemplify the organization's and constituents' purpose, vision, and values. They link the organization's aims to the goals of its internal employees and external stakeholders.

However, positive relationships with all organizational stakeholders are the gold standard for all organizational initiatives, according to ethical leaders. The most essential predictors of The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations are high-quality relationships based on respect and trust. Trust, respect, integrity, honesty, fairness, equity, justice, and compassion are just a few of the core concepts that ethical leaders should comprehend. The leader should understand that by living by these fundamental values, a human enterprise can

develop and endure (Berghofer & Schwartz, n.d). Ethical leaders should prioritize moral ideals and fairness in decision-making, examine the external consequences of organizational decisions, and convey to employees how their activities at work contribute to the organization's overall goals.

Ethical leaders help people find meaning in their work and guarantee that corporate decisions are based on moral ideals (Piccolo et al., 2010). Ethical leaders are constantly striving to incorporate moral concepts into their ideas, attitudes, and actions; they are dedicated to a higher cause, prudence, pride, patience, and perseverance (Khuntia & Suar, 2004).

The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations is a kind of worker conduct in the workplace that can compromise an organization's goals and interests. The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations can take many forms, such as workplace bullying, workplace aggression, sabotage, substance abuse, sexual harassment, fraud, theft, tardiness, and absenteeism. Such kinds of conduct not only influence the quality of work produced by those who are engaged in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations but may also negatively impact productivity.

The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, on the other hand, is always subject to ethical leadership and specific organizational moral beliefs. Every organization has ethical leaders that reflect the business and its customers' objectives, vision, and values while also knowing ethical ideals. They link the enterprise's aims to the interests of its inside employees and outside stakeholders while considering moral issues. Furthermore, they define the enterprise's goals and values to workers in such a way that it inspires people to choose corporate achievement over their ego. As a result, the fundamental value proposition of the interaction between ethical leadership and other stakeholders is to interact ethically.

The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations are those that are intended to hurt the enterprise and its people (Martinko et al., 2002, p. 37). Sackett, (2002, p. 5), furthermore, defines unproductive work behaviors as knowing activities that are averse to the lawful objectives of the organization.

By Le Roy et al. (2012, p. 1342), such practices, generally, produce conscious and systematic hurt to the organization and its stakeholders. The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations are those that directly target the organization and its members (management team, colleagues, suppliers, customers, and so on), are knowingly showing up, and the intent to cause damage is either obvious or hidden (Spector & Fox, 2002). Industrial sabotage is counterproductive to work behavior. In simple terms, it is the conduct of workers who do not complete their tasks by conducting themselves in a way that stops the enterprise from functioning efficiently. In the context of the enterprise dimension, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations is undesirable behaviors directed at the entire organization as well as its goals and purposes.

Workers' poor perceptions of the work environment cause them to engage in counterproductive job activities (Kanten & Ülker, 2014, p. 24). Contrary, a leader's grasp of management influences his or her behavior, attitude, and conduct, which contributes to the rise or decline of the enterprise's success (Uche & Timinepere, 2012, p. 200).

As a result, there is a possibility that workers associated with the organization of a leader who uses ethical and righteous actions in the enterprise can bring beneficial outcomes to the organization (such as demonstrating an engagement to the organization, creating a feeling of collective being part of something, and not engaging in counterproductive behaviors).

Through The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, an indirect association was discovered between ethical leadership and employee attitude. More specifically, the recent study's results show that unproductive work behavior mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employee attitude. Employee attitude was influenced partially by the style of the managers, and partially by the bad working behavior of employees. Our findings are congruent with the results of Elçi et al. (2013), who showed that the existence of ethical leaders who contributed in both direct and indirect ways to build an ethical climate reduced workers' The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. Furthermore, Newman et al. (2015) claimed a negative link between

ethical role clarity leadership and employee misbehavior was higher when workers experienced stronger levels of ethical role clarity leadership.

On the contrary, a leader's management style does not support employees' individual goals, restricts them to take part in decision-making, and is not viewed as just results in isolation (Ceylan & Sulu, 2010, p. 67). Isolation, additionally, might enhance detrimental actions within a company.

As a result, employees who view a style of leadership that leads to their favorable and personal objectives are anticipated to demonstrate positive behaviors and attitudes, whereas staff who perceive a negative leadership style are likely to show detrimental actions (Kanten & Ülker, 2014, p. 25).

Liu et al. (2012) investigated the association between ethical leadership and unproductive work habits and discovered that ethical leadership aids to restrict followers' organizational aberrations. The worker's The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations has decreased as ethical leadership pursues moral practice more and more.

Kessler et al. (2013) investigated the impact of leadership on disagreements between employees and unproductive workplace behavior. Based on the study's results, leadership style, and interpersonal conflict influence a person's negative feelings, which eventually results in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations.

In their study investigating the effect of ethical leadership activities on workplace equity and counter-organizational productivity work behaviors, Yeşiltaş et al., (2012) found that there is a negative relationship between the conduct of ethical leaders and variation behaviors and that ethical leadership tasks decrease variance conduct.

According to Mayer et al. (2009), ethical leadership is associated with less unproductive job conduct. Similarly, Avey et al., (2011) established a negative relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations.

Surprisingly, Detert et al. (2007) discovered no significant relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. In SME organizations, ethical leadership enhances subordinates' readiness to disclose ethical troubles, boosts organizational engagement, and decreases absenteeism (Hassan et al., 2010). As a result, ethical leaders seek to reduce the happening of unethical actions by fostering an ethical workplace.

Social Learning Theory by Bandura, (1977), is one of the most important scientific contributions of the best-living psychologist. Social Learning Theory has demonstrated strong predictive capacity in a variety of life situations, including career success (Akers, 2017; Ruggie, 2017;), health-related behavior (Ruggie, 2017), domestic violence (Murrell et al., 2007), The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations (Akers, 2017; Ruggie, 2017).

Social learning theory provides the structure to comprehend the relationship between ethics, leaders, and their success. According to Social Learning Theory, individuals learn behavior from their work environment through observation, imitation, and modeling. Although, people acquire through direct experience but also by looking at the behaviors and consequences of others. Bandura, (1977) refers to this form of vicarious action as learning without direct experience. Leaders affect followers' ethical behavior by modeling, which is a sort of behavior reenactment, according to Khokhar and Rehman's 227 social learning theory (cf. Bandura, 1986; p. 50). Individuals or leaders with strong hierarchical ranks in the company and the capacity to manage rewards, he claims, have a significant influence on modeling efficacy (p. 207). It also implies that an individual's behavior at work is determined by perceptions of what most others do in a social setting (like perceived descriptive norms) and perceptions of what most others approve or disapprove of in a social setting (perceived injunctive norms).

In connection to The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, Ames et al. (2000), hypothesize that when work-based referent others do not accommodate the use of alcohol at work, persons are less likely to use it. According to Blanchard and Henle, (2008), perceived injunctive norms are

likewise associated with mild internet loafing. Frone and Brown, (2010) explored the link between workplace substance use standards and workplace drug usage. They discovered a substantial positive link between perceived descriptive norms and workplace drug usage. Similarly, Crane and Platow, (2010) observe that employees who believe their referent individuals (e.g., coworkers/colleagues) participate in deviant behaviors, such as sexual harassment and voicing unhappiness, are more inclined to engage in such deviant behaviors.

Along similar lines, research has demonstrated that perceived social norms may explain The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations (Bobek et al., 2013; Henle & Pitts, 2010; Luna & Shih Yung, 2013; Bamberger & Biron, 2007). Given the widespread acceptance of social learning theory in a variety of life contexts, the core principle of social learning is that individuals acquire behavior from their work-based referent others through observation and imitation.

According to the literature review discussed above and the social learning theory, this investigation proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Ethical leadership has a significant negative impact on The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Navigating Ethical Complexity, Ethical Leadership, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Navigating Ethical Complexity is the mental state in which employees feel free to "show and employ themselves without fear of negative consequences to one's self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990 p. 708).

Similarly, Edmondson and Lei characterized it as an employee's shared belief about whether it is safe to take interpersonal risks in the workplace (presenting their thoughts, questions, and concerns). It represents a safe setting marked by a high level of interpersonal trust and a work environment marked by mutual respect, in which people may freely express their differences and generate new ideas without fear of being wounded, embarrassed, or condemned. In other words, employees who have a high level of Navigating Ethical Complexity are less likely to be afraid of being negatively influenced when they express their ideas.

A Navigating Ethical Complexity working environment promotes worker welfare more than an unsafe working environment because workers feel comfortable, able to avoid outside influences and impediments, and unfettered in voicing their voices (Burke et al., 2006). Employees can be comfortable expressing themselves and raising their voices in a safe setting, knowing that their conduct won't be impacted.

The significance of Navigating Ethical Complexity as a conciliator in the correlation between helpful management and employee well-being was investigated by Erkutlu and Chafra, (2016). According to the study's findings, Navigating Ethical Complexity mediated the association.

Members of organizations assess what they stand to gain or lose before speaking. Navigating Ethical Complexity is defined as the assumption that risky acts, such as using one's voice, will not result in personal injury (Detert & Burris, 2007). This concept was defined by Edmondson (1999, p. 354) as the "shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking." Navigating Ethical Complexity represents members' perception that they will not be penalized for unfavorable outcomes. This notion is defined as an atmosphere based on trust and mutual respect. People are at ease in this environment (Edmondson, 1999; Liu et al., 2015).

People can express themselves freely in such an environment. In this regard, leaders encourage followers to share their thoughts and remove barriers to doing so, establishing an environment of strong psychological trust. If followers trust their leader, they will take risks because they feel the leader will not penalize them if unfavorable outcomes occur. As a result, there is a link between ethical leadership and Navigating Ethical Complexity (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

According to social learning theory, employees study leaders in their work environment and learn and mimic their conduct. Ethical leaders have a strong moral character and exhibit characteristics such as responsibility, care, honesty, and fairness in their work. Such leadership creates a good example for followers. That is, followers, observe what the leader says and does and apply what they notice to their colleagues in the same way. As a result, ethical leaders demonstrate high moral, ethical, and fair standards, which impact employees' attitudes and behaviors,

fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Navigating Ethical Complexity, according to Edmondson, is a psychological state defined by mutual respect and interpersonal trust, in which individual employees feel at ease and engage in interpersonal risk-taking.

As a result, when an individual has trusting and supportive interpersonal ties with his coworkers, he is more likely to feel psychologically comfortable and will openly vocalize and convey fresh ideas. Employees may be encouraged to innovate if they perceive a safe environment. As a result, this research posits, based on social learning theory, that Navigating Ethical Complexity may be a potential mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations.

A leader's behavior, in particular, sets a stunning example of how followers should behave, and it is seen to be critical to affecting followers' Navigating Ethical Complexity since it plays a vital role in directly influencing organizational members' perceptions. According to Edmondson, Kramer, and Cook's research, three behaviors that leaders can specifically promote for employee Navigating Ethical Complexity are making themselves available and approachable, explicitly asking team members for their opinions and feedback, and modeling openness and fallibility. Mutual respect and trust are generated when ethical managers communicate with their employees in an organization with honesty and transparency, both between the leader and followers and among the followers themselves.

Furthermore, ethical leaders demonstrate genuine concern for their employees, respect their followers' interests, and do everything possible to provide them with instrumental and emotional assistance. To summarize, highly ethical leaders play a critical role in fostering mutual respect and trust among organizational members, and an organizational climate of mutual respect and trust will aid in improving employees' Navigating Ethical Complexity. Furthermore, ethical leaders are regarded to have characteristics such as altruism, high ethical standards, honesty, and commitment, and employees feel more psychologically secure while expressing

new ideas inside the firm. As a result, we anticipate that ethical leadership will play an essential role in promoting employee Navigating Ethical Complexity.

Based on what has been discussed so far and the theory, this study proposes:

H4: Navigating Ethical Complexity mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations.

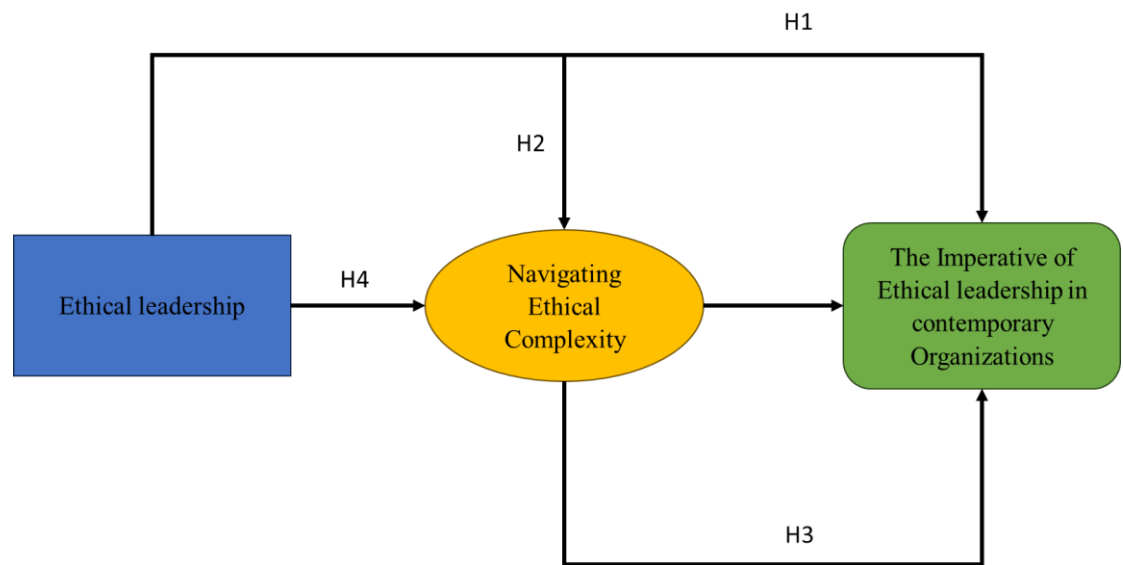


Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Model

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

To collect and analyze data for the current study thesis, a quantitative research approach was employed by the researcher. The research process is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Research Design and Proposed Model

The current research attempts to examine the relationship between ethical leadership, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations through the mediation effect of Navigating Ethical Complexity. A quantitative research approach was conducted among employees in an SME in Nigeria to test the proposed hypotheses. The data collected for this research was between May and June 2023.

Population and Sampling

This quantitative study was conducted on employees in SMEs in Nigeria. The study was conducted face-to-face. The researchers used the convenience sampling technique. Survey questionnaires were distributed among employees for data collection. Before the main data collection, twenty employees were selected for a pilot study to confirm the understandability of the questionnaires and to minimize errors that can happen in the data collection process. Based on the feedback gathered, a few items were fixed.

The researcher provided a cover letter at the beginning of the questionnaire. The cover page of each questionnaire included such information to reduce the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The cover letter assures the respondents about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. More precisely, statements such as “There are no right or wrong answers in this questionnaire”, “Any sort of information collected during our research will be kept confidential” and “Participation is voluntary” were included in the cover letter.

In this study, 400 questionnaires were distributed. Among these 293 were returned to the researcher. Six questionnaires were removed due to missing responses, giving a response rate of 72%.

Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection

This study is based on a quantitative survey using a self-administered questionnaire. All measurement items were adopted from existing literature and former empirical studies. The questionnaire contains 32 items whereas the demographical information has 4 items. Ethical leadership has 11 items which were adapted from the study of (Brown et al., 2005) with a 5 Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). The navigating ethical complexity scale has 7 items which was adapted from the study of (Brown et al., 2005). Measurement items have a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). Finally, the imperative of ethical leadership in contemporary organization scale has 10 items which were taken from (Spector et al., 2006) with 5 Likert scales (1= never; 5= every day).

Demographic information

Several demographic variables are assessed in the initial part of the survey. Participants were inquired about their gender, age, years of experience, and educational level. The demographic questions have four items. Table 1 provides information about the respondents.

Table 1 Sample Demographics

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	110	37.5
Female	183	62.5
Total	293	100
Age		
20-30	68	23.2
30-40	141	48.1
40-50	73	24.9

More than 50	11	3.8
Total	293	100
Education level		
High school	21	7.2
Bachelor	183	62.5
Master	65	22.2
Other	24	8.2
Total	293	100
Year of Experience		
1-5	55	18.8
1-6	132	45.1
11-15	87	29.7
More than 15	19	6.5
Total	293	100

Ethical leadership

Ethical leadership has 11 items which were adapted from the study of (Brown et al., 2005) with a 5 Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). To ensure reliability and meet the criteria for acceptable research, Cronbach's alpha should be no less than 0.7, as indicated by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014). The calculated Cronbach's alpha value is 0.822, which is deemed to be reliable.

navigating ethical complexity

The navigating ethical complexity scale has 7 items which was adapted from the study of (Brown et al., 2005). Measurement items have a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). To ensure reliability and meet the criteria for acceptable research, Cronbach's alpha should be no less than 0.7, as indicated by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014). The calculated Cronbach's alpha value is 0.862, which is deemed to be reliable.

the imperative of ethical leadership in contemporary organization

the imperative of ethical leadership in contemporary organization scale has 10 items which were taken from (Spector et al., 2006) with 5 Likert scales (1= never; 5= every day). The reliability of the data was determined to be satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.720. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha value for the

present research, which included 28 items, was calculated as 0.835, further confirming a dependable measure.

Table 2 The Cronbach's Alpha for Research Variables

Variable Name	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Ethical Leadership	11	0.822
Navigating Ethical Complexity	7	0.862
The Imperative of Ethical Leadership in Contemporary Organization	10	0.720
Total	28	0.835

Data Analysis Procedures

In order to reach reliable results to support the study's hypotheses and objectives, the methods used in the statistical analysis vary in complexity and tolerance. To facilitate dealing with the data via software applications, the data was checked and tabulated, as well as some statistical experts were consulted for the study and data processing. The researcher tested the internal consistency of the measurement tool using Cronbach's alpha. Data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

- The Cronbach's alpha is used to assess internal consistency to ensure the validity of the measurement instrument.

Standard deviations and standard errors of mean are used to analyze the responses to the survey and clarify the relative significance of variables.

- There are frequencies and percentages.

- Simple regressions can be used to determine the level of effect and association between variables.

- Process Macro version 4.1 can be used to show the direct and indirect impact of the proposed model of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

Preliminary Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) was used for data analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was employed using principal components analysis, with Varimax rotation to determine if they represent the distinct concepts of interests. Reliability analysis was used to check whether the measurement scales are reliable. Finally, regression analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses and to investigate the influence of ethical leadership on employee behavior, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, and Navigating Ethical Complexity.

Preliminary data analysis is conveyed to designate the number of respondents.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 3 shows that the KMO value is 0.930, exceeding the suggested cut-off value of .60 (Kaiser, 1974). Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity 8803.175 (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ($p < 0.00$). Thus, the data is considered appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4424.395
	Df	231
	Sig.	.000

All measures were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for establishing the relationship between measured variables in a data set and the latent factors that explain the covariation between these measured variables (Allen, 2017).

The initial results demonstrated that 9 items from ethical leadership measures produced a distinct dimension. Therefore, 2 items were removed from the measurement items. Additionally, 3 items from Navigating Ethical Complexity produced a distinct dimension; hence, removed from the measurement items. Finally, 1 item from The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations produced a distinct dimension and was thus removed from the measurement items. The final results indicated that all items were loaded on their underlying dimensions. Table 4 represents the factor loading of each of the variables in this study. Table 4 also represents that all items were loaded beneath their underlying variables with magnitudes ranging from 0.876 to 0.531. According to the data, 9 items were loaded under IELCO, 9 items were loaded under ethical leadership, and 4 items were loaded under Navigating Ethical Complexity. All Eigenvalues were greater than 1.0. In short, there was evidence of convergent validity.

Table 4 Factor Loadings

Item	The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations	Ethical Leadership	Navigating Ethical Complexity
IELCO7	.876		
IELCO10	.863		
IELCO5	.861		
IELCO6	.852		
IELCO9	.845		
IELCO8	.800		
IELCO2	.775		
IELCO1	.748		
IELCO4	.575		
EL8		.760	
EL5		.732	
EL7		.718	
EL4		.700	

EL1	.676	
EL9	.606	
EL6	.603	
EL3	.545	
EL2	.531	
NEC6		.812
NEC1		.803
NEC2		.758
NEC7		.729

Reliability

Reliability is used to evaluate the quality of research. It indicates how well a method, technique, or test measure something. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure (Middleton, 2020). In an attempt to have internal consistency, the relative Cronbach's alpha level of measurement scales should be over .70 (Cronbach, 1951).

Ranging from 0.931 to 0.846 all measures proved to be reliable since all coefficient alphas were above the commonly accepted cut-off values of 0.70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Table 5 shows that the scales used in the study have good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values reported as follows: Ethical Leadership (0.850), Navigating Ethical Complexity (0.846), and The Imperative of Ethical Leadership in Contemporary Organizations (0.931).

Table 5 *Reliability*

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Ethical Leadership	.850	9
Navigating Ethical Complexity	.846	4
The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations	.931	9

Correlation

The outcomes of the correlation analysis reveal that all five constructs exhibit a positive correlation with each other at a significance level of 0.01, as illustrated in Table 6. The association between EL and IELCO is identified as a significant, high positive correlation with a correlation coefficient of 0.769 and a p-value of 0.01. Similarly, the connection between NEC and IELCO is recognized as a substantial, strong positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.917 and p-value of 0.01. Moreover, the correlation coefficient between EL and NEC is acknowledged as a significant, strong positive correlation with a correlation coefficient of 0.756 and p-value of 0.01.

Table 6 Correlations between the variables

	EL	NEC	IELCO
EL	1		
NEC	.756	1	
IELCO	.769	.917	1
N= 293			
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Hypotheses Testing

The link between Ethical Leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Hypothesis H1 suggests that EL has a positive influence on IELCO. The results from the linear regression analysis in Table 7 indicate that the path estimates between EL and IELCO were statistically significant ($F(1,291) = 432.018, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.592$). Furthermore, the model coefficient reveals that EL had a positive and statistically significant effect on IELCO ($T(291) = 20.785, \beta = 1.148, p < 0.05$). The 95% confidence interval shows that zero does not fall between the lower and upper bounds (LLCI= 1.038, ULCI= 1.256), leading to the conclusion that the effect of

EL on IELCO is significantly different from zero. As a result, hypotheses H1 was supported.

Table 7 Regression analysis of EL on IELCO

Model Summary								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.769 ^a	.592	.590	6.431	432.018	1	291	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), EL								
ANOVA ^a								
Model		Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	17869.586		1	17869.586	432.018	.000 ^b	
	Residual	12326.201		291	41.363			
	Total	30195.787		292				
a. Dependent Variable: IELCO								
b. Predictors: (Constant), EL								
Coefficients ^a								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	32.399	1.987		16.305	.000	28.489	36.310
	EL	1.148	.055	.769	20.785	.000	1.039	1.256
a. Dependent Variable: IELCO								

The link between Ethical Leadership and Navigating Ethical Complexity

The hypothesis H2 suggests that EL has a positive influence on NEC. The results from the linear regression analysis in Table 8 indicate that the relationship between EL and NEC is statistically significant ($F(1,291) = 398.424$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.572$). Furthermore, the model coefficient reveals that EL has a positive and significant impact on NEC ($T(291) = 19.961$, $\beta = 0.637$, $p < 0.05$). By examining the 95% confidence interval, if the value zero falls within the interval, the hypothesis is rejected; if it falls outside the interval, the hypothesis is accepted. In this case, the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval in Table 8 (LLCI= 0.575,

ULCI= 0.700) do not encompass zero, leading the author to conclude that the effect of EL on NEC is indeed significantly different from zero. Consequently, hypotheses H2 was accepted based on the findings presented in the regression analysis.

Table 8 Regression analysis of EL on NEC

Model Summary								
Mode l	R R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.756 ^a	.572	.571	3.719	398.424	1	291	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), EL								
ANOVA ^a								
Model		Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square		F	Sig.
1	Regression	5510.799		1	5510.799		398.424	.000 ^b
	Residual	4121.787		291	13.832			
	Total	9632.587		292				
a. Dependent Variable: NEC								
b. Predictors: (Constant), EL								
Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	14.575	1.149		12.684	.000	12.313	16.836
	EL	.637	.032	.756	19.961	.000	.575	.700
a. Dependent Variable: NEC								

The relationship between Navigating Ethical Complexity and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

Hypothesis H3 suggests that NEC has a positive influence on IELCO. The results from the linear regression analysis in Table 9 indicated that the relationship between NEC and IELCO was statistically significant ($F(1,291) = 1564.428$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.840$). Furthermore, the model coefficient revealed that NEC had a positive and significant impact on IELCO ($T(291) = 39.553$, $\beta = 1.623$, $p < 0.05$). The 95% confidence interval's lower and upper bounds were used to determine the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. The confidence interval analysis in Table 9 showed that the effect of NEC on IELCO was significantly different from zero, as the lower and upper

bounds did not include zero (LLCI= 1.542, ULCI= 1.703). Therefore, the author concluded that hypothesis H3 was accepted based on the statistical findings.

Table 9 Regression analysis of NEC on IELCO

Model Summary								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.917 ^a	.840	.839	4.027	1564.428	1	291	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), NEC								
ANOVA ^a								
Model		Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	25364.275		1	25364.275	1564.428	.000 ^b	
	Residual	4831.512		291	16.213			
	Total	30195.787		292				
a. Dependent Variable: IELCO								
b. Predictors: (Constant), NEC								
Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	12.760	1.540		8.286	.000	9.729	15.791
	NEC	1.623	.041	.917	39.553	.000	1.542	1.703
a. Dependent Variable: IELCO								

The mediating effect of Navigating Ethical Complexity on Ethical Leadership, and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations

The third hypothesis suggests that NEC has a positive influence on EL, including tasks. The statistical analysis was conducted using the PROCESS for SPSS v3.5, with Table 10 displaying the results. The bootstrapping method with bias-correlated confidence estimates was utilized to evaluate the proposed mediation model. The findings revealed a direct positive relationship between EL and The Imperative of IELCO, with statistical significance ($F = 798.9421$, $R^2 = 0.8433$, $P < 0.05$). Additionally, a positive correlation was observed between EL and IELCO ($T = 34.5024$, $\beta = 1.5717$, $P < 0.05$). The indirect effects were calculated with 5000 bootstraps resamples, confirming the

mediating role of NEC in the relationship between EL and IELCO. The 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects indicated that the effect of NEC on the relationship between EL and IELCO was significantly different from zero (LLCI=.1431, ULCI=.2014). This suggests that the direct impact of EL on IELCO was significant when controlling for NEC, implying a partial mediation effect. Consequently, hypothesis H4 is supported by the study's results.

Table 10 Mediation results of NEC on EL and IELCO

OUTCOME VARIABLE: IELCO						
Model Summary						
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2
	.9183	.8433	15.9354	798.9421	2.0000	297.0000
						p
						.000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	12.9165	1.5280	8.4530	.0000	9.9093	15.9236
EL	.0273	.0110	2.4886	.0134	.0057	.0490
NEC	1.5717	.0456	34.5024	.0000	1.4820	1.6613
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
NEC	.1707	.0150	.1431	.2014		

Hypotheses overview

		R2	P-value	B Coefficients	Decision
H1	EL-IELCO	0.592	.000	1.148	Accepted
H2	EL-NEC	0.572	.000	.637	Accepted
H3	NEC-IELCO	0.840	.000	1.634	Accepted
H4	EL-NEC-IELCO	0.843	.000	1.571	Accepted

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Discussion

Through the mediation effect of Navigating Ethical Complexity, we attempted to identify the link between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. It contends that such a link is critical to improving workplace quality culture, objectives, and aims, as well as adapting to national and global difficulties. SME in Nigeria shifts its focus regarding organizational development and quality improvement, leadership development in the SMEs is essential for transforming and increasing employee performance, affecting how they act, assisting employees in achieving one's growth, and thus impacting the process of turnover.

Moreover, to further clarify the association between the factors mentioned above, the current study also made use of the Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and results from earlier research. The study provided insight into the influence of ethical leadership on employees' behavior along with the connection between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations via the mediation effect of Navigating Ethical Complexity, utilizing data gathered from workers in Nigeria.

According to our findings, ethical leadership has a positive impact on Navigating Ethical Complexity. Therefore, in SMEs in Nigeria when ethical leaders communicate with their employees transparently and openly, with mutual respect they can feel safe and express themselves freely.

It is critical in an organization for employees to use their voices safely. Voice refers to a risk-taking position since it contains an appraisal of the situation. Employees will speak as long as they believe they are safe (Avey et al., 2012; Van Dyne et al., 2003). Navigating Ethical Complexity is defined as the assumption that risky acts, such as speaking in public, would not result in personal harm (Detert & Burris, 2007). The organization is distinguished by a good climate characterized by

mutual respect in which members are not scared to make mistakes (Liu et al., 2015). People can freely express their differences in such an environment. Leaders play an important part in demonstrating followers' interests and views, as well as reducing barriers that prevent them from speaking loudly (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Leaders who behave honestly and equitably, show interest in their followers, can be attentive, and foster an atmosphere of trust, in which staff can engage in risky activity (Detert & Burris, 2007).

The findings of the investigation reveal that Navigating Ethical Complexity has a significant negative impact on The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. This indicates that in SME in Nigeria when the job situation is unanticipated, full of confusion, and can even threaten the worker's safety; they may become depressed, experience emotional disorders, and can eventually affect the individual's physical and psychological resilience, which may cause problems with productivity at work if left unchecked and may result in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in workers.

Our research also revealed that ethical leadership has a significant negative impact on The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. In SME in Nigeria, leaders who employ ethical and fair acts can benefit the organization by exhibiting participation, generating a sense of collective, being part of something, and not engaging in detrimental practices.

Gesturing about other members of the organization, organizational disagreement, delaying work, stealing enterprise property, and wasting time and resources are all examples of 'destructive' behavior (Kesler, 2007). A correlation exists between our findings and the ones of Elçi et al., (2013), this article demonstrates the existence of ethical leaders who helped to promote the creation of an ethical climate in both direct and indirect ways to reduce workers' The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations.

Kessler et al., (2013) evaluated the effect of leadership on employee conflicts and unproductive workplace conduct. According to the study's findings, leadership style and conflict between teammates impact a person's feelings, which leads to The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. Finally, the results

of this study show that Navigating Ethical Complexity is the process by which ethical leadership produces The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations. The results we obtained demonstrate that when leaders act ethically, SME in Nigeria employees feel safe and comfortable.

A psychologically safe workplace supports employee well-being more than an unsafe working environment because employees feel more at ease, can resist outside influences and barriers, and are free to express themselves (Burke et al., 2006). Employees can feel confident expressing themselves and raising their voices in a safe environment, knowing that their behavior will not be impacted.

Conclusion

In SMEs in Nigeria when ethical leaders communicate with their employees transparently and openly, with mutual respect they can feel safe and express themselves freely. It is critical in an organization for employees to use their voices safely. Voice refers to a risk-taking position since it contains an appraisal of the situation. Employees will speak as long as they believe they are safe. The findings show that when the job situation is unanticipated, full of confusion, and can even threaten the worker's safety; they may become depressed, experience emotional disorders, and can eventually affect the individual's physical and psychological resilience, which may cause problems with productivity at work if left unchecked and may result in The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations in workers. A psychologically safe workplace supports employee well-being more than an unsafe working environment because employees feel more at ease, can resist outside influences and barriers, and are free to express themselves

Limitations

It is noteworthy to recognize the limitation of the current study, which highlights the need for further studies. Even though our research provides meaningful results for understanding the influence of ethical leadership on employee behavior, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, and Navigating Ethical Complexity, still like other studies our research also has some limitations that need to be considered.

First and foremost, the self-reported assessments in this study raise concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, steps have been taken to reduce the influence of this prejudice by ensuring the anonymity of responses, which should reduce social desirability biases.

Furthermore, the information used in this study was acquired from a single national organization in the SME, which may differ from other enterprises in terms of features also this investigation used only the quantitative method not the qualitative method and it includes only the SME, not the private ones.

The study's results cannot be extrapolated to other cultural contexts with more effective resources and legislative frameworks that may minimize workplace misconduct because this issue is rarely discussed in Nigeria. The study's main objectives are to investigate how ethical leadership affects employee behavior and to give pertinent data that could help guide employees' behavior.

Future Studies

The study investigates ethical leadership's influence on SME employee behavior. Other approaches, such as interviews and observation, could be used in future studies instead of surveys. As a result of creating a broader idea of ethical leadership, a new and complementary is possible to create and test measurement scale. This may also allow for comparative studies across countries and cultures.

The long-term study design will offer support or verification for the current conclusion. Further research might require a comparison of self-reported and other assessed workplace ethics measures because our study only used self-reported data to see whether there are differences in how important this misconduct is, and if so, what its possible causes and effects may be.

Other variables, such as psychological distress, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and pleasant emotion at work, could be investigated as mediators between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, and Navigating Ethical Complexity in future investigations.

Future research should investigate the moderating impact of demographic traits such as gender, age groups, and personality in the link between ethical leadership and The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organizations, as well as Navigating Ethical Complexity.

Furthermore, the research is not thorough because it only includes the SME and not the private ones. As a result, future studies should extend the sample to include more businesses with a diverse range of features to generalize the findings. Furthermore, future studies may collect data at multiple time points, with a larger sample size, to better address the issue of common method bias.

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APPENDICES

Dear Responder,

This questionnaire aims to complete research conducted by the researcher under the title, **Ethical Leadership; Navigating Ethical Complexity, The Imperative of Ethical Leadership in contemporary Organization in SME in Nigeria**. Please fill out this questionnaire that is designed to conduct the research. All data will be used for scientific research purposes and will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thank you for your cooperation

Researcher

Please answer the questions by placing a (X) next to the answer that suits you .

1. Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age

Less Than 25 ☐ From 25 - 29 ☐ From 30 - 34 ☐ From 35 - 39 ☐
From 40 - 44 ☐ From 45 - 49 ☐ More than 50s ☐

3. Educational level

Diploma and below ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate or above ☐

4. Years of Experience

Less than 1 year ☐ From 1 - 4 years ☐ From 5 – 9 years ☐ From 10 - 14 years ☐
From 15 – 19 years ☐ From 20 – 24 years ☐ 25 or More years ☐

Please answer the questions by placing an (X) next to the answer you think is appropriate for you.

#	Items	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree/ nor disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
	Ethical leadership	(Brown et al., 2005)				

1.	My supervisor listens to what employees have to say					
2.	My supervisor disciplines employees who violate ethical standards					
3.	My supervisor conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner					

4.	My supervisor has the best interest of employees' mind					
5.	My supervisor makes fair and balanced decisions					
6.	My supervisor can be trusted					
7.	My supervisor discusses organizational ethics or values with employees					
8.	My supervisor sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics					
9.	My supervisor defines success not just by results but also by the way that they are obtained					
10.	When making a decision, my supervisor asks "What the right thing to do is"					
11.	My supervisor makes sure that employees are promoted in the organization because they show ethical behavior.					
	Navigating Ethical Complexity	(Brown et al., 2005)				
12.	If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.					
13.	Members of this team can bring up problems and tough issues.					

14.	Members of this team sometimes reject others for being different.					
15.	It is safe to take a risk on this team.					
16.	It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.					
17.	No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.					
18.	Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.					
#	Items	Never 1	Once or twice 2	Once or twice per month 3	Once or twice per week 4	Every day 5
	Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organisation	(Spector et al., 2006)				
19.	Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies.					
20.	Complained about insignificant things at work.					
21.	Told people outside the job what a lousy place you work for.					
22.	Came to work late without permission.					
23.	Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't.					
24.	Insulted someone about their job performance.					
25.	Made fun of someone's personal life.					
26.	Ignored someone at work.					

27.	Started an argument with someone at work.					
28.	Insulted or made fun of someone at work.					

TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP; NAVIGATING ETHICAL COMPLEXITY, THE IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION IN SME IN NIGERIA

by Ibolo Eric Anegbode

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ETHICAL COMMITTEE APPROVAL



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

18.11.2024

Dear Ibolo Eric Anegbode

Your application titled **"Ethical Leadership; Navigating Ethical Complexity, The Imperative of Ethical leadership in contemporary Organisation in SME in Nigeria"** with the application number NEU/SS/2024/1875 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aşkın KİRAZ'.

Prof. Dr. Aşkın KİRAZ

The Coordinator of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee