Ethics in academics and organizations: a fundamental ingredient for national development

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Abstract

Ethics can be described as moral principles, guidelines that explain rules and regulations people live by to make sure the right things are done, in various setting whether in government establishment or private. Ethics nowadays is a subject of discussion that has attracted serious debate. This study is intended to assess the ethical performances of some selected individuals in academics organization. Low productivity, indiscipline/violation of rules and regulations, weak control and corruption has been observed as results of unethical practices. This research employs general interview as well as semi-structured Interviews, which were flexible, sensitive to the social interaction within human relations. The research shall focus on the significant of ethical performances of higher institution students (HND and ND), teaching and non-teaching staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo Ondo State Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to identify the accountability, fairness, ethical leadership on organizational performance of both staff and students.

Keywords: ethics, performances, behaviour, instructions, organizations, staff, students, academic community, society

Introduction

Ethics can be seen as a systematic procedure of applying moral principles and operational frameworks to solve operational tasks (Rossy G. (2011) [1].

Ethics can also be viewed as moral principles that describe individual behaviors towards work (Trevino (2001) [3]. Miner (1998) [4] and Hornby A.S (2006) [5] also describe ethics as a philosophy of human behaviors that reflects values especially those of moral standards that can affects productivity. In recent years, many other parameters such as globalization, technology, intangible assets, and talent management have been identified to influence the level at which ethics has been analyzed by researchers. Meanwhile, organizations that have adopted ethical standards have enjoyed the benefits and identified the importance and significance of ethical performances, and therefore, have decided to prioritize its execution for the administration of the organization. Hence ethics is one of the most powerful and prominent parts of human activities in any organization.

The pressure of consumers, investors and the community for organizations to behave ethically in a socially responsible way has greatly increased and can no longer be ignored. Today stakeholder's concern on the prompt discharge of ethical conducts by directors who run organizations has tremendously increased. The unethical behaviors of directors and executives have badly affected the investor's funds (Hian (2004) [6].

In the 21st century, ethical behavior and value systems in the organizational setting have become an organizational procedure. Leaders have numerous external and internal factors, which present opportunities and threats, such as keeping up with the technology advancements and globalization and alignment of mission, vision to achieve the goals of the organization. Although, the roles of leaders are complex and numerous. Leadership in the other hand is the ability of a person or group to lead, influence and guild members of a team.

Given that leaders have the ability to influence the followers or members in a specific organization, they ought to promote principles and influence values in accordance to vision and mission of the organization.

Ethics involves some features, like duties, rights, values, aspirations or best practices that are either compulsory or not for all and can vary from one organization to another.

Most graduates of higher institution can develop their careers in government and private sectors, through the skills and knowledge they acquired. Therefore, ethical conducts in organizations assists both employers and employees to behave in a morally responsible manner (McDonald (1999).

Basically, one of the main goals of higher institutions has been to influence the moral and ethical development of the, students and members of society.

Students also are committed to ethical principles. This is important for educational values and fairness of the institution, Siham Mohammad Taha & Othman Abdulkader Obeidat (2021) [8].

Regularly, academic institutions saddle students and other units with the responsibility to adopt high ethical standards academically and socially. Students must consciously, exchange mutual trust and avoid inappropriate appearances. Moreover, when in doubt, they should consult the academics advisors or other experienced people regarding ethical standards, Altunji (2011) [9].

Different organizations have ethical standards that suits their own goals which also help the members to coordinate their activities.

Therefore, disciplines such as philosophy and religious studies

have a normative approach to ethics (Resnik, 2015) [10], Steinberg (1994) [11] argued that ethics in the world of organization's business involve "ordinary decency" which encompasses such areas as integrity, honesty and fairness.

Behaving in an ethical manner is seen as part of the social responsibility of individuals in any organization so as to ensure its stability and survival, Adenubi (2000) [12]. Geetu (2006) [13] concluded that there is no organization that can operates without ethics.

This study aims at identifying the ethical behaviour among students and staff of the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State Nigeria.

Methodology
Extensive oral interview was conducted between student ranging from National Diploma (ND) to Higher National Diploma (HND) as well as teaching and non-teaching staff of the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

It is pertinent to state the importance of leadership ethics which play fundamental role at the forefront of demonstration of ethical performance, a survey was made to some selected members in the institution where it was concluded that, effective operational ethical behavior will be relevant under active leaders.

Result and discussion
The outcome of this interview explains the study aspect of ethics in academics and organizational performance in the aforementioned institution.

Researches revealed that failure of leaders to implement ethical standards in the organizations has contributed to the failure and downfall of many businesses (Hassan, Wright & Yukl, 2014) [14]. It is mandatory for student to be committed to their parts of ethical principles. This is important for educational pursuit and in fairness to the institution, Siham Mohammad Taha & Othman Abdulkader Obeidat (2021) [8]. Always, academic institutions required students and other units to adopt high ethical standards in the academic and social environment at all costs (Altunji (2011) [9].

Few of the unethical behavior of student include Students' involving in examination malpractices such as impersonation, presenting academic work to others as their own, cheating, seeking help from classmates during examinations, copying other students' assignments, and using materials unauthorized during the examination.

In the other hand, this research suggests that being accountable for all action taken, has helped in discouraging staff from involving in destructive practices. Moreover, accountability enhances constructive learning. The research also indicated that lack of fairness, honesty, trust, respect, courage and accountability amongst the staff and students can creates a culture that facilitates the penetration and propagation of destructive practices in the institution.

The six fundamental value of academic ethics include: fairness, respect, honesty, trust, responsibility, and courage. Embracing these fundamental values by both staff (instructors and administrators) and students (ND and HND) will create effective scholarly community that preaches integrity. Without embracing aforementioned values, the work of the instructors, administrators and the learners loses value and credibility. Asides being abstractic principles, the fundamental values also

carry out the function of improving decision-making capacities and behavior, thereby helping academic communities to transform ideals into action. (ICAI) (2021) [15].

This research has identified raw information that ethical performances of leadership have influence on higher institutions. It was then suggested that organizational leaders can improve constructive learning by demonstrating fairness and accountability via their ethical behaviors and actions. Society flourishes when her citizens strictly adherent to the principles of fundamental ethical values. In order to achieve this, such society must practice them, regularly inviting students and staff to consider and discuss the role of ethical values and their ability to inform and improve various aspects of life on and off campus. When a society's institutions are infused with ethical academic's integrity, they create a stronger civic culture as a whole. Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Identification of key challenges
Globally failures of business in one country discourage other foreign investors and customers in many other countries (Ofori, 2009) [16]. These have compelled the leadership of many organizations around world to demonstrate ethical practices and develop mechanisms to encourage ethical behaviour among the followers in order to improve sustainable organizational performance (Price, 2000; Resick, Hanges, Dickson & Mitchelson, 2006) [17, 18]. Therefore, it is imperative for organizational leaders globally to adopt best practices of ethical standards and values of different cultures and societies in order to succeed in an era in which organizational and national boundaries are blurred (Jackson, 2001) [19].

Ethical leaders are seen as fair, upright, sincere and honest (Brown & Treviño, 2005) [20]. They demonstrate integrity, concern and care for others even at the expense of their personal and professional lives (Brown et al., 2005) [20].

They also create good working environment through fair decisions (Brown et al., 2005) [20]. Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes and Salvador (2009) [21] as well as suggesting that employees should respond to fair decisions in positive way.

Why is the principle of ethics necessary and significant?
The importance of ethical behavior as a principle has not been opening viewed until recent years that individuals and organizations have been searching to find a way to include ethical behaviour into corporate practices. Both Internal and external stakeholders have been constantly pressuring organizations to improve ethical practices within and throughout their organizations to promote procedures and practices targeting towards common good and its benefit (Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006).

Ethical climate is a set of shared believes of both performing a task and policies, codified and informal, which shape the prosperity of the future for ethical behaviour within an organization. Victor & Cullen (1993) [22].

Olson (1998) [23] reporting that ethical climate prepares the background at which ethical behaviour and decision-making occurs, this allows individual to trace and understand behavioral guideline which is acceptable rather than sanctionable within organizations.

Ethical climate becomes organizational core values both internally and externally, (Ellemers et al., 2013) [24], to promote much education, experience required and committed

individuals within the organization, and to manage behaviors that differs from the expected (Ceschi *et al.*, 2016) [25].

The term stakeholder is often used to qualify people in organizations involved in management and decision making in a specific activity or business. Stakeholders is the members or groups whose support and decision helps the organization to survive.

More so, ethical leaders also make decisions that affect both the customers and society at large (Piccolo, Greenbaum, Hartog & Folger, 2010) [26]. However, the concept of ethical leaders has been criticized due to the substantial overlap it has in common with other leadership styles such as authentic and transformational leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bakari & Hunjra, 2017; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2005) [27-29]. Consequently, the common characteristic found ethical leadership such as fairness, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and concern for others are also found in the ethical component of authentic and transformational leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005 [27]). Administrators are often faced with situations such as loss of trust, growing inequality, avoidance to work for the impersonal environment of a corporation, put strain on the day-to-day operations of an organization, which are neither ethical nor unethical.

It is to be noted that the prerequisites for both academics and organizational leadership needed the following under-mentioned elements to properly operate-

Honesty

Honesty is act of saying exactly what you mean without trying to hide feelings, opinions or facts (Hornby A.S (2006) [5].

Honesty has become unavoidable background of integrity and is necessary for full realization of trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. In the thirst of students for knowledge, they also must be honest both with themselves and others.

In study halls, laboratories, libraries and playing fields, practicing honesty becomes inevitable for integrity to be earned and extended to larger society.

Institutions must also be honest with students the same way students should be honest with the institution, and the society at large, honesty sets the tone for the totality of academic endeavors. Honesty encourages the growth of trust. Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Trust

Trust is the act of believing in the ability, strength and the character of someone or something. Having confidence that someone will do what you expect of him/her is termed as trust. hornby A.S (2006) [5].

The ability to trust someone or something is a major pillar of academic pursuit. Members of the academic community must be able to have confidence that works coming from either student or staff are carried out genuinely are not falsified and that standards are applied regardless. Trust enables collaborations between students and staff, allows information with new ideas freely, without fear.

It should be noted that trust is reciprocal: if you are expecting others to trust you, basically you should trust others.

One way of promoting trust is for Students to be honest while preparing their work. Instructors promote trust by setting clear guidelines for teaching and research work and for evaluating

student in an equitable, timely, and forthright manner.

Institution develops trust by setting clear and consistent academic standards, that are practicable by student and staff and that support honest and impartial research.

Trust enables society to value and depend on research. Society where there is trust encourages cooperation by creating environments in which participants expect to treat others and be treated with fairness and respect. Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Fairness

Hornby A.S (2006) [5] the quality of being reasonable, just and right is regarded to as being fair. One of the major factors in the establishment of ethical organization is fair and just treatment because it highlights the importance of truth, ideas and logic. Being fair in judgment and character comes with being transparent, accurate and reasonable.

Every member of the academic community, which includes students, administrator, and instructors have a duty to treat others justly and expect to be treated equally.

Staff is enjoyed with the responsibility of treating each other fairly and also lead by example. In that way, expectations are communicated clearly and the integrity of the institution is retained.

Another manner by which student can practice fairness is by sticking to their original work and acknowledging copied work properly. This will in turn uphold the integrity of the institution. The academic communities should be fair to the society by providing clear, useful, and just policies that establish and nurture society integrity. Accurate and impartial evaluation also play an important role in educational processes by establishing trust among staff and students. Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Respect

Respect is a feeling of special consideration for someone or high regard because of their good qualities, achievement and ideas. Hornby A.S (2006) [5]. Respect in academic communities is important because "respect they said is reciprocal". Showing respect for oneself as well as others automatically beckons others to reciprocate. Respect one's self it typically tackling challenges without compromising self-worth. Respect for others means placing values on different opinions and appreciating the need to refine ideas.

Academic communities succeed when the community members are accorded the respects they deserve especially when opinions are expressed contradictorily.

Students respect individuals that serve them with new ideas and advantage which enables them to take opportunities and gain knowledge by actively involving in their own education and contributing to discussions.

Staff shows respect to students by taking their ideas seriously, by acknowledging and developing their ideas, also by providing full and honest feedback on individual's ideas.

Consequently, members of academic communities show respect by acknowledging intellectual contributions through citation. Therefore, it is imperative for members of academic communities to take showing of respect as a collective responsibility Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Responsibility

Responsibility can be defined as the act of having a duty or

something to deal or have control of. According to Hornby A.S (2006) [5] responsibility is the state of being responsible for a particular action or duty. Every member of an academic community is responsible to themselves and other, in the area of safeguarding the integrity of the institution.

Responsible academic community can overcome apathy and encourage others to uphold the academic integrity standards.

Being responsible requires standing tall against bad attitudes and resisting negativity. Responsible individuals judge themselves and hold themselves accountable for actions taken to prevent unethical behaviors by others.

Responsible instructors create and instill institutional policy, by clearly communicating expectations around the policies.

Meanwhile, responsible students ensure they understand information about institutional policy.

Responsible institutions ensure that the educational processes and the institution's policies align with the government policies on education (Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Courage

Courage by definition is the quality or spirit that enables one to be brave even when frightened. The ability to control fear and be in charge regardless of the situation involved whether difficult, dangerous or unpleasant is categorized as courage. (Hornby A.S (2006) [5]. However, just like other factors of ethical behaviors, courage can be practiced and developed.

Courage is often interpreted as boldness but in reality, courage is the capacity to behave according to one's values even when frightened. Courageous individuals act in accordance with self-principles.

Students who exhibit courage hold themselves and their fellow students to high standards of academic integrity even when it involves risk of negative consequences.

Among the academic community, courage is the willingness to hold students, and other academic community members responsible for maintaining integrity in peculiarity with other previously mentioned values.

Members of academic communities must learn to make decisions that demonstrate integrity. They also must display the courage necessary to act on the decisions taken. Only being courageous enables creation of communities that are responsible, trustworthy, fair, honest and respectful, with capability to endure and perceiver regardless of the circumstances. Sally Colle, (2020) [2].

Conclusion and recommendation
Conclusion

This study addresses the problem of ethical behavior in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo State Nigeria. Due to the importance of education of higher learning as a bed rock of a given society, this research work examined the ethical relationship between the staff and the students at Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo Ondo State Nigeria in line with global best practices. This study identifies the academic ethics and organizational performances and the extent of their commitment to these ethical standards. The research has highlighted the influence of ethical performances of leaders on institutional learning. It is therefore concluded that leaders in every organization have the inherent potentials of encouraging good leaning and good working environment by strictly following and practicing fairness, respect, trust, responsibility and courage as attached to ethical behaviors.

Recommendation

Students and staff should be guided and taken through training courses and workshop respectively on ethical behaviors which will improve their focus on moral commitment to human and social relations within the academic environment and society at large. More studies on academic ethics should be carried out by researchers to further improve the existing values.

Government should focus on more public awareness to educate members of public on ethics standards to improve the society. The positive aspects of academic ethical behaviors amongst all segments of the institution should be promoted.

Academic ethical policies should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure consistency, equity and transparency, in line with the clearly stated vision, this review is necessary as it addresses the consistent changes in the field of technology and evolving methods of misconduct. Support services that will encourage students and staff to succeed in their dealings should be created and promoted.

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