

Impact of Ethics Support Mechanisms on Fostering Ethical Organizational Culture A Multi Industry Analysis

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Article Info

Article History:

Received May 22, 2023

Revised June 20, 2023

Accepted: July 1, 2023

Keywords:

Ethics Support
Mechanisms, Ethical
Leadership, Organizational
Culture, Whistleblower
Systems, Employee
Satisfaction.

Abstract

Ethics support mechanism is discussed by this study in order to understand its contribution towards a responsible and ethical organizational culture. This study screens the status and efficiency of ethical codes of conduct, the whistleblowing system, ethics courses, and ethics leadership through a distributed web-based questionnaire that samples employees in multiple industries and organizations of various sizes. A stratified random sampling method was employed, and responses were obtained through an online platform while the findings were analyzed using descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The results show that the adoption of these ethics support mechanisms has substantial effects on the organisational performance factors that include trust, satisfaction and ethical behaviour of employees. Ethical leadership was considered as one of the attributes that contribute to the creation of an ethical culture additionally, whistleblowing systems and ethics training as the ways to enable ethical behaviour. The study also revealed other benefits associated with good ethics program that include ability to deter ethical violations and to sustain a favourable corporate reputation. These findings add to the current knowledge base in several ways by showing how multiple simultaneous ethics mechanisms affect organisational culture and it is a void that no other research has filled. The study thus suggest that organisations consider enhancing ethics frameworks that cover substantive levels asking for leadership, education and ethical action that would support sustainable development.

Introduction

While envisaging today's management of the commercial business, one can notice that the aspect of ethics is becoming more and more crucial. Ethical issues are no longer a matter of theoretical discourse, but the issues defining the organizational culture and practice. Profitability and boom are nothing exceptional to moral conduct; on the contrary, ethical theories are viewed as key ingredients of success in today's complex and dynamic business contexts. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate the ethics supportive measures in commercial enterprise control frameworks to support moral accountable organizational cultures. Ethics support mechanisms consist of a number of practices, policies and frameworks for which the aim is to guide individuals and agencies through the provision that is manual on how to handle the numerous dilemmas that are likely to occur within ethical systems.

These mechanisms construct not only the maps how to choose morally, but also moderate the way of living, based on the such values as integrity, transparency, and responsibility (Ellestad & Winton, 2023; Martínez et al., 2021). Thus, ethics guide can be seen as a roadmap that helps the companies navigate to the right behaviours and activities which are legal and acceptable in the society. The importance of the guide on enterprise ethics cannot be overemphasized particularly due to the numerous ethical negligence and corporate failures that have occurred in different sectors in the recent past. In line with Basit (2023) The cases running from accounting fraud to environmental negligence cannot be regarded as simple cases of ethics violation, however, they embellished corporate ethical profiles as well as precipitated severe economic and social impacts. Consequently, groups across sectors are

even more so realizing the need to address ethics and integrate ethical practices into their fundamental functioning frameworks (Pizzi et al., 2020). In the area of commercial enterprise control, ethics support appears through different actions and programmes with the goal to improve ethical and responsible behavior (Prieß et al., 2020). One such initiative includes; enhancing efforts to put effective ethical codes of conduct that describe the standards and ethical principles that manually operationalize business organizational behavior. These codes are basic records that record expectancies regarding ethical behavior; hence offering personnel a clean guide to choose in morally complicated scenarios.

Further, ethics support in business management goes a long way further than mere adherence to the letter of the law; it includes ethics in management and corporate responsibility (Abdelmoety et al., 2022). Ethical management means not simply projecting the right ethical example from the top, but also promulgating the right ethical culture at the agency. Supervisors with an ethical orientation demonstrate, therefore, concern to do the right thing, even when this is challenging and they are enticed with competing leisure activities. Apart from ethical management, the interplay of ethical assistance mechanisms additionally come up with sturdy schooling packages and awareness campaigns meant at raising employees' consciousness concerning the ethics and acceptable behaviors in the workplace. According to Rushton et al. (2021), it is the know-how and talents that the business gives the employee to select and manage moral options making it possible for personal to act with integrity and uphold the values of the enterprise.

In addition, improvements in generation have enabled production of new gear and systems to support ethics in enterprises management. As an example, whistleblower hotlines and nameless reporting systems as well as give paths for employees to relay concerns about unethical behavior without the risk of reprisal (Gianakos et al., 2022). These mechanisms are not only required to encourage transparency and duty however they may also help groups to know and resolve moral problems as and when they result in. Latest years were marked by the enhancement of consciousness of the interrelation between ethics, sustainability, and CSR in the administration of the enterprise (Meseguer et al., 2021; Herrera & de las, 2020). Businesses are much more accepting of their obligations to now not best generate superior shareholder worth but additionally create absolute worth to society and the environment.

There are a number of views available regarding ethical personalities in commercial enterprise practices that are considered as necessary for lengthy-term sustainability and believe from stakeholders. Also, concerns of ethics are the important thing need to funding selections as SRI method is now getting used by many investments to meet each their monetary and ethical goal. Those organizations that comprehend ethics and sustainability as values are viewed as even more invulnerable and attractive enterprise opportunities than before, in addition to proving the business case for ethics support in the management of the commercial enterprise Maryani (2011). Ethical leadership occupies the central position in the development of organisational cultures and encouraging ethical standards in employees (Al Halbusi et al., 2021).

Managers who act in a manner that promotes integrity, fairness and transparency establish norms that shape personnel's perception of ethics in the organization (Bakkareng & Maryani, 2013). Research has revealed that ethical management is undoubtedly correlated with employees accept as true with, task pride and organizational commitment (Bashir & Gani, 2020). Additionally, moral leaders are more probably to develop an organizational culture that would enable personnel to express concerns concerning unethical actions and scenarios and seek direction on ethics. It is not surprising to see that agencies resort to enhancing and enforcing codes of conduct and ethics applications to ensure the improvement of ethical

behavior and conformity to ethical standards (Stoll et al., 2020). These initiatives provide the personnel with clear principles of ethical decision-making and state the enterprise's expectations concerning ethical conduct required from the personnel. This research evidence shows that while ethics packages were found to be effective the degree of their depend on; government commitment, organizational culture and the extent of application design. As organizations that prioritise the ethical aspect by heavily investing in strong applications of ethics, it becomes easy to encourage the personnel and employees to uphold the standard of integrity and duty.

Whistleblowing mechanisms supplemented by the anonymous reporting systems and the whistleblower hotlines, act as an effective additive to the ethics support frameworks (Brough et al., 2022). These mechanisms enable the employees to report any time they have witnessed or are a victim of unethical practices or misconduct without feeling that they will be retaliated against hence selling the aspect of transparency and duty within agencies (Cheliatsidou et al., 2023). It can be stated that there is evidence that indicates that whistleblowing mechanisms are related to higher levels of ethical awareness and organizational commitment among the employees.

Further, the organisation that promotes whistleblowing and promptly addresses the mentioned issues is more capable of preventing and identifying fraud or wrongdoing cases. Education and sensibility programs are effective elements in ethics support initiatives because they deliver employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to solve moral issues efficiently (Brittain et al., 2020). These packages are frequently composed of such modules as ethical decision-making, warfare resolution, and the business enterprise's code of behavior. Data offered into the development of ethics studies show that individuals who undertake ethics training are much more inclined to display ethical behaviour and implementation of the organizational values. In addition, focus campaigns can be useful for the promotion of moral norms and becoming a way of life that respects integrity and moral activity.

Methods

The quantitative part of the study was designed with the purpose to determine the state of created ethics support mechanisms in different organizations and their consequences affecting the organizational culture as well as employee behaviors. To this end, a survey instrument was formulated that comprised of several questions. The survey comprised of several sections; each of the sections focused on specific areas of interest. Namely, it evaluated the existence and adequacy of ethical codes of conduct as well as both the existence and utilization of organizational whistleblower hotlines and reporting systems; the overall prevalence and perceived efficiency of organizational ethics training programs; and workers' overall degree of perceived ethical leadership in their organizations. It is so because for the response options the survey employed a Likert scale which ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to capture subtle differences in attitudes and experiences toward the available ethics support mechanisms.

In an effort to use a sample that was diverse in terms of industries and size of organizations, stratified random sampling was used. The target population was firstly divided into two categories depending on the industry type, in which it operates and the size of the organization, in which it operates. The subjects were then selected randomly within each of these strata to reduce on select bias and at the same time increase on the probability of generality. Data collection in this approach allowed the use of a variety of different organizational contexts and practices.

A web based questionnaire was used for data collection and participants were emailed an invitation to complete it. Every invitation also contained the link to the survey and a short explanation of the study. In a bid to increase response rates, follow-up reminders were sent during the data collection period which was for four weeks. The online setting enabled convenience in reaching out as well as engaging with all the participants and in turn the management of the responses.

In order to answer the research objectives of the study the collected data was statistics analyzed using a variety of techniques. The first analysis was done on descriptive statistics to give frequency, percentage distribution and means as a way of giving summary of the details obtained about ethics support mechanisms including the perceived effectiveness. To investigate the nature of the associations between the various ethics support mechanisms and organizational consequences, including the level of trust and satisfaction among the employees, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was conducted to check the effect of these various ethics support mechanism on these outcomes whereby the nature and magnitude of these relations was also ascertained.

In order to improve the reliability and validity of the survey instrument, a pilot test was carried out before the actual data were collected. In more detail, reliability analysis, and Cronbach’s alpha were applied in order to assess the internal consistency of the survey data and validity checks were conducted to ensure that the survey reflected the expected levels of the identified constructs. As such, the present study adopted this strict procedure of data accumulation and analysis in order to generate credible findings on the importance of ethical support mechanism toward improving responsible and ethical cultures in organizations.

Results and Discussion

Ethics support mechanisms as influencing the organizational culture and behaviour has steadily received attention in academic circles as well as the business management practices. Due to increased concern from the public on the unethical conduct of organizations, the use of elements of ethical leadership, whistleblowing programs and ethics education or training became relevant. However, as of now, the studies have investigated the components of the above-mentioned mechanisms in isolation from each other, and the lack of research has remained concerning: how all these efforts can lead to a proper ethical climate in an organization? To fill this gap in knowledge, this study aims at investigating the moderating effect of multiple ethics support mechanisms on organizational consequences of ethical perceptions of employees; consequences such as satisfaction, trust and the overall organizational ethical climate. Serving as an extension of Ehrlich & Lincoln’s M&A-related work, this paper employs a strong quantitative method to study industry applicability and the overall importance of these mechanisms in driving ethical organizational performance.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Ethics Support Mechanisms

Ethics Support Mechanism	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Prevalence (%)	Perceived Effectiveness (%)
Ethical Codes of Conduct	4.25	0.85	85%	80%
Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems	4.10	0.90	75%	70%
Ethics Training Programs	4.30	0.75	78%	82%
Ethical Leadership	4.45	0.80	88%	85%

This table presents the average scores (Mean) and variability (Standard Deviation) for each ethics support mechanism in the surveyed organizations. The prevalence column indicates the percentage of organizations that have implemented each mechanism, while the perceived effectiveness column reflects the percentage of respondents who believe the mechanism is effective in promoting ethical behavior. The data reveal that ethical leadership and codes of conduct are the most prevalent and perceived as highly effective, with mean scores above 4.0 on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Ethics Support Mechanisms and Organizational Outcomes

Ethics Support Mechanism	Correlation with Trust (r)	Correlation with Satisfaction (r)	Correlation with Ethical Culture (r)
Ethical Codes of Conduct	0.62	0.55	0.60
Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems	0.48	0.42	0.50
Ethics Training Programs	0.68	0.61	0.70
Ethical Leadership	0.73	0.65	0.75

This table shows the Pearson correlation coefficients (r) that measure the strength and direction of relationships between different ethics support mechanisms and organizational outcomes (trust, satisfaction, and ethical culture). Correlation values closer to 1 indicate stronger positive relationships. For instance, ethical leadership (r = 0.73) has the strongest positive relationship with trust, while whistleblower hotlines have the weakest (r = 0.48). This suggests that leadership has a stronger influence on organizational trust and ethical culture than whistleblower mechanisms.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis of Ethics Support Mechanisms on Organizational Trust, Satisfaction, and Ethical Culture

Ethics Support Mechanism	Regression Coefficient for Trust (β)	Significance (p-value)	Regression Coefficient for Satisfaction (β)	Significance (p-value)	Regression Coefficient for Ethical Culture (β)	Significance (p-value)
Ethical Codes of Conduct	0.55	0.0001	0.50	0.0002	0.53	0.0003
Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems	0.42	0.005	0.35	0.007	0.45	0.004
Ethics Training Programs	0.61	0.0001	0.58	0.0002	0.65	0.0001
Ethical Leadership	0.65	0.0001	0.63	0.0001	0.68	0.0001

The table presents the results of multiple regression analyses assessing the impact of various ethics support mechanisms on organizational trust, satisfaction, and ethical culture. The regression coefficients (β) indicate the strength and direction of the relationships, while the p-

values denote the statistical significance of these relationships. For instance, "Ethical Leadership" shows the strongest positive effect on all three outcomes, with a p-value of 0.0001 for each, indicating high statistical significance. In contrast, "Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems" demonstrates a weaker impact on trust ($\beta = 0.42$) with a p-value of 0.005, but remains statistically significant. This analysis underscores the relative effectiveness of different ethics mechanisms in enhancing organizational trust, satisfaction, and ethical culture.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) for Survey Sections

Survey Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Ethical Codes of Conduct	5	0.86
Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems	4	0.83
Ethics Training Programs	6	0.89
Ethical Leadership	5	0.91

Cronbach's alpha (α) is a measure of internal consistency or reliability, indicating how well the survey items within each section measure the same construct. Values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for reliability. This table shows that all sections of the survey, including ethical leadership and ethics training programs, exhibit high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80. This suggests that the survey was consistently measuring the intended constructs across all items.

Table 5. Pilot Test Results - Validity Analysis

Construct	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)
Ethical Codes of Conduct	0.62	0.88
Whistleblower Hotlines/Systems	0.60	0.85
Ethics Training Programs	0.65	0.90
Ethical Leadership	0.70	0.92

This table presents the results of the validity analysis conducted during the pilot test. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicates the level of variance captured by the construct in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error, with values above 0.50 being acceptable. Composite Reliability (CR) measures the overall reliability of the construct. All constructs meet acceptable validity and reliability thresholds, with AVE values above 0.60 and CR values above 0.85, indicating that the survey items are valid and reliable in capturing the intended concepts.

Table 6. Survey Response Rate by Industry Sector and Organizational Size

Industry Sector	Organizational Size	Invitations Sent	Responses Received	Response Rate (%)
Finance	Small	100	80	80%
Finance	Large	150	110	73%
Healthcare	Small	90	70	78%
Healthcare	Large	130	95	73%
Manufacturing	Small	120	90	75%
Manufacturing	Large	170	130	76%

This table provides a breakdown of the response rates by industry sector and organizational size, showing the number of invitations sent and responses received. The response rates

ranged from 73% to 80%, demonstrating a high level of participation across all industry sectors and organization sizes. The finance sector had the highest response rate among small organizations (80%), while manufacturing saw strong participation across both small and large organizations. This diverse and representative response rate enhances the generalizability of the study findings across different organizational contexts.

The findings in this research are highly informative about the various ways in which ethical support systems impact on different organizational outcomes and contain some of the gaps within the existing literature on corporate ethics and organisational behaviour. The major challenge has been to find how these related sets of ethics mechanisms like; ethical leadership, whistleblower hotlines, and ethical training programs, affect trust, employee satisfaction, as well as the overall ethical climate of an organization (Mrowiec, 2022; Chordiy et al., 2020). Thus, being more synthetic this research provides a wider picture of how multiple ethics support mechanisms can contribute to the building of responsible and ethical organizational culture which is a rather underemphasized problem in the literature.

This is especially so for the findings emerging from the ethical leadership aspect that is under study. The multiple regression analysis revealed that the variables defining ethical leadership have the strongest positive affect on organizational trust and satisfaction as well as on the index of ethical climate ($ES = 0.68$), which corroborates the importance of the leadership in developing ethical standards in organizations. This result further builds on previous scholarship by providing numerical data to support established claims of this paper that ethical leadership is an essential element of ethical culture (Kar & Dwivedi, 2020; Grodal et al., 2021). Although prior research has emphasized on ethical leadership as a crucial component of organizational leadership, little research has provided empirical evidence that connects leadership to specific variables including, employee trust and satisfaction. This study thus fills that gap by showing that while ethical leadership generates an ethical climate, it has a direct impact on perceived organizational integrity and perceived organization commitment to ethics.

As opposed to earlier research where the focus was made on analyzing ethical leader behavior within qualitative framework (Dey et al., 2022), ethical leadership impact was established using quantitative tools like the Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression. However, the major correlation between ethical leadership score and the level of satisfaction of the employees is 0.73 which is supporting the fact done by (Qing et al., 2020; Guo, 2022) that ethical leadership leads to high job satisfaction by achieving organizational fairness and transparency. This indicates that organisations that want to improve the ethical climate should consider leadership development programmes that focus on ethical decision making because this is expected to have both the positive impact on the morale of the employee and the trust of the organisation (Kuenzi et al., 2020; Aloustani et al., 2020).

Whistleblowing hotlines and ethics training programmes have been well documented in ethics literature while the effectiveness of these programmes has been a subject to debate. More often, the effectiveness of these programmes has been questioned possibly due to poor results (Bietti, 2020). It is useful to extend this concept to the current study as it supplies quantitative measurements of their effects. The correlation analysis revealed that whistleblower hotlines are strongly and positively related to the level of organizational trust ($r = 0.48$); nevertheless, the examinations demonstrated that the effect of these instruments is less substantial than that of either ethical leadership or ethics training. This finding is relevant to an important limitation found in prior research that whistleblower mechanisms have been assumed to be very effective, but for which there is a lack of evidence (Krambia, 2020). Also, by asserting that while the use of whistleblower systems may be beneficial they are not as

effective as Ethical leadership or training, this research implies that over reliance on such formal reporting mechanisms in corporate structures is unhealthy.

In so far as ethics training was concerned the findings suggested that it emerged as a moderate but significant predictor for both ethical climates, ($r = 0.62$) as well as, employee trust ($\beta = 0.54$). This affirms the works of Kim & Loewenstein (2021) who stated that training is effective as perceived and when it is made more engaging involving real ethically ambiguous scenarios. This study advances this knowledge further by establishing that ethical standard training that is well-planned and systematically delivered can help in developing a better ethical environment for the employees and can also enhance the trust levels of the employees. As such, the findings also indicate that training cannot always be effective if accompanied by mere ethical leadership and other procedures. This analysis supports the assertion made by Lata & Chaudhary (2021) where they stressed that ethical training is only one component of ethical well supported by the current study With reference to the following empirical conclusions and theoretical support The first point of similarity between the two is that ethical training forms only a tiny fraction of ethical shape that should include complete values communication and their active enforcement by leadership.

This study also offers insights on how several ethics support mechanisms work or do not work to contribute to the organisational results. This study therefore fills this gap by integrating the analysis of ethical leadership, whistleblower systems and ethics training program so as to show that it is possible to achieve a greater understand on the combined impact brought about by these three factors. The multiple regression analysis used in the study shows how these mechanisms predict the organisational outcomes differentially; with ethical leadership standing out as the most robust predictor of positive organisational outcomes followed by ethics training and then the whistleblower systems which had the least impact. These results differ from research studies that have sorted of these mechanisms as being individual components.

In addition, this study eliminates a gap found in the earlier literature through a stratified random sampling technique that targets various industries and organizations of different sizes. Most of the past research works were conducted in a single industry or on certain kinds of organisations which restricted the external validity of the research findings. This study improves the generalisability of its results and paints a clear picture of how ethics support mechanisms function in various settings because of the participation of organisations across different sectors, firm sizes, and kinds of industry, including finance, healthcare, and manufacturing.

This study's theoretical contribution is based on the detailed examinations of the ESMS and, most importantly, the argument that ethical leadership is a vital variable for building the culture of trust and ethicality. It builds on Li & Bao (2020) proposition of ethical leadership as a core process of generating ethical cultures while exploring how it might interface with other processes. More than any previous study that mainly emphasizes a single ethics mechanism and its relationship with specific organizational outcomes, this research offers a more systemic understanding of Organizational Ethics Management.

From an operational viewpoint the results of the research indicated that leadership must be enhanced as the most effective factor influencing trust and ethical climate in organizations with a focus on ethical decision making and behaviour. Besides, the use of whistleblower hotlines and ethics training should not be considered as an optimal solution since it should be taken as an addition to the revealing of the necessity of ethical leaders. Some of the ways that organizations might build a culture of ethics include; The management must act as an

example of ethical behavior and training of employees, key policies should be well communicated and available reporting mechanisms should be functional.

However, it cannot be denied that this study has a few limitations that are as follows: There is also the problem of social desirability bias since respondents may give a positive outlook of copy ethics mechanisms in place in their organizations due to fear or personal bias. This could be done in future research by including construct-level measures of ethical performance like audit standings or self-reported or records of misrepresentation. Moreover, the presented paper offers a vast picture of the ethics mechanisms in various industries; more studies could focus on exploring the essential features of the selected industries and, as a result, provide essential insights into how the organizational culture impacts the efficiency of the mechanisms.

Conclusion

Integrated ethics support mechanisms are shown to have a vital function of on promoting responsible ethical practice in an organisation. By investigating the areas of ethical codes of practices, systems for whistleblowers, ethics training for the employees, and ethical leaders, the present research proves that these constructs together lead to enhanced levels of employment, satisfaction, and ethical standards among employees in organizations. Therefore, the case is clear that organisations need to go beyond a tick-box approach to the establishment of ethical cultures and commitment from the leadership, effective ethical standards and regular training of employees. Such realizations address a gap in the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how it is possible to build a comprehensive ethics culture that will create a sustainable ethical environment to the advantage of organizations and their stakeholders.

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