

Work Ethics, a Challenge to Productivity in the Public Service

Esekhagbe R O¹; Osueke, G O²; Chiabuotu, C C².

1. National Productivity Centre, Abuja; 2. Department of Mechanical Engineering, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria.

Submitted: 10-02-2022

Revised: 22-02-2022

Accepted: 25-02-2022

ABSTRACT

Work ethic is a very important aspect in public service, especially when referring to the productivity of the organization. This study examines the issue of work ethics as a challenge to productivity in the public service. A descriptive and empirical study was undertaken to understand how work ethics constitute challenge to productivity in public service. Survey method using questionnaire was adopted to collect the opinion of selected employees from the Kaduna State Public/Civil Service. The population of the study is the staff strength of the public/civil service of Kaduna State. The sample size of the study is 120. The designed questionnaire, was administered on the selected respondents from the Kaduna Civil Service Commission (KCSC). The data collected was analysed using quantitative approach. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyse the collected data from the survey. The study found that when there is no adherence to work ethics or employees decide to exhibit bad work ethics, this situation invariably constitute a challenge to productivity in the public sector. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that ethical standards for public service should be clear, and adequate accountability mechanism also be put in place within the public service to enhance productivity.

Key words: Work Ethics, Public Service, Civil Service, Challenge, Productivity.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the face of the emerging world economy, an organization that is involved in a proper framework for good governance must practice work ethics and incorporate good values as part of its organizational culture, if it must achieve higher performance. Work ethics affect the productivity of every organization. This is because the human resource is the most important resource in every organization. The

productivity of every organization is tied to the productivity of every member of staff (Omisore and Adeleke, 2015).

One major change that can be seen in today's business world is the exertion of ethical values in the work place. Managers have come to acknowledge and accept the importance and need of ethical working environment at work place and also in society for effective performance (Mehta & Joshi, 2010). Proper execution of ethics in the society and work place, not only motivates its employees but also have considerable impact on elements linked with it (Palchoudhary, 2016).

Unethical practices and wastage of resources has negative impact on productivity and the image of organization. This is a rationale for the ethical norms much needed both by employer and employees for the success of the organization and for development (Palchoudhary, 2016).

Work ethic is a very important aspect in public service, especially when referring to the productivity of the organization. Employees who strongly supports the work ethic of their organization is highly commitment to the organization and subsequently more likely to work towards improving the values and goals of the organization and is considered beneficial for the organization, compared to employees who are less supportive of work ethic in their organization (Faisal, Modding, Gani and Nujum, 2017).

In Nigeria most employees as soon as they assume duty, join the existing workers in the laissez-faire attitude to work. The normal slogan of most Nigerian workers, especially in the public service is: 'if you can't beat them you join them'. Most workers have continued to join the train of workers with bad ethical attitude in work places, which has resulted in the low productivity of Nigerian workers. The poor attitude to work of Nigerian workers has been a source of concern to most employers; most Nigerian workers have imbibed bad work ethic therefore affecting their

productivity. A significant proportion of Nigerian workers engage in various unethical practices, which are not in the interest of their employers and the organizations in which they work. It is based on this premise that this study intends to examine the issue of work ethics as a challenge to productivity in the public service. The objective of this study is to determine how work ethics poses challenge to productivity in Nigeria's public service.

Concept of Productivity

Rolloos (2007) defined productivity, by stating that "productivity is that which people can produce with the least effort". Productivity is also defined by Sutermeister (2006) as, "output per employee hour, quality considered". Dorgan (2004) defines productivity as, "the increased functional and organizational performance, including quality". Productivity is a ratio to measure how well an organization (or individual, industry, country) converts input resources (labor, materials, machines etc.) into goods and services. In this case, we are considering performance increase as when there is less absenteeism, fewer employee leaving early and less breaks; whereas in a factory setting, increase in performance can be measured by the number of units produced per employee per hour.

Wang and Gianakis (2009) have defined subjective performance measure as an indicator used to assess individuals' aggregated perceptions, attitudes or assessments toward an organizations product or service. Subjective productivity data is usually collected using survey questionnaires. Subjective data can also be descriptive or qualitative collected by interview (Clements-Croome and Kaluarachchi 2000). Subjective productivity data is gathered from employees, supervisors, clients, customers and suppliers.

Work Ethics Issues

Work ethics can simply be referred to as a set of principles relating to morals, especially as they apply to human conduct. In specific terms, work ethics is about what is morally correct, honourable and acceptable to the larger majority of the people of an organization, society or group. It is also the rules of conduct that have become a set of norms of the society, group or organization. Ethics deal with what is right and wrong as well as moral duty and obligation. Work ethics can be described as a set of values, which include the right attitude, correct behaviour, respect for others and effective communication in the workplace. Essentially, work ethics regulate what an employee would do in different situations in the organization. The habit of following good work ethics is intrinsic, i.e. it comes from within.

The work ethics an individual displays come from his/her values. Our values are dependent on our environment, experiences and life-long influences. These influences include our parents, teachers, friends, peers, competitors, etc, anyone or anything that has helped to shape or form our opinion of the world. Workers exhibiting good work ethics are considered eligible for higher positions and more responsibilities. They know that their actions have a direct impact on other people at work. This conscientiousness persuades them to cultivate a responsible outlook to every action they take. These people do not need prodding or constant supervision. They are self-motivated and valuable to their organizations. These workers are highly reliable and are appreciated by their superiors for what they bring to the work place.

Role of the Public Service of Nigeria

The Nigerian public service is an embodiment of the civil service, line ministries and extra-ministerial agencies. It also includes states and national assemblies, the judiciary, the Armed forces, the police and other security agencies, the paramilitary services, parastatals and agencies. The public service in Nigeria plays a lot of roles in the policy. These roles include giving professional and technical advice on government policies based on knowledge, experience gained over a long period of service and expertise. It is also the role of the public service to develop programmes of project execution by government and the project options based on available resources.

The public service of Nigeria also ensures the implementation of all government policies and programmes for the achievement of set goals and objectives. Another role of the Nigerian public service is the monitoring and evaluation of all on-going government projects and programmes to ensure they comply to plans and adequately or properly implemented. Also, the Nigerian public service ensures operation of development consciousness, performance oriented, effective and efficient administrative system. The public service also provides for promoting the dynamic growth of socially responsible private sector within the framework of national economic objectives.

Challenges of the Public Service Performance

Despite attempts by successive governments in Nigeria to ensure ethical standard, value and improve attitudes for better performance of the Nigerian Public Service, several challenges still militate against its being ranked as one of the best in the world. Some of these challenges include the following:

- (i) Unethical attitude and (non-accountability are other major challenges confronting the Nigerian public service (Beetseh and Kohol, 2013).
 - (ii) Fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, influence peddling, bestowing of favours to friends also pose some challenges (Ayanda, 2012).
 - (iii) Corruption in the form of solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly by public officials or any other persons, of any goods of monetary, or other benefits, such as a (induced) gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance, of his/her public functions. This include the offering or granting, directly or indirectly to a public official or any other person for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or for a third party; to mention just a few.
 - (iv) Gross indiscipline is another challenge facing the public service in Nigeria. Today, gross indiscipline has manifested itself in different forms. The lack of accountability, unethical behaviour and corrupt practices have become so pervasive and even institutionalised norms of behaviour in Nigeria to the extent that one may conveniently speak of a crisis of ethics in the Nigerian public service.
- All the above mentioned, unethical behaviour and practices appear to have been institutionalized in

Nigeria today for the fact that they seem acceptable and normal to the majority

II. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive and empirical study was undertaken to understand how work ethics constitute challenge to productivity in public service. Survey method using questionnaire was adopted to collect the opinion of selected employees from the Kaduna State Public Civil Service, representing one of the largest State services in Nigeria. The population of the study is the staff strength of the public civil service of Kaduna State. The sample size of the study is 120. The designed questionnaire, was administered on the purposively selected respondents from the Kaduna Civil Service Commission (KCSC). The data collected was analysed using quantitative approach. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyse the collect data from the survey.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 120 administered questionnaire, 115 were recovered valid for the analysis, while 5 of them were missing. The results of the analysis conducted are presented in tables and discussed under this section.

Table 1 Assessing Work Ethics in the Public Service

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev
1	It is common for employees in the public service to exhibit poor work ethics	3.94	0.26
2	Work ethics in the public service have not been adequately enforced	4.11	0.13
3	Proper execution of work ethics in the public service is a key requirement for success, growth and development.	3.81	0.31
Average		3.95	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The above table shows the result of respondent's responses to the questionnaire items for assessing work ethics in the public service. The average value obtained for the items; was 3.95, and it falls within the 3.5 to 4.4 value which shows agreement. This implies that respondents agree to the options provided for assessing work ethics in

the public service. The highest mean (4.11) was obtained for "Work ethics in the public service have not been adequately enforced", while the lowest mean (3.81) was obtained for "Proper execution of work ethics in the public service is a key requirement for success, growth and development".

Table 2 Determining How Work Ethics Poses Challenge to Productivity in the Public Service

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Unethical practices leads to wastage of resources and has negative impact on productivity in public service	3.76	0.14
2	Bad work ethics leads to poor attitude in the public service, resulting in low productivity	3.71	0.35

3	Bad work ethics is a major challenge to productivity in the public service	3.84	0.23
Average		3.77	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The above table shows the result of respondent's responses to items for determining how work ethics poses challenge to productivity in the public service. The average value obtained for the items; was 3.77, and it falls within the 3.5 to 4.4 value which show agreement. This implies that respondents agree to the options provided for

determining how work ethics poses challenge to productivity in the public service. The highest mean (3.84) was obtained in "Bad work ethics is a major challenge to productivity in the public service" and the lowest mean (3.71) was obtained in "Bad work ethics leads to poor attitude in the public service, resulting in low productivity".

Table 3 Work Ethics that Challenge Productivity in the Public Service

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Poor work attitudes of employee is a challenge to productivity in public service	3.62	0.85
2	Lack of integrity is a challenge that inhibits productivity in public service	3.68	0.46
3	Lack of self-discipline among employees constitute challenge to productivity in public service	3.65	0.53
4	Poor team working spirit hinders productivity in public service	3.93	0.93
5	Lack of emphasis on quality limits productive outcomes in public service	3.70	0.35
6	Lack of transparency and accountability among employees is a challenge that inhibits productivity in public service	3.82	0.67
Average		3.73	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The above table shows the result of respondent's responses to the questionnaire items for identifying the work ethics that challenge productivity in the public service. The average value obtained for the items; was 3.73, and it falls within the 3.5 to 4.4 value which shows agreement. This implies that respondents agree with the

different aspects of work ethics that challenges productivity in public service. The highest mean (3.93) was obtained for "Poor team working spirit hinders productivity in public service", while the lowest mean (3.62) was obtained for "Poor work attitudes of employee is a challenge to productivity in public service".

Table 4 Regression Output

Variables	Coefficient	t-Statistics	P-values
Constant	0.193	9.273	0.000
Work Ethic	0.729	7.389	0.000
R			0.672
R Square			0.692
Adjusted R Square			0.701
F-Statistics			33.182
F-Sig			0.000

Durbin Watson

3.371

Predictors: (Constant), Work Ethic

Dependent Variable: Productivity

Source: SPSS Output Version 23.0.

From the regression table output above, the obtained RSquare (0.672) which is the multiple coefficient of determination indicates that 67.2% of the variation in the dependent variable (productivity) is explained by the independent variable (work ethic). This implies that 67.2% of the variation in productivity in public service was caused by work ethic. The F-Statistics value obtained (33.182) indicates the goodness and fitness of the model fit and the independent variables are properly selected, combined and used. The table shows that 0.701 of the variance also known as the adjusted R square of productivity had been contributed by the explanatory variable; work ethic. The p-values obtained were less than 0.01 (0.00), this indicates significance at 1% confidence level (0.01). The obtained Durbin Watson value of 3.371 indicates a complete absence of positive serial correlation or autocorrelation in the relationship between the variables.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result obtained from the study implies that when there is no adherence to work ethics or employees decide to exhibit bad work ethics, this situation invariably constitute a challenge to productivity in the public sector. Poor work ethics such as: poor work attitudes, lack of integrity, lack of self-discipline, poor team working spirit, lack of emphasis on quality and lack of transparency and accountability do currently challenge productivity in public service. The onus is therefore on every employee to avail himself/herself of the public service rules to guide his/her proper conduct and to enable him/her to enjoy the full benefits of the rights and privileges provided.

Good work ethic is definitely one of the very important factors that improve productivity. Therefore, for the productivity of public service to increase, employers must put strategies in place to improve work ethic. The strategies must include information about processes that would lead to positive outcome on work ethic, identification of action levers that lead to increases in productivity and quality of working life, identifying the context of the organization and the way workers react to work improvements and the general re-orientation of public service workers' ethic towards their jobs.

Based on the finding of the IJA study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Work ethics are intrinsic in nature. Therefore they should be influenced by the organization through interventions like training, motivation, coaching, etc.
- ii. Adequate accountability mechanism should be put in place within the public service to enhance productivity: To ensure efficient delivery of social services to the people, the public servants should be accountable to the public for all their actions. This means total compliance to lay down rules and ethical standards so as to achieve stated objectives. The mechanisms to be adopted should be able to provide adequate controls and at the same time make provisions for flexible management.

REFERENCES.

- [1]. Ayanda, D. O. (2012). "Corruption Definition, Theories and Concepts". Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (OMAN Chapter 2(4)
- [2]. Beetseh, K. and Kohol, B. (2013). Challenges of Ethics and Accountability in Nigeria Civil Service. Implication for Counselling (SR Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 9, No. 2.
- [3]. Berwick, D (2003). Improvement, trust, and the healthcare workforce. QualSaf Health Care.
- [4]. Clements-Croome, D.J. and Kaluarachchi, Y.(2000). Assessment and measurement of productivity. London and New York.
- [5]. Faisal, A.A., Modding, H.B., Gani, A. and Nujum, S.(2017). The effect of organizational culture and work ethics on job satisfaction and employees performance. The International Journal of Engineering and Science (IJES); Vol. 6 (12), pp 28-36.
- [6]. John, R. (2002), "Social Identities and Commitments at Work: Toward an Integrative Model", Journal of Organizational Behavior, 27(11), 665-683 .
- [7]. Margaret, O. (2014). Beyond Codes of Ethics: An Integrated Framework for Stimulating Morally Responsible Behavior in Organizations. Leadership & Organizational Development Journal, 20(1), 133-146.

- [8]. Marri, MYK, Sadozai, AM, Zaman, HMF, and Ramay, MI (2012). The impact of Islamic work ethics on job satisfaction and organizational commitment: a study of agriculture sector of Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 2 (12), 32-45
- [9]. Malthis, Robert L. and Jackson, John H. (2003). *Human Resouce Management*. 9 th Edition. AlihBahasa Jimmy Sadeli Cs. PT SalembaEmban Patria. Jakarta
- [10]. OmisoreB. and Adeleke, O. (2015). Work Ethics, Values, Attitudes and Performance In The Nigerian Public Service: Issues, Challenges and The Way Forward. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 5(1)
- [11]. Opatha, H. (2002). Performance Evaluation of Human Resources. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281936106_Performance_Evaluation_of_Human_Resources
- [12]. Palchoudhury, A., (2016), "Productivity & Ethical Conduct: A Correlation", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 21, Issue 1, Ver. IV (Jan. 2016) PP 93-94 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, pISSN: 2279-0845. www.iosrjournals.org.
- [13]. SyahrulNizam bin Salahudin., SS bintiBaharuddin. Abdullah, MS, and Osman, A. (2016). The Effect of Islamic Work Ethics on Organizational Commitment. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 35, 582-590