

Unethical Behaviour and Corporate Performance in University System: A study of Nigerian Private Universities

Masoje O. M. Akpor-Robaro¹, Taofeek Sola Afolabi², Rantimi Jays Julius-Adeoye³, Leke Abraham Oluwalogbon⁴, Oluwayinka Samuel Olabode⁵

Abstract

The study investigated whether there exists a relationship between unethical behaviour and corporate performance in the university system, and hence determined the impact of unethical behavior on corporate performance in the Nigerian university system with private universities as reference. A survey design was employed with a questionnaire instrument administered to 250 university staff drawn from four private universities in South-west, Nigeria, using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. The response data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analysis. The descriptive analysis showed that unethical behaviour exists in Nigerian private universities. A multivariate Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) was used for the inferential analysis and to specify the relationships among the construct variables in the study. The bootstrapping technique of the PLS-SEM was used to estimate the parameters in the model, with the aid of the Smart-3 software. The result of the factor loadings, reliability test, convergent and discriminant validity revealed that the construct variables are fit for the PLS-SEM. The path analysis revealed that financial malpractices are a major unethical behavior affecting corporate performance adversely. Furthermore, unethical behaviours from university staff and university administration have significant negative influence on corporate performance. The study concludes that unethical behaviour is a key driver of poor corporate performance in the Nigerian university system. Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers in the university should adopt a holistic approach to ethical management that is oriented toward zero tolerance for unethical behavior in the university system

Keywords: Ethics, Unethical Behaviour, Corporate Performance, University System, Private Universities

INTRODUCTION

Ethics has undoubtedly become a subject of serious interest in business theory and practice. The impetus for the interest in the subject of ethics in industry is created by the inadequacy of ethical tradition and philosophical theory to guide decisions and actions of managers. Evidently, the specter of fragmented knowledge and the unknown consequences of certain actions and decisions by managers is not adequately addressed in the moral discourse of contemporary society. “Virtually every approach to normative ethics, from the Ten Commandments in the Holy Bible to the prescriptions in modern philosophy, focuses primary attention on moral problems in which certain conditions are to be upheld. These conditions are frequently absent in individual decision making and almost never found in organizational settings (Shaw & Barry, 2007).

In reality, ethics are neither taught through text books nor preached and advocated through any other media of learning or teaching. Therefore, while it is very difficult to find people with ethical habits, it is very easy to find large number of persons with unethical behavior in both industry and non-industrial organizations, including government (Pabla, 2011).

Generally, ethics is a fundamental concern for management at all levels of an organization (Trevino & Nelson, 1999). Where management pays little or no attention to ethical standards, then, unethical climate is given room

1 Department of Business Administration & Marketing, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Nigeria, E-mail: akpor-robarom@run.edu.ng

2 Department of Banking & Finance, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Nigeria, E-mail: afolabis@run.edu.ng

3 Department of Theatre Arts, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Nigeria, E-mail: julius-adeoye@run.edu.ng

4 Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Nigeria, E-mail: oluwalogbonl@run.edu.ng

5 Department of Economics, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Nigeria, E-mail: olabodeo@run.edu.ng

to prevail (Shafer, 2015), thereby making employees to be less committed to the organization's values, goals and aspirations. As Trevino, Butterfield & McCabe (1998) asserted employees are more committed to organizations, in which the top management represents highly ethical and credible standards, supporting and rewarding ethical conduct, and disciplining unethical behavior. Commitment to ethical standards by management engenders internal trust within the organization, i.e. among employees and between employees and management.

The ethical climate of organization also has effect on the external relations of the organization. It either engender trust or distrust from external stakeholders. Unarguably, unethical business practices can possibly kill trust, and long-term business relationships. Among venture partners, unethical behavior can cause conflicts, creating suspicion and lack of trust, which may end up terminating the relationship (Fassin, 2009). Unethical behavior can lead to negative publicity, bad company image, and ultimately decreased sales and profits (McGuire, Sundgren & Schneeweis, 1988).

Evidently, ethical questions are not raised in physical goods production industry alone. Even in the education industry there are serious issues of unethical conduct and crises of integrity. There have been a number of scandals in various forms in universities, and this mirrors the ethical lapses found in every sector of the society (Lucas, 2009). With the constantly increasing loss of values in today's society there is a tendency for corrupt practices and other unethical conduct to be on the rise in the university system (Lahi, 2013).

Presently, ethical issues in higher education have not received adequate attention. According to Robinson and Moulton (2005), ethical transgressions in higher education are less publicized than other sectors. Consequently, there has not been any serious analysis of ethical problems in higher education in research. The likely reason for lack of attention to poor ethical conduct in higher education is that in most cases, the issues are not reported and are settled out of public domain and therefore they are not brought up for interrogation and analysis in scholarly discourse.

Furthermore, there is the fact that the scholars who would do the research are members of staff of higher institutions and are also perpetrators of these acts and have tendency to protect their professional constituency. Thus, while in non-academic institutions the impact of unethical conduct on organizational performance has been well researched and reported, in academic institutions the story is different, particularly, for universities. There are only few studies, if they exist, on the relationship between unethical behavior and university performance. Consequently, there is lack of knowledge about the effect of unethical conduct on the performance of a university. This study is, therefore, aimed at examining the relationship between staff behaviour and corporate performance of universities and to determine the effect of staff unethical conduct on university corporate performance.

The author considers the study to be a significant contribution to the existing literature and the body of knowledge in the sense that it provides a concrete basis for clamouring for ethical behaviour and conduct in the university system and in business organizations in general. The author observed that many people who frown at unethical conduct in organizations and particularly in academic institutions do so on grounds of religious expectations. In other words, they argue that unethical conduct violates the principles of morality and Godliness. They often do not consider the perspective of the devastating socio-economic effects it has on the organization. This study is therefore a window to look into how the performance of academic institutions are practically affected by unethical conduct in the university.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical Behaviour and Unethical Behaviour

Ethical behaviour and unethical behaviour are two sides of ethics. Ethics as defined by various scholars is concerned with morality and human conduct. It does not set out to describe the way things are but the way they ought to be. It is therefore a normative term. Essentially, it deals with norms or standards of human behaviour (Fatile, 2013). It consists of accepted principles of right or wrong that govern the conduct of a person, the behaviour of members of a profession, or the actions of an organization (Hill and Jones, 2008), i.e.

principles that define behavior as right, good and proper. Such principles do not always dictate a single "moral" course of action, but provide a means of evaluating and deciding among competing options. In the view of Anam (2011), ethics deals with the character and conduct and morals of human beings. It deals with good or bad, right or wrong behavior; it evaluates conduct against some absolute criteria and puts negative or positive values on it. Ajayi (2007) summarized the meaning of ethics as the standards expected of people at the individual, corporate or community levels

Implicitly, reference to ethics can be at personal or individual level as well as organizational or professional level. From the organizational perspective ethics may be seen as consisting of the norms and morals that guide the practice of an occupation to ensure just and fair discharge of duties and avoidance of abuse of privilege (Ekundayo, 1999). Essentially, it relates to the rules and ethos that guide conduct and relationship in a given calling. Such rules, which hinge on morality, could be written or implied from practice (Esezobor, 2010)"

Workplace ethics can be described as a set of values, which include the right attitude, correct behaviour, respect for others and effective communication in workplace (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015). A person's conduct would have a significant ethical dimension if it involves dishonesty, hypocrisy, disloyalty, unfairness, illegality, injurious acts, or lack of accountability (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 1991). Furthermore, ethical issues may arise from conflicts between companies' or managers' interests and personal ethics of individual and employees.

Ethical behavior is that which is morally accepted as "good" and "right" as opposed to "bad" or wrong in a particular setting (Anam, 2011). The rapid changes in organizational environment in recent decades have triggered new working methods, practices and relationship patterns, expectations and obligations which have introduced new dimensions of ethical expectations and issues. The increasing number and diversity of ethical issues to be dealt with has necessitated a change in the definition of ethical behavior in work place. Similarly, the notion of ethical administration has changed being currently broader, more complex and more complicated (Demmke & Moilanen, 2011).

Expectations on ethical behaviour in organization are increasingly being rooted in what have been identified by Crosby (1997); Robbins (2001) and Bucholz (2003) as the essential elements of organization's performance: Accountability, Transparency, and Trust.

Accountability refers to the obligation on the part of organization officials to report on the usage of organization resources and be answerable for failing to meet stated performance objectives (Elia, 2005). Thus, accountability encourages ethical leadership behavior within organizations where the leaders need to be fair and principled decision-makers and also behave ethically in their personal and professional lives.

Transparency is openness and adherence to due process (Akpa, 1997). It ensures that information is readily available that can be used to measure the authorities' performance and guide against any possible misuse of power (Mubarak 2010). A transparent person is one with a track record of honesty and probity.

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) defined trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trust or, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

Cummings and Bromiley (1996) define organizational trust "as an individual's belief that others (individual or group) will make effort in good faith to keep commitments, be honest, and not take advantage of another. Vanhala *et.al.* (2011) has argued that the impersonal element of organizational trust commands consideration and should be incorporated into the measures of ethical behaviour in organization.

In contrast to ethical behaviour, unethical behavior is an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person, a profession or an organization. Individuals can behave unethically, so too businesses and organizations can behave unethically. Unethical behaviour by employees can affect individuals, work teams, and even the organization (Arlow & Ulrich, 2000). Organizations, thus, depend on individuals to act ethically. Vee & Skitmore, (2003) identified the elements of unethical behaviour to include corruption, misrepresentation, negligence and manipulative tendencies to get some unfair favorable position.

Promotional Factors of Unethical Conduct in Organization

A number of factors promote unethical behavior among employees in organization, ranging from employees attitudes to management attitude and policies (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). An organization in which co-workers ignore, justify, or accept unethical behavior of their colleagues and cover up their colleagues in their wrong actions or behaviour, transgressors are encouraged to continue in their ways, and an unethical climate is allowed to develop (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). As Bowditch, Buono, and Stewart (2007) observed, there is growing number of organizations experiencing situations where peers and supervisors encourage unethical behavior, by looking in the opposite direction of a wrongdoing, and failing to report wrongdoings or punish offenders on unethical behaviour.

As Cheney (2008) noted an organizational culture is capable of suppressing or promoting certain ethical or unethical practices in organization. In the view of Bisel, Kelley, Ploeger, & Messersmith, (2011) organization's culture can predispose its members to behave unethically. Recent research has found a relationship between organizations with a history of violating the law and continued illegal behavior and members' unethical behaviour in their organizations (Baucus & Near, (1991). Aside from this, some firms are known to selectively recruit and promote employees who have personal values consistent with illegal behavior; firms also may socialize employees to engage in illegal acts as a part of their normal duties. Thus, unethical activities may well be due to job roles, pressure, opportunity and predisposition. The argument, essentially, is that some organizations have a culture that reinforces unethical behaviour such that, even when an individual or organization does not directly engage in unethical conduct, there may be an indirect involvement. In the study carried by Ugwu (2011) on the causes of unethical behavior in Nigerian organizations it was found that individual value system, organizational practices and wider external environments are the main influential factors of unethical behavior.

Ethical issues in Universities

Ethical issues abound in the university system and this puts a burden on universities to make policies aimed at changing the situation. Fitzmaurice (2008) argues that the structure of the university system encourages ethical challenges because of its openness with no rigid rules or/and code of standards, such that where there are infractions, decisions are left to the prerogative of individuals and the authority in their subjective judgments. A number of studies have explored ethical challenges in the university system (Robertson & Grant 1982; Robie & Keeping 2004; Strom-Gottfried & D'Aprix 2006; Fitzmaurice 2008) and have identified a number of factors.

Unethical conducts pertaining to academics include, plagiarism by staff and students, various forms of cheating, sexual harassment by staff and students in and outside the classroom, misuse of power, exchanging sexual activities for grades, and accepting money or gifts for grades (Robie & Keeping 2004; Ashford & Davis 2006); sales of unauthorized books to students by teachers, and worse still forcing students to buy such books; allowing students who did not attend lectures to sit for an examination and also to have result in such courses (Oguntula, 2020); Lecturers not attending lectures as expected and not covering the course contents (Mbe, 2007).

The ill consequences of unethical behaviour by academics have been greatly emphasized by analysts. For example, it has been argued that examination malpractices by act of bribery through giving of money or sexual gratification to lecturers to get unmerited grades gives unworthy privileges to non-serious students over the committed and serious students. It also reduces their cravings to study hard (Tanaka, 2001). It can also be argued that the offer of bribes/favours to lecturers often result in substandard services and increase in procurement costs. Furthermore, such acts can destroy equal educational opportunities by paying bribes to the disadvantage of poorer students. This ultimately reduces the quality of graduates.

The position of Adesina (2000) suggests that ethical issues in the university are not limited to academic staff alone. He argued that non-academic staff are also involved in unethical conduct such as the sale of admission to students who did not do well in their Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (admission racketing) thereby making illegal money during admission period; students' results, in many cases, are not computed or computed incorrectly as a result of poor record keeping by the concerned authorities; collection of money from

students for computing their results by the concerned authorities; delay in payment of annual leave allowances by the management while the money is deposited in personal bank accounts for interest yield; inflation of procurement cost of materials; budget padding; inadequate provision of teaching materials by the concerned relevant authorities (ibid).

In the view of Oyewobi, Ganiyu, Oke, Olawo, & Shittu (2011), unethical behaviour and conduct by non-academic staff are generally in extortion, fraud, bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, wrong use of university property, and other forms of abuse of office for personal gains, denial of academic units the necessary resources and facilities for effective operations. These conducts are usually mediated by the positions such staff members occupy in the system (ibid).

The Concept of Performance in Organization

The concept of performance has gained increasing attention in recent decades, being pervasive in almost all spheres of human activity. Organizational performance comprises the actual results as measured against its intended outputs of the organization. Didier (2002) believes that performance is not merely an outcome, but rather, the difference between expected or intended outcome and the actual or achieved outcome. For Wholey (1996), performance is not an objective reality, but a socially constructed reality that exists in people's minds. That is, it is relative to certain standards set and accepted internally by the relevant entity, rather than those used by external bodies. Organization's performance is measured within the purpose for which it was established.

However, Kane (1996) argues that organizational performance can also be outside the purpose for its existence. This opinion captures the social performance or CRS performance of organizations. According to Kane, performance can be measured at the level of each individual within the organization or at organizational level. At the level of organization, performance is both an internal and external phenomenon. Internal performance relate to the achievement of its primary purpose for existence and increase in the value of its assets; while external performance is the value of the organization to its stakeholders and society in general, outside the purpose for its existence. Performance can either be in quantitative or qualitative terms (Neely, Adams & Crowe, 2001).

Performance in the University System

Performance in the university system usually relate to the internal administrative processes and the outcomes of the processes. The focus is mainly on internal performance perspective. The metrics used under this perspective allow university administrators to gauge how well their university is running, and whether its products and services conform to customer requirements (the mission). In this regard, the students are the products, the services are the academic deliverables (curriculum) and quality of academic delivery, as well as the environment of learning. The customers are the parents and the industry/society. The students are also customers but internal customers. Achieving academic excellence under increasing competition, a university must apply an appropriate performance measurement system that reflects and gives the opportunity to improve on its research and teaching quality, and on the quality of its facilities and staff.

The performance of a university must be evaluated via an appropriate method and the adoption of a robust performance measurement system that is key to improving the competitive status of the university, both locally and internationally, while at the same time maintaining its academic excellence (Chen, Wang and Yang, 2009). Such performance measurement system must incorporate the perspectives of all university stakeholders (Chen, Yang and Shiau, 2006). Adoption of this perspective of performance measurement by the university administration would enable the university to have an objective selection of its performance outcome in terms of what outcome is relevant and critical for assessing ethical behaviour, i.e.what is right or wrong.

In research relating to university performance, a university's culture and behavioural characteristics as well as governance system have often been cited as the influential factors relating to performance. The level of performance is also deemed to be affected by employees' behavioural characteristics. However, there has been no consensus on the key determinants of university corporate performance because few studies have empirically

tested performance determinants in the context of a university based on solid theoretical foundations. Even though many factors affecting university performance may have been identified, the impact of unethical behaviour on performance is yet to be explored, at-least in the context of university performance. Therefore, in this study the authors suggest a research model based on the various unethical factors identified from the literature review, to explain the relationship between unethical behaviour and corporate performance in the university as well as the impact of the factors on performance.

Conceptual Framework

The study explores the relationship between unethical behaviour/conduct and corporate performance of universities within the context of private university system. The proposed conceptual model as depicted in figure 1 is based on two main constructs: (i) unethical behaviour (UNETHBEHAV); and (ii) university corporate performance (UNICORPERFORM). Unethical behaviour represents an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for an employee of the university, or the university as a corporate body. It is argued that individual members of the university workforce can behave unethically, so too, the university as a body can behave unethically by the actions of its administration/management. In addition to affecting negatively the internal performance criterion, the framework hypothesizes that unethical behaviour can also affect negatively external performance criterion, such as, the corporate image of (public perception about) the university. The university corporate performance is measured by the actualization and realization of the proposed ends to be achieved or that are being pursued by the university, such as quality research output, students' academic excellence, students' enrolment, physical infrastructure development, and community impact.

The conceptual model (Figure 1) utilized dimensions of unethical behaviour identified from several sources in the literature (e.g. Strom-Gottfried & D'Aprix, 2006; Fitzmaurice, 2008; Robie & Keeping, 2004; Ashford & Davis, 2006; Mbe, 2007; Takana, 2001; Adesina, 2000; Oyewobi, *et.al.*, 2011). These sources present different distinctive aspects or dimensions of unethical behaviour considered to be related to university system. These unethical behaviour dimensions are summarized into six: fraud/financial misappropriation, sexual abuse, moonlighting, financial gratification for examination grades, financial and sexual gratification for promotion appraisal grades, and theft or use of official resources (equipment) for private ends. Similarly, there are six pertinent dimensions of university corporate performance: quality of research output, students' academic excellence, students' enrolment, physical infrastructure development, adequate provision of materials and facilities for work, staff welfare and development, community impact, and university corporate image.

The study model depicts the relationship between unethical behaviour variables and performance variables, and proposes a direct link between unethical behaviour and performance of a university. Essentially, the model presents two levels of unethical behaviour:

(i) the level of the individual (staff members) and (ii) the level of the organization (university administration/management). It also presents organizational performance at two levels: (i) internal level of the organization and (ii) the external level (social performance criterion). The university has expectations from their employees based on set performance indicators and targets, and predicts the conducts that will advance its operations and the attainment of its goals. Similarly, the public (society) has expectations from the university based on a set of performance indicators and targets, and predicts the conducts of the university that will advance the development of society.

The authors propose that unethical behaviour by university administration influences or generate an unethical behaviour climate among university staff. The model also indicates that both poor internal performance and poor external performance by university are a result of both unethical behaviour by the university staff and unethical behaviour by university administration. The reverse case is also true. Furthermore, university internal performance would affect university external performance. The university overall performance is measured by the level of both (combination of) internal and external performance.

Propositions

The study hypothesizes that unethical behaviour by the staff of a university, and the management of the institution, have negative impact on the corporate performance of the university. The study model (figure 1) explains the path of the effect of unethical behaviour on university corporate performance. The general proposition is that overall ‘unethical behaviour’ in a university has negative effect on the university corporate performance. Seven hypotheses are generated from this general proposition as follow:

H₀₁: University staff unethical behaviour has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

H₀₂: University administration unethical behaviour has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

H₀₃: Promotion and appointment malpractices has no significant effect on the university corporate performance

H₀₄: Financial malpractices has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

H₀₅: Sexual harassment has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

H₀₆: Academic malpractices has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

H₀₇: Theft of official time and resources has no significant effect on the university corporate performance.

Empirical Studies

In Nigeria and other countries there are a number of empirical studies with evidence of the relationship between workplace ethics and corporate productivity and performance, and the effect of ethical and unethical behaviour on corporate performance. For example, the findings of the studies by Sunanda (2018), Adeyeye, *et.al.* (2015), Kehinde (2015), and Ebitu & Beredugo (2015) both within and outside the university context suggest that a significant relationship exists between unethical behaviour and organization productivity, and that unethical behaviour impact negatively on corporate performance. Both Studies revealed that ethical behaviour has a positive correlation with organizational performance, with the reverse case being true also.

In the context of academic institutions, similar findings have been made in the studies by Yusra and Mahmoud (2017); Al-Omari (2012); Kanu & Ursula (2012) and Keenan (2015). Al-Omari (2012) studied the nature of the ethical climate for academic staff in the university system and found that the egoistic ethical climate was the most prevalent perceived climate among academic staff. This finding is indicative that academic staff behave or act in their own self-interests outside of the university corporate goals and ahead of those of other stakeholders. Kanu, *et.al* (2012) studied the unethical practices that have bedeviled higher education system in Nigeria and found similarly, that there is a high level of egoistic pursuit among staff of Nigerian education institutions.

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories that have dealt with the “why” and “how” of human behaviour and conduct that constitute what can be considered as right or wrong. The major theories include the theory of Ethical Virtue, the theory of Utilitarianism, the theory of Deontology, and the theory of Ethical Egoism. These theories provide the ethical principles by which human actions can be guided towards the best interest of all. All of the theories canvass an approach to understanding the concept of ethical conduct, i.e. what is ethical behaviour and what is unethical behaviour and therefore, the standard for measuring what is an acceptable behaviour in organization.

However, the ethical virtue theory is more suited to the expectations in organization and also captures the relevant prescriptions of the other theories that are relevant to ethical understanding in organizations. The theory emphasizes ‘virtue’ as the underlying factor in ethical conduct or morality (Duska, 2011). It states that; “an action is morally correct when it displays good character virtues.” ‘Good character virtue’ consists of such

qualities as Honesty, Fairness, Integrity and Loyalty. These behavioural elements constitute workplace ethics. The prescriptions in the other theories are embedded in these four pillars of the Aristotle's ethical virtue. In the context of the university, this would also include, dedication to work, and a holy relationship with students and/or staff. The elements manifest in virtuous actions and usually have impact on the level of corporate performance of an organization. The study is, therefore, hinged on this theory. The theory provided the foundation for the study model as it integrates forms of unethical behaviour suggested explicitly and implicitly in the theory.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques, with a sample size of 250 university staff drawn from four private universities in Osun state, South west, Nigeria using Yamane's criterion of $n = N/1+N(e)^2$, based on their combined population of 510 staff members.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire which consisted of three sections, with section A consisting of questions about the institution and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, section B consisting of questions on perceived level of unethical conduct and the the forms, and section C consisting of the performance level and the perceived effect of the ethical situation on corporate performance of the university. The instrument was structured on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from "Very high" (5) to "Very low" (1); and "Strongly agree"(5) to "Strongly disagree"(1) for all the focal constructs of the study. These were used to reflect the measures of responses about the items.

The instrument was subjected to relevant tests of validity and reliability to ensure that the instrument was suitable for the study and all tests were positive. To test for its face and content validity the instrument was pilot-tested with selected respondents (academics and non-academics) from the sample universities. Both convergent validity and divergent (or discriminant) validity were tested for using bivariate correlation analysis among the constructs which measured unethical behaviour in the study, and between each of the unethical behaviours and other variables to ensure that the scales were not measuring other unintended constructs.

Data collected through the research instrument were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analysis. The descriptive analysis was used to analyze the pattern of the responses in terms of numerical strength/values and present the profile of the respondents. A multivariate Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) was used for the inferential analysis and to specify the relationships among the construct variables in the study. The bootstrapping technique of the PLS-SEM was used to estimate the parameters in the model, with the aid of the Smart-3 software. The internal consistency and reliability of the measuring items for the constructs was tested using the Cronbach's alpha, rho_A and composite reliability statistics. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to ascertain the convergent validity, while the Fornell- Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criteria were used to test the discriminant validity of the constructs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' responses (table 1) on existence of unethical conducts in their universities showed that 91.7% of respondents indicated that unethical conducts exist in their universities while 8.3% are silent about whether or not unethical conducts exist in their universities. Of the respondents who indicated that the existence of unethical conduct 50.8% are female staff and 40.8% are male staff, with academic staff making 40% and non-academic staff making 51.7%, consisting of 37.5% and 14.2% for senior and junior staff respectively. Essentially, the responses indicate that unethical conducts exist in the universities. The higher percentage of responses by female staff suggests that female staff are more sensitive to the ethical climate in their universities and consequently more aware of cases of unethical conducts in the university. Furthermore, females suffer from certain unethical conduct such as sexual harassment much more than their male colleagues.

Assessments of the Measuring Items and Construct Variables

The standardized factor loading was computed for the measuring items in the research instruments. The minimum acceptable threshold is 0.6 and only items that meet this condition were retained for the SEM analysis. Table 2 shows the results of the factor loadings for the retained items in each of the construct variables and suggest that the items share significant variance with their respective constructs.

Table 2 also reveals the Cronbach Alpha, ρ_{om_A} and composite Reliability (CR) statistics for the construct variables. The rule of the thumb is a minimum acceptable statistic of 0.6 and the results indicate that all the constructs satisfy this condition. This implies that the items are internally consistent and reliable in measuring their individual constructs. Furthermore, the AVEs for all the construct variables are above the minimum threshold of 0.5, indicating that they pass the convergent validity test (Chin, 1998).

The Fornell-Larcker condition for discriminant validity requires that the square root of the AVEs (bolded and diagonal values) must be greater than any of the inter-construct correlations (other values). The results in Table 3 show that this condition has been met. Similarly, the HTMT ratios in Table 4 are all below one, which further ascertain that the construct variables do not have discriminant validity problem (Kline, 2011).

The cross-loading results in Table 5 show that all the indicator items have loadings higher in their individual constructs than any other places in corresponding constructs. This also implies that the constructs have no discriminant validity problem (Chin 2010).

The bootstrapping technique was carried out on the PLS-SEM in order to determine the regression coefficients, specify the t-statistics for the estimates and test the significance of the hypothesized paths among the constructs. Figure 2 shows the result of the structural estimates arising from the path analysis.

The results of the hypothesis testing in Table 6 reveal that the regression coefficient of the hypothesized path from financial malpractices to university corporate performance ($\beta=0.34$) has a t-statistic ($t=2.623$) which is significant at the 5% level ($p=0.009$). This implies that financial performance, as a dimension of unethical behavior, has a significant effect on the university corporate performance. Further results in Table 6 show that the other four proxies of unethical behavior (academic malpractices, promotion & appointment malpractices, sexual harassment and theft of official time & resources) do not have significant effect on the university corporate performance (p -values >0.05)

Additional results of the structural estimates show that the regression coefficient of the hypothesized path from university administration unethical behaviour to corporate performance ($\beta=-0.202$) has a t-statistic ($t=2.287$) which is significant at the 5% level ($p=0.023$). This suggests that the unethical behavior of the university administration has a significant effect on their corporate performance. Similarly, the regression coefficient of the hypothesized path from university staff unethical behaviour to corporate performance ($\beta=-0.235$) has a t-statistic ($t=2.735$) which is significant at the 5% level ($p=0.006$). This implies that staff unethical behavior has a significant effect on the university corporate performance.

The results of the analysis of the test of hypotheses of the study on the different dimensions of unethical behaviour and conduct identified suggest that only financial malpractices, e.g. Fraud, embezzlement, misapplication of fund, e.t.c has relationship with corporate performance of university, and consequently impact on performance of university. The dimensions of academic malpractices, promotion & appointment malpractices, sexual harassment and theft of official time & resources were shown not to have relationship with corporate performance of university. This may not be too strange because of two main reasons. First, Financial malpractices in any organization usually have direct relationship with availability of funds, with serious adverse effect on operations and development programmes, in the case of a university. Thus, it is easy to relate financial malpractices directly and visibly to Performance. Second, often there is limited understanding of corporate performance of university. Many people perceive corporate performance of university not beyond the traditional measures where performance is perceived only in terms of financial target, and financial variables are seen as the causal factor for performance.

The other measures of performance which are usually not directly linked or related to financial performance are undermined. Therefore, the relationship between university corporate performance and academic

malpractices, promotion & appointment malpractices, sexual harassment and theft of official time & resources may not have been understood and considered by the majority of the respondents. Such limited understanding of the composition of university corporate performance apparently undermined their perception of the role of the non-financial variables by respondents and this may have influenced their responses to the statements relating to the non-financial variables or parameters. This apparently impacted the results obtained in the test of hypotheses.

Furthermore, the nature of the statements provided on the instrument under the variables may also have influenced their responses in the direction that suggests that the variables have no link with university corporate performance and consequently do not impact performance, particularly in terms of traditional measures of performance. The result shown about the non-financial variables relationship with university performance corroborate the assertion by Wholey (1996) that performance is not an objective reality, but a socially constructed reality that exists in people's minds. However, as Wholey (1996) pointed out, an organization's performance is measured within the purpose for which it was established. Evidently, in contrast to Wholey's view, the measures of a university corporate performance considered by staff do not reflect the purpose for which a university is established. This is essentially due to their general lack of understanding of what should measure a university corporate performance.

However, Kane (1996) argues that organizational performance can also be outside the purpose for its existence. This opinion captures the social performance or CSR performance of organizations as noted in our review of the literature. The findings of the study suggest that the aspect of external performance expected of university was inadequately related. The focus was mainly on internal performance perspective which may have been informed by the fact that university administrators usually relate university performance to internal administrative processes and outcomes of the processes. Although it was found largely that unethical conduct exist in the university system based on the responses from the sampled universities shown in the descriptive analysis which is corroborated by findings of existing studies (e.g. Yusra & Mahmoud, 2017; Al-Omari, 2012; Kanu & Ursula, 2012; Kehinde, 2015; and Ebitu & Beredugo, 2015) but no significant relationship between unethical conduct and external performance of the university was established. External performance is usually better assessed by the customers such as the students, parents, and the industry/society.

The instrument was administered to the staff of the sample universities whose perception of university performance is limited to the internal processes and their outcomes with emphasis on financial outcomes, rather than to the university customers who are better positioned to assess the external performance of the university. This may have affected the objectivity of responses in relation to university performance and consequently the result that there is no significant relationship between unethical conduct and university corporate performance. The apparent inadequacy of this result validates the argument by Chen, Wang and Yang, (2009) that the performance of a university must be evaluated via an appropriate method and the adoption of a robust performance measurement system. Such performance measurement system must incorporate the perspectives of all university stakeholders (Chen, Yang and Shiau, 2006).

However, looking beyond the results of the specific individual proxies for unethical conduct, the results of the analysis of administration unethical behaviour showed that administration unethical behaviour has significant effect on university corporate performance, and thus a significant relationship exist between them. Similarly, the the results of the analysis of staff unethical behaviour showed that staff unethical behavior has a significant effect on the university corporate performance, thus a significant relationship exist between them. These results are corroborated by previous studies (e.g. Yusra & Mahmoud, 2017; Al-Omari, 2012; Kanu & Ursula, 2012; and Keenan, 2015).

Administration unethical behaviour and staff unethical behaviour are respectively composites of the elements (proxies) of unethical behaviour. Therefore, these results override the results of the isolated individual elements of unethical behaviour and consequently validate the study general proposition that unethical behaviour in the university either by the staff or the university administration has negative effect on the university performance

as shown in the findings of previous studies (ibid) both at the level of internal performance and external performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the descriptive analysis of responses and the strength of the results of the two composite factors, the study concludes that unethical behaviour/conduct exists in the university system and this affects the corporate performance of university adversely. Such unethical conduct or behaviour are exhibited not only by staff in their various roles but also greatly by university administration, in many aspects of decision making and allocation of resources.

The study, therefore, recommends a holistic approach to ethical management in the university system, that is oriented toward zero tolerance for unethical behaviour among staff. Aside from setting clear standards for acceptable behaviour, an Operant conditioning approach should also be adopted to reorient the minds of university staff towards ethical values and behaviour at work. It is also recommended that university councils must intensify their oversight functions on university administrators to ensure that their actions conform to the vision of the universities and set standard of operating procedures. All staff must be mentored to understand that university performance goes beyond the internal concept and metrics to include external performance measures such that they can eschew any behaviour or conduct that would adversely affect their external performance.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The manuscript is the original work of the authors. There is no conflict of interest between the authors and any parties living or dead.

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The Study Model

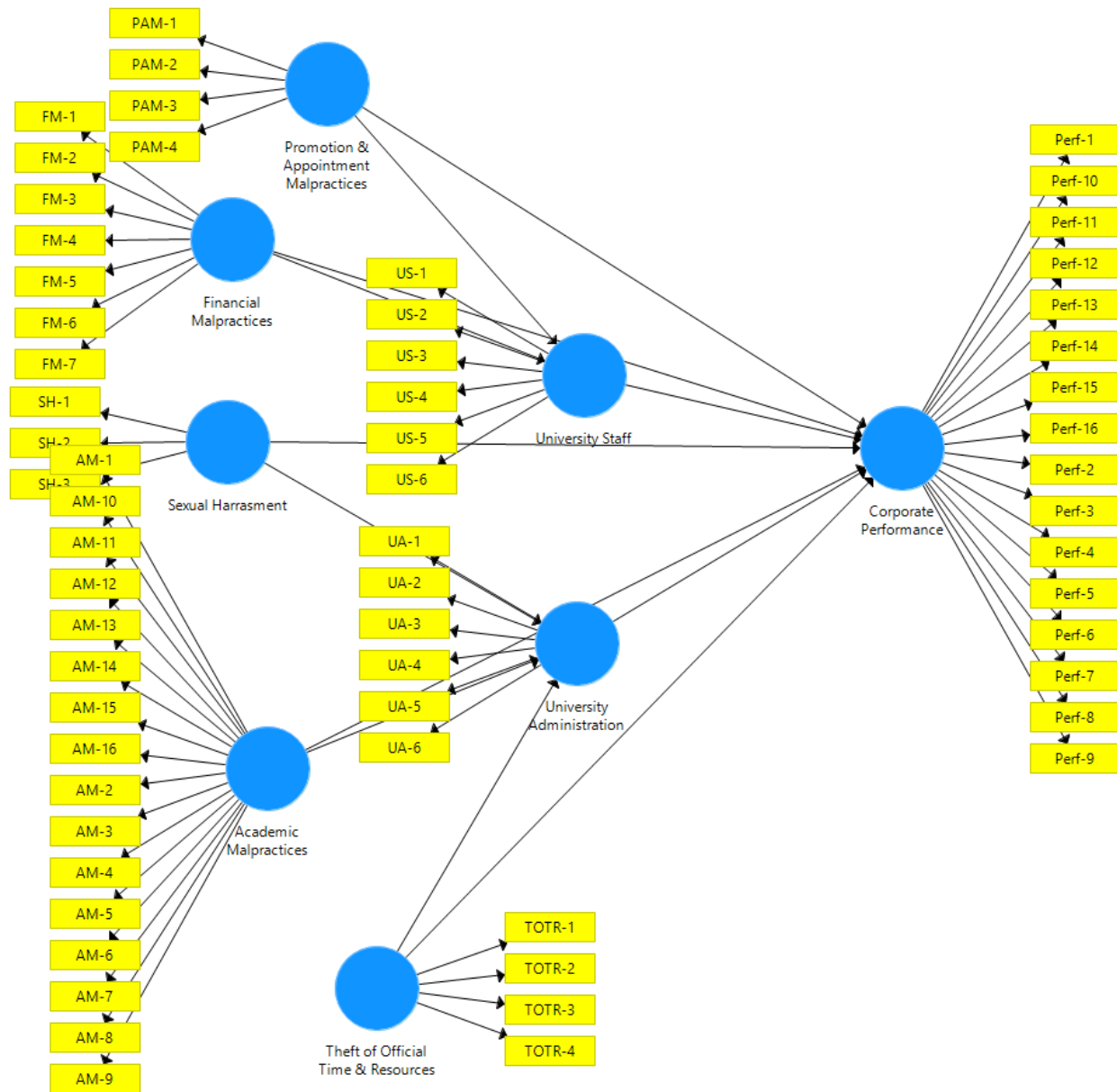


Figure 1. Structural Equation Model Linking Unethical Behaviour and University Corporate Performance

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of Respondents response on existence of unethical conducts in their Universities

University		Sex		Academic	Type of duty Administration Category of staff		Total respondents
		Male	Female		Senior	Junior	
Reedemer's University	Existence of Unethical conduct	35	42	38	22	17	83(33.2)
Reedemer's University	Neutral	2	4	-	-	6	
Adeleke University	Existence of Unethical conduct	27	31	17	33	8	62(24.8)
Adeleke University	Neutral	-	4	-	4	-	
King's University	Existence of Unethical conduct	18	27	18	22	5	50(20.0)
King's University	Neutral	-	5	-	5	-	
Fountain University	Existence of Unethical conduct	22	26	26	18	-4	
Fountain University	Neutral	4	3	-	7	-	55 (22.0)
Total		108	142	99	111	40	

Table 2. Assessments of the Indicator Items

Construct variables	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Academic Malpractices	AM-10	0.710	0.876	0.847	0.889	0.502
	AM-11	0.623				
	AM-12	0.663				
	AM-14	0.664				
	AM-15	0.803				
	AM-16	0.730				
	AM-3	0.726				
Financial Malpractices	AM-4	0.736	0.912	0.959	0.921	0.629
	FM-1	0.811				
	FM-2	0.664				
	FM-3	0.896				
	FM-4	0.809				
	FM-5	0.871				
	FM-6	0.785				
Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	FM-7	0.685	0.857	0.915	0.901	0.697
	PAM-1	0.878				
	PAM-2	0.874				
	PAM-3	0.831				
Corporate Performance	PAM-4	0.749	0.895	0.904	0.935	0.826
	Perf-14	0.906				
	Perf-15	0.933				
Sexual Harrasment	Perf-16	0.888	0.823	0.887	0.917	0.847
	SH-1	0.946				
Theft of Official Time & Resources	SH-2	0.893	0.819	0.877	0.867	0.621
	TOTR-1	0.815				
University Administration Unethical Behaviour	TOTR-2	0.858	0.727	0.74	0.817	0.528
	TOTR-3	0.678				
	TOTR-4	0.791				
	UA-3	0.718				
University Staff Unethical Behaviour	UA-4	0.668	0.643	0.686	0.845	0.733
	UA-5	0.754				
	UA-6	0.764				
	US-1	0.903				
	US-3	0.806				

Source: Research Data Analysis

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

Constructs	Academic Malpractices	Corporate Performance	Financial Malpractices	Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	Sexual Harassment	Theft of Official Time & Resources	University Administration Unethical Behaviour	University Staff Unethical Behaviour
Academic Malpractices	0.709							
Corporate Performance	0.338	0.909						
Financial Malpractices	0.624	0.383	0.793					
Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	0.575	0.274	0.660	0.835				
Sexual Harassment	0.312	0.345	0.275	0.196	0.920			
Theft of Official Time & Resources	0.691	0.272	0.625	0.577	0.289	0.788		
University Administration Unethical Behaviour	-0.196	-0.372	-0.058	0.001	-0.321	-0.171	0.727	
University Staff Unethical Behaviour	-0.124	-0.368	0.018	-0.023	-0.363	-0.115	0.516	0.856

Source: Research Data Analysis

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios

Constructs	Academic Malpractices	Corporate Performance	Financial Malpractices	Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	Sexual Harassment	Theft of Official Time & Resources	University Administration Unethical Behaviour	University Staff Unethical Behaviour
Academic Malpractices	0.294							
Corporate Performance	0.741	0.336						
Financial Malpractices	0.702	0.297	0.724					
Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	0.356	0.392	0.344	0.275				
Sexual Harassment	0.873	0.266	0.78	0.663	0.408			
Theft of Official Time & Resources	0.232	0.388	0.13	0.199	0.372	0.185		
University Administration Unethical Behaviour	0.187	0.469	0.076	0.129	0.45	0.147	0.728	
University Staff Unethical Behaviour								

Source: Research Data Analysis

Table 5. Indicator Items Cross-Loadings

Items	Academic Malpractices	Corporate Performance	Financial Malpractices	Promotion & Appointment Malpractices	Sexual Harassment	Theft of Official Time & Resources	University Administration Unethical Behaviour	University Staff Unethical Behaviour
AM-10	0.710	0.284	0.412	0.377	0.190	0.505	-0.234	-0.206
AM-11	0.653	0.132	0.413	0.463	0.160	0.443	0.019	0.122
AM-12	0.663	0.097	0.459	0.444	0.347	0.536	0.001	-0.145
AM-14	0.664	-0.017	0.457	0.564	0.168	0.593	0.049	0.102
AM-15	0.803	0.150	0.533	0.504	0.243	0.639	-0.113	-0.043
AM-16	0.730	0.261	0.629	0.619	0.232	0.476	-0.093	-0.020
AM-3	0.726	0.208	0.399	0.369	0.241	0.530	-0.056	-0.097
AM-4	0.736	0.303	0.365	0.287	0.229	0.450	-0.209	-0.075

FM-1	0.614	0.321	0.811	0.562	0.255	0.566	-0.138	0.037
FM-2	0.498	0.042	0.664	0.453	0.303	0.506	0.001	0.066
FM-3	0.485	0.350	0.896	0.555	0.204	0.582	0.002	0.006
FM-4	0.474	0.216	0.809	0.502	0.260	0.535	-0.107	-0.050
FM-5	0.492	0.440	0.871	0.586	0.209	0.480	0.004	0.029
FM-6	0.519	0.261	0.785	0.537	0.211	0.434	-0.043	0.024
FM-7	0.583	0.062	0.685	0.466	0.278	0.533	-0.087	0.005
PAM-1	0.562	0.302	0.591	0.878	0.254	0.517	-0.101	-0.093
PAM-2	0.521	0.182	0.576	0.874	0.309	0.467	0.009	-0.049
PAM-3	0.471	0.187	0.532	0.831	0.070	0.477	0.087	-0.039
PAM-4	0.324	0.200	0.493	0.749	-0.032	0.453	0.073	0.152
Perf-14	0.310	0.906	0.380	0.242	0.220	0.292	-0.349	-0.330
Perf-15	0.298	0.933	0.325	0.259	0.346	0.184	-0.378	-0.408
Perf-16	0.316	0.888	0.342	0.244	0.379	0.276	-0.279	-0.252
SH-1	0.326	0.372	0.276	0.284	0.946	0.313	-0.325	-0.430
SH-2	0.236	0.246	0.223	0.039	0.893	0.204	-0.258	-0.205
TOTR-1	0.452	0.343	0.498	0.501	0.064	0.815	-0.104	-0.046
TOTR-2	0.636	0.146	0.478	0.482	0.364	0.858	-0.212	-0.181
TOTR-3	0.583	0.070	0.549	0.429	0.339	0.678	-0.047	-0.024
TOTR-4	0.634	0.161	0.529	0.405	0.323	0.791	-0.147	-0.098
UA-3	-0.169	-0.339	0.005	0.128	-0.204	-0.065	0.718	0.453
UA-4	-0.072	-0.092	-0.030	0.026	-0.164	0.026	0.668	0.361
UA-5	0.033	-0.171	0.029	0.041	-0.186	-0.033	0.754	0.358
UA-6	-0.233	-0.333	-0.120	-0.134	-0.313	-0.274	0.764	0.335
US-1	-0.135	-0.360	0.032	0.001	-0.396	-0.110	0.511	0.903
US-3	-0.069	-0.259	-0.007	-0.049	-0.200	-0.084	0.355	0.806

Source: Research Data Analysis

Path Analysis

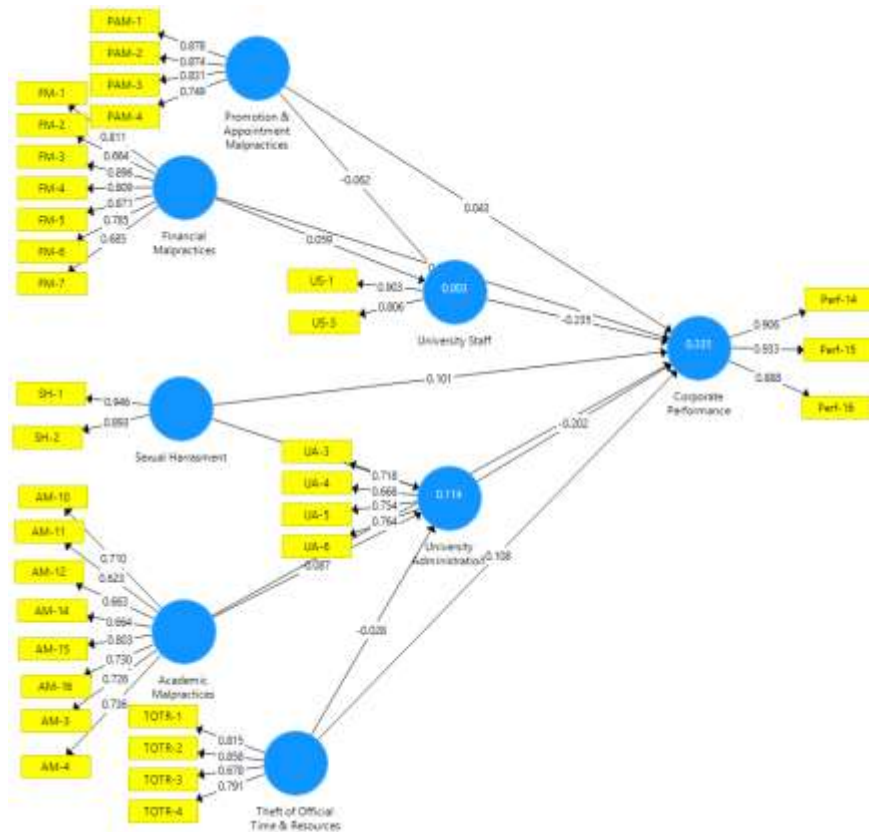


Figure 2: Structural Estimates of the Hypothesized Paths

Table 6. Structural estimates (Model results summary).

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Hypothesized Paths	Beta	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	t-statistics	p-values	Decision
Academic Malpractices -> Corporate Performance	0.075	0.095	0.155	0.484	0.629	Reject
Financial Malpractices -> Corporate Performance	0.340	0.316	0.130	2.623	0.009	Support
Promotion & Appointment Malpractices -> Corporate Performance	0.043	0.046	0.109	0.400	0.690	Reject
Sexual Harassment -> Corporate Performance	0.101	0.113	0.107	0.945	0.345	Reject
Theft of Official Time & Resources -> Corporate Performance	-0.108	-0.083	0.172	0.627	0.531	Reject
University Administration Unethical Behaviour -> Corporate Performance	-0.202	-0.210	0.088	2.287	0.023	Support
University Staff Unethical Behaviour -> Corporate Performance	-0.235	-0.235	0.086	2.735	0.006	Support

Source: Authors' Research Data Analysis