

Perceptions of Workplace Ethics Among Academic Staff in South Eastern Nigerian Universities

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Abstract - Higher education institutions are expected by society to produce knowledgeable graduates who will contribute responsibly to their communities and the country as a whole. If concerns about workplace ethics are to be discussed and addressed with meaningful outcomes, a detailed analysis of academics' perceptions is essential, as they have a significant influence in defining appropriate professional behavior for students. The general objective of the study is to determine workplace ethics: perceptions of academic staff in universities in South Eastern Nigeria. In this study, thirty academic staff members from selected universities in South Eastern Nigeria were surveyed, and their responses were analyzed using qualitative methodologies. Ten items on an in-depth interview form were used. The findings were examined using themes that accurately depicted the respondents' perceptions. The results indicate that academic staff members view professional ethics as the objective means of achieving the university's goals. The findings also show that university lecturers view workplace ethics as a tool for controlling faculty members' attitudes regarding behavior at work. Academic staff members are seen as individuals who play essential roles in organizations, often involved in learning and aiding others in achieving personal growth. The study's recommendations include the following: raising awareness of unethical behavior should be treated seriously so that no one can claim ignorance. Administrators should engage in intensive awareness creation to help curb unethical issues in learning institutions in order to raise staff ethical sensitivity in universities.

Keywords: Workplace Ethics, Academic Staff, Higher Education, Perceptions, South Eastern Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Universities today cannot function without ethical rules. Professional ethics encompass all matters and principles of appropriate behavior for employees in the workplace. According to Igbeka and Okoroma (2013), members of a group hold ethical rules in such high regard that it is easy to identify a professional group member based on occasional interaction or association. Namagembe and Ntayi (2012) assert that ethical codes include the group's interests, dos and don'ts, and are often associated with a logo. The collection of codes bearing the mark is periodically renamed to better meet the changing demands of the industry, their clientele, and society at large (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). As a result, academic staff members have an obligation to assume the duties that come with the independence they require. These obligations are to the following groups: (I) students, (II) scholarship, (III) colleagues, (IV) the

university, and (V) the greater community the institution serves. To ensure that academic staff adheres to professional and ethical standards and that efficient systems are put in place to oversee and uphold compliance, these obligations must be adopted. Academic personnel in postsecondary institutions, such as universities, are primarily responsible for teaching, conducting research, and providing community services. According to Archibong (2012), countries rely on university-generated knowledge to further their social, economic, and technical development. This suggests that society places a great deal of trust in academic workers. As a result, academic employees need to be individuals of unwavering moral character who can defend the university's values and the reputation for integrity that the Ivory Tower has earned (Bello, 2011). In other words, any educational institution needs its academic staff to be morally upright, disciplined, and guardians of these qualities.

According to Archibong (2012), this is not feasible if faculty members who work closely with students do not act as role models or engage in any unethical academic activities. Olaleye and Oyewole (2016) state that there are about 129 federal, state, and private universities in Nigeria offering undergraduate and graduate degrees, along with over 900,000 sub-degree students. According to CampusBiz.com.ng (2017), there are currently 40 federal universities, 44 state universities, and 68 private institutions in Nigeria. The National Universities Commission (NUC) was founded in response to the growing number of universities in Nigeria and the requirement to uphold a high standard of academic excellence. Nwokocha, Kennedy-Nkwocha, and Onyekwere (2020) stated that the NUC was created by the Nigerian federal government through Decree No. 1 of 1974, which transferred the organization's oversight of Nigerian universities, among other things. Among its responsibilities were setting minimum academic standards, allocating funds to federal universities, facilitating the accreditation of academic programs in Nigerian universities, and directing outside help toward institutions. According to Bello (2011), a clear and concise assessment of Nigerian universities will demonstrate a dearth of ethics in the country. This could be related to the idea of academic freedom, which is essential to the profession but has been dangerously overemphasized to the point where it is mistakenly understood to mean freedom from the law.

There is no denying that colleges play a significant role in the social, political, and economic advancement of any country. It follows that it is not surprising that universities have an advantage in helping make these goals a reality. There's a good chance that the decline in morality among university lecturers will have a significant impact on both the academic environment and the outcomes. Ajayi, Awoju, Arogundade, and Ekundayo (2011) state that, among other qualities, academic staff members are expected by society to have fairness, integrity, honesty, commitment to their work, humility, dedication, punctuality, and patriotism; sadly, these qualities aren't always present in them. There are numerous examples of instructors who care more about publications that will lead to promotions than they do about instructing students. The authors stated that they occasionally engage in exam misconduct, use students to record and compute results, and abandon students to chase contracts and political posts.

Nwogu and Adieme (2017) report that unethical behavior has been observed among academics in some South-East Nigerian universities. This behavior includes irregular attendance by some academic staff, borrowing human and material resources during accreditation, plagiarizing research conducted by other scholars, and accepting bribes from students to improve subpar results. Additional examples include sexual harassment, forging age certificates, directing students to professionals who can create projects, dissertations, or theses, and renovating school spaces while the institution is accredited. Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi, and Prescott (2002) stated that academic staff members should be held to the highest standards since they are considered role models and moral or ethical advisors.

Academic staff members are perceived as individuals who facilitate personal growth for others and have important positions in establishments that are often associated with education, according to Ohia (2002) and Dimkpa (2011). They claim that unethical academic activities by Nigerian university teachers are a problem that needs to be studied by scholars since they impede the provision of high-quality higher education. For example, professors' demands for satisfaction have been partially blamed for Nigeria's declining educational standards (Okebukola, 2005). Additionally, Kuranchie, Twene, Mensah, and Arthur (2014) proposed that the problem of unethical academic practices influences tertiary students' academic achievement. They further said that professors engage in plagiarism, extort money from students by selling handouts, and trade money for marks. According to Whawo (2015), unethical behavior in higher education institutions in Nigeria includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams, demanding money through extortion, and engaging in sexual relations with female students. All of these behaviors have a detrimental effect on students by producing low-quality graduates, delaying the integration of graduates into the workforce, and encouraging exam cheating. Nwogu and Adieme's (2017) recent study on South-East universities

concentrated mostly on creative ways to deal with corporate corruption in South-East institutions.

Furthermore, there has been little to no scientific research on the subject of professional ethics among university faculty, particularly in South Eastern Nigeria. Nonetheless, a large number of studies (Iroegbu & Uyanga, 2019; Oyelade, 2017; Oghuvbu & Okpilike, 2012) have either examined the productivity and work ethics of university staff in South West Nigeria, common ethical problems in Delta State schools, or the quality of instruction provided by teaching staff at federal universities in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Thus, using the following questions, this study examined workplace ethics and the views of academic staff in universities in South Eastern Nigeria.

1. What are lecturers' attitudes toward professional ethics in the selected Nigerian universities in the South East?
2. How do lecturers perceive professional ethics in the selected Nigerian universities in the South East?

II. WORK ETHICS

Professional organizations uphold the integrity of their professions, clarify members' expected behavior, and safeguard the welfare of subjects and consumers by establishing ethical rules (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). Because work ethics are crucial for assessing employee conduct and performance as well as for organizational performance, they have gained significant attention in management and business (Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005). Ethics are self-regulatory standards for making judgments and defining professions, and they aid in the smooth operation of day-to-day activities.

Work ethics, according to Bazy (2018), are an individual's attitude toward work and effortful activities. What the goals of exerting effort are and how one should approach labor are not made clear by this description. Bouma (1973) provides an explanation for this discrepancy by defining work ethics as "a belief in the value and importance of work for its own sake." According to this definition, since work is a necessary component of human existence, it should only be done for its own sake. This notion aligns with the work philosophy, which holds that labor is inherent to human nature (Allan, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling, & Tay, 2019).

Conversely, work ethic is defined by Lessnoff (1994) as "a complete and relentless devotion to one's economic role on earth." According to his concept, work is a manifestation of what it means to be a human being's "homo economicus" (economic man) (Petrovic, 2008). According to the notion of homo economicus, humans are rational beings who make decisions and pursue money based on their own interests (Efeoğlu & Çalışkan, 2018). Put differently, according to Petrovic (2008), economic creation is what defines a person or a community. Given that the goal of rational power is to transform matter into things with objective value, this idea does not necessarily conflict with the philosophy that views

work as an inherent aspect of human nature and a means of self-perfection (Cholbi, 2022). According to Petrovic (2008), this idea clarifies that humans are creative individuals who can use creativity, activity, or work to realize their nature as rational creatures.

Numerous studies have been done in relation to how work ethics affect outcomes. Bazy (2015) and Rapti and Masudur Rahman (2022) made the observation that success is correlated with work ethic, especially hard effort. A previous study by Mudrack (1997) made this conclusion as well, finding that people with good work ethics are typically more engaged, devoted, and fulfilled in their jobs. This outcome is consistent with research by Marri *et al.*, (2012), which examines how work ethics affect organizational commitment and intention to leave. The study discovered a substantial correlation between organizational commitment, intention to leave the company, and work ethics.

The same conclusion is also drawn from studies by Udin *et al.*, (2022), Aflah *et al.*, (2021), and Ud Din *et al.*, (2019). These studies show that work ethic impacts organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction. When it comes to measuring work ethics, scholars have disagreed with one another. Work ethics, according to Miller (2002), is a multifaceted construct made up of various dimensions, including work-related activity, attitudes and beliefs, and motivation that manifests itself in behavior. He claims that because work ethics are entirely secular, they do not relate to any specific profession or activity, nor do they represent any religious principles or ideas (Mutulakshmi & Jaisun, 2023). Hard work and self-reliance are the two components that Bazy (2018) views as constituting the multidimensional construct of work ethics. According to Van Ness *et al.*, (2010), work ethics is a multifaceted concept that encompasses seven dimensions: morality/ethics, leisure, hard labor, the importance of work, time wastage, and postponement of pleasure.

It is understandable that businesses should help facilitate such an environment in order to create an ethical organizational culture, as numerous research studies in professional ethics have identified moral problems that can lead to ethical ignorance, ethical disappointment, or bad intentions (Mayer, 2014). Additionally, this necessity has been examined and discussed in a number of recent research papers (Arulrajah, 2016). It is imperative that staff members receive frequent education and training to address unethical issues inside the firm. Concerns about professional ethics ought to receive more attention in this sense.

But it's crucial that each worker understands the value of acting professionally, and they should all receive training on the organization's policies and procedures. A monitoring committee should also be in place to ensure that the policies are adhered to (De Zoysa, 2019). Professional ethics are crucial in this regard because they enable any organization to establish and preserve a robust and positive ethical

culture among its experts (Bailey, Yeoman, Madden, Thompson, & Kerridge, 2019).

As a result, professional ethics seek to instill a value system in a business while also reducing disapproval and boosting worker enthusiasm. Every enterprise should prioritize institutionalizing an ethical environment since it will yield significant benefits and ensure the growth of a devoted and successful business (Agarwal, Anand, & Offergelt, 2023). Moreover, maintaining strong ethics requires routinely abiding by the rules of moral behavior. As a result, businesses always aim to improve the ethical climate in their workplace cultures. A study found that a company's ethical behavior increases revenue by increasing productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness (Hempel & Porges, 2004; Abdus Samad, Abdullah, Akib Shihab, & Jounul Islam, 2023).

Employers can motivate staff to maintain a positive attitude by offering rewards. Employee attitudes toward particular work-related tasks might be either favorable or negative. Singh (2023) affirmed that when workers have positive attitudes, their workdays are more enjoyable. Furthermore, tasks will be accomplished far faster and with less hostility. Conversely, negative attitudes lead to apathy about day-to-day tasks. Employees can become easily agitated by small things. Moreover, whatever tasks these workers do will ensure that the necessary requirements are fulfilled (Leonard, 2019; Fay, Strauss, Schwake, & Urbach, 2022).

III. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

A study conducted at a major urban university in the United States examined students' perceptions of professors' ethics (2005). A total of 15,700 students were enrolled in the university program, with 69% of them being undergraduates. Three hundred fifty participants in the study completed and returned their questionnaires, resulting in an 80% response rate, which was considered high. According to the research, women made up 62% of the respondents. The study found that half of the students thought their instructors were very ethical or ethical. In the eyes of the students, they were more moral than their professors. One of the main behaviors that students perceived as unethical among professors was dishonesty in grading. Students also viewed the following behaviors as unethical: allowing a student's likability to influence their grade, disregarding clear evidence of cheating, and ignoring clear evidence that a student plagiarized an assignment. According to the study, 94.3% of students thought that impartiality in grading their scripts was the most important factor. Using classes as a soapbox, with a mean of 2.61, was considered the least significant issue. A total of 350 out of 15,700 students participated in the poll, which involved a self-administered questionnaire with closed-ended questions.

In a study on sexual harassment in Nigerian universities, Bambale (2004) found that moral decay, a high degree of

independence, a lack of self-control or restraint among teachers, and the absence of severe consequences for harassers contributed to sexual harassment, which is considered unethical professional behavior. This was based on a survey carried out with 1,000 questionnaires distributed across five universities in Nigeria. A total of 752 respondents concurred that sexual harassment is pervasive in Nigerian universities.

A report from a study conducted at the University of Lagos in Nigeria indicated a problem with sexual harassment at the university, which is a form of professional ethics violation by lecturers. Information was gathered in May and June of 2002. Despite 96% of respondents disagreeing that they had experienced harassment, 95.1% of respondents who completed the questionnaires were certain that sexual harassment occurred. Furthermore, 93.8% of respondents believed that abuse primarily affected female students. The research identified several reasons why female students were sexually harassed, including their dressing patterns (23.7%), gratifying lusty urges (11.8%), and requesting unjustified academic assistance (30.3%). Sixty-four percent of respondents reported knowing female students who had been harassed. According to 93.8% of respondents, there is a connection between student dress codes and sexual harassment.

In a study titled *Students' Perception of Academic Staff Quality: A Measure of Quality Assurance in South-South Nigerian Higher Institutions*, Uche (2012) skillfully addressed the issue of students' perceptions of the quality of academic staff. The study included 2,000 final-year students from five faculties across eight institutions in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, out of a total population of 4,000. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique, and the statistical tools used were the correlation coefficient, mean scores, t-test, and standard deviation. The survey design utilized in the study was descriptive. The study's conclusions included the following: students believed that lecturers lacked sufficient time and did a poor job of preparing notes; they also thought that professional competence was at a high level but rated their supervision poorly. According to the study, frequent seminars and workshops should be offered to help students develop their communication skills, and professors should be encouraged to allot ample time for their students.

John, Amanda, and Matthew (2015) investigated work ethic as a predictor of task persistence and intensity. After completing the multidimensional work ethic profile, 147 participants were invited to perform a free-response task, with the quantity of content produced and task length noted. Work ethic scores were substantially connected to task intensity, with morality/ethics being the most important variable in predicting this outcome. However, the work ethic factor of leisure did not have a significant relationship with task perseverance, as expected. These findings suggest that, when left unsupervised, individuals with higher degrees of morality/ethics are more likely to produce a

greater number of responses and work more effectively on a task.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Role Theory

According to Biddle (1997), role theory emerged from several disciplines in the late 1920s and 1930s. Role theory has had several proponents, including Ralph Linton, Talcott Parsons, Jacob Moreno, Dahrendorf, Robert Merton, and Rose Laub Coser (Biddle, 1976). The theory can be utilized in sociology, psychology, and anthropology, as it bridges gaps in these areas of study. Its scientific utility in the social sciences and education is essential. It is a complex patchwork of fragments from functionalism, symbolic interactionism in sociology, and cognitive social psychology. The theory, however, did not originate with a single author but rather from many scholars working independently in various disciplines within the social sciences (Biddle, 1979).

Different approaches and viewpoints, such as the structural-functional perspective, interactionist perspective, organizational role theory, and cognitive role theory, can be used to study role theory. According to the structural-functional perspective on role theory, a person's role is the set of expectations that society places on them, resulting from a consensus of shared values that define what behavior is acceptable. According to the interactionist viewpoint, the role is continually negotiated through interpersonal interaction and is hence less prescriptive, rather than being an absolute fixation. The role of formal organizations and how people interact with them are the main topics of organizational role theory. The other variant of role theory, known as cognitive role theory, focuses on the relationship between the individual, role expectations, and behaviors; this is also useful for sociologists and psychologists conducting empirical research in organizations. It is scientifically useful in social research (Hindin, 2007).

There are no properly arranged propositions in role theory. Role theorists assume that ambiguity may result from a variety of distinct conceptions being held. While some of these are standards, others are preferences. Another critique of role theory is that advantages might not always be motivating, and as a result, they might not be connected to an individual's actions. Since the underlying cause of an action may be similar, role theory is considered weak when it comes to motivation (Biddle, 1979). There is no definitive definition of its use or applicability because it lacks an integrated theoretical statement.

V. METHODOLOGY

Universities in Southeastern Nigeria are included in the study region. To ensure equitable representation, the study population was selected from federal, state, and private universities located in the Southern Zone of Nigeria, as

shown in Figure 1 below. Federal universities were represented by the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; state universities by Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Abakaliki; and private universities by Gregory University, Uturu (GUU). Thirty purposively selected academic staff members from these three universities were chosen for the in-depth interviews. Because the subject matter was sensitive, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were used to ensure that participants could freely share their experiences without fear of reprisal.

The interviews were scheduled to last 45 minutes to minimize participant fatigue. Regarding ethical considerations, each participant’s oral informed consent was obtained, on the condition that they fully disclose everything about themselves, including permission to use a recording device. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and their voluntary participation was emphasized.

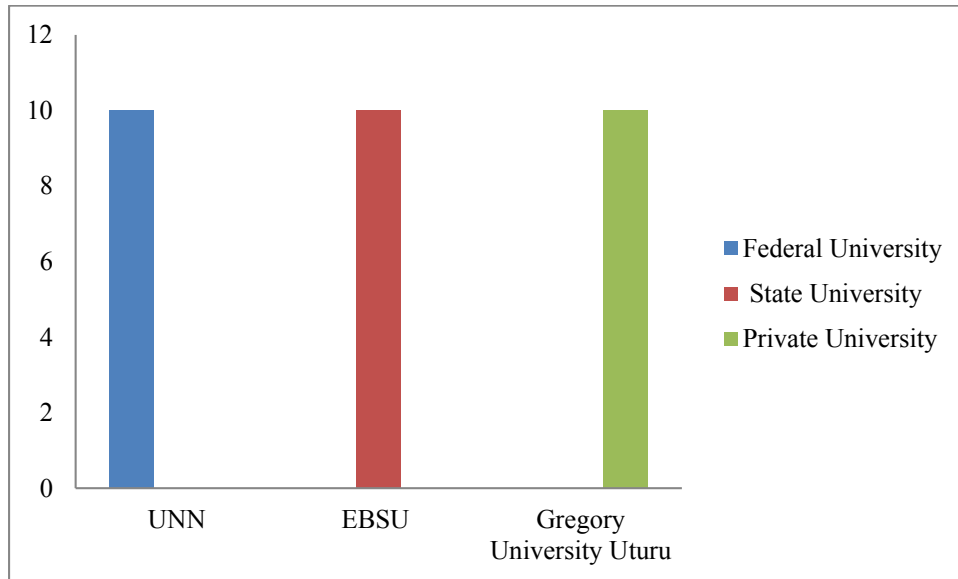


Fig. 1 Universities sampled

TABLE I SAMPLE SCHEME

Clusters	Number of Academic Staff in Each University	Time Allotted for Interviews (Minutes)
UNN	10	45
EBSU	10	45
Gregory University Uturu	10	45
Total	30	135

VI. RESULTS

A. Lecturers’ Attitudes Towards Professional Ethics

According to the IDI findings, professional ethics are essential in any organization, as it is only through adopting professional ethics that the organization’s goals can be accomplished. Any departure from that may lead to confusion in the organizational structure, which will hinder the achievement of the organization’s objectives (Dean JUPEP GUU, IDI, 2019).

The FGD results show that lecturers typically feel the greatest pressure to act in a way that upholds professional ethics. An IDI revealed that most lecturers in educational institutions have a negative attitude toward appropriate job behavior in general. As stated in an IDI report: *Many people do not take their work very seriously. When you come to*

work, you should be aware that you are supposed to be in school every day - on days you have lectures, departmental meetings, faculty board meetings, or any other day that management requires a special assignment for lecturers. I also hear about lecturers having intimate relationships with students, accepting gifts, but it doesn’t happen much here on this campus (Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities).

In addition to this finding, an IDI with the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities at EBSU revealed that late payment of salaries and incentives affect work behavior. He opined:

Though there may be reasons why some lecturers are involved in unethical work behavior, such as delays in salary payments, it is also a general attitude toward work. I wouldn’t say that all adhere to professional ethics, but the percentage may not be high in my estimation for those who do adhere to it.

Furthermore, an FGD with students at EBSU maintained that poor remuneration promotes unethical behavior. A respondent stated: *I think poor remuneration, like low salary, is a major issue. Most lecturers, because of low pay, engage in unethical practices in order to solve their family problems, since their salary cannot cover their expenses. To solve this problem, prompt payment of salaries, salary increases, and job security are also needed (EBSU, 43-year-old woman, FGD, 2019).*

Additionally, a respondent from the IDI indicated that various measures should be taken to enforce ethical standards and affect behavior. The Dean of VTE said: *Every civil servant ought to observe the ethics of the profession or job. There are rules that need to be followed to achieve the goal of the organization. It's about the dos and don'ts you need to engage in to promote the work for which you are employed. There are other things one should not engage in, or you will jeopardize the purpose of your work. For example, being regular at work, punctual, and observing schedules for meetings, lectures, and seminars. On the other hand, you shouldn't be absent without proper justification. If you are the chief executive of your own organization, there are channels of communication for any absences. There is also an appropriate way of relating to fellow staff and students. At times, what is often reported in the news is sexual abuse and harassment. One should not use their office to marginalize coworkers, particularly the younger ones, but should assist them in their professional goals. For instance, in this faculty, not because I am the Dean, but because I was formerly the Director of the Center for Technical Education, Training, and Research, I have a mentoring group where we meet weekly to share ideas on academic, professional, and research matters (IDI: Dean VTE, UNN, 2019).*

B. Lecturers Perceive Professional Ethics

According to an IDI conducted, professional ethics involve lecturers performing their duties, being proactive in their work, and aligning with university regulations. In terms of lectures and their various fields of specialization, it means adhering to the required standards for the area and considering the students' interests (Dean of Social Sciences, EBSU, IDI, 2019).

The HOD of Anatomy at GUU also affirmed that professional ethics exist and guide behavior. Explaining what professional ethics entails, he said: *Professional ethics exist in this institution, and they are the code of conduct that drives research and teaching, and how we relate to students in terms of practical knowledge. Professional ethics are essential. Every profession has a code of conduct and guidelines that help define what to do and what not to do. Workplace ethics serve as instruments to regulate the attitude of academic staff toward work behavior (HOD, Anatomy GUU, IDI, 2019).*

Additionally, an IDI with the Dean of JUPEP highlighted the role of professional ethical standards in improving a university's set goals and objectives. Good ethical behavior also helps institutions gain awards. According to him: *Unprofessional ethical acts usually do not occur naturally; they are coaxed into them. There is no reason to come from your mother's and father's house and then sleep with a lecturer, whether young or old. Well, I don't see anything wrong with anyone trying to practice what is within the realm of their profession, because that is putting knowledge into practice. Even in some known professions, it is allowed*

- medical doctors open hospitals, but the only thing is that there is a stage you must reach before you qualify to open a hospital. So, a wood technologist - I don't see anything wrong with opening a woodworking workshop or starting small businesses, which, to me, is better than exploiting students. There are different levels of student exploitation. For example, in the courses I teach, if there must be a handout, I produce it and give it to students for free. That envelope contains remnant handouts I gave to first-year students. These are people who are neither here nor there in terms of understanding what they are doing, so they create other avenues, give assignments, and collect money, tying themselves down. So, you see some lecturers appear as if they are living large. In line with someone's area of study and professionalism, one can run enterprises, businesses, or consultancies. Anywhere you are adding value, you are creating wealth. So, it's better to add value to solve societal problems than to exploit students in various forms. Cases of plagiarism arise among teachers and lecturers who are not really focused in their areas of education. If you engage properly and your research is well-conducted and genuine, and you are funded, there is no way research work, particularly a funded work, will be plagiarized. It's when you begin to fake things. The origin of plagiarism is faking (IDI: Dean VTE, UNN, 2019).

However, an FGD with women at EBSU revealed that often, most lecturers are not guided by professional ethical standards and still act carelessly. According to a female respondent from EBSU: *Some lecturers feel they are indispensable and that they can do anything to a student, and that without them, the student cannot graduate (EBSU, 32 years, female FGD).*

Additionally, the Dean of JUPEP at GUU mentioned that professional ethics help in actualizing the set goals and objectives of organizations. He stated: *Professional ethics are necessary in every organization because it is through the adoption of professional ethics that the objectives of the organization can be achieved at the end of the day. Professional ethics are perceived among academic staff as the objective way to achieve the university's goals. Any deviation from that will create confusion in the structure and hinder the realization of organizational goals (Dean JUPEP GUU, IDI, 2019).*

Furthermore, this study found that unethical actions by lecturers include using university equipment for personal purposes, using profane language in lectures, neglecting lectures for personal reasons, accepting money or gifts for grades, giving preferential treatment to relatives or people from the same area, having intimate relationships with students, plagiarism, selling handouts, using undergraduates in grading scripts, rushing lectures to meet deadlines, block marking of scripts, publishing substandard papers and textbooks for promotion purposes, and sexual harassment. However, the most frequently mentioned unethical action was neglecting lectures for personal reasons. From this finding, it is evident that despite the existence of

professional ethical standards to guide work behavior, the majority of lecturers in most institutions of learning perceive abandoning school activities and their jobs for personal, non-work-related purposes.

VII. DISCUSSION

A. Lecturers' Attitudes Towards Professional Ethics

Education is crucial in the social, political, and economic spheres of every country. Therefore, to lead students at the university level, lecturers who assist in imparting proper knowledge must exhibit a positive attitude guided by professional ethics. This is because attitude is essential, and working with the right attitude is the pinnacle of professionalism. The results of the survey showed that the lecturers expressed feeling most motivated by professional ethics to guide their work attitudes.

The study also discovered that lecturers engaged in unethical practices such as using university property for personal purposes, using profanity in lectures, skipping lectures for personal reasons, accepting gifts or money in exchange for grades, showing preferential treatment to relatives and locals, developing close relationships with students, plagiarism, selling handouts, using undergraduates to grade scripts, rushing lectures to meet deadlines, block marking scripts, and publishing substandard papers and textbooks for promotion. The most frequently cited unethical behavior, however, was skipping lectures for personal gain.

Based on this research, it is clear that most lecturers in educational institutions abandon their jobs and school activities for personal, non-work-related reasons, even though professional ethics exist to guide behavior at work. The qualitative investigation also revealed that many people do not take their jobs seriously. Additionally, 49.4% of respondents stated that lecturers at colleges should not accept presents or money in exchange for good grades. This result supports the findings of Abanobi (2017) and Agarwal, Anand, and Offergelt (2023). According to Abanobi (2017), the study's mean score of 3.04 indicated that participants at higher education institutions believed that professors' unethical behavior involved accepting money in exchange for changing students' grades.

B. Perception of Professional Ethics

According to the qualitative study, showing up on time and adhering to meeting, lecture, and seminar schedules are two areas where professional ethics are seen to influence behavior. In terms of religion, one might expect Christians to downplay the importance of professional ethics in the workplace, given that Christianity emphasizes a high moral code. However, a higher percentage of lecturers reported that professional ethics impact their behavior in universities. Male respondents, in particular, felt that professional ethics influence their behavior at work.

The majority of respondents believed that their own judgment was more effective than decisions made according to established professional ethics, according to the study's findings. This conclusion suggests that, in order to improve educational institutions, personal beliefs and the presence of professional ethics go hand in hand. The primary reason for the belief that individual judgment is crucial in adhering to professional ethics was expressed by 49.0% of respondents, who stated they had established a firm ethical standard for themselves prior to the implementation of the university's ethical policy. This result may help explain the opinion of Akonti (2013), who stated that performance at work becomes less reliant on the opinions of others and that attitudes toward work become internalized. Once more, the survey revealed that 43.9% of respondents were unsure whether professional ethics intimidate people in any way.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Academic staff members are held up as role models and moral or ethical leaders, and their standards should always be high. They are viewed as individuals who play important roles in organizations that are often involved in learning and assist others in achieving personal growth.

The following recommendations are made:

1. To curb unethical behavior in institutions of higher learning, administrators should engage in intense awareness campaigns.
2. To improve career growth and promote a positive learning culture in our institutions of higher learning, administrators should impose consequences on academic staff who engage in unethical behavior.
3. Lecturers should be required to teach fewer than two courses, as research has shown that such lecturers are less likely to engage in unethical professional practices.

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