



WORK ETHICS CONSTRUCTS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND INITIATIVE AS CORRELATES OF CAREER PROGRESSION OF BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Educational standards are traceable to the quality of teachers in terms of knowledge and skills possessed. Teachers' career progression relative to their functionality may be moderated by the prevailing work ethics in institutions. This study investigated the correlation between work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative on career progression of business educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study, while three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive correlation survey research design was adopted with a population of 177 Business Educators across all the nine Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Census sampling was used because of the population size. The instrument for data collection in this study was a questionnaire titled *Interpersonal Skills and Initiative Constructs of Work Ethics and Career Progression Scales (ISICWECPC)* adapted from *Occupational Work Ethics Inventory (OWEI)* developed by Hill and Petty (2005) to measure the work ethics. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Education Evaluation and Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. The reliability test was carried out using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a co-efficient of 0.93. The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and Linear Regression Analysis. The findings from the study revealed that the combined and overall correlation between work ethics dimensions and career progression of business educators was positively low and not significant. It was recommended among others that the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should initiate a process to review the conditions of service with a view to infuse work ethics dimensions as part of conditions and requirements for promotion towards ensuring an all-round career progression in Nigerian colleges of education.

Keywords: Work Ethics, Interpersonal Skills, Initiatives, Career progression, Business Educators

Introduction

Business educators in Colleges of Education are employed to train Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) manpower to develop and train teachers to teach at the upper basic schools and to render auxiliary functions in training the recipients to create a middle level manpower for industry. In colleges of education, the career progression of business educators spans through a period of eighteen years to rise through all the ranks from the entry level (Assistant Lecturer) to the peak of the career (Chief Lecturer) by advancement of knowledge through research, dissemination of knowledge including teaching and community service. These key functions are intended to bring about national development and competitive advantage to the educational system of a country at the global level. The achievement of these objectives largely depends on the academic staff because of the critical role they play in the educational process. How effectively an academic staff performs the above-mentioned functions is often the core basis for promotion. Promotion of an academic staff from a lower rank to a higher one is an indication that the staff has shown evidence of scholarship and effective performance in all the criteria for promotion as stipulated by the policy document of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). However, it appears assessment of productivity among business educators in Nigerian Colleges of Education is based mainly on publications, while teaching competence and other criteria for career progression are either partially observed or totally neglected.

The pressure to publish rapidly and constantly is a phenomenon engulfing academia in all countries of the globe, while neglecting other aspects of job behaviour such as work ethics. This human resource construct is a factor of workers efficiency and effectiveness that are requirements for job



satisfaction and a guarantee for career progression among teachers of tertiary institutions with reference to business educators in Nigerian colleges of education. This emphasis on publication as the only requirement for promotion has over the years affected quality instructional delivery and innovations in a mostly negative way. In Nigerian tertiary institutions in particular, this culture has mainly been a syndrome manifested by the urge among lecturers to publish for promotions and positions than for genuine research production, quality instructional delivery and meaningful community service which forms the fulcrum of lecturers' responsibilities.

It appears conducting research and publishing articles are a sine qua non for many ambitious and conscientious academics and this may have given rise to other problems bedeviling academic career progression such as plagiarism and publishing in predatory journals. The issue of predatory journals is quite a recent phenomenon which perhaps, started about a decade ago. It is fast becoming a cankerworm in the academic circle attributed to the "publish or perish" syndrome instead of "publish to be recognized" or "contribute to knowledge" (Hasan & Ahmadi, 2017). Scholars often hurriedly send their articles which might not have substance to these predatory journals for the purpose of gaining promotion and progress on the job. The reason for this is because recruitment and promotion in most tertiary institutions, especially colleges of education in Nigeria wholly depends on the publishing productivity of aspiring teachers without considering the expected work ethics of such intending teachers. That is, most colleges of education give greater attention to the number of publications to one's credit, during the recruitment and promotion of teaching staff. Hence, it seems the number of publications to one's credit is thus regarded by most of these colleges as a cardinal index of competency, efficiency and effectiveness; while neglecting other factors such as work ethics.

Besides, this culture of publishing extensively has become a tactic used by many business educators to demonstrate their dexterity and distinguishing themselves among their peers with the objective of career progression and attracting positions of responsibilities to themselves. This according to Kearney (2015) has, in fact become a harsh reality in most institutions across the globe. It has been observed by several critics that the "publish or perish" syndrome has had adverse effect on teaching and research in tertiary institutions, with reference to colleges of education. The phenomenon has continued to push many lecturers to devote less time to teaching and concentrate more energy on writing for publication, which may not necessarily be for the purpose of knowledge advancement in their chosen field, but for the purpose of promotion. The above had continued to be responsible for people sitting in a corner to write "anything and publish anything", just for the purpose of progressing on the job without the needed work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiatives. To this end, career progression of business educators in colleges of education ought not only to be limited to promotion through publications, but also work ethics of an employee should form a part of the conditions for advancement. This is because, the work ethics of business educator largely contribute to opportunities to head privilege positions and key portfolios such as head of departments, directors, coordinators of centres and so on.

Work ethic is one of the important soft skills that determine work related behaviours in the workplace and influence important organizational behaviour such as job performance, quality of work, productivity and organizational citizenship as well as how employees feel about their jobs, career or vocation. It involves a set of characteristics that reflect a person's attitude, behaviour, beliefs, values, respect, communication and interaction to the work and other workers (Gorman & Meriac, 2016). Work ethics are characteristics that reflect honesty, integrity and accountability, dedication to duty, competence and professionalism. These characteristics are expected of business educators to progress in their career. It determines how an employee behaves in his/her workplace. This is closely related to the employee's relationship with his employer, colleagues, or corporate guests. Rojewski and Hill (2014) identified work ethic along with career navigation and innovation as essential competencies that job seekers and employees must have or develop in the twenty-first-century workplace. As the world has become globalized more rapidly, employers need employees who can perform their jobs with a positive work ethic, regardless of their ethnic background and religions. Considering that many enterprises from various countries collaborate with one another to produce goods, work ethic attributes such as communication skills, interpersonal skills and initiative are essential in the globalized workplace where cooperation and collaboration are emphasized (Park & Hill, 2016). Employees who are adept at collaboration, communication, and problem-solving are better positioned for success in the rapidly evolving digital world (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Work ethic is a strong component of employability skills that has long been identified as important in vocational education, business, athletics, and many other contexts. Employers place a positive value on doing a good job and continue to seek workers with a strong work ethic (Hill & Fouts, (2005); Park & Hill,



(2016). Employers often state that a strong work ethic is one of the most desired characteristics of a new employee. Work ethic can be defined as a set of characteristics and behaviours that reflect a person's beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours toward work (Meriac, Woehr, Gorman, & Thomas, 2013; Park & Hill, 2016; Petty & Hill, 2005). It comprises three dimensions which according to Hill and Petty (2005) are measured with occupational work ethic inventory (OWEI) which include interpersonal skills, initiative and dependability. However, only the dimensions of interpersonal skills and initiative were covered in this paper.

Interpersonal skill is related to personal characteristics that promote favourable interactions with other people in the organization. It helps an employee to develop relationships with people who would assist in recording success and make progress on the job. According to Sandy (2017), poor interpersonal skills appear to be one of the reasons why employees do not get along with the terms of employment, not being promoted or even to retain their jobs. It comprises ability to manage people, understand the feelings of others, cooperate with other employees and have positive attitude in the institution. It is an asset in a work environment that can help an employee to navigate the complexity, of the day-to-day tasks. Interpersonal skills according to Sandy (2017) are the qualities and behaviors we exhibit while interacting with other people. They are considered to be one of the most sought after types of soft skills in office organizations in the recent times. It is demonstrated whenever an employee engages in any kind of verbal or nonverbal communication. Strong interpersonal skills are a key indicator of success in a working environment, as benefits include the ability to cooperate with teammates to solve difficult problems, as well as simply enhancing once popularity around the office. The non-possession of this important skill might lead to conflicts with colleagues or management and cause others to see such employee as a hindrance to getting the job done. The ability of a business educator in colleges of education to demonstrate the possession of this skill could largely position the teacher towards effective career progression.

Initiative often involves a constructive challenge to the status quo (Moon et al. 2008). Initiative includes recommending changes even when others disagree, taking initiative to improve circumstances at work, and solving problems even before being asked to do so (Bolino & Turnley 2005; Den Hartog & Belschak 2007; Van Dyne & Lepine 1998). Frese & Fay (2001) define personal initiative as "work behavior characterized by its self-starting nature, its proactive approach and by being persistent in overcoming difficulties that arise in the pursuit of a goal". Initiative encompasses qualities that facilitate moving forward on a job. Persons with initiative may tend not to be complacent with the status quo. It is characterized by doing things without being told, finding out what an employee needs to know, moving forward in the face of tough times and challenges. It involves ability to spot and take advantage of opportunities that others overlook. It is a feature that falls under the ambit of acting, instead of reacting at work. Taking initiatives and doing something special would make an employee progress in the workplace. Hence, business education in colleges of education needs individuals that are energetic, proactive and can go extra miles to meet the goals of the programme and be able to progress on the job.

Statement of the Problem

Career progression today is affected by several factors and there has been an incredible pressure on human resource managers to meet up with the continuous changing environment, most especially as it relates to human resource in business education programme in Nigerian colleges of education. The cardinal objective of business education programme in colleges of education in Nigeria is to prepare the would-be teachers in areas of teaching, research and community development, (NCCE, 2020). Several business educators rise through all the ranks and may even move to other greener pastures to continue in the same manner of publishing just to gain promotions, while neglecting other requirements of interpersonal skills and initiative of work ethic constructs for career progression. How then can writing only for publication assists in getting people on the job; work responsibly; display academic dexterity in instructional delivery and solving other myriads of problems in the college of education system arising from the process of teaching and learning? Though, there are reported studies on the influence of work ethics on career progression in organizations including educational institutions, a serious gap still exists in literature on the correlation among work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative on career progression of business educators in educational institutions in Nigeria, especially at the Southwest Colleges of Education. The various studies carried out were based on banking industries and other corporate organizations, with no one carried out on business educators in colleges of education, especially in Nigeria. The researcher was therefore motivated to investigate the relationships among work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative and career progression of business educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria



Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the level of business educators' work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria?
2. What is the correlation between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest Colleges of Education?
3. What is the correlation between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest Colleges of Education?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant correlation between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.
2. There is no significant correlation between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.
3. There is no significant relationship between work ethics constructs and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.

Method

A correlation descriptive research design was adopted in this study. The population of this study comprised 177 Business Educators across all the 9 Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. The entire population of 177 was used as sample for the study because of its manageable size. Hence, census sampling was used. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled Interpersonal Skills and Initiative Constructs of Work Ethics and Career Progression Scales (ISICWECPC) adapted from Occupational Work Ethic Inventory (OWEI) developed by Hill and Petty (2005) to measure the three constructs of work ethics which include interpersonal skills, initiative and dependability. The inventory consists of 50 items; out of which 36 items word descriptors that represent key work ethic and work attitude concepts of interpersonal skills and initiatives identified from previous work ethic research on a seven-point Likert-type scale for rating each item. Each of these is assigned with the weight as follows: 1 (never); 2 (almost never); 3 (seldom); 4 (sometimes); 5 (usually); 6 (almost always); and 7 (always). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts from the Department of Education Evaluation and Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. The reliability test was carried out using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a co-efficient of 0.93. This was considered adequate for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of 5 research assistants. The instrument was retrieved from the respondents within an interval of two weeks with 168 returned from a population of 177 representing 95% return rate. The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and Linear Regression Analysis. The Pearson r was used to analyze the data collected to answer research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to establish the level of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study and testing hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance to determine the percentage contribution of business educators' interpersonal skills and initiatives work ethics constructs to career progression.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing the career progression pattern of business educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I am satisfied with the investment my college makes in training in education	168	2.89	.812	High
2	I am satisfied that I have the opportunities to apply my talents and expertise	168	2.92	.844	High
3	I am satisfied with the job related training my college offers	168	2.95	.784	High
4	My college is dedicated to my professional developments	168	2.96	.807	High
5	I am pleased with the career development opportunities available to me	168	2.95	.825	High
6	I am satisfied with my opportunities for professional growth	168	2.96	.833	High



7	I set realistic goals for myself and I track my progress until I have realized them	168	3.18	.845	High
8	Engaging in career progression activities has a motivating effect on me	168	3.11	.721	High
9	It's worth making an effort on career progression because of the beneficial outcomes to my personal growth and institutional development	168	3.08	.800	High
10	There are rewards for continuing my professional development	168	2.96	.777	High
11	My Institution trains lecturers on skills that prepare them for future jobs and career progression	168	2.90	.849	High
12	My Institution provides career counseling and planning assistance to business educators	168	2.87	.852	High
13	My Institution allows business educators to have the time to learn new skills that prepare them for future jobs	168	2.91	.795	High
14	My Institution provides support when lecturers decide to obtain ongoing training	168	2.89	.826	High
15	My Institution is receptive to lecturers' requests for lateral transfers (transfer to another department)	168	2.77	.868	High
16	My Institution provides a systematic programme that regularly assesses business educators skills and interests to engender career progression	168	2.81	.854	High
17	My Institution is fully supportive of career progression programmes for business educators	168	2.95	.917	High
Cluster			2.95	0.49	High

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

Table 1 shows the level of business educators' career progression in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. However, items 1 to 17 show high level of business educators' career progression with a mean rating ranging from 2.77 to 3.18, while standard deviation also ranges from 0.49 to 0.917. With these results, the above mean score shows that the level of business educators' career progression in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria is high.

Research Question One: What is the level of business educators' work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the level of business educators' work ethics

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Interpersonal Skills	168	4.57	0.87	High
Initiative	168	4.83	1.02	High
Work Ethics	168	4.77	0.87	High

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

The data presented in Table 2 shows that business educators agree that the level of their interpersonal skill is high with a mean value of 4.57; initiative is high with a value of 4.83; while the overall work ethics is high with a mean value of 4.77. Generally, the level of business educators' work ethics constructs of interpersonal skills and initiative in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria is high.

Research Question Two: What is the correlation between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest Colleges of Education?



Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Relationship between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of Business Educators

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R
Interpersonal Skills	168	4.5742	.87071	.092
Career Progression	168	2.9454	.48710	

Sources: Computed from Field Work, (2023)

The result in Table 3 shows the correlation of interpersonal skills and career progression of Business Educators. The table shows a mean of 4.5742 and 2.9454, as well as standard deviation of .87071 and .48710 for interpersonal skills and career progression respectively. The correlation coefficient between interpersonal skills and career progression is .092 which is positive but very low. It therefore means that the correlation between interpersonal skills and career progression of Business Educators in Southwest Colleges of Education is positively very low.

Research Question Three: What is the correlation between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest Colleges of Education?

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Relationship between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of Business Educators

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R
Initiatives	168	4.8340	1.01758	.106
Career Progression	168	2.9454	.48710	

Sources: Computed from Field Work, (2023)

The analysis in Table 4 shows the relationship between initiatives and career progression of Business Educators. The table shows that the correlation coefficient of .106 is positive but very low. The data analysis also indicates that mean of 4.8340 and 2.9454, as well as standard deviation of 1.01758 and .48710 was obtained for initiatives and career progression respectively. This therefore connotes that the correlation between initiatives and career progression of Business Educators in Southwest Colleges of Education is positively very low.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Relationship between work ethics dimensions and career progression of Business Educators

	1	2	3	4
1. Interpersonal	1			
2. Initiative	.806	1		
3. Work ethics	.909	.946	1	
4. Career Progression	.092	.106	.112	1

Sources: Computed from Field Work, (2023)

Table 5 depicts the correlation coefficients between work ethics dimensions and career progression of Business Educators. The coefficients range from .106 to .946 among the variables. The correlation coefficients between dimensions of work ethics and career progression range from .092 to .112. Interpersonal and initiative all have a positive but very low correlation with career progression of Business Educators. Thus, the overall correlation between work ethics dimensions and career progression of Business Educators is positive but very low (.112).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant correlation between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.



Table 5: Summary of ANOVA on the linear regression estimate between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of Business Educators

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.333	1	.333	1.405	.238 ^b
Residual	39.291	166	.237		
Total	39.623	167			

Source: Field Study (2023)

Table 5 shows that the ANOVA summary of linear regression based on career progression as predicted by Business Educators interpersonal skills is statistically not significant ($F(1, 166) = 1.405, p = .238 > .05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant relationship between interpersonal skills of work ethics and career progression of Business Educators in Southwest Colleges of Education.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant correlation between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA on the linear regression estimate between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of Business Educators

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.447	1	.447	1.893	.171 ^b
Residual	39.177	166	.236		
Total	39.623	167			

Source: Field Study (2023)

The data analysis in Table 6 reveals that the ANOVA summary of linear regression based on career progression as predicted by Business Educators initiatives is statistically not significant ($F(1, 166) = 1.893, p = .171 > .05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant correlation between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education.

Table 7: Multiple regression coefficients of work ethics constructs predicting career progression of Business Educators

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.647	.217		12.177	.000
Interpersonal Skills	.006	.074	.010	.075	.941
Initiatives	.023	.073	.049	.318	.751

a. Dependent Variable: Career Progression

Note. $R = .115$; $R\text{-square} = .013$; $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-square} = -.005$; $p < .05$

Source: Field Study (2023)

The data in Table 7 shows that work ethics dimension does not significantly predict career progression of business educators such as interpersonal ($p = .941$) and initiatives ($p = .751$). The adjusted R square value is $-.005$, which indicates that the 0.5% of the variance in career progression is explained by work ethics dimension (interpersonal skills and initiative). This value is a small effect (Cohen, 1988). From the overall model analysis, the null hypothesis is retained. Therefore, the results reveal that the work ethics dimension that have less predictive effect on Business Educators' career progression are in the order of initiatives and interpersonal skills respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The findings on research question one show that the level of business educators' work ethics variables of interpersonal skills and initiatives in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria were all high.



The findings on research question two reveals that the coefficient between interpersonal skill and career progression is positive and very high. It shows that the relationship between interpersonal skill of business educators and career progression move in the same direction. Conversely, findings from hypothesis one shows that the ANOVA summary of linear regression based on career progression as predicted by business educators interpersonal skills is though positive, but statistically not significant. This means there is no significant correlation between interpersonal skill of work ethics and career progression of business educators in southwest colleges of education. This finding corroborates the findings of Sandy (2017) who reported that poor interpersonal skills appear to be one of the reasons why employees do not get along with the terms of employment, not being promoted or even to retain their jobs. This is because interpersonal skill comprises ability to manage people, understand the feelings of others, cooperate with other employees and have positive attitude in the institution. It is an asset in a work environment that can help an employee to navigate the complexity, of the day-to-day tasks. The ability of a business educator in Colleges of Education to demonstrate the possession of this skill would to a large extent position the teacher towards effective career progression.

The results of the analysis of the data relating to research question three shows that the correlation coefficient between initiative as a variable of work ethics and career progression of business educators is positive, but very low. This therefore connotes that the relationship between initiatives of work ethics and career progression of business educators in Southwest Colleges of Education in Nigeria is positively low. Similarly, the results of data analysis from hypothesis two shows that, initiatives do not significantly predict career progression of business educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. The variance value reported a low effect of initiative on career progression of business educators in Southwest colleges of education. From the overall model analysis, the null hypothesis is retained, which connotes that there is no relationship between initiatives and career progression of business educators in Southwest colleges of education. Thus, business educators do not possess initiative that can help them facilitate moving forward on a job. This means, business educators might tend to be complacent with the status quo by not finding out what they need to know. It also implies that there is inability to move forward in the face of tough times and challenges. This finding is at variance with the opinion of Frese & Fay (2001) who posited that personal initiative is a work behaviour that is characterized by its self-starting nature with proactive approach to be persistent in overcoming difficulties that arise in the pursuit of a goal in an organization. This to Frese and Fay describes ability of business educators in taking the responsibility to anticipate challenges in their actively changing environment of workplace and resolve such challenges to be able to make progress on the job. If business educators therefore lack initiatives, they may not have the ability to spot and take advantage of opportunities that other employees grabbed and utilized; hence, may continually not able to do something special to progress in the work place.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that business educators in southwest Colleges of Education need more grooming in work ethics constructs for career progression; despite it positive correlation. The dimensions of these variables appear not in existence based on the findings from the analysis; hence, noticeable dysfunctional work ethical behaviour and non-career progression abound among business educators in Southwest colleges of education.

Recommendations

1. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should initiate a process for conditions of service review and innovation with a view to infusing work ethics dimensions of interpersonal skills and initiative as part of conditions and requirements for promotion towards ensuring an all-round career progression in Nigerian colleges of education.
2. Also, initiative as a construct of work ethics should be developed among business educators to ensure a business education programme of quality teachers (business educators) capable of imparting the required knowledge, skills and attitude in its recipients.
3. Work ethics dimensions of interpersonal skills, initiatives and other constructs should be enshrined in the criteria for promotion and career advancement in addendum to conference attendance, publications and teaching.



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