

# Ethical Leadership Behaviour and Quality of Worklife among Professional Telecoms Service Providers Employees: The Mediating Impact of Sustainable Work Environment

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**Abstract.** Ethical leadership behaviour plays a cogent role in strengthening high quality worklife and sustainable workplace. This study investigates ethical leadership behaviour and employee quality worklife, a role of sustainable work environment on employees of telecoms industry in Nigeria. This research employed a longitudinal research design to explore the participants of the study, conducting over three months on three intervals. It administers the study instrument on 405 participants across four telecoms organisations in Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was utilised to examine the study respondents, and adapted several existing scales as research instrument. A partial least square structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was utilised to analyse the obtained data from the study participants. The findings of this study demonstrated a mixed report from the study population. It indicated that ethical leadership behaviour holds way in Nigeria's telecoms industry. However, some elements of ethical leadership practices finds negative significant impact with quality of worklife. One of the dimensions of ethical leadership behaviour observed, people-oriented behaviour has a negative significant impact on quality of worklife among the employees in Nigeria telecoms industry. While other dimensions indicate that ethical leadership is key to promoting integrity, trust, transparency and ethical practices in corporate organisations today. The outcome of the study illustrated that fairness, transparency, integrity/ethical behaviour and ethical awareness influence and impact quality of worklife of employees. The study concluded that organisations should lead with humanity, and make ethics an important aspect of performance evaluation, and reward ethical behaviour. This study has provided a natural means to acknowledge that ethical practices is germane to establish an enduring quality of worklife as well as sustainable workplace in corporate ecosystem. It has transformed the notion that unethical practices may be brandished by management of organisations which always push them into public scandals.

**Keywords:** Ethical Leadership Behaviour, Fairness, Integrity, People-oriented behaviour, Quality of Worklife, Sustainable Work Environment, Transparency,

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ethical leadership behaviour and sustainable work environment are two dichotomous fundamental aspects of research in organizational behaviour and human resource management, with peculiar emphasis on both employee well-being and quality of worklife, organizational performance, and societal impact (Fatima & Khan, 2025). Ethical leadership demonstrates normatively suitable behaviour through individual activities and mutual relationships and strengthens such behaviour among subordinates by way of communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Sreejesh, & Roy, 2024). In the view of Singh and Vashist, (2025) leaders who exhibit ethical behaviour are perceived by essential traits like fairness, integrity, accountability and transparency, which indicate trust and respect in the workplace. In another dimension, quality of work-life is the degree of ability of individuals to fulfil their personal needs through their work experiences in the work environment, including factors like job security, job satisfaction, capacity development, and opportunity for personal growth (Quynh, Alang & Le, 2025).

The connection between ethical leadership and quality of work-life is relevant in today's corporate organisations, where persistent emphasis is being placed on sustainable and humane work environments. Ethical leaders play a cogent role in fostering organizational culture and policies that directly influence individuals' quality of worklife in a workplace. An important area of this is promoting fairness and inclusivity, ethical leaders may likely decrease stress and burdens in the workplace, and by extension promote employee satisfaction (Abdullah, Alias, & Hamid, 2024). In the same manner, by entrenching open communication, and offering support for professional development, they can contribute to an ethical behaviour crusade and become fulfilled among employees. Research in ethical leadership attempts to explore the framework through which ethical leadership impacts the quality of worklife, and the large perspective organizational outcomes in terms of decreased turnover, improved productivity, and corporate reputation (Widiastuti, & Mulyaningsih, 2024). Knowledge of this relationship is important for organisations seeking to establish an environment that will not only influence performance but also prioritise the well-being of their employees. The concept of a sustainable work environment has come up as a possible mediating pathway between leadership behaviour and employee outcomes. A sustainable work environment moves beyond conventional environmental concerns to accommodate social sustainability, including fair labour practices, participatory policies, and enduring workforce quality of worklife. This holistic view of sustainability establishes parameters that strengthen both organizational performance and employee quality of worklife.

However, it is of a major concern that the contemporary workplace encounters unprecedented issues in maintaining a balance between organizational achievement with personnel well-being, especially as global

awareness of sustainable practices and ethical standards continues to increase. It is therefore evidence that the interaction between leadership behaviour and workforce outcomes has increasingly become crucial in organizational study, with ethical leadership occurring as a notable component in bolstering workplace dynamics and organizational culture (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025). Ethical leadership is characterized by manifested dedication to prescribing standardized behaviour through individual actions and shared relationships, and it has gained prominence following several corporate scandals and heightening public scrutiny of corporate practices. These unethical practices and irresponsible behaviour of leaders destroyed the reputation and credibility of some organisations today from the likes of Enron, Cadbury, FannieMae, WorldCom, and HealthSouth among others. Bashi-López & Guevara-Moncada, (2025) was of the view that leaders who enact ethical behaviour establish a reliable atmosphere of trust, transparency, and moral standards, which significantly impact employee attitudes, behaviour and productive outcomes. Nevertheless, the framework in which ethical leadership influences the quality of work-life remains incompletely unclear, predominantly in the context of sustainable work environments. Furthermore, the recent global pandemic and increasing awareness of climate change have emphasized the connection between leadership decisions, sustainable work environment and employee quality of work-life. Corporate firms encounter increasing pressure to embrace ethical leadership conducts and a sustainable work ecosystem while maintaining a greater degree of employee satisfaction and productive work behaviour. This paradigm shift stresses the promptness and importance of investigating how ethical leadership impact the quality of work-life through the lens of sustainable work environments.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical leadership behaviour is fundamental to entrenching a healthy quality of work-life and sustainable work environment provoking improved employee wellbeing, engagement, and optimal organizational outcomes (Khattab & Abdelaliem, 2024). Organisations and people are advocating for ethical leaders to manage the affairs of corporate firms following the failure of some defunct companies in recent times. This has raised many questions about the need to be ethical in the corporate ecosystem. The notable response to the demand for ethical norms is for organizations to be free from legal consequences. This may be the primary reason for leaders to be ethical, but this is not the main reason but part of the reason. There are numerous studies demonstrating that ethical leadership assists in nurturing a better work environment stimulates individual performance in the workplace and by extension creates a sustainable organization (Ahmad, Hashim, & Latiff, 2024). Ethical leadership describes leaders and managers making decisions based on the right thing to do at the right time for the benefit of everyone. Raziq, Wazir, Memon, and Rice, (2025) believe that ethical leaders inspire their members of the team to replicate and model this acceptable behaviour. They assist in building a workplace culture that fosters transparency, collaboration and participation, and a workplace where members of the employees have safety assurance to voice their concerns and worries. Thus, Rai and Koodamara, (2025) their recent research highlighted the connection between ethical leadership and other elements of job characteristics such as skill variety and work autonomy. They discovered an ethical leader robustly impacts subordinates by enabling inclusion in the decision-making process, using rewards to facilitate ethical behaviour. In addition, an ethical leader seeks to improve ethical values in all business transactions and enhance employee independence, and the significance of the work for the subordinates. In furtherance of the impact of ethical leadership importance on employee quality of worklife in the corporate environment, Ahmed (2025) found a significant association between ethical leaders and employees' dedication to workplace progress and accomplishment. Also, a consistent conclusion was reached from the study of Kim and Kim (2024) by arguing that ethical leaders in the executive cadre optimize employee job satisfaction and mid-level managers' commitment to organizational performance. In another dimension, Bates, Beus, and Parkinson, (2025) established that ethical leadership behaviour enables managers to listen to all the stakeholders of the business and be transparent in their conduct. On this basis, the ethical behaviour exhibited by managers earns the respect of the entire workforce and stimulates a solid background for a sustainable corporate business with greater performance (Astiwardhani, Santoso, & Sobandi, 2024). Haeckl & Rege, (2025) also claimed that ethical manifestation among leaders and managers is critical for the efficient functioning of any corporate organization, and not only enhances workforce performance but also boosts employee quality of work-life, employee's self-efficiency and identification with the organization and the brand.

### 2.1. Theoretical Underpinning & Framework

#### 2.1.1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-determination theory evolved from the great work of Deci and Ryan (1985) who first created their ideas in the novel invention of self-determination and intrinsic motivation in human behaviour. They established a theory of motivation that prescribes individuals tend to be motivated by an impulse to develop and gain fulfilment (Laguerre, & Barnes-Farrell, 2025). The theory provides additional theoretical insight by emphasising autonomy, competence and relatedness needs to drive workforce wellbeing. This theory is of the view that the quality of worklife is improved when work environments reinforce these basic psychological needs (Marrie, 2023). Self-determination theory attempts to underscore how employee self-determined affects motivation, on the

basis that an individual feels more energised to take action when the person perceives that his/her attitude will have a resultant impact on the outcome. Self-determination theory advocates that an individual is self-determined whenever his needs for competence, connection and autonomy are achieved (Ghaneapur *et al.*, 2019).

Self-determination theory suggests that employees are inherently driven to advance and accomplish progress, and will fully be dedicated to some uninteresting activities when their meaning and value are known (Annamalai, Bervell, Mireku, & Andoh, 2025). Given this premise, three core psychological needs are explained. First, autonomy is expressed as the avenue to behave with a sense of desire, free will, preference, and self-determination (Raine, Tucker, & Skinner, 2025). The second prominent aspect of SDT underscores the need for individuals to have a fundamental yearning for competence, the perception that people can relate to their environment and is of great importance to such individuals' outcomes (Wang *et al.*, 2025). The third significant component of SDT, suggests that when relatedness increases, individuals encounter satisfaction and supportive social interactions (Núñez-Regueiro, Santana-Monagas, & Juhel, 2025). These desires stimulate autonomous drive, which then denotes that people act out of their own volition, experience, and engagement, and all these emerge from the trajectory of the self-determined person (Zeshan, Rasool, Di Prima, & Ferraris, 2025). In corporate contexts, these psychological needs are critical to explaining workforce motivation, engagement and general work environment functioning.

However, Self-determination theory (SDT) resonates with this study by connecting with the ethical behaviours of leaders in the workplace. The association between self-determination theory and ethical behaviours of leaders are in tandem as it emerges via the framework in which ethical leaders promote these basic psychological needs. Ethical leaders, characterised by their moral standards, fairness and concern for people, establish an ecosystem that naturally promotes employee needs satisfaction. Research by Wang, Howard and Zhong, (2025) demonstrates how ethical leaders foster and stimulate autonomy by involving employees in the decision aspect of the workplace, offering and supporting meaningful preferences, and recognizing their views. Ethical leadership behaviour in relation to self-determination theory enhances competence by providing constructive feedback, nurturing opportunities for skill development, and creating rich performance expectations. The relatedness need is explained through the creation of participatory work environments, open and clear communication pathways, and true concerns for personnel quality of work-life (Hsia, Lin, Lin, & Hwang, 2025).

In the same line of discourse, self-determination theory (SDT) also resonates with the focus of this study, quality of worklife. Thus, the incorporation of self-determination theory with the quality of work-life gathered substantial attention in modern organizational research. The research by Bornemann, (2025) indicated that the fulfilment of basic psychological needs serves as a fundamental predictor of numerous quality of work-life determinants, involving employee job satisfaction, work engagement and psychological well-being. It is perceived that whenever an individual in the workplace experiences a workplace that boosts his fundamental needs, such a person manifests a greater degree of work-life balance, enhanced job satisfaction, and greater organisational dedication, and by extension improves the quality of work-life. This association is therefore notably evident in how need satisfaction impacts an individual's experience of meaningful work, professional growth and workplace relationships.

The integration of self-determination theory (SDT) philosophies to underscore the connection between ethical leadership behaviour and quality of work-life has core practical implications for corporate organisations across the globe. The recent study conducted by King (2025) suggested that organisations improve the quality of work-life by nurturing ethical leaders who acknowledge and promote fundamental psychological needs. This involves training and development for leaders to offer autonomous-supportive supervision, establish avenues for skill development, and encourage impactful workplace interactions. This evidence persistently indicates that such leadership development interventions may lead to enhanced personnel productive work behaviour, decreased employee turnover intentions, promoted job satisfaction, and enduring quality of work-life.

### 2.1.2. Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social identity theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), offers a full spectrum understanding of the theoretical framework explaining how the workforce obtains their sense of self from a particular group and social classifications. Through the organisational lens, social identity theory clarifies how individuals develop their professional identity by identifying with their workplace, leaders and work groups (Hornung, & Bandelow, 2025). SIT prescribes that individuals categorise themselves and others into social classifications, leading to peculiar in-group favouritism and the adoption of group features as part of their self-concept. In other words, social identity theory prepares a framework for understanding intergroup behaviour and intergroup communication based on the shared value individuals place on social group membership, and their preference to perceive their certain social groups in a significant way. This theoretical background has provided a valuable path to understanding the dynamics between ethical leadership behaviour and employee outcomes.

From the trajectory of leadership and work environment, social identity theory provided an insight into how ethical leadership behaviour and the quality of work-life are impacted by social identity dynamics (Reynolds, Subašić, Jones, & Zhou, 2025). Social identity theory resonates with this study, especially with the ethical leadership paradigm. Based on the in-group aspect of the theory, ethical leaders who are perceived as a members

of the in-group may efficiently impact an individual behaviour. It then means that individuals may likely follow ethical standards when having strong feelings of identification with such a leader and the organisation. However, the leader who is not morally engaged with the in-group may be dysfunctional in ethical behaviour in the group. A leader who fails to align with the in-group may encounter challenges in encouraging ethical behaviour. And so subordinates may equally engage in moral disengagement, justifying the unethical behaviour of the leaders when perceive a sense of disintegration from the leader of the organisation. Thus, role modelling in social identity behaviour is crucial especially for ethical leaders in the organisation among the followers (Nason, Bacq, & Gras, 2018). Ethical leaders who symbolise and represent the values and normative values of the group can serve as strong connections and role models, strengthening ethical norms through social identification (Kim, Yoo, & Park, 2025).

Social identity and its integration with quality of work-life show a robust instance in enhancing employee job satisfaction. Hence, a robust mindset of social identity may improve group cohesion, provoking enhanced teamwork, communication, and support, which are essential to the sustained quality of work-life among employees. Also, perceiving fairness among employees from the leadership of the organisation offers an indication of social identification with the corporate organisation. Álvarez-Castillo (2025) argued that the moment an individual strongly identifies with his organisation, he is likely to observe the work environment as fair and just, which by extension enhances job satisfaction and overall employee quality of work-life. In another dimension, ethical leaders who build trust and offer organisational support, which is critical for the enduring quality of work-life promote a sense of belongingness among the employees. Therefore, individuals who perceive trust in the leadership of the organisation are more likely to be secure and satisfied in their work roles and tasks and this improves the quality of work-life among employees. The study of Beatty *et al.*, (2020) also claimed that ethical leaders who empower the workforce and offer autonomy will enhance employee job satisfaction and work-life balance, key dimensions of quality of work-life.

Therefore, social identity theory emphasises how ethical leaders influence employees' identification with sustainable workplace practices. The implication of this theory in connection with this study is that when leaders mirror ethical behaviour consistently with sustainable philosophies, employees are more likely to exhibit these same values. Thus, social identity theory offers a powerful framework for understanding how ethical leadership behaviour and the quality of work-life are influenced by social identity dynamics. The study of Shi (2025) recommends that organisations can improve the quality of work-life by nurturing leaders who know about fostering robust social identities through ethical conduct. This involves training leaders to establish participatory group identities, maintaining persistent ethical behaviours, and demonstrating moral leadership that employees can identify with.

## 2.2. Conceptual Review and Hypotheses Development

### 2.2.1. People-Oriented Behaviour and Quality of Worklife

People-oriented behaviour is characterised by ethical leadership emphasising the safety and comfort, development and satisfying needs of the employees in the workplace. This has been broadly researched in the context of the quality of work-life. It has emerged as a fundamental aspect of efficient leadership functioning and corporate management, with various research highlighting its influence on employee quality of work-life and organisational performance (Dartey-Baah, Issahaku, & Akwetey-Siaw, 2025). Studies consistently suggest that effective leaders who exhibit people-oriented behaviour provide a supportive, and healthy work environment, which largely improves several dimensions of quality of work-life (Van Dierendonck, 2018). A favourable instance in support of this argument is found in the case of a leader whose inclination fosters a sense of trust and psychological safety, which are important in ameliorating stress and advancing job satisfaction. In addition, people-oriented leadership behaviour promotes open two-way communication and involvement, leading to improved teamwork and a healthy work ecosystem (Maes, & Gassert, 2024). Furthermore, the study by Elsaied, (2025) claimed that people-oriented leaders always offer mentorship roles and support their followers at all times thereby reinforcing enhance the quality of work-life. Studies by Cui and Mo, (2025) and AlShammari, Alajmi, & Moorosi, (2025) have established that perceived organisational support, a core element of people-oriented leadership, is robustly associated with a greater degree of employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Likewise, people-oriented leaders encourage employees to fulfil other domains of their work-life, by being responsible for their personal and professional needs (Jordans, Ng'weno, Spencer-Oatey, Nsabiaman, & Jordans, 2020). In general, this approach to leadership not only allows improvement in employee well-being but also reinforces organisational goals by improving employee engagement and taking away burnout in the workplace. Therefore, the extant literature posits that people-oriented behaviour is an essential element in establishing a sustainable quality of worklife, as it tackles both psychological and social needs challenges of the employees, entrenching a robust and supportive work environment. Thus, this study hypothesises here that: *H1: People Oriented behaviour has a positive significant impact on the employee Quality of work-life.*

### 2.2.2. Transparency and Quality of Worklife

Transparency is an essential leadership attribute, as it builds trust in leaders, it serves as the pathway to



create a constructive, high-performance culture (Siahaan & Sihaloho, 2025). A leader who does not understand the nuances of transparency may likely run it difficulty. The act of openness and clarity in communication, and decision-making processes within the workplace has been acknowledged as the core element to advancing the quality of work-life (Aguinis, Li, & DerFoo, 2024). Studies that consistently established the significance of transparency in leadership and work environment outcomes abound in the literature. The study by Khurohman, & Desiana, (2024) consistently proved that transparency in leadership and organisational success has a significant contribution to diverse dimensions of quality of worklife such as job satisfaction, accountability, and trust. A transparent leader who adopts open and a-two way communication with his workforce will reduce ambiguity and unclear effects, thereby reducing turbulent moments at the workplace and optimising the quality of work-life. The study of Dei (2024) also claimed that transparent leaders are more likely to exhibit a positive ethical climate, as employees always have a sense of value and appreciation, which enhances their quality of work-life. In addition, transparency stimulates a culture of trust, which is important for creating robust leader-member interactions and nurturing a supportive work climate. Transparent leadership and corporate work environment have been associated with greater levels of organisational commitment and better productive work behaviour among members of the organisation, as the workforce is likely to feel secure and inspired in a transparent and trustworthy ecosystem. In addition, transparent two-way communication can reinforce better conflict management approaches and collaboration, provoking enhanced teamwork and social integration, and improving a cohesive work environment (Knox, Goodman, Entress, & Tyler, 2025). Therefore, the literature supports the concept of transparency in leadership as a crucial dimension of high-quality of worklife, as it largely fosters inclusive organisational culture and employee wellbeing. Thus, this study hypothesizes here that: *H<sub>2</sub>: Transparency has a positive significant impact on employee Quality of Worklife.*

### 2.2.3. Integrity/Ethical Behaviour and Quality of Worklife

Integrity and ethical behaviour are important dimensions of effective leadership and have been proven to advance the enduring quality of work-life among organisational members (Asmaningrum, Rifki & Wijaya, 2025). Integrity is described as the persistent matching of actions with moral and ethical nuances, which includes compliance with moral values and norms established in the workplace. Empirical evidence consistently underscores that leaders who manifest integrity and ethical behaviour play a major role in improving diverse dimensions of the quality of work-life (Hussain, Zumar, & Ahmad, 2025). Integrity and ethical behaviour are significant for a positive and productive work environment, directly impacting the quality of work-life, creating an atmosphere of trust, a feeling of fairness, and bringing high-quality work-life. Integrity in the organisation comes in many shades but is greatly characterised by a high level of moral standards, work ethics, unbiased judgement, honesty, dependability and loyalty. Patri, Madhavan and Manayath, (2025) argued that a culture of integrity always promotes honesty and accountability in all forms of work. Such culture enhances the reputation, success and accomplishment of organisations and impacts employee quality of work-life. Research consistently upholds the view that employees who exhibit integrity are likely to be perceived as role models and mentors, optimising the opportunity for leadership positions and higher responsibility. In the same line of argument, integrity and ethical behaviour have been seen to highlight the quality of work-life among members of the organisation in recent times (Anand, Sinitsyna, Shantakumar, Lašáková & Oyner, 2025). Ethical behaviour in leaders encourages a positive ethical work climate within the organisation. This is characterised by a shared set of values and standards that prescribe behaviour. The study by Kerpel-Fronius, and Becker, (2025) and Jena, Pattnaik, and Sahoo, (2024) have established that a strong ethical climate reduces unethical behaviour, promotes a harmonious and productive work environment, and impacts the overall quality of worklife. Integrity and ethical behaviour play a pivotal role in the work domain of employees as it provide a sense of fairness and justice in the workplace. MohiU d Din and Zhang, (2023) noted that when employees discover that they have a leader who displays ethical behaviour and fairly treats them well, they are likely to mirror such behavioural patterns and feel satisfied and dedicated to their work. This reduces injustice and conflict, leading to a positive and supportive work environment. Hence, extant literature strengthens the act of integrity and ethical behaviour in leadership are fundamental to enhancing the quality of work-life. Therefore, this study hypothesizes here that: *H<sub>3</sub>: Integrity and ethical behaviour have a positive significant impact on the Quality of Worklife.*

### 2.2.4. Fairness and Quality of Worklife

Personnel perception concerning fairness in the workplace is highly central to their well-being and quality of work-life, as this inspires employees to accomplish more productivity (Feyisara & Arum, 2025). The idea of procedural and distributive justice is an essential factor in impacting the quality of worklife. From time to time, the study establishes the perception of fairness in the work environment positively affects diverse dimensions of quality of work-life such as employee job satisfaction, psychological well-being, social integration, and social relevance of worklife amongst others (Unterhitzenberger, & Lawrence, 2025). Johari, Alam, and Said, (2021) argued that procedural justice an element of fairness, the fairness of decision-making procedure, and distributive justice, which prescribes outcomes of fairness in the workplace, both function in a crucial way to promote the quality of worklife of the workforce in the contemporary work environment. It is believed that an individual who

perceives his organisation as fair is likely to experience greater satisfaction and organisational commitment thereby impacting more on his quality of worklife (Corbett-Nolan, 2025). In addition, perceptions of fairness promote the ability to trust the leadership of the organisation leading to a positive and supportive work ecosystem (Ammari, Howe-Walsh, 2025). Fairness is fundamentally critical to advancing high-quality work-life by stimulating positive attitudes, decreasing negative energies and outcomes in the workplace, and improving overall success. Thus, this study proposes the hypothesis that: *H<sub>1</sub>: Fairness has a significant impact on the Quality of work-life.*

#### 2.2.5. Ethical Awareness and Quality of Worklife

Ethics scholars have examined the importance of ethical awareness on employee productive work behaviour and quality of work-life (Farghaly-Abdelaliem, 2024, Singh, & Vashist, 2025). It has emerged as a critical element in shaping organisational accomplishment and personnel experience in the work environment. Lee, Kim, and Choi, (2023) described ethical awareness as an employee's understanding to acknowledge and be alert to moral issues in the workplace. This cognitive ability drives employees' perception, interpretation and response to ethical situations in their work ecosystem, and impacts employee work experience and quality of worklife (Park, Park, Chang, & Passmore, 2024). Studies have it that a greater degree of ethical awareness among workers and leaders provokes impacted job satisfaction and improved quality of work-life (Migdadi *et al.*, 2024). Research has explored ethical awareness from the perspective of employees' moral inclination and perspective of leadership duty to establish the prerequisites that optimise the opportunity for the employee to advance their quality of work-life (Matabologa, & Flotman, 2024). Ethical awareness nurtures a positive work environment, reduces unethical behaviour, promotes open communication, and trust and provides an avenue to be responsible in the workplace. This largely entrenches improved quality of work-life and high employee job satisfaction. Also, workers who observe that their company as ethically upstanding are likely to encounter psychological well-being and a sense of fulfilment which are core aspects of the quality of worklife. The study by Khalaf (2025) showed that being ethically aware by organisations and leaders is significant in providing a robust quality of worklife. A recent empirical study by Chauhan and Gullapalli, (2025) has demonstrated a clear connection between ethical awareness and particular quality of work-life indicators. The findings showed that individuals with developed ethical awareness experience reduced work conflict and have low issues of trust thereby promoting high job satisfaction. These individuals exhibit a greater ability to establish potential issues early enough by preventing workplace disputes and discord that may adversely affect their quality of work-life. Furthermore, their study indicated that ethical awareness enhances workplace interactions through shared respect and trust, and ultimately advances employee quality of work-life. Hence, this study proposes here that: *H<sub>2</sub>: Ethical Awareness has a significant impact on Employee Quality of Worklife.*

#### 2.2.6. Sustainable Work Environment, People-Oriented and Quality of Worklife

Employee quality of work-life has been linked not just to the work environment but to a more enduring work environment. Thus, a sustainable work environment may promote quality of work-life where the people-oriented behaviour of leaders in corporate organisations fail (Aboobaker, & Shanujas, 2025). However, transparent leadership in an organisation is popularly established as a positive influence on the quality of work-life. Nevertheless, studies have equally reported a negative influence of transparency on the quality of work-life may be fundamentally mediated by the presence of a sustainable work environment (Usha, & Ramkumar, 2025; Sheeran, Sutton, Cooper-Thomas, 2025). A sustainable work environment is defined as one that promotes the social, psychological and physical well-being of the workforce consistently over the long term, entrenching conditionalities that support health, productivity and quality of work-life (Begum, 2025). It was further discovered from the study by Solomon, Kaur, Solomon, von Rosing, and Möck, (2025) that the association between people-oriented behaviour and quality of work-life is meaningfully improved by the mediating effect of a sustainable work environment. People-oriented behaviour is considered as a leader's focus on emotional and social happiness, nurtured by growth and needs satisfaction of the workforce. This is argued to enhance employee job satisfaction, earn the leader's trust, and improve employee quality of work-life. The study by da Silva (2025) further demonstrated that a sustainable work environment plays a key role in mediating the both negative and positive impacts of transparency on the relationship between trust and the quality of work-life of the entire workforce. Empirical evidence that supports the notion that a sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between transparency and quality of work-life is found in the extant literature (Yang *et al.*, 2025). These discoveries indicated the significant impact of transparency on the quality of work-life, and overall welfare are prominent in corporate environments that recognise and appreciate sustainability. Therefore, from the foregoing, evidence from the literature that established that a sustainable work environment positively mediates the interaction between transparency and quality of work-life has been profound. This improves trust, and social camaraderie and heightens commitment, a sustainable work environment reinforces the positive influence of transparency, provoking a more fulfilling and supportive work environment for the workforce. Thus, this study hypothesizes here that: *H<sub>3</sub>: Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between people-oriented behaviour and quality of work-life.*

### 2.2.7. Sustainable Work Environment, Transparency and Quality of Worklife

Transparency in leadership has been perceived and acknowledged in a corporate environment for its significant effect on the quality of worklife, while its interaction is positively enhanced by the mediating role of a sustainable work environment (Akinwale, Kuye & Doddanavar, 2025). On another paradigm, scholars have established one line of thought for the quality of work-life accepted by everyone in the workplace. Thus, quality of worklife is explained as the ultimate satisfaction derived by employees. In other words, it is denoted as employees' satisfaction with various needs via resources, activities, and outcomes in the work environment. Another scholar had it as perceptions of employees' physical and mental health (Risal, Pandey & Bhujel, 2025). Hence, leadership transparency plays a very important role in corporate organisations of today for several reasons crucial to the organisation's survival and accomplishment. Transparency directly contributes to the growth of the business and employee quality of worklife. However, there various studies recently demonstrating the mediating impact of a sustainable work environment on the relationship between transparency and quality of worklife abound (Ra *et al.*, 2025; Siddiqui *et al.*, 2025). The study by Poor and Taylor (2025) established that a sustainable work environment contributed a core mediating role to both quality of worklife and leadership transparency in 21<sup>st</sup> century work environment, especially among Gen-Z. A sustainable work environment, prioritising consistent employee welfare via supportive policies and practises, further strengthens significant influence on the quality of work-life (Fry & Egel, 2025). Also, the integration of transparency and a sustainable work environment invigorates trust culture and psychological safety, which are paramount for effective communication and nurturing teamwork. This synergy also reinforces corporate commitment as workers feel more valued and supported in their private life domain as well as their professional life domain (Jang, 2021). The research conducted by Kayyali (2025) offered profound evidence that a sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between transparency and quality of work-life, causing greater levels of employee productive work behaviour, higher work engagement, and overall employee wellbeing. Therefore extant literature supports the notion that a sustainable work environment impacts an essential mediating effect in enhancing the positive effect of transparency on the quality of worklife. From this foregoing, this study hypothesizes here that: *H<sub>2</sub>: Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between transparency and quality of work-life.*

### 2.2.8. Sustainable Work Environment, Integrity-Ethical Behaviour and Quality of Worklife

A sustainable work environment is everything to employees in the corporate workplace. Recently, a sustainable work environment has been considered as a healthy work ecosystem which encompasses all that employees need to function effectively in an organisation (Shahzad *et al.*, 2025). However, integrity and ethical behaviour are fundamental to establishing an enhanced quality of worklife, as well as mediating the impact of a sustainable work environment positively improves this connection (Pio, 2022). The concept of integrity in positive psychology is perceived as the persistent adherence to moral and ethical principles, and ethical behaviour mandating behaving in consonance with the normative principles, crucial for fostering trust, decreasing conflict, and encouraging a positive organisational culture (Özsungur, 2019). Whereas, a sustainable work environment that emphasizes long-term employee well-being on account of supportive policies and practices further fosters a significant impact of integrity and ethical behaviour on the quality of work-life (Uppathampracha & Liu, 2022). For instance, a sustainable work environment that offers mental health support, and career development opportunities will likely reduce burnout, and advance employee job satisfaction, and overall well-being in the workplace (Khushk, Zhiying, Yi & Liu, 2025). Santiago-Torner, (2025) argued that a healthy work environment acts as a mediating variable between integrity ethical awareness, and quality of work-life by demonstrating that perception of the promotion of ethical behaviour and sustainability practices, positively impacts employees' overall quality of work-life, thereby bolstering the relationship between personal ethical conduct and job satisfaction, crucially, a healthy sustainable work environment facilitates positive impacts of ethical behaviour on employees' work experience. Recent empirical evidence by Kyambade & Namatovu, (2025) establishes that a sustainable environment mediates the link between integrity ethical attitude, and quality of work-life, provoking robust excellent job satisfaction, reduced unethical practices, and increased organisational success. In conclusion, the literature supports the idea that a sustainable work environment serves as a mediating variable in improving the impact of integrity and ethical practices on the quality of worklife, promoting a supportive and morally healthy work environment that benefits both employees and the organisation at large (Altahat & Atan, 2018; Santiago-Torner, Corral-Marfil, Jiménez & Tarrats-Pons, 2025). Therefore, against this background, this study proposes a hypothesis here that: *H<sub>3</sub>: Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between integrity/ethical behaviour and quality of work-life.*

### 2.2.9. Sustainable Work Environment, Fairness and Quality of Worklife

Fairness among members of the organisation has become a critical currency to enhancing the quality of the work-life domain of the workforce in today's business success. Fairness has further turned into the foundation for building a virile and trustworthy relationship among employees and the leadership of the organisation. It has gained significant attention in human resource management research, and positive psychology research, with a sustainable work environment emerging as an essential mediating element. Bashir, Memon, and Muenjohn,



(2024) argued that with a perception of fair treatment by the employees in the workplace, such an individual has a sense of ownership and security which by extension establishes a ground for a sustainable work environment. The study by Hossain, Tahat, and AbuGhazaleh, (2024) also claimed that the link between fairness and quality of work-life is positively supported by the mediating influence of a sustainable work environment. It has been discovered that a sustainable work environment includes employee development opportunities that offer chances for learning and growth and largely foster a sense of fairness and career progression thereby enhancing the quality of worklife (Sabino, Goncalves, Cesário, 2025). A recent study by Iqbal, and Parray, (2025) provides significant evidence for the mediating impact of a sustainable work environment on the link between fairness and quality of worklife in the corporate workplace. Their discovery portends that organisational fairness drives the quality of worklife directly and indirectly through the nurturing of sustainable work practices. It is believed that when corporate firms implement fair policies and procedures, they ultimately establish situations and avenues, encouraging to development of sustainable work environments, which in turn improve diverse areas of quality of worklife which include career development opportunities, and overall job satisfaction (Cugueró-Esofet, Ficapal-Cusí and Torrent-Sellens, 2019). A recent meta-analytic study by Kanojia and Dhiman, (2025) synthesises data from several studies demonstrating the significant mediating role of a sustainable work environment. Their investigation indicates that firms that implement fair practices experience high improvements in the quality of worklife when fair practices are backed up by sustainable work environment initiatives. The research specifically underscores how sustainable work environments improve the positive impact of fairness on individual outcomes through enhanced working conditions, better resource allocation, and improved organisational support systems. The practical implications of this mediating role of a sustainable environment has been further explored in the intervention research by Cruz, Dias, Pereira, Costa, and Gonçalves, (2025). The study establishes that organisations will enhance the quality of work-life by applying fair practices that particularly emphasize sustainability in work environments. Therefore, from this foregoing, this study here postulates that: *H<sub>5</sub>: Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between fairness and quality of work-life.*

#### 2.2.10. Sustainable Work Environment, Ethical Awareness, and Quality of Worklife

Ethical awareness and quality of work-life are now Siamese twins in the workplace. Ethics in business is seen as principles that tailor employee behaviour and conduct towards making the best decisions that have the best interest of the common good (Bashi Lopez, Guevara Moncada, 2025). While ethics is crucial in an individual's life, it is an essential thing in the business environment. Thus, awareness of ethics in the corporate world is a critical framework to optimise a sustainable work environment and employee quality of worklife (Tarkang Mary, & Ozturen, 2019). Ethical awareness prevents corrupt organisations and scandals as the organisations are more concerned about the well-being of their workforce and that of the environment. Ethical awareness creates an enduring work environment and provokes quality of worklife (Jia *et al.*, 2022). The link between ethical awareness and quality of work-life has thus attracted heightened attention in the organisation with a sustainable work environment evolving a practical mediating cord. The study by Batool, Mohammad, and Awang, (2022) indicated that ethical awareness directly drives corporate outcomes and also impacts a sustainable work environment. Their study illustrated that employees with a greater level of ethical awareness are likely to champion and contribute to healthy and sustainable workplace practices, which equally strengthens the quality of work-life. In the same line of discourse, the study conducted by Saleem *et al.*, (2021) provides robust evidence for mediating the impact of a sustainable work environment on the connection between ethical awareness and quality of work-life. The findings demonstrated that ethical awareness contributes to the development of sustainable workplace practices via improved environmental consciousness and long-term organisational thinking. The mediating role of a sustainable work environment has been further demonstrated in the study of Yu *et al.*, (2025) whose findings highlight there core pathways through which an enduring work environment mediates the link between ethical awareness and quality of work-life. One, ethical awareness stimulates environmental sustainability practices that establish sustainable workspace, arousing enhanced physical and emotional well-being. Second, it promotes social sustainability initiatives that advance workplace interactions and professional development opportunities. Lastly, it entrenches economic sustainability measures that promote fair compensation and secured jobs, contributing to the overall quality of worklife. A recent longitudinal study by Yasin (2021) established progressive dynamics of the mediating interaction. Their outcome reveals that ethical awareness influences the development and application of sustainable workplace practices, and in turn, enhances diverse areas of quality of worklife. The study specifically highlights the enduring dedication to workplace sustainability, driven by ethical awareness, which creates cumulative positive impacts on employee quality of work-life. Therefore, this study hereby postulates the hypothesis that: *H<sub>6</sub>: Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between ethical awareness and quality of work-life.*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study utilised a longitudinal research design to survey the telecommunication employees in Nigeria. This design involves observing the same set of employees over time to discover variations in their responses and



characteristics (Norris *et al.*, 2025). The justification for using this research design is that it affords the researcher to study the telecommunication industry employees' process changes or remain stable over time. Another major reason for longitudinal design is that it is correlational research that assists in observing and obtaining data on many variables without any manipulation or influence from the researcher (Hopwood, Bleidorn, & Wright, 2022). Thus, the study was conducted at three-month intervals over nine months in three trials. The outcome of the survey indicates little or no changes from the participants. The rationale for this design is that it fosters an ability to highlight a sequence of events, decreasing recall bias, and help to establish a cause-and-effect association, and offering a more accurate picture of how variables emerge across a certain period, which is not feasible with a single snapshot such as cross-sectional design (Gröschl, & Wilches, 2025).

### 3.2. Study Population and Sample Size

The study population is Nigeria's telecommunication industry comprised of MTN Communication Plc., Airtel Nigeria Networks Limited, Globacom Limited, 9-Mobile (Emerging Markets Telecommunication Service Limited), and MainOne Cable Limited. The population value of MTN Nigeria Com PLc is around 1824 employees. It is a Nigeria telecommunications company that builds and operates mobile network systems. Currently, Globacom Limited has 4456 staff strengths to its credit Airtel Nigeria Networks Limited has 4805 employees on its payroll, 9-Mobile has 1917 employees to its advantage and MainOne Cable Limited has 669 employees. The value of all the chosen telecom service providers in Nigeria altogether stands at 13,671. Therefore, the sample size was obtained by taking 5% of the total population, which is 683, of the entire chosen telecom organisations following the suggestion of Roscoe (1975) who recommended that a suitable sample size can be taken between 1% and 10% of the aggregate survey population and it is reliable and acceptable for sample size adequacy. It is sufficient to forecast the robust outcome of scientific research studies. Roscoe (1975) further maintained that it strengthens the enhancement of precision rate and assists in achieving tolerable and adequate error margins as low as 1% which is significant in social science and scientific research surveys.

### 3.3. Sample Strategy

The study employs a simple random sampling strategy to distribute the research instrument to the sampled employees of telecom organisations established. The justification for using simple random sampling is that it is implemented seamlessly, offering an impartial and fair representation of the entire population (Jensen, Whiles, & Mirza, 2025). This ensures every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be chosen and is considered a fair approach to taking a sample. Reducing the risk of sampling prejudice, and making it suitable for making accurate inferences about a larger population (Yadav *et al.*, 2019). It is a transparent process, enabling an easy explanation of how the sample is chosen.

### 3.4. Measurement Scale and Data Collection Instrument

To investigate ethical leadership and ethical awareness in an organisation, the study adopted the ethical leadership questionnaire scale (ELQ) created by Hoogh and Colleagues (2008) and later for Nigeria's corporate work environment. The scale originally consisted of 23 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale and explored two core leadership dimensions: ethical leadership, which measures morally appropriated ethical behaviour, and integrity behaviours with a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.79$ , and ethical awareness which measures ethical culture and moral reasoning with 5 question items (reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

The measurement scale for people-oriented behaviour was adapted following the suggestions of Lawrence, Lenk and Quinn, (2009) of people-oriented leadership scale that measured leadership competing values framework managerial behaviour instrument with a 9-items address people-oriented leadership behaviour. The original scale was in Spanish version but culturally adapted through the forward-back translation of Leon, Burga-Leon and Morales (2017) and replicated Lawrence *et al.* 2009 original scale and finally used 5 relevant modified items in the original scale.

The Fairness and leadership transparency were measured through an adapted scale from Nguyen, Simkin, Klaus and Chen, (2015). The scale was designed to measure employee perceived fairness in their behaviour towards their leaders in the organisation. The items assessing consistency, impartiality and equitable treatment across various situations and in the workplace. The scale measures leadership fairness quality by evaluating procedural fairness (process followed), distributive fairness (allocation of resources), and interactional fairness (respectful communication). The scale had a five-point Likert scale further evaluating employee perception of fairness in the workplace, assessing leadership behaviour in terms of fairness, and exploring how people perceive fairness in social relationships. The original scale had 13 question items but adapted and utilised 5 items for fairness quality and 5 items for transparency.

For a sustainable work environment, a short measurement scale was adapted from the previous study of Rossberg, Eiring and Friis, (2004), a work environment scale (WES) with 10 items assessing the workplace mistreatment and happiness in the working environment. The measure short scale of WES originally measured workplace social environments, contrasting employees' and managers' perceptions of their work group, and making a comparison of present and preferred work environments. The scale was used to facilitate counselling

and career planning. The scale measures three dimensions of the work environment in a sustainable workplace, evaluating employees' views of the work environment, ideal workplace goals and values employee holds, and lastly assessing individual employee work environment expectations. The study collapsed the 10 items into 8 items to measure secure jobs and healthy work conditions.

Lastly, the quality of the work-life scale was measured following the suggestions of Walton (1975) on doctors' work-related quality of life (WRQoL) a dimension of participation, social integration, growth and development, supervision, pay and workplace benefits. The original scale was 14 items on a Likert scale and further modified to fit into the corporate work environment. Six items were modified and utilised from the scale and overall all the scales were brought together to form a single instrument for this study. Eventually, this study created a single questionnaire consisting of 44 items to measure all the identified variables of the study.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

This study employed a structural equation model (SEM) analysis to investigate the variables indicators, latent constructs and observed variables of ethical leadership behaviour dimensions, quality of work-life and sustainable work environment. The study utilised a partial least square (PLS) variance-based SEM to evaluate the data obtained from the telecoms industry. The justification for using SMARTPLS SEM is because of its ability to evaluate links and relationships among the latent variables of interest in a large data category and investigate data with a large pool of multicollinearity (Becker, *et al.*, 2023). The choice of PLS-SEM lies in its ability to explain multiple statistical links concurrently through visualisation and model validation. It assists in understanding complex models, where prediction is the core emphasis and its capability to address both formative and reflective constructs (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Participants Demographic Profile

**Table 1:** Participants' Demographic Characteristics.

Employee Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex			Departments/Units		
Male	205	51.0	Marketing	80	19.8
Female	200	49.0	Human Capital Dev.	75	18.5
Age			Internal Control/Finance	70	17.3
21 – 25 years	80	19.8	ICT / IT	75	18.5
26 – 30 years	70	17.3	Risk Management	55	13.6
31 – 35 years	65	16.0	Corporate Affairs & Communication	50	12.3
36 – 40 years	110	27.2			
41 – 45 years	50	12.3	Hierarchy/Levels		
46 years and above	30	7.4	Junior Staff	76	18.8
Education			Management Trainee	124	30.6
National Diploma	72	17.8	Supervisory Manager	120	29.6
Bachelors	195	48.1	Assistant Manager	40	9.9
Masters Degree	80	19.8	Senior Manager	45	11.1
Professionals	58	14.3			
Work Experience					
1 – 5 years	75	18.5			
5 – 10 years	105	25.9			
10 – 15 years	85	21.0			
15 – 20 years	80	19.6			
20 years and above	60	14.8			
Income (Annual in Naira)					
1-3 million	120	29.6			
3-5 million	150	37.0			
5-10 million	110	27.2			
10 million and above	25	6.2			

Table 1 shows respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, demonstrating their sex, male and female in the telecom industry, and age category ranging from 21 years to above 46 years of age. The educational background of the participants portends that their educational qualifications ranged from national diplomas, bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees and professional certifications. Personnel levels in the organisation also ranged from junior employee category to senior manager position/grade. There are also units and departments of the participants along with their yearly income. The participants' work experience ranged from 5 years to 20 years category.

**Table 2:** Inter-Item Correlation Analysis and Discriminant Validity.

Constructs	POP	ETWA	INETB	TRP	FE	SWE	QWC
POP	0.73						
ETWA	0.71	0.72					
INETB	0.63	0.57	0.76				
TRP	0.62	0.65	0.71	0.73			
FE	0.68	0.58	0.66	0.59	0.72		
SWE	0.64	0.62	0.70	0.66	0.70	0.76	
QWC	0.68	0.66	0.67	0.63	0.61	0.57	0.71
Mean	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.3	4.3
SD	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.6

**Note:**  $P < 0.01$ , People-Oriented Behaviour = POB; Ethical Awareness = ETAW; Integrity/Ethical Behaviour = INETB; Transparency = TRP; Fairness = FE; Sustainable Work Environment = SWE; Quality Worklife = QWC; Standard Deviation = SD. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are in bold diagonal form, AVE for individual construct is higher than the corresponding inter-correlation construct square, indicating discriminant validity is achieved.

Table 2 indicates the discriminant validity of the instrument, indicating a measure of elements of the scales meaning that they are unrelated. This shows a fit of the research instrument as it measures what the study intends to measure appropriately. Also, the average variance extraction (AVE) which is in bold in Table 2 means that all the square roots of the respective AVE are above the correlation values with other constructs in the model (REF). Hence, the intercorrelation items also demonstrate that the model is fit and discriminant validity is achieved.

**Table 3:** Reliability and Validity Fit Indices for Estimating Ethical Leadership, Sustainable Work Environment and Quality of Worklife, (Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability).

Constructs	Indicators	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	AVE	rho_A
People-Oriented Behaviour	POB1	0.878	0.928	0.734	0.928
	POB2	0.835			
	POB3	0.802			
	POB4	0.812			
	POB5	0.801			
Ethical Awareness	ETAW1	0.876	0.924	0.725	0.924
	ETAW2	0.876			
	ETAW3	0.827			
	ETAW4	0.860			
	ETAW5	0.831			
Fairness	FE1	0.864	0.938	0.729	0.939
	FE2	0.849			
	FE3	0.827			
	FE4	0.829			
	FE5	0.831			
Integrity/Ethical Behaviour	INETB1	0.916	0.932	0.766	0.924
	INETB2	0.804			
	INETB3	0.753			
	INETB4	0.779			
Transparency	TRP1	0.930	0.924	0.725	0.925
	TRP2	0.830			
	TRP3	0.805			
	TRP4	0.795			
Sustainable Work Environment Healthy Working Condition			0.949	0.763	0.977
	HWC1	0.784			
	HWC2	0.783			
	HWC3	0.763			
	HWC4	0.769			
Secured Job	HWC5	0.755	0.896	0.734	0.879
	SECJ1	0.791			
	SECJ2	0.796			
	SECJ3	0.832			
	SECJ4	0.808			
Quality of Worklife	Qual Work Life1	0.788	0.944	0.718	0.945
	Qual Work Life2	0.807			
	Qual Work Life3	0.805			
	Qual Work Life4	0.801			
	Qual Work Life5	0.800			
	Qual Work Life6	0.810			

**Note(s):**  $\lambda$  = Factor loading,  $\alpha$  = Cronbach alpha, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, rho\_A = Composite Reliability.

Table 3 illustrates convergent and composite validity, the analysis and the instrument revealed a satisfactory convergent validity for ethical leadership, sustainable work environment and quality of work-life construct with an Average Variance Extration (AVE) of 0.70 above the threshold of 0.50, and acceptable composite reliability of 0.90, showing that the items measuring this constructs are internally consistent and adequately captured the



underlying concept.

#### 4.2. Analysis of Data and Test of Hypotheses

**Table 4.**

PLS-Structural Equation Model (SEM) Path Analysis Result.

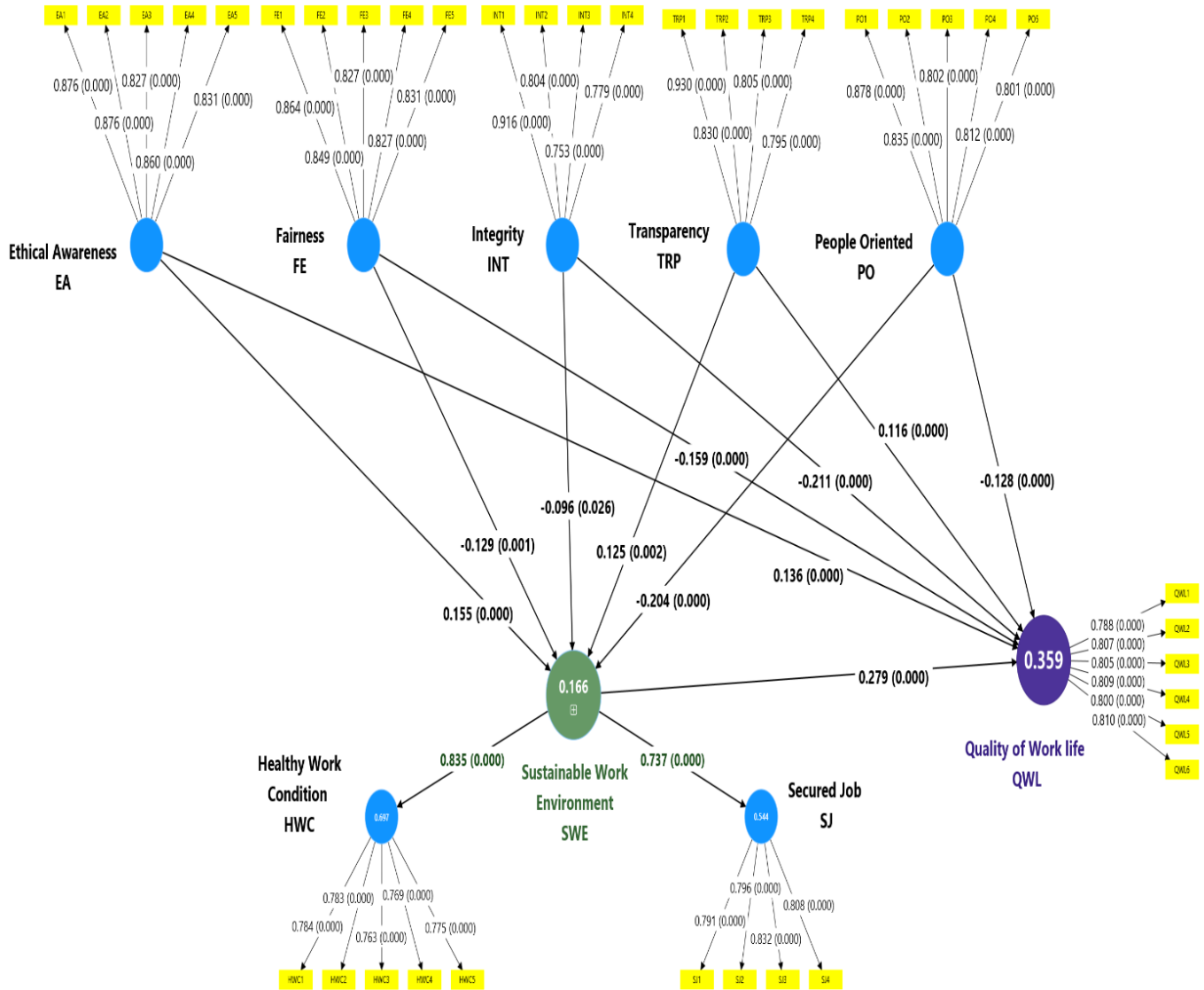
Hypotheses	Path Description	Estimates ( $\beta$ )	SE	CR	P	Acceptance Level
H1	POB $\rightarrow$ QWL	-0.128	0.207	2.816	0.001	Accepted / Significant
H2	TR $\rightarrow$ QWL	0.116	0.226	2.345	****	Accepted / Significant
H3	INETB $\rightarrow$ QWL	0.211	0.208	3.111	****	Accepted / Significant
H4	FE $\rightarrow$ QWL	-0.159	0.108	3.136	****	Accepted / Significant
H5	ETAW $\rightarrow$ QWL	0.136	0.408	2.441	****	Accepted / Significant

**Source:** NB: POP = People-Oriented Behaviour; TR = Transparency; INTETB = Integrity.Ethical Behaviour; FE = Fairness; ETAW = Ethical Awareness.

The hypotheses are shown in Table 4 and Table which demonstrates the link and association between the variables of interest against the quality of work-life of individual employees on H<sub>1</sub> to H<sub>5</sub>. H<sub>1</sub> investigates that leadership people-oriented behaviour has a positive significant impact on the employee quality of work-life. The outcome of this study shows that people-oriented behaviour has a negative impact on the quality of worklife of employees of the telecoms industry in Nigeria with a regression value of ( $\beta = -0.128$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), this illustrates that the hypothesis is significant but the result had an adverse turnout that people-oriented behaviour had a negative influence on employee quality of work-life. It portends a negative relationship between people-oriented behaviour and quality of work-life. This result implies that people-oriented behaviour in the telecoms industry is not robust and therefore it does not offer the expected impact on employees' quality of worklife.

The second hypothesis, H<sub>2</sub>, Transparency has a positive significant impact on employee Quality of Worklife produced a regression value of ( $\beta = 0.116$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which indicates a 11.6% weak but positive significant relationship with quality of work-life. The result demonstrates a positive significant interaction with employee quality of work-life. This implies that there exists transparency in the leadership framework of the management of Nigeria's telecoms industry and this is reflected in the employee quality of work-life.

The third hypothesis, H<sub>3</sub>, Integrity and ethical behaviour have a positive significant impact on the Quality of Worklife was significantly true with a regression value of ( $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), this indicates that within the ethical leadership framework of Nigeria's telecoms industry. It shows that 21.1% interaction with quality of worklife on weak correlation. They have a low degree of integrity and ethical behaviour and this impact on employee's quality of work-life. This shows that there is evidence of integrity and an element of ethical behaviour among the leadership of the telecoms industry in Nigeria. The fourth hypothesis, H<sub>4</sub>, Fairness has a significant impact on the Quality of work-life has a regression value of ( $\beta = -0.159$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), showing a negative weak relationship but significance with the quality of work-life in the telecoms industry. This means that fairness has a 15.9% relationship with the quality of work-life and it is a significant model. The fifth hypothesis, H<sub>5</sub>, Ethical Awareness has a significant impact on Employee Quality of Worklife with a regression value of ( $\beta = 0.136$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), this illustrates that ethical awareness is positive and is significant to impact on the quality of work-life. However, ethical awareness reports a 13.6% weak relationship with the quality of work-life. The implication of this is that the leadership of the telecom industry are ethically sensitive and aware but not robust enough meaning that advocacy on this is needed for improvement.



**Figure 1:** Partial Least Square (PLS) Structural Equation Model (SEM) Analysis.

**Table 5:** Mediating Analysis Results – (Bootstrapping) of Sustainable Work Environment on the Relationship Between Dimensions of Ethical Leadership and Quality of Worklife

Hyp.	Path	D-Effect	In-Effect	T-Effect	P-Value	LLCI	ULCI	Mediation Type
H6	POB → SWE → QWL	-0.128	-0.057	-0.204	0.001	0.341	0.546	Full Mediation
H7	TR → SWE → QWL	0.116	0.035	0.125	0.000	0.245	0.421	Partial Mediation
H8	INETB → SWE → QWL	0.211	-0.027	-0.096	0.020	0.486	0.212	Partial Mediation
H9	FE → SWE → QWL	-0.159	-0.108	-0.129	0.002	0.456	0.552	Partial Mediation
H10	ETAW → SWE → QWL	0.136	0.043	0.155	0.000	0.724	0.312	Partial Mediation

**Source:** NB: POB = People-Oriented Behaviour; TR = Transparency; INETB = Integrity.Ethical Behaviour; FE = Fairness; ETAW = Ethical Awareness; SWE = Sustainable Work Environment; QWL = Quality of Worklife.

Hypothesis six,  $H_6$ , Sustainable work environment plays a major mediating role in the relationship between people-oriented behaviour of ethical leadership and quality of work-life. From the finding as depicted in Table 5, the mediating analysis revealed that a direct weak negative relationship between people-oriented behaviour with quality of work-life with values ( $\beta = -0.128$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and indirect relationship value shows ( $\beta = -0.057$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), the total effect illustrates a stronger yet weak relationship ( $\beta = -0.204$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), since the relationship shows a negative on a direct association with quality of work-life, and now it recorded significant mediating impact. It then implies a full mediating role of a sustainable work environment on the relationship between people-oriented behaviour and quality of work-life.

Hypothesis seven,  $H_7$ , Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between transparency and quality of work-life. The finding of this hypothesis depicts a positive relationship between transparency and quality of work-life, indicating that a sustainable work environment plays a cogent role in this pathway, there is a direct relationship between transparency and quality of work-life with a regression value of ( $\beta = 0.116$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), with an indirect impact between the two variables with the regression value ( $\beta = 0.035$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), having a total effect regression value is ( $\beta = 0.125$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). This implies that the sustainable work environment has a direct relationship with the quality of work-life, and also plays a partial mediating impact between transparency and quality of work-life in Nigeria's telecoms industry.

Hypothesis eight,  $H_7$ , Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between integrity/ethical behaviour and quality of work-life. The finding illustrates that there is a relationship between integrity/ethical behaviour and quality of work-life among the leadership and employees of quality of work-life. The direct relationship integrity/ethical behaviour and quality of work-life does not have a positive significance ( $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), while an indirect effect was observed ( $\beta = 0.027$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). The total effect is discovered to be significant ( $\beta = -0.096$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). Hence, the study concluded that as there exists a significant direct impact, the sustainable work environment offers a partial mediating role in linking transparency to the quality of worklife. Therefore, the study concludes that a sustainable work environment has a partial mediating impact on the relationship between transparency and quality of worklife.

Hypothesis nine,  $H_9$ , Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between fairness and quality of work-life. The finding indicates that a sustainable work environment has a partial mediating impact on the relationship between fairness and quality of work-life. The finding depicts a significant direct relationship between sustainable work environment and quality of work-life ( $\beta = -0.159$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), an indirect effect ( $\beta = -0.108$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), and a total effect ( $\beta = -0.129$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). Thus, plays a partial mediating role, highlighting its impact on improving the quality of work-life. The last hypothesis ten,  $H_{10}$ : Sustainable Work Environment mediates the relationship between ethical awareness and quality of work-life. The finding establishes a direct relationship between ethical awareness and quality of worklife is significant ( $\beta = 0.136$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ), and a significant indirect effect is discovered ( $\beta = 0.043$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ) and a total effect of ( $\beta = 0.155$ ,  $P < 0.000$ ). Therefore, this study concludes with the hypothesis that a Sustainable work environment partially mediates the relationship between ethical awareness and quality of work-life among the leadership and the employees of Nigeris' telecoms industry.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

The study established that leadership people-oriented behaviour has no positive significant impact on the employee quality of work-life in the telecoms industry in Nigeria. The study emphasizes that people-oriented leadership behaviour has a negative effect on employee quality of worklife. This implies that management of the telecommunication seldom focuses on nurturing interactions with the workforce. The finding of the study indicates that the leadership may not prioritise effective relationships with the entire workforce which accounts for the negative significant impact recorded on the employee quality of work-life. The finding of this study finds a similar stance to the study of Elsaied, (2025) whose discovery indicated that some leaders of corporate firms do not appreciate workplace camaraderie that will foster efficient work interaction and functioning teamwork.

The second hypothesis demonstrated that transparency has a positive significant impact on employee quality of work-life. The finding of this study demonstrated that leadership transparency is essential in exploring relationships, trust outcomes and largely general organisational accomplishment and by extension employee quality of worklife in Nigeria's telecoms industry. The study indicated that transparency in leadership has stimulated increased collaboration and bonding between leaders and the employees in the telecoms organisations investigated. The finding further depicted that transparency in leadership of the telecoms has shown persistent direction with their leaders being accountable, implying that management of Nigeria telecoms are transparent and responsible, they are efficient in their use of the company's resources. However, the finding of this study takes the same expression as the study of Knox, Goodman, Entress, and Tyler, (2025) whose results claimed that transparency of leadership has enabled the workforce to build a reputable organisation and successful brand and at the same time strengthen employee engagement and commitment towards organisational performance.

The third hypothesis however indicated an adverse significant impact of integrity/ethical behaviour on the quality of work-life of employees. The finding of this study on this hypothesis showed that a crucial philosophy of ethical leadership which means truthfulness and honesty is found to be in positive form and this has a resultant effect on the quality of work-life of employees. This finding implies that integrity is an avenue for good governance and practices and this positively impacts employee dedication and overall quality of work-life to thrive in the workplace. This outcome finds a similar expression with the study of Hussain, Zumar, and Ahmad, (2025) whose finding demonstrated that the integrity of cross-sectional leaders examined in some parts of the African continent has a high tendency on moral conduct and evidence of consistently adhering to ethical standards and established shared values of conduct linked therewith-among South African employees. The fourth hypothesis demonstrates that fairness has a negative significant impact on the quality of work-life of employees across the investigated telecom companies in Nigeria. The finding of this study illustrated that fairness is one of the crucial elements of ethical leadership which has provoked the treatment of employees equally and with a certain measure of respect, irrespective of their background, race or situations. This has promoted trust and greater cooperation and support among the telecoms employees in Nigeria. The outcome of this study further demonstrated the fairness triangle experienced by the workforce that articulates their dimensions of fairness as relational, procedural and substantive. The outcome of this evaluation maintains a similar position to the study of Corbett-Nolan, (2025) whose study provided an experience of equal opportunities for career growth and open communication between leaders and personnel. The fifth hypothesis also portends that ethical awareness has a



significant impact on the quality of work-life of employees in Nigeria's telecoms industry. The implication of this is that leaders and employees in Nigeria's telecoms industry acknowledge and actively consider the moral implications of their decisions and actions. It assists in the fostering of a culture where ethical behaviour is their goal and they always prioritise such ethical behaviour. They practice leadership by example, and they nurture training programmes to highlight and tackle potential ethical issues. In the same line of thought, this finding holds a similar position to the study of Singh, and Vashist, (2025) whose findings showed that a robust ethical image attracts top talents and promote employee dedication towards accomplishing organisational performance. The study further claimed that ethical behaviour builds trust within the workforce and the entire stakeholders of the organisation.

The sixth hypothesis demonstrated that a sustainable work environment will mediate the relationship between people-oriented behaviour and quality of work-life. The finding illustrates that a sustainable workplace enables the workforce to achieve living and working conditions that strengthen employee in engaging and maintaining work throughout their work domain and other social life domains. The finding shows that working conditions have fostered transformation that eliminates the toxics that discourage or prevent employees from remaining or engaging in the industry. The finding of this study takes a similar position to the study of Sheeran, Sutton, and Cooper-Thomas, (2025) whose study demonstrated that robust social camaraderie and mutual respect within the employees and leaders of organisations will entrench collaboration and a supportive work environment. Also, the seventh hypothesis sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between transparency and quality of work-life. It is an indication that Nigeria's telecoms industry seems healthy and positive, and the employees feel comfortable in the work environment. This finding implies that the work environment is sustainable which emphasizes employee growth, which boosts employees' mental and physical health, and safety. This finding also maintains a symmetrical position with the recent study by Akinwale, Kuye and Doddanavar, (2025) whose discovery established that sustainability mediates career opportunities and fosters professional development and employee satisfaction, assisting in skill-building.

The eighth hypothesis, sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between integrity/ethical behaviour and quality of work-life. The finding invalidates that a happy workplace environment as the positive atmosphere of Nigeria's telecoms industry is a work ecosystem whereby employees feel valued, supported and engaged in their work, and healthy work-life balance. Thus, a sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between integrity and quality worklife, as this provokes increased job satisfaction and productive work behaviour. This finding also maintains a symmetrical position with the study of Santiago-Torner, (2025) whose study has shown that a sustainable work ecosystem promotes a positive attitude, actively listens to the workforce and always leads by example. The ninth hypothesis indicates that a sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between fairness and quality of work-life. The finding demonstrated that a sustainable workplace environment has the element of fairness in Nigeria's telecoms sector. It further established a work environment in which the individual employees feel valued, respected and treated equitably, leading to positive and productive atmosphere where all the employees feel comfortable contributing their best work without any fear of discrimination or unfair treatment. The finding of this study further demonstrated that the leadership of Nigeria's telecoms industry enjoy a healthy work ecosystem that offers all workers equal opportunities for career development and promotion, regardless of sex, race or background. This finding maintains an equal position with the study of Sabino, Goncalves, and Cesário, (2025) whose findings illustrate that a sustainable workplace provides communicating organisation policies and rules to ensure all the employees recognise the expectations and navigate the system fairly. The last hypothesis of this study demonstrated that a sustainable work environment mediates the relationship between ethical awareness and quality of work-life. This result implies that the telecom industry creates a culture in which employees trust each other to exhibit the right attitude and do the right thing which provokes a happy work environment, more collaborative interactions, and the ability to attract and retain ethical employees. The finding showed that the work environment is ethically upright, and maintain transparent policies, and open communication. This study has a similar result to the study of Yu *et al.*, (2025) whose discovery established sustainable work environment enhances the creativity and innovation of employees as the people feel comfortable sharing ideas. The study also demonstrated that a sustainable work ecosystem improves employee satisfaction as ethical practices lead to a positive organisational reputation and brand loyalty for customers.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has validated the concept that ethical leadership behaviour plays a major role in stimulating a high quality of work-life and fostering a sustainable work environment by strengthening individual well-being, promoting transparency, protecting ethical standards, and establishing a culture that values persistent sustainability where individual employees have a sense of empowerment and positively contribute to the organisation and the overall working environment. Hence, the study concludes that leaders in organisations should maintain ethical behaviour that will ensure transparency, accountability and innovation, which by extension will inspire stakeholders at every stage and across diverse industries to adopt a sustainable work environment. Therefore, this study suggests the following recommendations to better improve ethical leadership

and quality of work-life in organisations of all types:

- i. Management should promote an ethical leadership style that will help cultivate a positive work culture where employees will feel respected, supported and driven to put on productive work behaviour.
- ii. Organisations should ensure they lead with humanity, make ethics an important aspect of performance evaluation, and reward good behaviour.
- iii. Organisations should imbibe an ethical leadership model through their actions, establishing a positive example for the workforce to emulate.
- iv. Leadership in organisations should nurture a positive/sustainable work environment that will build on ethical leadership philosophies that will attract and retain employees and foster loyalty and a dedicated workforce to the company.
- v. Organisations should prioritise a sustainable work environment and promote ethical practices, this will afford organisation leaders to build a virile reputation and ensure the organisation's long-term progress.
- vi. Organisations should endeavour to promote a culture of fairness and equity by treating all employees with respect and ensuring fair treatment in decision-making, including promotions. Workload distribution, and reward systems, promote a sense of justice in the organisation.
- vii. Employees should also cultivate behavioural patterns that will support and promote ethical practices in the organisation. Whenever the workforce observes unethical practices, they should encourage their voice to be heard in the organisation to curb unethical behaviour either among their colleagues or within the leadership of the organisation.

## 7. THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

This research underscores a social identity and self-determination theory has a pathway to promote ethical leadership direction in corporate organisations of today. From the trajectory of leadership and work environment, social identity theory provided an insight into how ethical leadership behaviour and the quality of work-life are impacted by social identity. Social identity and its integration with quality of work-life show a robust instance in enhancing employee job satisfaction. Hence, a robust mindset of social identity may improve group cohesion, provoking enhanced teamwork, communication, and support, which are essential to the sustained quality of work-life among employees. Also, perceiving fairness among employees from the leadership of the organisation offers an indication of social identification with the corporate organisation. Therefore, social identity theory emphasises how ethical leaders influence employees' identification with sustainable workplace practices. The implication of this theory in connection with this study is that when leaders mirror ethical behaviour consistently with sustainable philosophies, employees are more likely to exhibit these same values.

## 8. IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE

The practical implication of this study entails that ethical practices in leadership styles in not negotiable but are mandatory. The study has established a practical paradigm that ethical leadership is one of the core pillars of any successful organisation. It has demonstrated that being an ethical leader and organisation implies possessing integrity and courage to create a positive impact on the workforce and the work environment at large. In practice, the study has shown the merits of ethical organisations in that it will help strengthen organisation culture, help attract and retain top talent, and appeal to stakeholders and investors.

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