



The effect of organisational citizenship behaviour and unethical pro-organisational behaviour on the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study investigated the relationship between ethical leadership (EL) and organisational culture (OC), focusing on the mediating roles of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and unethical pro-organisational behaviour (UPB) within the context of a financial services company in Africa. Given that no empirical study had been performed on the combined mediating effect of OCB and UPB on the relationship between EL and OC, the research aimed to address this significant gap in the literature.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was quantitative in nature, which adopted an explanatory method where empirical data comprising 194 survey responses was obtained from a financial services company to test the hypotheses.

Findings: The research results affirmed that EL is positively and significantly related to OC, where EL is posited to enhance OC by fostering trust and collaboration among employees. Furthermore, OCB was found to mediate the relationship between EL and OC. This indicates that promoting OCB is essential for fostering a favourable OC. On the other hand, the results showed that UPB does not mediate the relationship between EL and OC.



Recommendations/value: This research contributes to the understanding of how EL influences OC and highlights the importance of fostering OCB in organisational settings

Managerial implications: The practical implications provide valuable insights for leaders and scholars aiming to enhance organisational effectiveness and ethical conduct.

Keywords: ethical leadership; financial services; organisational culture; organisational citizenship behaviour; unethical pro-organisational behaviour

JEL Classification: D23, M14, L840, C31

1. INTRODUCTION

The example set by leaders can have an impact on the ethical behaviour of followers at lower levels. Put differently, when a leader demonstrates ethical behaviour, it is reasonable to assume that followers will follow suit and create a shared understanding of what constitutes proper behaviour. No study was identified that has included both organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and pro-organisational behaviour (UPB) as variables. Existing literature tends to treat these behaviours in isolation, overlooking the possibility that they may operate as competing mechanisms, one reinforcing ethical norms (OCB) and the other potentially undermining them (UPB). This omission is particularly pronounced in the African financial sector, where cultural values such as Ubuntu intersect with ethical leadership practices, creating a unique context for understanding these dynamics.

Considering that leaders influence followers' actions (Hsieh *et al.*, 2020), the current paper presents an empirical analysis of the relationship between EL and OC and examines and proposes a theoretical model outlining the potential mediating effects of OCB and UPB as illustrated in Figure 1. Thus, the first purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between EL and OC, and secondly, to investigate the mediating effects of OCB and UPB on the relationship between EL and OC. To this end, the paper builds on previous studies of EL, OC, and OCB, respectively, and its contribution lies in its examination of the mediating effects of two variables, providing valuable insights into how these constructs interact. The paper, therefore, advances the literature by:

- a) Integrating dual mediators (OCB and UPB) into a single model to test their simultaneous influence on the EL-OC relationship.

- b) Introducing the African/ Ubuntu ethical perspective, which emphasises communal values and moral integrity, to explain why OCB aligns with ethical leadership while UPB conflicts with it.

1.1 Problem statement

The research problem under consideration was whether there is a positive and significant relationship between EL and OC, and whether OCB and UPB mediate this relationship. This study is also the first of its kind to examine the relationships between these variables in the context of the financial sector in Africa. The financial sector is crucial for economic stability and growth. Thus, ethical leadership in this sector can assist in preventing financial scandals and crises, which in turn can have widespread negative impacts on the economy and society at large (Smith, 2014). Additionally, Africa presents a unique economic and social context characterised by rapid growth, diverse cultures, including varying levels of economic development. In this sense, this diversity necessitates a nuanced approach to leadership that considers local ethical norms and practices. In summary, the financial sector in Africa is a critical area for the study due to its role in economic development, the unique challenges and opportunities present in the region, and the potential to influence broader societal outcomes through improved governance and ethical standards.

1.2 Research objectives

The purpose of the research was to investigate the mediating effects of OCB and UPB on the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. In doing so, the following objectives were investigated:

- 1) Determine whether ethical leadership has a significant positive relationship with organisational culture.
- 2) Determine whether OCB and UPB positively mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.

This paper began with an introduction that outlined the research context, purpose, problem statement and research objectives. Next, it will review the literature related to the constructs under the study, focusing on the relationship between EL and OC, including the mediating effects of OCB and UPB. The theoretical and empirical foundations are discussed, followed by the methodology section, which highlights the research methodology that was adopted in the study, including the aim and main hypotheses, and ethical considerations. The results of the study's data analysis are then presented, followed by a discussion of these findings. The

final section of the paper highlights the study's key findings and offers management and future research recommendations, and discusses the study's limitations, practical implications, and contributions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of ethical or responsible leadership is said to be a social and normative phenomenon that develops through interactions between leaders and their followers (Maak & Pless, 2006). In their review of sixty years of research on leadership in Africa, Fourie *et al.* (2017) concluded that the research has covered an extensive range of themes, including a few studies on ethical leadership. In an African context, ethical leadership has largely been explored from the perspective of the concept of Ubuntu (Malunga, 2006; Muchiri, 2011; Adeleye *et al.*, 2020; Sipondo, 2025) based on the idea that leaders who embody Ubuntu principles seem to be better equipped to create environments where ethical behaviour is the norm, and the well-being of all members is prioritised. Additionally, Ubuntu is thought to have an impact on the organisational culture and the development of leadership in African organisations (Van der Colff, 2003; Fourie *et al.*, 2017). However, many areas of leadership remain under-researched in an African context (Muchiri, 2011), including Brown *et al.*'s (2005) concept of ethical leadership.

This study, therefore, builds on the work of Brown *et al.* (2005), who developed a model for ethical leadership. This study explored the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture and the mediating effects of OCB and UPB on this relationship. According to Brown *et al.* (2005), ethical leadership involves modelling normatively acceptable behaviour for followers through one's own behaviour and interpersonal interactions, as well as encouraging such behaviour through decision-making, two-way communication, and reinforcement.

Organisational culture is said to represent an aspect of the workplace environment that helps employees understand their own and others' actions (Jones *et al.*, 2007). According to Kaptein (2009) and Tsai (2011), it relates to an informal organisational control structure comprising common values, beliefs, perceptions, and customs. Ethical leadership shapes organisational culture by impacting the attitudes, convictions, and actions of employees (Shin, 2012). This is further supported by the positive correlation between ethical leadership and employees' work-related attitudes and behaviours (Resick *et al.*, 2013). Thus, leaders serve as informative nets of organisational policies and processes for employees (Mayer *et al.*, 2010).

The concept of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is described within the workplace as conduct relating to employees voluntarily assisting others in the workplace, promoting the eminence of their organisation and leaders in the absence of an explicit or implicit promise of reward for such behaviour (Wang *et al.*, 2023). Resick *et al.* (2013) highlight two dimensions underpinning OCBs. First, a behaviour relating to co-workers and their helpful attributes and information sharing with each other, and second, a dimension aimed at the organisation itself and the promotion of the organisation's services and products. Thus, OCB is seen as a contributory benefit not only to the actor but the collective (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2000).

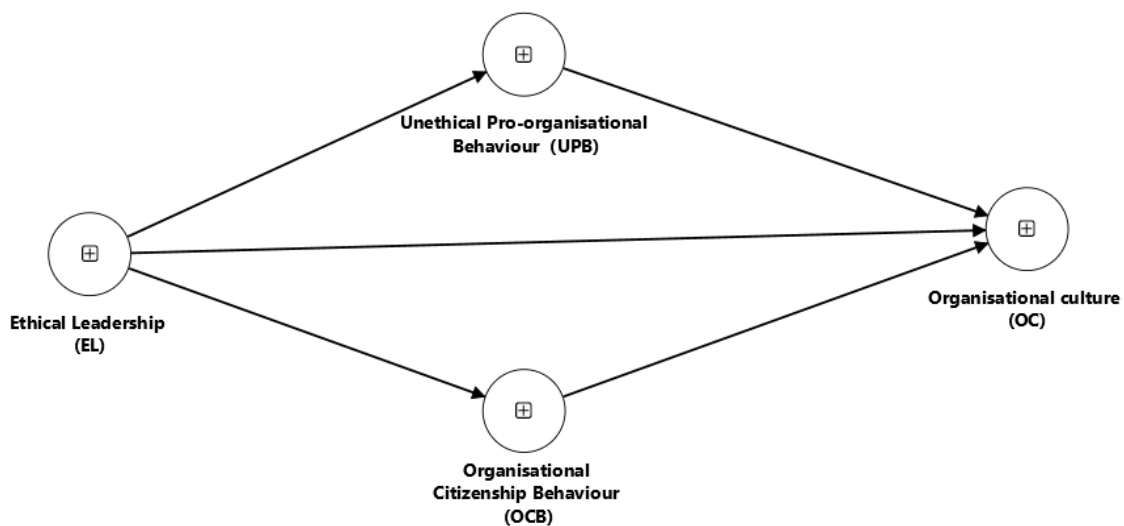
At the core of UPB is that it encourages actions whose intention is to advance the effectiveness of an organisation whilst transgressing ethical norms, values, and standards or adequate employee behaviour (Umphress & Bingham, 2011), and adversely affect the organisation and its culture (Giberson *et al.*, 2009). Thus, UPB involves actions that advance the objectives of an organisation, but which are morally questionable and socially unacceptable (Hsieh *et al.*, 2020). In considering ethical leadership in an African context, Mitonga-Monga *et al.* (2016), found that ethical leadership mediates the link between workplace ethics culture and engagement in Namibia, reinforcing the role of ethics in shaping organisational behaviour in African organisations. Sipondo (2025) conceptualised Ubuntu-based ethical leadership in African public sector organisations, emphasising communal values and moral responsibility.

Turning to the mediating variables, the literature review evidenced that OCB mediates numerous relationships, with the research predominantly conducted in the Middle East (Ekowati *et al.*, 2013; Khokhar & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2017; Alshihabat & Atan, 2020; Alhashedi *et al.*, 2021; Hanaysha *et al.*, 2022; Hanaysha, 2023), and Asian countries (Han *et al.*, 2016; Jiang *et al.*, 2017; Setyowati *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the focus has been on education (Khokhar & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2017; Alshihabat & Atan, 2020; Setyowati *et al.*, 2021; Hanaysha *et al.*, 2022; Hanaysha, 2023), the banking industry (Ekowati *et al.*, 2013), and the private sector (Han *et al.*, 2016; Alhashedi *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, research has neglected to test this mediation effect within the African financial sector context, and from a review of the literature, the mediating effect of UPB has not yet been investigated. Africa provides a unique setting for evaluating these opposing mediators, as Ubuntu's emphasis on interconnection and community well-being is in line with OCB's cooperative character but fundamentally contradicts UPB's norm-violating inclinations.

Consequently, the study presented an empirical analysis of the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, examining and proposing a theoretical model outlining the potential mediating effects of OCB and UPB as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Having regard to the conceptual framework, prior studies (Setyowati *et al.*, 2021; Hanaysha *et al.*, 2022) show that OCB mediates the ethical leadership-organisational culture relationship as it operationalises the leader's influence on collective norms. However, UPB fails as a mediator since ethical leadership reduces UPB, making it more of a potential suppressor than a mediator.

3. METHODOLOGY

The explanatory research method is described by Cohen *et al.* (2000) and Rahi (2017) as research that aids in determining the causes of a specific phenomenon's occurrence. Given this objective, the explanatory method was adopted in this study. From a quantitative perspective, the process can be understood as explaining the causal relationship between inputs and outputs (Fischer *et al.*, 2017). A survey research method was utilised to gather data, and a questionnaire was distributed electronically (i.e., online via Teams Forms).

The biographic profile of the participants was based on gender, race, age group, line of business, hierarchical level, tenure within the organisation, and educational level. A frequency method was used to determine the frequency distribution of all these variables, and a total of

560 staff members were invited to participate in the survey. After three weeks of data collection, a total of 198 responses were obtained. Of the 198 received responses, four were deleted as retaining them would likely result in biased results. But for this, all data were found to have all the values and consistent responses. To obtain accurate results from the research, the Inverse Square Root Method (Kock & Haday, 2018) was used to determine a minimum sample size, and based on a path coefficient, $\beta = 0.20$ was 155. A post hoc analysis using the lowest, path coefficient, $\beta = -0.178$, required a sample size, $n = 195$. As such, the 194 was adequate at a significance level of 5% with adequate statistical power (80%).

3.1 Measures

Multi-item measures, comprising 41 items, were used in this study. The ethics leadership scale (ELS) (comprising 10 items), developed by Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005), was used to measure ethical leadership. When adopted by Mitonga-Monga, Flotman and Cilliers (2016), it had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.91$. A shortened version of the 58-item corporate ethical virtues (CEV) Scale, developed by Kaptein (2008) and applied with $\alpha = 0.91$ (Eisenbeiss *et al.*, 2015), and $\alpha = 0.96$ (Mitonga-Monga *et al.*, 2016) was used as a measure of organisational culture. The shortened scale consisted of 10 items. UPB and OCB were measured using the scales primarily developed by Umphress *et al.* (2010) and Lee and Allen (2002), respectively. The UPB scale, comprising 6 items, was confirmed with $\alpha = 0.85$ (Tang *et al.*, 2020), $\alpha = 0.93$ (Wang *et al.*, 2023) and $\alpha = 0.94$ (Jiang *et al.*, 2023). The OCB-O scale was developed by Lee and Allen (2002) and comprises eight items. It was confirmed with $\alpha = 0.91$ (Umphress *et al.*, 2010) and $\alpha = 0.90$ (Anvari *et al.*, 2017). A five-point Likert agreement scale was used for EL and OCB, while six-point and seven-point Likert scales were used for OC and UPB, respectively.

To examine the validity of the measures, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted. To test the hypotheses of this study, the procedure employed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and adopted by Mitonga-Monga *et al.* (2016); Hanaysha *et al.* (2022); and Hanaysha (2023) was used. The procedure begins with determining the direct effect of EL on OC. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), if there is a significant and positive effect, then the first condition for the mediation test will be achieved. Thereafter, the significance of the indirect effects and the size of the indirect effect of the two competing mediating variables were determined by using the SmartPLS 4 package.

3.2 Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

H1. There is a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.

H2. OCB positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.

H3. UPB negatively mediates (i.e. a competitive or suppression effect) the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Before distributing the survey to the intended participants, an ethical review application was submitted to the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC), and approval was granted. Additionally, permission to conduct research within the company was obtained, and only then were participants invited to form part of the study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical data were analysed to determine if it was normally distributed, if the skewness values fell within the range ± 2 . As maintained by Hair *et al.* (2010), considering the distribution of the data set, even though variable UPB 5 with a value of 2.211 constitutes slightly more skewed data, the researchers were satisfied that all other variables are normally or nearly normally distributed. This is informed by EL1 having a skewness of -1.294, suggesting a significant leftward skew, while UPB1 shows a skewness of 1.622, indicating a strong rightward skew. Most items in the EL and OC constructs exhibit negative skewness, as seen in EL2 with 0.034 and OC1 with -0.895, which implies a tendency towards the left side of the distribution. Turning to whether the distribution is flat or peaked, the kurtosis analysis showed that all variables had values below ± 7 (Hair *et al.*, 2010), i.e., UPB1 with 1.890, OC3 with 2.705, and OCB1 with -0.414. This meant that there were no concerns regarding kurtosis. Since the data was normally or near normally distributed, it meant that either a Structural Equation Model Covariance (SEM-CB) or Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) can be employed to analyse this data. However, PLS-SEM was employed as it is better for prediction in estimating models, which are meant to provide causal explanations (Chin *et al.*, 2020; Hair *et al.*, 2022).

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis – Measurement model

To examine the construct reliability and validity of the measures used in this study, a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was performed. The factor loadings for the measurement model were between 0.623 to 0.860, with average loadings above 0.70 for all the constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, as indicated in Table 1, the model fit was evaluated using various indices, including standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and NFI, with the saturated and estimated models being compared. The analysis showed SRMR being 0.074. To this end, the study’s SRMR fit index showed that the model yielded a better fit to the data (SRMR < 0.08). Considering this, it is safe to conclude that there is a relatively good fit between the hypothesised model and the observed data (Hu & Bentler, 1998). NFI was 0.726, which is lower than $NFI \geq 0.90$. Overall, this suggests that the model fits the data moderately well, even though there may be room for improvement to enhance the model’s explanatory power. In PLS-SEM, certain fit indices are used. That is, NFI should be treated with caution for several reasons, namely:

- Model complexity – PLS-SEM is often utilised for complex models with many constructs and indicators, and traditional fit indices like NFI are designed for simpler models and may not accurately reflect the fit of more complex PLS-SEM models (Russo & Stol, 2022).
- Model dependence – NFI compares the fit of the specified model to a null model (one with no relationships between the variables). According to Schuberth *et al.* (2023), if the baseline model is inappropriate, the NFI value can be misleading.

Table 1: Model fit

	Estimated model
SRMR	0.074
d_ULS	3.234
d_G	1.014
Chi-square	1019.752
NFI	0.726

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics performed on the variables forming part of this study. Cronbach’s Alpha (α) was used to determine the reliability of the variables, and the results on all constructs (EL, OCB, OC and UPB) demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s Alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7. The values for composite reliability ρ_a and ρ_c indicate the internal consistency and

reliability of the model's constructs. To this end, the results of the analysis indicated EL with the highest level of reliability, with composite reliability values of 0.939 (ρ_a) and 0.946 (ρ_c), followed by OC with composite reliability values of 0.880 (ρ_a) and 0.902 (ρ_c), OCB of 0.872 (ρ_a) and 0.888 (ρ_c), and though slightly lower than other constructs, UPB with composite reliability values of 0.855 (ρ_a) and 0.872 (ρ_c), respectively. This means that the items measuring the constructs are consistent and reliable, and further that the composite reliability values support the attainment of satisfactory convergent validity. The results showed that Ethical Leadership had an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.659. An AVE greater than 0.50 indicates that the construct has good convergence validity, meaning the indicators are well-represented by the construct they are intended to measure. The lowest values were achieved on UPB, with the average variance extracted being 0.532. As shown in Table 2, all values were found to be above the recommended thresholds, indicating good internal consistency and satisfactory convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

Table 2: Reliability and validity statistics

	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite reliability (ρ_a)	Composite reliability (ρ_c)
OL	0.659	0.935	0.939	0.946
OCB	0.573	0.852	0.872	0.888
OC	0.507	0.878	0.880	0.902
UPB	0.532	0.830	0.855	0.872

The discriminant validity of the dataset was established through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. In this regard, analysis of the results showed an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.659 (EL), 0.573 (OCB), 0.507 (OC), and 0.532 (UPB), respectively. In applying the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square roots of these AVE values were compared to the correlations among the constructs (i.e. the correlation between EL and OCB is 0.554, which should be less than the square root of the AVE for EL, approximately 0.812). This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Age	EL	Gender	OCB	OC	Race	Tenure	UPB
Age	1.000							
EL	0.103	0.812						
Gender	-0.021	0.092	1.000					
OCB	0.120	0.433	0.028	0.757				
OC	0.239	0.469	0.024	0.554	0.712			

Race	0.201	0.015	-0.033	0.037	0.089	1.000		
Tenure	0.289	-0.164	-0.069	-0.037	0.054	0.177	1.000	
UPB	-0.193	-0.162	-0.011	-0.244	-0.265	-0.096	0.015	0.730

The above comparison helped confirm that each construct is distinct from the others, supporting the validity of the measurement model. Overall, the results suggest that the constructs meet the Fornell-Larcker criterion, indicating adequate discriminant validity within the model. As shown in Table 4, further analysis of the results showed an HTMT of less than 0.85, which indicates adequate discriminant validity and thus supports the constructs' distinctiveness (Henseler *et al.*, 2015).

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Matrix

	Age	EL	Gender	OCB	OC	Race	Tenure	UPB
Age								
EL	0.105							
Gender	0.021	0.118						
OCB	0.123	0.456	0.044					
OC	0.258	0.503	0.068	0.613				
Race	0.201	0.068	0.033	0.064	0.095			
Tenure	0.289	0.169	0.069	0.070	0.070	0.177		
UPB	0.203	0.182	0.068	0.288	0.285	0.121	0.060	

4.2 Structural model

In determining the predictivity relevance, the research assessed the predictive performance of the PLS-SEM approach against a linear model (LM) and an indicator average (IA) approach. An analysis of the predictive relevance of dependent variables (i.e. OCB, OC, and UPB) was performed. This entailed an assessment of the Q² predict, RMSE, and MAE, indicating the predictive power and accuracy of the model. But for a relatively lower Q² value for UPB (0.007), the remainder of the variables showed a Q² value significantly above zero (Q² >0). This indicates that the model has a good predictive performance or relevance. This demonstrates that the model is capable of predicting the observed values of the dependent variables in the dataset used for the analysis. Table 5 shows the variables' Q²predict, RMSE, and MAE values, respectively. Further analysis shows Q²predict to be moderate for OCB, substantial for OC, and low for UPB. The RMSE was found to be low for OCB and OC, and high for UPB. On the other hand, the MAE values were found to be low for OCB and OC, and moderate for UPB. The model's explanatory power was moderate, with the highest R-squared value being 0.412 for OC (Table 5).

Table 5: Predictivity, relevance and R-square values for explanatory power

	Q ² predict	RMSE	MAE
OCB	0.168	0.922	0.743
OC	0.205	0.901	0.695
UPB	0.007	1.016	0.793
			R-square
OCB			0.187
OC			0.412
UPB			0.026

EL and OCB had substantial effects on OC, with F-square values of 0.230 and 0.208, respectively, indicating moderate effect sizes. EL also had a moderate effect on OCB (F-square = 0.105). UPB had no significant impact on OC (F-square = 0.015). Other control variables did not significantly influence OC (Table 6).

Table 6: F-square values

	OCB	OCB	UPB
Age		0.019	
Ethical Leadership	0.230	0.105	0.027
Gender		0.000	
OCB		0.208	
Organisational culture			
Race		0.001	
Tenure		0.009	
UPB		0.015	

As outlined in Table 7, the analysis results showed that the highest VIF for this study was for EL6 (3.939). Since all of the values were less than 5, this suggests that the multi-collinearity is not a significant concern (Menard, 2001).

Table 8: Collinearity statistics

	VIF
Age Group	1.000
EL1	2.233
EL10	3.095
EL3	2.077
EL4	3.279
EL5	2.981
EL6	3.939
EL7	2.204
EL8	3.147
EL9	2.597

Gender	1.000
OC1	1.624
OC10	1.716
OC2	1.661
OC3	1.733
OC4	1.537
OC6	1.600
OC7	2.139
OC8	2.479
OC9	1.884
OCB3	1.525
OCB4	2.139
OCB5	1.538
OCB6	2.384
OCB7	2.188
OCB8	2.163
Race	1.000
Tenure	1.000
UPB1	1.948
UPB2	2.014
UPB3	2.229
UPB4	1.685
UPB5	1.585
UPB6	1.924

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

H1 proposed that there is a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. Table 9 below shows the path coefficients, total effects and specific indirect effects of the variables. This suggests, *inter alia*, that the path from ethical leadership to organisational culture is statistically significant (H1 $\beta = 0.281$, t-statistic = 3.637, $p < .001$). Considering this, the values indicate a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, with ethical leadership having a direct effect on organisational culture. The t-statistic and p-value of 0.000 affirm that there is an association between ethical leadership and organisational culture, and further, that organisational culture is dependent on ethical leadership. Accordingly, the relationship is statistically significant at a high level of confidence. The confidence intervals for this relation are also positive, affirming that the positive effect of ethical leadership on organisational culture is consistent across the sampled data. Accordingly, this provided support for H1. In addition to this, the results affirmed the statistical significance of the following relationships:

Ethical Leadership -> Organisational Citizenship Behaviour: $\beta = 0.440$, t -statistics = 6.292, $p < .001$.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour -> Organisational culture: $\beta = 0.400$, t -statistics = 5.383, $p < .001$.

Ethical Leadership -> Unethical Pro-organisational_ Behaviour: $\beta = -0.178$, t -statistics = 2.132, $p < .033$.

Table 9: Path Coefficients

	Paths	B	t-statistics	p-values
Direct effects	Age -> OC	0.115	1.949	0.051
	EL -> OCB	0.440	6.292	0.000
	EL -> OC	0.281	3.637	0.000
	EL -> UPB	-0.178	2.132	0.033
	Gender -> OC	-0.005	0.092	0.927
	OCB -> OC	0.400	5.383	0.000
	Race -> OC	0.020	0.400	0.689
	Tenure -> OC	0.078	1.171	0.242
	UPB -> OC	-0.111	1.424	0.154
Total effects	Age -> OC	0.115	1.949	0.051
	EL -> OCB	0.440	6.292	0.000
	EL -> OC	0.474	6.699	0.000
	EL -> UPB	-0.178	2.132	0.033
	Gender -> OC	-0.005	0.092	0.927
	OCB -> OC	0.400	5.383	0.000
	Race -> OC	0.020	0.400	0.689
	Tenure -> OC	0.078	1.171	0.242
	UPB -> OC	-0.111	1.424	0.154
Specific indirect effect	EL -> OCB -> OC	0.175	4.524	0.000
	EL -> UPB -> OC	0.018	1.123	0.262

H2 proposed that OCB positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. The results of the analysis showed that the 97.5% confidence interval (CI) around the mediation effect of organisational citizenship behaviour did not contain zero, indicating that the mediation effect of organisational citizenship behaviour was statistically significant (H2: $\beta = 0.175$, t-statistic = 4.524, $p < .001$). A p-value of 0.001 indicates a statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables, with organisational citizenship behaviour serving as a mediator. With a total effect of 0.396, this

positive effect suggests that higher levels of organisational citizenship behaviour contribute to a stronger organisational culture, reinforcing the idea that engaged employees help to shape a positive work environment. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected, and H2 was supported.

H3 proposed that UPB negatively mediates (i.e. a competitive or suppression effect) the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. A p-value of 0.262 for the relationship -> ethical leadership -> unethical pro-organisational behaviour -> organisational culture, indicates that the observed relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, as mediated by unethical pro-organisational behaviour, is not statistically significant at the conventional levels (H3: $\beta = 0.018$, t-statistic = 1.123, $p < .0262$). As such, unethical pro-organisational behaviour was found not to have a meaningful impact on the relationship. With a total effect of -0.099, the negative effect indicates that unethical pro-organisational behaviour detracts from organisational culture. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, and H3 was not supported.

Table 12 shows a summary of the accepted and rejected hypotheses, with a further analysis of the mediators showing that OCB significantly and partially influences the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.

Table 10: Accepted and rejected hypotheses

	Hypotheses	Outcome
H1	There is a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.	Accepted
H2	OCB positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture.	Accepted
H3	UPB negatively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture	Rejected

4.4 Discussion of findings

The present study provides several implications for theory. Firstly, this study confirms a significant positive direct relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis, which states there is not a significant positive relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, is rejected. This positive effect shows that ethical leadership fosters an environment that encourages ethical behaviour and values, which can lead to a more positive and cohesive organisational culture. Considering the above, the findings of the study also appear to be consistent with the empirical studies that found that there is a positive and significant association between ethical leadership and organisational

culture (Thoms, 2008; Huhtala *et al.*, 2013; Eisenbeiss *et al.*, 2015; Mitonga-Monga *et al.*, 2016; Saĝnak, 2017, Wang *et al.*, 2023).

Secondly, the study examined the mediating effect of OCB and UPB on the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. To this extent, the study is the first to examine the combined mediating effect of OCB and UPB:

- a) on the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture; and
- b) within an African and financial sector context.

The results of the statistical analysis show that OCB significantly and partially influences the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. Thus, the second null hypothesis, which states OCB does not positively mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, is rejected. This is in line with the empirical research conducted by Setyowati *et al.* (2021), who, in their analysis of the effect of organisational culture and job satisfaction on OCB and employee performance at the University of Muhammadiyah Jember, Indonesia, concluded that OCB is positively and significantly related to organisational culture.

The literature reviewed was silent on the mediating effects of UPB on the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. The results of the statistical analysis show that the indirect effect of ethical leadership on organisational culture through UPB is 0.016, with a confidence interval ranging from -0.008 to 0.048. This indicates that the indirect effect is not statistically significant. In this regard, the third null hypothesis stating that UPB does not negatively mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture cannot be rejected. In other words, the results imply that UPB does not have an adverse effect on the influence of ethical leadership on organisational culture.

The non-significant findings in the study regarding the mediating role of UPB have several implications. Firstly, this implies that ethical leadership can effectively foster a positive organisational culture without being undermined by unethical behaviours that are intended to benefit the organisation.

Secondly, the acceptance of the null hypothesis regarding UPB suggests that organisations may not need to overly focus on mitigating unethical pro-organisational behaviours when promoting ethical leadership. Instead, they can concentrate on enhancing ethical practices and fostering organisational citizenship behaviours.

Lastly, the lack of significance in the UPB findings highlights the need for further research to explore the complexities of ethical leadership dynamics within different contexts.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the primary contributions of our study lies in the understanding of how ethical leadership influences OC and highlights the importance of fostering OCB in organisational settings. Organisations should prioritise the development and promotion of ethical leadership practices. In practice, organisations should motivate leaders to set an example for others by acting morally in their day-to-day activities. This includes, *inter alia*, being open, equitable, and consistent in their decision-making procedures. Additionally, leaders are encouraged to set clear ethical standards, to lead by example, and create an environment that fosters ethical behaviour and discourages unethical actions. This can be achieved through training programmes, ethical guidelines, and a strong ethical culture that values integrity and accountability.

Given the significant positive effect of ethical leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour, management is encouraged to establish a development and training programme that enhances leaders' ethical decision-making, accountability (Sağnak, 2017) and integrity or moral competence (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

Since OCB significantly mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, management should implement initiatives that encourage employees to engage in citizenship behaviours. This could include recognition programmes that promote collaboration and support among employees, leading to work motivation and satisfaction (Ali & Ahmed, 2009). Considering the differences observed among respondents from different age and race groups with OCB and organisational culture, organisations should consider implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives.

These initiatives are likely to assist in creating a more inclusive environment that enhances employee engagement and promotes positive organisational behaviours. This alignment can lead to a stronger commitment to ethical practices across the organisation. Management is encouraged to utilise social learning theory by encouraging employees to observe and model the behaviour of ethical leaders. In this sense, social modelling and observational learning would enable the employees to emulate and model the behaviour of others (Kim *et al.*, 2023). This can also be achieved through mentorship programmes, leadership development initiatives, and regular feedback sessions.

The study's findings advance theoretical frameworks in leadership studies by enhancing the understanding of ethical leadership dynamics, integrating key behavioural concepts, developing predictive models, and exploring contextual influences. The study's contribution lies in its examination of the aforementioned relationship and context, providing valuable insights into how these constructs interact.

Firstly, the study confirmed the positive relationship between ethical leaders and organisational culture, thus showing that ethical leadership is one essential way of enhancing organisational culture. It follows that when a leader demonstrates ethical behaviour, it is reasonable to assume that followers will follow suit and create a shared understanding of what constitutes proper behaviour. This relationship is crucial as it helps establish trust, collaboration, and a shared commitment to ethical standards within the organisation. Accordingly, future studies should examine this relationship across different industries and cultural contexts to determine whether the findings are generalisable.

Secondly, the research demonstrates that OCB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture, and as such, promoting OCB can lead to a more favourable organisational culture, which is essential for overall organisational effectiveness. This suggests that OCB can help reinforce the values and norms established by ethical leadership. Thus, when employees demonstrate OCB, they are essentially embodying the ethical standards set by their leaders, which is likely to further entrench these values within the organisational culture.

6. CONCLUSION

The study assessed the role of UPB in this context and emphasised the importance of focusing on positive behaviours rather than negative ones when considering leadership impacts on culture. This comprehensive analysis underscores the importance of ethical leadership in shaping a positive organisational culture and the need for organisations to promote ethical behaviour while mitigating unethical actions. In this sense, ethical leadership grounded in Ubuntu principles strengthens organisational culture by promoting behaviours that reflect communal ethics (OCB), while discouraging behaviours that compromise integrity (UPB). This explains why OCB mediates positively, and UPB fails to mediate.

The practical implications and future research directions provide valuable insights for leaders and scholars aiming to enhance organisational effectiveness and ethical conduct. The financial sector is crucial for economic stability and growth. Thus, ethical leadership in this

sector can assist in preventing financial scandals and crises, which in turn can have widespread negative impacts on the economy and society at large (Smith, 2014). Additionally, Africa presents a unique economic and social context characterised by rapid growth, diverse cultures, including varying levels of economic development. In this sense, this diversity necessitates a nuanced approach to leadership that takes into account local ethical norms and practices. Thus, the financial sector in Africa is a critical area for the study, due to its role in economic development, the unique challenges and opportunities present in the region, and the potential to influence broader societal outcomes through improved governance and ethical standards. In conclusion, it is essential to assess the sustainability of ethical leadership practices and their lasting impact on organisational culture. This can have a positive impact if implemented, and provide insights into the durability of ethical initiatives and the challenges they face.

The study has some limitations that should be noted. Firstly, since the dataset on ethical leadership and organisational culture was collected from the same participants, the researcher cannot completely exclude the possibility of common method bias. According to Podsakoff *et al.*, (2003:885) this arises from having a “common rater, a common measurement context, a common item context, or from the characteristics of the items themselves”. The second limitation highlights the importance of limiting the generalisability of the results to other contexts. Thus, the findings and conclusions drawn from the research analysis may not be fully generalisable beyond the scope of the dataset (Gelman & Hill, 2007), which represents a specific financial institution. Future studies should consider replicating the present model with a wider data set, i.e., from different sources, to mitigate bias. To this end, it is recommended that such studies replicate the findings of the current study to validate whether the lack of significance regarding UPB is consistent across different samples and contexts. Understanding these dynamics in various settings can provide more generalised insights and practical recommendations.

The current study’s findings may be due to specific conditions that do not generalise within the entire financial sector. This means that the study could serve as a foundation for future research that examines how UPB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organisational culture. Furthermore, this study was conducted within a specific financial institution in an African context. As such, future works on ethical leadership and the combined mediating effects of the mediators (OCB and UPB) can include other financial institutions to further validate the outcomes of ethical leadership. Finally, future studies can focus on the

mediation effect of UPB or how UPB is associated with ethical leadership and organisational culture.

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