

Enhancing Employee Learning and the Institutionalization of Ethics in Organizations: Evidence from the University of Cape Coast

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the correlation between employee learning and the institutionalisation of ethics inside organisations, using empirical data from administrative personnel at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey methodology was used to gather data from 160 administrative personnel using structured questionnaires, which were then analysed by descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression methods. The findings demonstrated a robust positive association ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$) between employee learning and the institutionalisation of ethics. Regression analysis revealed that leadership modelling ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), ethical awareness ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), and training programs ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$) jointly accounted for 67% of the variation in ethical institutionalisation ($R^2 = 0.67$). These results highlight the essential need for ongoing education and leadership dedication in fostering an ethical culture inside higher education organisations. The research advocates for the integration of structured ethics training modules and quantifiable ethical performance indicators into employee evaluation systems to improve ethical behaviour and organisational integrity.

Keywords: Employee learning, Institutionalization of ethics, Leadership communication, Higher education, University of Cape Coast

INTRODUCTION

The integration of ethics inside organisations has become a primary goal for those aiming to improve their reputation, accountability, and sustainability both now and in the future. Incorporating ethical standards into daily operations at higher education institutions is essential both morally and practically. Academic integrity and social responsibility are essential components of student life in such context. The extent of ethical institutionalisation is shown by how thoroughly employees assimilate, internalise, and implement ethical principles in their daily tasks. Mehak and Siddiqui (2020) and Lašáková, Skaloš, and Madžík (2025) assert that an organization's integrity is optimally preserved by ongoing education and reinforcement of ethical norms for staff. Certain members of Ghana's higher education sector have expressed apprehensions over possible favouritism, resource misallocation, and breaches of regulations. This has led to widespread scepticism about the effectiveness of ethical management methods. Among state universities in Ghana, UCC is a premier choice. To enhance student awareness of the seriousness of their activities on campus, new regulations have been introduced, ethical codes established, and professional development opportunities offered. We now lack sufficient evidence to establish definitive conclusions on the impact of training on the integration of ethics in these circumstances. Understanding this link is essential for fostering trustworthiness, competence, and accountability in university administration. Alizadeh, Dirani, and Qiu (2021) with Schultz and Seele (2023) provide empirical data demonstrating that on-the-job learning enhances moral reasoning, ethical consciousness, and decision-making grounded in integrity. Nonetheless, a limited number of these studies have expressly concentrated on African universities; rather, they have mostly emphasised Western or corporate environments. Moreover, previous research has mostly focused on students' ethical behaviours, resulting in a limited comprehension of how faculty and staff might contribute to the establishment and maintenance of ethical environments on university campuses.

This research examines the impact of employee learning on the institutionalisation of ethics at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess staff awareness and perceptions of ethical standards and practices at the University of Cape Coast.
2. To evaluate the role of employee learning and training in promoting ethical practices at UCC.
3. To investigate how ethical principles are practiced and institutionalized within the operations of UCC.
4. To identify challenges hindering the institutionalization of ethics and propose strategies for strengthening ethical practices at UCC.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on organisational learning and ethics at universities by achieving the aforementioned objectives. It provides evidence from a developing-country setting that shows how leadership participation and continuous learning may create long-lasting ethical cultures in public organisations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Ethics and Institutionalization

An organization's code of ethics dictates how employees should behave and what choices they should make on the job (Abdi, Mohamed, and Farah, 2025). When principles of ethics are ingrained in a company's culture, practices, and rules, they permeate all aspect of everyday operations (Ali et al., 2023). All administrative, academic, and individual actions at universities are held to a high standard of transparency, fairness, and accountability via ethical institutionalisation. According to Alizadeh, Dirani, and Qiu (2021), organisations are more likely to maintain stakeholder trust and integrity when they institutionalise ethics via training programs, ethical leadership, and codes of conduct. Universities in poor countries are coming under more and more scrutiny for their governance, academic integrity, and financial management, making the institutionalisation of ethics in higher education all the more important (Bianchi et al., 2022). In addition to fostering trust, an ethical culture in these types of businesses improves service delivery, teamwork, and idea generation.

The literature on organisational ethics emphasises the significance of leadership, communication, and employee education as fundamental factors influencing ethical environment. Brown and Treviño (2006) describe ethical leadership as the exhibition of normatively suitable behaviour via personal acts and interpersonal connections. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory posits that workers emulate ethical behaviour by witnessing and emulating ethical leaders. Studies from other places substantiate these connections. Schwartz (2013) indicated that ethics training improves decision-making and employee responsibility in Western environments. Nguyen et al. (2021) proved that organised ethics programs significantly enhanced staff compliance in Vietnamese institutions. Owusu and Koomson (2021) similarly discovered that Ghanaian organisations incorporating ethics training into staff development exhibit enhanced integrity and professionalism.

However, the disparity between policy and implementation persists significantly in several developing nations. Ethical norms often reside in policy papers but lack enforcement and review systems. Integrating ethics via ongoing education and quantifiable metrics is essential for a healthy institutional culture.

Employee Learning and Organizational Ethics

Ghasempour et al. (2021) state that organisations invest in their employees' learning by providing opportunities for formal training, informal mentorship, and continuous professional development. When it comes to ethical considerations, education equips workers to recognise when they are in a sticky situation, choose their words and deeds carefully, and check that they align with the organization's principles (Kancharla & Dadhich, 2021). There is strong evidence from empirical research that shows a link between education and moral behaviour. Training on ethics increases both moral consciousness and commitment to ethical ideals, according to Yadava

(2024). Similarly, Amponsah-Kwatiah, Owusu, and Afranie (2021) discovered that training programs implemented by Ghanaian public institutions assist staff in adhering to the ethical standards established by their respective organisations. Furthermore, according to Akaigwe (2021), ethical settings are fostered via continuous learning since it motivates employees to be accountable and consider ethical considerations. Still, many schools in Africa see ethics instruction more as a one-time compliance exercise than a continuous effort to better their students (Raadschelders & Chitiga, 2021). Because of this chasm, it is more difficult for workers to understand and abide by ethical standards, which in turn makes it more difficult for ethics to permeate the company. Continuous learning that equips workers to handle real-world ethical dilemmas is essential if we want to see lasting changes in workplace ethics.

Leadership, Communication, and Ethical Culture

In order to transform ethical ideals into their institutionalised form, strong leadership is required. Leaders who are ethical mould their followers by being honest, open, and fair themselves (Vikaraman et al., 2021). By establishing trustworthy lines of communication, they promote openness, constructive criticism, and moral decision-making (Godbless, 2021).

According to research by Amponsah-Kwatiah, Owusu, and Afranie (2021), leadership conduct in Ghanaian higher education strongly predicts ethical culture. This is due to the fact that workers have a tendency to mimic their bosses' actions. Another crucial aspect is the quality of the conversation. Everyone benefits from leaders who consistently and clearly convey institutional principles because it facilitates understanding and agreement. However, misunderstandings and noncompliance may result from ineffective communication and uneven application of ethical principles.

Challenges to Institutionalizing Ethics

Universities still face many challenges in integrating ethics into their culture, despite the fact that more and more individuals are aware of the need of ethical governance. Some of them include a lack of funding for training, an absence of rule enforcement mechanisms, leaders unwilling to reform, and an accepting culture of poor conduct (Bush-Mecenas, 2022). Despite having ethical standards in place, several African institutions struggle to put them into practice due to administrative issues and competing interests (Adeleye et al., 2020). It is difficult for individuals to assume responsibility for ethical endeavours due to ineffective monitoring methods and a lack of staff participation in policymaking. Both official policies and strong participation via communication and education are required for the institutionalisation of sustainable ethics, according to Matimbwa and Kamala (2024).

Theoretical Framework

Employee learning's role in ethics' institutionalisation is explored in this study by drawing on Kahn's (1990) Engagement Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees are more invested in their job when they have a sense of purpose, are protected from harm, and can easily reach out for help, according to Kahn's idea. By equipping workers with the knowledge and self-assurance to consistently make moral decisions, ongoing ethical education helps to establish such an environment. Learning opportunities, leadership support, and clear communication are all examples of work resources that the JD-R model states may increase engagement and moral conduct by reducing stress and increasing motivation. In this model, leadership communication reinforces individual and institutional ethics, and employee learning is a resource that boosts workers' cognitive and moral involvement. Ethical standards get ingrained in the fabric of an organisation as a result of these interrelated processes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Population

The research used a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to examine the correlation between employee learning and the institutionalisation of ethics. The target demographic included the administrative personnel of the University of Cape Coast, anticipated to be 300 individuals. According to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

sample size table, 169 questionnaires were distributed, with 150 completed and returned, yielding an 89% response rate.

Staff members with administrative responsibilities at UCC were surveyed for this study. In addition to overseeing the day-to-day operations of the institution, the selection of administrators was based on their track records of ensuring that all units and departments adhere to the strictest ethical guidelines. To ensure that all units and offices were properly represented, an intentional random sampling approach was adopted, as the focus was exclusively on administrators. Collecting data from fifty administrators was the goal. Because it was straightforward to gather data and allowed for statistical analysis, this quantity was considered sufficient for a focused institutional case study. If all participants are from the same occupational group, a representative sample of 40–50 people from a comparable higher education case study could give trustworthy insights into organisational practices. The goals of the research were to be achieved by analysing at least 150 replies and drawing reliable conclusions.

Research Instrument

The research objectives were matched with closed-ended Likert scale questions in the study's structured questionnaire, which served as the primary instrument for data collection. The tool was composed of five primary elements. Information on the personnel's gender, age, years of service, category, and unit or department were gathered in Section A. Section B examined the level of staff members' knowledge and understanding of ethics. We looked at their grasp of ethical standards and the efficacy of UCC's code of conduct. Including ethics in staff development programs and how training, seminars, and workshops impacted workers' capacity to make ethical judgements were the topics covered in Section C. Section D examined the practice and institutionalisation of ethics by analysing the following: the application of ethical notions in daily work, the actions of leaders, and the recognition of ethical conduct. Issues and potential solutions were covered in Section E. Topics covered were a lack of leadership buy-in, inadequate training, and the stigma associated with speaking out against wrongdoing. A few of the enquiries included: "I clearly understand the ethical standards expected of me in my role" along with "Leaders at UCC show that they are committed to acting ethically."

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*, enabling quantitative assessment of perceptions and experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

Approval from UCC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to data collection. Official approval was also given by the university administration. The data collection process took four weeks. We distributed the surveys digitally (using Google Forms distributed via institutional email) and physically (by hand delivery to departmental offices). The participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured that their responses would remain confidential, and were given the freedom to withdraw at any moment. There was no pressure to participate in any way.

Data Analysis

The last stage in the data analysis process was to code and analyse the completed surveys using SPSS. Describing staff knowledge, learning, practice, and difficulties was the initial goal of descriptive statistics. While percentages and frequencies were used to represent demographic information, averages and standard deviations were used to describe replies to Likert scale queries. In order to ensure that the awareness, learning, practice, and hurdles scales were internally consistent, we used Cronbach's alpha. Third, we used Pearson's correlation coefficients to conduct a correlation analysis and determine the strength and direction of links between many relevant factors, such as employee learning and the institutionalisation of ethics. A number of control factors were then included to examine possible moderating effects, including years of service, staff category, and department. Leadership modelling, communication quality, and employee learning were examined using regression analysis to determine their predictive influence on the institutionalisation of ethics. Lastly, we accounted for variations in service duration and department affiliation by comparing groups using

independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA. A clearer picture of the ethical stances held by various departments emerged from this.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Respondents' Characteristics

The demographic attributes of the respondents provide valuable insights on the makeup of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) administrative workforce and the potential impact of staff characteristics on learning and ethical practices. Among the 160 respondents, 86 (53.8%) were female and 74 (46.3%) were male, reflecting a rather balanced gender distribution with a small female predominance. This indicates the increasing involvement of women in administrative leadership roles within Ghana's higher education system. From an ethical standpoint, gender diversity promotes inclusivity in decision-making and fosters equitable institutional governance. The majority of respondents, 41.9%, were aged 31–40 years, followed by 30.0% in the 41–50 years group, 18.1% aged 21–30 years, and just 10.0% aged 51 years and more. This distribution indicates that the majority of administrators are in their active and mid-career phases, contributing a combination of experience, maturity, and professional zeal. Individuals within this age bracket are often more amenable to training and ethical learning programs, owing to their familiarity with institutional regulations and professional obligations.

The data indicates that 48.1% of participants had Master's degrees, 34.4% owned Bachelor's degrees, 11.9% had HND/Diplomas, and 5.6% obtained PhDs. The elevated educational attainment of UCC's administrative personnel indicates their academic preparedness to comprehend intricate institutional ethical frameworks and to convert policy into responsible conduct. Education cultivates understanding of organisational standards and fosters critical thinking, both of which are vital for ethical decision-making and institutional integrity. Regarding position, 63.8% of respondents were junior staff, whilst 36.2% were senior staff. This indicates that a substantial segment of the respondents are frontline administrators actively involved in operational and service delivery functions. These personnel often engage with various stakeholder groups, resulting in recurrent ethical decision-making scenarios. Enhancing ethics training and leadership communication at this level is essential for maintaining uniform ethical conduct across the organisation. Analysis of work experience indicated that 58.1% had 6–10 years of experience, 31.9% had 1–5 years, 8.1% had less than one year, and 1.9% had over 11 years of service. The prevalence of moderately experienced administrators indicates a stable and seasoned staff with sufficient institutional expertise to assess and internalise ethical norms. The demographic profile indicates a diversified, highly educated, and experienced administrative staff adept at offering credible insights on the institutionalisation of ethics at UCC. The combination of youth, education, and experience signifies a workforce that is both amenable to ethical instruction and strategically equipped to sustain an ethical institutional culture.

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	74	46.3
	Female	86	53.8
Age	21–30 years	29	18.1
	31–40 years	67	41.9
	41–50 years	48	30.0
	51 years and above	16	10.0
Education	HND/Diploma	19	11.9

	Bachelor's Degree	55	34.4
	Master's Degree	77	48.1
	PhD Degree	09	5.6
Position	Junior Staff	102	63.8
	Senior Staff	58	36.2
Experience	Less than 1 year	13	8.1
	1–5 years	51	31.9
	6–10 years	93	58.1
	11 years or above	03	1.9

Results And Discussion

Objective 1: To assess staff awareness and perceptions of ethical standards and practices at UCC

Table 2: Staff Awareness And Perception Of Ethics

Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree
I clearly understand the ethical standards expected of me in my role.	4.48	0.59	92
Ethical issues are openly discussed within my department/unit.	4.16	0.63	84
Ethical policies at UCC are communicated effectively to staff.	4.20	0.67	86
Ethical standards at UCC are consistent across departments.	3.72	0.84	70
Ethical guidelines are practical and easy to apply.	3.88	0.74	76
The importance of ethics in professional conduct is emphasized.	4.08	0.69	82
I feel confident that I can identify unethical behavior.	4.00	0.75	80
Average	4.07	0.70	81

The results show that 81% of people agreed or strongly agreed with statements about ethical awareness and perception. So, it's safe to say that the vast majority of UCC staff are well-versed in and committed to upholding professional ethics. Workers seem to have a solid grasp of expectations, as the statement "I clearly understand the ethical standards expected of me" garnered the highest level of agreement (92%). "Ethical standards at UCC are consistent across departments." was a statement that 70% of participants agreed with. It seems that several departments deal with the enforcement and communication of ethical norms in their own unique methods. This lends credence to the claim made by Chordiya et al. (2020) that an institution's credibility is enhanced when all departments adhere to the same ethical standards. Based on the findings, it seems that UCC staff members should continue to communicate and collaborate on policies in order to maintain consistent standards, despite their high level of ethical awareness.

Objective 2: To evaluate the role of employee learning and training in promoting ethical practices

Table 3: Employee Learning And Training

Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree
I have received ethics-related training during my time at UCC.	4.02	0.83	82
Ethics training at UCC is frequent and consistent across departments.	3.68	0.87	70
The ethics training programs I have attended were relevant to my job.	4.10	0.73	84
Continuous learning opportunities improve my ethical decision-making.	4.38	0.60	90
Ethics training has improved my awareness of consequences for unethical behavior.	4.22	0.66	86
My department encourages employees to share and apply lessons from training.	3.90	0.74	78
Employee learning is central to institutionalizing ethics at UCC.	4.12	0.70	84
Average	4.06	0.73	82

According to the results, 82% of the personnel agrees that UCC's ethical standards are much improved via employee education. Consistent professional development has an immediate impact on moral reasoning, as the statement "Continuous learning opportunities improve my ethical decision-making" garnered the highest level of agreement (90%). Not all workers may have equal opportunities to learn, since 70% of employees disagree on how consistent training is across departments. The authors Constantinescu and Kaptein (2020) state that when institutional learning methods are consistent, it helps to reinforce workplace principles that everyone adheres to. A more systematic and inclusive strategy is needed to assure fair benefits for all personnel, although the data does show that ethics training at UCC is successful.

Objective 3: To investigate how ethical principles are practiced and institutionalized within UCC's operations

Table 4: Practice And Institutionalization Of Ethics

Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree
Ethical behavior is consistently practiced in my department.	3.92	0.77	78
University leaders serve as role models for ethical conduct.	3.78	0.86	74
Ethical principles are incorporated into daily administrative processes.	4.00	0.69	80
Staff who demonstrate ethical behavior are recognized and rewarded.	3.48	0.89	64
There are clear procedures for reporting unethical practices.	3.74	0.85	72
Employees who report unethical behavior are protected from retaliation.	3.58	0.81	68
UCC has a strong culture of ethics embedded in its operations.	4.06	0.67	82
Average	3.79	0.79	74

Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) believe that UCC activities adhere to and uphold ethical norms. According to the results, 82% of people believe that "UCC has a strong culture of ethics embedded in its

operations," indicating that the university's leadership prioritises moral principles. A dismal 64% thought that "staff who show ethical behaviour are recognised and rewarded," proving that the current system of recognition is inadequate. Rules and mechanisms to enforce them, such as incentives and sanctions, are necessary for institutionalisation, according to Schultz and Seele (2023). Although these results demonstrate an ethical culture, leadership should strengthen official recognition and reporting mechanisms to make ethics more apparent and sustainable.

Objective 4: To identify challenges hindering the institutionalization of ethics and propose strategies

Table 5: Challenges Hindering Ethics Institutionalization

Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree
Lack of continuous training is a barrier.	4.24	0.66	88%
Fear of reporting misconduct discourages employees.	4.10	0.70	84%
Leadership commitment to ethics is sometimes inadequate.	3.88	0.74	78%
Limited resources hinder ethics training programs.	3.82	0.80	76%
Cultural and social pressures affect ethics at UCC.	3.76	0.83	74%
Staff are unclear about what constitutes unethical behavior.	3.58	0.89	70%
Average	3.90	0.77	78%

It is difficult to include ethics into UCC, according to 78% of respondents. Both a lack of training (88%) and a fear of retaliation (84%), the two most common issues, were identified. As a result, we must ensure that individuals may safely blow the whistle and continue to improve our ethical abilities. According to Dua, Farooq, and Rai (2023), workers are less likely to express their ethical issues when there is a lack of communication and a climate of fear. Ethical activities inside African public institutions are hindered by cultural constraints and lack resources, according to Adeleye et al. (2020). In order to enhance ethical involvement, respondents suggested that UCC strengthen leadership accountability, establish confidential reporting systems, and set aside funding specifically for ethics training.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Variables	Employee Learning	2
Employee Learning	1	-
Ethics Institutionalization	0.71**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that as employee learning increases, the level of ethical institutionalization also rises.

Predictor	β	t	Sig.
Leadership Modeling	0.38	3.42	0.001
Ethical Awareness	0.33	2.98	0.004

Training Programs	0.29	2.54	0.007
$R^2 = 0.67, F(3, 146) = 31.28, p < 0.001$			

The study emphasizes the importance of higher education institutions viewing ethics as an ongoing learning process rather than a one-time compliance requirement. Structured ethics training, regular workshops, and mentoring programs should be institutionalized. Management should integrate ethics indicators into performance appraisal systems, such as including “ethical conduct scores” in annual staff reviews. Leadership training must emphasize transparency, accountability, and the communication of institutional values. Establishing an Ethics Oversight Committee can further strengthen accountability and encourage feedback mechanisms that support a learning-driven ethical culture.

Implications Of The Study

This research suggests that employee learning substantially improves the institutionalisation of ethics in higher education. Ongoing training, ethical consciousness, and exemplary leadership all foster the establishment and maintenance of an ethical environment. Integrating quantifiable ethics KPIs, conducting semiannual ethics workshops, and associating ethical conduct with promotions and recognition can cultivate enduring integrity at the University of Cape Coast and comparable institutions. The results underscore that ethical growth is not innate but fostered via continuous education and dedicated leadership.

Further Research

This research provides important insights into how ethics are being institutionalised at the University of Cape Coast through employee learning, however it only covers one institution and one set of workers. For more applicable findings, future studies may include more institutions in Ghana or elsewhere in West Africa. If we wanted to know how organisational structure and governance affect ethical behaviours, we might compare public and private institutions. For a more in-depth understanding of how workers cope with ethical challenges and how their business learns from their mistakes, future studies may combine quantitative analysis with qualitative interviews. Ongoing ethics training may also have an effect on institutional culture and behavioural alteration, which may be tracked via longitudinal research. The mediating roles of leadership communication and employee involvement in the association between ethics training and the institutionalisation of ethics may also be explored by researchers. Understanding how learning interventions translate into ethical performance requires an in-depth framework, which may be achieved by investigating these aspects. Theoretical and practical understanding of ethical behaviour and institutional transformation in academic institutions might be advanced by future studies that centre on these areas.

CONCLUSION

Finding out how the University of Cape Coast's staff learns to act ethically was the driving force for this research. Employees have a high level of awareness and comprehension of ethical norms, according to the findings, and they also recognise that continuous learning is crucial to maintaining these principles. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that ethical behaviours are institutionalised to a certain extent, with variations seen between departments. Full integration of ethics into university operations is made more difficult, according to the research, by issues such as insufficient continuous training, a lack of commitment from leadership, and a fear of reporting unethical activity. While these obstacles have a negative impact, regression research showed that staff knowledge and training are strong determinants of ethics' institutionalisation. In order to create a more ethical culture, it is crucial to have leaders who demonstrate ethical behaviour, clear routes of communication, and organised ethics training. There has to be continuous reinforcement of ethics via training, leadership, and organisational commitment; policy pronouncements are not enough, according to the study. The University of Cape Coast can foster ethical development over the long run by instituting culture-wide ethics training programs, providing transparent channels for personnel to provide and receive feedback, and including ethics indicators into performance appraisals. The credibility and efficiency of the organisation will be enhanced by these measures, which will make it more transparent, responsible, and trustworthy. The findings provide valuable insight for educational institutions on how to

integrate ethics into their internal processes. Creating a lasting culture of integrity that supports good governance and institutional excellence may be achieved by ensuring that staff understand about ethical leadership and communication.

This study concludes that employee learning significantly enhances the institutionalization of ethics within higher education. Continuous training, ethical awareness, and leadership modeling jointly contribute to creating and sustaining an ethical climate. For the University of Cape Coast and similar institutions, integrating measurable ethics KPIs, conducting biannual ethics workshops, and linking ethical behavior to promotions and recognition can foster long-term integrity. The findings reinforce that ethical development is not spontaneous but cultivated through consistent learning and leadership commitment.

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Ethical Considerations

The study strictly followed research ethics protocols. Participants gave informed consent before taking the survey. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses, and data were stored securely with restricted access to the research team. Results were presented in aggregate, preventing the identification of any individual.

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