

## Chapter 5

---

# Relationship between Ethics and Productivity in Public and Private Organisations in Sokoto State

*Nura A. Allumi and Muhammad S. Umar*

### Introduction

The importance of productivity in any goal oriented organisation whether public or private cannot be over emphasized. It is very central that organisational efficiency vis-à-vis over all organisational success depends largely on the level of productivity such organisation ably attained. Productivity depicts efficiency and effectiveness in service oriented organisations and portrays profitability in organisations with a profit motive. In whichever way and from whatever angle one looks at it, one thing is certain, that organisations are conscious of the vitality of productivity, hence strive very hard to achieve and maintain productivity at all times. Consequently, the search for and maintenance of productivity by organisations keeps bubbling through various means such as training and development, product improvement, sales promotion, motivation of work force and perhaps the observance of work ethics.

This paper attempts to answer the following questions: how does observance of work ethics affect productivity? What consequences follow as a result of non compliance

with work ethics? Thus the study is guided by two hypotheses:

- a. There is positive relationship between work ethics and employee productivity
- b. Non observance of work ethics leads to corrupt practices by employees.

The paper is divided into five sections, section one is the introductory section, section two reviews related literature, section three presents the methodology adopted by the study, and section four discusses the data presentation and analysis while the last section concludes the paper.

## **Literature Review**

The concept of ethics cannot be defined using universal terms as with other concepts in the social and management sciences. Many scholars are of the belief that a very thin line of demarcation exists between what is ethical and what is considered as unethical. This perhaps is very true because humans have different tastes and choices, different beliefs, different cultures and traditions and different conceptions and perceptions of issues. Consequently, what is considered as ethical at one end could be found among unethical acts at the other end. Ethics as opined by Aristotle is “an attempt to find out our chief end or highest good” (I. E. P, 2006). As a concept, ethics has not captured the essence of a whole like other abstracts such as freedom, justice, human right, good, bad etc. Their meanings are elusive and slanted and hence depend on the definer’s point of view.

Work ethics on the other hand are set of values based on the moral virtue of hard work and diligence. It is also a belief in moral benefits of work and its ability to enhance character. For instance, being steadfast and reliable, being committed and having initiative, doing right what an organisation prescribes, etc. Decades ago, work ethics was

by far easier because people in general or rather the majority had less distractions and greater focus (Leanne, 2009). Those times, one could hardly distinguish between jobs that attracted higher pay and other incentives from other personal or voluntary jobs because the commitment, determination and steadfastness of people in both public and private business were more or less the same. Thus, Donna (2009) submits that it is not surprising to identify, select, and keep employees who embody a strong work ethics to help organisations build their future through high productivity.

Productivity is a state of producing and translating rewards for results. It could also mean an act of attaining a primary aim through various means at a particular point in time. An organisation could be said to be productive if such organisation performs to expectations. In other words, if organisations surmount or rather ignore work ethics to attain productivity, repercussions will certainly follow and could be very detrimental to the survival of those organisations. Arithmetically, productivity is the product of value and work ethics divided by time as shown below:

$$\frac{\textit{Productivity} = \textit{value} \times \textit{work ethics}}{\textit{time}}$$

The variable *value* in the definition could mean what something is worth, how much something costs, the rate at which something is charged, etc. *Work ethics* represent the moral virtues regulating the conduct of work i.e. what should and should not be done in the work, why and why not. *Time* is a very significant variable upon which organisational goal is based. That is, if organisations (public or private) are very slow in approach, they will certainly lose

out of the competitive environment of the present era of globalisation. In a nutshell, time consciousness is a primary factor to attaining organisational productivity.

Human capital is the greatest asset any organisation can ever possess. It is equally pathetic at times that these assets do not operate at maximum productivity because their effort is shifted to doing other things at the expense of the organisation they work for. This phenomenon may occur due to negligence of work ethics. The relationship that exists between work ethics and productivity is highly crucial yet very challenging to win over. Some people believe that, work ethics is an intrinsic quality; a large number believe it is a feature which is acquired through learning. Again, others still hold the opinion that work ethics is nurtured through culture, religion, family or community values.

Some of the most important dominant ingredients in western culture for over a century are rationalism and positivism whereas normative values still prevail in the developing countries such as Nigeria. With globalization, cultural convergence, standardization and professionalization have begun to change through the nature of organisation management and strategies. Gone are days that one would start thinking that the world is composed of distinct countries, market economy, the polity, public and private sectors. In the contemporary world, managers of both public and private sectors are now conscious of the fact that the global environment is a source of important opportunities and threats that they (the managers) must confront and effectively deal with by instituting adequate facilities (human and material) to be able to stand the ever growing global forces.

Even though the public sector pursues non quantifiable objectives such as law and order, national unity, overall state welfare which makes it very complicating when it comes to assessing the level of productivity, that can be assessed in terms of quality of service delivery. That is, the ability to deliver in terms of curtailing unethical issues. Lack of accountability, unethical behaviour and corrupt practices

have become so pervasive and even institutionalised norms of behaviour in Nigerian public service to the extent that one may conveniently speak of and point at crisis of ethics in Nigerian public sector. Apart from outright bribery and corruption, patronage, nepotism, embezzlement, use of positions for self enrichment and fulfillment, partiality, absenteeism, lateness to work, abuse of public property and host of other vices are manifestations of what is obtainable in the Nigerian public sector today.

A variety of bodies have been established in the country to curb ethical violations. They include the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt practices and Other Related offences Commission (ICPC), Public Complaint Commission (PCC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) etc, but the incidence has increased even with a large number of violators being investigated and punished. That perhaps is largely due to the fact that the measures are partial in nature focusing mainly on sanctions. Similarly, the measures were introduced in an overall political and policy environment that is not sufficiently conducive to enable the success of such measures. The enormity of the task to deal with corrupt practices and promote ethics to be able to bring forth productivity in the public service is not to be underestimated.

The fact that no organisation operates in a vacuum, clearly tells us that no organisation is self sufficient, no organisation is self contained, no organisation exists without operating with the outside environment for their inputs. This is where critical elements of the external environment and perhaps public relations come to play. Chhabra (2005) observed that, the environment of the organisation presents a set of either positive stimulant or negative constraints. He further clarified that these elements could act in either way; they either help the organisation to accommodate productive efficiency or impede organisational performance thereby decreasing productivity drastically.

As a matter of fact, no matter how high organisation success could be, no matter how productive that organisation is, it could be said to be too insignificant without a corresponding corporate social responsibility. This will no doubt bring into the open issues like accountability, transparency, independence, objective reporting and overall organisational productivity. This indeed is very true because it is through corporate governance that the outside environment confirms the above mentioned principles.

## **Methodology**

This study is a survey research. The population of the study comprises of public and private organisations in Sokoto metropolis. For convenience, Sokoto State Ministry of Commerce and Industry was purposely selected to represent public organisations, while Intercontinental Bank Plc (Main Branch) was selected to represent private organisations. Random sampling method was used in selecting 10 and 15 respondents each from Intercontinental Bank Plc. (Main Branch) and State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Sokoto, respectively. The questionnaire served as the instrument for primary data collection which comprises of 15 questions. Questions 1 – 3 solicited information on the profile of respondents. Question 4 asked respondents whether there exist work ethics in their organisations while the remaining questions attempt to measure the relationship between work ethics and productivity, the causes of unethical practices in organisations and how to comply with ethics in organisations. Descriptive statistics were used in data analysis.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Beginning with educational qualification, table 5.1 indicates the different levels of educational attainment of the respondents. The essence of this information is to have a broad idea on the quality of staff of the organisations in this study.

Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents hold at least OND/NCE. Bachelors Degree/HND holders represent 52% of the total respondents while 12% of them hold Masters Degree or PhD. Only few of the respondents (16%) hold other qualifications, such as ICAN, ANAN and other professional certificates.

**Table 5.1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Educational Qualification**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
SSCE /NECO	0	0
OND / NCE	5	20
Bsc / HND	13	52
Higher Degree	3	12
Others	4	16
Total	25	100

*Source:* Field Survey, 2008

This finding implies that the organisations in this study have quality manpower because education and training are symbols of quality manpower. Productivity of workers depends on the educational background and training they have received.

**Table 5.2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Length of Service**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a yr	0	0
1-5 yrs	10	40
Above 5 yrs-10 yrs	3	12
Above 10 yrs-15 yrs	5	20
Above 15yrs-35 yrs	7	28
Above 35 yrs	0	0
Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5.2 presents information on length of service to determine the extent to which data supplied can be relied upon. The table shows that all the respondents have served in their organisations for more than a year. In fact, 60% of the respondents indicate that they have served for more than 5 years. No respondent has served for more than 35 years. Thus, it seems reasonable to regard their responses to the questionnaire as informed opinions because of some level of stability in their work place.

**Table 5.3: Distribution of Respondents Based On Age**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
18-22 yrs	0	0
23-30 yrs	5	20
31-40 yrs	9	36
41-50 yrs	11	44
51-65 yrs	0	0
Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The age of a person is an important determinant of maturity of that person. Table 5.3 indicates that none of the respondents is below the age of 18 years and none above 50 years. Most of the respondents (56%) are between 23 and 40 years of age while the remaining respondents (44%) are between the ages of 41 and 50 years. The implication of this finding is that most of the staff have few years to remain active in the labour force as far as age is concerned. The Pension Act (1990) stipulates that retirement age in both public and private sectors is 60 years for female and 65 years for male.

This is dangerous to the nation as younger people spend their youthful years in schooling as evident in the table. It shows that no respondent is between the ages of 18 and 22 years which is the school going age. Another implication of this finding is that unemployment situation in the country has made it difficult for people to start working at the minimum working age of 18 years. In order to find out whether there is gender balance in employment in these organisations, respondents were asked to indicate their gender.

**Table 5.4: Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Female	4	16
Male	21	84
Total	25	100

*Source: Field Survey, 2008*

Table 5.4 shows that majority of the respondents are males. This shows that there are more males than females in the formal sector of the Nigeria economy.

**Table 5.5: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether their Organisations Have Work Ethics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	76
No	6	24
Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5.5 presents the responses of respondents on the issue of existence of work ethics in their organisations. Interestingly, it reveals that 76% of the total respondents agree that their organisations have work ethics while few of them (24%) disagree that work ethics do exist in their organisations. This may be understood to mean that although there are work ethics in these organisations, they are not being observed by employees. This explains why few of respondents believe there is no work ethics in their organisations. It was also discovered when sorting the questionnaire that five out of six respondents who hold the opinion that their organisations have no work ethics are from the public sector. Thus, this implies that even if there are work ethics in both public and private sectors, those of the public sector are not clearly spelt out or enforced.

**Table 5.6: Distribution of Respondents Based on the Reasons they Comply with Work Ethics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Financial reward	4	16
Fear of punishment	15	60
Part of work itself	6	24
Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5.6 indicates that all the respondents agree that employees comply with work ethics for one reason or the other. 60% of the respondents hold the opinion that employees comply with work ethics for fear of punishment. Thus, it is not only achieving results that matters most, but doing the right things.

Table 5.7 shows that most of the respondents (92%) believe that organisations should as a matter of urgency, design means of compelling employees to comply with work ethics. No respondent has a negative view. Thus, work ethics are inevitable in organisations for growth and prosperity.

**Table 5.7: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether It Is Necessary to Compel Employees to Obey Work Ethics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highly necessary	18	72
Necessary	6	20
Not necessary	0	00
Undecided	1	08
Total	25	100

*Source: Field Survey, 2008*

Respondents were also asked to indicate their opinion on whether there is relationship between work ethics and employee productivity. Their responses are presented in Table 5.8.

**Table 5.8: Distribution of Respondents Based On Whether There Is Relationship between Work Ethics and Employee Productivity**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	23	84
No	2	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2008*

Table 5.8 presents an interesting finding. It shows that only few respondents (16%) are of the view that work ethics have no relationship with employee productivity. But it is a fact that work ethics are guides to organisational productivity, and organisations are established to attain productivity. This is the view of 84% of the respondents.

In order to find out whether employees conform to work ethics, respondents were asked to indicate whether they are satisfied with how employees conform to work ethics in their organisations. Their responses are presented in table 5.9.

**Table 5.9: Distribution of Respondents Based on whether they are Satisfied with Employee’s Conformity to Work Ethics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highly satisfied	10	40
Moderately satisfied	0	0
Not satisfied	0	0
Strongly dissatisfied	15	60
Undecided	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5.9 shows that 40% of the total respondents are highly satisfied with the way employees conform to work ethics in their organisations while majority of them (60%) are strongly dissatisfied. It was observed that those that are not happy with how employees conform to work ethics are from the public sector. It is therefore not surprising for public sector employees to experience low productivity.

The study also solicited for responses on the causes of unethical practices in organisations as presented in Table 10. The table shows that majority of the respondents (40%) submit that the major cause of unethically practices in

organisations is lack of ethical orientation for new employees while 28% of them indicate poor financial incentives. No respondent indicates that unethical acts are caused by emphasis on goal achievement.

**Table 5.10: Distribution of Respondents Based on Causes of Unethical Acts**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poor financial incentives	7	28
Bad leadership style	4	16
Lack of ethical orientation for new employees	10	40
De-emphasizing non financial incentives	4	16
Emphasis on goal achievement	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Respondents were also asked to indicate the consequences of non-compliance with work ethics in organisations. Table 5.11 presents their responses. It shows that refusal to observe work ethics in organisations results in low productivity and other corrupt practices such as embezzlement and bribery. Specifically, 28% of the respondents indicate low productivity while majority of the respondents representing 72% indicate corrupt practices.

**Table 5.11: Distribution of Respondents Based on Consequences of Non-Compliance with Work Ethics in Organisations**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Low productivity	7	28
Corrupt practices	18	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field Survey, 2008

These findings explain that for an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives and for employees to achieve what they want from the organisation, certain rules and regulations have to be adhered to otherwise both organisational and personal interest will be difficult to attain. This corroborates the submission made by UNPAN (2008) that corruption remains a symptom of poor administration and management because it gives the unscrupulous public officials the room to exploit opportunities for putting self above public interest contrary to the spirit of public service, hence the overall aim of efficiency and effectiveness (productivity) is defeated. Finally, Table 5.12 shows the distribution of respondents on whether there are institutions enforcing work ethics in Nigeria.

**Table 5.12: Distribution of Respondents on whether There are Institutions Enforcing Work Ethics in Organisations**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	88
No	3	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 5.12 indicates that 88% of the respondents pointed out that there are institutions enforcing work ethics in both public and private organisations while only 12% have contrary opinion. It has been observed that all the organisations are to some extent being monitored by institutions such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) but private organisations emphasize much on internal control and close supervision unlike in public organisations.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The importance of observance of work ethics in organisations cannot be over emphasized. In order to maintain productivity at all times organisations should ensure that they have set of values based on moral virtue of hard work and diligence especially in private organisations.

The study concludes that though there are work ethics in public organisations and employees are aware of their existence, they are not enforced as it is with private organisations. The study here by recommends the following:

- i) A very conscious advocacy and enforcement and training should be made on both personal and work ethics i.e. workers should be made to understand that work ethics is part of the work and therefore inevitable. This could be done by organizing orientation/ induction courses for newly recruited public servants, political appointees etc;
- ii) Though there are a number of institutions in Nigeria charged with different responsibilities all geared towards promoting ethical behaviours and accountability in both public and private organisations, they focus more in detecting and punishing culprits, there should be a

paradigm shift to preaching and maintaining work ethics as well as rewarding ethical performances;

- iii) Issues like whistle blowing should be encouraged, ethics hotlines provided. Those blowing the whistle should be protected from reprisals. This is done in different ways such as: Leaks to the press, exposure to the public and the media, reporting to higher authority, resignation in protests; and
- iv) The study of ethics should be incorporated in the education curriculum to effectively instill and groom pupil's right from childhood to puberty to old age.

## References

- Chhabra T. N (2005), *Principles and Practice of Management*. Dhanpat Rai and Co Ltd New Delhi, India.
- Donna B. (2009), *Can Work Ethics be Bolstered in troubled Times?* Institute for Corporate Productivity Inc;
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2006) [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com). Retrieved Wednesday, January 21, 2009
- Leanne H. (2009), *Productivity and Work Ethics are Partners in Increased Profitability*, [http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Leanne\\_hoadland-smith](http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Leanne_hoadland-smith). Retrieved Tuesday, February 10, 2009
- United Nation (1997), *Ethics Professionalism and the Image of Public Service. Group experts on the program on public administration and Finance*; United Nation Secretariat-New York.
- UNPAN (2008), *Ethics Transparency and Accountability. United Nation Public Administration Network*; Georgia-USA