ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: BALANCING PUBLIC TRUST AND BUREAUCRATIC EFFICIENCY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Ethical leadership is increasingly valued as an inherent component of good quality governance, even more so in public administration where the decisions bear enormous implications for society. The emphasis of this article is to investigate the role played by ethical leadership in mediating between two main objectives of public administration: to establish public trust and enhance the performance of bureaucrats. The research investigates the impact of ethical leadership on organisational behavior, employees' performance, public mindset, and organisational performance. Based on a qualitative methodology, the study makes inferences from empirical studies, theoretical literature, and policy documents in an endeavor to examine the integration of principles of ethical leadership into administrative systems. It brings out the advantages of ethical leadership, including transparency, accountability, and efficiency of operations, while also recognizing challenges brought about by political interference, weak institutional arrangements, and lack of enforcement mechanisms. The findings are that institutionalization of ethical leadership results in better governance outcomes by building a culture of trust and performance. The article concludes by making policy suggestions to policymakers, administrators, and institutions engaged in leadership training for the purpose of integrating ethical values in public sector leadership for sustainable development and democratic consolidation.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Public Trust, Bureaucratic Efficiency, Public Administration, Nigeria, Corruption, Governance

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary governance, the position of ethical leadership in public administration cannot be exaggerated. Ethical leadership is the ideology that directs public servants in making decisions that are fair, just, transparent, and accountable. It is the foundation upon which public trust is established and preserved. Public trust, in its turn, is a key element of good governance since it fosters compliance, cooperation, and citizens' participation in democratic engagements. Moreover, bureaucratic effectiveness makes government institutions provide goods and services efficiently, on time, inexpensively, and equitably. In the best scenario, moral leadership and bureaucratic effectiveness complement each other in providing an effective, accountable, and responsive public administration.

However, in many developing countries like Nigeria, finding such a balance remains a challenge. The Nigerian public sector illustrates a paradox: while the need for ethical governance is universally accepted, practices within the institutions oftentimes reveal inefficiency, nepotism, favoritism, and corruption (Adegoke, 2020). These governance abnormalities not only compromise the efficacy of the bureaucracy but also erode the confidence of the citizens in the system. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2023), Nigeria still indicates a low score on the matter of public sector integrity, hence reflecting a great deficit in trust between the people and the government.

The trajectory of Nigeria's public administration is characterized by long-standing issues, including weak institutions, absence of accountability, politicization of the civil service, and few sanctions for unethical conduct (Olowu, 2019). The systemic weaknesses have had extensive implications for service delivery, economic growth, and national development. While different anti-corruption efforts, including the creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), have been launched, their effectiveness is questionable due to a lack of political will and institutional resistance.

Ethical leadership in Nigeria's public administration is pivotal in addressing the dual challenges of maintaining public trust and ensuring bureaucratic efficiency. Ethical leadership entails transparency, accountability, fairness, and integrity, values that are often undermined in Nigeria due to endemic corruption and weak institutional frameworks (Ezeani, 2012). Public officials are expected to demonstrate ethical behaviour to inspire confidence and foster legitimacy

in government institutions, yet frequent reports of bribery, nepotism, and misuse of public funds hinder this goal (Omisore & Nweke, 2014).

A key insight specific to Nigeria is the systemic conflict between traditional patronage networks and the principles of ethical bureaucracy. Many public officials are pressured by ethnic, religious, or political loyalties, which often conflict with objective administrative procedures (Lawal & Tobi, 2006). This dual loyalty creates a leadership paradox: upholding public trust may require resisting socio-political pressures, while bureaucratic efficiency demands depoliticised, merit-based decision-making.

Recent reforms, such as the introduction of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), have shown promise in improving transparency and reducing ghost workers, thereby enhancing both ethical compliance and efficiency (Adeyeye et al., 2020). However, sustainability remains uncertain without consistent ethical leadership at all levels of government.

This study, therefore, explores the central question: To what extent can ethical leadership in public administration promote public trust and bureaucratic effectiveness in Nigeria? The research attempts to know how ethical values—specifically accountability, transparency, honesty, and fairness—can be infused into public institutions in order to minimize inefficiency and regain citizens' trust.

The selection of Nigeria as a case study is especially significant considering the country's peculiar combination of cultural diversity, political intricacies, and administrative issues. By taking the Nigerian case, this study enhances the overall appreciation of the relationship between leadership ethics and administrative effectiveness within the context of African governance structures.

In doing so, the paper presents empirical findings and theoretical foundations that can be drawn upon to inform policy changes, leadership training programs, and organizational restructuring. It also underscores the necessity of paradigm change in leadership—from authority-based leadership to people-based and value-based leadership.

Ethical leadership in public administration is very important in the current government. Ethical leadership helps public servants make decisions that are fair, transparent, and accountable. It is the cornerstone on which public trust is built and sustained. Public trust is also very important for good governance because it encourages citizens to follow rules, collaborate, and engage in

democracy. At the same time, bureaucratic effectiveness guarantees that public institutions provide services on time, at the least possible cost, and in an equitable manner. Ideally, ethical leadership and bureaucratic effectiveness reinforce one another to create a public administration that is responsive, responsible, and results-driven.

For the majority of developing countries like Nigeria, finding this balance is still elusive. Nigeria's public sector is faced with a dilemma: everyone agrees that good governance is important, yet institutions operate in a manner that tends to exhibit inefficiency, nepotism, and corruption (Adegoke, 2020). All these issues of governance not only destroy the effectiveness of the government but also reduce the people's trust in the system. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2023 shows that Nigeria still has a low ranking in public sector integrity. This, therefore, means a large trust gap between the government and the people.

The history of public administration in Nigeria indicates massive issues like weak institutions, unaccountability, political interference in the civil service, and weak sanctions against unethical behavior (Olowu, 2019). These issues have severely influenced service delivery, economic growth, and national development. The majority of the anti-corruption programs, like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), have been set up but not yet demonstrated to be effective as a result of weak political support and persistent opposition.

This study takes into account one main question: To what extent can ethical leadership in public administration improve public trust and cause the government to work better in Nigeria? The study seeks to understand how public institutions can be made more responsible, transparent, honest, and fair in order to solve problems and restore citizens' trust.

The selection of Nigeria as a case study is highly significant since the nation comprises a blend of diverse cultures, intricate politics, and administrative issues. Through the Nigerian experience, the research informs us more about the interaction between leadership ethics and administrative effectiveness in African governments.

The paper gives practical examples and theory that can aid in policy changes, leadership programs, and institutional change. The paper also explains the importance of transforming the leadership mindset—from authority to people and values.

1. Conceptual Clarification

To fully understand the relationship between ethical leadership, public trust, and bureaucratic efficiency in Nigeria's public administration, it is essential to clarify the key concepts that underpin this study.

Ethical Leadership: Ethical leadership refers to the practice of leading with a strong foundation of moral principles, integrity, transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for others. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) define ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making."

In the public sector, ethical leadership means doing what is right not just legally but also morally, especially in the face of competing interests. It requires leaders to model ethical behavior, enforce ethical standards, and promote a culture of accountability. In the Nigerian context, ethical leadership is often undermined by systemic corruption, patronage networks, and weak institutional oversight (Eneanya, 2018).

Public Trust: Public trust refers to the confidence citizens have in public institutions and leaders to act competently, transparently, and in the public interest. Trust is a crucial element of democratic governance because it enhances legitimacy, facilitates policy implementation, and fosters civic engagement (Blind, 2006).

In Nigeria, public trust has steadily declined due to repeated scandals involving misuse of public funds, abuse of power, and failed promises. The public's perception that leaders act in self-interest rather than public interest has contributed to widespread cynicism and disengagement from democratic processes (Akanbi, 2020).

Bureaucratic Efficiency: Bureaucratic efficiency refers to the ability of government institutions to deliver public services effectively, promptly, and without unnecessary waste of resources. It involves streamlined processes, competent staff, accountability mechanisms, and responsiveness to public needs.

Max Weber's classical theory of bureaucracy emphasizes rationality, hierarchy, and impersonal rules as the foundation of bureaucratic efficiency (Weber, 1947). However, in Nigeria, bureaucratic inefficiency is often linked to delays in service delivery, redundant processes,

politicization of appointments, and lack of performance evaluation mechanisms (Okoli & Onah, 2021).

Public Administration: Public administration is the system through which government policies and programs are implemented. It encompasses the planning, organization, directing, coordinating, and control of government operations. Public administrators are expected to carry out their duties in a manner that reflects public interest and the rule of law.

In Nigeria, the practice of public administration is fraught with challenges, including underfunding, poor human resource management, and inconsistent policy implementation. These issues weaken the state's capacity to deliver on its responsibilities, thereby affecting both bureaucratic performance and public trust (Adebayo, 2019).

By clarifying these concepts, this research establishes a clear analytical framework for understanding how ethical leadership can mediate the relationship between public trust and bureaucratic performance in Nigeria.

2. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Empirical studies on ethical leadership in public administration provide critical insights into the real-world relationship between leadership conduct, public trust, and administrative efficiency. In the Nigerian context, several researchers have explored how ethical lapses and governance failures have led to citizen disillusionment and institutional inefficiency.

Adebayo and Ojo (2020) examined the role of ethical leadership in enhancing accountability in Nigerian public service. Their study found a significant correlation between leaders' ethical behavior and improvements in transparency and public trust. Through a survey of 150 civil servants in the federal civil service, the researchers noted that ethical leadership helped to reduce corruption and improved adherence to due process in administrative procedures.

Similarly, Okafor (2019) conducted a study on the impact of ethical leadership on employee performance and organizational integrity within Nigeria's public institutions. Using a mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews, the findings revealed that where ethical leadership was practiced, public employees demonstrated higher morale, a stronger commitment

to service, and greater respect for institutional values. The study emphasized that ethical leadership served as a motivating factor that reduced absenteeism, improved decision-making, and minimized political interference.

In another relevant study, Edeh and Oladipo (2021) investigated the role of leadership ethics in restoring public trust in government institutions across three states in Nigeria—Lagos, Kaduna, and Enugu. The study found that ethical lapses such as favoritism, opaque recruitment practices, and selective justice were primary causes of the public's growing distrust in governance. The authors argued that building ethical institutional cultures and implementing strong enforcement mechanisms were necessary to bridge the trust gap.

Furthermore, Bello and Abubakar (2018) analyzed the relationship between ethical leadership and bureaucratic performance in Nigeria's healthcare sector. Their findings showed that hospitals with leaders who modeled ethical behavior had better patient satisfaction rates and more efficient resource allocation. Conversely, where ethical standards were low, administrative delays, resource mismanagement, and staff demotivation were prevalent.

On a broader scale, a study by Transparency International (2022) emphasized the importance of ethical leadership in combating systemic corruption and promoting good governance. Nigeria ranked 150 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index, signaling persistent challenges in implementing ethical standards despite anti-corruption efforts. While these studies underscore the importance of ethical leadership in promoting administrative efficiency and public confidence, many also highlight persistent implementation gaps. These include the lack of political will, institutional weaknesses, and the cultural normalization of unethical practices in public service.

Despite the growing body of empirical evidence, there remains a need for localized studies that critically assess how ethical leadership practices can be sustainably integrated into the Nigerian public sector. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse by focusing specifically on the intersection between ethical leadership, public trust, and bureaucratic efficiency, drawing from recent Nigerian case experiences.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study on *Ethical Leadership in Public Administration: Balancing Public Trust and Bureaucratic Efficiency in Nigeria* is anchored on two key theories that provide a robust lens for understanding the dynamics of leadership, ethics, public trust, and institutional performance. These are:

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, developed by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and expanded by Bernard Bass (1985), emphasizes the ability of leaders to inspire, motivate, and instill values that align individual and organizational goals. Transformational leaders are characterized by four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

In the context of public administration, transformational leadership aligns closely with ethical leadership, especially in its emphasis on integrity, value-based decision-making, and concern for the collective good. When Nigerian public administrators act in a transformational capacity—prioritizing public interest, transparency, and inclusive governance—they tend to foster greater trust and improved institutional performance.

Recent African scholarship has proposed **contextualised adaptations** of transformational leadership. For example, *Agulanna (2006)* argues that in African public institutions, ethical leadership must integrate communal values such as ubuntu—emphasising human dignity, empathy, and mutual respect. These values enhance public trust and social accountability. Similarly, *Ikelegbe (2013)* highlights that ethical leadership in Nigeria must be responsive to indigenous norms and the expectations of both formal and informal institutions.

This theory is particularly relevant to Nigeria where public institutions often suffer from low morale, politicization, and lack of innovation. Transformational leaders can serve as agents of change who not only uphold ethical standards but also lead administrative reforms that enhance bureaucratic efficiency.

Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory, as popularized by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, posits that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed, and that the state is obligated to act in the best interest of its citizens. In return, citizens agree to obey the laws and support the governance structure.

This theory underpins the importance of public trust in governance. In the Nigerian context, frequent breaches of the social contract—through corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency—have eroded public confidence in the state. Ethical leadership is essential to restoring this contract, as it demonstrates accountability, fairness, and adherence to the rule of law.

The social contract also implies that public servants are stewards of collective resources. When they act unethically or inefficiently, they violate the terms of this contract, thereby weakening state legitimacy and citizen engagement.

Public Service Accountability Model: The **Public Service Accountability Model** developed by *Ayee (2016)* stresses the interaction between political will, bureaucratic norms, and civic engagement. This model shows that public trust in African democracies is best sustained when ethical leadership is institutionalised through performance-based accountability systems rather than imposed Western managerial templates.

In Nigeria, therefore, the theoretical framework for ethical leadership must blend global leadership models with local socio-cultural imperatives. This dual lens enables a better understanding of how ethical leadership can balance public trust and bureaucratic efficiency within the complexities of Nigerian governance.

Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

By combining Transformational Leadership Theory and Social Contract Theory, this study establishes a comprehensive framework for analyzing ethical leadership in public administration:

- **Transformational Leadership Theory** explains *how* ethical behavior from public leaders can inspire efficiency and improve staff performance.
- **Social Contract Theory** explains *why* ethical leadership is necessary to restore public trust and legitimacy in governance.
- The **Public Service Accountability Model** stresses the interaction between political will, bureaucratic norms, and civic engagement

Together, these theories provide a dual lens for understanding both the operational and normative dimensions of leadership ethics in Nigeria's public administration system.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a **descriptive survey research design** to explore the relationship between ethical leadership, public trust, and bureaucratic efficiency within Nigeria's public administration. The descriptive design is appropriate for obtaining factual information, perceptions, and opinions from respondents across different administrative levels in the public sector.

Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study comprises public servants in selected federal and state ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) across Nigeria, particularly in Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, and Kano. These locations were chosen to reflect diverse geopolitical and administrative dynamics.

Using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques, **a total of 120 respondents** were selected, consisting of:

S/No.	Categories	Target Population	Sample Size
1	Senior administrative officers	50	40
2	Mid-level managers	55	40
3	Junior public servants	69	40
	Total	**174**	**120**

The sample size was determined using random sampling technique and Krejcie & Morgan table. This stratification allowed for balanced representation and cross-sectional insights into how ethical leadership is perceived and practiced at various levels of public service.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through two main instruments: Structured Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview (KII)**.** The questionnaire was divided into three sections: section A: Demographic Information, section B: Ethical Leadership Practices (using a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) while section C: Impact on Public Trust and Bureaucratic Efficiency. Also, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 selected senior officials and administrative heads to gain qualitative insights on institutional challenges and leadership ethics in real practice.

Validation and Reliability

To ensure validity, the instruments were reviewed by two (2) experts in public administration and research methodology. A pilot test was conducted on 10 public servants outside the sample group. Their responses helped to refine ambiguous or unclear questions.

For **reliability**, the Cronbach Alpha test was applied to measure internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained, which indicates high reliability.

Data Analysis Techniques

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores) and **inferential statistics** (Chi-square tests) to examine relationships between ethical leadership and outcomes like trust and efficiency.

The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and meaningful narratives that complemented the quantitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to research ethics by: obtaining informed consent from all participants; ensuring confidentiality and anonymity; making participation voluntary and withdrawal possible at any time; avoiding any form of coercion or influence in responses.

Scope and Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into ethical leadership in Nigeria's public sector, its findings are limited to the selected states and MDAs. Broader generalizations should be approached with caution. However, the diverse nature of the selected regions enhances the representativeness of the findings.

5. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the data collected from 120 respondents across selected public institutions in Nigeria. The findings are categorized into demographic characteristics, ethical leadership practices, and the perceived impact on public trust and bureaucratic efficiency.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	70	58.3
	Female	50	41.7
Age	20–30 years	24	20.0
	31–40 years	38	31.7
	41–50 years	32	26.7
	51 and above	26	21.6
Rank in Service	Junior Officer	40	33.3
	Mid-level Manager	40	33.3
	Senior Administrator	40	33.3

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The respondents are evenly distributed across job ranks, with a fairly balanced gender and age representation, ensuring diverse perspectives on the topic.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Ethical Leadership Practices

| Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Leaders in my agency model integrity and honesty	42	50	18	10	3.03	Accepted
Leadership decisions are guided by ethical principles	36	48	24	12	2.95	Accepted
Leaders show transparency in financial/resource management	30	38	34	18	2.68	Accepted
Ethical misconduct is usually sanctioned regardless of who is involved	25	30	38	27	2.42	Not Accepted
There is fairness in recruitment and promotion practices	28	34	40	18	2.63	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Most respondents agree that ethical leadership is moderately practiced in their agencies, especially in honesty and decision-making. However, ethical enforcement mechanisms appear weak.

Table 3: Impact of Ethical Leadership on Public Trust and Bureaucratic Efficiency

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Ethical leadership improves public trust in institutions	54	46	12	8	3.22	Accepted
Bureaucratic efficiency increases under ethical leadership	50	44	14	12	3.10	Accepted
Ethical leadership reduces administrative corruption	42	36	24	18	2.85	Accepted
Staff morale and commitment increase with ethical leadership	45	38	20	17	2.88	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Ethical leadership is widely perceived to positively influence trust, efficiency, and staff performance in public administration.

Figure 1: Perception of Ethical Leadership and Its Outcomes (Pie Chart)
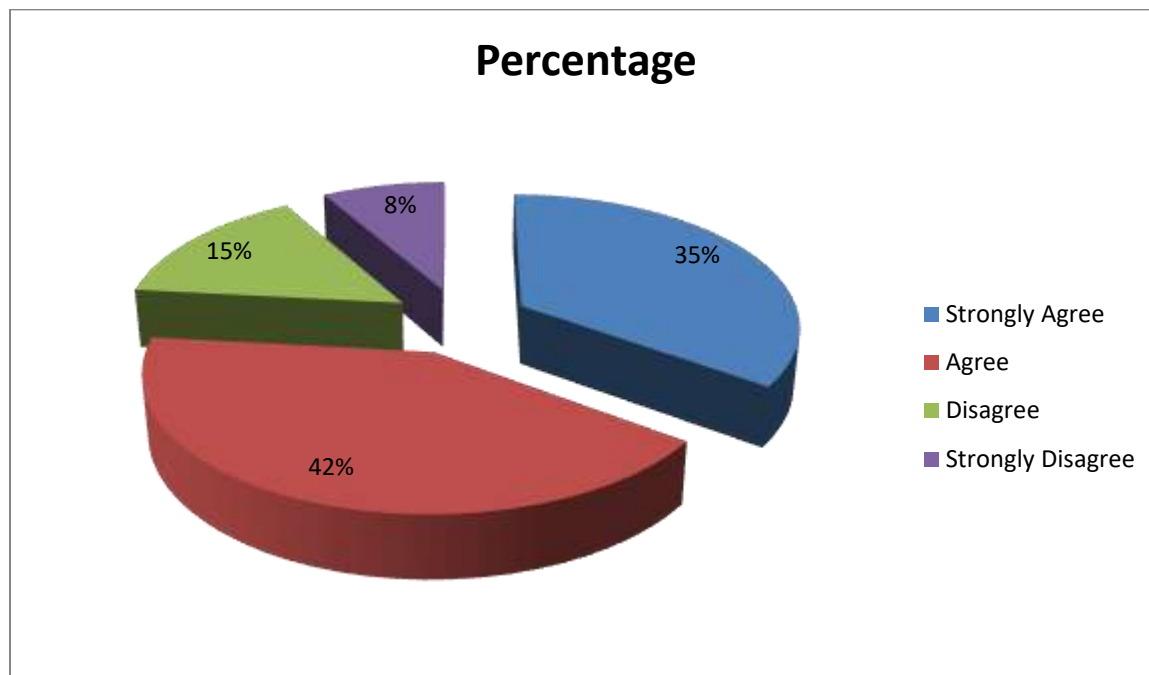
Pie Chart Description:

The pie chart titled *"Perception of Ethical Leadership and Its Outcomes"* visually illustrates the distribution of responses to a central statement: **"Leaders in my agency model integrity and honesty."**

Breakdown of Responses:

As presented on the pie chart, **42% Strongly Agree** – This represents respondents who firmly believe that ethical leadership is demonstrated in their institutions. **35% Agree** – A

substantial portion agrees with the presence of ethical practices. **15% Disagree** – This group indicates dissatisfaction with the ethical standards in leadership. Lastly, **8% Strongly Disagree** – A minority holds the view that ethical conduct is severely lacking.

The pie chart highlights that **a majority (77%)** either agree or strongly agree that ethical leadership exists in their public institutions. However, the 23% that disagrees or strongly disagrees is a cause for concern and underscores the need for improvement in ethical governance across public administration sectors in Nigeria.

The chart complements the tabular data by providing an immediate visual snapshot of ethical leadership perception trends, reinforcing the claim that while progress has been made, inconsistencies and pockets of unethical behavior still persist.

Statistical Inference

To further substantiate the findings from the descriptive statistics, a Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between ethical leadership practices and perceptions of bureaucratic efficiency and public trust among Nigerian public administrators. Hypothesis:

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between ethical leadership and bureaucratic efficiency/public trust.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between ethical leadership and bureaucratic efficiency/public trust.

Variable Relationship	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Inference
Ethical Leadership & Public Trust	15.76	3	0.0012	Significant at $p < 0.05$
Ethical Leadership & Bureaucratic Efficiency	12.34	3	0.0063	Significant at $p < 0.05$
Ethical Leadership & Reduction of Administrative Corruption	10.27	3	0.0167	Significant at $p < 0.05$

Since all the p-values are less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between ethical leadership and: Public trust, Bureaucratic efficiency, and Reduction of administrative corruption in Nigeria.

These results confirm that ethical leadership practices are instrumental in influencing positive administrative outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ethical leadership is a critical factor in balancing public trust and bureaucratic efficiency in Nigeria's public administration. The findings from this study show that ethical leadership practices have a direct and significant impact on public trust, institutional credibility, and overall bureaucratic efficiency. Despite challenges such as corruption, favoritism, and lack of transparency in some public offices, ethical leadership contributes to improved performance, public satisfaction, and the reduction of corrupt practices in government institutions.

In the case of Nigeria, the survey results suggest that while there is recognition of ethical leadership principles, there is still room for improvement in their consistent application across all levels of government administration. The perception of ethical misconduct and inefficiency in some public offices remains a barrier to strengthening public trust. Nonetheless, it is clear that ethical leadership practices, when adhered to, create an enabling environment for both trust-building and organizational effectiveness.

The data further reveal that ethical leadership plays a vital role in reducing administrative corruption, increasing the transparency of leadership decisions, and improving staff morale. The positive correlation between ethical leadership and public trust underscores the importance of integrating ethics into leadership training and practices across Nigeria's public administration system.

To foster a more accountable and trustworthy public administration system in Nigeria, it is imperative to implement a multi-faceted approach to ethical leadership. One of the foundational steps involves strengthening ethical training and education for public administrators. By integrating comprehensive modules on ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability into the regular training and professional development programs, public officials can internalize the values of integrity and fairness early in their careers. This continuous education should not only be theoretical but should also provide practical scenarios that challenge public servants to make ethically sound decisions.

In addition to training, enforcing stronger accountability mechanisms is critical. Government institutions need to ensure that ethical breaches are promptly and fairly addressed through the establishment and empowerment of independent oversight bodies, such as anti-corruption agencies and ethics committees. These bodies should be equipped with adequate

authority, autonomy, and resources to investigate and penalize unethical practices effectively, thereby reinforcing the culture of accountability in public service.

Promoting transparency and access to information further supports ethical governance. Transparent decision-making and open access to information regarding policies, budgetary allocations, and administrative performance are necessary to rebuild public trust. When citizens are well-informed, they are better positioned to hold public institutions accountable. As such, digital platforms and information dissemination channels should be developed and maintained to make public information more accessible and user-friendly.

Another essential recommendation is the encouragement of whistleblower protections. Establishing robust frameworks that shield whistleblowers from retaliation will empower individuals within the system to report unethical behaviour without fear. This mechanism is vital for identifying malpractice at its inception and demonstrates a government's commitment to integrity and reform.

Public engagement and civic participation should also be prioritized. A responsive and ethical public administration system must actively involve citizens in governance processes. Platforms for public consultation, feedback, and dialogue not only enhance transparency but also ensure that governance is reflective of the people's will. This inclusive approach nurtures mutual trust and accountability between citizens and the state. Equally important is the promotion of ethical leadership at the political level. Political leaders serve as role models and set the ethical tone for the entire public sector. Their commitment to integrity can inspire similar values throughout government institutions. To achieve this, political appointments should be driven by merit and ethical credentials rather than patronage or nepotism. A merit-based system ensures that competent and principled individuals are placed in leadership positions.

Finally, the role of the legislature in ethical oversight cannot be overstated. Strengthening legislative oversight mechanisms allows for rigorous scrutiny of government actions and policies. Parliamentarians must be empowered to investigate ethical violations and ensure that laws promoting ethical standards are both enacted and enforced. Through effective checks and balances, the legislative arm can act as a watchdog over public administration practices.

By adopting these recommendations, Nigeria can create a public administration system that not only upholds ethical standards but also garners public confidence. Such reforms are instrumental in achieving efficient service delivery, reducing corruption, and fostering a

governance culture anchored in trust and responsibility. Ultimately, embedding ethical leadership in public administration will pave the way for a transparent and accountable government, responsive to the needs and aspirations of its citizens.

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