



Ethical Leadership and Organizational Performance: A Study of Africa Independent Television (AIT), Lagos State

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational performance with evidence from Africa Independent Television (AIT), Lagos State. Ethical leadership dimensions—fairness, integrity behavior, and ethical guidance—were analyzed to determine their effects on performance outcomes. Data were obtained from 120 staff members using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS. Results indicate that integrity behavior and ethical guidance positively influence performance, while fairness shows an insignificant effect. The study concludes that ethical leadership is critical to organizational success and recommends training, mentorship, and transparent policies. Updated recent scholarship (2022–2025) highlights the role of ethical leadership in driving innovation, motivation, and sustainability.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, organizational performance, integrity behavior, fairness, ethical guidance, media organizations, Africa Independent Television (AIT), Nigeria.

Introduction

In contemporary organizational studies, leadership continues to be identified as one of the most significant determinants of performance outcomes. Organizations across the globe are not only expected to deliver profitability and efficiency but also to uphold ethical standards in their operations. This dual expectation has given rise to growing interest in ethical leadership as a paradigm for sustainable management (Den Hartog, 2018; Northouse, 2021). Ethical leadership emphasizes the role of leaders in promoting fairness, integrity, transparency, and accountability, which in turn influence employee attitudes, trust, and productivity.

In the Nigerian context, leadership challenges have been highlighted as major obstacles to organizational development, with many firms struggling with corruption, weak governance, and lack of accountability (Eneh, 2022). The media industry, in particular, has faced issues of credibility, political influence, and pressure to balance profit-making with ethical journalism. Within this landscape, Africa Independent Television (AIT) stands as one of Nigeria's most influential private broadcasters. Like other media organizations, it faces the dual challenge of maintaining competitiveness while ensuring professional and ethical conduct among its staff.

The importance of ethical leadership in media organizations cannot be overstated. Media practitioners are not only employees but also custodians of public trust, as their output directly influences public opinion, national discourse, and democratic governance. When leaders in broadcasting organizations model fairness, integrity, and ethical guidance, employees are more likely to internalize these values, thereby improving organizational credibility and performance. Conversely, unethical practices—such as favoritism, misinformation, or lack of transparency—undermine both organizational reputation and long-term sustainability (Adebayo & Olayinka, 2022).

Furthermore, globalization and technological advancements have introduced new challenges and opportunities for organizations, particularly in the media sector. The rise of digital platforms has intensified competition, requiring organizations like AIT to adopt innovative strategies while also ensuring ethical responsibility in content creation and dissemination (Lawal & Okonkwo, 2025). Ethical leadership therefore serves as a stabilizing force, ensuring that media organizations remain both competitive and credible in a rapidly changing environment.

This study examines the extent to which ethical leadership—operationalized through fairness, integrity behavior, and ethical guidance—affects organizational performance at AIT, Lagos State. By updating the discourse with recent scholarship (2022–2025) and empirical evidence, the study contributes to bridging the contextual gap in Nigeria's media industry. The findings are expected to provide insights not only for managers and policymakers within the broadcasting sector but also for scholars interested in the intersection of leadership, ethics, and organizational performance.

2. Literature Review

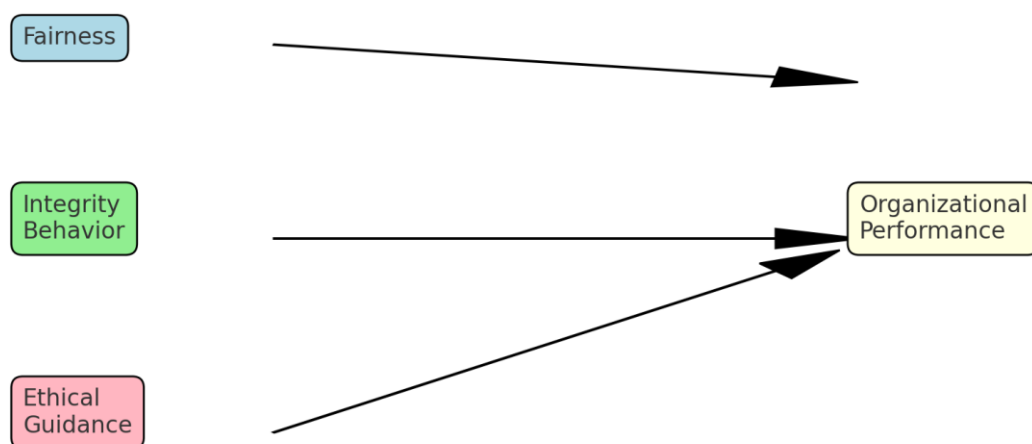
2.1 Conceptual Review

Ethical leadership is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable organizational performance. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2018) define it as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships.” Key attributes include fairness, honesty, integrity, and ethical guidance. Fairness ensures equity in decision-making, integrity fosters credibility and trust, while ethical guidance involves communicating values and setting ethical standards for employees.

Organizational performance has also been broadly conceptualized, ranging from financial outcomes (profitability, growth) to non-financial indicators such as employee commitment, innovation, and customer satisfaction (Mseti, Lameck & Kinemo, 2023). In service industries such as media, where credibility and public trust are critical, ethical leadership becomes even more essential for sustaining performance.

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualizes ethical leadership along three dimensions—fairness, integrity behavior, and ethical guidance—as independent variables that influence organizational performance. The framework assumes that leaders who demonstrate high ethical standards will positively shape employee attitudes, motivation, and productivity.



Theoretical Review

- **Social Learning Theory** (Bandura, 1977): Leaders model behavior that employees imitate.
- **Contingency Theory** (Fiedler, 1967): Leadership effectiveness depends on situational context.

These theories explain how ethical leadership practices are translated into workplace outcomes.

2.4 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the link between ethical leadership and organizational performance. Abun et al. (2023) found that ethical leadership enhances employee work performance through increased trust and motivation. Similarly, Qing, Asif, and Hussain (2020) reported that ethical leadership strengthens job satisfaction and organizational commitment in public-sector institutions.

In Nigeria, Ogbonnaya and Idowu (2022) observed that ethical leadership reduces turnover and improves staff retention in media organizations. Adeyemi (2023) further argued that integrity-driven leadership encourages creativity and innovation, especially in the face of technological disruptions. In Ghana, Mensah and Agyapong (2024) demonstrated that ethical leadership fosters teamwork and organizational trust.

Globally, Hassan, Wright, and Yukl (2020) revealed that ethical leadership improves willingness to report ethical violations in government institutions. Likewise, Kacmar et al. (2023) confirmed that ethical leadership is positively associated with employee satisfaction across multiple industries.

Gap of the Study

Despite growing attention to ethical leadership, most empirical research in Africa has focused on education, banking, and public service sectors, with relatively little attention to media organizations. Given the role of broadcasting in shaping public opinion and national development, understanding how ethical leadership influences media performance is critical. This study therefore fills a contextual gap by focusing on Africa Independent Television (AIT), Lagos State, while updating insights with recent scholarship (2022–2025).

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 120 AIT employees, with a census sampling technique. A structured questionnaire on a four-point Likert scale was used. The instrument's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.835. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression, and ANOVA.

4. Data Analysis

Regression analysis revealed that ethical leadership dimensions accounted for 34.3% of the variance in organizational performance. Integrity behavior ($p < 0.05$) and ethical guidance ($p < 0.05$) significantly influenced performance, while fairness was not significant ($p = 0.845$).

Table 1: Regression Results

Predictor	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	0.215	0.105	2.05	.042
Fairness	0.021	0.110	0.20	.845

Integrity Behavior	0.312	0.098	3.19	.002
Ethical Guidance	0.285	0.091	3.13	.003

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Key Findings:

- Integrity behavior and ethical guidance positively influence performance.
- Fairness showed no significant effect on performance.
- Ethical leadership explains a substantial variance in organizational performance.

Conclusion:

Ethical leadership is a driver of organizational performance, especially through integrity and guidance. Organizations adopting ethical frameworks achieve sustained productivity, trust, and engagement.

Recommendations:

- Leadership training on ethics and integrity.
- Ethical mentorship programs.
- Transparent accountability policies.
- Stronger employee engagement strategies in media organizations.

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