



Unlocking Excellence: How Ethical Leadership Fuels Performance in Sport Organizations

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Abstract

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This research examined the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance in Ethiopian National Sports Federations, addressing a gap in non-Western, sports-specific contexts. Quantitative data from 296 administrators and qualitative data from 15 semi-structured interviews were examined using an embedded mixed-methods research design. The results of the quantitative method analyzed with a confidential level of 95% by using SPSS version 28 through quintile regression showed that leader integrity ($\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.027$), fairness ($\beta = 0.014$, $p = 0.010$), and role modelling ($\beta = 0.059$, $p = 0.043$) positively impact organizational performance, with role modelling revealing the strongest result. Conversely, communication about ethics had a negative impact ($\beta = -0.036$, $p = 0.012$), signifying operation encounters. Qualitative results, derived through NVivo thematic analysis, acknowledged four themes: leader integrity fosters trust and collaboration, fairness increases morale, role modelling motivates performance quality, and communication about ethics can interrupt performance due to language fences. These themes supported the quantitative outcomes, underlying trust, confidence, and cultural hierarchy as instruments, while resource limitations and unsuccessful communication pose fences. Practical consequences comprise encouraging transparency, comprehensive decision-making, and tailored communication approaches to increase performance. Future investigation should examine regional differences and longitudinal impacts to support generalizability.



Introduction

Ethical leadership is defined as leadership that demonstrates and promotes normatively appropriate conduct in both personal relations and interpersonal interactions (Brown et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2021). A leadership approach grounded in personality traits provides valuable understanding into the dynamics of effective leadership (Keçeci & Çelik, 2024; Liu et al., 2020). Among the several leadership styles, ethical leadership has appeared as a framework that highlights the importance of ethical principles in guiding organizational performance (Alkhadra et al., 2022). As a consequence of ethical leadership, organizations are characterized by behaviors that foster fairness, integrity, and respect, not only in the decision-making processes within the organization but also within its general culture and climate (Kumar et al., 2023).

The prevailing literature highlights the critical role of ethical leadership in enhancing employee performance and organizational products (Al Halbusi et al., 2022).

Consequently, these elements are imperative to confirming the workforce reaches new levels of productivity and efficiency, ultimately ensuring the success and growth of the organization (Ayad & M. Hasanein, 2024).

The studies of the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance were mostly conducted in Western countries and developed

Asian nations. According to the finding of [Lonati and Van Vugt \(2024\)](#), leadership at the global level is greatly affected by the environment in which an organization operates. In this environment, for ethical leadership to translate into enhanced performance, administrators must invest significantly more time and constant action to shape trustworthiness. Therefore, just emphasizing Western countries' and developed Asian nations' circumstances didn't provide understanding into how ethical leadership can impact organizational performance globally.

Secondly, several studies have examined how ethical leadership impacts organizational performance in different types of organizations. For example, in the public sector, research in Pakistan revealed that ethical leadership significantly increases organizational performance by developing worker trust and engagement, with data from 210 public sector workers showing a positive correlation between ethical leadership and improved service delivery results ([Sabir, 2021](#)). Similarly, according to [Butta et al. \(2016\)](#), in the private sector, Pakistan's banking industry showed that ethical leadership encourages organizational citizenship manners, leading to improved performance such as enhanced customer service and profitability, with structural equation modeling on data from 250 bank employees confirming a partial mediating effect of corporate social responsibility. According to [Banks et al. \(2021\)](#), the perception of ethical leadership is a vital aspect of organizational management, yet its



interpretation and application can differ significantly across diverse organizations. Most existing studies have focused on corporate or educational settings, leaving a void in understanding how ethical leadership influences performance in sports organizations. Therefore, there is a significant contextual gap.

Thirdly, a methodological gap exists. Numerous studies in this area have been conducted primarily using qualitative methods ([Anwar, 2024](#); [Butta et al., 2016](#); [Constandt et al., 2020](#); [Sabir, 2021](#)). However, this study employed a mixed-method approach (both quantitative and qualitative) to authenticate the variables' impacts on each other, thereby strengthening the evidence base within Ethiopian national sport federations.

According to [Garmamo et al. \(2024\)](#); [Tadesse, Asgedom, et al. \(2024\)](#), Ethiopian sports federations have their own unique cultural and operational dynamics and governance. Also, therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by studying the specific ways in which ethical holds significant implications for many stakeholders within Ethiopian national sports federations' management. By clarifying the role of ethical leadership in refining organizational performance, it aims to provide understandings that can help federations implement effective leadership strategies. The findings would be valued for policymakers, coaches, and administrators looking to foster a culture of integrity and responsibility within national sports organizations. Besides, this research contributes to the purpose of this study, which was to fill as

leadership can increase the performance of national sports federations in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, national sports federations are indispensable for the advancement of sports at various levels, yet they often grapple with leadership challenges that decrease their performance. The performance of Ethiopian national sports federations is often compromised by unethical practices, including corruption and maladministration. Regarding these problems, [Garmamo et al. \(2024\)](#) reported that many national sports federations in Ethiopia face problems in governance, resource allocation, and athlete development, despite their strong history in athletics and other sport events. These problems not only deter organizational performance but also negatively affect athletes' development and public insight into sports governance in the countryside. This investigation addressed these problems by investigating how ethical leadership can alleviate these challenges and promote better organizational performance. As a result of the previously mentioned gaps in this research, this study developed the following hypotheses.

Ha1: Leader integrity significantly impacts organizational performance.

Ha2: Fairness significantly impacts organizational performance.

Ha3: Role modeling significantly impacts organizational performance.

Ha4: Communication about ethics significantly impacts organizational performance.



METHODS

Study design

The research adopted an embedded mixed-methods research design to broadly study the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance in Ethiopian National Sports Federations. According to [Ishhtiaq \(2019\)](#), an embedded mixed design mixes qualitative and quantitative data in a single study, with one method embedded within the main framework of the other to increase the depth of results. In this research, the quantitative method helped as the main method, employing structured surveys and performance metrics to find statistical based on the federations' organizational culture. To ensure the generalizability of results, stratified sampling was employed for the quantitative method, dividing the population into strata based on administrative levels and randomly selecting participants from each to replicate the population's variety. According to [Bala et al. \(2023\)](#), the stratified sampling method increases the accuracy of estimates by ensuring representation across main subdivisions, making it ideal for organizational research with diverse populations like sports federations. The sample size was calculated using the Cochran's sample size determination formula, and 296 participants were determined.

For the qualitative method, the purposive sampling method was used to select 15 administrators. According to [Palinkas et al. \(2015\)](#), purposive sampling is effective in qualitative studies for targeting information-rich

relationships, while the qualitative method provided a supportive part through semi-structured interviews to provide appropriate perceptions. This design was selected for its capability to address multifaceted research questions and confirmed a vigorous analysis by combining the generalizability of quantitative data with the richness of qualitative insights.

Population and Samples

In this study, all 35 Ethiopian National Sports Federations, totaling 1273 administrators, were considered for top-level, middle-level, and low-level positions

cases, confirming deep perceptions into multifaceted phenomena. This dual sampling method helped all-inclusive analysis, merging comprehensive, representative data with detailed, context-specific perceptions, thereby increasing the research's validity in Ethiopian sports federations.

Quantitative Data Collection Tools

Standardized questionnaires were directed to 296 administrators, including two validated standardized scales. The 10-item ethical leadership scale, which was developed by [Brown et al. \(2005\)](#) and the 20-item organizational performance standardized scale, which was developed by [Kaplan and Norton \(2015\)](#), were used in this study. The pilot study consisting of ten percent (10%) of study respondents, amounting to 30 administrators, was conducted to ensure clarity and situational appropriateness. Also, the questionnaires were distributed in



person and online through Google Forms, ensuring anonymity.

Qualitative Data Collection Tools

For the qualitative method of this research on ethical leadership and organizational performance in Ethiopian National Sports Federations, semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary data collection tool, basic themes while enabling flexibility to investigate unique contextual aspects of leadership. This interview included open-ended questions and was conducted in private situations, recorded with participants' agreement, and transcribed, lasting approximately 25–30 minutes individually. This qualitative tool complemented the study's quantitative results, providing inclusive consideration of the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance in the specific setting of Ethiopian sports federations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research on ethical leadership and organizational performance in Ethiopian National Sports Federations employed a dual method associated with the embedded mixed research design. Quantitative data from surveys of 296 administrators were analyzed using SPSS version 28, descriptive statistics (mean and percentile) to summarize ethical leadership and performance metrics, and quantile regression to measure their relationships, as reported by [Karanja et al. \(2023\)](#) for comparable leadership research. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 15 administrators were

with 15 administrators purposively selected to provide deep insights. This method is justified by its capability to provide nuanced viewpoints on the ethical leadership practices and organizational performance, which quantitative methods exclusively cannot fully explore. According to [Karatsareas \(2022\)](#), semi-structured interviews let researchers keep attention on analyzed using NVivo and thematic analysis to recognize themes related to ethical leadership and organizational performance challenges. Integration happened through a joint demonstration, combining statistical results with qualitative themes to provide inclusive insight, a method recognized by [Jalaluddin et al. \(2025\)](#) in triangulating mixed-methods data. This method confirmed vigorous, contextually grounded results, increasing the research's validity and pertinency to Ethiopian sports federations.

Results (Quantitative Data)

The 296 participants' demographic details are displayed on graph 1. Each participant signed a voluntary consent form after being informed about the study. The majority of them were men (68.6%), with women making up 31.4%. 33.1% of participants were unmarried, whilst 66.9% of participants were married. About one-third (32.4%) had postgraduate degrees, 16.9% had diplomas, and half (50.7%) had bachelor's degrees. According to the distribution by position level, there were 48.3% of people in low-level jobs, 25.3% in middle-level jobs, and 26.4% in top-level manager positions. It's noteworthy that every administrator (100.0%) said they have



worked for at least six months.

The demographic characteristics of participant

The normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) was conducted (Table 1) on the ethical leadership dimensions (communication about ethics, fairness, leader integrity, and role modelling) and organizational performance data. All ethical leadership dimensions showed normal distributions ($p > 0.05$), supporting the use of parametric tests for these variables. However, organizational performance was not normally distributed (S-W: $p = 0.025$), requiring non-parametric tests for analysis. Therefore, quintile regression analysis was employed to measure the impact of ethical leadership dimensions on organizational performance, confirming robust results despite the non-normality of the dependent variable.

Normality analysis of ethical leadership (leader integrity, fairness, role modeling, and communication about ethics) and organizational performance data.

Table 1

	Tests of Normality			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Statistic	df	Sig.
	Statistic	df	Sig.			
Communication about ethics	0.035	296	.200*	0.995	296	0.480
Fairness	0.038	296	.200*	0.996	296	0.605
Leader Integrity	0.051	296	0.066	0.994	296	0.283
Role Modeling	0.037	296	.200*	0.990	296	0.402
Organizational performance	0.083	296	0.000	0.989	296	0.025

As the analysis of **table 2** demonstrates, **leader integrity** has a statistically significant positive impact on organizational performance (coefficient = 0.037, $p = 0.027$). The 95%

confidence interval (-0.023 to 0.097) includes zero but leans to a positive outcome, suggesting that while the impact is modest, administrators who demonstrate ethical characteristics



contribute to better organizational performance. This result supported hypothesis **Ha1**, the significance of leader integrity in developing organizational performance.

Additionally, fairness (**table 2**) shows a significant impact on organizational performance (coefficient = 0.014, p = 0.010), though the impact size is small. Also, the confidence interval (-0.039 to 0.067) includes zero, indicating some ambiguity, but the low p-value proves its significance. This lines up with hypothesis **Ha2**, suggesting that **fairness** within the Ethiopian national sport federations has an impact on performance.

The role modeling is also the most significant factor, with a stronger positive impact (coefficient = 0.059, p = 0.043) and a confidence interval (0.002 to 0.116) that remains completely above zero. This finding supports

hypothesis **Ha3**, highlighting how administrators who demonstrate ethical behavior directly and significantly improve organizational performance.

Table 2 also demonstrated communication about ethics shows a negative and significant impact (coefficient = -0.036, p = 0.012), with a confidence interval (-0.095 to 0.023) that contains zero but leans towards negative. This unpredicted result challenges hypothesis **Ha4**, signifying that excessive or ineffective ethical communication might hinder organizational performance.

Table 2

Quantile regression analysis summary of the impact of ethical leadership (communication about ethics, fairness, leader integrity, and role modeling) on organizational performance.

Parameter	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Intercept)	2.742	0.205	13.373	291	0.000	2.338	3.145
Communication about ethics	-0.036	0.0299	-1.216	291	0.012	-0.095	0.023
Fairness	0.014	0.0299	0.511	291	0.010	-0.039	0.067
Role Modeling	0.059	0.0289	2.031	291	0.043	0.002	0.116
Leader integrity	0.037	0.0305	1.210	291	0.027	-0.023	0.097

Note: The dependent variable is organizational performance.

The 10-item ethical leadership scale (communication about ethics, fairness, role modeling, and leader integrity) met the standard level for scale reliability with a Cronbach's alpha

of 0.753, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The indistinguishable standardized alpha value shows that all items significantly contribute to measuring the latent variable (ethical leadership), with constant measurement qualities unaffected by item variance.



Table 3

The reliability test (internal consistency) of ethical leadership data

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.753	0.781	10

Table 4 shows that the organizational performance scale, consisting of 20 items, has good to excellent internal consistency, as demonstrated by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.821 (non-standardized) and 0.897 (standardized). These findings show that the scale is a reliable tool for measuring organizational performance, with cohesive items. Generally, this is a strong and reliable measurement for measuring organizational performance.

Table 4

The reliability (internal consistency) test of the organizational performance data

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.821	.897	20

The analysis (table 5) reveals strong discriminant validity between ethical leadership and organizational performance, as demonstrated by a significant but non-perfect correlation ($r = 0.645$, $p < .001$). The two constructs are positively related; their correlation is adequately below 1.0, confirming that they measure different yet interrelated dimensions. The common

variance (41.6%) shows meaningful overlap, but the remaining distinctiveness of each construct shows their discriminant validity. With this sample size ($N = 296$), the results reliably found that ethical leadership and organizational performance are empirically separable.

Table 5

Discriminant validity of ethical leadership and organizational performance data

Correlations

		Organizational performance	Ethical leadership
Organizational performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	296	296
Ethical leadership	Pearson Correlation	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	296

**: p>.05

The convergent validity of the total Composite Score of Ethical Leadership (TCSEL) is fitted as proved by statistically significant positive correlations with almost all components of the construct (Ethical Leadership). The total composite score of ethical leadership shows moderate to strong relationships with Fairness item 2 ($r = .525$, $p < .05$), Leadership items (Lea1: $r = .586$; Lea2: $r = .592$, $p < .001$), Role modeling items (Rm1: $r = .444$; Rm2: $r = .518$, $p < .05$), and Ethical Conduct items (El1: $r = .511$; El2: $r = .457$, $p < .50$). While correlations with communication items were weaker but still

significant (Com1: $r = .205$, $p < .05$; Com2: $r = .140$, $p = .016$), the non-significant correlation with Fairness item 1 (Fa1: $r = .120$, $p = .023$) suggests this specific item may help less consistently to the total composite score of ethical leadership. In general, the outline of moderate/strong correlations confirms that TCSEL effectively converges with core dimensions of ethical leadership.

Table 6

Convergent validity of ethical leadership data

Correlations

		Correlations											
		TCS											
		EL	Com1	Com2	Fa1	Fa2	Lea1	Lea2	Rm1	Rm2	El1	El2	
TCSEL	Pearson Correlation	1	.205**	.140*	0.120	.525**	.586*	.592**	.444*	.518*	.511*	.457*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.016	0.023	0.000	0.00	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	

: strong to moderate relationships **Note: TCSEL (Total composite score of ethical leadership)

Furthermore, the correlation analysis done using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistics

between transformed composite score organizational performance (TCOP) items and all items of organizational performance (Op1 to Op20) demonstrates good convergent validity for



the organizational performance scale, as evidenced by significant positive correlations between the transformed composite score organizational performance (TCOP) data and all individual items (Op1 to Op20) ranging from 0.357 to 0.722 (all $p < 0.05$), suggesting mostly high alignment with the total score.

RESULTS (Qualitative data)

Fifteen administrators from Ethiopian National Sports Federations participated in semi-structured interviews using the qualitative method, which offers knowledge of how ethical leadership dimensions—leader integrity, fairness, role modeling, and communication about ethics—influence organizational

performance. These findings aligned with the quantitative findings, which included organizational performance coefficients, displayed in Table 2.

Table 6: Theme extraction process in NVivo.

Theme	Interview Question	Key Codes from NVivo	Theme Extraction Process	Alignment with Quantitative Results (Table 2)
Leader Integrity as a Catalyst for Trust and Collaboration	How do you demonstrate integrity in your leadership role, and what specific examples show its impact on organizational performance?	Transparency, promise-keeping, trust, collaboration, resource disputes	Coded responses for transparency and trust; grouped into themes via NVivo node hierarchy; word frequency showed "trust" in 12/15 transcripts.	Modest positive impact (coefficient = 0.037, $p = 0.027$, CI = -0.023 to 0.097); trust-building explains effect, variability due to resource constraints.
Fairness as a Driver of Morale and Cohesion	What steps do you take to ensure fairness in decision-making, and how do you believe these efforts influence performance?	Equitable allocation, inclusive processes, morale, conflict reduction, cultural biases	Coded for equitable allocation and morale; NVivo clustering formed the theme; "morale" appeared in 10/15 transcripts.	Small positive impact (coefficient = 0.014, $p = 0.010$, CI = -0.039 to 0.067); morale enhancement aligns, and barriers explain small effect size.



Role Modeling as an Inspiration for Performance Excellence	Can you share an example of how you model ethical behavior and how this has affected team or organizational outcomes?	Accountability, dedication, inspiration, team dynamics, hierarchical culture	Coded for inspiration and accountability; NVivo matrix queries linked to outcomes; "inspiration" in 14/15 transcripts.	Strongest impact (coefficient = 0.059, p = 0.043, CI = 0.002 to 0.116); inspiration drives performance, amplified by cultural hierarchy.
Communication about Ethics as a Double-Edged Sword	How do you communicate ethical expectations, and what challenges have you faced that might affect performance?	Clarity, repetitive content, disengagement, language barriers	Coded for clarity and disengagement; NVivo text search showed "barriers" in 11/15 transcripts; theme formed via clustering.	Negative impact (coefficient = -0.036, p = 0.012, CI = -0.095 to 0.023); disengagement explains effect, variability due to inconsistent methods.

Theme 1

Leader Integrity as a Foundation for Trust and Performance

Administrators constantly emphasized integrity as a foundation for trust, critical for performance. A top-level administrator stated that, "When administrators are transparent and preserve promises, workers have confidence in them, leading to better relationships and enhanced performance." Integrity is also vital in solving resource-related problems and challenges in these sports federations, indirectly increasing performance by reducing disturbance. The qualitative theme of trust-building over transparency explains this inference, as it increases teamwork and productivity. This shows variability due to resource limitations or cultural pressures distinguished by administrators, which may bound the constancy of integrity's impact across situations.

Theme 2

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Fairness as a Factor in Organizational Performance

The managers underscored that fairness, reached via inclusive decision-making, increases confidence and commitment. A middle-level manager stated that, "When we allocated training resources equitably, disagreements between athletes diminished, allowing us to focus on performance goals." This reduction in conflicts improved team cohesion and engagement in federation activities to increase performance. Issues included lack of resources, which occasionally led to perceptions of unfairness or delayed decisions. Participants recommended regular employee meetings and standardized criteria to strengthen fairness, aligning with practices in sports governance. The qualitative method result confirms that fairness develops a positive work environment, but it is impacted by external constraints, showing the modest quantitative effect.



Theme 3

The Power of Role Modeling to Encourage Performance Excellence

Administrators highlighted that leaders who show ethical character set an influential example, especially in Ethiopian national sport federations. A low-level manager stated, "Our administrator always attends training sessions and displays commitment, which encourages coaches to be more dedicated, resulting in prepared athletes." This is directed to concrete results, such as enhanced event forecasting and competitive achievement. Role modeling was seen as developing a supportive environment, with leaders' activities such as openly recognizing errors or resolving disagreements peacefully inspiring employees to match these manners. Participants recommended training programs to increase leaders' role-modeling skills, in line with research on transformational leadership in sports. The strong impact of role modeling was attributed to cultural respect for authority, increasing its impact on team dynamics and performance.

Theme 4

Communication about Ethics as a Double-Edged Sword for Performance

Administrators recognized the significance of clear ethical communication for lining up employees with organizational goals. A top-level manager stated, "Frequently discussing our code of conduct in meetings supports avoiding misinterpretations, keeping everybody focused on our objectives." This clarity was seen as

supportive performance by reducing conflicts. Nevertheless, encounters such as language barriers, repetitive content, and workload pressures led to disengagement. One administrator said that "our monthly ethics consultations sometimes feel like a distraction from our fundamental jobs." Participants recommended using various communication approaches, such as multilingual materials, to advance performance and diminish negative impacts. The negative coefficient (-0.036, $p = 0.012$) recommends a detrimental outcome on performance. The qualitative theme of disrupted clarity due to communication barriers explains this, as ineffective discussions may distract from performance objectives or cause conflicts. The confidence interval including zero (-0.095 to 0.023) shows inconsistency, likely due to inconsistent communication methods across federations, as distinguished by administrators.

Discussion

The results of this research provided persuasive evidence on the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance. The quantitative findings show significant positive relationships amongst key dimensions of ethical leadership—leader integrity, fairness, and role modeling—and organizational performance, while communication about ethics showed an unexpected negative impact. These findings were further supported by qualitative perceptions through which ethical leadership impacts organizational performance in this exclusive cultural and organizational situation.



According to the quantitative analysis, organizational performance is positively impacted by leader integrity (coefficient = 0.037, $p = 0.027$). This result lines up with current research by [Shi et al. \(2025\)](#); [Zarghamifard and Danaee fard \(2020\)](#), who underscored that administrators who show integrity foster trust and empowerment among employees, thereby increasing organizational performance. The qualitative outcome confirmed this, with administrators emphasizing the importance of openness and keeping your word in fostering trust and addressing resource-related issues. However, the confidence interval (-0.023 to 0.097) states variability in this relationship, possibly due to external constrictions such as resource limitations or cultural pressures, as distinguished by [Samagaio et al. \(2025\)](#); [Tadesse, Haddera, et al. \(2024\)](#) in their study on Ethiopian sports federations.

Additionally, fairness had a noticeable but slight positive impact (coefficient = 0.014, $p = 0.010$). This lines up with [Jo and Shin \(2025\)](#); [Olose \(2024\)](#), who state that insights of fairness in decision-making and resource distribution increase employee morale and diminish conflicts. Administrators emphasized equitable resource distribution as a significant impact in reducing conflicts and fostering team cohesion, which was corroborated by the qualitative findings. However, the confidence interval (-0.039 to 0.067) shows that the impact of fairness may be varying, likely due to background encounters such as resource shortage or cultural barriers, as

emphasized by [Chen et al. \(2024\)](#); [Galderisi et al. \(2024\)](#).

Role modeling appeared as the most impactful dimension (coefficient = 0.059, $p = 0.043$), with a confidence interval totally above zero (0.002 to 0.116). This result supports the work of [Karaca and Bektas \(2024\)](#); [Xuan and Yankai \(2025\)](#) who claimed that administrators who show ethical conduct encourage employees to emulate these traits, leading to enhanced performance. The qualitative facts supported this, with administrators describing how leaders' visible commitment and ethical conduct directly motivated employees and improved event consequences. The strong cultural respect for authority in Ethiopian national sports federations, as distinguished by [Tadesse, Haddera, et al. \(2024\)](#), may increase the impact of role modeling in this setting.

Surprisingly, communication about ethics had a negative and significant impact (coefficient = -0.036, $p = 0.012$). This contrasts with [Hajjaj et al. \(2024\)](#), who found that ethical communication lines up employees with organizational goals. The qualitative result provided clarity, displaying that repetitive or poorly executed communication and hard work were perceived as disruptions, mostly when language barriers or workload pressures were present. This recommends that the quality and technique of communication are critical, as ineffective methods may weaken performance, as reported by [Noegroho and Zahra \(2024\)](#); [Tyoso et al. \(2024\)](#).



Conclusion

The quantitative analysis results showed that the main dimensions of ethical leadership—leader integrity, fairness, and role modeling—positively impact organizational performance. Leader integrity showed a modest yet substantial impact (coefficient = 0.037, $p = 0.027$), highlighting its first role in building trust and decreasing distractions. Fairness, though its effect was minor (coefficient = 0.014, $p = 0.010$), contributed to conflict reduction and team cohesion, which increases performance in the Ethiopian national sport federations. Role modeling appeared as the most significant factor (coefficient = 0.059, $p = 0.043$), demonstrating how ethical behavior by leaders directly motivates workers and raises performance penalties. However, communication about ethics unexpectedly had a negative impact (coefficient = -0.036, $p = 0.012$), stating that ineffective or excessive communication may deter performance, mainly when perceived as repetitive or disrupting.

The qualitative results supported these understandings by contextualizing the quantitative findings. Administrators underlined that leader integrity develops trust and transparency, which are serious for resolving resource-related encounters and improving solidarity, which led to performance increment. Fairness was related to equitable decision-making, which decreased fights and encouraged performance. Role modeling was mostly influential in Ethiopian sports federations, where cultural esteem for authority improved its effects,

inspiring employees to emulate ethical behaviors.

On the other hand, communication about ethics was understood as a double-edged sword; while clearness in ethical prospects associated employees with organizational goals, poor accomplishment—such as language barriers—led to disconnection and perceived incompetence.

Limitations

The research was conducted entirely within Ethiopian National Sports Federations headquartered in Addis Ababa, restricting the generalizability of the results to other types of organizations. The unique organizational cultures and operational dynamics of Ethiopian sports federations may not be applicable to federations in other countries or to non-sports organizations.

Practical Implications

The results of this research offered understandings for Ethiopian National Sports Federations by focusing on the critical impact of ethical leadership in increasing organizational performance. Administrators can influence these results to develop integrity, fairness, and role modeling within their leadership, while refining communication approaches to avoid perceived incompetence. Applying targeted training programs to develop ethical leadership skills and reasonable resource distribution frameworks can increase trust, decrease conflicts, and increase overall performance, eventually strengthening the federations' governance and competitive results.

Authors' Contribution

The three authors made their contributions to this



research. The first author theorized the study, designed the research framework, and developed the hypotheses. Primarily responsible for the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, including conducting quantile regression and drafting the initial manuscript, particularly the methods and results sections. The second author participated in data analysis and interpretation, drafting the article, and final approval of the version to be published, and the third author drafted the article and gave final approval of the version to be published.

Conflict of interest declaration

In this research, the authors stated that they have no known competing financial interests or personal affairs that could have looked as if to influence the work reported on the impact of ethical leadership and conflict management in Ethiopian national sports federations.

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board Committee of Addis Ababa

372 University, College of Natural and Computational Sciences meeting held on 01/01/2025, minute 06/2017/2025. On this basis, the researchers received an ethical clearance letter dated January 03/ 2025, with number CNCSDo/355/17/2025.

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