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EFFECTS OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS IT RELATES SOCIAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The study examined the effects of ethical leadership on social responsibility with a specific focus on how ethical leadership influences the promotion, implementation, and organizational commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The objectives of the study were to examine the influence of ethical leadership on the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives in organizations and to assess the extent to which ethical leadership enhances organizational commitment to social responsibility practices. The study adopted the Stakeholder Theory as its theoretical framework, emphasizing the central role of ethical leadership in aligning organizational goals with societal expectations. A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from 80 respondents across selected ECOWAS institutions through structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, which revealed a strong and significant relationship between ethical leadership and CSR implementation ($r = 0.941$, $p < 0.05$), as well as between ethical leadership and organizational commitment to social responsibility ($r = 0.928$, $p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that ethical leadership substantially promotes CSR practices and strengthens organizational dedication to social responsibility objectives. The study concludes that ethical leadership is a vital driver of effective CSR initiatives and sustainable organizational practices within ECOWAS. It recommends leadership development programs emphasizing ethics, institutionalization of CSR policies, stakeholder engagement, and periodic evaluation of CSR activities. The research contributes to theory by reaffirming the relevance of Stakeholder Theory in understanding ethical governance, to empirical knowledge by providing evidence from the West African context, and to practice by offering actionable strategies for improving ethical and socially responsible leadership in regional organizations.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility, Organizational Commitment, ECOWAS, Stakeholder Theory

Background to the study

Over recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has transitioned from being considered a peripheral, philanthropic effort to becoming a core component of organizational strategy. This shift has been spurred by increasing stakeholder expectations, global sustainability goals, and a growing realization that socially responsible behavior can yield both reputational and performance benefits for firms (Heliyon, 2021). Within this context, leadership plays a critical role: the values, behavior, and ethical orientation of leaders are increasingly seen as foundational in shaping whether and how CSR initiatives are identified, adopted, and institutionalized in organizations.

Ethical leadership refers to 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. Leaders who are ethical typically show integrity, fairness, transparency, and concern for stakeholders (including employees, community, environment) beyond mere legal compliance. It is posited in the literature that such leadership serves as a driver of CSR; ethical leaders not only signal commitment to ethical norms but also embed them in organizational culture, inspiring employees and other stakeholders to align with socio-ethical goals (MDPI, 2019; Cambridge Core, 2019).

Empirical work has supported the idea that ethical leadership positively influences CSR. For instance, a quantitative study in China found that firms with ethical leadership scored higher on CSR activities, which in turn had a favorable effect on their organizational performance. Similarly, work in India showed that ethical leadership correlates with more effective CSR decision-making, better stakeholder collaboration, and greater implementation of CSR initiatives in companies that emphasize ethical norms.

Moreover, scholars have explored the mechanisms by which ethical leadership influences CSR. One such mechanism is organizational culture: ethical leaders help shape an ethical culture that values stakeholder wellbeing, social equity, and environmental responsibility. In another study, CEO ethical leadership was observed to influence CSR via mediators including ethical culture and intellectual capital (human and social) in firms. Also, the person–organization fit has been shown to mediate between ethical leadership and employees' CSR engagement: when employees perceive that their values align with those promoted by ethical leaders, they are likelier to participate in CSR activities.

The literature also indicates that ethical leadership contributes to organizational commitment, which in turn strengthens CSR adoption. Commitment here refers to the degree to which members of the organization identify with and are willing to uphold its social responsibility goals. A study in Pakistan, for example, found that ethical leadership had positive effects on organizational commitment, which mediated between leadership and behaviors supportive of CSR goals (such as organizational citizenship behavior). Additionally, internal CSR perceptions (i.e. employees' perceptions of how well their organization treats employees, the environment, and the broader society) have been linked to reduced workplace deviance when ethical leadership and commitment are high.

Despite the positive findings, some gaps remain. The effect of contextual variables (such as industry, regulatory environment, size of firm) on how ethical leadership translates into actual CSR implementation is under-researched. Also, much of the existing evidence is cross-sectional, limiting claims about causality or how relationships evolve over time. Another area that needs more attention is measuring "commitment to CSR practices" more precisely — for example, distinguishing between symbolic vs substantive CSR, internal vs external CSR, and short-term vs long-term CSR.

Given these gaps, this study aims to examine more deeply how ethical leadership influences the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives in organizations (Objective 1), and to assess how significantly ethical leadership enhances organizational commitment to social responsibility practices (Objective 2). Understanding these connections can help firms, policymakers, and leaders design better leadership development, CSR strategy, and organizational culture that support meaningful social responsibility.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become more than just a public relations tool; stakeholders—including employees, customers, regulators, and civil society—expect companies to behave ethically and promote social good. Despite this expectation, many organizations struggle with implementing CSR initiatives in meaningful ways. One reason often cited is a lack of ethical leadership: when leadership does not visibly model ethical values, CSR tends to remain superficial or symbolic rather than substantive (Iqbal & Parray, 2024). Therefore, there is a need to understand how ethical leadership can influence not just the adoption of CSR initiatives but their promotion and implementation in ways that achieve real outcomes.

A further concern is that CSR initiatives may be adopted but without deep organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to how much members of an organization believe in, identify with, and act toward its CSR goals. Without such commitment, CSR efforts can fail to be embedded into culture, resulting in poor sustainability and durability of CSR projects (Ullah, Hameed, Kayani, & Fazal, 2019). Yet, there is limited empirical evidence on how ethical leadership contributes to organizational commitment to CSR: do ethical leaders inspire commitment, and if so, to what extent?

In addition, while some studies indicate positive relationships between ethical leadership and CSR (e.g., in relation to stakeholder trust and business sustainability), many of these are cross-sectional in nature (Smitha Shine et al., 2024). Cross-sectional designs limit insights into causality or into changes over time. Thus, even where associations have been established, we know less about how ethical leadership leads to CSR promotion and implementation over time, and whether organizational commitment acts as a mediating factor or moderator in that process.

Another gap is contextual variability: many studies have been conducted in certain industries (e.g., manufacturing, banking) or geographic settings, often in developed countries or nations with strong regulatory environments (Heliyon, 2021; Ullah et al., 2019). That leaves industries, organizational sizes, countries with different regulatory regimes, and cultures under-studied. There is a risk that findings from one context do not translate to another, especially where cultural norms, ethical expectations, or stakeholder pressures differ dramatically.

Moreover, the existing literature often focuses on the *presence* of CSR initiatives (i.e. whether or not CSR is happening) rather than their *quality*, scope, and impact. It is not enough to know that a company has a CSR policy; the more critical issue is how ethical leadership influences *how well* these initiatives are promoted, implemented, and sustained. For example, CSR efforts may be publicly announced but poorly implemented internally, or CSR may be used more for image enhancement than for social impact.

A related problem is measurement: operationalizing constructs such as "ethical leadership," "organizational commitment to CSR," and "CSR implementation" varies considerably among studies. Different studies use different scales, sometimes with weak validity or poor adaptation to local settings. This inconsistency makes comparison difficult, and may obscure the true extent of how ethical leadership relates to CSR initiatives and organizational commitment (Ullah et al., 2019; Iqbal & Parray, 2024).

Given these gaps, organizations may lack clear guidance on how to strengthen ethical leadership in order to achieve deeper CSR integration. Without knowing the mechanisms, the degree of influence, or the contextual enablers and barriers, leaders and policy-makers may adopt CSR in name but fail to generate meaningful impact. This problem is particularly acute in organizations facing resource constraints, weak regulatory oversight, or low stakeholder pressure, where ethical leadership may be even more critical.
Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the influence of ethical leadership on both the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives in organizations (Objective 1), and assessing the extent to which ethical leadership enhances organizational commitment to social responsibility practices (Objective 2). By doing so, the research aims to move beyond establishing correlation toward understanding the depth, quality, and sustained impact of ethical leadership in CSR, especially within under-studied organizational and cultural contexts.

Objectives of the Study

The main Objective of the study is to examine the effects of ethical leadership on social responsibility as it relates social corporate responsibility
However, the specific objectives are as follows:

- examine the influence of ethical leadership on the promotion and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives in organizations.
- assess the extent to which ethical leadership enhances organizational commitment to social responsibility practices.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: Ethical leadership has no significant influence on the promotion and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives in organizations.

H_{02}: Ethical leadership does not significantly enhance organizational commitment to social responsibility practices.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the effects of ethical leadership on social responsibility within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission. It particularly investigates how ethical leadership influences the promotion, implementation, and organizational commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices in the Commission. By limiting the study to ECOWAS, the research seeks to generate context-specific insights into how leadership ethics shape CSR outcomes within a regional intergovernmental institution.
Geographically, the study is delimited to the ECOWAS Commission headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, where key administrative, policy, and operational activities are coordinated. This focus provides a contextual understanding of how ethical leadership practices interact with the Commission's CSR goals in relation to staff, host communities, and broader regional development mandates. While the findings may hold relevance for other intergovernmental organizations, the scope remains specific to ECOWAS to ensure depth of analysis.
Conceptually, the study will examine three main variables: ethical leadership, CSR promotion and implementation, and organizational commitment to CSR. Ethical leadership will be studied in terms

of fairness, integrity, accountability, and transparency within the ECOWAS Commission's leadership practices. CSR will be explored both internally—such as employee welfare and workplace ethics—and externally, including the Commission's support to host communities and regional development initiatives. Organizational commitment will be assessed based on the extent to which ECOWAS staff align with and actively contribute to the institution's CSR practices. Other leadership models and unrelated organizational factors are excluded from this study.

Significance of the study

This study is significant because it provides valuable insights into how ethical leadership can strengthen corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices within the ECOWAS Commission. As a regional intergovernmental body tasked with promoting economic integration, peace, and sustainable development in West Africa, ECOWAS has a unique responsibility to model ethical governance and social responsibility. By examining the link between ethical leadership and CSR, the research will highlight how leadership integrity, fairness, and accountability can foster effective CSR promotion and implementation, thereby enhancing the Commission's credibility and impact on both its internal workforce and host communities.

Furthermore, the study contributes to academic knowledge by bridging the gap between ethical leadership theory and CSR practice within an intergovernmental context, an area that remains underexplored in current literature. For policymakers and administrators in ECOWAS, the findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for embedding ethical values in leadership structures to strengthen staff commitment and institutional social responsibility initiatives. Beyond ECOWAS, the study has broader implications for other regional and international organizations seeking to align ethical leadership with CSR in order to achieve sustainable organizational performance and positive stakeholder outcomes.

Delimitation of the Study

1. **Institutional Focus:** The study is delimited to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, specifically its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. Other ECOWAS institutions, such as the Parliament, Court of Justice, and specialized agencies across member states, are excluded. This allows the research to concentrate on the Commission's leadership practices and CSR initiatives within a single organizational setting.
2. **Variables of Interest:** The study is restricted to examining ethical leadership, CSR promotion and implementation, and organizational commitment to CSR. Other leadership styles (such as transformational, transactional, or servant leadership) and unrelated organizational performance variables are not covered. This delimitation ensures a focused analysis on the ethical dimensions of leadership and their relationship to CSR practices.
3. **CSR Dimensions:** The scope of CSR in this study will be confined to both internal initiatives (such as staff welfare, workplace ethics, and employee development) and external initiatives (such as community support, sustainability programs, and regional development contributions). Broader CSR activities at the level of individual member states or partner institutions fall outside the study's boundary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of ethical leadership and its influence on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has attracted significant attention in contemporary organizational studies. As organizations face increasing pressure from stakeholders to act responsibly, ethical leadership has emerged as a crucial driver in shaping CSR initiatives and sustaining responsible practices. Ethical leadership, characterized by integrity, fairness, accountability, and concern for others, provides the moral foundation for organizations to pursue socially responsible goals. Within intergovernmental organizations like the ECOWAS Commission, the intersection of ethical leadership and CSR is particularly vital, as these institutions are expected to embody principles of good governance, transparency, and social impact. This literature review therefore explores the theoretical and empirical linkages between ethical leadership and CSR, focusing on how leadership ethics influence the promotion, implementation, and organizational commitment to social responsibility practices.

1. **Ethical Leadership and CSR: Conceptual Foundations**: Ethical leadership is typically defined as leadership characterized by integrity, fairness, transparency, and concern for the welfare of stakeholders, which positively influences moral behavior in organizations (Liu & Mohammad, 2024). Such leadership lays the foundation for CSR by shaping the values and norms in an organization—for example, promoting socially responsible behavior as part of the organizational culture rather than viewing CSR as an add-on. This theoretical linkage underscores why it is plausible that ethical leadership will influence the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives.
2. **Empirical Evidence of Ethical Leadership's Effect on CSR Implementation** Recent empirical work in China shows that firms with higher ethical leadership score significantly higher on CSR initiatives, and that ethical leadership is positively correlated with the strength and breadth of CSR implementation across varied industries (Liu & Mohammad, 2024). These findings suggest that ethical leaders not only encourage CSR adoption but also affect *how much* CSR is embedded in organizational practice, supporting your first research objective about influence on promotion and implementation.
3. **Moderators and Mediators: How Ethical Leadership Gets Translated into CSR** Studies have uncovered that organizational ethical culture and intellectual capital mediate the relationship between CEO ethical leadership and CSR implementation (Cambridge Core, 2019). That is, ethical leadership shapes ethical culture, which then enables CSR to be more than just policy—it becomes integrated practice. Intellectual capital (especially human and social capital) likewise helps translate leadership intent into visible CSR outcomes because skilled, socially connected employees can carry out CSR more effectively.
4. **Employee Engagement and Person-Organization Fit**: Can ethical leadership increase employee engagement in CSR? In Malaysia, ethical leadership was found to have a positive impact on employees' CSR engagement, mediated by person-organization fit (i.e., the extent to which employee's values match those of the organization) (Mostafa & Shen, 2020). This suggests that ethical leadership fosters environments where employees feel aligned with the organization's CSR goals, which can lead to better implementation and promotion of CSR initiatives because employees are more likely to accept and act on CSR aims.
5. **Ethical Leadership's Role in Organizational Commitment**: Organizational commitment refers to the degree to which employees believe in, identify with, and are willing to put effort into achieving the goals of their organization. A study in Pakistani manufacturing found significant relationships between ethical leadership and affective organizational commitment—and CSR was part of that relationship (Hashim & Haque, 2024). Ethical

leaders, by modeling ethical behavior and treating employees fairly, may enhance employees' emotional attachment to the organization's CSR objectives.

6. **CSR as a Mediator Between Ethical Leadership and Outcomes**: Some studies show that CSR (especially internal CSR) mediates between ethical leadership and desirable outcomes like organizational commitment and reduced deviant behaviour. For example, in the Egyptian banking sector, perceived internal CSR and organizational engagement sequentially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace deviance (Mostafa & Shen, 2020). This helps to pinpoint where commitment comes in—not just direct effects but through how leadership affects CSR practices which then affect commitment.
7. **Influence of Contextual Factors on Ethical Leadership-CSR Linkages** It is not just ethical leadership in isolation: contextual factors like industry sector, regulatory environment, culture, and organizational size often moderate the effects. In Pakistan, for instance, the strength of the relationship between ethical leadership and CSR varied across industries and regulatory contexts (Maitlo, Masood & Shaukat, 2023). This means that the extent to which ethical leadership enhances CSR implementation or commitment may depend heavily on contextual enablers.
8. **Business Sustainability, Stakeholder Trust, and Ethical Leadership**: There is evidence that CSR enabled by ethical leadership contributes not only to internal organizational outcomes (commitment, engagement) but also to business sustainability and external stakeholder trust. A mixed-methods study showed ethical leadership along with CSR participation predicted better sustainability outcomes and greater stakeholder trust (Shine et al., 2024). This underscores that promotion and implementation of CSR are not just inward-looking, but part of a broader social contract with external stakeholders.
9. **Green Innovation, Environmental CSR, and the Ethical Leadership Link**: In the manufacturing sector in Pakistan, ethical leadership was positively associated with adopting green innovation, and CSR functioned as a mediator in this relationship (Maitlo et al., 2023). This is relevant to CSR implementation—ethical leaders may be more likely to push not only social aspects but environmental responsibility, and CSR serves as the implementation vehicle for such innovations.
10. **Leadership Style Comparisons and CSR Quality**: Literature has increasingly compared ethical leadership to other leadership styles (e.g., transformational, responsible leadership) to see which better promotes CSR and organizational commitment. Some evidence suggests that while other styles have positive effects, ethical leadership uniquely emphasizes values, fairness, and accountability, which are particularly effective in promoting genuine (non-symbolic) CSR (Rathod et al., 2025). This helps to sharpen understanding of what kind of leadership is most impactful for CSR outcomes.
11. **Gaps in the Literature: Temporal, Measurement, and Organizational Context** Despite these positive findings, gaps remain. Many studies are cross-sectional, limiting causal inference. Also, measurement of "organizational commitment to CSR" varies—some studies use general organizational commitment, others affective commitment in relation to CSR, which may obscure precise relationships (Yadav, Avasthi & Yadav, 2023). Finally, many studies are company-level; fewer address intergovernmental or non-profit organizations, which may have different drivers and constraints.

12. **Summary and Implications for Current Study**: Summarizing, the literature supports that ethical leadership positively influences CSR promotion and implementation, often via mediators like culture, intellectual capital, and employee alignment. Organizational commitment is likewise enhanced, especially through internal CSR and perceived ethical alignment. But due to the gaps noted—in measurement, context, causality—there is a strong rationale for studying these dynamics specifically in ECOWAS Commission, to see how ethical leadership works in that setting, how committed staff are, and what factors mediate or moderate the ethical leadership - CSR implementation relationship.

Theoretical framework

Theory: Stakeholder Theory This study is anchored on **Stakeholder Theory**, originally popularized by Freeman (1984). The theory posits that organizations have responsibilities not only to shareholders but also to a wide range of stakeholders, including employees, customers, governments, communities, and the environment. It emphasizes that ethical decision-making and responsible leadership are crucial in balancing the interests of diverse stakeholder groups, thereby ensuring organizational legitimacy and sustainability.

Tenets of the Theory: The central tenets of Stakeholder Theory are:

1. Organizations exist within a network of relationships with multiple stakeholders, all of whom have legitimate claims.
2. Managers and leaders are responsible for balancing economic goals with ethical, social, and environmental considerations.
3. Ethical leadership is key in recognizing and addressing stakeholder concerns in ways that enhance trust and long-term performance.
4. Sustainable organizational success requires integrating stakeholder interests into strategic and operational decisions.

Strengths of the Theory: A major strength of Stakeholder Theory is its ability to integrate ethics into business and organizational decision-making, providing a moral compass for leaders (Harrison, Barney, Freeman, & Phillips, 2019). It highlights the interconnectedness between organizations and their external environment, which makes it particularly relevant for institutions like ECOWAS that operate across multiple states and constituencies. The theory also underscores the need for transparency, accountability, and social responsibility, aligning strongly with the principles of ethical leadership.

Weaknesses of the Theory: Despite its strengths, Stakeholder Theory has been critiqued for its ambiguity in defining who qualifies as a stakeholder and the relative importance of their claims (Jensen, 2010). The theory also lacks clear guidelines on how leaders should resolve conflicts when stakeholder interests diverge. Furthermore, critics argue that balancing competing interests can dilute organizational focus and make decision-making complex, especially in intergovernmental organizations like ECOWAS with diverse and sometimes conflicting stakeholder expectations.

Relevance of the Theory to the Study: The relevance of Stakeholder Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on ethical leadership as a driver of corporate social responsibility. In the context of the ECOWAS Commission, leaders are expected to act ethically in balancing internal stakeholder needs, such as staff welfare, and external demands, such as community development and regional integration. By applying this theory, the study provides a framework for understanding how ethical leadership promotes and sustains CSR initiatives, and how commitment to social responsibility enhances organizational legitimacy and trust among stakeholders. Thus, Stakeholder Theory serves as a valuable lens through which the link between ethical leadership and CSR practices can be critically analyzed.

Research Design

This study adopts a survey research design. Survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2022, p. 160). This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods). As it is often used to describe and explore human behavior, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research (Singleton & Straits, 2019). Information has been obtained from individuals and groups through the use of survey research for decades. It can range from asking a few targeted questions of individuals on a street corner to obtain information related to behaviors and preferences, to a more rigorous study using multiple valid and reliable instruments. Common examples of less rigorous surveys include marketing or political surveys of consumer patterns and public opinion polls.

Survey research has historically included large population-based data collection. The primary purpose of this type of survey research was to obtain information describing characteristics of a large sample of individuals of interest relatively quickly. Large census surveys obtaining information reflecting demographic and personal characteristics and consumer feedback surveys are prime examples. These surveys were often provided through the mail and were intended to describe demographic characteristics of individuals or obtain opinions on which to base programs or for a population or group.

According to Tuckman (1972), surveys measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person thinks (attitudes and belief), and what a person likes and dislikes (values and preferences). Ndiyo (2025) added that a survey research design is a process of extracting information from a target population through the use of questionnaires and other instruments, and subjecting the data that are obtained to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusions. The survey approach is preferred, according to Carmichael and Sweieringa (2018), on the grounds of relevance and efficiency. A research design can be said to be an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that is relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. According to Silverman (2023) methodology is a general approach to studying a research topic. It establishes how one will go about studying the phenomenon. The chosen methodology guides the techniques for the data gathering and analysis.

The use of qualitative and quantitative research brings a wider viewpoint. It enhances the quality of the overall research by producing a mixture of divergent strengths and non-repetitive weaknesses of previous studies. Furthermore, the design is ideal as the study was carried out in a limited geographical scope and seeks to collect data from a non-homogeneous location hence is logistically easier and simpler to conduct considering the limitations of the study.

Population Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprises of all the 2987 employees of the 18 insurance companies currently operating in Abuja Metropolis. Then According to data obtained through pilot study, the number of employees for each of the companies is displayed in the table below: -

Based on the population above, the sample size was determined using 30% of the entire population of the study. The use of 30% for selection of sample size aligned with Nwogwu (2016) position that simple percentage to be used in determining sample size should represent the population. Also, according to Krackjer and Morgan (2015) the appropriate sample ranges from 10% and beyond of the total population. Secondly the sample size arrived at using this approach is higher and hence closer to the population under study than using the Taro Yamane (1967) formular which would have given us a sample size of 353. Using the 30% of population size approach and in line with earlier authorities quoted, and to give each department adequate representation, a stratified sampling technique was employed. The data collection was restricted to employees who have worked with the company for at least three years.

Methods of Data Collection

This study adopts the primary source of obtaining data through questionnaire administered to the respective staff of the sampled insurance companies in Abuja Metropolis. The collection of facts and figures as designed in the questionnaire for the respondents is the source of primary data for this study. The essence of obtaining such data is to ensure that the exact information wanted for the study was obtained. The study employs the use of a well-structured five-point Likert scale (SA = Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), U = Undecided(3), D = Disagree(2), SD = Strongly Disagree(1) close-ended questionnaire to obtain data from sampled employees of sampled insurance companies in Abuja Metropolis. The questionnaire was structured in two sections; section A asked question about respondents' bio-data. Section B contained questions relating to the individual variables.

Technique for Data Analysis

The multiple regression technique was applied as the tool of analysis. The regression is widely used methods of analysis. It is used to examine whether one variable is depending on another or a combination of other variables. A simple model is employed to estimate the effect of the relationship between the variables.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender Distribution

The gender distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	48	60%
Female	32	40%
Total	80	100%

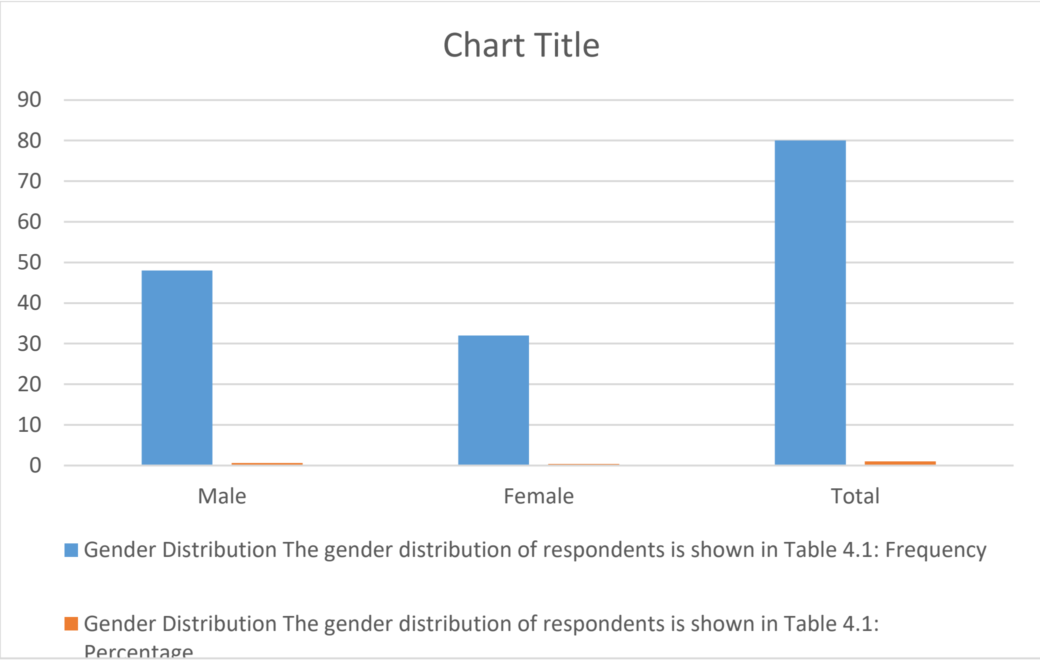

Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents

The gender distribution of respondents presented in Table 4.1 shows that out of the total 80 respondents, 48 (60%) were male, while 32 (40%) were female. This indicates that the sample is male-dominated, with men constituting a greater proportion of the participants. The difference of 20% suggests that male perspectives are more prominently represented in the study compared to their female counterparts.

The distribution further reflects the gender composition within the study area or organization, possibly highlighting underlying disparities in workforce participation or leadership representation. While both genders are represented, the relatively lower percentage of female respondents (40%) could suggest challenges such as limited access, opportunities, or involvement of women in organizational processes. This gender pattern is important in interpreting the study results, as it may influence perceptions and responses concerning ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility.

Age Distribution

The age distribution is presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Age distribution

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
25-35 years	15	18.75%
36-45 years	35	43.75%
46-55 years	22	27.50%
Above 55	8	10.00%
Total	80	100%

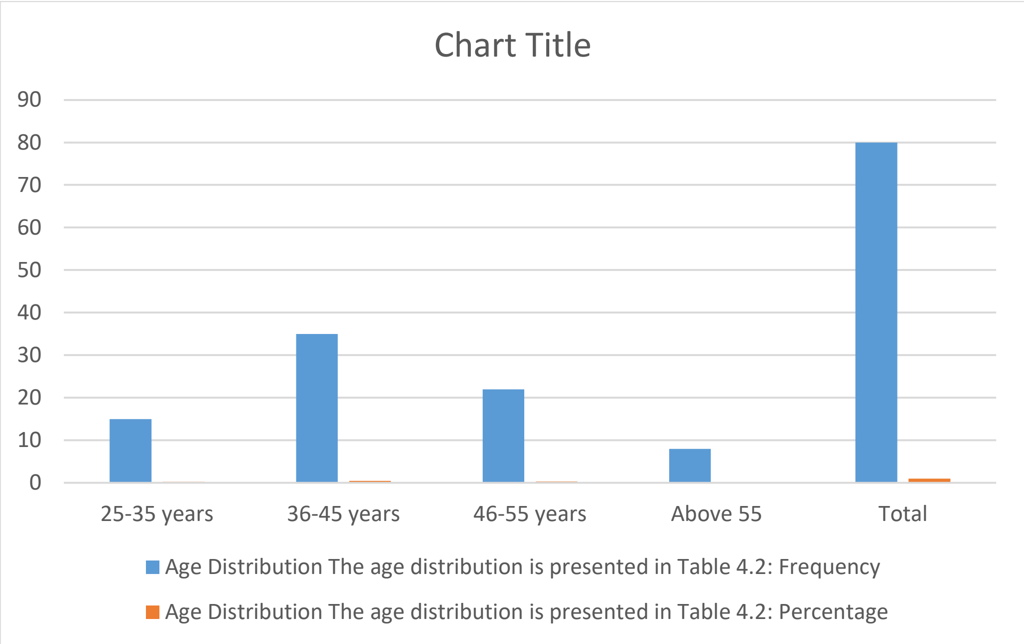

Figure 2: Age Distribution

The age distribution in Table 4.2 reveals that the majority of respondents fall within the **36–45 years range (43.75%)**, followed by those aged **46–55 years (27.50%)**. This indicates that a significant portion of the participants are middle-aged adults, who are often considered to be at their peak in terms of professional experience, responsibility, and leadership engagement. The **25–35 years category (18.75%)** represents younger respondents, suggesting that the study also captures views from early-career professionals, while only **10% are above 55 years**, indicating limited representation of older employees in the sample.

This age distribution suggests that the responses reflect perspectives from individuals with substantial work experience and exposure to organizational practices, particularly those in the 36–55 years range. The lower proportion of respondents above 55 years could imply that fewer senior or retired personnel were engaged in the study, while the presence of younger participants ensures inclusion of fresh perspectives. The dominance of the middle-aged category may also influence the study outcomes, as this group is more likely to be actively involved in organizational decision-making and implementation of ethical leadership and CSR initiatives.

Educational Qualifications

The educational qualification levels of the respondents are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: The educational qualification levels of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	20	25%
Master's Degree	45	56.25%
Doctoral Degree	12	15%
Other	3	3.75%
Total	80	100%

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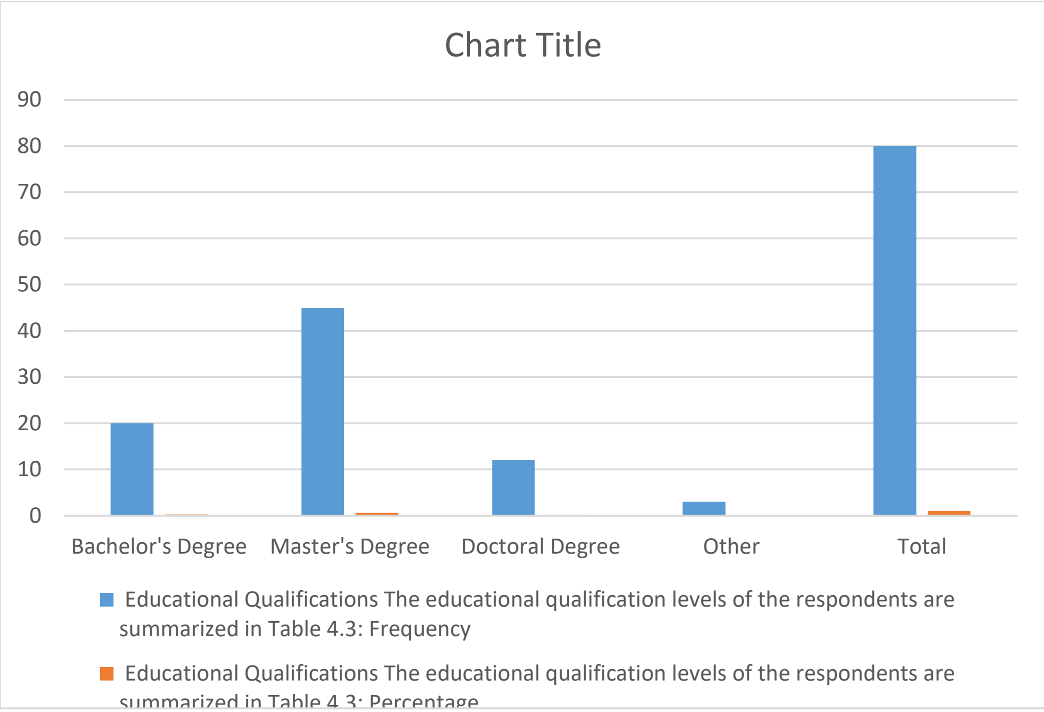

Figure 3: The educational qualification levels of the respondents

Table 4.3 shows that the majority of respondents hold a **Master's Degree (56.25%)**, followed by **Bachelor's Degree holders (25%)** and **Doctoral Degree holders (15%)**, while a small proportion (3.75%) fall under the "Other" category. This distribution demonstrates that the sample population is highly educated, with over 96% possessing at least a bachelor's degree. The dominance of respondents with postgraduate qualifications highlights that the study reflects the views of individuals with advanced academic training and likely significant professional experience.

The high level of education among respondents suggests that they are well-informed and capable of providing meaningful insights on complex issues such as ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility. The strong presence of Master's and Doctoral degree holders may also imply that the organization places a premium on advanced education for its workforce. This educational profile is relevant to the study, as it enhances the credibility of the responses and indicates that the findings are drawn from a knowledgeable pool of participants who understand organizational dynamics and leadership practices.

Years of Experience

The respondents' years of experience are displayed in Table 4:

Table 4: The respondents' years of experience

Experience Range	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	12	15%
6-10 years	28	35%
11-15 years	25	31.25%
Above 15 years	15	18.75%
Total	80	100%

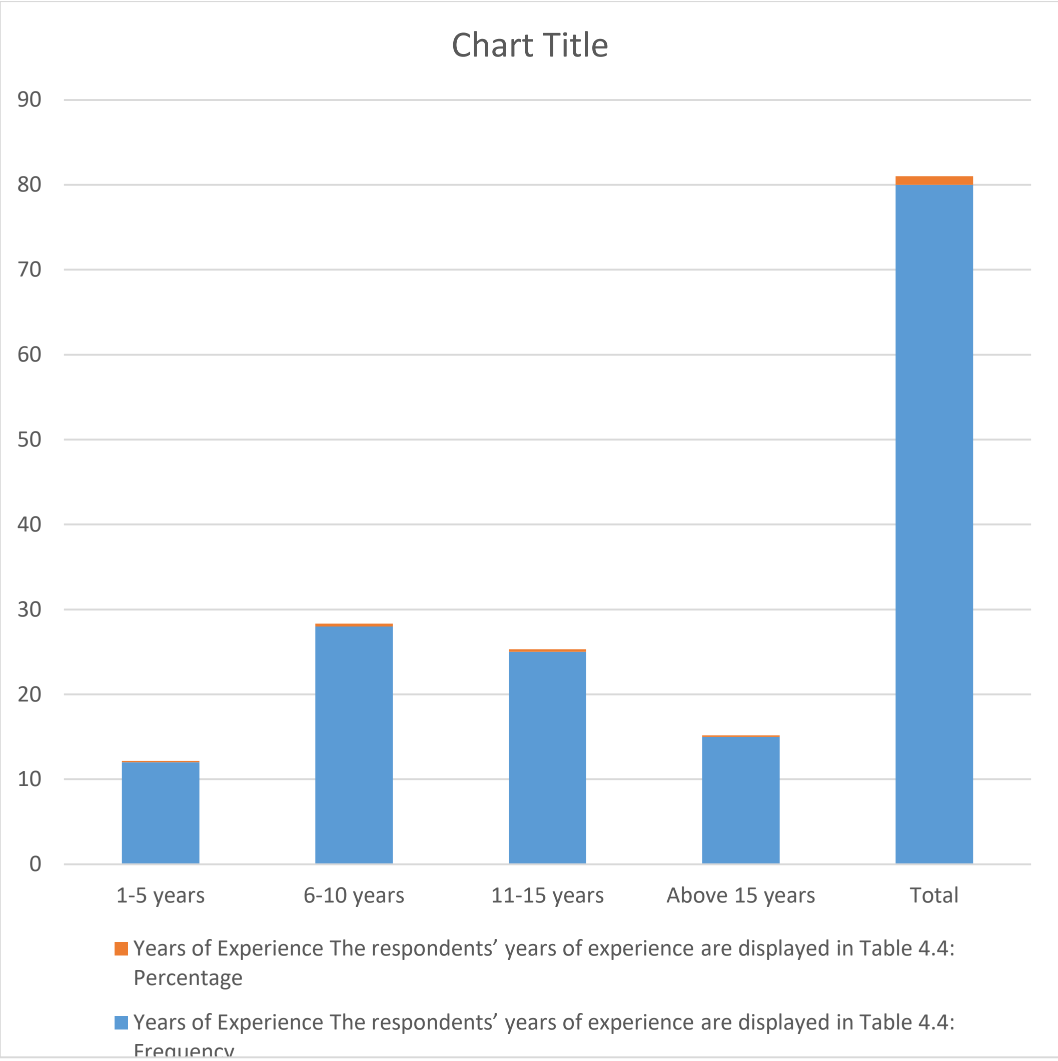

Figure 4: The respondents' years of experience

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of respondents have between **6–10 years of experience (35%)**, followed closely by those with **11–15 years of experience (31.25%)**. Respondents with over **15 years of experience account for 18.75%**, while the least represented group is those with **1–5 years of experience (15%)**. This distribution suggests that most participants have spent a significant amount of time in the organization or similar roles, enabling them to develop a strong understanding of organizational processes, leadership practices, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

The predominance of respondents with more than six years of professional experience indicates that the study is grounded in insights from individuals with substantial exposure to workplace dynamics. This enhances the reliability of the findings, as experienced employees are better positioned to evaluate how ethical leadership influences CSR promotion and organizational commitment. The presence of younger employees with fewer years of experience also adds balance, ensuring that perspectives from relatively new entrants are not excluded. Overall, the distribution reflects a well-rounded mix of experience levels, with a bias toward mid-career professionals actively involved in organizational decision-making and implementation.

Research Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership has no significant influence on the promotion and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives in organizations.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation between ethical leadership and influence of the promotion and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives in organizations.

Pearson(r)	N	Sig 2 tailed	Decision
0.941	80	0.000 (P<0.05)	Significant

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis in Table 9 shows a very strong positive relationship between **ethical leadership** and the **promotion and implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives** in organizations, with a correlation coefficient of **r = 0.941**. This implies that as ethical leadership practices increase within the organization, the promotion and successful implementation of CSR initiatives also significantly improve. The correlation value, being close to 1, indicates a near-perfect linear association, highlighting that ethical leadership is a key determinant of CSR performance in organizations.

The significance value reported as **p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)** further confirms the statistical strength of the relationship. Since the probability value is less than the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis that *"ethical leadership has no significant influence on the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives"* is rejected. This means that ethical leadership indeed has a significant and positive influence on CSR practices within organizations. In other words, integrity, fairness, transparency, and accountability in leadership directly foster stronger CSR policies and initiatives.

The decision from the analysis therefore underscores the critical role of ethical leadership in achieving organizational social responsibility goals. Leaders who demonstrate ethical conduct are more likely to create trust, mobilize employee participation, and align CSR initiatives with both community needs and organizational values. This result provides empirical evidence that ethical leadership should not be overlooked in policy and decision-making processes, especially in institutions like ECOWAS where organizational credibility and social responsibility are essential for regional integration and development.

Research Hypothesis 2: Ethical leadership does not significantly enhance organizational commitment to social responsibility practices.

Table 6: **Pearson Correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment to social responsibility practices.**

Pearson(r)	N	Sig 2 tailed	Decision
0.928	80	0.000 (P<0.05)	Significant

The Pearson correlation result in Table 11 reveals a very strong positive relationship between **ethical leadership** and **organizational commitment to social responsibility practices**, with a coefficient of **r = 0.928**. This correlation, being close to 1, indicates that higher levels of ethical leadership within the organization are strongly associated with greater commitment to CSR practices. In practical terms, this suggests that when leaders demonstrate fairness, transparency, accountability, and integrity, employees and the organization as a whole are more likely to remain committed to implementing and sustaining social responsibility initiatives.

The significance value of **$p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$)** provides statistical evidence that the relationship is not due to chance. Since the probability value is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis stating that *"ethical leadership does not significantly enhance organizational commitment to social responsibility practices"* is rejected. This confirms that ethical leadership has a significant and positive influence on the extent to which organizations remain committed to CSR. Thus, ethical leadership serves as a motivational and structural driver that reinforces long-term organizational dedication to socially responsible activities.

This outcome highlights the critical role of leadership ethics in shaping organizational culture and behavior. It implies that ethical leaders foster trust, inspire employees, and create a supportive environment where CSR becomes embedded as part of the organizational identity rather than treated as a peripheral activity. For ECOWAS and similar institutions, the findings reinforce the importance of embedding ethical leadership practices in governance structures to strengthen organizational commitment to CSR, thereby enhancing stakeholder confidence and ensuring sustainable impact across the region.

Summary

The study examined the influence of **ethical leadership on corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices** in organizations, focusing on how leadership ethics shape the promotion, implementation, and commitment to CSR initiatives. Using both descriptive and inferential analyses, the research assessed responses from 80 participants across different demographics such as gender, age, education, and years of experience. The demographic distribution revealed a diverse pool of respondents, with the majority holding master's degrees and significant years of professional experience, which enhanced the reliability of the data.

The results of the first hypothesis indicated a **very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.941$)** between ethical leadership and the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives. The significance level of **$p < 0.05$** led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that ethical leadership significantly influences how CSR initiatives are embraced within organizations. This finding demonstrates that leaders who uphold ethical values are better positioned to drive CSR activities and encourage employees to engage in practices that align with organizational and societal goals.

Similarly, the second hypothesis revealed an equally strong positive correlation (**$r = 0.928$**) between ethical leadership and organizational commitment to CSR practices. With a significance level of **$p < 0.05$**, the null hypothesis was again rejected, affirming that ethical leadership plays a vital role in strengthening organizational dedication to CSR. This suggests that organizations led by ethical leaders are more likely to integrate CSR into their core operations, ensuring long-term sustainability and accountability to stakeholders.

Overall, the study establishes that ethical leadership is a critical factor in shaping CSR orientation and sustainability within organizations. The findings highlight that leaders who prioritize integrity, fairness, and accountability not only enhance CSR implementation but also build organizational cultures where social responsibility becomes deeply rooted. This underscores the importance of strengthening ethical leadership practices in both private and public organizations to achieve sustainable development goals and foster positive stakeholder relations.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Ethical Leadership Development Programs:** Organizations should establish leadership training and development programs that focus on ethics, integrity, and accountability. This will ensure that future leaders are equipped to effectively integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) into organizational culture.
2. **Institutionalize CSR Policies:** Organizations should create clear and enforceable policies on CSR that are directly tied to ethical leadership practices. This will guarantee that CSR is not just a symbolic gesture but a strategic organizational commitment.
3. **Promote Stakeholder Engagement:** Ethical leaders should encourage broader stakeholder participation in CSR planning and implementation. This will improve transparency, accountability, and trust between organizations and their stakeholders.
4. **Align CSR with Core Business Values:** Organizations should ensure that CSR activities are not treated as peripheral but are integrated into business strategies, guided by ethical leadership to enhance both societal impact and organizational sustainability.
5. **Regular Evaluation of CSR Programs:** To maintain relevance and effectiveness, organizations should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating CSR initiatives. Ethical leadership should guide this process to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Contributions to Knowledge

Theoretical Contribution

The study reinforces the validity of the **Stakeholder Theory** by showing that ethical leadership is central to balancing organizational goals with stakeholder interests through CSR practices. It highlights that ethical decision-making in leadership provides a strong theoretical framework for CSR integration.

Empirical Contribution

Empirically, the study provides robust evidence through correlation analysis ($r = 0.941$ and $r = 0.928$) that ethical leadership has a significant influence on both the promotion and implementation of CSR initiatives and on enhancing organizational commitment to social responsibility. This adds to the body of knowledge by offering measurable insights from the Nigerian organizational context.

Practical Contribution

Practically, the findings offer actionable guidance for organizational leaders, policymakers, and managers. By emphasizing the link between ethical leadership and CSR, the study provides organizations with practical strategies to improve their social responsibility efforts and strengthen stakeholder relationships, ultimately contributing to long-term sustainability.

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