



How Fairness Practices Help Ethical Leaders Improves Employee Performance in Public Sector: A Case of Tanzania Electrical Supply Company Limited Tabora Office

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Abstract: *This study investigated how ethical leadership affects employee performance at the TANESCO Tabora office. The study adopted positivism philosophy with the aid of a quantitative research approach and an explanatory research design. A sample size of 175 respondents was selected using simple random sampling from the population of 312 workers within the TANESCO Tabora Office. A systematic questionnaire was used for collecting the data, and descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses were used to analyze the results. The results showed that leadership dimensions like job fairness had a significant positive impact on employee performance. Moreover, the study recommends that management of the TANESCO Tabora office should involve employees in decision-making and delegate tasks to employees more to enhance their productivity. At the TANESCO Tabora office, participatory decision-making is necessary. This might be accomplished by allowing lower-level staff to participate in the process of making decisions. Moreover, senior leaders at the TANESCO Tabora office should continuously provide role clarification for employees to maintain and improve their performance.*

Keywords: *Ethical leadership, Employee performance, Fairness, TANESCO, Tabora*

How to cite this work (APA):

Nuru, R. L. (2026). How Fairness Practices Help Ethical Leaders Improve Employee Performance in Public Sector: A Case of Tanzania Electrical Supply Company Limited Tabora Office. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 10(1), 495 – 504. <https://doi.org/10.59765/ngur6>.

1. Introduction

Ethical values and behavior are visible features of numerous recent emerging theories in the literature of leadership, so in response to this, studies about the backgrounds, products, and procedures of practicing ethical leadership are progressively growing (Nyambura, 2024). The definition of ethical leadership has been explained in several forms. Ethical leaders participate in performances and activities that give benefits to others; on

the other hand, they refrain from actions that may cause some damage to others at the same time (Ojeleye, Abdullah & Salami, 2023). Huang and Paterson (2017) state that ethical leaders integrate ethical ideologies from their views, values, and activities.

The scope of ethical leadership is wide-ranging; its categories include self-sacrifice, honesty, compassion, equality, and righteousness. Ethical leadership can be expressed by the performance of these principles (Shaheen et al., 2020). Examples consist of a very

compassionate and supportive attitude when someone faces difficulty, very impartial behavior when allocating rewards and benefits, visible honesty when collaborating with people, and giving sacrifices to advantage others. It is clear from the literature on ethical leadership that it's a relationship-oriented behavior to some degree, like generating caring or thoughtful leadership, authorizing leadership, emerging secondary services and self-confidence, and demonstrating secondary benefits. To promote an ethical environment within an organization, incorporate a significant role (Ojeleye, Abdullah & Salami, 2023).

Ethical leaders are defined by two dimensions. The first is being a moral person and then being a moral manager. The dimension of being a moral person includes the abilities of an ethical leader, i.e., being straightforward, trustworthy, honorable, and friendly (Malik & Khan, 2020). Employees can approach these leaders with their serious problems and issues because they know that these people care and solve these issues. Moral managers practice ethical principles while allocating rewards and punishments. According to Rice et al. (2020), ethical leaders are categorized as truthful, compassionate, and righteous entities that furnish reasonable and well-adjusted judgments. They also established strong and ethical principles that are repeatedly interconnected to their admirers. Besides this, ethical leaders give respect to their followers, permit their employees to participate in choices and decisions, and explain hopes and tasks, as demonstrated in his research. Gerpott, Fasbender, & Burmeister (2020) conduct a study that shows that ethical leaders can exhibit a facilitating role between the work outcomes of employees and the culture of the organization.

Throughout history, among various leadership models, ethical leadership is an exclusive form of leadership. Ethical leaders have a significant role in generating a motivational tool where employees feel more satisfied, and this can lead to their improved sustainable performance (Jelagat, 2020). Administrators usually adjust their leadership behavior to accomplish the organization's goals, and this could influence the employees' job satisfaction and their work (Ramzan et al., 2023). Ethical leadership is urgently required due to the latest credit disaster, the most serious worldwide recession of the 1930s, and several other scandals involving leading corporate business firms in the past (Krishnan, 2018). Since the 2008 financial crisis in the United States, corporate leaders have faced lots of unanswered questions regarding the impact of ethical leadership behaviors (Ribeiro, Gomes, & Kurian, 2018). A national study among government employees revealed that 57% of government staff reported that they had

witnessed or seen violations of ethical policies and standards in their workplace in the last 12 months. The majority of these violations went unreported (Rice et al., 2020).

In China, the current social and economic transformation has resulted in a moral and value vacuum that has created a conducive environment for most corporate wrongdoing and fraud, indicating a deficiency in ethical leadership in the Chinese business environment (Zheng et al., 2021). Corruption, unethical behavior, and a lack of accountability were found to be rampant in South Africa, as cited by Cheteni and Shindika (2017). These unethical practices have become so pervasive in South Africa's public service that they are almost accepted as the way of conducting business in the public sector. In Congo, a lack of visionary, positive, and ethical leadership has continued to limit the impact of recent efforts by international institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB) (Onuoha, Ogunjinmi, & Owodunni, 2018). Obicci (2019) revealed that ethical leadership was practiced by leaders in a leader's balance processing in Uganda.

In the Tanzanian context, Mwombeki (2017) contended that the application of transformational ethical leadership can improve performance because a good leadership style wants to develop knowledge and employee potential. Most African countries, including Tanzania, are characterized by poverty and deprivations that result from poor leadership in public sector organizations (Uronu, 2017). Leaders in these organizations put forward the establishment of close interpersonal relationships with top authorities rather than being close to subordinate employees. Close relationships between leaders and employees would lead to improved performance of employees (Khamis, 2019). However, despite the elaborate legislation and framework promoting ethical leadership in Tanzania, in both the public and private sectors, the application of ethics among the leaders is still below average (Mwangwala, 2022). In the case of TANESCO, unethical conduct and unstable performance in public organizations have been reported to have increased recently. The Parliament Energy and Minerals Committee (2018) report revealed that TANESCO has not met 81% of the performance goals that were established. Therefore, this study examined how ethical leadership affects employee performance at TANESCO.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Despite the emphasis on ethical leadership within Tanzania's public sector, employee performance at the Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (TANESCO) Tabora office remains inconsistent. Current leadership

often focuses on technical output while neglecting fairness practices, such as distributive and procedural justice, which are critical for morale (Masawe & Ngirwa, 2023). Previous studies have explored leadership styles generally, yet there is a significant empirical gap regarding how specific fairness interventions directly catalyze performance in remote regional offices (Lotto, 2020).

The motivation for this study is to address the disconnect between ethical rhetoric and operational reality. If left unaddressed, perceived unfairness may lead to burnout and decreased service delivery (Suleiman, 2022). This research fills the gap by proposing a tailored framework of fairness practices specifically for TANESCO, offering a localized perspective that differs from broader national surveys.

1.2 Objectives of the study

To examine the effect of fairness practices on employee performance in public sector

2.. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by social exchange theory, which was developed by two American sociologists, Homans (1910–1989) and Blau (1918–2002). This theory assumes that the organization's encouragement factors drive the relationship between employees and their organization. Employees in an organization expect certain things to be given by their employers to guarantee their commitment and fulfillment towards their jobs. and the organization (Rehman et al., 2020). Strong ethical leaders demonstrate a commitment to the long-term prosperity of their companies by upholding the highest ethical standards and placing their long-term stakeholders' trust foremost. Additionally, they create trusting environments that make subordinates more likely to take on similar committee behavioral patterns (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2011).

On the other hand, the social exchange theory has some drawbacks, as this theory failed to consider other aspects like culture or norms that may influence social exchange and oversimplify social relationships' complexity (Muhammad, Salima & Tayyebah, 2024). According to the social exchange theory, people act in particular ways in order to establish legitimacy and trust. This notion is normally applied to romantic relationships. However, this notion does not apply to every relationship (Sheraz, 2020). According to social exchange theory, relationships

follow a straight line; however, relationships grow, die, skip, or repeat some stages (Miller, 2005). However, the social exchange theory is relevant to this study because it considers ethical leadership as the act of leaders knowing what is right and wrong and abiding by what is right. The foundation of moral leadership is the mental inspiration model, in which the leader mediates the interaction between productivity, goals, ambition, and relations with the personnel.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Fairness and Employee Performance

Resick et al. (2019) assert that ethical leaders are essential in helping people realize that relationships naturally arise in settings that uphold integrity, respect, justice, equity, and fairness. According to Arshad, Asif, and Baloch (2018), the resources that employees have access to do their duties are part of the fairness of the incentive system, the appropriate size of work that each employee can manage, adequate office equipment, and an equal system for rating and recognition.

Muhammad & Suleiman (2024) investigated how the fairness of appraisals mediates the relationship between subjective assessments and employee performance appraisal using the case of the Bauchi State Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Nigeria. The study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design; the study surveyed 5,016 individuals, selecting 355 respondents through cluster sampling. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale. Structural equation modelling conducted with Smart PLS-SEM version 4 revealed a significant positive relationship between the variables under investigation. The study was grounded in equity and organizational justice theories. The findings indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between subjective appraisal and employee performance evaluations, with appraisal fairness playing a substantial mediating role. Finally, the study recommends the continuous enhancement of appraisal systems and the need for ongoing research and collaborative efforts to introduce innovative approaches ensuring fairness in performance evaluations.

Karim (2024) assessed the effect of perceived fairness of performance appraisal (PA) on bankers' attitudes, namely job satisfaction, job involvement, work engagement, and organizational commitment. The research employed a convenience sampling method to gather data from 207 frontline bank officers working in 10 private commercial banks in Bangladesh. For the data analysis, the study

employed statistical tools such as ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression, using SPSS version 25. The study found that fair PA has a significant positive impact on all four types of attitudes. From the control variables (i.e., experience, age, gender, education, and marital status), only education level is found to have a significant negative association with job satisfaction and job involvement.

Kitungi (2020) examined the effects of motivation on employee engagement and performance using the case of the Rufiji District Council and found that there is a strong relationship between motivation and employee engagement and performance. The conclusion was based on the results from the analysis of all respondents from the study, which found that there is a close relationship between motivation and employee engagement and performance. The study also reveals the motivational factors like safety, favorable working environment, respect, recognition, training and development, promotion, good salary, teamwork, and strong supervisory support. These are the best ways and influential factors for primary and secondary school teachers' engagement and performance. However, the study has also found that teachers are seriously disengaged, which is directly associated with low performance due to poor working environment, lack of recognition and unfair supervisory support, lack of promotion, low salary, safety problems, and lack of sound training and development.

H1: *Fairness have a significant effect on employees' performance.*



Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Researcher (2025)

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study employed a case study research design. This is a type of research design enables a researcher to robustly

Research Gap

The literature reviewed shows that of the reviewed studies were done in Pakistan. For instance, the study by Muhammad, Salima & Tayyebah (2024) looked at how fairness help ethical leaders to improve employee performance and create a sustainable workplace environment in Pakistan. Also, Karim (2024) studied perceived fairness of performance appraisal in Bangladesh. All these studies were done in developed countries where the rules and regulations guiding the practices of ethical leadership are quite different from those of Tanzania. In the Tanzanian context, there are few studies. For instance, the study of Nkolimwa (2023) on employees' engagement on the performance of Tanzanian public higher learning institutions: a case of the Institute of Social Work. The study used the correlation research design, while the current study employed a descriptive research design. Also, the study was done in higher learning institutions and not parastatal organizations like TANESCO. Thus, the current study looked at how ethical leadership affects employee performance using the case of the TANESCO Tabora office. The descriptive research design uses questionnaires as the data collection instrument. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistical analysis.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The below conceptual framework has been developed to show the relationship of various dimensions of ethical leadership and employee performance. In this study we consider ethical leadership as independent variable, while employee performance is the dependent variable.

explore the topic of interest by obtaining data that capture a phenomenon as it unfolds in real time (Majid, 2018). In this study the researcher employed a quantitative approach. Quantitative approach was used to collect numerical information while qualitative approach was used to explore the meanings that people construct out of their natural settings (Kumar, 2019).

3.2 Study area and Population

The study was conducted at the TANESCO Tabora Zone Office in Tanzania, where all district offices within the region were visited. According to Kothari (2019), a population is a well-defined set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households that are being investigated. The target population of this study was 312 employees working at the TANESCO Tabora Office.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling

Sample size determination was based on Taro Yamane's mathematical model (1967), a valuable tool for estimating sample size in studies employing primary data (Kothari, 2019). The formula used was:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where; n= sample size, N=population of the study e= Confidence level (expressed into percentages 5%-10%, for this study e=10%), N=312

$$n = \frac{312}{1 + 312 (0.05^2)} = 175.28$$

Therefore, a sample size contained 175 respondents.

To ensure adequate representation of the different subgroups within the target population, the researcher selected 175 respondents from the population using a simple random sampling approach. However, out of 175 respondents, 10 respondents were not included in the final sample size since they participated in the pilot study. 175 questionnaires were administered, out of which 146 were

returned and were used for analysis which is approximately 83% of the total responses.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The study employed only primary data. These are original and gathered from first-hand sources (Kothari, 2019). Structured questionnaires were used as the main instrument of data collection. The data acquired in the field was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Data presentation included frequency tables and charts.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To verify the validity of the instruments a pilot study was conducted. To ensure reliability of the designed instrument, the questionnaire was checked for consistency using the Cronbach Alpha. The finding shows the reliability statistics for the different items of the research questionnaire and for the variable the Cronbach's alpha value is greater than .7 which shows that items used in the research tool are consistent and reliable. The values of Cronbach's alpha for fairness were 0.768.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile (Gender, age, Education and working experience)

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Age	20-30	12	8.2
	31-40	46	31.5
	41-50	66	45.2
	50-60	22	15.1
	Above 60	0	0
	Total	146	100
Gender	Male	94	64.4
	Female	52	35.6
	Total	146	100
Education	Certificate	18	12.3
	Diploma	42	28.7

Bachelor's degree	80	54.8
Master's Degree	6	4.1
Total	146	100
1-5 years	23	15.8
6-10 years	66	45.2
11-15 years	32	21.9
Above 15 years	25	17.1
Total	146	100

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 1 discusses the demographic variables of the study. The respondents' characteristics, like gender, age, qualification, and working experience, are shown. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (over 45.2%) were in the 41–50-years age group, followed by 31.5% who were in the age group 31–40. Regarding the gender of the respondents, the majority, about 64.4%, were male, while 36% of the samples were female. Regarding education qualifications, the majority of the respondents (over 54.8%) had a university degree, whereas 28.7% had a diploma, 12.3% had certificates, and only 4.1% of the respondents had a master's degree. In terms of working experience, 15.8% of the respondents had worked at TANESCO for 1-5 years, 45.2% for 6-10 years, 21.9% for 11-15 years, and 17.1% for more than fifteen (15) years. These results suggest that a large number of the surveyed respondents have between 6 and 10 years of job experience working within TANESCO Company.

4.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix of the dependent variable, including employee performance and independent variables that are fairness, clarification of role, and power sharing, is given in the table below. The above table results show the measure of an employee's performance has a significant correlation with fairness. The correlation findings show that there was a positive and significant association between fairness and employee performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.413 and a p – value of 0.000 as shown in Table 2. This means that an increase in fairness leads to an increase in employee performance. The findings suggest that an increase in fairness by leaders contributed to an increase in employee performance at TANESCO Tabora office company. This means that leaders practiced ethical leadership, and this improved employee performance.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Fairness		
Fairness	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Employee	Pearson Correlation	.413**
Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Source: Field data (2025)

4.3 Regression Results

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of fairness on employee performance. The regression coefficients summarized in table 3 indicate that

an increase in fairness resulted to a 0.482 increase in employee performance and this was statistically significant with a p value of 0.000. This means that a unit increases in fairness by organisational leaders resulted to a 0.482 positive increase in employee performance.

Table 3: Fairness and Employee Performance Regression Results

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.407 ^a	.165	.158	.56718		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Fairness						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.272	1	7.272	22.605	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.673	114	.322		
	Total	43.944	115			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Fairness						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized	Standardized		t	Sig.
		Coefficients	Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.804	.419		4.304	.000
	Fairness	.482	.101	.407	4.754	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

Source: Field data (2025)

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

This study examined the influence of ethical leadership specifically the fairness dimension on employee performance within a public sector utility. The empirical

evidence from TANESCO Tabora indicates a positive and statistically significant effect: Pearson's $r = 0.413$ ($p = .000$) and a regression coefficient ($B = 0.482$) ($p = .000$). These results show that as employees perceive higher levels of distributive and procedural fairness from their

supervisors, their task performance and service delivery measurably improve. Contextual factors help explain this relationship. TANESCO employees serve a diverse client base under operational pressures, so they consistently look to leaders for motivation, equitable treatment, moral guidance, and consistent application of rules. Fairness therefore functions both as a motivational signal and as an organizational constraint-reducer: when appraisal and reward systems are perceived as fair, role ambiguity and resentment decline and employees invest more effort and discretionary behavior. The study's internal reliability for the fairness scale was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.768) and the usable sample for analysis was 146 returned questionnaires, supporting the robustness of the findings. These empirical outcomes align with other studies: Muhammad et al. (2025) report similar positive links between appraisal fairness and performance, while Karim (2024) found fair appraisal strongly associated with job satisfaction, involvement, engagement, and organizational commitment.

Practically, the results imply that TANESCO management should prioritise transparent performance criteria, equitable distribution of rewards and participatory decision-making to sustain service quality. Strategic interventions clear role clarification, standardized appraisal procedures, and training for managers on impartial decision-making are likely to amplify the fairness-performance linkage and reduce turnover and service gaps. In short, fairness is not merely ethical rhetoric in this context but a tangible driver of employee performance with clear statistical and practical significance. Future research should test these mechanisms across different regions and service units to increase external validity and policy relevance.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that ethical leadership, particularly the fairness dimension, has a strong and positive influence on employee performance in the public sector. The findings demonstrate that fair treatment by leaders significantly enhances employees' motivation, commitment, and overall job performance, especially within service-oriented organizations such as TANESCO. Ethical leadership fosters a supportive work environment in which employees feel valued, respected, and encouraged to contribute innovative ideas. By promoting equity, transparency, and moral conduct, ethical leaders help reduce work-related pressure and stress, enabling employees to focus on achieving organizational goals. Therefore, fairness is not only a moral obligation but also a critical managerial tool for improving efficiency, service

delivery, and sustainable organizational performance in public institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends that

1. The management of TANESCO Tabora office strengthen ethical leadership practices, with particular emphasis on fairness.
2. Management should actively involve employees in decision-making processes and increase task delegation to enhance ownership, accountability, and productivity.
3. Participatory decision-making can be achieved by allowing lower-level staff to contribute ideas and opinions on work-related issues.
4. Senior leaders should provide continuous role clarification by clearly defining job responsibilities, performance standards, and organizational goals. Regular supervision, constructive feedback, and supportive guidance should also be emphasized to help employees correct mistakes and improve work quality.
5. Future studies should adopt various aspects of ethical leadership captured in the literature. The current study employed an electrical supply company as the case study; however, there is a need for further research in other sectors such as education, health, etc.

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