

**ETHICAL COMPLIANCE IN THE
WORKPLACE AND
ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY:
EVIDENCE FROM THE EDO STATE
MINISTRY OF ROADS AND BRIDGES.**

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ABSTRACT

This study provided a theoretical insight explicating how Organisational efficiency is influenced by ethical compliance in the workplace. The objectives of the study among other things were to examine the various ethical rules and the challenges hindering ethical compliance in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges. The paper utilizes a qualitative method and relies on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary data was obtained through an in-depth interview while the secondary data was gotten from journals, textbooks and internet. The study adopted the principal-agent theory as a basis of analysis. The study reveals among other things that ethical compliance promotes Organisational efficiency and that the growth of Organisation depends largely on how well resources are utilized in accordance with the rules guiding the institution. Furthermore, the study reveals that the compliance with ethical rules in the

Ministry is hindered by lack of financial resources and motivation. The paper therefore recommends among other things that the ministry should recruit workers with integrity and moral rectitude by conducting psychological test to ascertain prospective workers level of integrity. Also, that goals and targets be set for workers putting into consideration, the amount of resources expended in comparison with the final outputs in the course of executing projects. More so, a system of reward should be established specifically to reward workers that display attitudes of trustworthiness, integrity, and are in compliance with the ministry ethical rules and regulations.

Keywords: Ethical Compliance; Evidence; organisational Efficiency; Workplace

INTRODUCTION

The concept of ethics is crucial in Organisational efficiency. Ethical compliance plays a significant role in shaping Organisational behavior and performance in public sector Organisations (Bernard & Oyende, 2015). Employees' attitudes and dispositions towards work significantly contribute to achieving Organisational goals and objectives. Ethical compliance drives effective public service delivery, encompassing culture, processes, structures, and rules that guide public officers to act in the public's best interest (Ezeanyim & Ezeanolue, 2021). It is an essential feature of good governance, sustainability, growth, and institutional development. In any political system, government institutions are established to facilitate the provision of services to the citizens. The Ministry of Roads and Bridges (MORAB) in Edo State that was established in the year 2021 exemplifies this importance. MORAB aims to develop roads, maintain a good road network, and build bridges to improve

economic growth and social well-being of the citizens. Their contributions include constructing roads like Irhirhi and Ekehuan, and rehabilitating others like Yoruba Street and Sakponba Road (Nigerian Observer, 2023).

To address complex societal challenges, governments must safeguard democracy and promote good governance by embracing workplace ethics. Ethical compliance is crucial for enhancing Organisational efficiency, as employees are the most significant asset in every Organisation. Their productivity is directly linked to achieving Organisational goals and objectives (Bernard & Oyende, 2015). Moreover, ethical compliance is essential for Organisational survival, as employees must adhere to high standards of behavior.

Furthermore, employees' perceptions of their Organisation's response to ethical compliance significantly influence its role in enhancing Organisational efficiency. To improve efficiency, scholars continually seek ways to enhance ethical compliance, thereby boosting Organisational performance (Ezeanyim & Ezeanolue, 2021). Against this backdrop, this study examines ethical compliance in the workplace and Organisational efficiency within Edo State's Ministry of Roads and Bridges.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Workplace ethical compliance is a critical component of Organisational success because it directly impacts the Organisational efficiency. Ethical compliance refers to the adherence to established laws, regulations, and Organisational policies that govern workplace behavior. In recent years, public service has faced increasing pressure to maintain high ethical standards due to the growing public awareness and scrutiny. There are assertions that some public institutions in Nigeria are regarded as a

liability to the citizens due to reported cases of low productivity, breach of ethical standards, violation of rules and regulations (Bernard & Oyende, 2015). The spate of corrupt practices, driven by selfish ambition, has been observed as a common element among some public sectors, where public officials have been implicated (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2015).

Despite the critical role of the Edo State Ministry of Roads and Bridges in ensuring the availability of good infrastructure in the state, the ministry still faces significant challenges in promoting ethical compliance in the workplace and Organisational efficiency. The prevalence of corruption, lateness to work, and lack of adequate financial resources in the ministry have resulted in poor service delivery and erosion of public trust. It is against this background that this study tends to examine ethical compliance in the workplace and Organisational efficiency: evidence from Edo State Ministry of Roads and Bridges. In furtherance of addressing these issues this study seeks to ask the following questions: (1) what are the workplace Ethical rules in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges? (2) Does ethical compliance in the workplace promote efficiency? (3) What are the challenges militating against the implementation of workplace ethics in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges?

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine workplace ethical compliance and Organisational efficiency in Edo State Ministry of Roads and Bridges. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine ethical rules influencing the behaviour of workers in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges.

2. Investigate whether compliance with ethical rules promotes efficiency in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges.
3. Ascertain the challenges hindering the compliance with ethical rules in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Defining Work

Work is an activity that a person does for a living. Work occupies a crucial place in the life of an individual and the society at large. The effect of work is an important facet of life that plays a vital role in promoting self-esteem and facilitates the attainment of economic needs (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2007). The environment where work is done is generally called a workplace. According to Steenkamp (2012), workplace is a place occupied and filled with human conduct (tangible and intangible motivations) where people engage in formal work that provides for a meaningful condition of life. According to Kant & Bowie (as cited in Petrus & Johan, 2013), a meaningful work from a philosophical angle, is depicted by the work that is done-entered freely, earn sufficient wage, develop his/her competences, support ethical improvement, that is not governed by authoritarian tactics.

Ethics

The word 'ethics' originates from the Greek word 'ethos,' meaning character or custom (Adewale et al., 2015). It is a collection of values, norms, and principles that judge behavior as right, good, and proper and is used to assess the integrity and trustworthiness of an individual's conduct. These principles are not always the basis for identifying a single 'moral' course of action; rather, they provide a means of evaluating and deciding among competing options (Hubert et al., 2007). Ethics distinguishes between what is right and wrong. It is an

attempt to guide human behavior toward compliance with what is morally accepted by all. Ethics establishes and provides a platform for accountability for office holders. Ethical behavior hinges on such values as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compliance with moral rules and regulations (Ronald, 2021).

Organisational Efficiency

Efficiency is defined as the process of using minimal resources to achieve tangible goals. It measures the output produced in relation to the input expended. Private Organisations primarily aim to maximize profits and achieve goals at higher levels of productivity and efficiency at the least cost (Oyadiran & Kasim, 2013). In contrast, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016), efficiency in some public sector institutions is determined by analyzing the ratio between administrative costs and overall results in the fiscal year. Thus, an efficient Organisation is one that achieves significant results with minimal input. Organisational efficiency is related to increasing output using a fixed number of resources. The more output delivered using the same resources, the more efficient the Organisation is considered to be.

Ethical Compliance

Firstly, the word 'ethical' pertains to morals. It involves an effort to guide human conduct by applying principles of good behavior. Compliance implies obedience to established rules and regulations. It constitutes an act of yielding, submissiveness, and consenting to the wishes of others. Thus, ethical compliance entails yielding and consenting in obedience to an institution's rules and regulations. Ethical compliance requires that Organisations and individuals act in accordance with the tenets of moral ideology by obeying its principles (Venelin et al., as cited in Ronald, 2021). Thus, in an

Organisational setting, ethical compliance is crucial for maintaining a positive reputation, fostering trust among stakeholders, and ensuring long-term success.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Factors Shaping Workplace Ethics

Work ethics encompasses important cultural norms that promote positive moral values by encouraging individuals to perform their jobs well. This concept is rooted in the belief that work has inherent value (Quinn in Bernard & Oyende, 2015). Childhood socialization and experiences significantly influence an individual's adherence to work ethics. Through praise, blame, affection, or anger, children evaluate their performance in household chores and later in part-time jobs, shaping their attitudes toward work (Akonti, in Bernard & Oyende, 2015). As individuals mature, these attitudes become internalized, and work performance becomes less dependent on others' reactions. Socialization in the workplace also plays a crucial role in shaping work attitudes. Upon entering the workplace, individuals' perceptions and reactions toward others tend to confirm or contradict their pre-existing work attitudes (Braude, in Bernard & Oyende, 2015). The occupational culture significantly impacts an individual's attitude toward work and work ethics, which become integral to their belief system.

Nigeria Public Service Rules (PSR)

The Nigerian Public Service is regulated and governed by the Public Service Rules (PSR). The PSR stipulates the operative outline, guiding principles, privileges, and responsibilities of all public servants and also indicates the penalty for erring officials. The PSR is a compendium of sixteen chapters detailing important information on Parastatals and the Nigeria

Foreign Service Regulations with reference to the conditions for their service (John, 2020). During the colonial rule up till 1974, it was called "General Orders" and from then to January 2000, it was known as "Civil Service Rules" and thereafter, has been labeled as "Public Service Rules" till date (Jadesola, 2022). The changes in names over the years according to John (2020), are a reflection of the contextual, textual and structural variations which depicts the migration of the Service from one era to another. The structural changes have not addressed the challenges arising from societal changes. The military origin of the rules is a significant factor, as it has impacted the quality and effectiveness of the rules. Moreover, the rules were imposed on workers without their input, limiting their ability to deliver effective and quality services.

Chapter three of the PSR outlines rules governing punitive directives for Federal Public Service personnel. PSR 030301 defines "misconduct" as behavior that damages the service's image and may lead to termination or compulsory retirement. Examples of misconduct include unruly behavior, foul language, habitual lateness, and dishonesty. In contrast, PSR 030401 identifies "serious misconduct" as extremely grievous acts of dishonesty that threaten the service's existence and may warrant dismissal. Such acts include fabrication, destruction of records, and criminal charges (John, 2020). The importance of public service rules is underscored by the United Nations' adoption of an International Code of Conduct for Public Officials in 1996. The general principles are:

1. Public office, as defined by national law, is a position of trust, requiring public servants to act in the best interest of the public. Their ultimate loyalty lies with the public interests of

their country, expressed through democratic government institutions.

2. Public officials must perform their functions efficiently, effectively, and with integrity, aligning with state administrative policies. They must utilize public resources effectively and efficiently.
3. Public officials must be attentive, fair, and impartial when performing their duties, particularly in relations with the general public. They must not discriminate against any group or individual, nor abuse their power and authority (United Nations, 1996).

Moreover, the Nigerian Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, Civil Service Rules, and Financial Regulations outline ethical standards for public servants, including: Discipline, Loyalty, Honesty; Courage, Courtesy, Co-Operation and Tact (Bernard & Oyende, 2015). The ethical code of conduct for public servants, as outlined in the 1999 Constitution, includes:

1. Avoiding conflicts of interest and duties.
2. Prohibiting public officers from running private businesses or trades, except for farming.
3. Restricting foreign accounts outside Nigeria.
4. Prohibiting requests for gifts to facilitate duty discharge.
5. Restricting loans, gifts, or benefits to certain public officers.
6. Requiring assets declaration before and after leaving office every four years or at the end of their term

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the principal-Agent Theory, developed by Stephen Ross and Barry Mitnick in 1970 (Potucek, 2017). The principal-Agent Theory, popularized by several economist theorists, explains the

relationship between one or more individuals (agents) and another person or group of persons (principal). The theory assumes that the agent is entrusted with the principal's resources to achieve institutional goals and objectives efficiently. The theory involves developing, identifying, and measuring the performance of individual agents and aligning it with the strategic goals of the institution.

According to Lucian and Jesse (2004), examples of principal-agent relationships include corporate management (agent) and shareholders (principal), elected/appointed officials (agent) and the electorate (principal), and public servants (agent) and citizens (principal). In these relationships, the agent must act in the best interest of the principal. The principal-Agent Theory examines the ethical and moral flaws of agents and the satisfaction of principals in utilizing resources. The theory assumes that agents may have different preferences, such as willingness to work, incentives, and information, which can lead to challenges like monitoring, performance, commitment, and coordination, affecting institutional performance (Harvard University).

Two key determinants of the principal-Agent Theory are: (1) the agent's actions must promote the principal's interests by effectively managing resources, and (2) the agent must comply with rules and regulations guiding service delivery. Ghazali and Chariri (2007) noted that these rules are ethical standards that employees (agents) must adhere to. Therefore, ethical compliance is crucial, as it determines the agent's integrity, truthfulness, and openness in expending resources, increasing trust between workers (agents) and the public (principal).

In the context of this study, the principal-Agent Theory is significant in explaining how the behavior and attitude of workers in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges

(agents) affect citizens (principals) positively when guided by ethical principles such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compliance with established rules and regulations.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative method for data collection, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated through in-depth interviews (IDIs), while secondary data was sourced from the internet, textbooks, and journals. The study population consists of employees from the Edo State Ministry of Roads and Bridges. To efficiently collect data, a sample size of 12 respondents was purposively selected, comprising two management staff members from each of the six departments: Human Resources, Finance, Marketing, Operations, Procurement, and Customer Service. The data obtained was analyzed thematically using subheadings to reflect the objectives stated in the study.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The identity of the respondents was concealed so as to maintain ethical principle of confidentiality. Table 1 and 2 indicate the sample questions used to elicit responses from respondents and the summary of findings.

Table 1: Face to Face questions conversation

Theme	Questions
Existence of Ethical Rules	Are there laid-down rules and regulations guiding the character and attitudes of workers in the Ministry? Under what conditions are the Public Service Rules applicable to the

	workers of this Ministry?
Role of Ethical compliance in promoting efficiency	To what extent do you think that by obeying lay down rules, efficiency can be enhanced? Do you think that workers' actions affect the Ministry's level of efficiency?
Challenges militating against the implementation of workplace ethics	What are the factors hindering compliance to ethical rules in the Ministry? Apart from political interference, what other internal factors hinder compliance?

Table 2: Findings

Theme	Summary of Key Respondents' views
Existence of Ethical Rules	lateness to work, sleeping, doing personal business during office hours, fighting, falsifying information etc. constitute the ethical rules in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges
Role of Ethical compliance in promoting efficiency	Workers with integrity, firmness of character, honest, sincere and trustworthy expend resources faithfully. Such workers do not require much supervision.
Challenges militating against the implementation	Prevalent cases of corruption, insufficient financial incentives and

of workplace ethics	motivation compromise workers ability to act with integrity, thereby exacerbating the risk of non-compliance.
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Source: Fieldwork, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Existence of Workplace Ethical Rules.

The appropriate conduct in Organisations is determined by the rules and regulations governing it and also by the values held by such Organisations, the members, and other members of the society (Anderson & Ekelund, 2022). Organisations cannot survive without realistic rules and regulations that guides the operations of the workers. In response to the question with regards to the existence of ethical rule in the ministry, majority of the respondents interviewed asserted that:

“The application of ethical conduct in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges is fostered by the establishment of norms and values which influence the behaviour of all the employees. Every facet of work in the Ministry has a standard that is being maintained at all times. The engineers on the field are to stick to the specification of every project putting in view customer’s satisfaction and the image of the ministry. Those saddled with the administrative responsibility are to act in confidentiality, maintain discipline, and remain neutral and not bias with regards to the application of the Ministry rules of engagement. Other specific ethical rules in the Ministry includes: respect for customers, promptness and diligence in service delivery”.

Furthermore, they also added that lateness to work, sleeping during

office hours, fighting etc. are considered as an unethical conduct in the Ministry and will prompt commensurate punishment.

WORKPLACE ETHICAL COMPLIANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Workplace ethics occupies a strategic position in influencing employees towards efficiency and effective discharge of their duties. According to Komari & Fariastuti (2013) workplace ethics is essential in determining and shaping employee’s attitude towards their task and in contributing to the success of the Organisation. Abiodun et al (2014) posit that employees who are ethically compliant have the tendency to exert more effort towards the overall Organisational performance. Common principles upheld by such employees are integrity, sense of team work, self-motivation, sense of responsibility and quality of work.

In corroboration, most of the respondents interviewed on how ethical compliance promote efficiency infers that: the growth of Organisation depends largely on how well both the material and financial resources are utilized in the process of executing task. They noted that personnel with integrity, firmness of character, sincere and are trustworthy expend resources faithfully. According to them, such personnel are entrusted with greater responsibilities and they do not require much supervision. They are staffs that are distinguished by their good behaviour and conducts. Their conduct promotes organisational efficiency because they achieve more results and are dutiful, resourceful, truthful, and are committed to doing the right things even when no one is monitoring them. They are compared by their moral aptness to obey the ministry rules and regulations. They come to work early, respect

customers, and are truthful. Their conduct help to preserve the culture of the Ministry and protect its public image at the same time. Furthermore, ethics distinguishes between what is right and what is wrong; it guides human behaviour towards the good path and contribute to group efforts. Ethics establishes and provide the platform for accountability. Ethical behaviors rely on trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness and compliance with moral rules and regulations (Ronald, 2021).

CHALLENGES MILITATING AGAINST ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

Corrupt Practices

The spate of corruption in the public service has been described to affect negatively on citizens' trust in public Organisations and also impact adversely on a country's socio-economic development and levels of equality. Corrupt practices such as influence peddling, undue favour and nepotisms by public officials undermine ethical compliance, reduce investment in social welfare and hinders socio-economic development (Ayanda, 2012). When public officials engage in corrupt activities, it erodes trust and discourages investment in essential social services, ultimately affecting the well-being of citizens and the economy as a whole. (Asobie, 1991).

According to Bonzek (1991), public Organisations are faced on a continuous basis with complex ethical issues which marred their operations. These issues have on the long run places much strain on personal and professional values against the public service rules and code. The persisting menace have greatly affected public sector efficiency. In view to the challenges militating against ethical compliance, respondents share their opinions that:

“The placement of corrupt people that seems to be untouchable and are prone to doing anything they like, come to work whenever they choose to and will not be punished due to protection from some powerful individual within and outside of the Ministry have greatly impede the application of ethical conducts”

Furthermore, other respondents added that the prevalence of unethical conduct is worsened by undue favour granted to undeserving individual whose attitude and conduct overtime have proven to negate the established rules and regulations (coming to work late, falsifying information, untruthful, disregard for customers etc.) of the Ministry. Hence, they stand as hindrance to the enforcement of ethical rules. Since they have been known to evaded consequences several times, other workers begin to follow their steps with the conviction that no action will be taken against them. This situation has continued to weaken the ministry's stance against unethical conduct.

Lack of Adequate Financial Resources

The significance of workplace ethical compliance in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges cannot be over emphasized. The Ministry occupies a critical position and play a vital role in ensuring the existence of good road infrastructure in Edo State. However, lack of adequate financial resources in the Ministry hinders compliance with ethical rules at the workplace, compromise the ministry's effectiveness and its ability to deliver services to the citizens optimally. Workplace ethical compliance is essential for maintaining public trust and also ensure the integrity of government institutions in the public eyes. The Ministry of Roads and Bridges, is responsible for constructing and

maintaining critical infrastructure and as such, would require a timely and adequate financial supply to meet up with its constitutional obligations. Unfortunately, their poor financial stance has consistently undermined this commitment because financial resources play an important role in providing quality infrastructural service in the state (Olaopa, 2014). Examples from the Federal Ministry of Works report indicates that road infrastructure in Nigeria is poorly funded (Emenike, 2015).

The respondents interviewed identify poor financial provision as one of the challenges bedeviling the Ministry of Roads and Bridges. The respondents noted that the ministry ability to respond to citizen's demand on time and provide quality service in most cases is affected by their limited resources. They further averred that the ministry is underfunded and that the Ministry can only attend to issues based on the financial availability. This view coincides with Emenike, (2015) submission who identify reduction in government spending on infrastructure as one of the reasons for the awful condition of roads in Nigeria.

Poor Financial Incentives and Lack of Motivation

Factors such as environment; finance and human resources influence the performance of an Organisation. Among these factors, the human resource is believed to have utmost influence on Organisational performance. Given this fact, Organisations need to constantly motivate their employees to accomplish set goals and objectives (Obiekwe, 2016). According to Furnham cited in Grabowski et. al. (2021), commitment and hard work are linked with working for material benefits. Empirical studies embarked upon by Grabowski, et. al. (2021), revealed that there are positive connection between ethical compliance in the

workplace and motivation. Motivated workers understand the significance of work and are also in the moral sense, persuaded of the value of hard work. Such workers are more willing to work and are convinced that every work should be done perfectly because they find work exciting and interesting even in challenging situations. In view of this, the respondent infers that:

“Poor financial incentives and low motivation and morale in the Ministry of Roads and Bridges constitute bottle necks to ethical compliance. Motivation in terms of good salaries and incentives, giving credits to those who deserve it and not taking glory for other people's efforts, rewarding excellence and commitment to the Ministry's ethical rules and regulations, and encouraging innovations contributes immensely to Organisational efficiency”.

In this case, motivation is assumed beyond financial or material incentives. According to Lindner (no date), the greatest challenging role for leaders of Organisations is finding out how to motivate employees because what motivates each workers changes always. Understanding how to motivate employees effectively is crucial in the efficient use of resources because motivated workers are the stalwart of efficacious Organisations (Grabowski, et al. 2021). Unmotivated employees contribute little or nothing to work and also evades duties for things they are motivated about.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the significant impact of workplace ethics and Organisational efficiency, this study recommends the following measures to enhance compliance with ethical rules within the Ministry of Roads and Bridges (MORAB):

- a. **Integrity-Based Recruitment:** To ensure a workforce of high integrity, public offices should recruit individuals who demonstrate trustworthiness, truthfulness, and firmness of character. This can be achieved by conducting integrity tests or purpose-driven assessments for prospective employees, thereby measuring their perception of honesty.
- b. **Goal-Setting and Accountability:** Setting clear goals for workers enables the comparison of resource utilization with final outputs, promoting accountability for resource management. This approach helps identify instances of wastage and mismanagement, ensuring that personnel are held responsible for their actions.
- c. **Consequences for Ethical Violations:** Implementing consequences for ethical violations is crucial, as it ensures that culpable individuals face penalties. This approach communicates the Organisation's stance and expectations to workers, fostering a culture of accountability.
- d. **Reward System and Compensation:** Establishing a reward system that recognizes trustworthy, respectful, and responsible workers who adhere to the ministry's rules and regulations is essential. Additionally, salaries should be reviewed periodically to reflect current economic realities, ensuring fair compensation for employees.
- e. **Transportation Solution:** To address the issue of lateness due to transportation challenges, consider providing a subsidized bus service to

transport workers to and from work daily. This solution can help mitigate the impact of transportation costs on employee punctuality.

CONCLUSION

A very worrisome picture of the Nigerian Public Service is portrayed because the application of workplace ethics in the public institutions has greatly declined. To address this, strict adherence to Public Service Rules is crucial as it will enhance the prevalence of amenable workplace ethics in the public service. By so doing, public institutions can foster a culture of honesty, fairness, and respect among employees, leading to improved efficiency, workers commitment, and ultimately, better achievement of Organisational goals and objectives.

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