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Ethical Leadership and Workplace Pressures as Mediators: Linking Ethical Climate to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour in Mauritian Enterprises

Yuna Kim^{1*}, Hyun Woo Lee¹

1. Department of Business Administration, College of Social Sciences, Korea University, Seoul, South Korea.

Abstract

The world continues to encounter unparalleled difficulties arising from ethical challenges within organisations, closely connected to leadership integrity and moral decision-making. Consequently, this research examines the correlations among organisational culture, ethical climate, ethical leadership, decision-making practices, and workplace pressures. Furthermore, it investigates how these ethical constructs influence organisational citizenship behaviour, employees' ethical conduct, and perceived performance, through a macro-meso-micro analytical perspective. A quantitative cross-sectional approach with a survey methodology was employed, gathering data from 526 individuals representing diverse professional backgrounds and sectors within "large" enterprises in Mauritius. Findings reveal that organisational culture and ethical climate, functioning as macro-level independent factors, jointly impact the dependent variables—organisational citizenship behaviour, ethical conduct, and perceived employee performance—both directly and indirectly at different intensities. Additionally, ethical leadership, decision-making, and workplace pressures (both internal and external) were found to serve as significant meso-level mediators influencing organisational citizenship and perceived performance outcomes. The structural model demonstrated an adequate fit and may serve as a reference framework for practitioners and scholars to promote organisational citizenship behaviour. Concluding remarks provide strategies to strengthen ethical standards and citizenship-oriented practices in the Mauritian corporate setting.

Keywords: Organisational culture, Ethical climate, Ethical leadership, Workplace pressures, Organisational citizenship behaviour

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Corresponding author: Yuna Kim

E-mail ✉ yunakim.research.kr@yahoo.com

Introduction

During the last century—and more notably in the past few decades—organisations have confronted various socio-economic obstacles. Increasing demands from shareholders to maximise profit and maintain high value creation have pushed executives to find a delicate equilibrium between achieving shareholders' interests and upholding moral responsibilities [1, 2]. This tension has, over time, led some business leaders to overlook core ethical duties in favour of financial gain. Research by the Institute of Leadership and Management and Management Today revealed that 50% of respondents believed their firms prioritised monetary objectives over ethics [3]. Similarly, the National Business Ethics Survey of Fortune 500 Employees identified job security as the main internal pressure and performance targets as the major external pressure prompting ethical compromise [4]. In recent years, this global pattern has intensified, with employees reporting heightened pressure to breach ethical norms, observing more misconduct, and facing increased retaliation when exposing wrongdoing [5].

The 2008 financial collapse, largely resulting from unethical corporate behaviour, had devastating impacts on the U.S. and international economies [6]. This event was neither the first nor the last case of moral misconduct in business. Well-known examples include Citigroup's involvement in the WorldCom downfall in 2002 [7], the 2011 Alibaba.com seller fraud [8], Toshiba's accounting manipulation and the FIFA scandal [9, 10], and the recent ethical controversies arising during the



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COVID-19 crisis [11, 12]. Such events have drawn renewed attention to the importance of ethics, culture, and ethical climate within organisations.

Although numerous studies have explored the association between ethics and leadership, certain theoretical and empirical gaps still exist [13-15]. Examples include the need to examine the dynamics of ethical climates across various types and their business implications [16], as well as to analyse interconnections among ethics-related factors within a macro-meso-micro conceptual framework [17-20].

The central aim of this investigation was to analyse the interrelationships and mediating effects of selected organisational ethics variables—structured under the macro-meso-micro framework—within a multi-cultural, multi-sectoral, and large-organisation environment in Mauritius. This focus arises from the country's distinct economic, cultural, and social contexts, which remain underexplored. The study seeks to close this research gap by evaluating how ethical culture and climate shape employees' moral behaviour, and how ethical leadership and workplace pressures mediate their influence on organisational citizenship, within the Mauritian corporate landscape.

This research provides insights that can help organisations and professionals comprehend the mechanisms of ethical climate and its influence on citizenship behaviour, ethical conduct, and employee performance across organisational levels.

Theoretical background

Before presenting the empirical analysis, it is essential to outline the theoretical foundations of the constructs examined in this study. The discussion follows the macro-meso-micro framework to maintain conceptual clarity. The sequence includes a review of organisational culture, ethical organisational climate, ethical leadership and decision-making (macro-level constructs); ethical leadership, decision-making, and internal and external workplace pressures (meso-level constructs); and finally, organisational citizenship behaviour, employees' ethical conduct and behaviour, and perceived employee performance (micro-level constructs).

Organisational culture

Inspired by the philosophical ideas of Kant [21] (1790-1914), Harste [22] described organisational culture as emerging “when groups of people, despite their individual differences, can collectively and reflexively decide how the organisation distinguishes itself from its environment.” The Kantian approach emphasises mutual respect for diversity, collective alignment toward shared objectives, and self-organisation among members, forming a cohesive social unit committed to achieving common organisational goals.

According to Robbins and Judge [23], organisational culture represents a “shared system of meaning that differentiates one organisation from another.” Schein and Schein [24] conceptualised it as a multilayered system comprising: (1) visible artefacts and symbols, (2) consciously adopted beliefs, norms, and aspirations, and (3) underlying, often unconscious, assumptions and values. They argued that culture functions as a subtle yet potent social mechanism that shapes behaviour throughout an organisation.

Research by Kotter and Heskett [25] revealed that “corporate culture can significantly influence long-term financial performance and will likely play an even more decisive role in the success or failure of companies in the next decade.” This finding reinforces the necessity of understanding culture as a determinant of organisational endurance and underscores the importance of studying it across diverse, multicultural environments such as Mauritius.

Ethical organisational climate

The origins of organisational climate research trace back to Lewin and colleagues [26], who examined leadership typologies to identify their relationship with workplace climates [27]. Schneider and Reichers [28] initially viewed climate as a descriptive notion—“the account of events experienced by employees within the organisation.” Later, Patterson *et al.* [29] expanded this understanding to include emotional and evaluative dimensions. Both organisational culture and climate refer to employees' shared perceptions of their environment, though climate is often regarded as the outward expression or visible “layer” of culture [30, 31]. It reflects the organisation's internal tone, character, and psychosocial atmosphere [32, 33].

In the aftermath of numerous ethical lapses and corporate scandals, scholarly attention has turned again to ethical organisational climates and leadership ethics. Kaptein's [34] introduction of the Corporate Ethical Virtues Model highlighted eight fundamental virtues that define ethical organisational contexts. His work reinforced and extended established frameworks such as Victor and Cullen's [15] Ethical Climate Model and Vidaver-Cohen's [35] Moral Climate Continuum, deepening the theoretical basis for understanding ethical behaviour in institutions.

Ethical leadership and decision-making

Brown *et al.* [36] defined ethical leadership as “the exhibition of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the encouragement of such conduct among subordinates through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.” This widely adopted definition underscores how a leader's personal integrity, relational

behaviour, and decision-making transparency shape followers' moral awareness. Ethical leadership involves consistent role modelling, guiding ethical norms through authentic actions, open dialogue, fair decision processes, and by embedding these standards into organisational practices.

Ethical leadership and decision-making

Lawton and Páez [37] conceptualised ethical leadership through three interconnected dimensions — virtues (who the leader is), purposes (why the leader acts), and practices (how ethical behaviour is demonstrated). The interaction of these dimensions gives rise to distinct manifestations of ethical leadership. According to Zhu *et al.* [38], ethical leaders are individuals who act impartially, maintain fairness, display moral integrity, consider the needs of others, and uphold the rights of their employees. Ethical leadership outcomes require that leaders embody virtues such as honesty, fairness, courage, and truthfulness, while pursuing meaningful social or economic purposes through sound ethical judgment and responsible decision-making. The influence of ethical leadership on employee conduct, moral orientation, and organisational citizenship becomes increasingly vital in turbulent times shaped by global crises, pandemics, and socio-economic uncertainty.

In multicultural environments like Mauritius, where social and economic contexts differ from other regions, examining the mechanisms of ethical leadership can provide valuable insights into leadership ethics across sectors. Comparative analysis with findings from other parts of the world can help reveal both shared patterns and contextual differences, deepening understanding of how leadership ethics impact employee behaviour and job performance within the Mauritian setting.

Internal and external workplace pressures

Ethical behaviour within organisations is frequently shaped by both internal and external pressures that influence employees' decisions and actions. Internal pressures usually stem from personal concerns such as job stability, career progression, financial responsibilities, or the instinct for self-preservation. In contrast, external pressures arise from factors such as meeting organisational goals, achieving profitability, maintaining shareholder value, and responding to competitive or political demands. Broader influences including globalisation, social expectations, investor demands, scandals, and even crises like the pandemic, further intensify the ethical challenges employees and leaders face.

High workloads, strict performance deadlines, and aggressive business targets also affect professional integrity. Kaptein [34] referred to this as the "Virtue of Feasibility," suggesting that unrealistic expectations often provoke unethical behaviour. Similar empirical patterns were noted by Schweitzer *et al.* [39], who observed that unachievable goals tend to encourage misconduct.

Cohen and Vidaver-Cohen [40] explored how anomie—the erosion of ethical standards—emerges within workplaces. Drawing on Merton's [41] adaptation of the social structure and anomie theory (originally developed in 1938), she explained that excessive pressure to achieve objectives without balancing procedural fairness often leads to unethical outcomes. While personal morality remains a key determinant of conduct, the organisational environment was found to exert an equally strong influence. Merton's model, initially designed to explain criminal tendencies in society, offers several implications for understanding corporate anomie:

- When achieving objectives is prioritised far above adherence to legitimate means, the likelihood of unethical, antisocial, or even illegal behaviour increases.
- Discrepancies between acceptable methods and desired ends—creating a form of moral imbalance—result in weakened adherence to rules and norms.

A crucial question arises: do similar patterns of workplace pressure and ethical compromise, as discussed by Cohen and Vidaver-Cohen [40] and Kaptein [34], occur in Mauritius, where organisational culture is shaped by social diversity and strong performance ambitions? Addressing this requires empirical investigation to assess how such pressures influence employees' behaviour, moral judgment, and overall performance.

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)

In a global environment marked by economic competition and constant pressure for growth, sustaining organisational performance and value creation has become a dominant concern for business leaders. Such challenges make it essential to cultivate a positive and engaging workplace that motivates employees to contribute beyond their assigned responsibilities. Huhtala *et al.* [42] observed that when organisations uphold ethical principles and systems, employees demonstrate stronger commitment and emotional engagement. This highlights the importance of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) in promoting sustainable performance.

Pioneering scholars such as Smith *et al.* [43], Organ and Konovsky [44] and Alizadeh *et al.* [45] examined OCB as a behavioural phenomenon that encourages a supportive and collaborative environment where individuals willingly exceed the expectations tied to their formal roles. Bateman and Organ [46] defined OCB as discretionary actions by employees aimed at improving both individual and organisational effectiveness.

The underlying philosophy of OCB is that employees voluntarily exert effort beyond their formal job descriptions, motivated by loyalty and mutual respect. Such behaviour often stems from gratitude and reciprocity toward leaders who provide fair treatment and a supportive environment. Konovsky and Pugh [47] noted that OCB thrives where positive social exchanges and strong superior–subordinate relationships exist, while Gouldner [48] explained this through the norm of reciprocity—employees feel a moral obligation to return the goodwill and benefits they have received from their employers.

The findings demonstrated a significant positive association between ethical leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour, sequentially influenced through perceived procedural justice and employees' organisational concerns [49]. Employees often develop a sense of obligation toward leaders who treat them fairly and with care, which in turn motivates them to support these leaders in achieving broader organisational goals [50, 51]. It would therefore be insightful to examine if this behavioural pattern similarly exists within Mauritius's corporate environment, where organisational performance and value creation remain top priorities.

Ethical employee behaviour and conduct

At the centre of examining ethical climate and culture is the assessment of employees' moral actions and behaviour. Ethical employee behaviour encompasses those actions commonly viewed as morally appropriate and expected within a professional setting. Maesschalck [52] illustrated this by contrasting examples of “unethical conduct” against the nine ethical criteria proposed by Victor and Cullen [15]. As explained by Maesschalck [52], unethical actions can manifest as self-serving motives (e.g., corruption or personal benefit), excessive loyalty to the organisation (e.g., manipulating records to safeguard the company's image), obsession with efficiency (e.g., bypassing procedures for higher profit), nepotism (e.g., favouring relatives or friends unlawfully), team loyalty (e.g., concealing wrongdoing within a group), partiality (e.g., biased treatment of stakeholders), and various forms of noncompliance such as law- or rule-fetishism, leading to organisational disorder or anarchy. Given the limited amount of local research, identifying the underlying drivers of such ethical lapses is critical for addressing ethical challenges in firms. Understanding the macro- and meso-level influences on these behaviours is essential for defining leadership strategies that can foster integrity, ethical practices, and a value-based organisational culture.

Perceived employee performance

The interrelation between macro and meso organisational variables and their effects on perceived employee performance warrants thorough exploration. Perceived employee performance refers to how workers evaluate their organisation's effectiveness across dimensions such as reputation management, product and service competitiveness, customer growth, talent attraction and retention, workplace culture, ethical standards, and leadership fairness in cultivating a rewarding and high-performing environment. Such elements, coupled with advanced HR practices, serve as key facilitators of workforce performance within organisations [53].

The mauritian context

Like many other nations, Mauritius has experienced numerous ethical dilemmas in the corporate, social, and political domains. Despite having a robust legal, regulatory, and governance framework, local media have continued to report incidents involving corruption, nepotism, misuse of power, fraud, collusion, and economic lobbying. Several empirical works have addressed ethical dimensions in Mauritius, including ethical decision-making [54], media ethics [55], ethical leadership [56, 57], and corporate governance assessment [58].

Napal [59] found that business executives largely rely on personal ethics in decision-making, irrespective of the existence of formal company codes, and that managerial behaviour plays a decisive role in shaping ethical outcomes. Chan-Meetoo [55] identified multiple ethical challenges within Mauritian journalism, such as the pressure to publish rapidly—often compromising accuracy—sensationalism to increase sales, and political influence over sensitive reporting. In a study on leadership and ethical judgment among 247 managers in higher education, Ah-Kion and Bhowon [56] found that transformational leadership negatively affected subordinates' ethical reasoning and intentions, possibly indicating pseudo-transformational tendencies or the impact of cultural dimensions.

Even with comprehensive legislation and governance structures to curb misconduct, unethical and illegal acts persist globally [60]. Likewise, despite formal ethics programs, codes of conduct, and internal controls, many firms continue to confront ethical breaches [4, 5, 61].

A critical review of the literature on organisational culture, ethical climate, leadership, decision-making, workplace pressures, behaviour, and performance reveals key research gaps:

- a. Although the connection between leadership and ethics has been investigated extensively [62, 63], societies still experience profound socio-economic difficulties linked to unethical practices [64].
- b. Current theoretical models have yet to confirm whether mediation effects among organisational ethics variables within a macro–meso–micro structure are consistent across varying contexts, organisations, and populations [65].

c. It is critical to investigate how organisational culture, ethical organisational climate, ethical leadership and decision-making, and both internal and external workplace pressures interact, and to examine the ways in which these factors collectively shape organisational citizenship behaviour, employees' ethical conduct, and perceived performance, particularly in multi-industry, multicultural contexts.

d. There is a pressing need to construct or refine a conceptual framework or model that can foster enhanced organisational citizenship, ethical decision-making, and overall performance, especially in environments where internal and external pressures may challenge moral standards.

e. Additionally, the study aims to offer practical guidance to businesses, helping them navigate ethical dilemmas effectively in settings marked by cultural diversity and socio-economic variation.

Although research in these domains exists in other nations, no study to date has examined the combined influence of organisational culture, ethical climate, leadership, decision-making, workplace pressures, organisational citizenship, and employee behaviour as an integrated system in Mauritius. Given the country's distinct economic, cultural, social, and political characteristics, this study seeks to provide local stakeholders with insights into how these variables interrelate and operate within the national context.

To address these gaps, it was necessary to map the relationships among macro, meso, and micro variables, and subsequently investigate how independent ethical constructs and mediating factors jointly influence organisational citizenship behaviour, ethical conduct, and perceived employee performance.

The conceptual framework guiding this investigation, illustrated in **Figure 1**, is embedded in a macro–meso–micro structure:

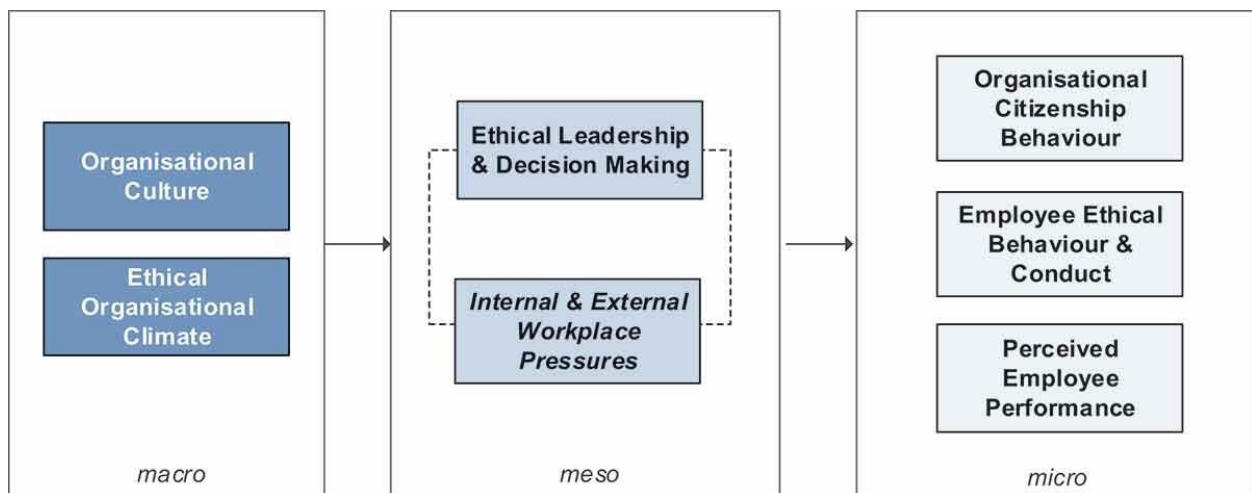


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model Embedded in a Macro–Meso–Micro Framework

The study responds to the following research inquiries:

- How are organisational culture and ethical organisational climate statistically associated?
- What is the relationship among the mediating constructs, namely ethical leadership, decision-making, and internal/external workplace pressures?
- How do the independent variables (organisational culture and ethical organisational climate) relate to the mediating factors, and what is their combined effect on the dependent outcomes (organisational citizenship behaviour, employee ethical conduct, and perceived performance)?
- To what extent does the empirically derived structural model align with the hypothesised theoretical framework?

Materials and Methods

Given the complexity of the constructs and the cross-industry, multicultural context, a quantitative methodology was deemed appropriate.

A survey approach was adopted to gather numerical data from a carefully selected sample of participants representing Mauritian enterprises across different sectors.

A detailed, structured questionnaire was developed, utilising eight validated and reliable measurement scales. Minor adjustments were made to a few items to align with the study's objectives and scope, without compromising psychometric properties.

The final instrument evaluated the macro, meso, and micro variables outlined in the conceptual model through 232 items, as presented in **Table 1**. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, suitable for capturing participant perceptions across the constructs.

Table 1. Overview of Master Instrument

Construct	Questionnaire	Items
Participant Profile & Demographics	Custom-designed items	5
Ethics & Compliance Framework Status	Custom items derived from Ethics and Compliance Initiative (2018)	6
Organisational Culture	Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument [66]	30
Ethical Climate in Organisation	Ethical Climate Questionnaire [15]	36
Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making Practices	Ethical Leadership at Work Scale [67]	38
Internal and External Job Pressures	Modified from “Factors eliciting Managerial Unethical Decision Making” [5, 68]	28
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	OCB Scale [69]	24
Employee Ethical Conduct & Behaviour	Modified Scale of Questionable Practices [52]	46
Perceived Employee Performance	Adapted Perceived Organisational Performance Measure [53]	7
Study-Specific Additional Items	Custom items built on Ethics & Compliance Initiative (2018) and related sources	12
TOTAL		232

The study focused on examining large-scale enterprises operating within Mauritius’s diverse, multi-sector context. Based on the 2013 national census conducted by Statistics Mauritius, the country contained approximately 127,000 active business units, identified as production establishments. Among these, around 2,200 (2%) were categorized as large organizations, distributed across multiple industries and recognized as major contributors to national economic growth [70]. Each large entity employed a minimum of ten workers.

However, the 2013 dataset was not fully comprehensive, as it excluded some large businesses in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, among others. To obtain a complete picture, an additional governmental survey in 2016 was carried out, expanding the list to 2,534 large enterprises functioning across 19 industry categories. From this population, a sample of 526 entities was chosen for further investigation.

The project received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, on 13 August 2019 (Reference: 2019_SBL_DBL_012_FA).

Data were collected digitally via tablets using the Computer Aided Personal Interview (CAPI) platform. Participants provided informed consent, and an independent research agency, Kantar, conducted the survey anonymously, following strict methodological protocols and quality checks to ensure data accuracy and participant engagement.

Several statistical techniques were applied — univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses, along with advanced tools such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), path analysis, and mediation testing, executed through PROCESS. These approaches enabled detailed interpretation of the interaction between variables and the proposed conceptual model.

During data validation, three cases were identified as potential unengaged responses because of minimal variation across scale items ($SD < 0.40$). Consequently, the usable sample was reduced from $n = 526$ to $n = 523$ for final analysis.

Given the conceptual model and the fact that previously validated instruments were used, it was appropriate to perform CFA initially to test model fitness using the current dataset.

Each macro-, meso-, and micro-level construct underwent model fit evaluation using rigorous statistical standards. As various indices provide different insights into fit quality, most researchers recommend a multi-index approach to validate robustness [71]. In this study, a consistent set of indices was applied to all constructs, following Matsunaga [72]— namely, Chi-square/Degrees of Freedom (CMIN/df), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Wherever an acceptable fit appeared but discriminant validity was insufficient, EFA was conducted on the affected constructs to redefine a more theoretically grounded measurement model. The resulting factors were justified theoretically and re-evaluated using CFA. Models showing adequate fit, internal reliability, and discriminant validity were maintained. In a few cases, a proxy indicator was utilized for constructs — particularly in path analysis — that continued to show discriminant validity challenges.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

The mean values, standard deviations, kurtosis, and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Target Population and Sampling

Aspect	Description	Value
Target Population	Large enterprises across various industries in Mauritius	2,534
Sample Size	Calculated from target population using 5% margin of error and 99% confidence level	526

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
Organisational Culture (OC)	3.93	.56	1.48	.77
Ethical Organisational Climate (EOC)	3.71	.72	-0.92	.91
Ethical Leadership & Decision Making (ELDM)	3.61	.51	2.30	.78
Internal & External Workplace Pressure (IEWP)	2.71	.89	-0.46	.87
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)	4.14	.47	1.04	.89
Ethical Employee Behaviour & Conduct (EEBC)	3.61	.43	0.81	.76
Perceived Employee Performance (PEP)	3.71	.49	0.54	.90

Note. n = 523

Table 3 summarizes descriptive results for each model variable. The means, standard deviations, kurtosis, and reliability scores for each construct were computed and tabulated. Most mean values (excluding IEWP) align closer to the “agree” point on the measurement scale, implying strong association with their underlying dimensions. Meanwhile, IEWP responses appeared more evenly distributed, gravitating toward a “neutral” position. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients demonstrate acceptable to excellent consistency among items within each construct.

The correlation relationships between the seven major constructs are displayed in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations among the Seven Primary Variables

	OC	EOC	ELDM	IEWP	OCB	EEBC	PEP
Organisational Culture	1	.54**	.53**	-.48**	.43**	.36**	.60**
Ethical Organisational Climate	.54**	1	.46**	-.43**	.53**	.47**	.59**
Ethical Leadership & Decision Making	.53**	.46**	1	-.34**	.40**	.39**	.61**
Internal & External Workplace Pressure	-.48**	-.43**	-.34**	1	-.31**	-.06	-.41**
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	.43**	.53**	.40**	-.31**	1	.44**	.51**
Ethical Employee Behaviour & Conduct	.36**	.47**	.39**	-.06	.44**	1	.53**
Perceived Employee Performance	.60**	.59**	.61**	-.41**	.51**	.53**	1

Note. n = 523

.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Abbreviations: OC = Organisational Culture; EOC = Ethical Organisational Climate; ELDM = Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making; IEWP = Internal and External Workplace Pressures; OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; EEBC = Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct; PEP = Perceived Employee Performance.

Table 4 presents the correlation outcomes for the variables examined in this research. The inter-variable relationships were analysed and found to be statistically meaningful. Every construct demonstrated a positive correlation with the others, except IEWP, which exhibited a negative association. Most correlations were moderate to strong, while the link between IEWP and EEBC appeared weak and nonsignificant.

Model fitness for each measurement instrument was also assessed. The indices considered were the minimum discrepancy per degree of freedom (CMIN/DF), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). These results are presented in **Table 5**. The evaluation adhered to the guidelines proposed by Hair *et al.* [73], Awang [74], Hu and Bentler [71], and Schumacker and Lomax [75].

Table 5. Model Fit Evaluation of Measurement Tools

Variable	Emerging Factor Structure	Items & Factor Loadings	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR	Model Fit Assessment
Organisational Culture	Three-factor model • Achieving Business Goals • People Consideration • Work Ethics	10 items (Loadings .51–.79)	2.92	0.061	0.96	0.042	Acceptable to Excellent
Ethical Organisational Climate	Three-factor model • Principle-oriented • Benevolence • Altruism	15 items (Loadings .62–.87)	3.82	0.073	0.955	0.034	Acceptable
Ethical Leadership & Decision Making	Six-factor model • People Consideration • Fairness • Power Sharing • Consideration for Sustainability and Ethical Guidance (second-order) • Role Clarification • Integrity	31 items (Loadings .72–.95)	2.82	0.059	0.948	0.042	Acceptable to Excellent
Internal & External Workplace Pressure	Four-factor model • Prioritisation of Economic Results • Situational Stress • Personal Situational Stress • Violation of Ethical Guidelines	15 items (Loadings .72–.88)	4.82	0.086	0.958	0.038	Reasonable to Acceptable

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Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	Three-factor model • Altruism • Civic Virtue • Sportsmanship	12 items (Loadings .61–.83)	3.47	0.069	0.959	0.042	Acceptable
Ethical Employee Behaviour & Conduct	Eight-factor model • Self Interest • Organisational Interest • Efficiency • Friendship • Team Interest • Stakeholder Orientation • Personal Morality • Rules and Law	35 items (Loadings .71–.91)	2.59	0.055	0.942	0.045	Acceptable to Excellent

Analysis of Perceived Employee Performance revealed a single-factor structure with 15 items, achieving a Cronbach's alpha of .94, which confirms strong internal reliability for the construct.

Overall, the outcomes in Table 5 suggest that each of the measurement instruments achieved adequate to excellent fit, allowing them to be confidently used in the subsequent structural analyses.

Mediation assessment

To examine the complete conceptual model, the framework was divided into six sub-models for a more detailed investigation. This segmentation enabled evaluation of the mediating effects of ELDM and IEWP between the independent constructs (OC and EOC) and the dependent constructs (OCB, EEBC, and PEP).

The PROCESS macro by Hayes (IBM SPSS, Version 3.4.1; Hayes [76]) was used to generate both total and individual effect estimates (total, direct, and indirect effects). Analyses were conducted at a 95% confidence level, with 5,000 bootstrap iterations employed to produce percentile-based confidence intervals.

Results from the PROCESS output were presented in standardized beta (β) coefficients. To interpret effect magnitudes between predictors and outcomes, Cohen's [77] benchmarks were applied: $r \approx .10$ indicates a small effect, $r \approx .30$ a medium effect, and $r > .50$ a large effect.

A concise summary of the statistical significance of mediation for each sub-model and its constructs is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Statistical Significance of Mediating Relationships

Sub-Model	Macro Independent Variable	Meso Mediators	Micro Dependent Variable	Mediation Significance
Model 1.4	OC	ELDM & IEWP	OCB	Statistically Significant
Model 2.4	EOC	ELDM & IEWP	OCB	Statistically Significant
Model 3.4	OC	ELDM & IEWP	EEBC	Statistically Significant
Model 4.4	EOC	ELDM & IEWP	EEBC	Not Statistically Significant
Model 5.4	OC	ELDM & IEWP	PEP	Statistically Significant
Model 6.4	EOC	ELDM & IEWP	PEP	Statistically Significant

Note: OC = Organisational Culture; EOC = Ethical Organisational Climate; ELDM = Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making; IEWP = Internal and External Workplace Pressures; OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; EEBC = Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct; PEP = Perceived Employee Performance.

Table 7 outlines the direct (DE), indirect (IDE), and total effects (TE) across the sub-models considered in this study.

Table 7. Summary of Effect Magnitudes across Sub-Models

Model	Pathway (Sub-Constructs)	Direct Effect (DE)	Indirect Effect (IDE)	Total Effect (TE)	% Direct Effect	% Indirect Effect
Model 1.4	OC → ELDM/IEWP → OCB	.26	.17	.43	60%	40%
Model 2.4	EOC → ELDM/IEWP → OCB	.42	.11	.53	79%	21%
Model 3.4	OC → ELDM/IEWP → EEBC	.28	.07	.36	79%	21%
Model 4.4	EOC → ELDM/IEWP → EEBC	.44	.03	.47	95%	5%
Model 5.4	OC → ELDM/IEWP → PEP	.33	.26	.60	56%	44%
Model 6.4	EOC → ELDM/IEWP → PEP	.35	.24	.59	59%	41%

Note: DE = Direct Effect; IDE = Indirect Effect; TE = Total Effect.

OC = Organisational Culture; EOC = Ethical Organisational Climate; ELDM = Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making; IEWP = Internal and External Workplace Pressures; OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; EEBC = Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct; PEP = Perceived Employee Performance.

Integrated model and path analysis

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive path representation of the tested conceptual model, highlighting the directional relationships, effect strengths, and the determination coefficients of the dependent variables.

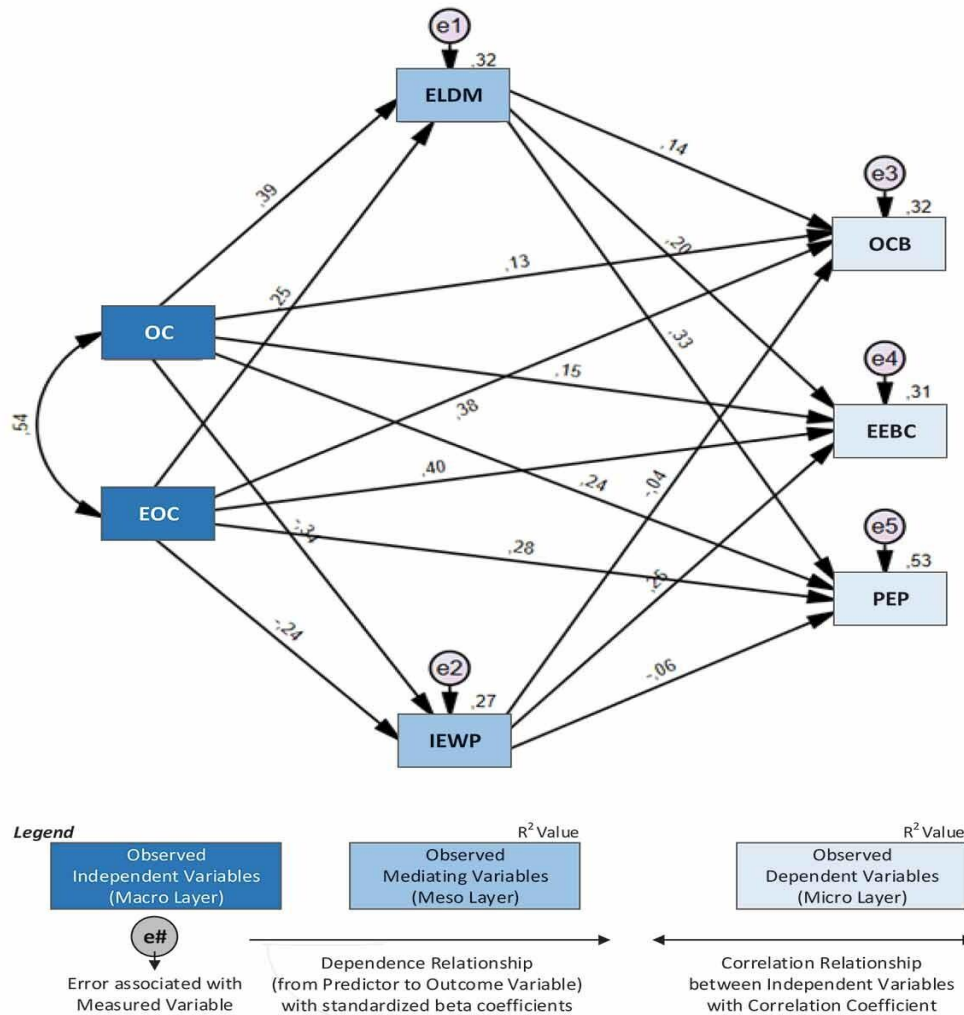


Figure 2. Path diagram for the empirically validated conceptual model

Note: OC = Organisational Culture; EOC = Ethical Organisational Climate; ELDM = Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making; IEWP = Internal and External Workplace Pressures; OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; EEBC = Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct; PEP = Perceived Employee Performance.

Analysis of the path diagram produced several major insights:

- OC and EOC act as independent variables, showing a positive correlation ($r = .54$) and jointly influencing the dependent variables to differing degrees.
- Among the five dependent constructs directly related to OC (ELDM, IEWP, OCB, EEBC, and PEP), the strongest relationship emerged between OC and ELDM ($\beta = .39$), followed by a moderate negative relationship between OC and IEWP ($\beta = -.34$).

This indicates that Organisational Culture has a notable positive effect on Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making and a negative effect on Workplace Pressures. Furthermore, when comparing the dependent outcomes, OC exerts the greatest impact on PEP ($\beta = .24$) relative to its influence on OCB and EEBC.

- Among the macro-level predictors in the framework, EOC shows the greatest influence on EEBC and OCB, with standardized coefficients of $\beta = .40$ and $\beta = .38$, respectively, compared to its influence on other dependent factors. A negative association is observed between EOC and IEWP ($\beta = -.24$). Overall, the strength of EOC’s impact on the dependent constructs exceeds that of OC.
- Acting as a mediating predictor, ELDM most strongly influences PEP, yielding an effect size of .33. It also demonstrates a notable positive relationship with EEBC ($\beta = .20$). Regarding IEWP, the model indicates a stronger influence on EEBC ($\beta = .25$) than on OCB or PEP, where the relationship is weakly negative.
- Analysis of the ELDM coefficient of determination shows that 32% of its variation is jointly predicted by OC and EOC ($R^2 = .32$). Likewise, 27% of the variability in IEWP is explained by these same two predictors ($R^2 = .27$).
- When OC and EOC function as direct predictors and ELDM and IEWP as mediating factors, they collectively account for 53% of the explained variance in PEP ($R^2 = .53$). This level of explanatory power is higher than that found for EEBC ($R^2 = .31$) and OCB ($R^2 = .32$).

e. Under the same predictive structure—OC and EOC as primary variables and ELDM and IEWP as intermediaries—32% of the total variance in OCB is captured ($R^2 = .32$).

f. In the case of EEBC, both ELDM and IEWP exert statistically insignificant mediating effects (refer to Model 4.4, **Table 6**). Consequently, 31% of the variation in EEBC can be attributed to the combined influence of OC, EOC, and the mediators, with OC serving as the main independent variable.

The research sought to empirically examine how Organisational Culture (OC) and Ethical Organisational Climate (EOC)—as higher-order independent constructs—affect Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct (EEBC), and Perceived Employee Performance (PEP), both directly and indirectly. Another objective was to determine whether the mediating constructs—Ethical Leadership and Decision Making (ELDM) and Internal and External Workplace Pressures (IEWP)—hold stronger predictive value when acting as intermediaries within Mauritian enterprises.

Relationship between organisational culture and ethical organisational climate

Results reveal a moderately positive correlation between OC and EOC, $r(521) = .54$, $p < .001$, indicating that improvements in organisational culture tend to align with more ethical organisational climates.

Relationship between ethical leadership and decision making, and internal and external workplace pressures

A moderate negative correlation exists between ELDM and IEWP, $r(521) = -.34$, $p < .001$. Regression and path analyses confirm that both primary independent variables significantly influence the mediating and dependent constructs. The findings imply that a strong organisational culture generally fosters a healthier ethical climate, while enhanced ethical leadership and decision-making correspond to lower levels of workplace pressure. In contrast, inadequate ethical leadership may elevate such pressures and increase the likelihood of ethical breaches—consistent with earlier research by Vaughan [78] and Passas [79].

Interrelationships among variables

Overall pattern: Both OC and EOC, operating as independent variables, exert varying degrees of influence across mediating and dependent constructs spanning the meso and micro levels.

Impact of Organisational Culture:

Within the Mauritian context, OC, defined by its emphasis on goal orientation, employee consideration, and ethical standards, demonstrates its strongest association with ELDM ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$). The results confirm that a robust cultural environment promotes ethical leadership and decision-making behaviours. Prior research supports this connection between culture and leadership values [24, 80, 81].

In addition, OC shows a moderate negative correlation with IEWP, implying that workplaces characterized by care for employees, transparent communication, and team cohesion tend to experience fewer stressors, reducing the temptation to act unethically.

The analysis further indicates that OC positively influences OCB ($\beta = .13$, $p < .001$), EEBC ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$), and PEP ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$). For example, a culture that values teamwork and interpersonal respect encourages employees to engage in discretionary, prosocial acts—such as assisting co-workers and exceeding job expectations—hallmarks of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

Influence of the ethical organisational climate

In this investigation, the ethical organisational climate (EOC) emerged as a central contextual element, displaying dimensions of principled reasoning, compassion, and altruistic concern that vary across workplaces in Mauritius. Findings demonstrate that EOC significantly predicts ethical leadership and decision-making (ELDM) ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$). For instance, a setting that emphasises respect for individuals—whether colleagues, the organisation, or society—and compliance with laws, norms, and established procedures shapes people's ethical reasoning and judgement.

The analysis further shows that EOC has a meaningful influence on both organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and employee ethical behaviour and conduct (EEBC) ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = .40$, $p < .001$, respectively). These outcomes correspond with the observations of Huhtala *et al.* [42] and Mitonga-Monga & Cilliers [82], who reported that ethical workplace climates enhance employee engagement and commitment. In their research, Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers found that workplace ethics and moral climate are among the strongest contributors to employee involvement and work commitment. An ethical atmosphere that promotes fairness, care, and adherence to organisational procedures nurtures altruism, civic virtue, and a tendency to act beyond formal job duties for the collective good. In contrast, an environment tolerant of ethical lapses elevates workplace tension and drives employees toward moral compromise. The results reveal a negative correlation between EOC and internal and external workplace pressures ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .001$), implying that the presence of ethical principles helps reduce stress and pressure.

These findings align with Huhtala *et al.* [42], who proposed that ethical systems strengthen emotional engagement and work dedication. Similarly, Mohanty and Rath [83] demonstrated that cultivating organisational culture instills citizenship behaviour among employees.

Joint effects of organisational culture and ethical organisational climate

The analysis shows that organisational culture (OC) and ethical organisational climate (EOC), when acting together as higher-order independent factors, produce a moderate but statistically significant effect on ethical leadership and decision-making ($R^2 = .32$, $p < .001$) and on workplace pressures ($R^2 = .27$, $p < .001$). The findings suggest that these two variables jointly predict ethical orientation, moral leadership, and the degree of stress experienced in the workplace.

Mediating role of meso-level variables

The results reveal that ELDM, serving as a mediating variable, exerts its strongest influence on perceived employee performance (PEP) ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$) compared with OCB ($\beta = .14$, $p < .001$) and EEBC ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$). When fairness, moral integrity, concern for others, and ethical awareness are evident within leadership, employees tend to demonstrate higher work performance and positive perceptions of their environment. In organisations where ethical decision-making and leadership are visible, individuals perceive their workplace as more cooperative, productive, and morally supportive.

This conclusion aligns with Mo and Shi [49], who established that ethical leadership directly shapes employees' moral outlook and behavioural responses. Conversely, heightened workplace pressures—both internal and external—undermine employee performance and reduce cooperative behaviour. Cohen and Vidaver-Cohen [40] noted that excessive pressure to meet organisational objectives may foster ethical regression and behavioural misconduct.

To determine the mediating role of ELDM and IEWP, both direct and indirect effects were examined. The findings reveal that direct effects such as EOC \rightarrow OCB, EOC \rightarrow EEBC, EOC \rightarrow PEP, and OC \rightarrow PEP range between $\beta = .30$ and $\beta = .50$ ($p < .001$), indicating moderate-to-strong influences. The indirect effects mediated through ELDM and IEWP—linking OC and OCB, EOC and PEP, and OC and PEP—account for approximately 40–44% of the total impact, confirming substantial mediation.

These outcomes highlight that ethical leadership and workplace pressures are critical transmission channels influencing OCB and PEP within Mauritian organisations. This observation echoes Vaughan [78] and Passas [79], who argued that performance-driven pressure often forces employees to compromise their ethical standards—a pattern that appears again here, as the pursuit of profits can sometimes outweigh ethical considerations.

Overall findings

The study provides new evidence about the interconnected structure of the macro, meso, and micro dimensions within the conceptual model. OC and EOC (as primary predictors), together with ELDM and IEWP (as mediators), explain 53% of the total variance in perceived employee performance ($R^2 = .53$, $p < .001$). This percentage is higher than the explanatory power for OCB ($R^2 = .32$, $p < .001$) and EEBC ($R^2 = .31$, $p < .001$).

Furthermore, the combination of these four variables accounts for 32% of the variation in OCB ($R^2 = .32$, $p < .001$), all statistically significant. When examining EEBC, however, the mediating role of ELDM and IEWP is not statistically significant, particularly between EOC and EEBC. This implies that approximately 31% of the variance in EEBC can be attributed to the combined influence of OC, EOC, and the mediators, with OC remaining the central predictive construct.

Evaluation of model fit between the empirical and theoretical frameworks

A systematic and sequential process was undertaken to examine each constituent of the Conceptual Research Model. Following Matsunaga's [72] recommendation, and to prevent bias in assessing model adequacy, the same model fit indicators—CMIN/df, RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR—were consistently applied and interpreted across all hypothesised model stages.

Drawing upon both theoretical reasoning and empirical validation, the investigation successfully formulated a comprehensive multi-dimensional ethical climate framework that facilitates organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This empirically supported structure, termed the “Ethical Climate Model for Organisational Citizenship Behaviour”, is proposed as a guiding mechanism for organisations seeking to establish a robust ethical base that enhances employee conduct, moral behaviour, and overall performance within the workplace.

The model, having undergone empirical validation, displayed an acceptable level of model fit, affirming the direct and indirect linkages between macro-level constructs and micro-level outcomes, mediated by meso-layer variables. In essence, fostering an organisational environment grounded in ethical culture and moral climate encourages employees to exhibit sportsmanship, altruism, civic virtue, compliance with norms, and heightened job performance.

Additionally, the findings confirm that ethical leadership and ethical decision-making, along with workplace pressures, exert notable mediating effects on OCB and perceived employee performance (PEP). This underscores the necessity for

organisations to carefully cultivate and maintain an ethical work environment that integrates moral values into leadership and everyday operations.

Conclusion

This research sought to assess—through a macro-meso-micro analytical framework—how ethical climate dynamics influence organisational outcomes. Specifically, it examined the effects of the independent variables—Organisational Culture (OC) and Ethical Organisational Climate (EOC)—on the dependent constructs—Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), Employee Ethical Behaviour and Conduct (EEBC), and Perceived Employee Performance (PEP)—both directly and indirectly via the mediating factors: Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making (ELDM) and Internal and External Workplace Pressures (IEWP).

The outcomes indicate positive intercorrelations among all model variables, except IEWP, which demonstrates a negative association with the others. Furthermore, OC and EOC were found to jointly predict OCB, EEBC, and PEP, exerting both direct and mediated influences of varying intensity. These independent constructs also significantly shape ethical leadership tendencies, decision-making orientations, and the extent of workplace pressures.

Results further highlight that ELDM and IEWP serve as pivotal mediators, substantially impacting both OCB and PEP within the Mauritian organisational context. The combined explanatory strength of the independent and mediating variables accounts for a notable proportion of variance in all three dependent outcomes ($R^2 = 0.31-0.53$; all statistically significant). Based on the overall model fit indices, the proposed structure demonstrates a satisfactory alignment between empirical evidence and theoretical expectations.

Recommendations

Derived from the empirical analysis, four principal recommendations are advanced for both practitioners and researchers seeking to reinforce ethical culture and citizenship behaviour within enterprises:

Firstly, Cultivate a strong organisational culture as the foundational enabler.

Since OC profoundly shapes employees' perceptions and actions across all levels, leaders should establish a clear strategic direction, define transparent objectives, and ensure balanced decision-making that integrates business targets, ethical conduct, and employee well-being. Management should actively support ethical problem-solving and maintain equilibrium between profit orientation and moral accountability.

Secondly, Embed ethical principles and fairness into the organisational climate.

Enterprises should consciously sense, regulate, and nurture a climate driven by compliance with laws, rules, and shared moral principles, while exhibiting genuine concern for individuals, the organisation, and society. Such a climate enhances employees' commitment to exceed formal responsibilities, promotes ethical integrity, and strengthens emotional attachment and work engagement. Over time, an ethically guided organisational atmosphere cultivates trust, transparency, and sustained citizenship behaviour among employees.

Third, it's crucial for business leaders to embody ethical leadership qualities to inspire positive employee behaviors, engagement, and overall performance. As custodians of their workplace environments, leaders must ensure they create an ethical space for all stakeholders. This involves demonstrating key leadership traits like fairness, integrity, respect for people, clear role definitions, sharing power, adherence to ethical duties, and a focus on sustainability. When leaders make decisions rooted in fairness and ethical considerations, it fosters an atmosphere where employees are more motivated, engaged, and driven to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB). Furthermore, when leaders lead by example, consistently displaying ethical traits, they help maintain an organisational culture where these values are mirrored in the actions of employees.

Lastly, businesses must carefully monitor and manage workplace pressures to avoid creating a harmful or unethical environment. Excessive workplace stress is known to demoralize employees and can stifle their motivation, making it difficult for them to excel. To prevent detrimental behaviours, ethical regressions, or an unhealthy work environment, organisations need to reconsider how they pursue their goals. Striking a balance between achieving business objectives and maintaining ethical practices is essential to ensure a healthy and sustainable work environment that encourages growth and integrity.

As highlighted in the Ethical Climate Model for Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, putting these four recommendations into practice can significantly enhance OCB, employee ethical conduct, and employee performance within companies. Business leaders are therefore encouraged to embrace these strategies, which will benefit both the individuals and the organisation as a whole.

This study provides significant contributions to the field of social science, offering theoretical, empirical, business, and national insights. From a theoretical standpoint, it builds upon the works of Jeurissen [84], Dopfer *et al.* [85], Li [20], and Engelbrecht *et al.* [72], addressing their call for a new direction in research through a macro-meso-micro framework. This structure has led to a deeper understanding of how ethical and behavioural factors interconnect and influence key outcomes

in organisational settings. Specifically, it demonstrates how ethical climate can be broken down and examined through a multi-layered approach.

The findings led to the development of the Ethical Climate Model for Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, an empirically validated model that outlines how organisational culture and ethical organisational climate directly affect OCB, while ethical leadership and workplace pressures act as mediating factors. The comprehensive scope and profound insights of this research add valuable dimensions to the understanding of organisational citizenship behaviour in Mauritius, and offer fresh perspectives for the broader research community. It illustrates how OCB can be nurtured through the dynamic interplay of organisational culture, ethical climate, leadership, and the regulation of workplace pressures. By fostering a collective commitment among all stakeholders, organisations can elevate their corporate ethical culture to new heights, creating a fertile ground for OCB and employee ethical behaviour across industries.

However, the study does have limitations, especially regarding its methodology. First, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires introduces the potential for methodological biases, even though confidentiality measures were in place. The issue of social desirability bias can distort findings, as participants may be inclined to provide answers that are more socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true opinions or behaviours.

Second, the cross-sectional design used in this research limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time, as it captures data at one point, which could artificially enhance the associations between variables.

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