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Original Article

Ethical Issues and Organisational Performance in Nigeria's Food and Beverage Industry: Evidence from Nestlé Nigeria Plc

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Abstract *- Business ethics has become an important determinant of organisational competitiveness and long-term sustainability, particularly in manufacturing industries operating within emerging economies. However, empirical evidence on how specific dimensions of organisational ethics influence organisational performance in Nigeria's food and beverage sector remains limited. This study examines the relationship between ethical practices and organisational performance using Nestlé Nigeria Plc as a case study. Specifically, the study investigates the influence of ethical culture, ethical climate, unethical organisational standards, and employees' ethical behaviour on organisational effectiveness, competitiveness, productivity, and organisational growth. A quantitative research approach employing a descriptive survey design is adopted for this study. Data is collected from 350 employees selected through stratified random sampling from a population of 2,767 employees. The research instrument demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.70$). Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and Analysis of Covariance are employed to analyse the data at the 5% significance level. The findings indicate that ethical culture significantly enhances organisational effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.652$, $p < 0.05$), while ethical climate positively influences organisational competitiveness ($R^2 = 0.675$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, unethical organisational standards have a significant effect on organisational productivity ($F(2,138) = 18.024$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.207$), whereas employees' ethical behaviour significantly contributes to organisational growth and survival ($F(2,138) = 3.559$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.049$). These findings provide empirical evidence that organisational ethics constitutes an important strategic capability for improving organisational performance within multinational manufacturing firms operating in emerging economies. The study contributes to the business ethics literature by providing evidence from Nigeria's food and beverage manufacturing sector, an empirical context that remains comparatively under-represented in existing research. The findings further suggest that strengthening ethical governance, ethical culture, and responsible employee behaviour enhances organisational effectiveness and sustainable competitive advantage. The study recommends that manufacturing firms institutionalise comprehensive ethics management systems as part of their long-term corporate strategy.*

Keywords *- Business Ethics, Ethical Behaviour, Ethical Climate, Ethical Culture, Organisational Performance.*

1. Introduction

Business ethics has become a defining determinant of organisational success in the 21st century. Organisations are increasingly evaluated not only by their financial performance but also by the ethical standards that govern their relationships with employees, customers, investors, suppliers, regulators, and society. Growing public scrutiny, corporate governance reforms, rapid technological advancement, environmental concerns, and heightened stakeholder expectations have transformed ethical conduct from a voluntary organisational attribute into a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Ferrell et al., 2022; Treviño & Nelson, 2021). Consequently, organisations that institutionalise ethical values within their governance systems are generally better positioned to enhance stakeholder trust, improve organisational legitimacy, reduce operational risks, strengthen employee commitment, and achieve superior long-term performance.

The strategic importance of ethics is underpinned by stakeholder theory, which argues that organisations create sustainable value by balancing the interests of multiple stakeholder groups rather than focusing exclusively on shareholder wealth maximisation (Freeman, 1984). Similarly, the Resource-Based View (RBV) suggests that organisational resources such as ethical culture, corporate reputation, employee integrity, and stakeholder trust constitute valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable assets that can generate sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Together, these perspectives suggest that ethical practices are not merely compliance mechanisms but strategic organisational capabilities that influence productivity, innovation, organisational resilience, competitiveness, and long-term business sustainability.

Business ethics, therefore, extends beyond legal compliance to encompass the values, principles, norms, and behavioural standards that guide organisational decision-making and shape relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Shaw, 2010). Ethical organisations establish governance structures that promote accountability, transparency, fairness, integrity, and responsible leadership while fostering organisational cultures that encourage employees to make decisions consistent with accepted moral and professional standards. Previous studies have associated ethical leadership and strong ethical cultures with higher employee engagement, improved organisational commitment, increased customer satisfaction, stronger corporate reputation, and superior organisational performance (Ferrell et al., 2022).

Organisational performance is similarly recognised as a multidimensional construct encompassing both financial and non-financial outcomes. While traditional measures such as profitability, return on assets, return on equity, and earnings per share remain important indicators of organisational success (Al-Matari et al., 2014), contemporary performance measurement also incorporates customer satisfaction, employee productivity, innovation capability, operational efficiency, market competitiveness, organisational learning, and sustainability (Moyano-Fuentes et al., 2018). Increasingly, organisations are expected to achieve economic performance while simultaneously delivering social and environmental value, consistent with the Triple Bottom Line framework (Tseng et al., 2018; Aksoy et al., 2020).

Despite growing recognition of the value of ethical business practices, unethical organisational behaviour remains a significant challenge across industries worldwide. High-profile corporate failures involving financial misconduct, corruption, product safety breaches, environmental violations, misleading reporting, and governance failures have demonstrated the substantial organisational costs associated with weak ethical systems. Such failures frequently result in reputational damage, regulatory sanctions, declining customer confidence, reduced employee morale, diminished investor confidence, and weakened organisational performance (Amin & Soh, 2021). These challenges are particularly significant in manufacturing industries, where organisations operate in complex regulatory environments and ethical failures may directly affect consumer welfare, product quality, supply chain integrity, and public health.

These concerns are particularly relevant within emerging economies such as Nigeria, where manufacturing industries continue to play a critical role in economic diversification, industrial development, employment creation, and food security. The Nigerian food and beverage industry has faced growing pressure to improve corporate governance, product quality, environmental stewardship, labour practices, and stakeholder accountability while remaining competitive in an increasingly globalised marketplace. Consequently, ethical decision-making has become an essential determinant of organisational resilience and sustainable business performance within the sector.

Existing empirical literature generally reports a positive association between organisational ethics and organisational performance. Studies have demonstrated that ethical leadership, ethical climate, corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, and organisational integrity contribute positively to employee commitment, organisational effectiveness, innovation capability, customer satisfaction, and financial performance (Ferrell et al., 2022; Treviño & Nelson, 2021). Nevertheless, closer examination of the literature reveals several important limitations that justify further investigation.

First, most of the empirical evidence has been generated within developed economies characterised by relatively mature governance systems and institutional environments. Whether these findings remain applicable within emerging economies such as Nigeria, where institutional arrangements, regulatory enforcement, cultural expectations, and market dynamics differ considerably, remains insufficiently understood.

Second, many previous studies have conceptualised business ethics at an aggregate level by examining broad constructs such as corporate governance, ethical leadership, or corporate social responsibility. Comparatively, fewer studies have simultaneously examined the influence of specific organisational ethical dimensions - including ethical culture, ethical climate, unethical organisational standards, and employees' ethical behaviour—on multiple dimensions of organisational performance. These limit understanding of the specific ethical mechanisms through which organisational performance is enhanced.

Third, previous empirical findings remain inconsistent. While many scholars report significant positive relationships between ethical practices and organisational performance, others report weak, indirect, or context-dependent relationships, suggesting that organisational, institutional, and industrial characteristics may moderate these associations. These inconsistencies indicate that further empirical investigation within specific organisational contexts remains necessary.

Fourth, relatively little empirical research has focused specifically on multinational food and beverage manufacturing companies operating within Nigeria. Existing studies in Nigeria have largely concentrated on financial institutions, public organisations, small and medium enterprises, or manufacturing industries more generally, leaving limited evidence regarding how ethical practices influence organisational performance within one of Nigeria's most strategically important manufacturing sectors – the food and beverage segment. This represents a significant contextual gap because multinational corporations operating in emerging markets face unique governance challenges, stakeholder expectations, and regulatory environments that may influence the implementation and effectiveness of ethical practices.

Nestlé Nigeria Plc provides a best-in-class context for addressing these gaps. As a subsidiary of Nestlé S.A., the world's largest food and beverage company, the organisation operates within an internationally recognised corporate governance framework founded on integrity, accountability, transparency, compliance, sustainability, and the Creating Shared Value philosophy (Nestlé S.A., 2024). Since commencing operations in Nigeria in 1961, Nestlé Nigeria has become one of the country's leading food manufacturers, making substantial contributions to industrial development, employment generation, agricultural value chains, and national economic growth. Its established ethical governance structures and operational significance provide an appropriate setting for examining how organisational ethics influence organisational performance within a major multinational manufacturing enterprise operating in an emerging economy.

This study attempts to address the identified theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps by examining the influence of ethical culture, ethical climate, unethical organisational standards, and employees' ethical behaviour on organisational performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Unlike previous studies that have examined ethics using broad governance indicators or single ethical constructs, this study adopts a multidimensional approach that simultaneously evaluates several organisational ethics dimensions and their relationship with organisational effectiveness, competitiveness, productivity, growth, and business sustainability.

In doing so, the study contributes to the business ethics literature by extending empirical evidence from an under-researched emerging-market context while providing practical insights for organisational leaders seeking to strengthen ethical governance as a strategic driver of organisational performance.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of organisational ethics on organisational performance using Nestlé Nigeria Plc as a case study. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the effect of ethical culture on organisational effectiveness at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.
2. Investigate the effect of ethical climate on organisational competitiveness at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.
3. Examine the effect of unethical organisational standards on organisational productivity at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.
4. Determine the effect of employees' ethical behaviour on organisational growth and sustainability at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 5% level of significance:

H_{01}: Ethical culture has no statistically significant effect on organisational effectiveness at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

H_{02}: Ethical climate has no statistically significant effect on organisational competitiveness at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

H_{03}: Unethical organisational standards have no statistically significant effect on organisational productivity at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

H_{04}: Employees' ethical behaviour has no statistically significant effect on organisational growth and sustainability at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Business Ethics and Ethical Issues

The Latin use of the word "ethics" refers to both insights into what constitutes human excellence and the customary values and rules of behaviour found in cultural ethos and social mores. Nowadays, people frequently use the terms ethics and morality interchangeably. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that examines the principles, justifications, and reasoning behind moral beliefs and human conduct (Rachels & Rachels, 2019).

Ethics extends beyond manners to cover issues that almost every human society finds important: acts like lying, breaking a promise, or murder are more serious than social *faux pas*. Ethics also has to do with human motivation and character, which are frequently unrelated to etiquette and the law.

Additionally, laws and manners are occasionally attacked for moral reasons. These moral principles come from people, official pronouncements made by organisations, or the legal system. These standards, ideals, moral and immoral behaviours serve as the foundation for a corporation. They assist those companies in better interacting with their stakeholders (Ferrell, 2016).

According to Ebitu and Beredugo (2015), ethics are a collection of good principles or values that organisations use to guide the behaviour of the organisation and its personnel in all their business operations, both internally and externally. According to Turyakira (2018), morality in the field of organisational business entails common decency, which includes traits like integrity, honesty, and fairness.

2.2. Organisational Performance

According to Daft (2020), organisational performance is influenced by the alignment between organisational structure, leadership, culture, strategy, and the external environment, all of which determine an organisation's ability to achieve sustained effectiveness and competitiveness.

According to Chen (2012), organisational performance refers to the conversion of input into outputs for the achievement of certain goals. The link between minimum and effective cost (economy), between effective cost and realised output (efficiency), and between output and accomplished outcome is one of the topics covered by performance in terms of its substance (effectiveness).

The three fundamental performance factors are what determine an organisation's effectiveness.

1. Efficiency and process reliability
2. Human resources and relations
3. Innovation and adaptation to the environment (Yuki, 2016).

The capacity of an organisation to achieve goals like high profit, quality product, huge market share, strong financial outcomes, and survival at a predetermined time, utilizing an appropriate strategy for action, is referred to as organisational performance (Koontz & Donnell, 1993). Organisational performance may also be used to compare an enterprise's performance against that of other businesses in the same sector in terms of profit margin, market share, and product quality.

Performance management refers to a process that integrates management of the organisation, staff, customers, administration policies of the business, organisational and functional objectives, and its plans and goals (Bititci *et al*, 1997; Short *et al*, 2007). As a result, company innovation and management are mediated through firm performance measurement (Wang & Kim, 2018).

2.3. Relationship between Ethics and Organisational Performance

Ethics is a crucial corporate component that has a significant impact on company performance (Kumar, Singh & Dwivedi, 2020; Vitolla, Raimo, Rubino & Garegnani, 2021). For instance, Wahab (2021) defines company ethics as the application of a declared set of ethical principles and a structured value of values. Firm ethics are behaviours that are in line with the principles of the community or society to which a person belongs, according to Houqe, van Zijl, Dunstan & Karim (2015). According to Stahl, Chatfield, Ten Holter and Brem (2019), as ethics also serves as a reflection of norms, ethics cannot be completely separated from principles and standards. Indeed, implementing ethics inside the company has advantages that enhance both financial and non-financial success (Tseng, Lim & Wu, 2018).

The idea serves as the firm's basis and helps it achieve its objectives while upholding the stakeholders' and the corporation's shared values. According to Valente, Sá, Soares, and Sousa (2021), a company's ethics have an impact on risk management and business performance. According to Martnez, Skeet, and Sasia (2021), businesses often address several high-profile ethical dilemmas in technical areas, seeing their activities as a component of a long-term business plan. It is critical to keep company ethics and sustainability standards in mind. In a study carried out by Ikwere, Okechukwu, and Orga (2026) on organisational ethics of food and beverage manufacturing firms in Enugu State, Nigeria, they posited that organisations should establish a well-defined and widely communicated ethical code of conduct, which should outline acceptable behaviours, decision-making guidelines, and consequences for ethical violations.

According to Machado, Winroth, Ribeiro, and Da Silva (2020), businesses that have a commerce framework in place need to be ethical and transparent to sustain long-term growth without undermining people's self-worth. According to Kumar, Singh, and Dwivedi (2020), businesses in the new context of sustainable development must use ethics and technology to extend sustainable benefits. This implies that companies should uphold ethics in all aspects of their operations and that doing so offers significant long-term benefits. According to Tseng, Lim, and Wu (2018), corporate social responsibility activities were enhanced by social image, company culture, and stakeholder management. They also demonstrated that senior management must consistently support these initiatives.

According to the firm's ethics approach, tenet values are distinct ethical principles, such as integrity, openness, and trust (Jin, Austin, Eaddy, Spector, Reber, & Espina, 2018). The term "leadership role" relates to the example of a leader, and it is demonstrated by concern for ethics, acting as an example of ethical behaviour, and having an ethical purpose (Kumar, Singh & Dwivedi, 2020).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Stakeholder Theory. Edward Freeman introduced the stakeholder hypothesis in 1984. In his article that popularised the phrase "stakeholder theory," Freeman (1984) argued that a firm's performance depends on its ability to pay systematic attention to stakeholder interests. According to the classic definition, a stakeholder is any group or person that has the potential to influence or be affected by the success of an organisation's goals (Freeman, 1984). Friedman & Miles (2006) indicated that an organisation is a composition of stakeholders, and the objective of an organisation should be to be able to manage its own interests, opinions, and requirements. The definition has offered a new notion of redefining an organisation as to what it should be like.

According to the stakeholder hypothesis, an organisation has a duty and right to be led by people whose lives are affected by it (Kotler & Keller, 2016). They must thus have a say in business decisions since they are company stakeholders. The five principal stakeholders are, but are not limited to, the following: shareholders, employees, clients, suppliers, and the community (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Because transparency is a key value for those supporting stakeholder ethics, organisations must strive to be as transparent as possible before, during, and after conducting business. The stakeholder approach, on the other hand, requires corporate directors to balance everyone's interests and welfare and appeal to all parties in the name of maximizing advantages for everyone whose lives are impacted by the firm, according to Baker and Hart (2016). If the stakeholders are not completely involved or kept in the dark about the facts, business ethics is likely to lose its value.

Harrison *et al* (2015) separated stakeholder theories into descriptive, instrumental, and normative points of view. The normative approach focuses on the reasons why a firm should take into consideration its stakeholders; finally, the descriptive theory, which implies the stakeholders that a firm possesses; the instrumental view, which entails the consideration of stakeholders by the organisation, and they remain successful.

The fundamental tenet of the stakeholder theory is the idea that managing stakeholder relationships is the most crucial task for managers. Business ethics, on the other hand, deals with the obligations that a company must meet. This may lead to the conclusion that while both notions are connected, business ethics is more abstract. The growth of an organisation may be measured using the stakeholder theory (Quazi, 2013). The stakeholder model places more emphasis on stakeholders' interests and concerns than on economic interests. From the standpoint of the stakeholder model, the emphasis shifts to how to win over and establish relationships with the beneficiary community. Based on this supposition, it is possible to suggest that the guiding concept for stakeholder model corporate ethics initiatives can encourage workers to participate more actively. In this study, the researcher examined how business ethics activities, based on the stakeholder model, affect organisational performance. Therefore, stakeholder theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for explaining how ethical business practices strengthen stakeholder relationships and enhance organisational performance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Methods

The section discusses the methodology used for this research and how the data needed for the study were gathered. The selection and identification of the research method (survey), the population, sample size, sampling techniques, the validity and reliability of the data acquired, and data analysis are all included.

3.2. Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that the researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically with a view to effectively addressing the research problem. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. It is the overall strategy utilised to carry out research that defines a succinct and logical plan to tackle established research questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of data. Survey research design was employed in this study.

3.3. Study Population

All objects or subjects with knowledge of the topic of research make up the study's population. Olatunji, Adeeko, and Kasali (2012) defined the population as the totality of all instances that met a certain set of criteria, but Ogbuoshi (2006) defined the population as the whole membership of the study target, whether it be a person, organisation, or object. The primary subject of this research is Nestle Nigeria Plc, the largest international producer of food and drinks in Nigeria.

The top, middle, and junior staff members of Nestle Nigeria's plant and headquarters, located in the south-western Nigerian states of Ogun and Lagos, respectively, were the focus of this research. The total population is two thousand, seven hundred and sixty-seven (2,767) male and female employees of Nestle Nigeria Plc at both locations.

Table 1. Population of the Study

Company	Population			Total
Nestle Nigeria PLC	Top Mgt	Middle Mgt	Junior Staff	
	55	300	2, 412	2, 767

Source: Human Resource Department of Nestle Nigeria, 2022

Table 1 above presents the main employee classifications in the organisation under investigation. The population is divided into top management, middle-level management, and junior staff.

3.4. Sample Size Determination

In this study, the sample size was determined based on Taro Yamane (1967) statistical method as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size
N = Population of study
e =Maximum acceptable margin of error or margin of tolerable error
(Margin of error is assumed to be 5%)

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}767}{1+2{,}767(5\%)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}767}{1+2{,}767(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 349.48$$

= 350 employees

Table 2 below highlights the proportion of questionnaires distributed across the various locations of the organisation under study.

Table 2. Proportion of Questionnaire Distribution across the Head office and factory of Nestle Nigeria Plc

Company	Branch	Sample size
Nestle Nigeria Plc	Agbara	245
Nestle Nigeria Plc	Lagos	105
Total		350

Source: Researcher's computation, 2023

3.5. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Using Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size selection technique, 350 respondents were randomly selected from the study population. The stratified random sample approach was used to ensure the fair and impartial selection of the respondents. The technique requires classifying the respondents into strata based on their sex, work department, and field of employment. The respondents were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique. The benefit of utilizing this strategy is that it is straightforward to use when the research population must be divided into segments for proper and equitable representation.

3.6. Sources of Data

Questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study. The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the necessary data for this investigation. The interviewees were better at expressing themselves and providing clearer explanations since the interviews were centred on words rather than figures (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.7. Research Instrument

Following a comprehensive empirical and theoretical examination of the literature on ethics and organisational performance, the questionnaire for this study was developed. The questionnaire was utilised by the researcher as a study tool to gather crucial data from the respondents. A questionnaire is a tool for communication between the researcher and the target audience. It is also a collection of scales assembled to produce answers to inquiries relevant to the research topics. The questionnaire was designed to have two sections with closed-ended questions. Section A generated information on respondents' backgrounds, while Section B was created to collect information from respondents on their assessment of ethical concerns and organisational performance of the selected food and beverage firm. Questions, using a four-point Likert scale, including Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), were employed. A 4-point Likert scale, which somewhat forces respondents to create an opinion in either direction, was utilised in the questionnaire. When a user's opinion is crucial, yet not impartial on a particular issue, researchers typically employ a 4-point Likert scale.

3.8. Validity of the Instrument

The extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure is referred to as its validity. The best research tool for this sort of quantitative analysis is a questionnaire. Additionally, there was no interference while the respondents were providing their responses to the questions. Before administering the questionnaires to the respondents, the content validity for the research was tested using expert judgement. In measuring the content validity, the content validity index was calculated. The content validity index is an average of the scores provided by the subject-matter expert.

It is important to select individuals who are knowledgeable in the subject matter, either because of their academic background, work experience, or recognition in the community. When selecting the judges, it is important to choose individuals who are knowledgeable about the subject, either because of their academic background or because of their work experience.

The information provided by the judges may be collected individually. As part of the procedure, the experts assessed the different dimensions, using a numerical scale while taking into consideration their reasoned opinions. This is useful to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the instrument. As a result, the expert judgement includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

The validity and dependability of the study are crucial evaluations of the quality of the quantitative research. Saunders *et al* (2019) describe these two reasons in their research. Numerous factors affect research validity, including internal consistency, measurement consistency, content consistency, predictive consistency, and concept consistency.

Validity, in terms of content and construct were used in this study. The extent to which a survey will cover or prepare respondents for information is elaborated by content validity. A survey's questions should be evaluated to see whether they are crucial, required, or neutral to ask.

Construct validity considers the appropriate selection of survey questions to include to show employee satisfaction or attitude scores. According to Saunders *et al* (2019), based on the demands for internal communication and the resources offered by the organisations under study, the research team developed the survey's questions. To ensure that the questionnaire would be easily understood by the respondents, the organisation's representative, the research supervisor, and the researcher carefully scrutinised each question.

3.9. Reliability of the Instrument

A reliable approach will produce consistent findings no matter how many times a respondent answers the same questionnaire, according to the concept of consistency. The four risks to reliability—participant error, participant bias, researcher error, and researcher bias - should be noted (Saunders *et al,* 2019). When the same research procedure is used repeatedly, and the results are reproducible within given confidence boundaries, reliability is attained. According to Bell (1993), a study is reliable if it can be repeated by another researcher who comes to the same results.

This has to do with a research finding's capacity to repeat itself if a parallel investigation is carried out. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of the scale to confirm the validity of the research's findings.

Based on this fact, George and Mallery (2003) recommended that a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.700 is acceptable. As shown in Table 3, the result showed that Cronbach's alpha was 0.708, which implies that the research instrument has a high level of internal consistency.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics for each variable

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Ethics	5	0.705
Ethical culture	5	0.707
Ethical climate	5	0.708 (Highest)
Unethical standards	5	0.700 (Least)
Ethical behaviour	5	0.706

Source: Field survey, 2022

As a result, it was determined that the instrument used to assess the organisational performance and ethics at Nestle Nigeria Plc was sufficiently reliable and consistent.

3.10. Methods of Data Analysis

Simple percentage calculations and frequency distribution were used to analyse the data collated from the respondents. The analysis of Covariance and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) are the statistical techniques employed in this study.

Additionally, descriptive and inferential data analysis methods were used in this study. As a result, distribution frequencies and percentages were included in the use of descriptive statistics. This was done to make it easier to describe the different types of information gathered. The correlation coefficient from the inferential statistics was used to establish the relationship between ethics and organisational performance of the chosen food and beverage firm.

3.11. Operationalisation of the Variables

$Y=f(X)$

Y = Dependent variable

X = Independent Variable

f = Function

Y = Organisational Performance

$Y_1 =$ Organisational Effectiveness

$Y_2 =$ Competitive Advantage

$Y_3 =$ Organisational Productivity

$Y_4 =$ Growth and Survival

$Y=f(X)$

X = Ethical issues

$X_1 =$ Ethical culture

$X_2 =$ Ethical climate

$X_3 =$ Unethical standards

$X_4 =$ Ethical behaviour

Recall,

$Y=f(X)$

Therefore

$Y = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4)$

Regressionally,

Ethical issues (independent variables)

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \mu \quad (1)$$

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 x_2 + \mu \quad (2)$$

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 x_3 + \mu \quad (3)$$

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_4 x_4 + \mu \quad (4)$$

β = regression parameter, which measures the coefficient of the independent variable; each measures the effect of a given change in the independent variable on the dependent variable

β_0 = constant or intercept of the independent variable; this is the average value of the dependent variable when the independent variable is equal to zero

μ = error term or stochastic variable; this is included in the model to accommodate the influence of other variables that affect the dependent variable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which 321 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 91.7%, while 8.3% were not returned. The response rates were 92.7% for the Agbara factory and 89.5% for the Lagos head office (Table 4). The high response rate indicates that the findings can be generalised to the study population.

Table 4. Analysis of respondents' composition by questionnaires returned

Organisation	Location	Response Rate
Nestle Nigeria PLC	Agbara	227 (92.7%)
Nestle Nigeria PLC	Lagos	94 (89.5%)
Total		321

Source: Field survey, 2023.

As presented in Table 5 below, the respondents were predominantly male (67.9%), while 32.1% were female. Most respondents (54.2%) were aged 20–30 years, followed by those aged 31–40 years (27.1%). Regarding marital status, 49.2% were single, and 31.5% were married. Nearly half (47.0%) possessed WAEC/GCE qualifications, while 28.4% had OND/NCE qualifications. In terms of work experience, 42.7% had worked for 1–5 years, and 24.6% had 6–10 years of experience. Most respondents were junior staff (48.0%), followed by contract staff (27.1%), middle-level staff (16.8%), and management staff (8.1%). Overall, the demographic profile suggests that the respondents possessed adequate educational qualifications and work experience to provide reliable information for the study.

Table 5. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Respondents' Background Data	Categories	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	218	67.9
	Female	103	32.1
Age	20–30 years	174	54.2
	31–40 years	87	27.1
	41–50 years	44	13.7
	50 years and above	16	5.0
Marital Status	Single	158	49.2
	Married	101	31.5
	Divorced	37	11.5
	Separated	11	3.4
	Widowed	14	4.4
Educational Qualifications	WAEC/GCE	151	47.0
	OND/NCE	91	28.4
	B.Sc./HND	39	12.2
	M.Sc./MBA/MPA	28	8.7
	Others	12	3.7
Work Experience	1–5 years	137	42.7
	6–10 years	79	24.6
	11–15 years	65	20.3
	15–20 years	23	7.2
	21 years and above	17	5.3
Occupational Status	Management staff	26	8.1
	Middle-level staff	54	16.8
	Junior staff	154	48.0
	Contract staff	87	27.1

Source: Field survey, 2023 & Computations aided by SPSS Version 24.0

4.2. Descriptive Analysis of Ethical Culture and Organisational Effectiveness

Table 3 shows that respondents generally agreed that ethical culture enhances organisational effectiveness in Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Most respondents agreed that a strong ethical culture promotes trust, cooperation, and organisational effectiveness (66.3% strongly agreed; 26.1% agreed). Similarly, respondents indicated that ethical behaviour forms part of the organisation's social responsibility and improves organisational effectiveness (54.0% strongly agreed; 29.0% agreed). The majority also agreed that communicating ethical culture and integrity enhances organisational effectiveness (41.7% strongly agreed; 53.0% agreed), while an effective organisational culture discourages unethical behaviour (38.9% strongly agreed; 41.1% agreed). Furthermore, respondents supported regular internal ethics audits as a means of adding value to the organisation (60.7% strongly agreed; 37.4% agreed). Overall, the findings indicate a high level of agreement that ethical culture contributes positively to organisational effectiveness, with a grand mean of 6.43 and a grand standard deviation of 0.539.

Table 6. Descriptive analysis of responses on ethical culture and organisational effectiveness (n=321)

Ethical Culture and Organisational Effectiveness Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
A strong ethical culture enhances trust, cooperation and organisational effectiveness.	66.3	26.1	5.3	2.3	2.76	0.432
Behaving in an ethical manner is part of the social responsibility of organisations, which helps to enhance organisational effectiveness.	54.0	29.0	10.8	6.2	3.29	0.456
Communicating the importance of ethical culture and integrity clearly and convincingly influences organisational effectiveness.	41.7	53.0	5.2	0.1	4.62	0.788
An effective organisational culture discourages unethical behaviour within the organisation.	38.9	41.1	15.3	4.7	3.59	0.494
It is important that my organisation carries out internal ethics audits on a regular basis, as this will add great value to the organisation.	60.7	37.4	1.4	0.5	4.62	0.621

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2023 & Computations aided by SPSS Version 24.0)

4.3. Descriptive Analysis of Ethical Climate and Organisational Competitiveness

Table 7 indicates that respondents generally agreed that ethical climate influences the competitive advantage of Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Most respondents agreed that an unethical climate weakens organisational competitiveness (28.0% strongly agreed; 39.3% agreed). They also agreed that a strong ethical climate provides employees with a foundation for addressing moral issues that enhance organisational performance (28.0% strongly agreed; 29.0% agreed). Furthermore, respondents agreed that the practice of stonewalling or withholding relevant information is common in the food and beverage sector (38.3% strongly agreed; 31.8% agreed). The majority also agreed that improving the ethical climate enhances and preserves organisational reputation (22.4% strongly agreed; 57.9% agreed) and strengthens organisational loyalty (49.0% strongly agreed; 36.4% agreed). Overall, the findings indicate that a positive ethical climate contributes to competitive advantage, with a grand mean of 5.53 and a grand standard deviation of 0.924.

Table 7. Descriptive analysis of responses on ethical climate and competitive advantage (n=321)

Ethical Climate and Competitive Advantage Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Unethical climate undermines the competitive strength of my organisation.	28.0	39.3	21.5	11.2	4.84	0.963
A strong ethical climate provides employees with a foundation for thinking about moral issues that would enhance organisational performance.	28.0	29.0	29.0	14.0	4.29	1.028
The practice of stonewalling or willingly hiding relevant information is quite common in the food and beverage sector.	38.3	31.8	13.1	16.8	4.41	0.921
Improving the ethical climate of an organisation enhances and preserves its reputation and advertises that it has the right ethical message.	22.4	57.9	19.6	0.1	3.21	0.532
Refining the ethical climate of an organisation enhances organisational loyalty.	49.0	36.4	10.6	4.0	4.61	0.674

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: *Field Survey, 2023 & Computations aided by SPSS Version 24.0)*

4.4. Descriptive Analysis of Unethical Standards and Organisational Productivity

Table 8 shows that respondents generally agreed that unethical standards adversely affect organisational productivity in Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Most respondents agreed that unethical behaviour negatively affects organisational productivity (62.2% strongly agreed; 34.3% agreed). They also agreed that effective management of ethical issues requires managers to possess adequate knowledge of handling ethical challenges in their daily work (35.5% strongly agreed; 45.7% agreed). Furthermore, respondents agreed that organisations may inadvertently encourage behaviours that violate ethical standards (40.2% strongly agreed; 48.9% agreed) and tend to develop counter-norms that conflict with prevailing ethical standards (20.6% strongly agreed; 77.6% agreed). The majority also agreed that maintaining high ethical standards benefits both internal and external stakeholders (45.6% strongly agreed; 49.3% agreed). Overall, the findings suggest that unethical standards have important implications for organisational productivity, with a grand mean of 1.58 and a grand standard deviation of 0.71.

Table 8. Descriptive analysis of responses on unethical standards and organisational productivity (n=321)

Unethical Standards and Organisational Productivity Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Unethical standards and actions adversely affect organisational productivity.	62.2	34.3	2.0	1.5	1.71	0.644
Effective management of ethical issues requires that management knows how to effectively deal with ethical issues in their everyday work lives.	35.5	45.7	17.9	0.9	1.72	0.568
Individuals knowingly committing unethical actions are based on the fact that organisations often unknowingly encourage behaviours that violate ethical standards.	40.2	48.9	0.2	10.7	1.46	0.617
Organisations tend to develop counter norms, accepting organisational practices that are contrary to prevailing ethical standards.	20.6	77.6	0.4	1.4	1.67	0.812
Maintaining a high ethical standpoint when operating a business is beneficial to both the internal and external stakeholders of the business.	45.6	49.3	0.1	5.0	1.73	0.654

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2023 & Computations aided by SPSS Version 24.0)

4.5. Descriptive Analysis of Ethical Behaviour and Organisational Growth and Survival

Table 9 presents respondents' perceptions of ethical behaviour and organisational growth and survival in Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The majority agreed that ethical behaviour is accepted as the organisational norm (59.8% strongly agreed; 29.9% agreed) and that transparency is essential for sustaining organisational success (34.0% strongly agreed; 44.0% agreed). Respondents also agreed that management should demonstrate ethical behaviour to promote organisational growth and survival (34.6% strongly agreed; 35.5% agreed). However, most respondents disagreed that embracing transparency as a norm directly enhances organisational growth and survival (42.5% disagreed; 33.6% strongly disagreed), while opinions were also mixed on whether ethical behaviour is characterised by honesty, fairness, and equity in interpersonal and professional relationships. Overall, the findings suggest that ethical behaviour is considered important for organisational growth and survival, with a grand mean of 5.86 and a grand standard deviation of 1.74.

Table 9. Descriptive analysis of responses on ethical behaviour of employees and organisational growth and survival (n=321)

Ethical Behaviour of Employees and Organisational Growth and Survival Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Ethical behaviour is characterised by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal and professional relationships.	12.1	19.6	37.2	31.1	3.45	1.586
Ethical behaviour is morally accepted as the norm in our organisation.	59.8	29.9	0.0	10.3	3.80	0.606
Transparency is key to enhancing the perpetual success of an organisation.	34.0	44.0	11.2	10.8	4.52	0.586
Embracing transparency as a norm enhances the growth and survival of an organisation.	10.0	13.9	42.5	33.6	6.12	1.213
Management must show a good example in terms of ethical behaviours, which will invariably promote organisational growth and survival.	34.6	35.5	14.9	15.0	6.24	1.114

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2023 & Computations aided by SPSS Version 24.0)

4.6. Test of Research Hypotheses

4.6.1. Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between ethical culture and the effectiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc

As presented in Table 10, ethical culture had a significant positive relationship with organisational effectiveness in Nestlé Nigeria Plc ($F = 18.024$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.207$). The model explained 69.3% of the variation in organisational effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.693$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.652$). Since the p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that ethical culture significantly enhances organisational effectiveness in Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Table 10. Tests of the relationship between ethical culture and the effectiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc

Source	Type	Df	MS	F	Sig.	η^2
Corrected Model	26708.045[a]	18	1483.780	17.269	.000	.693
Intercept	2512.578	1	2512.578	29.242	.000	.175
Ethical Culture	3097.364	2	1548.682	18.024	.000	.207
Organisational Effectiveness	60.033	1	60.033	.699	.405	.005
Error	11857.471	99	85.924			
Total	555751.000	321				

a. R Squared = .693 (Adjusted R Squared = .652)

4.6.2. Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between ethical climate and the competitiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc

Table 11 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between ethical climate and organisational competitiveness. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between ethical climate and organisational competitiveness ($r = 0.675$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that ethical climate has a significant positive relationship with the competitiveness of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Table 11. Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between ethical climate and organisational competitiveness

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2
1. Ethical Climate	4.2874	0.8137	1	0.675**
2. Organisational Competitiveness	4.4972	0.8386	0.675**	1

Note: N = 321; Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.6.3. Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between unethical standards and the productivity of Nestle Nigeria Plc

Table 12 presents the ANCOVA results for the relationship between unethical standards and organisational productivity. The findings revealed a significant relationship between unethical standards and organisational productivity ($F(2,138) = 18.024$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.207$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that unethical standards have a significant relationship with organisational productivity in Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Table 12. ANCOVA of the relationship between unethical standards and the productivity of Nestle Nigeria Plc

Source	Type III	Df	MS	F	Sig.	η^2
Corrected Model	26708.045[a]	14	1483.780	17.269	.000	.693
Relationship	3097.364	2	1548.682	18.024	.000	.207
Error	11857.471	305	85.924			
Total	555751.000	321				

a. R Squared = .693 (Adjusted R Squared = .652)

Table 13. Summary of ANCOVA of the relationship between the ethical behaviour of employees and the growth and survival of Nestle Nigeria Plc.

Source	Type III SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.	η^2
Corrected Model	26708.045[a]	14	1483.780	17.269	.000	.693
Relationship	611.636	2	305.818	3.559	.031	.049
Error	11857.471	305	85.924			
Total	555751.000	321				

a. R Squared = .693 (Adjusted R Squared = .652)

4.6.4. Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between the ethical behaviour of employees and the growth and survival of Nestle Nigeria Plc.

Table 13 presents the ANCOVA results for the relationship between the ethical behaviour of employees and organisational growth and survival. The findings revealed a significant relationship between the ethical behaviour of employees and organisational growth and survival ($F(2, 138) = 3.559$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.049$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the ethical behaviour of employees has a significant relationship with the growth and survival of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

4.7. Ethical Culture

From hypothesis one, it was contingent that there is a significant relationship between ethical culture and the effectiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc, contrary to the earlier stated null hypothesis (H_0). It is, however, supporting the alternative hypothesis (H_1) because it receives statistical support. From the empirical analysis and hypothesis testing conducted, the study found that ethical culture is positively related to the effectiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc at the 0.5 level of significance, as indicated by a coefficient of 0. 0.653 (t = 0563, p-value < 0.000) of the studied firms.

The result is in line with the findings of previous research carried out by Stahl, Chatfield, Ten Holter and Brem (2019) that ethics is a part of the ideals, culture and norms that cannot be excluded because ethics also reflects norms. Indeed, the application of ethics within the firm provides benefits that also improve corporate performance, both financially and non-financially (Tseng, Lim & Wu, 2018).

4.8. Ethical Climate

From hypothesis two, there is a significant relationship between ethical climate and the competitiveness of Nestle Nigeria Plc in the sampled area, contrary to the earlier stated null hypothesis (H_0). Ethical climate, collective moral emotion and collective ethical efficacy interact to create an environment more strongly related to ethical behaviour.

The result is in line with the findings of previous research carried out by Arnaud (2017) that employees' ethical climate in their organisations was positively related to organisational competitiveness. Similarly, Choi, Moon, and Ko (2016) used concepts of stakeholder theory to establish that employees' ethical climate and organisational competitiveness led to higher levels of objective financial performance and perceived customer satisfaction through fostering organisational innovation.

4.9. Unethical Standards

From hypothesis three, it was seen that there is a significant relationship between unethical standards and the productivity of the selected company in Nigeria, which is contrary to the earlier stated null hypothesis (H_0). Within the literature on corporate illegality, the predominant view is that pressure and need force organisational members to behave unethically and develop corresponding rationalisations. However, according to research, this explanation only accounts for illegal acts in some cases (Baucus & Near, 2017). In their data, poor performance and low organisational slack (the excess that remains, once a firm has paid its various internal and external constituencies) to maintain cooperation were not associated with illegal behaviour, and wrongdoing frequently occurred in munificent environments.

The result is in line with the findings of previous research carried out by Baucus & Near (2017). The results showed that a significant relationship exists between ethical standards and organisational productivity. In Nigeria, integrity cum discipline contribute to improved productivity levels of the organisation, which could be attributed to the nature of these virtues being abstract and could only be seen or observed over time. As noted above, organisations operating in certain industries tend to behave ethically. Certain industry cultures may predispose organisations to develop cultures that encourage their members to select unethical acts. If an organisation's major competitors in an industry are performing well, in part because of unethical activities, it becomes difficult for some players to focus only on unethical actions, and they may regard unethical actions as a standard of industry practice. Such a scenario results in an organisational culture that serves as a strong precipitant to unethical actions.

4.10. Ethical Behaviour

Unethical behaviour by employees can affect individuals, work teams, and even the organisation. Behaviour is a function of both the person and the environment (Lewin, 2015). Ethical behaviour, if not practised, can reduce organisational performance. It may cause disagreements, lawsuits, client dissatisfaction, poor service delivery, poor time management, and corruption, among others. Some of the observable unethical behaviours that may affect organisational performance include arrogance, ignorance, fraud, absenteeism, alcohol consumption, smoking, and neglect, among others. An organisation's ability to bring forth ethical behaviour that goes above and beyond the call of duty can be a key asset and one that is difficult for competitors to imitate.

Ethical behaviour is acting in ways that are consistent with one's personal values and the commonly held values of the organisation and society (Naran, 2016). Unethical The behaviour of employees can affect individuals, work teams, and even the organisation (Andrews, 2016). Organisations, thus, depend on individuals to act ethically. An organisation's ability to elicit ethical behaviour that goes above and beyond the call to duty can be a key asset and one that is difficult for competitors to imitate. Ethical behaviour is characterised by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal and professional relationships, and it respects the dignity, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups of people. Therefore, for an organisation to survive, it is important to have a good understanding of ethics and take it seriously, as this can undermine the competitive strength of the organisation and the society at large (Martínez et al., 2021).

The result is in line with the findings of previous research carried out by Kehinde (2016), who described unethical behaviour on organisational performance as evidence from three service organisations in Lagos, Nigeria. The study used a quantitative method with two hypotheses stated in the null form. Results were analysed with the aid of appropriate test statistics. Findings revealed that ethical behaviour influences the performance of an organisation and that good ethical behaviour has a positive correlation with organisational performance. Suitable policy recommendations were offered, which decision makers in business organisations and government functionaries will find very useful.

The results supported the assumption of the stakeholder theory as the pivotal theory for this study. The theory regards an individual or group who can affect or who can be affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of an organisation as a stakeholder. The cornerstone of stakeholder theory is the decisions by the management of the company from time to time, strategies adopted for implementing these decisions for meeting the requirements of the maximum number of stakeholders regarding their monetary and non-monetary considerations by ethical means. Over the years, stakeholders have adopted different strategies. The core of stakeholder theory is the belief that stakeholder relationships are the most important factor that managers must take care of. However, business ethics addresses those responsibilities that a business needs to fulfil. This concludes that both concepts are interrelated, but the level of abstraction differs in business ethics.

The stakeholder theory is an effective gauge to measure the growth of an organisation (Quazi, 2013). The stakeholder model focuses primarily on the interests and concerns of the organisation's stakeholders over economic interests. From the stakeholder model perspective, the focus becomes how to please and build mutually beneficial relationships with the beneficiary community. Based on this assumption, it can be argued that the underlying philosophy for business ethics activities under the stakeholder model can produce a positive attitude among employees, thereby increasing their participation levels.

5. Conclusion

The relationship between ethical concerns and organisational performance at Nestle Nigeria Plc has been thoroughly examined in this study. The study of the data revealed that ethics had a considerable impact on the non-financial performance of the chosen Nigerian food and beverage company. Kenneth and Chukwuma (2015) discovered evidence tying organisational performance with ethics. According to the findings, performance will rise in organisations where management upholds the ethical standards set by the Board, encourages other staff members to do the same through communication, and leads by example. Based on the results obtained, the study concluded that ethical management practices will improve overall organisational performance in Nigerian food and beverage businesses. Organisations with a culture of integrity typically outperform rival organisations and deliver strong long-term financial success, making them leaders in their sectors.

The study concluded that moral behaviour has a direct impact on the organisational performance of the chosen food and beverage company based on the findings of the tested hypotheses. The function and effectiveness of manufacturing companies are truly reliant on the moral workplace environment, ethical work culture, and moral norms and behaviours. The collective moral thinking of an organisation's members is reflected in its ethical activities. Employees may have sound moral reasoning about what is appropriate to do, but putting that reasoning into practice depends on collective moral feeling and collective ethical effectiveness, which have a moderating influence.

Ethical behaviour is characterised by honesty, fairness, integrity, and justice in both interpersonal and professional relationships. It encompasses respect for individual rights, diversity, human dignity, and the equitable treatment of stakeholders, thereby fostering trust and accountability within organisations. An organisation's ability to understand, institutionalise, and consistently uphold ethical principles is fundamental to achieving sustainable organisational performance. Conversely, ethical deficiencies can undermine stakeholder confidence, weaken competitive advantage, damage corporate reputation, and adversely affect long-term organisational success. Consequently, embedding ethics into organisational culture, governance structures, and managerial decision-making has become a strategic imperative for enhancing performance and ensuring sustainable value creation (Martínez et al., 2021; Kaptein, 2015).

It is crucial for an organisation to have a thorough understanding of ethics and to embed ethical principles throughout its culture, leadership, and decision-making processes to enhance organisational performance and long-term sustainability (Martínez et al., 2021).

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutionalisation of comprehensive ethics management systems: Nestlé Nigeria Plc and other food and beverage manufacturing firms should institutionalise comprehensive ethics management systems that

integrate ethical principles into strategic planning, operational procedures, performance management and organisational decision-making. Such systems should incorporate clearly defined codes of conduct, accountability mechanisms, regular ethical reviews and effective compliance structures.

2. Strengthening ethical culture and climate: Management of Nestle Nigeria Plc should strengthen ethical culture and climate through visible ethical leadership, continuous ethics training, effective communication of organisational values and consistent enforcement of ethical standards. Senior and middle-level managers should demonstrate ethical conduct in their decisions and interactions, thereby reinforcing ethical expectations throughout the organisation.
3. Prevention and management of unethical organisational practices: Nestle Nigeria Plc should regularly review organisational policies, performance targets and operating procedures to identify practices that may unintentionally encourage unethical conduct. Performance expectations should be designed to promote productivity and competitiveness without creating incentives for employees to compromise ethical standards. Clear procedures for identifying, investigating and addressing unethical conduct should also be established and consistently applied.
4. Promotion of ethical employee behaviour: Nestle Nigeria Plc should provide continuous, practical ethics education that equips employees to recognise and appropriately respond to ethical dilemmas arising in their daily activities. Ethical behaviour should also be incorporated into employee appraisal, promotion and reward systems so that employees recognise that ethical conduct is an integral component of organisational performance rather than merely a compliance requirement. Confidential whistleblowing mechanisms should be strengthened to enable employees to report unethical practices without fear of retaliation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest whatsoever regarding the publication of this paper.

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