

# Effects of Workplace Ethics on Employees and Organisational Productivity in Nigeria

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**Abstract**—Man’s abysmal failure to uphold ethical behaviour within the framework of employment relationship, necessitates continuous interrogation of the complex issues, which arise from the asymmetry between productivity and employees’ commitment. This paper examines the effects of etiquette and unethical behaviour on employee commitment and productivity in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study using one hundred and eleven valid questionnaires, which were administered on Employees in Government Establishments, Organised Private Sector, Indigenous, Asian and Lebanese Companies operating in Ikeja, Oshodi, Ikorodu, Isolo and Iganmu Industrial Estates of Lagos State, Nigeria. Secondary data as well as documented evidence were also reviewed and used for the study. The sampling procedure was carried out randomly. The data collected were analyzed through Structural Equation Modelling and supported by descriptive statistics. Each item was based on a 5-Point-Likert scale. AMOS 22 was adopted in testing the study hypotheses; the data was presented with the use of SPSS while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized due to its generality and flexibility to evaluate the validity of regression and correlation between the observed variables. The results show that significant relationship exists between ethical standards and organisational productivity, in Nigeria and that integrity cum discipline have negative impact on improved productivity level of the organization, which could be attributed to the nature of these virtues being abstract and could only be seen or observed overtime. The study suggests that all government agencies such as National Pension Commission (PENCOM), Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), Economic & Financial Crimes Commission & Independent Corrupt Practices, etc. saddled with the duty of ensuring etiquette in workplaces, should discharge their responsibilities more diligently and sanction organisations found guilty of unethical conducts in business concern and employment relationships.

**Index Terms** – Work Ethics, Work Attitudes, Teamwork, Integrity, Self-Discipline, Profitability

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ethical behaviour and the prevailing system of employment relations in any work organizations is very crucial for general development, the production of goods and services, both for domestic consumption and international trade or exchange, creation of national wealth, the attainment of political stability and the inclusive benefits of sustainable human developments. In other words, how well organizations adhere to ethical standards, obviously, determines the well-being of all the stakeholders, the organisation’s productivity and the subsequent profitability, as well as the macroeconomic growth and development of the nation [5].

The concept of efficiency as applicable to the context of employment relationship is a function of proper management of employees at work, including the adherence to workplace ethical standards. Admittedly, work dominates the lives of most men and women, and the management of employees, both individually and collectively, remains a central feature of organizational life [22]. The totality of the essence of work in society is that it is the primary determinism around which human lives are ordered, organizations improved and nations are developed. Also the primacy of work in society and the critical role of the production function have naturally contributed to the growth, development and advancement of nations throughout human history.

In practical terms, nations are in existence to provide security, safety and most importantly developments to people who had surrendered their sovereignty in exchange for the aforementioned necessities of life, using organizations and all human resources available to them. Indeed, organizations advance the fortunes of nations through efficiency, productivity, output level and performance, as engendered by the institutional labour or a group of people known as workers. These workers are human beings with aspirations, hope and feelings. They render their human efforts (labour) in exchange for

equitable wages and salaries, good physical working environment and longevity of employment relationship, anchored on ethical standards and human resource best practices, [4].

Any behaviour contrary to the expectations of these actors would rather hinder the trajectory of production processes and the development of the organizations. Since national development is dependent on what the labour can generate by way of Gross Domestic Products (GDP), a substantial attention must be paid to the agreement legally, socially and economically entered into by all the stakeholders for the parties to enjoy the expected efficiency, equity and development, which are the main objectives of employment relationship and the overall impact on the organizational productivity.

#### *Statement of Problem*

The desperation of the productive enterprise to achieve corporate goals and workers' desire for equity have naturally affected etiquette, integrity, self discipline and by extension the level of performance and productivity within the framework of employment relationship [5].

Hitherto, Nigerian workers were ranked among the best in world, given a conducive work situation. Today, the rating has developed far below average as Nigerian workers only care about what he can benefit from employment relationship. Ultimately, this study is to see standards and favourable situations in the work system acting as a catalyst to increasing performance of employees, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and real output.

Admittedly, globalization and its concomitants pose a potent challenge to organized labour, hence necessitates the adoption of a proactive strategy in the continuous interface with employers, management and government and onerous pursuit of the development agenda in Nigeria. Gone were the days of irresponsible trade unionism. This is another cogent reason for the research.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines ethics as "the science which deals with morals" Ethics is the systematic study of the fundamental principle of the moral law; or as normative science of human conduct [7]. This implies that ethics is basically a normative science, as distinct from the descriptive or empirical sciences. Moral principles that form the subject matter of ethics are about the way people ought to behave in terms of the commitment to their work and their team, integrity and being self-disciplined. It follows that ethics, primarily is the critical investigation of the norms of conduct to which human actions ought to conform. According to [27], the term ethics refers to the fundamental principles of right and wrong; it is the behavior that is consistent with those principles. Conceptually, discipline and

indiscipline are dimensions of human behavior. Disciplined behavior is the sine qua non for individuals, organizations and national survival and development. Discipline and indiscipline, just and unjust, right and wrong, can be directly associated with ethics.

However, work ethics as noted by Cascio, is the accepted standards in terms of personal and social welfare of employee, their work attitudes, self-discipline and commitment to their assignments [16]. Velasquez observes that work ethics is the principle of conduct governing an individual or a group in the work place, which makes them conform to the ethical standards thus influencing organizational output level and the resultant profitability level [38].

The work attitudes, integrity, self-discipline, teamwork, emphasis on quality, commitment and productivity of the Nigerian workers have painted a rather negative picture of an apathetic, uncommitted men and women, who are unresponsive to motivational techniques. The Nigerian workers have been described as indolent, apathetic and unresponsive to motivation and generally, not willing to put forth maximum productive efforts [35]. Whichever way we look at it, the Nigerian workers are what we have, hence we must encourage them to make meaningful contribution to the development of the nation by becoming more productive.

## III. TEAMWORK AND ORGANISATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Every organization, large or small, private or public enterprise, struggle to acquire productivity so as to achieve success and maintain a valuable image in this present days of stiff organizational competitions. Though the population of workers in an organization may be large and organizational productivity also low with no improvement in their products, yet this could be as a result of absence of teamwork in the organization. Absence of teamwork in the organization is the failure of an organization to coordinate works into work groups so as to tap from the respective human resources the organization possesses [19]. Teamwork is the cooperative and coordinated efforts on the part of a group of persons who work together as a team. It is the willingness of people to work together to achieve a common goal. A team exists when individual strengths and skills are combined with teamwork in the pursuit of a common cause in order to produce meaningful results for the team members and the organization [4]. Thus, a team combines individual strength with a shared commitment to performance.

There is a saying that many hands make light work. The reason not far-fetched, in that more can be achieved as a collective than individual. For instance, with teamwork, creativity is achieved. Because we have different skills, knowledge and personal attributes, by utilizing these different aspects in a team, more ideas can

be generated and more creative solutions brought on board thereby leading to better results and thus improve on the organizational results/ productivity.

Not only that, even the best qualified individual cannot have all of the skills to do everything. While some persons excel at coming up with the ideas, some others have to be counted on when it comes to implementing and follow through of a plan [3]. The bottom line is that when a team works together, it has a wide range of skills available to deliver extra-ordinary results. Thus, in the light of this, we come up with the proposition in null form that;  $H_1$ : *Teamwork is not likely to influence organizational productivity.*

#### IV. INTEGRITY AND PRODUCTIVITY

The goal of any organization is to have employees behave in a manner consistent with the company's mission and goals i.e aligning absolutely with the core values, adhering to a code of ethics and matching actions with beliefs across a variety of situations [31]. Meanwhile, integrity play a fundamental role in employee pattern of alignment, sound moral, ethical principles and organization productivity [15]; [36]. Moreover, absenteeism, unwarranted breaks, stealing of organization property, converting office equipment for personal use, gossiping etc. are characteristics of unethical conducts and are liable to affect organization productivity [26]; [32]; [34]. However, the organization level of productivity is directly proportional to employee level of commitment and satisfaction, thus, the commitment and satisfaction becomes immaterial if it does not infused with integrity [10]; [11]. Integrating values of integrity into the day-to-day operation of an organisation will promote employees ethical behaviour, prevent damaging lapses while tapping into human instincts for moral though/action and as well enhanced sustained productivity [11].

Therefore, we propose the null hypothesis that;  $H_2$ : *Integrity will not in any way contribute to organizational productivity.*

#### V. EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

Most organizations have realized that the employees' commitment is fundamental in determining organisation productivity [39]; [13]. Meanwhile, employee commitment is an extent to which employee feels attached, loyal and dedicated to the organisation goals and objectives [9]; [39]; [30]. However, employee commitment can benefit organization in a number of ways which include but not limited to reducing absenteeism, promoting employee active engagement, reducing intention to quite thereby resulting in sustained productivity [12]. Besides, Rajendran and Raduan (2005) opined that employee commitment tends to aid higher

productivity if the employee morale is enhanced. A committed employee is perceived to be loyal and stays with the organization even in turbulent times, attends to work regularly, protects organisation's assets and as well shares its goals [14]; [18]. Therefore employee commitment is an important factor for sustained productivity. Hence the following proposition in null form that;  $H_3$ : *Employee commitment is not likely to have a significant relationship with organizational productivity.*

#### VI. WORK ATTITUDE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Each individual worker has a different level of attitude to work and this attitude is assessed by the involvement of employees in performing the assigned responsibilities. According to [21], attitude as an acceptable and unacceptable evaluation of particular person, people, objects, events happenings or ideas. Attitude paves way for behavioral action which ultimately influences productivity. The relationship between work attitude and productivity has been largely studied and various factors are responsible for this relationship. Some studies [6], [21], [35] argued that employees work attitude tends to be favourable when organizations facilitate industrial harmony, affection, recognition, friendliness, freedom that are crucial for enhancing organizational productivity [29]. However, where these are ignored, intention leave, sabotage, absenteeism, labour turnover, low morale and productivity becomes a common phenomenon. Also argued that unfavourable work attitude could come as a result of poor relationship with a leaders/manager, lack of recognition and flexitime, inequality, inconsistent promotion and payment of salary, lack of training, development and career opportunities [1]; [28] increased industrial hazard, inadequate employment protection can be the push factor behind an individual's attitudes towards organizational productivity [35]. It becomes imperative to note that an individual that is not satisfied with the pay, working environment, ethical values, culture, company policy and processes may exhibit some attitudes that could be detrimental to organizational productivity. When productivity is adversely affected, then achievement of corporate objective suffers which will eventually make profit maximization unattainable. It is pertinent to note that the notion of an employee towards his/her job will certainly influence his/her attitude. However, favourable and unfavourable cultural and ethical values should be a formal and informal laid down policies, procedures and standards which are established to guide the conduct, attitude and behaviour of employees in the workplace [20]. Therefore, the success of every organization is a dependent factor on employees' attitude towards increasing productivity of the organization. Therefore, we have the following



assertion that;  $H_4$ : *Work Attitudes do not have significant relationship with organizational productivity.*

### VII. SELF-DISCIPLINE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Self-discipline at the workplace is an optimistic determination and efforts which assists in developing certain traditions for guiding individual’s feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts, activities and habits. Self-discipline could be seen as an art of self-control, self-reliance, self-determination and self-sufficiency, which stimulates an individual to sustain his/her decisions and drives the individual towards achieving the set goals. In order to flourish and survive, organizations must drive the need to concentrate on stimulating self-discipline at work [17]. The lack of self-discipline among workers may result to distressing thoughts, negativity and lack of enthusiasm at work, which adversely affect productivity of the employee and the organization at large. Leader and managers of organization need to admit the fact that self-discipline cannot be learnt transferred and fulfilled overnight .An organization benefit greatly when its employees demonstrate some measures of self-discipline at work. In fact, self-discipline at work promotes strong relationships to succeed and raises an environment of commitment, dedication, keenness and devotion amongst the employees which ultimately results in improved organizational productivity. Maxwell, Chonko, and Loe (2001) indicated that self-discipline at work can be sustained by making sure that employees are cleared about performance expectations in order to sustain their focus towards the accomplishment of work assigned to them. Self-discipline involves giving greater commitment to work without being coerced, compelled and intimidated; relaying information to others; keeping them informed and updated; assuming responsibilities; caring for others’ interests etc. [8]. Self-discipline is not influenced and imposed from supervisors or managers rather it comes from one’s attitude. When individual in an organization have this attitude, it shapes and develops the culture of self-discipline which will ultimately lead to increased productivity. And where a new employee/individual joins the workforce, he/she inevitably and habitually imbibes the culture of self-discipline. Conversely, productivity can be affected adversely when individuals are overwhelmed with laziness, negligence, irresponsibility, favouritism, self-interest and lack of self-determination. Apparently, if managers and employees are not self-disciplined, hence the organization will become a lawless community which will eventually make increased productivity far from sight. Following from above, we propose the following null hypothesis that;  $H_5$ : *there is no significant positive correlation between self-discipline and improved organizational productivity.*

Proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

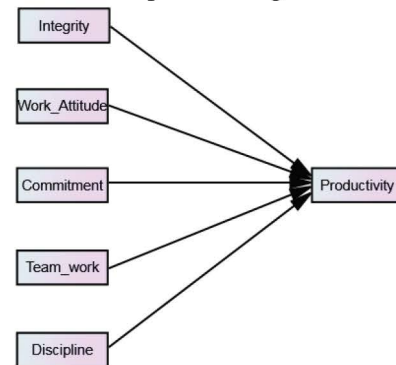


Fig. 1. Proposed Model for the Study

### VIII. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey research design was adopted because it is economical, convenient, and practicable. Structured questionnaire was used as research instrument to obtain relevant and valid data from one hundred and eleven (111) respondents from organised private sector, indigenous, Asian and Lebanese Companies operating in Ikeja, Oshodi, Ikorodu, Isolo and Iganmu Industrial Estates of Lagos State, Nigeria. The questionnaire was divided into two parts; the first part contained the demographic data such as gender, age, marital status, etc. while the second part contains twenty items that focused on observed variables of the study, which were developed from literature and each item was based on a 5-Likert scale. AMOS 22 was adopted in testing the study hypotheses; the data was presented with use of SPSS while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized due to its generality and flexibility to evaluate the validity of regression and correlation between the observed variables.

### IX. RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

Table 1 depicts the characteristics of the respondents.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS BIO-DATA

Characteristics		Frequency (N=111)	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Gender:	Male	65	58.6	58.6	58.6
	Female	46	41.4	41.4	100.0
Age:	Below 21 years	4	3.6	3.6	3.6
	21 – 30 years	44	39.6	39.6	43.2
	31 – 40 years	39	35.1	35.1	78.4
	41 – 50 years	18	16.2	16.2	94.6
	Above 50	6	5.4	5.4	100.0
Marital Status:	Single	33	29.7	29.7	29.7
	Married	68	61.3	61.3	91.0
	Divorced	6	5.4	5.4	96.4
	Widowed	4	3.6	3.6	100.0
Educational Qualification :	WASC/GCE/SS CE	3	2.7	2.7	2.7
	A Level/OND	28	25.2	25.2	27.9
	BSc/BA/MSc	72	64.9	64.9	92.8
	Ph.D	8	7.2	7.2	100.0
Status:	Senior Staff	37	33.3	33.3	33.3

	Middle Staff	67	60.4	60.4	93.7
	Junior Staff	7	6.3	6.3	100.0
Service Years:	Below 5 years	43	38.7	38.7	38.7
	5 – 10 years	54	48.6	48.6	87.4
	10years & above	14	12.6	12.6	100.0

Source: Survey, 2014

As obtained in Table 1, the valid sample for the study shows that sixty five (65) males and forty six (46) females representing 58.6% and 41.4% respectively. The sample indicates that one hundred and one (101) respondents are above twenty one (21) years but not more than fifty (50) years, while below twenty one (21) years and above fifty (50) years are four (4) and six (6) respondents respectively. Evidently, a significant percentage (61.3%) of the respondents were married with 29.7% unmarried. About 48.6% have worked for five years and above with 38.7% below five (5) years.

There are different measures of model fit measure of how well a model accurately represents reality. There are many different measures among which include; the significance level of the study chi-square value, Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation). The rule of thumb for these parameters varies; for NFI and CFI, the benchmark value should either equal or greater than .90 [41]. In structural equation modeling, chi-square value is expected not to be significant and different standards are considered to be appropriate model fit using this measure, the value ranges between 2 and 5. However, as for the chi-square value (CMIN/DF = 4.234) obtained from the study it could be considered to have good model fit. The NFI and CFI values obtained are depicted in Table 2, these values are .872 and .873, respectively, while .9 and above are considered to have acceptable or good fit.

TABLE 2: MODEL FIT SUMMARY

Model	N PAR	C MIN	D F	P	CMI N/DF
Default model	2 5	8. 468	2	.014	4.234
Saturated model	2 7	.0 00	0		
Independence model	1 2	6 5.942	1 5	.000	4.396
Model	N FI Delta 1	R FI rho1	I FI Delta 2	T LI rho 2	CFI
Default model	.8 72	.0 37	.8 99	.048	.873
Saturated model	1. 000		1. 000		1.000
Independence model	.0 00	.0 00	.0 00	.000	.000

Source: Survey, 2014

Depicted in Figure 2 are the standardized parameter estimates of the model. Generally, close relationship exists amongst the observed variables viz-a-viz integrity,

work attitude, commitment, team work and discipline. Strong relationships that exist between these variables is a vital predictor of organisational productivity. The regression coefficient value between commitment and productivity is 0.16, being the highest. While the coefficient value between both work attitude and productivity; team work and productivity is .13.

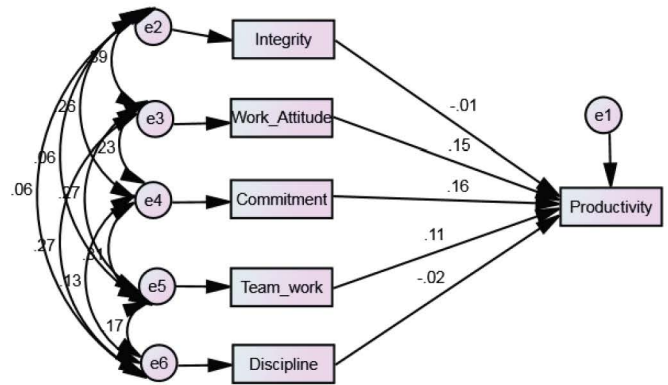


Fig. 2. Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Model  
Source: Survey, 2014

## X. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Results obtained from the study showed that integrity and discipline have negative impact on the improved productivity level of organization, which could be attributed to the nature of these virtues being abstract and could only be seen or observed over time. In other words, both hypothesized statements regarding these variables should be accepted – (a) *integrity will not contribute to organisational productivity*; this is contrary to the existing literature that was argued by Bergman (2006) that infusion of integrity into daily operations of organisations tend to enhance employees ethical behavior which may enhance productivity; (b) *there is no significant positive correlation between self-discipline and organisational productivity*. Similarly, this hypothesized statement is also contrary to the view of [17] who argued that for organisations to flourish and survive, stimulation of self-discipline at work is essential.

Further, others hypotheses should be rejected having obtained that these variables (work attitude, commitment, and team work) are strong predictors of organisational productivity, which are supported by literature. [39]; and [13] argued that employees’ commitment is a determining factor of organization productivity. [19] argued that lack of teamwork could lead to failure in organisations. Work attitude has also been found to be vital in organisation productivity.



## XI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The urge to attain and maintain high level of productivity is a “sine qua non” for the establishment of commercial and business ventures. Ethical consideration in labour management relationship is a concomitant for organizational development. For high productivity, it is important that all stakeholders observe ethical conducts in their dealings with one another. This must be openly displayed through positive attitudes, committed teamwork, high integrity and self-discipline.

Although a few scholars in labour relations feel differently, many including these researchers, observed that, when pursued sincerely, the aforementioned variables could serve as indicators of organizational development. This implies that concerted efforts must be made to ensure and observe etiquette and ethical conducts within work centres for the expected goals of the complex organization to be attained. Absence of etiquette in work places has created in the Nigerian worker the attitude, which may hinder productivity. The exploitative nature of the productive enterprise, particularly those of local and foreign origins, is a major concern to this study.

It is a known fact that the surplus labour is extremely appropriated by the capitalists leaving labour with very little, even after having been made to work with their “blood”. On the part of the Nigerian worker, for ethical conducts to have been properly observed, there is the need to align wage demands and increase in productivity and performance. A stable pattern of rising productivity will naturally improve and sustain wages and favourable conditions of employment relationship in Nigeria, [22].

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