Organisational Communication as a Tool for Institutionalising Professional Ethics, Core Values and Employee Engagement to Enhance Work Performance in the Public Service Sector

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Abstract
In recent times, cases involving top public officers and political appointees surrounding huge breach of public trust as a result of lackadaisical attitude toward work ethics and core values have been reported in the media. Historically, the Nigerian public service sector has been facing what may be described as insurmountable decay in work ethics and core values leading to high degrees of inefficiency, corruption, and the lack of public trust by the public. Available literature suggests ways of mitigating the problem in addition to providing empirical evidence of the levels and links of the problem with Nigeria's socio-economic and political advancement. Some of the critical panaceas highlighted in the literature include proactively educating, enlightening, and engaging employees and personnel on the sanctity of the need to abide by work ethics and core values for enhanced work performance. All these, however, can be achieved through effective organisational communication. This article reviews existing literature on work ethics and core values, highlighting theoretical foundations and outlining critical areas that require urgent attention. Educating employees through seminars/webinars, workshops, etc. is shown to possess great potential to make positive impacts. Using critical desktop reviews, secondary data were sourced from Google Scholar, Scopus (ScienceDirect) and other web-based data banks were reviewed and analysed thematically. Implications of the themes are discussed, and conclusion drawn.
Keywords: Organisational communication, Work ethics, Core values, Public service, Public organisations, Employees

1. Introduction
Every day, changes occur across the planet. Nigeria, like all other countries, is affected by this transformation. It is no surprise that a philosopher once observed that the only constant thing in life is change because everything is continually changing. There is no such thing as a static situation in life. As a result of the dynamic and complicated difficulties that are addressed daily, the Nigerian work environment has grown susceptible to change (Adeyinka et al., 2013; Idike et al., 2019). The amount of work ethics and values that are domiciled within an organisation is a developing trend in work that is beginning to function as a mark of differentiation or critical edge. The character of an individual worker is shaped by these three factors, namely attitude, ethics, and values (Qing et al., 2020). The words and behaviours of an employee reveal his or her character (behaviour) (Robertson, & Callinan, 1998; Yamak, & Eyupoglu, 2021).

2. Review of Related Literature
2.1 Issues on Work Ethics
Work ethics can simply be defined as a set of moral principles, particularly as they pertain to human behaviour. Work ethics is concerned with what is ethically correct, honourable, and acceptable to most people in an organisation, society, or group. It is also the rules of behaviour that have evolved into a collection of societal, group, or organisational norms. What is good and wrong, as well as moral duty and obligation, are all discussed in ethics. Work ethics can also be defined as a set of values that include the proper attitude, proper behaviour, respect for others, and efficient workplace communication. Work ethics, in essence, govern what an employee should conduct in various scenarios within the company (Valentine et al., 2019). For example, a departmental secretary is required by work ethics not to disclose sensitive records to members of the public or family members outside of the office, just as he or she is bound by work ethics to maintain workers' personal records at work.

Hence, arguably, the habit of conducting oneself to good work ethics is intrinsic, i.e., it comes from within the recess of the personality of the individual worker. Therefore, this is a challenge to all employees of public organisations – do all staff and employees follow good work ethics because of the conviction they have that being good is good business and that the Islamic principles and cultural values require them to always behave well regardless of the circumstance and situation, or they follow good work ethics under duress? An individual's work ethics are derived from his or her values. Our values are shaped by our surroundings, experiences, and life experiences. These influences include our parents, teachers, friends, peers, competitors, superiors (seniors), political influencers, and anyone or anything else who has shaped or formed our perspective on the world (Weber, & Anne Lawrence, 2011).

Employees with good work ethics are considered for promotions and increased responsibility. They are aware that their actions at work have a direct impact on others. This conscientiousness persuades individuals to adopt a responsible attitude toward all of their actions. These people do not require constant pushing or supervision. They are self-driven and important to their companies. These employees are extremely dependable, and their supervisors value what they bring to the table. Can we categorically say that all employees of public organisations are like that?

Employees that follow good work ethics are trustworthy, accountable, and reliable assets to their companies. By institutionalising ethics, our managers and rectors have the obligation of building an organisational environment that supports strong work ethics and ethical decision-making. This entails incorporating ethical principles into day-to-day operations in their various organisations. Scholars such as Purcell and Weber (1979), and Weber and Anne Lawrence (2011) suggested that this can be accomplished in three ways:

- creating a suitable company policy or code of ethics,
- utilising a formally established ethics committee, and
- teaching ethics in management development programmes.

The most common way to institutionalise work ethics in public organisations is to establish a code of ethics (Adams et al., 2001; Menzel, 2019). However, publishing a code of ethics is not enough. Some organisations, for the Federal Civil Service, require employees to sign the code and include ethics criteria in performance appraisal. Other organisations link remuneration and prizes to ethical remuneration. Rectors and other managers should seize every chance to encourage and publicly recognise ethical behaviour among their employees. Employees should be encouraged to inform management about unethical practices. Rectors, Principal Officers, and other managers, above all, must lead by example via ethical behaviour and procedures. Every employee must perform ethically, and disregard generally accepted social standards that damage others (Ab Wahab, 2021).

Code of ethics should be the guiding principles and as a reference. A code is a set of regulations, principles, or guidelines that govern how people behave. Codes of ethics do not simply apply to government and business organisations. They should be used to guide people's behaviour in all organisations and everyday life. The existence of an organisation's code of ethics, as well as any governance structure put in place to support it, should be made public to all employees. Any exceptions to the code of ethics or rules controlling ethics procedures should also be disclosed (Sartor, 2020).

All details of the code of ethics, as well as the following details, must be widely disseminated:

- the existence of an ethics committee and its responsibilities;
- the sanctions for code of ethics violations;
- reporting mechanisms and "whistle-blower" protection mechanisms; and
- policies for the dissemination and promotion of the code of ethics.

2.2 Factors Influencing Modern Work Ethics

Work ethics has been defined by several academics. Work ethics is a cultural norm that sets a positive moral value on performing a good job and is founded on the concept that work has intrinsic value for its own sake (Sa'adatu, 2020). Agreeing with Sa'adatu (2020), Akonti (2013), and Braude (1975) opined that a person's adherence to or belief in work ethics, like other cultural standards, is primarily influenced by socialisation experiences during infancy and adolescence. A person "learns to place a value on work behaviour as others approach him in situations demanding increasing responsibility for productivity" through interaction with family, friends, and influential adults. A youngster evaluates his or her success in domestic tasks, or later in part-time work, depending on praise or criticism, affection, or wrath, according to the researchers, but this evaluation is based on the perspective of others. As a youngster grows older, his or her attitudes toward work become more internalised, and work performance becomes less reliant on others' reactions (Busari et al., 2019; Macky, & Boxall, 2007).

Workplace socialisation has been shown to influence work attitudes in studies. Allen et al. (2017), Uranta et al. (2021), Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 2017), Nguru and Ibrahim (2018), and Braude (1975) have all agreed that workplace socialisation is a crucial element in moulding people's work attitudes. When a person first starts working, people' opinions and reactions tend to reinforce or contradict the work attitudes formed in infancy. The

workplace culture, particularly the influence of "an inner fraternity" of co-workers, as Braude (1975) puts it, "has a significant impact on people's attitudes toward work and work ethic which form part of each person's belief system."

Public schools are one of the strategies used by society to convey culture to young people. One of the purposes of schools is to help pupils comprehend cultural norms and, in some situations, to appreciate the benefits of accepting them. For example, vocational education has as a stated purpose the promotion of work ethics. In addition, research (e.g., Kasim et al., 2016; Cooper, 2020; Gruzina et al., 2020; Omisore, & Adeleke 2015; Reubens, 1974) has identified "inculcation of good work attitudes" as one of the highest priorities for high school education. Schools should not be expected to completely transform a young person's work ethic orientation in the absence of early socialisation that supports good work attitudes but educating students about what the work ethic is and why it is important to success in the contemporary workplace should be a component of not only our tertiary institutions' curriculums but also secondary education curriculums (Gong et al., 2018; Gruzina et al., 2020).

2.2.1 Public service and code of conduct

In the Nigerian public service sector, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, the Civil Service Rules, and the Financial Regulations have established ethical standards. They are as follows:

- *Discipline*: Officers who want to lead others should be disciplined individuals. They must always keep in mind that effective leadership necessitates excellent character, tireless effort, and transparent integrity. One of the prerequisites for advancement is good behaviour. Officers should be aware of government regulations and standards governing good behaviour.
- *Allegiance*: Officers who wish to lead must have and demonstrate unwavering loyalty to their superiors as well as the current administration. They must prioritise loyalty to the highest moral ideals and the country before loyalty to individuals, political parties, or government agencies.
- *Honesty*: Civil officials should be truthful in their work and their interactions with the public. They should understand that they are paid a salary for the work they do, and they should demand or accept nothing in the form of money or in-kind from anyone during their tasks other than their normal entitlements.
- *Audacity*: Civil servants must be courageous in the performance of their tasks. They must never discriminate by bestowing special favours or privileges on anyone, whether for remuneration or not; and they must never accept favours or benefits for themselves or family members in situations that could be perceived by reasonable people as influencing the performance of others.
- *Courtesy*: When doing their regular duties, civil servants must always be courteous. It costs you nothing to be courteous to your co-workers and the general population you serve. Remember that polite instruction is more likely to be followed. Also, the public values respect and consideration for government employees. Courtesy in the workplace and public makes it easier to get along with others. In fact, a busy schedule of responsibilities or any other reason cannot excuse civil workers' poor attitude.
- *Collaboration*: No one is an island, and no one is completely self-sufficient. We all rely on one another to survive. Nobody knows everything. A ministry's officers and staff should work together as a team to achieve the ministry's objectives.
- *Tact/Diplomacy*: The term 'tact' refers to the ability to handle a tough issue without offending those involved. In the public service sector, this is critical. The ability to engage with people and create an appearance of a desire to help improves the office's efficiency and provides public satisfaction. Maintain these values, always remembering that public office is a public trust.

2.3 The Concept of Work Values

Values are a crucial part of an organisation's culture, as well as other social and technological systems. Values are items that a community holds in high regard and to which it clings tenaciously. Values determine how people behave in any culture. Every organisation, institution, and/or society has its own culture, values, and practices. The underlying drive for individual and group activity is societal or business ideals. The way a company does business is determined by its values, beliefs, and principles. The mission statement of organisations contains corporate principles. The things that make organisations thick are corporate values (Omisore, & Adeleke, 2015).

2.3.1 Key matters regarding work values

The identification of core values and various peripheral values should be considered while building an organisation's value system. The major driving force of the organisation is its core values, whereas the peripheral values are derivatives of the core or main values. In addition, every effort should be taken to guarantee that all segments of the organisation are involved in the development of the organisation's values. This includes everything from the initial draught through the final examination and adoption of the fundamental principles. Because all parts were involved in its creation, the final message will be simple. Because all

stakeholders were involved in its development, it would be simple for everyone to share these beliefs. As a result, comprehending the ideals would not be an issue because all sectional heads would ensure that it was brought to a simmer through education and enlightenment (García-Hernández et al., 2021).

2.3.2 Work values in institutions and organisations

All institutions and organisations are established with specific purposes (goals) and objectives in mind. The reasons for the establishment of such organisations are the goals of the proprietors or shareholders. All stakeholders should be able to understand them. Commitment to strategic planning is required for these objectives to be realised. The attainment of the institutional and/or organisation's goals and objectives may become a mirage without strategic planning. These objectives must, once again, be customer-centric; otherwise, the institution or organisation may be obliged to close its doors sooner rather than later (Magsumov et al., 2021; Macky, & Boxall, 2007).

Another asset of a company or organisation is excellent personnel and employee welfare, as well as a strong incentive system for both employees and customers. Staff that are underqualified and lack basic abilities are merely a liability to the institution or organisation. Institutions and organisations can only meet the desires and goals of stakeholders if they employ well-trained and well-equipped personnel to run the various arms of the operation (Maiyaki, 2010). Profitable operations are the goal of all organisations, especially corporate organisations. Organisations would struggle to stay afloat if they did not make a profit (revenues). Organisations that are cost cautious can continue to operate profitably. Cost-cutting should always be handled seriously because it can determine whether or not a company can stay in business (Sartor, & Beamish, 2020).

Transparency and accountability are two other organisational objectives. A company that is not transparent and accountable is on the verge of failing. This is because rumours have no place in an open and responsible organisation. There will also be no strikes or work-to-rule in such organisations because the workers are aware of what is going on. Organisational value also includes innovation and technology. This is especially true in dynamic settings such as Lagos and Kano states where dynamism is the most important factor. Things change regularly, and any organisation that refuses to adjust to the world's direction will eventually become extinct. As a result, in order to compete with others, businesses must be willing to embrace technological change. One of the values of any organisation is a strong financial foundation. To embrace innovation and technology, businesses must have a sound financial foundation. Every new change has the potential to be costly. As a result, businesses that want to invest in new technology or innovation will need funding (Sartor, & Beamish, 2020; Valentine e al., 2019).

2.4 Theories on Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making has also been extensively studied. This section begins with a general definition of moral dilemmas (situations that require moral decision-making), and then reviews the most important models that attempt to explain moral decision-making. Although these literatures developed completely independently of the street bureaucratic literature, the conclusions are similar: a greater understanding of the black box of causality is needed. The concept of social mechanisms can help open this box (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010).

2.4.1 The concept of ethical decision-making

Ethical decisions are made when individuals are faced with choices related to ethical issues (Bommer et al., 1987). But when exactly does a problem become an ethical one? These issues are often categorised as "ethical dilemmas" or situations in which important moral values conflict (Maesschalck, 2005). Ethical decision-making can be described as the application of moral standards (usually a set of moral standards) to a particular behaviour in a given situation. However, some scholars use a broader definition of ethical issues. For example, Velasquez and Rostankowski (Velasquez, & Rostankowski, 1985) stated that "The actions of one person, if carried out freely, may be detrimental to the interests of others." In other words, from the moment the action or decision chosen has an effect on others, the decision becomes a moral decision (including most decisions in reality). Regardless of the definition used, it is important to note that ethical issues may arise at any step of the decision-making process, not only when setting goals or comparing different alternative courses of action, but also during the implementation step (Bommer et al., 1987; Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010).

2.4.2 Models of ethical decision-making

Moral decision theory is primarily based on business ethics (e.g., Treviño, & Weaver, 2003), developmental psychology (Kohlberg, 1969, 1984; Rest, 1984) and organisational research (e.g., Jones, 1991; Sims, & Keon, 1999). Central questions in this field of research relate to the way in which individuals (in most studies, private sector managers) deal with ethical dilemmas and the factors that influence ethical decision-making. To answer these questions, several models of ethical decision-making have been developed that include a number of explanatory factors, both personal and situational (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010). Six of these models are briefly presented.

The first example is Kohlberg's model (1969, 1984). As a psychologist, he mainly focuses on the role of cognitive moral development, trying to explain how individuals perceive moral dilemmas rather than how they

act in certain situations. However, the question is whether moral reasoning abilities (relating to the level of moral development) warrant moral action or behaviour (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010). According to Treviño (1986) and Bommer et al. (1987), the true dependent variable should be moral behaviour.

Second, Rest (1986) also refers to the psychological processes that explain moral decision-making, with the goal of developing a model that can be used to explain moral behaviour rather than just moral reasoning. His model, the second important example, speaks of four mental processes believed to influence whether or not an individual acts morally: moral interpretation, moral judgment, choice of moral action, and execution of the moral action process (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010).

Third, Treviño's (1986) model of person-situation interaction. In her model, personal factors (such as moral development, points of control, ego strength, etc.) remain important determinants of moral decision-making, but she links them to situational variables or situational mediators (such as immediate action context, organisational culture, characteristics of the work itself, moral content) organisational culture, etc.). Their framework is important because previous models tended to emphasise individual or contextual variables, but neither approach accommodated significant interaction effects between individual and contextual variables (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010; Wittmer, 2001).

Fourth, Bomer et al. (1987) identified several circumstances in which managers' decision-making can be affected. The work environment, governmental/legal environment, social environment, professional environment, and personal environment are all important factors influencing ethical decision-making. (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010). Another interesting contribution of these researchers is that they distinguish between the degree of influence of various factors that the decision-maker believes should have on the one hand, and the actual influence of those factors (for example, even if subordinates perceive that the supervisor has somewhat weak or no influence at all), the supervisor may have some influence over that particular subordinate).

The fifth model was developed by Jones (1991). He argues that nearly all existing models that claim to explain moral decision-making miss an important aspect: the nature of the moral question itself. In the conditional moral decision-making model, moral content is presented as a multidimensional complex made up of six components, such as size and proximity of outcomes (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010).

Finally, as some scholars have argued, an individual's moral judgments are also influenced by his preferred moral philosophy (OC Ferrell, & Gresham, 1985; Hunt, & Vitell, 2006, 1986; Stead et al., 1990). The two basic types of moral philosophy are moral evaluation and teleological evaluation. Moral evaluation refers to the inherent rightness or wrongness of a particular behavioural choice (Hunt, & Vitell, 2006), and teleological evaluation that a person's choice should be based on the fact that he is most beneficial to all social units affected (OC Ferrell, & Gresham, 1985). These moral philosophies can be learned through socialisation (e.g., family, social group, formal education, professional environment). MZ Ferrell and Ferrell (1982) found that the probability of immoral behaviour was a better predictor of behaviour than personal beliefs or peer beliefs (Loyens, & Maesschalck, 2010).

Of course, these are just a few of the current patterns of ethical decision-making. Despite the stark differences, all of these models have at least one thing in common: the tendency to list factors that influence moral decision-making and/or moral behaviour. To provide a clearer overview of all of these variables, several authors have reviewed the empirical research (Ford, & Richardson, 1994; Loe et al., 2000; Wittmer, 2001) and, according to Loyens and Maesschalck (2010), provided lists of personal, environmental, or situational factors believed to have an effect on thinking and/or ethical behaviour.

3. Methodological Considerations

Desktop reviews of existing and past literature were adopted as method of data collection. All secondary data were obtained through careful selection of relevant materials (journal articles and books/book chapters) from globally famous online databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus (ScienceDirect), Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, Springer Nature, and Emerald. Because this review was not meant to be a systematic review of literature, rigorous scientific methods of data gathering, and analysis were not adopted. However, valid methods of data collection that is commensurate with the research design of this review was employed. Only relevant literature was reviewed. Key points, empirical findings, and conclusions were critically reviewed and analysed. Because of the importance of past literature to the development of current one (especially regarding theoretical grounding and concept development), no strict limitations were placed on the date of publications reviewed. However, a fair representation of both past and existing (more current) literature is ensured. The data were analysed based on thematic analysis (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017). That was achieved with careful coding of critical points and stressed concepts (Peterson, 2017).

4. Outcomes and Analysis of the Reviewed Data

The present of literature has yielded a number of critical concepts and theoretical postulations regarding work ethics and core values in public organisations. Workers' adherence to work ethics can be boosted through several

ways including motivated work performance.

Boosting Workers' Performance and Productivity: Four of the most prevalent motivating factors for improving employee performance and productivity are:

- Challenging, exciting work;
- An environment of Mutual Trust and Open Communication;
- Management Support (give tools, training, etc.); and
- Opportunities for personal growth and advancement.

Labour employers want employees to act in a way that is compatible with the organisation's mission and goals. Management sets expectations for appropriate behaviour by defining business conduct standards. Positive attitudes usually result in a productive work environment in which clients (e.g., students, parents), customers, suppliers, and partners take pride in their work and would want to patronise them.

4.1 Respect as Communication Tool

Institutions and organisations guarantee that employees demonstrate respect in the workplace by requiring that all employees recognise each other's perspectives and treat all stakeholders with dignity. Employees' productivity tends to suffer when they have negative attitudes toward other employees because they are from a different culture, religion, or area. Organisations help their employees improve performance/productivity by promoting activities that help teams work together better, such as workshops, conferences, and symposiums with team-building exercises designed to improve communication, solve problems, and make effective decisions, "organisations help their employees improve performance/productivity" (Sa'adatu, 2020).

4.2 Teamwork and Collaboration

The organisation itself is key to success. Managers, especially our Rectors, must encourage collaboration and cooperation in their organisations by including subordinates in decision-making. These Managers assist in minimising production disruptions caused by unnecessary conflict by establishing conflict management skills. Effective Rectors and other Managers lead by example, maintaining high levels of integrity and communicating honestly and openly with their subordinates. Team members who feel respected and trusted by their superiors have higher job satisfaction and a positive attitude about their work. This usually results in increased productivity, lower operational expenses, and more customer satisfaction.

4.3 Character and Outfit as Communication Tools

Employees that have a good attitude about their jobs are more likely to accept the institutions or organisations' norms and dress code, follow safety protocols, follow ethical standards, and always exhibit self-discipline. Employees are usually required to consider how their actions might appear if they were mentioned in the news as part of their company's work ethics regulations. If an employee is concerned about being viewed negatively by the public for his or her conduct, he or she should refrain from acting in a way that would condemn him or her. Distractions from immoral and unethical behaviour diminish performance and disturb the work environment for everyone.

4.4 Orderliness and Attendance

Effective employees usually finish the work they were hired to complete by arriving on time and leaving on time. Unexpected absences or missed appointments resulted in lower productivity, which impacted the rest of the company. Employees who have a positive attitude toward work complete tasks on schedule and ensure client satisfaction. For us to understand this point, we must know who are the clients of the Nigerian public service sector? (Answer: members of the general public parents). Therefore, logically, to ensure a client's satisfaction means to ensure the satisfaction of the general public – teachers, students, parents, traders, farmers, men, women, children, the youth, drivers, community leaders, and so on. High ethical standards lead to employee trust, respect, and productivity/performance when organisations deal with misconduct consistently and prevent retaliation against employees who report bad behaviour.

4.5 Effective Work Performance

Performance, according to Arowolo (2012), and Maimako and Bambale (2016), is an action that entails a great deal of effort in order to achieve a goal. To determine how well or poorly a duty or activity is carried out, performance is measured against a set of standards. As a result, performance may be good or bad. Performance can be defined in terms of a public servant's activities, particularly in terms of his/her efficiency in carrying out certain jobs related to service provision for clients, parents, students, management, the government, and so on, that his/her department produces in a day, week, month, or year.

4.6 Overview on Public Service

The executive branch of government's public service is a group or agency tasked with assisting in the development and implementation of government policy. It is a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing important services to the public. Ministries, parastatals, agencies, corporations, and other government entities make up the public service sector (Maimako, & Bambale, 2016).

4.6.1 Factors boosting public service performance

The following factors are shown to enhance performance in public service. These are also corroborated by Maimako, and Bambale (2016).

1. Workplace facilities: Employees should be provided with all of the tools they need to do their jobs. This will go a long way toward improving employee productivity.
2. A favourable work environment: Performance can only be improved in a setting that is beneficial to his or her productivity. Because there is cooperation rather than conflict, and a happy relationship rather than a hostile relationship, a pleasant setting naturally stimulates performance.
3. Capacity building: Capacity building is a process used by businesses to improve the way employees can work. To put it another way, capacity building entails education and training, "creating opportunities for employees, and other means through which employees could perform better."
4. Creating an informal group/team: It is necessary to develop informality out of formality. In certain ways, this can lead to encounters that would not have been feasible in a formal relationship. Team building is another term for this. Where all employees and employers, as well as subordinates and the boss, have time to connect, discuss their personal lives outside of work, and express their grievances and suggestions for improving their performance.
5. Appraisal awareness: Knowing that there is time to review an employee's efforts and to reward or reprimand, depending on the efforts he or she puts into the job, might motivate an employee to improve his or her performance.

4.6.2 Constraints of performance in the public service

Despite efforts by successive Nigerian governments to ensure ethical standards, value, and improve attitudes in the Nigerian Public Service in order to improve performance, the Nigerian Public Service continues to face several challenges that prevent it from being ranked among the best in the world. The following are some of these difficulties:

i. The Nigerian public service sector is often depicted as self-serving, venal, and nepotistic. This is corroborated by Takaya (1989).
ii. Other major challenges confronting the Nigerian public service are unethical attitudes and non-accountability. Salisu (2001), and Beetseh and Kohol (2013) suggested similar findings.
iii. Fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, influence peddling, and bestowing favours to friends are all challenges. This is also found by Ayanda (2012).
iv. Corruption takes the form of public officials or others soliciting or accepting monetary or other favours such as an (induced) gift, favour, promise, or advantage for himself or another person or entity in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his or her public functions to name a few, this includes directly or indirectly offering or granting to a public official or any other person to illicitly obtain benefits for himself or a third party. Muhammad and Maidabino (2012) have also agreed with this finding.
v. Nigeria's public service has another challenge: gross indiscipline. Gross indiscipline has taken many shapes in today's world. Lack of accountability, unethical behaviour, and corrupt activities have become so ubiquitous in Nigeria that they have become institutionalised standards of behaviour, to the point where one may easily speak of an ethics problem in the Nigerian public service sector.
vi. Bribery and corruption: The typical Nigerian civil servant is a person who vividly displays a lukewarm attitude toward the fight against bribery and corruption. Both top-ranking officers and staff members (personnel) are involved in the unpatriotic acts at varying degrees of intensity. The behaviour of our children who are being trained in institutions and schools full of corrupt administration workers and teachers/lecturers/instructors will be negatively affected. By extension, the implications of this to the socio-economic development and peace in our society will be jeopardised.

Furthermore, scholars and researchers, for example, Omisore and Adeleke (2015), Oluwatoyin and colleagues (2020), Shabbir (2017), and Maiyaki (2010) have all agreed that all of the above immoral behaviours and practices appear to have become institutionalised in the Nigerian civil service, particularly in higher institutions of learning today, because they appear to the majority to be acceptable and normal. Because they stand to benefit from such unethical acts and their poor influence on public service performance, leaders do not take them seriously. All of these difficulties, according to Osaghae (1993), and Osaghae and colleagues (2002), arise as a result of Nigeria's colonial legacy. The professor claims that Nigeria's colonial past is a crucial influence in the country's public service sector's ethical deterioration.

The institution and organisation can impact work ethics, values, and attitude through interventions such as training, motivation, and coaching. They cannot, however, be changed forcibly because they are inherent in nature. If these initiatives fail to improve the situation, the Management may take more drastic measures. The institutions or organisations' management plays a critical role in fostering employee commitment. The present review has further revealed that most people want to work for an institution or organisation that:

- pays competitive wages in its industry,
- offers prospects for career growth,
- gives equal opportunities for all, and
- treats all employees equally.

In addition, most people would wish to work in such an organisation until they retire. Bello, and Jakada (2017), Hassan (2017), as well as Omisore, and Adeleke (2015) have all corroborated those findings.

The organisation's challenge is to create such an institution while remaining profitable. While transparency and accountability are two important components of work ethics that are essential for effective service delivery and increased productivity. In light of this finding, scholars such as Ogar and Ude (2020), Bambale (2013), and Okeniyi (2013) have argued that success in establishing new work ethics will necessitate a holistic approach, whereas strict adherence to the public service's work ethics and values will promote both the sector and, invariably, the Nigerian polity. As a result, it is incumbent on every Nigerian public employee to use the Public Service Rules to guide his or her correct conduct and to enable him or her to fully benefit from the rights and privileges given.

The Nigerian Public Service has been painted in a very negative light, but things have not yet reached the point of no return. It is possible to make things right. Attempts to address corrupt practices and unethical infractions in the public service sector in Nigeria and other developing countries have been made numerous times over the years. Measures should be put in place to prevent undue involvement in Nigerian public service sector appointments, postings, and promotions, particularly in Nigerian public academic institutions. Because this is the practice in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the Federal and State governments, particularly the former should grant autonomy to the public universities and other higher institutions of learning (such as polytechnics and colleges of education) owned by the Federal and State Governments, which will effectively safeguard the autonomy of the civil service in those institutions (e.g., Magsumov et al., 2021; Maimako, & Bambale, 2016).

The civil service, like the army, should be urged to remain apolitical (politically neutral) and not get attached to a political party or leader. Efforts should be made to place in power political leaders who have both integrity and competence, and who can be looked up to by the people with regard and respect rather than disdain, as is the case now (e.g., Magsumov et al., 2021).

Ethics has become a casualty in the sphere of education in Nigeria, which is a cause for significant concern. Our ivory towers, our academic temples, have devolved into political and violent hotbeds. As a result, the Government (both Federal and State) should devote more resources to the education sector. Efforts should be made to achieve 100% literacy, and the purity of our higher education institutions, which has been severely tainted by politics, corruption, and criminalisation, should be restored. Every public sector organisation, in addition to the constitutional requirement, must establish a code of conduct. All employees should be required to sign a statement agreeing to follow the code of conduct. Gruzina et al. (2020), and Idike et al. (2019) offered similar recommendations.

A moral campaign should be launched by the government as well. This strategy aids in the launch of vast propaganda and campaign urging public officials to be disciplined and practise moral principles. It is a moral sermon about the current situation. Moral degeneration is a terrible disease that needs to be tackled in the public, business, and government sectors. The government should also establish a system to recognise and reward exceptional ethical behaviour. An individual's great act of discipline behaviour should be rewarded in terms of prestige, money, and kindness in the situation or situations where it occurs.

All of the above actions, as well as others, are unquestionably important if we are serious about restoring the integrity of the public service sector in Nigeria in order to improve work ethics and institutionalise core values.

5. Conclusion

For work ethics and core values to be effectively institutionalised in the Nigerian public service, paper works (theories, seminars, workshops, etc.) must be squarely matched with real practice. How can the Nigerian public service sector achieve that? The answer is: the Nigerian public service sector with other sub-sectors as well as each sub-sector in the Nigerian public service sector collaborating with its peers in order to share ideas and modalities through a peer review basis in order to educate each other on how best to ensure sufficient compliance with work ethics and core values. The Nigerian public service sector needs to collaborate with its peers in other African countries as well as non-African countries to exchange policies, modalities, and ideas

about how to enhance substantial compliance with work ethics.

Furthermore, the Nigerian public service sector must collaborate with relevant government ministries and departments and other key stakeholders to develop and implement a model which we named in Hausa language as *Aikinka iyalinka*, meaning, 'Your Work is Your Family'. Hausa is the lingua franca in northern Nigeria and the second most populously spoken language in Africa (Abdulkadir, 2021).

The concept of *Aikinka iyalinka* was derived from the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) in which he was reported to have admonished all Muslims and non-Muslims (i.e., humanity) that every one of us (humans) is a shepherd and that every one of us will be questioned (on the Last Day, by Allah the Supreme, the Creator) regarding how each one of us looked after his/her shepherd. Shepherd here refers to those persons whose responsibility of taking care of, grooming, teaching, catering for, protecting, leading, mentoring, etc. rests on one's shoulders (e.g., family, students, followers, etc.). Therefore, applying the principle of this hadith to public service implies that an individual employee who abides by good work ethics and core values will take care of his/her work, workplace, and colleagues in virtually the same manner he/she would look after his/her own family (e.g., Fathallah et al., 2020; Salin et al., 2019).

If you are married, for example, you should sincerely do your work, and look after your workplace, and colleagues in almost the same way you take care of your home and look after your wife/husband and children; and if you are an unmarried person, you should take care of your work, and treat your workplace, and colleagues in virtually the same way you would want to take care of your home, and look after your future wife/husband and children with sincerity, believing that Allah is always monitoring our actions and intentions.

Conflict of Interest
We declare no potential conflict of interest.

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