SOCIETY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION IN KENYA

Influence of Ethical Leadership Practices on Governance in Kilifi County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

The study aimed to establish the influence of ethical Leadership practices on governance in Kilifi County Government, Kenya. Drawing upon Servant Leadership Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, the research sought to elucidate the interrelation between ethical leadership practices and governance within the specific context Kilifi County's governance. Governance was measured by transparency, accountability, integrity and fairness. A descriptive research design was employed utilizing guided questionnaires, interview schedules and analysis of ethical leadership practices to systematically explore the study objectives. The study targeted County Executive Committees, Chief Officers and citizens who come to seek services from the various county offices. The target population was 186 respondents. The study utilized census sampling technique. Data analysis technique included descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative data and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes within qualitative data. The study found that transparency have a positive impact on public trust in Kilifi County government. The study also found that accountability measures contribute to better decision-making. The study further found that leaders who demonstrate integrity are likely to gain public trust in Kilifi County government. The study concluded that accountability measures contribute to better decision-making, and that ethical leadership practices have a significant impact on the overall governance performance in Kilifi County government. The study suggests ethical leaders prioritizing ethical conduct in the workplace improves service delivery. By acting ethically, leaders can encourage employees to follow suit. The study emphasizes that ethical leaders should treat followers with respect and consideration
Key words: Transparency; Accountability; Integrity; Fairness; Governance

1. Introduction

Ethics and leadership play a crucial part in shaping the effectiveness of any private or public sector organization (Dimi, 2021). Ethical leadership practices, in particular, have garnered increasing attention in recent years as societies and institutions recognize the profound impact they have on governance, organizational culture, and overall outcomes (Miller, M. J., & Kuhnert, K. 2022). Ethical leadership refers to proper and thoughtful behavior both within and outside the office, as well as upholding ethical ideals (Njoroge, D. N., & Kivuva, J. K. 2022). Within the framework of public management, ethical leadership becomes even more paramount, as it sets the tone for responsible decision-making, accountability, and the welfare of citizens (Naughton & Sage, 2022). Ethical leadership is characterized by principles such as integrity, transparency, accountability, and fairness. It has gained prominence as an essential ingredient for effective governance. Ethical leaders, in both the public and private sectors, serve as beacons of responsible decision-making and the guardians of the public interest (Lee et al., 2020). They set the tone for organizational culture, inspire trust among citizens, and ultimately determine the direction of governance (Gunawan & Widodo, 2023).

Governance mechanisms involve a combination of elements such as Laws and Regulations where governments create laws and regulations to establish the legal framework within which organizations and individuals must operate. Institutions and structures in which governance often relies on are parliaments, courts, regulatory bodies, and executive

133

agencies to enforce laws and policies. The decision-making processes such as voting, consensus-building, or expert consultation, are used to make important choices such as to allocate resources, set priorities and lastly accountability and oversight mechanisms including audits, transparency requirements, and reporting, ensure that those in positions of authority are held accountable for their actions (Shahin *et al*, 2023).

Ethical behavior is essential to democratically elected public leaders, but it's also a vital component of providing quality public services. Many nations and public institutions worldwide, especially in Africa, lack morally upright leaders who put the needs of the populace first (Fourie & Fourie, 2023). In South Africa for instance, fighting unethical behavior in government is futile when trying to enforce and examine national, provincial, and local standards of ethics (Fourie &Fourie, 2023). The provision of public services has been found to be severely impacted by several elements, such as poor service delivery, absence of moral behavior in government leadership, and inadequate system for dealing with unethical activity in government institutions. According to Rousseau & Buchholtz (2023), developing countries' economies are suffering from a massive trust deficit that is only growing. Senior government officials, who are required to demonstrate high levels of leadership ethics, have jeopardized their positions of authority. According to Mingming Xu, Jing Jing, and Yiran Li. (2023), ethical leadership behavior such as accountability for ethical norms, should reflect the distributive and procedural parts of justice in order to efficiently provide public services. Leader behavior has been found to have a major influence on employees' faith in the beginning (Griffin, Leiter & Johnson, 2023).

The relationship between ethical practices and governance is marked by several critical trends and issues. One prominent concern is the global demand for greater transparency, accountability, and integrity as societies increasingly hold leaders to higher ethical standards. The digital age has ushered in a new era of transparency, enabling the public to scrutinize leaders' actions like never before. Issues such as corruption, abuse of power, and unethical decision-making continue to erode public trust in governance institutions. Furthermore, the need for ethical leadership is underscored by complex global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and economic inequality, which require principled, forward-thinking leaders capable of fostering cooperation, innovation, and equitable solutions for the betterment of society. Corruption remains a significant challenge in many African countries (Story *et al, 2022*). Leaders who engage in corrupt practices undermine trust in governance institutions and hinder socioeconomic development. It argues that leaders need to take concrete steps to reduce corruption and strengthen governance institutions in order to promote socioeconomic development.

Governance requires ethical leadership (Bolatito, 2018). In addition, government representatives have a high bar for moral behavior (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Bukhamsin (2015) asserts that a lack of ethical behavior by leaders has caused a leadership crisis in the public sector over time. Public officials' unethical behavior makes it harder to accomplish effective governance and provide quality services, which contributes to a dilemma in leadership (Dimitrov & Jain, 2014). The provision of services is in crisis as a result of officials involved in the dishonest practice of embezzling public funds meant for improving service delivery and developing local governments, with much of the funds being siphoned into private wallets (Hafeez, Malak & Zhang, 2007). People are suffering as a result of the government system's inability to provide social services and decent administration, which worries the populace.

Kilifi County, located along the Kenyan coast, offers an opportunity to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and governance. For the past few decades, the topic of ethical behaviours in Kenya has generated intense discussions. Following high-profile incidents, unethical practices in public enterprises and organizations have been extensively documented and published. The problem has not been improved by the creation of anti-corruption commissions or legislation. Public servants and leaders due of their role as role models and influencers of ethical behaviour have come under increased scrutiny because, their moral leadership standards have not satisfied the public's confidence. The leadership practices in Kilifi County Government hold the potential to significantly influence the standard of public service delivery and governance. This research sought to delve into the intricate relationship between ethical leadership practices and governance within the specific context of Kilifi County Government.

2. Research Methods

The study used a descriptive survey research approach in order to achieve its objectives. It is possible to get data about people's views, beliefs, values, and behaviour about social or educational issues using survey designs. It's a methodical approach to researching behaviour that requires environment manipulation in order to observe or experiment on. Investigating and gathering data on the research topic will be appropriate using this design. The data collected was

combined into a single study, which encapsulated the themes within an overarching design that guided the entire study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study. Thus, the design gave a description of each kind of data. From a target population of 186 respondents census sampling was utilized where all the 186 respondents formed the sample size which included 153 citizens, 10 County Executive Committees (CECs) and 23 Chief Officers. The instruments for gathering data for this research consisted of questionnaires and interviews. To collect primary data for this study, the researcher employed a questionnaire as the data collection method. The respondents were interviewed in-person by the researcher. By using this strategy, the researcher was able to clarify any questions and make sure that participants understand the questionnaire, leading in the collection of exact and applicable data to meet the study's objectives.

The research collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 computer program was utilized to evaluate the unprocessed data and provide conclusions. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation which was presented using tables and graphs. Inferential statistics such as correlational analysis was utilized to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Ethical practices were correlated against governance to establish whether a significant relationship existed. In the study, thematic analysis was employed to examine qualitative data which was presented in narration form. This was based on Zina's, (2010) advice for analyzing qualitative data, which calls for organizing, categorizing, coding, and thematically analyzing the data obtained based by the study variables in order to find significance, interpret it, and draw conclusions in light of the goals of the study.

3.0 Result and Discussions
3.1 Transparency and Governance
The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of transparency on governance in the Kilifi County Government. To respond to the objective, the researcher requested the respondents to indicate the agreement on the various statements on transparency. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on transparency and governance. The findings are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Extent of Agreement in Transparency and Governance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev
The level of transparency is very high in Kilifi County	120	2.658	1.185
You believe that transparent decision-making processes have a positive impact on public trust in Kilifi County	120	4.092	1.138
There are specific transparency-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County	120	3.425	1.172
There are established mechanisms within Kilifi County to report instances of unethical behaviour or lack of transparency in governance	120	3.300	1.274
You have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcomes as a result of increased transparency in Kilifi County	120	3.358	1.019
Transparency initiatives in Kilifi County are communicated to the public effectively	120	2.975	1.119

From the findings the respondents stated that they believe that transparent decision-making processes have a positive impact on public trust in Kilifi County (mean=4.092). Additionally, the respondents were neutral on the fact that there are specific transparency-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County (mean=3.425), followed by that they have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcomes as a result of increased transparency in Kilifi County (mean=3.358), there are established mechanisms within Kilifi County to report instances of unethical behaviour or lack of transparency in governance (mean=3.3), transparency initiatives in Kilifi County are communicated to the public effectively (mean=2.975), and that the level of transparency is very high in Kilifi County (mean=2.658). This depicts that, transparent decision-making processes have a positive impact on public trust in Kilifi County.

The findings from KIIs indicated that leaders carry out open meetings for the public which are often open for attendance, allowing residents to witness discussions and decisions first-hand. The County created websites that serve as a central hub for information including details about government structure, departments, budgets, and ongoing

projects and also and online resources for departments to showcase their activities. Based on the Right to Information enshrined in the constitution of Kenya. The county government of Kilifi encourages its citizens based on the constitution to formally request information from government departments, thus fostering greater transparency.

The findings align with a study by Hope, (2023) who stated that transparency fosters information exchange and builds trust, all of which are essential to the company. In order to attain transparency, an organization must give stakeholders accurate, comprehensive, and timely access to information about its operations and governance. Zhang, Shujian and Wang, Li (2020) stated that there is a noteworthy correlation between budgetary transparency and the effectiveness of municipal environmental governance

3.2 Accountability and Governance

The second objective of the study was to determine the influence of accountability on governance in the Kilifi County Government. To respond to the objective, the researcher requested the respondents to indicate the agreement on the various statements on accountability. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on accountability and governance. The findings are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Accountability and Governance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev
The level of accountability is very high in Kilifi County	120	2.842	1.053
You believe that accountability measures contribute to better decision-making	120	4.625	0.486
There are established channels for citizens to report misconduct or breach of accountability by public officials in Kilifi County	120	3.475	0.987
Transparency reporting systems, whistleblower protection, oversight committees significantly enhance accountability in Kilifi County	120	3.508	1.517
You have personally experienced or witnessed improved governance outcomes as a result of increased accountability in Kilifi County	120	3.033	1.092
Accountability initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public	120	3.167	0.999
There are accountability-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County	120	3.342	1.220

From the findings the respondents agreed that they believe that accountability measures contribute to better decision-making (mean=4.625), and that transparency reporting systems, whistle-blower protection, oversight committees significantly enhance accountability in Kilifi County (mean=3.508). Further the respondents were neutral on the fact that there are established channels for citizens to report misconduct or breach of accountability by public officials in Kilifi County (mean=3.475), there are accountability-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County (mean=3.342), accountability initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public (mean=3.167), they have personally experienced or witnessed improved governance outcomes as a result of increased accountability in Kilifi County (mean=3.033), and that the level of accountability is very high in Kilifi County (mean=2.842). This depicts that the respondents believe that accountability measures contribute to better decision-making.

The KIIs stated that "…. *accountability leadership goes beyond simply having mechanisms in place. It requires a cultural shift within the county government, where leaders actively seek feedback, address concerns openly, and take responsibility for their actions. This fosters a more responsible and responsive form of governance that ultimately benefits the county's residents. County Leaders hold regular press briefings to share information about government plans, budgets, and ongoing projects. This transparency allows citizens of the county to understand government actions and identify areas where their input might be valuable. The County websites and social media pages serve as platforms for sharing information, updates, and announcements. This allows residents to stay informed about government activities. The constitution of Kenya empowers citizens to formally request information from government bodies. Therefore, based on this right, residents of Kilifi County are encouraged to access specific data they need to understand government decisions and hold leaders accountable.*"

According to Kraemer, R., (2023), public servants have a moral obligation to account for how they have used the power and resources entrusted to them. Therefore, accountability refers to the duty placed on public servants to account for their failure to reach performance goals and to provide a report detailing their usage of public resources. Africa

136

has to improve its governance record since it demonstrates a very low degree of public accountability. Neo-patrimonial control holds sway African Management of development and politics, which accounts for the lack of effective accountability in many African administrations.

3.3 Integrity and Governance

The third objective of the study was to determine the influence of integrity on governance in the Kilifi County Government. To respond to the objective, the researcher requested the respondents to indicate the agreement on the various statements on integrity. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on integrity and governance. The findings are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Integrity and Governance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev
The overall level of integrity among leaders is high in Kilifi County	120	2.950	1.122
You believe that leaders who demonstrate integrity are likely to gain public trust in Kilifi County	120	4.333	0.920
There are established mechanisms to address ethical misconduct among leaders in Kilifi County	120	3.208	1.076
Clear ethical guidelines, training and education, public scrutiny significantly contribute to leaders' ethical integrity in Kilifi County	120	3.900	0.864
You have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcome as a result of increased integrity in Kilifi County	120	3.192	0.973
There are specific integrity-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County	120	3.100	1.088
Integrity initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public	120	2.883	1.310

From the findings the respondents agreed that they believe that leaders who demonstrate integrity are likely to gain public trust in Kilifi County (mean=4.333) and that clear ethical guidelines, training and education, public scrutiny significantly contribute to leaders' ethical integrity in Kilifi County (mean=3.900). further the respondents were neutral on the fact that there are established mechanisms to address ethical misconduct among leaders in Kilifi County (mean=3.208), followed by the fact that they have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcome as a result of increased integrity in Kilifi County (mean=3.192), there are specific integrity-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County (mean=3.100), the overall level of integrity among leaders is high in Kilifi County (mean=2.950), and that integrity initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public (mean=2.883). This depicts that, respondents believe that leaders who demonstrate integrity are likely to gain public trust in Kilifi County.

According to the KIIs, *".... County government of Kilifi one of the counties in Kenya, like most governmental bodies, adhere to a set of ethical principles and values. Some key ethical standards county leaders are expected to uphold: Leaders are clear about decision-making processes, avoid conflicts of interest, disclose relevant financial information, open and answerable for their actions. The County leaders try to avoid bribery, misuse of public funds, or any actions that could erode public trust. Leaders strive for impartiality in decision-making and ensure fair treatment for all citizens regardless of background or affiliation. Leaders are entrusted with managing public funds by prioritizing efficient use of resources and avoiding wasteful spending. Ultimately, county leaders serve the people. They are committed to working in the best interests of the county's residents and promoting their well-being."*

The findings agree with a study by Yusuf *et al.,* (2020) who stated that the integrity of leaders in upholding the ethical corridor, supporting education and learning, functioning of the organization's ethical board, optimizing IT systems, and encouraging change for the future improvement of the organization had a significant effect on governance practices.

3.4. Fairness and Governance

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the influence of fairness on governance in the Kilifi County Government. To respond to the objective, the researcher requested the respondents to indicate the agreement on the various statements on fairness. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on fairness and governance. The findings are shown in table 4.

137

Table 4. Fairness and Governance

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev
There is high level of fairness in governance of Kilifi County	120	2.317	1.347
You believe that fair treatment of stakeholders by leaders contribute to improved community satisfaction in Kilifi County	120	4.150	0.950
There are specific policies or guidelines in place to ensure fairness in resource allocation and decision making in Kilifi County	120	3.125	1.274
Lack of diversity and inclusion, nepotism, corruption among other significantly hinder fairness in governance of Kilifi County	120	4.000	1.561
There are specific fairness-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County	120	2.967	1.216
Fairness initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public	120	2.892	1.067
You have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcomes as a result of increase fairness in Kilifi County	120	2.967	1.276

From the findings the respondents agreed that they believe that fair treatment of stakeholders by leaders contribute to improved community satisfaction in Kilifi County (mean=4.150), and that lack of diversity and inclusion, nepotism, corruption among other significantly hinder fairness in governance of Kilifi County (mean=4.000). Further the respondents were neutral on the fact that there are specific policies or guidelines in place to ensure fairness in resource allocation and decision making in Kilifi County (mean=3.125), followed by there are specific fairness-related policies or guidelines in Kilifi County (mean=2.967), respondents have personally witnessed or experienced improved governance outcomes as a result of increase fairness in Kilifi County (mean=2.967), fairness initiatives in Kilifi County are effectively communicated to the public (mean=2.892), and that there is high level of fairness in governance of Kilifi County (mean=2.317). This depicts that, respondents agreed that they believe that fair treatment of stakeholders by leaders contribute to improved community satisfaction in Kilifi County.

The KIIs stated, *".... County leadership works towards fair and equitable treatment for all citizens through a combination of policies, programs, and practices. County has put up Clear and enforceable policies prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender, disability and socioeconomic status. These policies apply to all county government departmental services, employment, and contracting procedures. The county leadership holds frequent meetings in diverse locations and actively recruiting residents from varied backgrounds for committees and boards. County leaders consider factors like poverty rates, health needs, and infrastructure deficiencies when allocating funds to ensures all areas have a fair shot at improvement and development. Leaders regularly engage with residents from diverse areas to gain a better understanding of community needs and concerns to allows for identifying and addressing issues of fairness and equity more effectively."*

The findings agree with a study by Huang, L., & Paterson, T. A. (2017) who investigated the fairness and governance of Vietnam's public sector milk value chain and the findings demonstrated how significantly the dairy industry and milk production in Vietnam have grown since the reforms. Dairy farmers were treated with impartiality making Vietnam's milk value chain to expanded in scope and underwent in-depth development.

3.5. Governance
The respondents were requested to indicate the extent of agreement on statements with regard to governance. The findings are shown in table 5.

Table 5. Governance

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev
There is high effectiveness of governance level in Kilifi County	120	3.208	1.222
Ethical leadership practices have a significant impact on the overall governance performance in Kilifi County	120	4.125	1.112
You have observed an improvement in quality of governance in Kilifi County over the past years	120	3.675	1.217
Ethical leadership practices such as transparency and accountability contribute to the reduction of corruption on governance of Kilifi County	120	4.075	1.278

You are satisfied with the level of public services and infrastructure development in Kilifi County	120	2.567	1.059
Leaders in Kilifi County uphold ethical values and principles in their governance roles	120	2.650	1.345
Ethical leadership practices foster a sense of trust and confidence in the government's ability to serve the interest of the community in Kilifi	120	3.650	1.382
There is high level of community engagement and participation in governance processes in Kilifi County	120	3.183	1.115

From the findings the respondents agreed that ethical leadership practices have a significant impact on the overall governance performance in Kilifi County (mean=4.125), followed by ethical leadership practices such as transparency and accountability contribute to the reduction of corruption on governance of Kilifi County (mean=4.075), they have observed an improvement in quality of governance in Kilifi County over the past years (mean=3.675) and that ethical leadership practices foster a sense of trust and confidence in the government's ability to serve the interest of the community in Kilifi (mean=3.65). Further the respondents were neutral that there is high effectiveness of governance in Kilifi County (mean=3.208), there is high level of community engagement and participation in governance processes in Kilifi County (mean=3.183), leaders in Kilifi County uphold ethical values and principles in their governance roles (mean=2.65), and that they are satisfied with the level of public services and infrastructure development in Kilifi County (mean=2.567). This depicts that ethical leadership practices have a significant impact on the overall governance performance in Kilifi County.

The findings agree with a study by Rohr, (2023) who stated that the principle of governance requires local officials be fair and be able to galvanize all the administrative apparatus available toward producing positive outcomes that meet the aspirations and interests of the public while making the utmost use of available resources. To guarantee the effective and efficient provision of public services and to counteract bureaucratic corruption in local government, professionalism in public service is necessary. Governance also requires that the government is responsive to the needs of citizens. Responsiveness entails that government agenda and policies are to be focused on citizens' needs and interests; it implies integrating citizen demands in the decision-making and resources allocation in the light of citizen needs.

Pearson Correlation Analysis
Correlational analysis using Pearson's product moment technique was done to determine the relationship between ethical leadership practices and governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya. Ethical practices which included transparency, accountability, integrity and farness were correlated against governance to establish whether a significant relationship existed. Results of the correlation are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Transparency	Accountability	Integrity	Fairness	Governance
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	1	.805**	.671**	.665**	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.805**	1	.387**	.614**	.545**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Integrity	Pearson Correlation	.671**	.387**	1	.751**	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Fairness	Pearson Correlation	.665**	.614**	.751**	1	.800**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Governance	Pearson Correlation	.737**	.545**	.794**	.800**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	120	120	120	120	120
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The results in Table 6 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between transparency and governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya (r = 0.7377). This implies that there is a very strong association between transparency and governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya which is significant. The findings also reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between accountability and governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya (r = .545**, p-value < 0.05), thus implying that accountability has a positive and significant relationship with governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya.

On integrity, the findings indicated a significant positive relationship with governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya (r = .794**, p-value < 0.05) thus, depicting that integrity have a significant positive relationship to governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya. The findings also reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between fairness and governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya (r = .800**, p-value < 0.05), thus implying that fairness has a positive and significant relationship with governance within the Kilifi County Government in Kenya.

4. Conclusions
The study concluded that transparent decision-making processes have a positive impact on public trust in Kilifi County, accountability measures contribute to better decision-making and that leaders who demonstrate integrity are likely to gain public trust in Kilifi County. The study further concluded that fair treatment of stakeholders by leaders contribute to improved community satisfaction in Kilifi County, and that ethical leadership practices have a significant impact on the overall governance performance in Kilifi County. Finally, the study concluded that there exists a significant positive relationship between transparency, accountability, integrity and fairness with governance in Kilifi County.

5. Recommendations
The study recommended that public servants should prioritize upholding ethical standards in the workplace to enhance service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness. Notably, servants Leaders should leverage ethical leadership practices to encourage employees to become exceptional public servants. Evidently, the study suggests that ethical leaders should build stronger relationships with their followers through respect and individualized consideration. The study also recommends that the leadership and the citizens of the county should strive to ensure that the elected leaders exhibit ethical values. This is because the study has established that ethical leadership leads to the improved governance performance. Furthermore, County leadership should ensure adherence to established ethical standards and code of conduct. Ethical leadership values should be a top priority for county leadership to enhance its dynamic capability for performance improvement. Finally, the study recommends that the county should sponsor employee training programs to educate them on the negative consequences of unethical behavior and encourage ethical conduct through recognition and rewards. Conversely, unethical behavior should be met with appropriate disciplinary action to deter future occurrences.

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