

# **Work Ethics and the Dimensions of Knowledge Management of Academic Staffs in College of Education, South-West, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the influence of Work Ethics on the Dimensions of Knowledge Management of academic staff in College of Education, South-West, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey research design, three hundred and sixty-one (361) respondents were surveyed. Data were collected using the Work Ethics Scale ( $r = 0.61$ ) and the Knowledge Management Scale ( $r = 0.82$ ) and analyzed using Multivariate Analysis at 0.05 significance level. The results show that Work Ethics has a significant influence on the Dimensions of Knowledge Management namely, documentation, transfer, creation and application. It is recommended that the academic staffs to be driven towards positive Work Ethics contained by the setting of institutional structure and tasks. Managers of academic institutions should create a policy which will ensure that knowledge acquisition, documentation, creation, transfer, and application are rewarded.

## **Keywords:**

Work Ethics, Dimensions, Knowledge Management, Academic Staff, College of Education

## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of Knowledge Management has become a source of concern to researchers in the tertiary institution. According Dalker (2005) Knowledge Management (KM) is “the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organisation’s people, technology, processes, and organisational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This coordination is achieved through, creating sharing and applying knowledge as well as through feeding the valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organisational learning”. Knowledge Management is emerging as critical issues in college of education especially now that academic institutions are bedeviled with myriads of challenges. Therefore, there is a need for research on the construct to position colleges of education for enhanced service delivery.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sokhanvar, Matthews, and Yarlagadda (2014) in their study concluded that, Knowledge Management is systematic and structured approach for organizing and transmitting both implicit and explicit knowledge of employees to other employees who could benefit from it to perform their jobs more effectively. Mazdeh and Hesamamiri (2014) describe it as the managements' meticulous efforts to use apparatuses and methods to create, secure, refine, switch or proportion and use knowledge assets accessible to the organisation. Reiser and Dempsey (2012) in Caruso (2017) purported Knowledge Management as the creation, documentation, and sharing of valued information, understanding, and insight into and across communities of people and organizations with comparable pursuits and needs, the aim of which is to construct competitive gain. Knowledge Management is extracting expertise and abilities from individuals who have it to the person who desires it (Caruso, 2017).

Ethics is a vital element of the workflow of a worker within the organization. Ethics determines values in a society and act as guidelines that separate right from wrong (Badah, Alaoamlh, Alsaleem and Al-Alli, 2013 as cited in Efanga, Effiong & Nwokomah, 2018). Ethics shaped human behavior; thus, neglecting ethics could results in egoistic and greedy individuals (Soesatyo, 2008). However, ethics approaches in a collective manner in which the values and behavior considered as ethical or unethical are imposed within the member of a group but not enforced to other groups. For example, a conduct considered as unethical in a particular culture does not necessarily regard the same in other culture.

Ethics is a condition of being respectful and the enactment of good actions. According to Oparaji et al. (2021), ethics are made in order to establish uprightness of a worker and the organization where he or she works or teach. It guides employees on becoming professionals that conduct ethical behavior and moral values in an institution. Work Ethics is a collection of values and behaviours that most employers feel are moral and appropriate for the workplace. A collection of convictions and dispositions that represent the essential values of labour is known as Work Ethics. (Miller, Woehr & Hudspeth, 2002). Some of these values and behaviours are Attendance, Teamwork, Attitude, Organisational Skills, Appearances, Productivity, the Initiative, Honesty, and Respect.

Miller et al. (2002) in their study made an assertion that, Work Ethics comprised multiple constructs of attitudes and beliefs relating to how employees conduct themselves at work. Miller et al. (2002) further explained the six characteristics of Work Ethics. First, Work Ethics is multi-dimensional constructs. Second, it does not focus on a specific job but could be applied to any work in general. Third, Work Ethics could be trained to employees. Fourth, it involves more than just behavior but also attitudes and beliefs. Fifth, Work Ethics could be demonstrated by employees' behavior and driven by the motivational construct and finally, it is independent of any religious beliefs. Parboteeah and Kapp (2008) recognized a link between ethical workplace climate regarding organizational dedication, delight, and dysfunctional behaviours. Therefore, research denotes a link between workplace ethics climates and diverse elements of worker engagement such as positive behaviours, dedication, and delight (Martin & Cullen, 2006).

Similarly, in an organization like the College of Education in Nigeria, the members are guided by specific values and rules which are documented in the code of ethics. The code of ethics is important due to stated cases of questionable characters or unethical behaviours exhibit by a few workers. Head of the Department is the role model of the organizational members; thus, their conduct is typically imitated by others. For that reason, the Head of the Department must portray ethical behaviour that can be exemplified by others (Efanga, Effiong & Nwokomah, 2018). A lot

of researches have been carried out at the areas of Work Ethics but the excessive frequency of ambiguous consequences from previous research discouraged further research on this domain (Raymond, Kimberly, Cheryl & Charles, 2010). This may be because of the attempt to examine the construct of Work Ethics without considering the way it pertains to the Dimensions of Knowledge Management. Thus, this study attempts to measure the influence of Work Ethics on selected Dimensions of Knowledge Management of Academic staffs in College of Education. Particularly, this study aims to assess the influence of Work Ethics on the dimensions of Knowledge Management namely; Knowledge acquisition, Knowledge documentation, Knowledge transfer, Knowledge creation, and Knowledge application.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study is a survey type, and the research design deals with the description of the characteristics of a phenomenon being studied. The researchers selected this research design because the study intended to seek the opinion of Academic staff on the influence of Work Ethics on the Dimensions of Knowledge Management. The population size is 1557 lecturers in the 10 public colleges of education in South-West, Nigeria as at the 2017/2018 academics session. 361 respondents were selected using simple random sampling and surveyed in this study. The simple random sampling technique is highly scientific as all elements in a population has equal probability to be selected as the samples. Samples resulting from simple random sampling is said to be unbiased and are therefore representative of the population. To select the sample, three Colleges of Education were randomly selected out of the six states (Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, and Oyo) in South-West, Nigeria. The selected States were Lagos, Oyo, and Osun, one government-owned college of education was randomly selected from each of the three states and 50% of the total populations of lecturers in these states were randomly selected. The selected numbers of Lecturers in each of the selected government-owned college of education are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1: Selected Lecturers in Each of the Selected States**

State	College of Education	Population	50% of the Population (Sample)
Lagos	Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education	237	119
Osun	Osun State College of Education	127	64
Oyo	Emmanuel Alayande College of Education	356	178
	<b>Total</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>361</b>

Two instruments are used for this study, namely:

1. Knowledge Management Scale; and,
2. Work Ethics Scale.

**Knowledge Management Scale (KMS)**

Knowledge Management Scale (KMS) is a 34-items scale developed by Filius, de Jong, and Roefs (2000) to measure Knowledge Management practices in the institutions. The instrument is divided into two parts; namely, (1) biographical information; and, (2) Knowledge Management Scale (KMS). The Knowledge Management practices are measured based on Knowledge acquisition (7 items), Knowledge documentation (6 items), Knowledge transfer (6 items), Knowledge creation (7 items), and Knowledge application (8 items). The 26-items adapted from by Durojaiye (2019) was used for the purpose of this study. The respondents were required to rate the items based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1-Completely Disagree to 4-Completely Agree. This mode of

measurement is also used by Khaksar, Yaghoobi, Jahanshahi and Nawaser (2011) with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78 and Durojaiye (2019) with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82 were reported.

**Work Ethics Scale**

The scale was developed by McDaniel (1997) which contained twenty items. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to check for internal consistency reliability was 0.93, and the test-retest result was 0.88. Construct, content, and criterion validity are established. The scale is unidimensional, with factor loadings exceeding the minimum preset criterion. Mean score is 3.1 out of 5.0, with scores of 3.5 and above interpreted as reflective of a positive ethics environment. To establish the reliability a test-retest method was conducted within two weeks. The questionnaires were distributed to 20 lecturers from the Federal College of Education, Osiele. The respondents from this pilot study were excluded from the actual samples. The administrations of these instruments are correlated with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test whether it is sufficient to be used as the instrument for data collection. This instrument yielded 0.61 coefficients which provide sufficient justification for the usability of the instrument for this study.

The participation of the respondents in this study was voluntary. 361 questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff of College of Education in South-West, Nigeria through a self-administered survey. However, only 350 valid questionnaires returned, which yielded 96.9% response rate. All seven dimensions of Work Ethics were analyzed based on means, standard deviations and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The, the multivariate analysis of variance was performed to find the differences in the separate Dimensions of Knowledge Management as a function of Work Ethics. The Wilks’ Lambda was calculated, followed by the calculation of separate univariate F-tests in order to ascertain the impact of the main effect of Work Ethics on the individual Dimensions of Knowledge Management.

**FINDINGS**

**Demographic Profile**

The overall finding for this analysis is displayed in Table 2. The results show that 50.2% ( $n= 462$ ) of the respondents were male and the remaining were female. This analysis shows that 8 (0.9%) had ND/NCE, 46 (5.0%) had first degree while 648 (70.4%) and 219 (23.8%) had Master’s and Ph.D respectively.

**Table 2: Description of Respondents’ Characteristics**

Demographic Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	196	56.0
	Female	154	44.0
	<i>Total</i>	350	100.0
Highest Level of Education	First Degree	25	7.1
	Masters	225	64.3
	Ph.D	100	28.6
	<i>Total</i>	350	100.0

**Correlation Test between Work Ethics and the Dimensions of Knowledge Management**

The results summarized in Table 2 provide indication on a positive relationship between Work Ethics and the Dimensions of Knowledge Management with specific score of Knowledge Acquisition -  $r_{(350)} = .237$ ; Knowledge Documentation -  $r_{(350)} = .472$ ; Knowledge Transfer -  $r_{(350)} = .160$ ; Knowledge Creation -  $r_{(350)} = .479$ ; Knowledge Application -  $r_{(350)} = .505$ ; ( all with  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the results for overall correlation test are displayed in Table 3 which indicates, Knowledge Management has a significant correlation relationship with Work Ethics.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix between Work Ethics and the Dimensions of Knowledge Management of Academic Staff in College of Education**

Variables	WE	KAcq	KD	KT	KC	KApp
Work Ethics (WE)	1					
Knowledge Acquisition (KAcq )	.237**	1				
Knowledge Documentation (KD)	.472**	.191**	1			
Knowledge Transfer (KT)	.160**	.058	.104	1		
Knowledge Creation (KC)	.479**	.264**	.545**	.161**	1	
Knowledge Application (KApp)	.505**	.231**	.498**	.140**	.507**	1
Mean	59.997	16.328	15.917	16.180	15.334	18.417
Standard Deviation	8.110	5.070	2.290	8.944	2.237	2.698

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3: Test of Work Ethics on Knowledge Management (N = 350)**

IV Name	DV Name	Univariate F	Partial Eta <sup>2</sup>
Work Ethics	Knowledge Management	7.648*	.483

\* Significant at the 0.05 level.

**Test of Main Effects and Test on Work Ethics on Each Dimensions of Knowledge Management**

Table 4 shows the overall findings of this study. The Wilks’ Lambda was moderate and significant, with Work Ethics approximately contribute 24% of the variability in the Dimensions of Knowledge Management. The univariate F-tests verified the influence of Work Ethics on most of the individual constructs of Knowledge Management. According to Table 4, Work Ethics significantly and strongly affected Knowledge documentation, transfer, creation, and application ( $p < .05$ ). Despite that, the findings failed to confirmed a significant effect of Work Ethics on knowledge acquisition.

**Table 4: Test of Main Effects and Tests of Work Ethics on Each of the Dimensions of Knowledge Management using Univariate F-tests (N = 350)**

IV Name	DV Name	Wilks’ Lambda Value (F)	Univariate F	Partial Eta <sup>2</sup>
Work Ethics	Knowledge Management	.251 (2.583**)		.241
	Knowledge Acquisition		1.199	.128
	Knowledge Documentation		4.173*	.338
	Knowledge Transfer		4.122*	.335
	Knowledge Creation		4.716*	.366
	Knowledge Application		5.595*	.406

\* Significant at the 0.05 level.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study investigated the influence of Work Ethics on the Dimensions of Knowledge Management of Academic Staff in College of Education. From the analysis, it was revealed that Work Ethics accounted for 48% of the total variance in Knowledge Management. It was also discovered that Work Ethics had a significant influence on the Dimensions of Knowledge Management (documentation, transfer, creation and application) of Academic staff in the College of Education while Work Ethics did not have a significant influence on Knowledge acquisition. This could be because to make the best use of academic staff's Knowledge Management, positive and strong Work Ethics need to be developed. This result supported the findings of Peyman et al. (2013), and Monsef et al. (2014) who discovered a positive relationship between ethical climate and Knowledge Management process. In contrast, selfish ethical climate was negatively related to employee participation in the Knowledge Management process.

This relationship is in line with the work of Rantaung David, Swami and Tangirala (2018) who explained that the effect of Work Ethics on Knowledge Management was driven by the need for organizational development. Furthermore, the findings of Shojayifar, Marzieh and Nastiezaie (2017) showed that there was a correlation between professional ethics which was represented by four subconstructs (dependable, ambitious, considerate, and cooperative) with Knowledge Management.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Work Ethics significantly influence the Dimensions of Knowledge Management (documentation, creation, transfer and application) while Work Ethics did not have significant influence on the Knowledge acquisition dimension. Therefore, the current researchers suggested academic staff to embrace positive Work Ethics contained by the setting of institutional structure and tasks in order to improve Knowledge Management. Furthermore, for Managers of Academic Institutions to effectively manage knowledge there should be a specific policy which will ensure that its acquisition, documentation, transfer, creation, and application are rewarded. In addition, Knowledge Management culture should be accommodated as part of the Work Ethics of every tertiary institution. Work Ethics policies that will increase the level of academic staff Knowledge Management should be intensified. Work Ethics should be observed strictly for the expected goals of the academic institutions to be achieved.

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