

EMPLOYEES UNETHICAL PRACTICES AND PRODUCTIVITY IN RIVERS STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

Unethical practices violate ethical standards in any given organization. Employees in public service show some disregard to ethical codes that are given to achieve productivity in civil service. The paper evaluated employees' unethical practices and productivity in Rivers State civil service. The objective of the study includes to determine how the influence of ethnicity in public service increase unethical practices among public office holders and investigate how public servants' selfishness on public resources increase unethical activities among civil servants in Rivers State civil service. Two research questions were provided to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was used to obtain data from 400 respondents which made the sample size from the population of study, 488,400 (institute of government, 2023). The data were retrieved after administering structured questionnaire to relevant respondents through the adoption of purposive, quota and accidental sampling techniques. A total of 398 copies of questionnaire were returned and analyzed in percentage and presented on tables. The findings show that ethnicity influences some employees in civil service to act in an unethical manner and that public servants selfish interest on public resources increase unethical activities among them. Based on the findings, the study recommends that management should maintain ethical standards provided in civil service for all departments and ministries or parastatals despite the dominance of any particular ethnic group, and government should often review policies that are obsolete in civil service to enable the achievement of civil service core objective of productivity.

Keywords: Employees, Unethical Practices, Productivity, Civil Service

INTRODUCTION

When determining if an action or practice is ethically acceptable or unacceptable in organizations, many employers and employees depend on series of factors that usually show such behavior, and they could be social, situational, and cognitive factors. Therefore, these intentional actions may be perceived to have the capacity that could affect productivity in an organization (Gray & Wegner 2009). In addition, the level of harm and other outcomes it produces, can affect their professional, cultural, political or religious beliefs. And the emotional or behavioural response to such practice, transgression and conduct of the perpetrator within the organization could pose a great danger in influencing others negatively. Since ethics is the moral principles that moderate or influence individuals behaviour, practices, activities, actions and conduct in attaining productivity in an organization, unethical practice otherwise, is that situation where a person lacks moral, social, cultural, political, professional and religious beliefs that can direct him or her to follow ethical standards to achieving organizational productivity. Ethics is majorly concerned with showing disparity between what is viewed to be right and wrong in the workplace.

Ethics mainly settles issues dealing with human morality in different professions and workplaces, and it describe what is termed to be good and bad, or acceptable and unacceptable. Sometimes, personal interests as well as selfishness may make employees to ignore ethical rules in the workplace. Meanwhile, obtaining unethical or ethical outcome depends on understanding the purpose of the action that influences the individual. Schoeman (2014) argued that these purposes are mainly determined by beliefs, values, enacted laws, convictions, rules and regulations. As ethics is the ability to behave and act right, it can be deduced that truthfulness, trustworthiness and

integrity in one's profession, and workplace are elements or conducts that can promote the image of an organization as well as indicate a good organizational climate, (Mason, 2009).

As ethical conduct or practice is important in achieving work productivity in organizations, it gives every employee the opportunity and guidelines on how to comport and conduct self in the running or handling of duties in organizations. However, adequate perception and general practice of ethical code of conduct remains an issue for broader evaluation in workplaces. The enhancing of ethical standards among employees and employers with ethnic affinity is a great challenge in various corporate bodies. This is because ethnic consciousness and ethnic solidarity among employees in public organizations may be perceived to have contributed to certain unethical practices which may have been allowed to persist due to the support received from fellow ethnic co-workers. It is however basically important for workers to sustain ethical standards despite ethnic bonds as to prevent unethical practices that could be detrimental to organizational productivity even among professionals in departments of the civil service sector. Adhering to unethical behaviors is tantamount to preventing growth, good image and productivity in any workplace.

Most individuals demonstrate convictions concerning what is viewed to be right and wrong in a given profession on the basis of religious beliefs, cultural background, family roots, individual experiences, rules and regulations, organizational policies, government laws, organizational values, professional etiquettes and political habits. More so, ethical values like trustworthiness, truthfulness, respect, responsibility, transparency, caring, fairness and citizenship as well as personal and professional beliefs often vary periodically, even as it occurs among different cultures and among people of the same ethnicity or society. These may be some of the sources of constant historical discrepancies, and even the outcome of conflicts. There is nothing bad if a person has strong individual and professional moral convictions regarding what is right and wrong, but unfortunately, few persons are seen as "moral imperialists" because they want to impose their personal understanding and individual moral judgments on others, (Mason, 2009). Over the years, employees' attitudes have been explained in both negative and positive terms as in job satisfaction, commitment, and on employees' behaviors, that is, employee work productivity, performance and citizenship. On organizational behavior and practice, researchers have often focused their attention to understanding the causes of costly misconduct within organizations (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).

Some scholars have applied several terms to elucidate employee unethical practices, including, antisocial behavior, deviance, misbehavior, counterproductive behavior, and other unethical behaviors, all of which share similar concern with counter normative attitudes or behavior intended to cause harm to the organization or its related partners, (O'Leary-Kelly, Duffy, & Griffin, 2000). Unethical behavior in organizations has been obviously reported in recent times as high-profiled corporate individuals are claimed to have involved in some scandals. As practitioners and scholars consider what factors may be driving employees to unethical behavior, some key leaders are placed under increasing evaluation and scrutiny because several senior executives in organizations are accused or alleged to may have committed unethical acts without considering the management of unethical and ethical conducts of both organization board members and employees (O'Leary-Kelly, Duffy, & Griffin, 2000).

There is the assumption that majority of individuals in work organizations, overtime, are given to some form of practices and misbehavior in their related jobs, at high frequency and intensity. These misbehaviors come in ranges of full purview from minor to major or even serious degrees, like workplace bullying, incivility; insulting behaviors; theft of company resources, social undermining; destructiveness, vandalism, sabotage; substance abuse; as well as misconduct perpetrated against some employees, and toward the employer and other organizations. Such practices of misbehavior are issues vital to organizations which should be well understood, (Fox & Spector 2005; Vardi & Weitz 2004). As Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds (2006: 951) recently stated, "stakeholders, including stockholders, communities, and governments, have placed increasing pressure on organizations to manage employees' behavior in ways that will reduce individuals' illegal and unethical conduct".

Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate the impact of unethical conducts among individuals with ethnic affinity and how such solidarity can affect productivity in public institutions.

The objectives of the study include to:

- i. Determine how the influence of ethnicity in public service increase unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service.
- ii. Investigate how public servants' selfishness on public resources increases unethical activities among civil servants in Rivers State Civil Service.

Research Questions

- i. How can the influence of ethnicity in public service increase unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service?
- ii. How does public servants' selfishness on public resources increase unethical activities among civil servants in Rivers State Civil Service?

Unethical practices

Unethical practices in organizations has variously been reported in recent times where high-profile individuals were involved in corporate scandals. As scholars and practitioners argues on what may be responsible for such behavior, most leaders are coming under constant scrutiny not just because many senior or junior employees are accused of having been involved in committing unethical acts but that the role of work leaders at every level is thought to play in controlling ethical and unethical manners or conducts of all individual in the organization. Furthermore, organizations are increasingly showing interest in the "moral potential of leadership in the wake of unethical practices". Sunanda, (2018) posits that ethics entails the principles and practices that describes behavior to be right, acceptable, good and proper. Such principles in essence, do not all the time speculate a single "moral" move of action, but gives a means of evaluating or assessing and deciding among different competing options. Ethics is basically concerned with how a morally minded individual should behave, while values determine the way an individual actually behaves. Values centres on ethics when it pertains to beliefs on what is wrong and right. Most people have convictions regarding what is termed right and wrong due their religious beliefs, cultural and family background, experiences, certain laws, values, professional norms and political background.

Causes of Unethical Behaviour

There are several reasons why employees may engage or involve in unethical behavior in the organizations. The organization in which employees work can support or encourage unethical behavior (Sims, 1992). Meanwhile, society places value on individuals that are honest and who are not found deceitful, but some organizations rely on employees that are seen to be dishonest and deceitful in character for them to be successful (Sims, 1992). These varieties of organizations are perceived to be toxic and are often characterized by a perception of poor performance, poor productivity, poor decision-making, employee dissatisfaction and workers stress issues (Coccia, 1998).

Toxic organizations may develop under various circumstances. The initial aspect is concerns few work units having a high level of daily face-to-face relationship and interaction that can stimulate internal relationships. Under these conditions, the "sick organization" can develop with a constant interdependence on its employees that possess individual agendas that may not be similar with the needs of the organization. The second aspect for such a toxic organization is an ineffective manager who may be immoral or show some mental unsoundness (Sims, 1992).

On this view, some organizations may be seen as falling from a continuum ranging from functioning organization to toxic organizations that appear harmful and damaging to its workers and leaders (Sims, 1992). One postulation that encourage toxic organizations to influence employees to indulge in counter normative behavior has been classified as "bottom-line mentality" (Appelbaum, 2005). According to Sims (1992) this type of organization mentality encourages unethical practices in order to claim, reap and pocket financial gains. Individuals in unethical practices view workplace code of ethics as major obstacle to their primary goal of unjust profit making.

Another reason why unethical practice is condoned in the workplace is the key influence of deviant role models. It is necessary to include the influence of work groups in work organizations when examining the effects of unethical behavior within the organization structure. Scholarly, it has been suggested that deviant role models in organizations, within a group setting will have significant influence on others around and within the group (Appelbaum., 2005). However, organizational stressors are observed to lead to unethical practices. Causes of unethical behavior have been investigated at various levels. To start with, it seems that on individual level, unethical behavior may not be related to personality characteristics alone, however, it is likely that unethical behavior may be best speculated on both the combination of nature of workplace condition and personality variables (Peterson, 2002). Furthermore, personality variables and the workplace condition, are included with other key elements in ascertaining the likelihood of unethical behavior within an organization, they are: unfair treatment, organizational culture and climate, as well as leadership and supervisory role behavior (Caruana, 2001). Bolin & Heatherly (2001) opined that there are four main causes of unethical workplace behavior. These factors are believed to include, theft approval, employee intent to quit, feeling of dissatisfaction with the organization and company contempt which are all seen as symptomatic of all workplace unethical practices. More so, other symptoms that could be shown include absenteeism, substance abuse, abuse of employment benefits and theft (Bolin & Heatherly, 2001).

Workplace unethical practice is often damaging and destructive in nature, it can reveal positivity in some aspect. It may provide clue on being safety conscious about individuals behaviour, and allows workgroups to identify each other's hidden and common interests, as well as provide necessary warning signals to organizations. Interpersonal unethical behaviour may likely increase employee cohesion by forming interpersonal bonds, whereas organizational deviance can indicate to the company of impending issues so that may require urgent solutions, (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The basis of maintaining unethical behavior or practice in the workplace is most likely connected to the lack of good and moral leadership in any organization. (Trevino & Brown, 2005). It is argued that team leaders who engage in unethical practices usually cause an atmosphere that allows unethical acts within the organization, and employees will find it conducive to engage in deviant behaviors that is parallel to that of the team leader (Trevino & Brown, 2005). Employees are likely to keep imitating superior's practices, even if such action constitutes unethical behaviour.

Ethical Decision and Unethical Deception

There are numerous unethical behaviors in existence. Deception is an attractive aspect of unethical behavior, such behaviors have been viewed and identified as the major among various high profile cases involving corporate corruption in several companies (Stevenson, 1992). According to Eichenwald, (2002), deception continues to be a more difficult problem to manage in corporate organizations (Grover 2005). However, the decision to align with deception always permits some mental dexterity on the main actor, demonstrating the vital aspect of mechanisms for moral disengagement. Accordingly, deception and decisions to engage in deception are subjugated on decision maker's perspective on the costs and privileges of using deception, and crucially, people tend undermine the varied costs of using deception because they want to justify their action and own of deception too often to themselves.

The view that people rationalize unethical practices has been in discourse over half a century. This idea was argued by Tenbrunsel & Messick's (1999) that unethical factors consist of self-deception, whereby people trick themselves into behaving with self-interest while at the same instance, falsely believe that their moral principles and values were upheld. Rationalizations aids inappropriate behaviours by giving reasons why such specific unethical acts are justified or excused from the acceptable normative rules (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). On moral justification, the individual is involved in cognitive reconstruction of the unethical behavior itself. This indicates often that individuals do not intend to indulge or engage in any form of unethical behavior unless they are able to justify the morality of their actions by themselves (Bandura 1999). In this view, unethical practices are taken to be a personal construct and socially approved by making it a service of value with moral purposes. This concept encourages the idea that most employees neutralize or undermine their wrongdoing by clamoring for higher loyalties, Molinsky & Margolis's (2005) further argued on the concept of "necessary evils," referring to how individuals construe that ethical rules have to be set aside for more selfish causes.

Experimentally, Bandura, (1996: 364) observed that "moral re-construal of harmful conduct by linking it to worthy purposes" was perceived as the main stronger predictor of unethical activities like violence and lying. For instance, the executives in an organization known as Enron were quoted as justifying their unethical and fraudulent behavior in terms of forming a deregulated, viable and better energy market (Eichenwald 2005). Moral justifications increases the use of deception. However, moral justifications promotes shifting from personal perception and decision making to gratifying economic decision making, by engaging in deceptive accounting practices to sustain the firms share price. In addition, Tenbrunsel & Messick (1999) posits that a shift from personal to economic purposes had a negative effect on individual moral judgement. In this case, the use of moral justification in deception is necessary for individual principled reasoning, where the person accepts to steal for different reasons. Therefore, the intention to morally justify a decision reflects on general intuition for moral justifications, some can even be illegitimate and for self-serving purposes. However, people may obviously and chronically indulge in these activities until they become very used to it as routine schemas. To the extent that employees accepts moral justifications for all their wrong behaviors, because they are more often likely to be involved in deceptive or unethical behavior that can otherwise be considered very normatively harmful or even unethically offensive, Tenbrunsel & Messick (1999).

Baucus & Near (1991) have argued that illegal behaviors are more likely to occur in bigger firms owning greater resources. It is accepted that employees working for such firms are mostly predisposed to choose to take part in practicing certain illegal activities that is socially accepted within such organization are. Therefore, it is believed that most organizations can pave way that can significantly influence their employees, even when these employees endeavours to maintain solid ethical values. In addition, several scholars have recognized that some forms of production and property deviance are often practiced by employees who may be young, fresh to the job, work as part-time employee, or have a position of low pay (Baucus & Near, 1991).

Peterson, (2002) argue that, social normality, wrongful treatment as well as the influence of employees in work groups can also encourage unethical practices in the workplace. However, four major demographic factors exist which have the capacity to affect ethical behaviors among employees in any organization. The initial factor is gender; this suggest that mostly males tend to indulge in more aggressive or unethical behavior than their female counter parts at workplace. Another factor is tenure; this connotes that those employees having lesser tenure are more believed to often commit property and destructive workplace deviance. The third factor talks more about educated employees, it claims they are minimally giving into involvement in unethical practices. The fourth factor is age, in this case older employees are more likely to be proven honest than younger employees (Appelbaum, 2005).

Sims (2002) asserts that individuals that report high cases of job and organizational satisfaction have lesser levels of ethical code or rule truncating within the organization. This idea can be explained by saying that individuals who are more close or attached to their work and organizations holistically are often likely to follow the ethical rules provided by their workplaces, which remain cognizant with the role ethical rules making (Sims, 2002). Work commitment is an inclusive factor that can make an employee to engage in unethical or deviant practice. Employees that show more loyalty and are passionate about their daily work engagement are likely may not engage in any unlawful business practices. Meanwhile, Sims (2002) in contrast holds that “increased feelings of continuance commitment” would basically have positive factors of making some employees to manifest unethical or deviant behavior at workplace.

The multiple ethnic varieties between employees in an organization may also have inverse related likelihood of unethical behaviours. because ethnic similarity has the capacity to actually increase the chances of workplace unethical behaviours,. However, in some instance, ethnically different individuals may feel they should conform to organizational ethical norms in order to prevent any unnecessary connotations for ignoring the existing code of behavior, (Liao *et al*, 2004). Furthermore, it’s been observed that employees with a high position, status and numerous groups may likely engage themselves often in positive behaviors than others without (Galperin, 2002). In addition, people with a high official status may receive more support for involving in positive behaviors than individuals with a low status. Therefore, an increase in a worker “self-efficacy” can be linked to increased tendency to indulge in positive deviant behaviors (Galperin, 2002).

According to Vardi & Weitz (2004), there are various classes of unethical behaviours organized in five broad aspects: (a) intrapersonal misbehavior, which include the problem alcohol drinking, drug or substance abuse, workaholic behavior, and (b) interpersonal misbehavior, like incivility, bullying, aggressive behavior, sexual harassment), and (c) production misbehavior, such as in rule breaking, absenteeism, loafing, tardiness, and (d) property misbehavior, involving vandalism, espionage, theft, computer system hacking, and finally, (e) political misbehavior, misuse of public assigned power, politicking, impression management, favoritism.

The use of illegal drugs by most employees is perceived to table a growing problem in the several workforce across the globe. Workaholic Individuals may prefer to identify and choose to consume drugs “abusing” themselves at workplace. They often exaggerate the work role they play in workplace. Some, as a result of many reasons, show increased devotion while doing their jobs and upholding their careers. Such excessive commitment and alarming involvement may be dubbed “workaholics” to indicate an over addictive behavior, (Peiperl & Jones 2001). Andersson & Pearson (1999) argue that employee unethical behavior include incivility or “workplace incivility which denotes expressions of individual’s impoliteness or rudeness may project into increased aggressive behaviors. One of the common known forms of workplace incivility is described as insulting behavior. Gabriel (1998), provides various forms of insulting behavior as exclusion, stereotyping, rudeness, ingratitude, scapegoating, as well as being kept waiting, or being ignored and provided a unique insight into forms of social psychology of insults prevalent in organizations. More so, insults also includes slighting, humiliating, or display of offensive character.

Sexual Harassment

Flirting, sexual attraction and bantering are common activities in workplaces. Certainly, not every social interaction has a sexual sign or constitute sexual harassment or assault. Cleveland, Stockdale & Murphy (2000) demarcated workplace romance from sexual harassment. Whereas, consensual interactions describe those having positive or autonomous kind of expressions between workers’ been attractive to themselves, and such is found to be prevalent in the workplace. Sexual

harassment, in other words, consists of any unwelcome or unacceptable advances, pleas, requests for sexual relationships, or physical conduct or closeness of a typical sexual nature. It is however, a pervasive or pervading phenomenon in common in work organizations. Female employees gender is sexually facing harassing behaviors in different workplaces.

Withdrawal Behavior

The prevalent work misbehavior is the physical absence and the psychological absence as well as employees' withdrawal from work (Hackett 1989). In human resource management this terms are referred to as dysfunctional lateness, absenteeism and turnover. Unjustified absence from workplace and excessive show of tardiness, that are against organizational norms, in disregard of their consequences, toward work processes are related to unethical practices. Moreover, such behaviors can negatively impede individual work performance, influence coworkers' and work behaviors in general.

Social Loafing

Approach work with collective effort, teamwork can, indeed, cushion work load and creatively improve productivity. More so, working as team can also enable individual workers to demonstrate lesser effort than they could otherwise, therefore, this concept connotes social loafing, (Kidwell & Bennett 1993). The survival, success and sustenance of a work team is mostly dependent on members' belief that their involvement in work may be greatly beneficial to the team than to work alone. In the absence of such belief, the willingness of the team workers to contribute their relative effort to the success and survival of the collective work or task can diminish.

Whistle-Blowing

Whistle-blowing as an act, refers to an action taken undertaken by an employee to raise alarm whenever he or she decides to inform internal or external authorities or any work member or the media about unethical practices in the workplace. The perception generated by this phenomenon is viewed as intentional organizational misbehavior, because in many work structures, it may be considered as a violation of core organizational norms of engagement expected from employees. In most organization, it is a form of betrayal. Near & Miceli (1997), argued that it is an antisocial organizational practice or behavior that is intentionally performed by a worker in an organization. Such behaviour is directed toward a person, group of person, or the organization in particular which the individual interacts with, with the ulterior motive of causing disparity and harm. For whistle-blowing is always with the intention of inflicting and causing damage or harming co-workers. This behavior, then, is common with those who engage in unethical practices, (Vardi & Wiener 1996), and it can also sometimes be perceived as an antisocial display of retaliation or revenge

Political Behaviour

Most scholars have posited several arguments in their exploration and explanation of deep intricacies relating political actions taken within work organizations. For many, their emphasis has dwelt on the aspects that individuals and groups involve in acquiring and using power and other influence to derive utmost resources desired. Some of the ways such individuals use could be seen legitimate and under the auspice of organization normative system. Meanwhile, those tactics used may be manipulative, exploitative and improper in nature (Vigoda 1997). More so, those unethical behaviors could be self-serving and manipulative and are seldom sanctioned by the workplace management. In all, the behavior could show adverse consequences, infiltrate conflict and disharmony that often occur when such elements are allowed in the organization as it is directed against each other. However, if individuals exert deceptive and manipulative types of political tactics, that can be in violation and neglect of organizational codes of ethics, acceptable standards and conduct, that is clearly shows there is engagement in acts of organizational unethical behavior.

Meanwhile, when the workplace environment becomes highly politically oriented or work structures is grossly politicized, it may in reality become an avenue for forms several manifestations of unethical conduct, and leading to socially undermining, incivility, subversion, betrayal, insult and revenge.

Employee Theft

According to Greenberg (1997), employee theft is a common issue in public organizations. It is a major pervasive, worrisome, costliest and intriguing form of unethical practice in organizations. Employees at all work levels take home some office supplies or resources for personal use, these may include paper clips, furniture, or may return late from work breaks, misuse computer materials and time, falsify or manipulate reimbursement requests, embezzle huge or small monies, cheat vulnerable customers, use a company's design idea for private business, and theft of other valuable resources within the organizational

It is estimated that about 75% of employees in organizations steal valuables from their workplace in most cases at least once, and that most damages are not only due to individual grand theft cases, but to large extent the accumulation and acquisition of substances from petty theft. This done to the extent where individuals may desire to display self as behaving or acting in a morally acceptable manner, they also attempt to clarify the legitimacy of their dubious acts of including those who threaten to expose or impose labels by calling a "thief" or by challenging their moral fitness and self-images. Greenberg (1997) further proposed that workers' theft can be halted by efforts to counter the cognitive strategies associated and to attempt on strengthening inherent forces, and also to weaken any encouraging forces.

Sabotage and Vandalism

Sabotage and vandalism are the gruesome manifestations of unethical employee demonstrating misconduct that is targeted toward the organization's products, services to society and property with the aim of inflicting damage and destruction to organizational reputations. Employee sabotage happens when individuals employed in an organization begins to deface the organization, indulges in intentional acts that effectively damages a firm's property, products, services and reputation. Harris & Ogbonna (2006) deliberated that employee misbehavior in form of sabotage is in a variety of service settings. Some could be in mild forms of sabotage that may be unnoticed externally or internally, like in graffiti or spreading rumors maligning the employer, or organization in general are quite understandable. In addition, some of these practices could often be dismissed by management team and may be tolerated at times. However, any activity that is purposely carried out to inflict some levels of damage or sabotage on the organization, its customers, assets, and even on relative stakeholders is regarded as unethical practices because they are damaging, disparaging, and destructive behavior committed intentionally against the organization.

Unethical Behaviour and Target's Well-Being

Exposure to constant unethical practices can be a major threat to a person's self-esteem. However, experiencing threat toward self-esteem may not solely lead to physical as well as psychological strains but in addition may affect behavior. According to the assertion by Baumeister, Smart, & Boden (1996), a threatened individual self-esteem may result to either work withdrawal or intentional aggressive behavior, depending on either the individual's acceptance or rejection of the negative evaluation. However, when the individual welcomes the negative evaluation, such person may reverse his or her self-esteem, cause negative feelings and emotions toward the self by being sadness and expressing withdrawal behavior. Furthermore, in a situation that the individual rejects the outcome of the negative evaluation and choose to protect his or her self-esteem, then the negative emotions directed to the source of the threat by expressing anger are triggered, and this can lead to gruesome or aggressive behavior that is focused on the source of the threat. This insinuates that people are highly concerned and motivated in protecting and maintaining their self-

esteem without any trace of doubt. Therefore, aggressive behavior is the act of self- authentication and affirmation, it is also a common reaction to a persons threatened self-esteem.

Aggression most times can be directed on the perpetrator of unethical behavior. With the understanding of revenge, individuals try to make effort in restoring justice (Jones, 2009) and to discourage and dissuade further unethical practice, either from the perpetrator or from any person as a third party who may notice that such behavior is not tolerated. However, aggression centred on the perpetrator may be an option only if there is the absence of further punishment expected (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001). The perpetrator may show not be around or may likely be too connected. Anger is related with the tendency of becoming aggressive (Berkowitz, 2003; Haidt, 2003), hence, aggression may be focused on other people like coworkers, who were not part of any unethical behavior, and family members.

There is an indication that unethical behavior by the supervisor or superior may cause unethical behavior consequences toward family members. Hoobler & Brass (2006) posits that abusive supervision by the employee undermines behavior against family members. Restubog, Scott, & Zagencyzk (2011) argued that such relationship might hopefully be mediated by the employee's condition of distress. This explains that, the experience of unethical behavior is capable causing strain, and anger, and it can trigger unethical behavior on others. However, unethical behavior expressed against other parties may not have to be driven by intention to harm; it can be driven by discouraging capacity to have control over individuals's impulses, such impulses as to behave aggressively, inconsiderately, or selfishly.

Unethical behavior in essence, represents those practices and behaviors that breaches codes of ethics and norms of mutual respect. abiding by the influence of norms often requires constant self-control, which relies on the presence of limited energy resource (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). This resources determines and enables a person on how to successfully regulate his or her behavior, but can become depleted by self-control acts. The practice of unethical behavior is key to depleting self-control capacities. In absence of self-control, individuals tend to condition themselves in a more typical selfish, self-centred, impulsive, and antisocial manner (Baumeister & Exline, 1999). DeBono, Shmueli, & Muraven, (2010) argues that individuals demonstrate more unethical behavior whenever they lose self-control resources or if it becomes depleted. However, the indirect effects of unethical behavior toward others can generate a reduction in the quality of social interactions. Unethical behavior may affect coworkers who accidentally witness it in the workplace.

Productivity in Public Service

Public services are met with challenges that obscures improvement in productivity. The reduction in ethical values in civil service calls for productivity improvements in public service in most developing countries. In order to improve or increase productivity in public sector, the factors of productivity need to be identified. These factors can be used in different ways and for specific purposes, which include identification of areas intended for development. However, these factors may rely on some contextual elements or characteristics similar in industries, public services, private sectors and even in the service sector.

According to Mathis & Jackson (2004), productivity is the outcome that is perceived after evaluating one's job performance for rewards, and organizations experiences at a given period time. Weiss (2002) also argued that productivity concerns one's attitude, which describes how job is done and its positive outcome in achieving organizational goal. Multi-national companies, small or medium organizations, and government departments adopt promotion as a driver that motivates employees to become productive in assigned duties. In this approach, rewarding employees whose

performance is rated high, encourages others to ensure they perform better (Rupia, Musa, Nandi, & Odera, 2012).

Public services are said to be effective and productive when it can resolve individuals' problems, and add public value. Grant & Chuang (2013) argues general knowledge on public values and city improvement is embedded in privileges of public service outcomes or productivity. Therefore, productivity is an ambiguous term or concept. Productivity is similar to performance because high performance of any organization translate positively to its productivity. Since, the productivity of organizations can be seen as being a major component to its performance. Overtime, productivity is perceived as the main factor promoting private companies and public organizations.

In the light of national or public economy, productivity increment has been associated to many other economic and social phenomena, as in economic growth and improved standard of living. Productivity is basically referred to as the ratio between input and output. In addition, productivity can also be increased in many ways, as in the quality of employee service, utilization of the quality service and its capacity as well as the role of customers in receiving the service provided.

The issue of quality service is multidimensional and difficult ascertain. However, there are three major dimensions associated to quality of service: (i). Technical quality: this refers to the outcome or result of a service which can often be measured by objective manner, (ii). The functional quality as it relates to process of the service execution, (iii). The perceived quality of service relates between the function of perceived quality and the expected quality. Factually, customer usually evaluates the service quality offered subjectively in determining the kind of service received and if it is in line with their expectations.

Ethnicity and Public Office

Ethnicity refers to an individual's self-concept and behaviour that is basically influenced by belonging to a social group and the emotional significance and value associated by a member of such group (Moncrieff & Lienard, 2018). Therefore, ethnicity is believed to have a greater part in influencing an individual's ethics and moral obligations. There is also an impact of ethnicity on individuals' attitude as well as ethical-moral judgment. In addition, an individual tends to engage in a behavior that is recommended by his/her social group or family members, siblings, friends, (Bairaktarova & Woodcock, 2017). Meanwhile, it is further argued that ethnicity can be literally connected to ethical decision making.

The essence of ethnicity in this context, is specially focused on public service and administration as an avenue of re-producing attitudes of ethnic categorizations, as it brings the apparatus of the state into the focus of consideration, with the knowledge that as a heterogeneous ensemble entailing several organizations, procedures or processes and instruments of authority, actors, or practices. A state has institutionalized legal dimension or state administration (Jessop, 2016). The impression of individuals on the state administration is that individual disaggregated organizations, and branches or specialized discourses, levels, indicate a dynamic and disparate entity in its multi-layered plural reality.

Concepts of "state bureaucracy" or "public administration" (Eckert 2020, 7–8), which are commonly used with the inclusion of the term official (Bourdieu 2014), should not hide the fact that state action can prove to be a well-burdened illusion as a closer inquiry is made, Bourdieu (2014). Furthermore, it can be easy to identify a state as having a dynamic set of relations, administrative routines, an institutional level of administration, bureaucratic organizations, as well as an administrative regulated practice or official administrative communication-channels, actions, and vested with an authority, (Bourdieu 2014).

Power relations concentrated in public institutions makes them to have explicit position at the service of the public as it concerns all public affairs, using public resources for its common good. With the authority of the state, public servants pursue the agenda, enforcement and preservation of all public interest via performing roles under the rule of law (Fassin 2015). Therefore, organizations and procedures involving public administration are complex and made official through state symbols and authority, and the public status are marked by a tone of voice, work settings as well as office furnishings (Piñeiro, Nova & Nathalie. 2021).

Ethnicity as Sliding or Solidified

The link between ethnicity and public service points to the idea in which ethnicity is created in addition to structures, processes, dynamics, and practices of producing, solidifying ethnic attitudes and attributions or distinctions. Moreover, ethnicity can be termed as a consequence of production procedures, processes or social solidarity (Wimmer 2008), thereby making social organizations of ethno cultural categories. This provide the understanding that the complex practices and processes involves ethnic marking and differentiation which can be situationally activated or influenced as well as purposefully deployed.

Ethnic categorizations are a possible resource outcome of distinction and devaluation, which can be applied whenever it appears aiding the pursuit of special interests and goals, as well as being able to influence a situation (Piñeiro *et al.* 2021).

However, the actions of what individuals and organizations do with ethnic categories becomes crucial (Brubaker 2004), and it also gives awareness on the various ways ethnicity can function in public service. Furthermore, ethnicity can prove to be a dynamic practice having ethnic differences with sliding elements. In addition, the practical and factual administrative processes to categorize ethnicity are basically of individuals' interest, specifically how on ethnic differences are shown or identified in everyday work, and how it produces as gains or "achievement" for ethno centric individuals, through practical activities, (Bergmann 2000).

According to Hirschauer (2017), ethnicity can be perceived as a means of human differentiation that is associated with places of birth, native language, human bodies, culture, beliefs, as well as achievements. It can include secondary characteristics like symbols, objects, behaviors, and social activities or positions. Human differentiations can be based on factual contingent distinctions which do occur during interplay of representational or relational performances and attributions (Kubisch, 2008) that can as well become solidified (Piñeiro *et al.* 2021). Ethnic categorizations in most situation, can be actively mobilized or downplayed in their particular situational significance, they can also be dramatized, trivialized, neglected, or even blurred, (Nieswand 2014). Undoing ethnicity in a setting or permitting any indifference toward other ethnic categories are also factually conceivable because of the possibility of their irrelevance, (Hirschauer, 2014). Ethnic and cultural affiliations can often take place unnoticed on daily basis representations and by conscious staging.

Organizational Justice

Workplace unethical behaviour occurs as a reaction for being treated inequitably in the most workplaces. This argument focuses on benefits and fair treatment apportioned to all employees' comparison with co-workers on the basis of their ration of outcomes in pay, pay raises, and promotions to inputs of skill, on the job training, education, and work effort, Henle (2005). In a situation where employees enjoy similar outcomes in equivalence to inputs in relation to other coworkers, employees will perceive and experience equity. But, in the case there is a discrepancy in relation to their input and output ratio with others, the employees are experiencing inequity. In order to recoup their sense of inequity, most employees may often resort to unethical activities, (Henle, 2005).

Within every organization, leaders take disciplinary measure on wrongful acts. Such exercise gives powerful indication of the value of rules, codes and norms to every member of the organization (Trevino & Brown, 2005). However, if employees act in an approved and accepted manner, as they perform their assigned task without compromising to do wrong, they ensure that are appraised by their superiors. In addition to doing work in an approved way as to receive recognition, some employees however, wants gratitude for deviating from normal work regulations within the work environment to increase productivity in the organization. Subsequently, in a scenario where such employees observe that a colleague have acted in a similar unacceptable way but was penalized, the employee will likely feel disappointed with the justice meted to those who break the existing intra-organizational rules and norms (Trevino & Brown, 2005). Therefore, when an employee is caught acting wrongfully against the norms by committing an unethical practice, and if in case his job is terminated because of his actions, other colleagues may obviously understand the message that such wrong act will not be tolerated within the organization any longer and punishment will be exerted accordingly. (Trevino & Brown, 2005).

Organizational commitment Toward Productivity

Organizational commitment refers to the work effort which an employee exerts within a particular organization in achieving its goals, and wishes to maintain a healthy and continues membership in such organization, Robbins & Langton (2003). Cullen, Parboteeah & Victor, (2003) argued that the ethical climate in an organization can be related to the level of organizational and employee commitment. However, benevolent climates in an organization can trigger commitment, whereas egoistic climates conditions in workplace can have negative impact in relation to organizational commitment. Therefore, the perception of a dynamic and benevolent climate condition of an organization can lead employees to have strong bonding with others in the organization, and that can increase cooperation and higher levels of togetherness, cohesiveness and cooperation among work group members and this can ultimately produce higher levels of organizational commitment.

When employees feel there is an egoistic climate in the organization, they tend to perceive that the organization supports that people should act in the same manner, with little or no regard given to fellow employees: an egoistic climate signals to individuals that the organization is obviously supporting or endorsing self-interested practices at the detriment of other employees (Cullen, *et al.* 2003). This climate decreases cooperation, togetherness and cohesiveness which is a contrast to benevolent climates which might obscure employees from identifying with the organization, and its perceived values which go against the generally acceptable behavior (Cullen, *et al.* 2003).

Promoting Wellbeing and Preventing Unethical Behaviour

Individuals in organization most time become a type of watchdog for their organization. They are described as "Toxic handlers" because they make themselves volunteers who shoulder the abnormalities, wrongdoings and actions that can impede organizational productivity, (Frost & Robinson, 1999). These individuals are the ones who filter and checkmate upsetting directives from toxic or unethical bosses to the employees, give empathetically their attention to worker's frustration and anger, working behind the scene to eradicate pain and are holding in confidence the evidence of others in the workplace.

In most cases, these persons are unrecognized and or are underappreciated. Several organizations view this approach as a "fluff" position and tend not to think past the bottom line. In the absence of recognition and provision of assistance, the toxic handler may likely become over stressed as the role of shouldering the general population may be putting more pressure, and could result to experiencing burnout (Frost & Robinson, 1999). Furthermore, some firms are gradually beginning to realize, that toxic handlers in companies are critical to their bottom line profits. When individuals are hurting others, ideas may be drying up and productivity may also decline, thus leaving a direct

effect on low revenue. Those companies that have consciousness of this position in tougher manners have even proceeded in hiring consultants specifically for the job (Appelbaum, 2004).

Consultants handling ethical issues in organizations enjoy greater anonymity within the firm’s workforce, oftentimes are not totally trusted as they are not individually and practically well known. The prevalent ways to keep a toxic handler can be to personally identify them and then come up ways to keep them motivated, without stress, (Frost & Robinson, 1999).

Organizations are beginning to adapt to proactive ways of maintaining proper organizational environments. Severe deviations can be recorded through background checks as well as psychological testing. Once hired, it becomes a necessity to nip unethical behaviours in the nucleus before it gets out of hand to exert significant detrimental social influence on the entire workforce (Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998). There is likelihood that punishment can significantly be exerted on a group with antisocial behaviour as well as individual permeating antisocial behaviour in organizations. Although, it is interesting to note that with punishment having strong influence on the prevention of antisocial or unethical behaviour, close supervision may not really have such influence on the workforce, (Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly, 1998).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

For this paper, the descriptive survey design was adopted. The survey approach is used to describe details of data related to unethical professional practices in Rivers State Civil Service Commission in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. In addition, the choice for adoption of the descriptive survey design is to allow for a wider reception of variety of research approaches to investigate univariate and bivariate variables that concerns the phenomenon which is subjected to research questions, that can be applied in quantitative method of research. The reason for survey design is to obtain and show statistical evidences that can be analyzed as well, in other to establish a link between variables. However, the population of the study involves a total number of 488,400 full time civil servants, (Institute for Government, 2023), who are professionals under the auspices of departments in the Rivers State Civil Service Commission, Rivers State. Therefore, a total sample size of 400 respondents was drawn from the observed population being 488,400, (Institute for Government, 2023). Therefore, Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. How can the influence of ethnicity in public service increase unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service Commission?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid
Percent			
Strongly agree	122	31.0	31.0
Agree	108	27.4	27.4
Strongly disagree	80	20.3	20.3
Disagree	84	21.3	21.3
Total	394	100	100

Source: field survey (2023)

Table 1. revealed that 122(31.0%) of respondents strongly agree and 108(27.4%) agree that influence of ethnicity in public office increases unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service Commission. However, 80(20,3%) strongly disagree and 84(21.3%) disagree to the stated research question. A greater number of respondents agree to the stated research question, therefore, the research accepts that influence of ethnicity in public office increases unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service Commission.

Table 2. How does public servants’ selfishness on public resources increase unethical activities among civil servants in Rivers State Civil Service Commission?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	142	36.0	36.0
Agree	120	30.5	30.5
Strongly disagree	82	20.8	20.8
Disagree	50	12.7	12.7
Total	394	100	100

Source: field survey (2023)

Table 2 reveals that 142(36.0%) of respondents strongly agree and 120(30.5%) agree that public servant’s selfishness on public resources increase unethical activities among public servants in Rivers State Civil Service Commission. However, 82(20.8%) respondents strongly disagree and 50(12.7%) disagree to the stated research question. A greater number of respondents agreed to the stated research question, therefore, the research accepts that public servant’s selfishness on public resources increase unethical activities among public servants in Rivers State Civil Service Commission.

Discussion of findings

The findings revealed that ethnicity influences civil servants to act in unethical manner. The research accepts that the influence of ethnicity in public office increases unethical practices among public office holders in Rivers State Civil Service Commission. The study also accepts that public servant’s selfishness on available and accessible public resources increase unethical activities among public servants in Rivers State Civil Service Commission.

CONCLUSION

Unethical professional practices have been found to have a constraining relationship with productivity in Rivers State Civil Service Commission. This means that unacceptable actions that violate ethical codes and standards in organizations will often prevent the realization of goals. Therefore, the modification of behavior and adherence to rules and regulations in performing assigned duties in civil service should be a priority to all stakeholders in both private and public organizations in society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Management should maintain ethical standards in civil service in all departments and parastatals despite the dominance of any particular ethnic group.
2. Government should often review policies that are obsolete in civil service and legislate better policies that are implementable in civil service to give guarantee in achieving productivity or core objectives.
3. Management should ensure that there is transparency in the handling of all public assets and resources meant to improve the public sector and society at large.
4. Management should vehemently punish civil servants caught violating ethical codes by demotion and denial of promotion and applaud those adhere to ethical standards periodically.

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