

WORK ETHICS AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' TASK PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined work ethics as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was a correlational research design. The population of the study was 267 principals in the 267 public secondary schools from the six Education Zones in Anambra State. Census sampling technique was employed in the study to select the entire population of 267 principals for the study. Two instruments as structured by the researcher were used for data collection. They include: Work Ethics Questionnaire (WEQ) and Teachers' Task Performance (TPQ). The instruments were subjected to content and construct validation. Content validation was done by three experts while construct validation was carried out by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the help SPSS v.26. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha technique and the average coefficient values of 0.81 for WEQ and 0.86 for TPQ were considered highly reliable and suitable for the study. Out of 267 copies of the instrument administered, 263(99%) of the instrument were correctly completed and returned. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used for the study. The study revealed that self-discipline and teamwork positively and significantly predicted teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study concluded that teachers' compliance to good work ethics and when teachers are seen upholding a sound professional conduct, it creates a high level of public confidence and trust on the teaching profession. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that principals should make an effort to come up with measures that can boost teachers' compliance with good work ethics, and show gratitude to those who exhibit exemplary behaviours and sacrifices for the success of teams in the school. This practice will spur and motivate teachers to perform optimally in their tasks in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Keywords: work ethics, teachers' task performance, public secondary schools

Introduction

Secondary school system is a very crucial level of educational system. It is a gateway to tertiary education and a ripe age for developing students' potentials. It is at this level of education that entrepreneurial and vocational skills of the students are cultivated. The contribution of this level of education to tertiary education cannot be over emphasized. This is because suitable candidates for tertiary education are selected from the secondary schools. Hence, if the products of the secondary schools are well prepared, tertiary education will have a good raw material for the development of human resources, which is a prime function of the universities. In all these, the most important factor is the teacher. Teachers are more important than technique, method or curriculum because they translate all these into meaningful learning experiences for students. It is the teacher who ultimately interprets and implements policy as represented in the school curriculum, which is designed to actualize educational goals. The extent to which teachers can attain this feat is contingent on effective task performance. Teachers' task performance could be seen as those activities executed by teachers in a defined school setting to actualize desired effects on students.

Teachers' task performance involves their compliance to set standards and commitment to school vision and mission in order to achieve the goals and objectives of education. It involves the extent to which the teacher participates in the overall running of the school in order to achieve the established goals and objectives of the school. Teachers' task performance is a measure of the extent of their commitment to effective pedagogical delivery as well as their display of uprightness and academic excellence in carrying out academic activities (Ughamadu *et al.*, 2024). Teachers' task performance is the extent teachers are committed to effective pedagogical delivery and exhibit uprightness and academic excellence in conducting academic activities (Kaegon & Okere, 2023). It is the ability of teachers to display the right

attitude to work by being committed and dedicated to the teaching job and making frantic efforts towards the accomplishment of school goals and objectives.

Teachers' task performance is the ability of teachers to execute their primary assignment which includes grooming students into useful living by teaching, training and behaviour modification. It indicates the level, way, manner, process and commitment of teachers in terms of performance of teaching, lesson preparation, presentation, actual instructional delivery and teachers commitment to their job, extracurricular activities, supervision, motivating and morale among others. However, most teachers who are seen as role models by students are not complying with the professional conduct. Ibezim (2024) noted that most teachers indulge in examination malpractice, absenteeism and also take advantage of exploiting students' weakness by demanding financial and sexual favour from them.

The researcher defined teachers' task performance as duties performed by teachers at a particular period in the school system and the behaviours exhibited by teachers in achieving school goals. These behaviours exhibited by teachers affects their task performance because no meaningful teaching and learning can take place under emotional conditions. In this regard, teachers need to ensure that their professional practice of teaching meets the highest possible ethical standards.

Work ethics is work attitudes or traits into the workings of a person or a group of the nation. The work ethics is manifested by the simple living and hard work. The work ethic is often much echoed by the leader to his men to be in performing their duties. Work ethics refer to cultural norm that places a positive moral value on doing a good job due to the belief that work has intrinsic value for its own sake. Epelle *et al.* (2023) defined work ethics to be accepted standards in terms of personal and social welfare of employee, their work attitudes, self-discipline and commitment to their assignments. Obianuju and Ikediugwu (2023) also defined work ethics as a manner of conduct binding on an individual or a group in the work place, which makes them conform to the ethical standards as a result of which organizational output level and the resultant profitability level are influenced positively.

Work ethics refers to the moral principles, rules of conduct or special control mechanism that govern the actions of members of an organization. In the school system, ethics is a set of moral principles and values that govern individual teachers, which they are bound to observe. Teachers' work ethics are moral principles which deal with the knowledge of teachers on what is right and wrong including moral duty. Odunukwe *et al.* (2024) stated that teachers' work ethics refer to a set of concepts and principles that guide teachers in determining what behaviours help or harm the performance of their duties. Teachers are expected to observe school regulations which specify the rules of conduct within the school system.

In this study, teachers' work ethics is the prescribed norms, values, principles, rules, regulations and standards governing teachers' professional conduct. It is part of the responsibilities of the school and thus, expected teachers' commitments enclosed in the core values and principles of the school. This suggested that work ethics can be widely seen as the guideline schools and its authorities can use to generate sound decisions. In this study, work ethics will be limited to self-discipline and teamwork.

Self-discipline is the ability to push oneself forward, stay motivated, and take action, regardless of the feeling, physically or emotionally. It means regulating oneself and making corrections to one's thoughts and behaviours in order to improve oneself. Unachukwu and Orji (2021) defined self-discipline as a conscious effort geared towards training and developing peoples character to follow an instituted order or an ethical standard of conduct in an organization. The existence of well-disciplined teachers and students as exhibited by conforming to laid down rules, respect of oneself, self-control, orderliness, and displaying acceptable patterns of the behaviour is one of the indicators of principals' managerial effectiveness. Ibezim and Ikediugwu (2023) stated that well-disciplined teachers comply with schools rules, regulations and policies which improve their job commitment. Also, a disciplined teacher is one who complies with the rules and regulations in school's pursuit of predetermined goals. For teachers to achieve the desired goals, it is necessary that they imbibe the sense of teamwork because teams that work together are more productive and motivated toward achieving school goals

Teachers' teamwork happens when people work together toward a common goal. Ethical teamwork requires virtues in communication, joint decision-making, collaboration, self-management, and

accountability (Nwogbo & Ugwuoke, 2022). To help everyone to practice virtues and work well internally, teams need codes of ethics and codes of conduct. Teaming works better when members have shared values and a similar work ethic. It is that variable that allows common people to attain uncommon results. Teamwork facilitates employees to cooperate with each other, improve their skills and deliver useful response without any dispute between them (Kaegon & Okere, 2023). Working effectively as part of a team is incredibly important for output quality, morale, and retention. A strong sense of teamwork is when everyone in the team is working towards the same goal and is willing to help out their fellow teammates. Thus, teachers' sense of teamwork helps to breed improved competencies for teachers in schools.

Furthermore, every profession has code of conducts that guide the actions and behaviours of members that form the body of such profession. Teaching is a moral activity because it is typically built on relationship with key stakeholders of the education community viz; students, colleagues, parents, administration and the community/general public. Consequence to this, the teaching profession rest on a set of solid, tested and proven ethical framework that guarantees the very best atmosphere and trust in the teaching-learning process. Teachers are therefore expected to apply these ethical frameworks on a daily basis in the performance of their duties. Unfortunately, professional laxity on the part of teachers are observed as indicated by Adegbola (2019) that teachers are found exhibiting excessive and unreasonable behaviours such as absenteeism, sexual scandal, alcoholism, disrespect, examination malpractices to mention a few. Similarly, Esiaba (2023) buttressed that teachers are found loitering during working hours, leaving their students unattended to, as well as exhibiting divided loyalty, nonchalant attitude and indiscipline.

Consequent upon this above, the challenges in the workplace and the diverse background of teachers all contributed in making the practice of work ethics very difficult. Principals are increasingly finding out that in making informed decisions, they select from alternatives that are neither wholly right nor wholly wrong. In such case, there is no clear moral compass to guide leaders through the complex dilemma of what is right or wrong. In line with the above, Odunukwe *et al.* (2024) noted that some teachers in public secondary schools are going against the work ethics guiding the teaching profession such as harassment of students, fraud, examination malpractice, abuse of office, extortion, sexual abuse, unlawful punishment to students, using vulgar languages on students, disrespectful to colleagues and indecent dressing. This is having adverse effect on teachers' task performance and their relationship with stakeholders of the education community. Where ethical conduct is lost in secondary education, the chances of breeding students who would behave in civil and disciplined manner is jeopardized. This study therefore sought to examine work ethics and teachers' competencies as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine work ethics as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the predictive value of self-discipline on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. determine the predictive value of sense of teamwork on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of self-discipline on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive value of sense of teamwork on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Self-discipline does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Sense of teamwork does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methods

The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was a correlational research design. The population of the study was 267 principals in the 267 public secondary schools from the six Education Zones in Anambra State. Census sampling technique was employed in the study to select the entire population of 267 principals for the study. Two instruments as structured by the researcher were used for data collection. They include: Work Ethics Questionnaire (WEQ) and Teachers' Task Performance (TPQ). The instruments were subjected to content and construct validation. Content validation was done by three experts while construct validation was carried out by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the help SPSS v.26. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha technique and the average coefficient values of 0.81 for WEQ and 0.86 for TPQ were considered highly reliable and suitable for the study. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used for the study.

Results

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of self-discipline on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of simple regression analysis on the predictive value of self-discipline on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β
Constant	21.472	6.235	
Self-Discipline	0.562	0.312	0.542
R	0.542		
R ²	0.478		
Adj. R ²	0.418		

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that self-discipline positively predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.542$). This implies that a unit increase in teachers' self-discipline led to 0.542(54%) increase in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Thus, the positive prediction of self-discipline on teachers' task performance means that teachers' task performance moderately depends on the proper behaviour of teachers' self-discipline in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.478 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implies that 49% of the variations in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in self-discipline. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.418 indicating that 42% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teachers' task performance) was explained by the independent variable (self-discipline). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of self-discipline is moderately strong in determining the teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of teamwork on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of simple regression analysis on the predictive value of teamwork on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized
		β	β	β
Constant		26.306	5.764	
Teamwork		0.588	0.292	0.578
R	0.578			
R ²	0.493			
Adj. R ²	0.446			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that teamwork positively predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.578$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.493 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implies that 49% of the variations in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in teachers' teamwork. Thus, the positive prediction of teachers' teamwork on teachers' task performance means that teachers' task performance moderately depends on the prompt improvement of teachers' teamwork in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.446 indicating that 45% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teachers' task performance) was explained by the independent variable (teachers' teamwork). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of teamwork is moderately strong in determining the teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: Self-discipline does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Test of significance of simple regression analysis with self-discipline does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	t-value	p-value
		β	β	β		
Constant		21.472	6.235		21.336	0.000
Self-Discipline		0.562	0.312	0.542	18.809	0.000
R	0.542					
R ²	0.478					
Adj. R ²	0.418					
F	28.512					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 showed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.542 while the R^2 is 0.478 and Adjust R^2 is 0.418. The F-ratio associated with regression is 28.512, the t-test is 18.809 and the P-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that self-discipline does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that self-discipline significantly predicts teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: Teamwork does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Test of significance of simple regression analysis with teamwork does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	t-	p-
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	β	β	β	value	value
Constant	26.306	5.764		23.515	0.000
Teamwork	0.588	0.292	0.578	19.243	0.000
R	0.578				
R ²	0.493				
Adj. R ²	0.446				
F	32.184				0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 showed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.578 while the R² is 0.493 and Adjust R² is 0.446. The F-ratio associated with regression is 32.184, the t-test is 19.243 and the P-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that teamwork does not significantly predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that teamwork significantly predicts teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on how self-discipline predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed that self-discipline positively predicted teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also revealed that self-discipline significantly predicted teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding showed that teachers become a role model that is often imitated by students, so teachers should set a good example. One of the behaviours that can be an example for students is the attitude of the teachers who are always motivated and disciplined. This finding lends credence to the findings of Ehiane (2024) that classroom teachers exhibited effectiveness on discipline to ensure students behave in a desirable way in the school. Ehiane further noted that having a loud, unruly class with a lack of discipline is not conducive to successful learning. Umar and Sha'awa (2023) submitted that teachers' effectiveness on discipline helps to ensure that, not only that students adhere to rules, regulations and procedures that are deemed necessary for enhancing their academic performance in schools. Without any iota of doubt, self-discipline in any school is as a result of self-control, obedience to the rule of law, restraining oneself, forbearance and trustworthiness from teachers. Sibomana and Andala (2024) asserted that, a teacher that practices self-discipline has the capacity to resist behavioural temptations, be it in the private or public with a determination of pressing forward to exhibiting what is right. Sibomana and Andala further maintained that positive discipline is a more effective way to manage behaviours in the school, rather than using punishment or rewards. It allows students to learn and teachers to teach and adapt their behaviours to meet expectations in the school.

Findings on how teamwork predict teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed that teamwork positively predicted teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also revealed that teamwork significantly predicted teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This result is in consonance with Epelle *et al.* (2023) that the presence of teamwork amongst staff in the school brings about high performance of the school to coordinate works into work groups so as to tap from the respective human resources the school possesses. The findings of Quines and Nino (2023) indicated that, on the part of students, it gives them more opportunities to master critical soft skills like better communication skills and teamwork, which not only improve learning outcomes but help create a positive school culture too. Teachers' teamwork provides fellow educators opportunities to meet, share insights, create cohesive plans, and work together effectively. Quines and Nino (2023) submitted that the presence of properly instituted teams or committees in the school to facilitate school activities will not only bring about good students' performance but also a productive administrative system in the school. A team exists when individual strengths and skills are combined with teamwork in the pursuit of a common cause in order to produce meaningful results for the team members and the organisation. The study in collaboration with Obionu *et*

al. (2024) exhibited a positive and significant relationship which could be as a result of friendly, collaborative, strong bonds of loyalty and tradition in the schools as they have similar features which promote teachers' job commitment in schools. Obionu *et al.* research also underscores the importance of teamwork in achieving goals, leading to a more cohesive and effective team. Moreover, they highlighted how teamwork enhances teachers' job performance by fostering collaborative innovation strategies, encouraging creativity and implementing collaborative exercises in the classroom. Teamwork practices in schools provide opportunity for teachers to improve their skills and enrich knowledge for effective execution of their duties in secondary schools. This agreed with the findings of Arjay and Joelyn (2022) that teamwork practices in schools cultivate strong relationships and build favourable atmosphere that can make teachers comfortable in performing their task to achieve common goals of secondary education.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers' compliance to good work ethics and when teachers are seen upholding a sound professional conduct, it creates a high level of public confidence and trust on the teaching profession.

Educational Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have far reaching educational implications. The study revealed that work ethics positively and significantly predicted teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This result implies that when work ethics including teachers' self-discipline and teamwork are handled fairly in schools, it will lead to a high improvement in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Thus, teachers are expected to stick to their professional ethics in carrying out their daily activities in the schools. Therefore, the school board enforcing minimal standards and a strong work ethics in the schools would be a strategy to enhance support of the learning process as well as improving teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Principals should make an effort to come up with measures that can boost teachers' compliance with good work ethics, and show gratitude to those who exhibit exemplary behaviours and sacrifices for the success of teams in the school. This practice will spur and motivate teachers to perform optimally in their tasks in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Teachers should acquaint themselves with the contents of the code of ethics to enable them become aware of what is expected of them while discharging their duties.

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